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**“SCORING FOR THE HOMELAND”: THE SOCCER TEAM OF THE REFUGEES
OF VOLOS**

Key words: soccer, cultural identity, ethnic identity, refugees.

ABSTRACT

One of the functions of modern sports is to provide people with a sense of differentiation and classification. In addition, sports are influenced and interact with the social context. On this foundation, the present study examines the social conditions under which refugees from Asia Minor founded the soccer club “*Niki Volou*” after settling in the city of Volos, Greece, in the early 1920s. In particular, two issues are investigated: the reason why the soccer club was created and the role it played in the refugee community. Information was obtained from primary and secondary sources, interviews from soccer players, fans and members and articles from newspapers. It is claimed that the reason for the establishment of “*Niki Volou*” was related to the preservation of the refugees’ particular cultural identity, while under the pressure of their clash with the indigenous population, the role of the team changed becoming the ground where the participants’ ethnic identity was tested.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is the means through which human communities perceive and structure their existence. Culture also renders the latter meaningful and provides a vehicle for expression and communication. Modern sports constitute one of the numerous forms of culture which realise the above processes. As Jeremy MacClancy points out, one of the functions of modern sports is to provide people with a sense of differentiation and classification [1]. In other words, modern sports play the role of an “identity bearer” while at the same time they contribute to the construction and reproduction of a significant part of many individuals’ identity in the modern world [2]. However, sports do not function in disconnection from the social context but quite the opposite, are influenced and interact with it. On

this foundation, the present study examines the social conditions under which refugees founded a soccer club after settling in the city of Volos in the early 1920s. In particular, the soccer club “*Niki Volou*” will be studied while two issues are investigated: the reason why this particular soccer club was created and the role it played in the refugee community.

Relative studies to the present, in other words studies focusing on the issue of sports clubs founded by refugees settling in a particular area, were not possible to find. There are, however, a number of studies on the foundation of sports clubs or organizations by immigrants. Characteristic examples of such studies are those conducted in Germany in the 1980s, which examined the way immigrants organized their teams there [3]. Research classified in the same category is also that

of Gary Ross Mormino, who studied the voluntary athletic organizations of Italian immigrants in St. Louis, USA, in the 1920s and 1930s [4], and of Jennifer Pratt who studied the role of amateur soccer clubs of Latin Americans again in the USA [5]. Related studies have also been conducted by Massey, Alarcon, Durand and Gonzalez on the contribution of USA-established Mexican soccer clubs to the preservation of a communication network [6]. It appears that the establishment of sports clubs, and particularly, soccer clubs, by specific social groups as well as the role these clubs played in the broader social context is an issue which has been a subject of Sports Studies to a considerable extent.

Concerning the present study, information was obtained from primary and secondary sources, including interviews from soccer players, fans and members of the particular soccer club. Articles published in newspapers of the time were also a source of information as were data from research and studies on the settlement of refugees in Volos and other areas of Greece.

THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN VOLOS – HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After the end of the First World War, the victorious allied forces decided to create a small, in territorial terms, Turkish country. The coasts of Asia Minor were under contest by France, Italy, but also Greece because of the large population of Greeks living in that area. Finally, Greece received the order to send troops to Smyrna and with the Treaty of Sèvres the area would come under its command until the inhabitants decided whether they would join Greece. Subsequently however, France and Italy withdrew their support for the Greek occupation and command of Smyrna. Nevertheless, in 1921, Greece proceeded in military operations in the mainland of Asia Minor but, in 1922, the Turkish army counter-attacked and managed to repel the Greek troops at the coast. The defeat of the Greek army and its departure from Asia Minor triggered the exodus of tens of thousands of Greeks who sought refuge in mainland Greece.

The wave of refugees came to an end with the Treaty of Lausanne, which provided for the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. As a direct result, a population of

approximately 1.200.000 orthodox inhabitants [7] of Asia Minor, eastern Thrace and Pontos migrated to Greece. However, this movement of population was not towards a foreign country but to a place, which constituted a point of reference for their national identity.

The majority of refugees settled mainly in the area of Macedonia, from where the Muslim population had departed. Refugees also moved to major urban centres of Greece [8], such as Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Kavala and Volos, contributing to their industrial transformation [9]. The settlement of refugees in Greece, however, was not an easy matter. The problems of their accommodation and relief were among the first that required urgent attention and solution. In the city of Volos characteristically, which was one of the settlement destinations, the refugees initially lived in the empty areas of the city and mainly around Riga Feraiou Square, where an entire shanty town was established (which was destroyed by fire in 1930). In late autumn 1924, however, the first refugee homes for about 2000 people were established in the area of Ksirokambos on the outskirts of Volos. These first homes constituted the initial core of the city of Nea Ionia of Volos. The official inauguration of the refugee settlement took place in December of the same year. From 1925 to 1928, many refugee homes were built while the year 1928 saw the first official population census [10] in the area under the name Refugee Settlement, which registered 6,186 residents, all refugees from Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace and Pontos [11].

THE SPORT CULTURE OF THE REFUGEES

In order to understand the reasons behind the establishment of the soccer club by the refugees of Volos, one must examine their sport culture from the historical perspective. It should be pointed out initially that the Greek population of Smyrna was active in terms of sport through clubs which were not entirely athletic in their scope. Characteristically, in 1890, the articles of the “*Orpheus Club*” of Smyrna mentioned that the aim of the club was the musical and athletic education of its members [12]. It is observed that, in this manner, clubs of the time served wider educational purposes. The reason for this is related to the preservation and forging of a particular ethnic identity for the Greek population of the Ottoman

Empire, the cities of which accommodated various national groups, including western Christian nations like the French and Italians [13] among others. Thus, through these clubs the Greeks learned and retained their culture while differentiating themselves from the other ethnic groups. In other words, the sports clubs functioned as a symbol of ethnic identity for the Greeks. This phenomenon of population groups exploiting sports as a powerful symbol of ethnic identity has been observed in other instances during the same historical period and, as an example, one could mention the Italian immigrants in the USA in the 1930s [14].

There were also, however, national reasons for the existence of these clubs. In the 1860s and thereafter, in accord with the conceptual framework of the ‘*Megali Idea*’ [15] (grand idea: an irredentist concept Greek nationalism), numerous clubs were established in various locations of the Ottoman Empire where Greeks lived and which were charged with the duty of propagating Greek culture and education [16]. Therefore, clubs contributed to forging both ethnic and national identity.

Finally, one additional reason for the establishment of these clubs is related with the social class of their founders. More specifically, the latter were wealthy Greeks of the middle class [17]. The majority of this group maintained close financial and social ties with Greece and were not only a part of the local middle class but also that of Greece. At the time, the middle class spent its leisure in specific ways, developing a new form of sociability through the voluntary participation in club organizations [18]. This practice functioned symbolically and was an element that distinguished the middle class from the other social classes [19]. This sort of behaviour had also been observed in the American middle class in the late 19th century and has been interpreted by Thorstein Veble as a symbolic identity element of the middle class in his work “*Theory of Leisure Class*” [20].

Obviously, the Greek population of Asia Minor had an athletic tradition for nearly thirty years before their migration to Greece. It should be noted that this tradition was characterized by the organization of major regular athletic events, one of which were the “*Panionian Games*” which took place every year from 1896 in Smyrna. This particular event became so prestigious that, from 1899 and thereafter, it enjoyed the participation of athletes of clubs outside Smyrna, from cities of

Asia Minor and Cyprus, Constantinople, Lesbos, Samos, Athens, Piraeus, Alexandria as well as from cities of Britain, Armenia and Turkey. Initially, these games mainly exhibited track events but later more events were added including gymnastics, swimming, fencing, cycling, rowing and occasionally, wrestling and weightlifting [21].

Soccer was particularly developed. The Greeks were the first to introduce and cultivate the sport in the Ottoman Empire. The development of soccer among the Greeks of Asia Minor was rapid after the first game in Smyrna in 1897, featuring a mixed team consisting of Britons and Greeks against a team of similar composition from Constantinople [22].

THE FIRST ESTABLISHMENT OF A SOCCER CLUB BY REFUGEES

The first establishment of a soccer team was attempted by the refugees in 1923, one year after their settlement in the city of Volos. During that period, the majority of refugees had not yet relocated in the area of their later permanent residence in Nea Ionia of Volos. They lived in makeshift camps around the Town Hall of Volos. The person thought to be the originator of the idea of the soccer club was Panagiotis Magoulas [23]. Not unlike the great majority of refugees in Volos, Magoulas came from Smyrna in Asia Minor. He was also a soccer player for the club “*Apollon of Smyrna*” of Asia Minor, one of the three Greek clubs of the city established in 1891 by a group of Greek fans [24].

While the three aforementioned reasons for the creation of sports clubs in Smyrna may have resulted in the development of a specific athletic culture among club members, the mentality associated with this culture changed when these people arrived in Greece as refugees. Apparently, in the new environment, the refugees, who were already bearers of an athletic culture, wished to remember their homeland and meet each other through the clubs they establish in Volos. Thus, one year after their settlement in Volos, they created the unofficial club “*American Red Cross Refugee Union*” [25]. According to the words of a refugee of the time: «*We created our team, we played ball and we remembered who we were...*»[26].

The soccer club owed its name to the fact that the American Red Cross, which helped the

refugees, had donated shirts and balls to the players of the team in order to play. It should be noted that the American Red Cross reached an expenditure of 3.000.000 dollars during the first months of the refugees' settlement in various locations of Greece as it was charged with the task of provisioning 800.000 refugees [27]. Therefore, the soccer club took the above name as a token of gratitude towards their benefactor [28]. The establishment of a sports club by the refugees only a year after their arrival in Volos is not unique but characterizes all the refugee groups that settled in Greece [29].

The soccer team held great importance for the refugees and this could be seen in the way they viewed it as a part of their cultural legacy. As they characteristically mention:

«The only things we took with us were the icon of Mother Mary from our church and our soccer team...» [30].

It must be mentioned that this first soccer club of the refugees did not receive the recognition of the state. For this reason, in the following year (1924), the club submitted a formal request for official state recognition. Indeed, the approval from the state came and the club now bore the name "*Athletic Club: Refugees of Volos*" [31]. In terms of symbols, the new team adopted the Byzantine color scheme, yellow and black, in order to emphasize their cultural roots.

The soccer team was of great importance for the refugees from the first moment of its inception and they supported it with any means within their power. In their words:

«At that time, the households of the settlement took turns in washing the players' shirts for a week...» [32].

In the same year, they also found an appropriate location in the area of Nea Ionia – which in the meantime had become their permanent residence – for the construction of a soccer pitch. The population of the refugee community showed their support again by voluntarily participating in the construction of the pitch offering manual work:

«Neither any member of the club administration nor any refugee had the money to pay for the soccer pitch. But men who knew the craft helped in the construction and so our first pitch was ready in 1924. We built our church with our own hands and in the same way we built our soccer pitch...» [33].

It is noteworthy that the soccer pitch was not located on the fringes of the city but in a central

location, surrounded on its one side by houses. However, the establishment and operation of the soccer team was not in an entirely positive atmosphere as will be seen in the following.

STIGMATIZATION OF THE REFUGEES THROUGH THE SOCCER TEAM

The team immediately began participating in the local soccer events of the time. In these events, when referring to the team of Nea Ionia, the fans of other teams often used the characterization 'refugee team', which was a derogatory term for the refugees. The term 'refugee team' took on pejorative nuances in the general context of terms and names used by the native inhabitants to characterize the refugee population, names such as "*turkomerites*", "*turkosporoi*" or "*turkalades*", names which directly suggested that the refugees were more of Turkish origin than Greek:

«In the games we played against the other teams, they used to call us "turkosporoi" and "turka-lades"...» [34].

In this way, it was implied that the refugees lacked any Greek national identity. Refugees were also called "*aountides*", which meant "those who have no name or identity". This process was clearly one of stigmatization of the refugees by the native population.

The questions raised concern the social groups that favored such stigmatization as well as the reasons and function of the latter. Regarding the first part, it was the native population which advocated such practices regardless of social position and class [35]. This is a phenomenon not exclusively restricted to the city of Volos but rather, one observed throughout Greece [36]. It is similar to the phenomenon described by Norbert Elias and John Scotson in 1965 when they studied the relationship between the established from the old estate and the outsiders from the new estate in a working class area in England. According to the researchers, although the two groups belonged to the working class, in their effort to ensure their social position and power, the population which had been established in the area for years, stigmatized the newcomers, creating a form of social exclusion [37].

The originality of the researchers' study lay in their interpretation of social exclusion which was based on the grounds of social consistency and prior settlement and rather than on national,

cultural, religious or class differences. The model put forward by Norbert Elias and John Scotson is a good platform to provide an explanation for the case of the refugees of Volos. Although their stigmatization is seemingly due to cultural or national differences, this is not the case. The derogatory terms *turkomerites* and *aountides* do not intend to imply a different national identity but to reduce the refugees’ Greek nationality. The issue of the extent to which one feels Greek is not related to the individual who is different in terms of culture or nationality, but to the individual who is evaluated as being lower than the rest.

However, the model proposed by Norbert Elias and John Scotson does not fully apply to the case of the refugees of Volos as it assumes the acceptance of the stigmatization on the part of the refugees [38]. This did not occur in Volos, where the refugees retaliated by employing similar means against the indigenous population. For example and more specifically, at one point the natives of Volos refused to comply with the decision of the Greek government to deny customs clearance to Austrian products; this supplied the refugees with enough ammunition to start calling them “Austrians” [39]. This is a well-documented psychological strategy followed by a group of people when dealing with threats to its identity [40].

THE CHANGE OF NAME AND SYMBOLS

In early 1926, taking into consideration the above local social conditions and aiming to rid themselves of the “refugee” label, the refugee population initiated discussions to rename the team. Finally, at the end that year, they submitted an official request to change the team’s articles of association and rename it *Athletic Club “NIKI”* [41].

The change of the name to “*NIKI*” was not a random act. As shown by Vernon Lidtle and Eugen Weber, who studied the athletic clubs in the late 19th and early 20th century in Germany [42] and France [43] respectively, the names and symbols of clubs encapsulate and represent their social identity and ideology. This phenomenon seems to characterize Greek clubs [44] as well, since in their articles of association, the majority make detailed references to their signs, seals, colours and other symbolic elements. As a rule, Greek clubs opted for names and symbols, which alluded to ancient

Greece. Therefore, for example, they used Myron’s Discobolus, Paionios’ Niki, Hermes, Hercules and others. Another element is the choice of names which indicate national ideology such as *National Athletic Club* or *Panhellenic Athletic Club*.

The refugee population and their team is no exception to the above, apart from their first name *American Red Cross Refugee Union*. The official name of the club, however, later became *Athletic Club: Refugees of Volos*, boasting the two-headed eagle as their symbol and a yellow and black color scheme, alluding directly to Byzantium. It may be that it was the refugees’ desire to differentiate themselves from the locals through these references to Byzantium and the word “refugees” in their club’s name; with the latter they immediately distinguished themselves from the indigenous population while the Byzantine symbols alluded to their homeland, since Asia Minor was the cradle of Byzantium.

However, the determination of collective identity, as shown by social psychology, occurs within the context of external inter-group relationships [45]. It is dependent on the circumstances and is subjected to changes. As pointed out by Richard Jenkins, merely sending out ‘identity messages’ is not sufficient; these must also become accepted by the others, before one can say identity becomes established [46]. In the case of the refugees’ team, the Byzantine symbols did not play their designated role, and stigmatization inflicted upon the refugees forced them to abandon these symbols. They had to lay emphasis on their Greek national identity but without relinquishing their ties with their forefathers’ land. The following story appears on the official website of the club as well as the website of the Municipality of Nea Ionia, the residential area of the refugees:

“The team of the recently established refugee settlement had to rid itself of the refugee tag. With this in mind, the administration board, players and team supporters concentrated on coming up with a new name. One endless night, in Pana’s office, the discussion reached a dead-end. The first administration suggested the name “Panionios” while others, headed by Panagiotis Magoulas, the name “Apollo”. Neither would yield to the other until Panas proposed the name Athletic Club “Niki”, triggered by the statuette of Apteros Niki which was on the wall. The fact that “Niki” was also the emblem of Panionios of Smyrna gave additional leverage to his

proposal. Thus, the name “Niki” was decided, as it constituted an overall expression of the refugees’ ideology and psyche» [47].

The abovementioned statuette was found in ancient Olympia [48] and makes allusions to ancient Greece, rather than Byzantium. The Byzantine colors were also abandoned in favor of the colors of the Greek flag, blue and white, a color scheme still in existence today. The reason for this, as reported by the refugees, was “...to show them that we, the people from Asia Minor, were all Greeks...” [49].

THE TEAM’S WIDER CONTEXT OF FUNCTION

At this point, it is necessary to make a general reference to the wider context within which the refugees’ soccer team functioned in relationship to the other sports clubs in the area. The establishment of sports clubs in Volos followed, to an extent, the course observed in other areas of Greece. According to Christine Koulouris, at the time of their foundation, certain clubs incorporated exercise and sport in their wide range of activities, connecting these with national purposes [50]. Later, clubs were created which exhibited a purely athletic scope and, eventually, clubs focusing on only one sport. The first type of club was not observed in Volos – only the second and third. Particularly, in 1896, the *Athletic Club of Volos* was founded which was purely athletic. From the very beginning, the club enjoyed the support of the city authorities, which also donated the estate where the club gym has ever since found accommodation [51]. The club’s scope was initially restricted to track events but gradually extended its activities to soccer, wrestling, swimming, rowing, volley-ball, basket-ball and cycling.

The establishment of this club occurred in a general climate of athletic development in Greece in the period of 1894-1896 as a result of the first modern Olympic Games being organized in Athens in 1896. This period witnessed the foundation of sixty sports clubs throughout Greece. In the first part of the 20th century, athletic clubs focusing on one sport exclusively emerged in Greek cities, including Volos. Characteristic of this bloom is the fact that in Volos alone, from 1902 to 1922, six clubs [52] were founded which focused exclusively either on hiking, hunting or marksmanship [53].

The club founded by the refugees, according to its first articles of association, seems to belong to the category of the general sports club, stating that its scope includes other sports as well besides soccer [54]. Nevertheless, soccer seems to be the most important sport since it has been cultivated from the initiation of the club. Lacking a worthy rival in the wider area of Volos, the team became dominant until 1936. There was a native soccer team, *Centaur*, which participated in the local championship with *Niki*. This team, however, was no match for *Niki* and, therefore, games were not of much interest [55]. In mid-1936 and for the remainder of the year, soccer games were prohibited throughout Greece [56]. In 1937, when soccer games were allowed again, a group of young men, who lived in the suburb of Agios Constantinos of Volos and were supporters of *Olympiakos Piraeus*, founded a new club, *Olympiakos Volou* (of Volos) which consisted exclusively of native residents. In the same year, the new team took part in the local championship and also beat *Niki*.

Since then, the games between the two teams were of great appeal to both the refugees and the indigenous population. These games did not lack in intensity and episodes; according to a report by a local newspaper on a soccer game in 1938:

«Thousands of fans gathered two days ago at the soccer pitch of Niki at 4:45 pm to attend the scheduled soccer match between Niki and Olympiakos... The refereeing was not excellent. Although the umpire is one of the best, he made numerous mistakes which triggered most episodes. Despite the latter, order was maintained thanks to the measures taken by the 3rd police station» [57].

The conflict between the indigenous and refugee populations became obviously clear when the two teams met as opponents:

«When Olympiakos Volou played against Niki it was like Olympiakos against Panathinaikos. You could say that there was a sort of hatred. In the matches against Olympiakos, they shouted at us and called us “turkosporoi” and “turkalades”...» [58].

Something which the fans of *Olympiakos Volou* also can recall:

«Whenever we played against Niki, there used to be a great deal of fanaticism. We were rivals in the same way Olympiakos Piraeus and Panathinaikos were. They were the team of the refugees and we were the locals» [59].

In order to fully understand this conflict between the two teams, one must take into consideration the wider social and political context of the relationship between the refugees and the natives. Specifically, very often friction would be created between the two populations due to political, economic and cultural reasons [60]. Concerning the political reasons, these had to do with the fact that while the refugees in their majority supported the Liberal Party, they had settled in an area which was predominantly in favor of the Popular Party [61]. The Liberal and Popular were rival Parties of the time. Their opposition was quite strong and was characterized by the division of the Greeks into those who were supporters of the king (Popular Party) and those against him (Liberal Party). Therefore, from the perspective of the Popular Party, the refugees were not only voters of the rival party but also the reason why they could lose influence over areas which they traditionally had for years. Later, particularly in 1930, a large part of the refugee population which had settled in cities like Volos and were employed as industrial workers became supporters of the Greek Communist Party.

Concerning the economic reasons, it should be noted that the refugees, in their great majority, constituted a cheap workforce for the Greek industry of that period [62]. Furthermore, the arrival and settlement of the refugees took on dimensions of a cultural shock for the indigenous population [63]. Of course, the refugees were of the same religion as the natives – the exchange of population between Greece and Turkey was based on the sole criterion of religious belief [64]. Nevertheless, many of the refugees spoke Turkish and practiced different customs and traditions from the natives. Thus, the latter regarded the presence of the refugees as a threat to their cultural ideals [65]. It becomes apparent that this general and multi-faceted clash between the two populations found an outlet, and was imprinted in their soccer encounters.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEAM – ENSURING THE IDENTITY

The legal context within which the club was organized was determined by a law voted by the Liberal Party in 1914 [66]. The articles of association contained provisions defining critical functional aspects including the aims of the club,

the means of achieving these aims, prerequisites of obtaining membership, types of membership, rights and obligations, resources, expenditure and the election of administration boards. The study of the articles may, to an extent, reveal the organizational structure of the club. What is of particular interest is the mechanism through which members were elected. However, because most articles in Greece at the time were fashioned according to certain western European models, they are nearly identical to each other [67]. Therefore, the study of the articles of association must be carried out in conjunction with information sources. The first articles of Niki state that membership can be obtained by any person provided that he is over 18 years of age and has references by another member. The request for membership is then examined by the administration board of the club [68]. Thus, participation in the team is voluntary but not automatic – the prerequisite of supplying references from another member and the approval from the administration ensured a system of excluding individuals not belonging to the refugee population:

«The club, Niki, was not a place for people to promote their own self. All members here are the flesh and blood of Nea Ionia» [69].

Obviously, this system was in function for a long period:

«Until 1959, when Niki played for the first time in the first national league, there was no player or team member who was an outsider. They were all refugees of Nea Ionia» [70].

From the above, it is clear that a network of social relationships within the refugee community was at work, which ensured that new memberships would not alter the uniformity of the team. The maintenance of such a system, of course, could not be feasible without the prominence which participation in the club ensured. In other words, if participation in the club guaranteed stature, then there would always be people wishing to become a part of the club. Besides, a sufficient number of members did not only ensure an adequate number of administration executives or members who would pay their subscription but players as well. Obviously, the soccer players enjoyed the respect of the refugee community:

«I used to work at the fish market – I was a young worker at my uncle's fish boat. He would very often send me to town on errands. I had my trousers rolled up but when people saw me, even doctors and lawyers, they knew I played soccer

and would call me "sir". "Hello sir, how are you!" Everybody had a lot of respect for us back then» [71].

This respect enjoyed by the soccer players also seems to be related to the status of the club in the refugee community:

«Wherever you went in Nea Ionia, you were well-known and everybody loved and respected us. It was very important to be a soccer player for the team. The team was very important. Before the war, most shops used the name Niki on their signs» [72].

Clearly, the organization of the team provided the mechanisms not only for the attraction of new members but also the exclusion of certain people. Such practice is neither odd nor unprecedented but rather one observed in numerous sports clubs in Greece in the early part of the century [73].

At this point though, an important note should be made. At a symbolic level, the refugees viewed the team of *Olympiakos Volou* as the expression of the political, social and cultural *other*. However, *Olympiakos Volou* was not created by rich middle-class people, who, generally, belonged to a specific and uniform cultural group and to the rival political party. Nor did its fans or players belong to such a category. *Niki*, on the other hand, was not founded exclusively by industrial workers, nor did all refugees share absolutely identical cultural features. Their settlement, though, at the same location, the newly-founded city of Nea Ionia, and the common needs and problems created a context within which a parallel new local urban identity developed – that of the resident of Nea Ionia of Volos. This local urban identity also acquired meaning through its contrast and clash with the local *other* in a neighbouring city. The *other* in this case is the resident of Volos. Besides, the phenomenon of rivalry, which very often verges on enmity, between sports clubs of adjacent cities is one observed frequently in Greece, a prime example being the teams Panathinaikos and Olympiakos, based in the neighbouring cities of Athens (the capital of Greece) and Piraeus (the largest port of Greece) respectively. As a conclusion, sports provide a platform on which not only social, cultural or ethnic but also local identities manifest and collide with each other.

CONCLUSION

The questions posed in this study were two. The first concerned the reason for the establishment of the soccer club of Niki Volou, while the second, the role this club played in the refugee community. It is clear that the answer to both is the same and it is connected with the collective identity of the refugees. This is not something rare in the field of sports. Specifically, according to Richard Giulianotti and Gary Armstrong, soccer is an area in which personal or collective identities can be created [74]. In this context, research work of characteristic significance is that conducted by George Jones, which revealed the role of soccer in the development of working-class solidarity [75], and that of John Hargreaves, who investigated the way soccer may assist in the formation of self-styled progressive nationalism [76]. Within the same context are also the studies by Richard Holt [77] and Tony Mason [78] who provide insight into the way soccer rooted itself in the urban areas of England in the 19th and early 20th century, as well as by Peter Frykholm on pre-revolutionary Moscow [79].

In the case of the soccer team of the refugees in Volos, the reason for its establishment was related to the preservation of their particular cultural identity. Not before long though, under the pressure of their clash with the indigenous population, the role of the team changed. The ethnic identity of the refugees is under doubt by the native population despite the latter being essentially of the same ethnic group. In this context, the confrontations between the two groups on the pitch become the ground where the participants' ethnic identity is tested. The phenomenon greatly resembles what Roy Jones and Philip Moore [80] report on nationalism and sports in Australia. In particular, they emphasize that soccer becomes a public arena where national identities are weighed and re-invented. In Volos, of course, there are no different national identities to be weighed; rather, it is the degree of a particular ethnic identity which is put to the test.

Concluding, it is interesting to remember what researchers Vic Duke and Liz Crolley have stated; that during a soccer match, the players may disconnect themselves from the political and social context but the match is always conducted within this context [81]. However, it is not only the soccer game which cannot be disconnected from the

political and social context but the establishment of a sports club as well. The study of similar cases will reveal the various ways, in which this context influenced, and still influences, athletics and sports.

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