



Summary :

The first initiatives of Constantinopolitan Greeks for the realisation of sport activities date from the second half of the 19th century. Gradually many clubs developed encompassing distinguished athletes. Indicatively, there can be mentioned the successful appearance of athletes of clubs of Constantinople in the *Panionian* games of Smyrna, in the *Panegyptian* games of Alexandria and the *Panhellenic* games of Athens.

Date

19th-20th century

Geographical Location

Constantinople (Istanbul)

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1. Introduction

Since the second half of the 19th century, the Greeks of [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul) had taken action for the organisation of athletic activities. Until the first decade of the 20th century these activities had occasional character, but in the course of time they opened the way for the foundation of many sports clubs, the organisation of remarkable local sport events and the appearance of outstanding athletes. Many of these athletes managed to rise to prominence during important contemporary sports meetings outside Constantinople, in which they were invited for their noticeable performance (four of them stood out as Olympic champions). Indicatively, there can be mentioned the successful appearance of athletes of Constantinopolitan clubs in the *Panionian* games of Smyrna, In the *Panegyptian* games of Alexandria and the *Panhellenic* games of Athens.

2. The games

The *Panconstantinopolitan* games was the most important sports meeting in Constantinople. It took place 23 times, from 1910 to 1922. Each year, a different club of Istanbul undertook the organisation of the games, contrary to what happened in [Smyrna](#), where "[Panionios](#)" took exclusively the task to organise the Panionian games.

The first *Panconstantinopolitan* games took place in July 25th and in August 1st 1910 with the approval and under the auspice of the "League of Greek Athletic Gymnastic Clubs" of that time, while "Ares" club undertook the task to organise the games. Except for "Ares" club, the local clubs "Achilles", "Hermes", "Heracles", "Theseus", "Jason" and "Pheidippides" participated too. Many athletes took part in the games and lots of spectators watched them. The programme of the games included footraces, jumps and throws.

The organisation of the "Artemisia" games in 1922 was another effort of the Greek clubs of Constantinople to organise permanent athletic activities. However, this effort did not continue because of the conditions after the [Asia Minor Catastrophe](#).

Until 1922, the "League of the Constantinopolitan Sports Clubs" was the coordinator that took care of the athletic activities. The League's aim was to bring the club heads into contact with each other, collect information about the problems that hampered the normal function of the clubs and to promote and supervise the efforts for the organisation of the sports events.¹ Except for the local sports meetings organised by the League, there were also efforts to organise international sports meetings aiming at the regular and stable contact of the sports clubs of Constantinople with the respective ones of other countries and, generally, with the international developments in sports.



The first attempt to institutionalise sports meetings in international level took place in May 1922 (May 27-29) with the organisation of international sports games in the famous stadium of Taksim. Representatives of the athletic federations of all the ethnic groups of Constantinople were invited to join the committee that was responsible for the games. The programme of the games included athletics, football meetings, while a part of the programme was dedicated to the school athletics.

Concerning the sports equipment for the athletes' training, the winter gym in the centre of [Pera](#) played an important role thanks to Iraklis Stagalīs, the trainer and director of the gym, who according to articles in the contemporary press (1900), was the prime mover of its function. The same articles mention that initially the gym was housed in the room "Sponec" in Galatasaray, and then in the facilities of the club "Hermes" opposite the English embassy.²

3. The most important clubs

The processes for the foundation of sports clubs in Constantinople date from the decade of 1870.

"[Hermes](#)" is considered as the first sports club of Istanbul, founded in 1877. Since then, lots of clubs had been founded and developed ample activities in the field of athletics. Some of them were strictly sports clubs ("Ares", "Theseus", "Achilles", "Jason", "Pheidippides", "Hephaestus", "Aias", "Perseus") while others, except for the development of athletics, also aimed at the development of art and educational activities. Indicatively, there can be mentioned the "Music Association Orpheus", founded in [Fanari \(Fener\)](#) in 1885, the "Pedagogic Gymnastic Club *Drasis*", founded in 1914, and the "Music-Gymnastic club *Terpsichore*", founded in *Six Marble* district in 1912.³

Constantinople club "Hermes", as it has already been referred, was founded in 1877 and developed significant athletic activities for that time up to 1922. Three graduates of Lyceum of Pera, K.D. Kostarakis, I.A. Zervoudakis and A.K. Stefopoulos are considered as its founders. Initially, the club was named "Clio", but soon it was renamed "Hermes". In its deed, the basic aim of its function was defined to be "the intellectual development of the inhabitants of the East" and the means for achieving this purpose was the organisation of public lectures and courses, the publication of a journal under the title "Hermes", the organisation of competitions, the economic support of indigent students of the community, the set-up of a library accessible to everyone, and the "Sunday Schools".⁴

The first priority of the members of "Hermes" was to ensure open spaces and transform them into places for training with the aim to encourage sports (mostly physical exercise) in young people. Soon they established an open gym behind the Eastern Club. In this place, mostly school games took place under the auspice of the Patriarch. Except for the encouragement of sports, these games aimed at the financial support of the various schools in Istanbul.⁵ Certainly, the club heads' provision for improving the training grounds for the club's athletes is evident in their persistence with asking clubs from Greece for information about gyms' design, the organisation and the programmes of training etc.⁶

Except for "Hermes", the "Greek Football Team" was also one of the most important clubs. After 1922, it was renamed "Pera Sports Club" and later, necessarily, "Beyoğlu Sport". Until 1926, the club activities were housed in the deserted gym of "Hermes", which shut down after 1922. Initially, the club maintained two departments, football and gymnastics. Later, there were established departments of wrestling and boxing and, in 1926, basketball and volleyball departments were added too. Certainly, volleyball athletes of the club had held the championship of Turkey for many years. After 1926, the club removed to the building of the "[Ladies Charity Fraternity of Pera](#)".

In its long history, the most of the "Pera Sports Club" departments had been awarded in many competitions. Specifically, until 1962 the football department played in the first football category in Turkey. The efforts of the club notables, such as G. Chalkousis, Str. Kanakis, G. Mouzakis, A. Tripos etc., played a determining part in this success.

The athletes' contribution to the success was very important too. Some of them were distinguished in Greek and in international level. Indicatively, we mention that, the ex-athlete and the later coach of the weightlifting team Chr. Iakovou, the later football player in AEK Al. Sofianidis and many more had started their career from the "Pera Sports Club".⁷



The "Heracles Sports Club" was another important sports club in Constantinople, founded in 1896 and its history was linked to the gym located in its building, which had been set up to house the "New Pedagogic School".

In 1899, the fraternity "Proodos" in collaboration with members of the "Charity Fraternity" decided to set up a building, where indigent young men and women from [Tatavla](#) could be lodged and work. The erection of the Pedagogic School building, which was going to house the indigent young people of the area, was backed by Vasilios Zacharof. However, when the erection finished, any action for the Pedagogic School discontinued. The members of "Heracles" taking advantage of this development transferred the gym of the club from an old wooden building to the new building of the Pedagogic School. This initiative proved very significant since the new sports facilities and the decent conditions attracted many young people of Constantinople. The modern apparatus, for that time, favoured new training methods giving new impetus to the artistic gymnastics.

Brothers Georgios and Nikolaos Alimbrandis, who had been distinguished in great sports events, were among the athletes of "Heracles". Both were athletes of gymnastics, the first in horizontal bar and the second in rope climbing. They won their greatest distinction in the mid-Olympics of 1906 in Athens, where they were invited by the Olympic Committee because of their excellent performance in previous sports events. In the "Kallimarmaron" Stadium of Athens, brothers Alimbrandis won two gold medals and a reputation as the two first Olympic champions in the history of the club.

By that time, except for the gymnastic department, the club also developed in a great extend the Greek-Roman wrestling department under the leadership of Menelaos Karotsieris, who was one of the club founders. In 1927, Karotsieris settled in Athens and later he became president of the Greek Wrestling Federation.

In 1922, the club was renamed as "Tatavla Sports Club" and new community members came to reinforce its activities. We mention indicatively Giasoumis Skendris; on his initiative, annual sports demonstrations were established in the open ground behind the club's building.

In the '30s, Dionysis Sakalakis, graduate from the American Robert College, organised the Club's Literary Department with other graduates from the Lycées of Istanbul. Its function was largely based on the establishment of its remarkable library.

In the same period, "Tatavla Sports Club" intensified the efforts in the field of sports with the foundation of basketball, volleyball, cycling, athletics and other sports departments. Competent athletes from these departments were distinguished in local and international sports events. In the '60s, the club was transferred to Greece, specifically to Athens, where it continues being active up to the present days.⁸

1. Concerning these see: Μανιτάκης, Π., *100 χρόνια νεοελληνικού αθλητισμού 1830-1930* (Athens 1962), pp. 274-275, 398; Μπόζη, Σ., *Ο ελληνισμός της Κωνσταντινούπολης. Κοινότητα Σταυροδρομίου- Πέραν* (Athens 2002), p. 357.

2. See: Μπόζη, Σ., *Ο ελληνισμός της Κωνσταντινούπολης. Κοινότητα Σταυροδρομίου- Πέραν* (Athens 2002), p. 358.

3. Μαμώνη, Κ., *Μελετήματα από την Ιστορία, παιδεία και εκκλησία της Κωνσταντινούπολης (1437-1922)* (Athens 2001), p. 225; Μανιτάκης, Π., *100 χρόνια νεοελληνικού αθλητισμού 1830-1930* (Athens 1962), pp. 274-275, 286-287 and Μαμώνη, Κ., - Ιστικοπούλου, Λ., *Γυναικείο σύλλογοι στην Κωνσταντινούπολη (1861-1922)* (Athens 2002), p. 182.

4. Μαμώνη, Κ., *Μελετήματα από την Ιστορία, παιδεία και εκκλησία της Κωνσταντινούπολης (1437-1922)* (Athens 2001), pp. 71-73.

5. Μαμώνη, Κ., *Μελετήματα από την Ιστορία, παιδεία και εκκλησία της Κωνσταντινούπολης (1437-1922)* (Athens 2001), p. 75.



6. Μανιτάκης, Π., *100 χρόνια νεοελληνικού αθλητισμού 1830-1930* (Athens 1962), pp. 117-118.
7. For the 'Pera Sports Club' see: Μανιτάκης, Π., *100 χρόνια νεοελληνικού αθλητισμού 1830-1930* (Athens 1962), pp. 358-360.
8. See: Αρσάνογλου, Λ., *Ταταύλα. Εκατό Χρόνια Αθλητισμός* (Athens 1997), pp. 11, 13, 18, 21, 25, 26, 28-30.

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	Μανιτάκης Π. , <i>100 χρόνια αθλητισμού 1830-1930</i> , Αθήνα 1962
	Αρσάνογλου Λ. , <i>Εκατό χρόνια Αθλητισμός</i> , Αθήνα 1997
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