Authoring : *Choumerianos Manolis*
Translation : *Βελέντζας Γεώργιος*

For citation : *Choumerianos Manolis , "Club "Panionios Sporting Assosiation", Smyrna", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Asia Minor*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=10235>

Summary :

Panionios was established in 1898 after the clubs Orpheus and Gymnasium of Smyrna were united. The activity of the new club, apart from athletics, was focused on fostering and encouraging any musical, philological and, in general, artistic attempt. Panionios established a school of gymnastics, whose classes were held in the yard of the Evangelical School. Moreover, a great part of its activities involved the organisation of the Panhellenic Games. In 1922 the club was transferred to Athens.

Date

1898 - today

Geographical Location

Smyrna, Athens

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1. The Establishment of the Cultural Club Orpheus

On 14 September 1890 music-lovers from Smyrna and students of the Aronis School established Club Orpheus (Greek: Ορφεύς). The club aimed to develop musical education and promote physical education. Among the establishers of the club were Panos Argyropoulos, Andreas Voulgaridis, Aimilios Kartalis, Konstantinos Tobrof and Ioannis Fatseas.

The place accommodating the first activities of the members was a building owned by some Kapogrossos, in Rodon Street. The opening lessons were on music education and were given by the teacher of music Nikias Tzetzos, while the number of the members who attended them highly satisfied the inspirers of the venture. Not before long, with the encouragement of Aronis, director of the school of the same name, the club acquired the necessary musical instruments and formed a permanent band.

The first public appearance of the members of Orpheus took place on 23 April 1891, on the name day of St. George. The successful presence of the club in the artistic events of Smyrna encouraged several wealthy citizens to make donations to the club, thus contributing to its further development. Among the most important donators were the doctor Themistoclis Iatrou, the lawyers Armodios Chamoudopoulos and Ippokratis Leon, who also served as counselors of the club, and the poet Alekos Fotiades.

On 23 May 1893 the members of Orpheus started music tours from Lesvos, where the local authorities welcomed them with unprecedented pomp and circumstance. From then on, the club gave several successful performances, judging from the numerous invitations the members received in order to appear in public.[1]

2. Sporting Activities of Orpheus and Establishment of Gymnasium

Apart from their musical activities, the members of the club were also involved in sporting activities. This was an important social development at the time, since training and sporting activities, in general, were very limited. It should be mentioned that no gymnasiums operating on a regular basis had existed until then. Moreover, there were no permanent sporting clubs with specialised trainers offering concrete training programmes. The private school Hippocrates was the only one offering lessons of gymnastics (1874), stick-play and sabre-play, given by a specialised instructor. The same institution also included a ‘bath for combined cold shower’, since, according to an advertisement of the school, ‘the cold shower is the main base for hygiene’.[2]

The importance of the sporting activities of the club was reflected in the distinctions achieved by three athletes from Smyrna during the Greek national Olympic Games of Athens. The first national Olympic Games were held on 15 November 1859 in Loudovikou Square (today's Kotzia Square) in the presence of King Otto and Queen Amalia. Petros Velissariou won the event of dolichos race (seven stadia). At the second national Olympic Games held in October 1870 at Phaliron Demetrios Melegoglou won the pole vault and the horizontal bars. The third athlete from Smyrna who did well in the same games was K. Malokidis. More specifically, he won the ascent

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on a sloping pole as well as the climb on a rope at the third national Olympic Games of Athens in May 1875.

The above distinctions promoted the operation of the club and several young men of the city enrolled as members of the club aiming to participate in athletic events. As a result, the athletes of Orpheus were always present in athletic events. They mostly took place in events held by English citizens at the stadium of Burnova and Paradeisos. Several athletes of the club defeated their opponents and distinguished themselves in these events.[3]

However, as some members of the club wished the activities of Orpheus to be focused on athletics, without allowing time for musical-literary activities, there was a disagreement between the above and the rest of the members. Those who disagreed withdrew from their club and formed a new club called Gymnasium. The sole purpose of the new club was to 'develop and promote the feeling for athletics among the young'.

The members of Gymnasium established a gymnasium and organised long walks and athletic games at the Burnova stadium called 'public' games. Foreign athletes as well as athletes of Orpheus took place in the events. As a result, the stadium of Burnova, where athletes of the two clubs competed, became a place of athletic meetings and a place where developments concerning the future of local athletics occurred. These developments finally resulted in the union of the two clubs.

However, until then their athletes had been representing Smyrna in important games held in Greece, cheered by both their compatriots living there as well as by Greek citizens. It is worth mentioning the warm welcome the teams of the two clubs received when they went to Tinos Island in order to participate in the first Panhellenic Games in 1895, which served as elimination contests for the Greek athletes in view of the first modern Olympic Games of Athens in 1896. It should be pointed out that five athletes of Smyrna won five events during the games, thus creating a favourable impression on all who watched the events of the meeting. In particular, the winners were: D. Tobrof in dolichos race, Ioannis Lazaropoulos in diaulos, N. Kontaxopoulos in the horizontal bars and K. Christogiannopoulos and K. Mouratis in the triple jump and the 100-metre run.[4]

3. Establishment of Panionios Sporting Club

The establishment of the club in October 1898 resulted from the union of the two clubs of Smyrna, Orpheus and Gymnasium. According to the Articles of the new club, 'its principal purpose was to develop gymnastics and the feeling for athletics among the young of Smyrna as well as to arouse and promote the feeling for music and by all means encourage fine arts in general'. It becomes obvious from the Articles that the activity of the new club, apart from athletics, is focused on the development and promotion of any musical, literary and, in general, artistic attempt.

Its members organised lectures with the participation of both Greek and foreign scholars and scientists of the time, such as Kyriakos Giannikis, Michail Argyropoulos and Stilpon Pittakis. In addition, concerts were given in Smyrna, Alexandria and Athens.

For some years (until 1904) there was a music section with two bands and a large choir. Poetic contests and art exhibitions were also organised. The first painting and sculpture exhibition held in 1901 was particularly successful. Works of distinguished artists of the city, such as Evangelos Ioannidis, Ch. Palaiologos and Ovidios Kourtovik, were presented during the exhibition. The exhibition of the following year included works of artists outside Smyrna, such as N. Lytras and K. Volanakis.[5]

4. The Anthem

In 1900 Panionios staged a competition for the composition of the club's anthem. The basic assumption of the announcement demanded that 'the anthem be written in ancient Greek'.[6] The selection committee included the Athenian scholars Georgios Mistriotis, Nikolaos Kazazis and Aristomenis Provelengios.

The committee unanimously decided to award the prize to the poem signed by the pseudonym Apiliotis. It was the pen name used by the then young student and subsequent important author and university professor from Smyrna, Stelios Sperantsas.

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The verses of the first part of the anthem are as follows:

'Merrily shine the days suddenly,
Pictures of earlier days,
The languorous centuries passed,
The darkness of chilly nights is away.
Hail, the Bard's birthplace; hail, the glorious land of virtuous Ionia.
The great struggle of our ancestors grants you enviable honours again.
The young, for centuries now,
Had withered away in torpor,
But have risen willingly again, asking for glory and vigour,
Coveting the gifts of health
In harmonious exercise.
Upstanding and warm they breathe again
Competing in divine ebullience,
Unanimously they immediately create
A strong Panionian bond'.

5. Club Regulations

In September 1906 the members of the general assembly of the club drew up and adopted their regulations. The board included A. Fotiadis (chairman), I. Diamantopoulos (secretary general), A. Athinogenis, D. Dallas, K. Isigonis, A. Karmaniolos, S. Raptopoulos and K. Chatziapostolou (members). The regulations included 16 articles, which among others said that:

The club aims at the physical training and development of the young, the promotion of gymnastics among all social classes, the improvement of the young and the preparation of athletes. (Article 2.) Moreover, in case the club is dissolved, the assets will be transferred to the gymnasium of the Evangelical School. (Article 16.) As regards sources, the club hopes for the goodwill of donators, benefactors and great benefactors (Article 15,)

As soon as these regulations were introduced, Panionios, as a club, took on a clearly athletic character, since Article 2 about the aims of its existence indicates its clearly athletic orientation. For the avoidance of misinterpretations, Article 3 states that 'this aim may be achieved… through communication with other clubs, public lectures on gymnastics….'.[7]

6. School Games

On the initiative of D. Dallas, Panionios played a leading role in establishing School Games in the city of Smyrna in 1901. There had been no systematic classes of gymnastics in communal and private schools of the city so far and classes of gymnastics were occasionally held, while there was poor planning for the students' physical exercise.

This institution will be at the centre of club activities for twenty years, since its members were to a large extent devoted to its systematic organisation. What is more, in order to promote this venture, the following year the members of the club established a school for physical education instructors, whose first director was Sofoklis Magnis. School classes were given in the yard of the Evangelical School. Moreover, in cooperation with the ecclesiastical authorities of the provinces of Asia Minor, Panionios undertook to promote Swedish gymnastics to the male and female teachers of these provinces. In order to achieve this goal, specialised instructors of physical education were sent from Smyrna to the boards of the above schools.

All schools, including the McLachlan Lyceum, started gradually to take part in the School Games. The anthem of the games, composed by Spyridon Samaras, was sung at the opening and closing ceremony of the games. There were both individual and team events. They usually included Swedish gymnastics performed by high school and primary school teams, as well as races, jumps and

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throws.

The above activities of the club were funded by the Greek state for 11 years (1903-1914) with the amount of 6,000 drachmae.[8] The School Games were abolished in 1922.

7. Panionian Games

A great part of the club's activity was devoted to organising and holding the Panionian Games, where athletes from Greece and all Asia Minor took part.[9]

Between 1896 and 1922 the games were held 19 times and more than 1,500 athletes took part in them. What is more, their successful organisation and increased importance led to the official recognition of the performances of the athletes by the committee of the Olympic Games.

The first games were held at the Burnova stadium with the participation of athletes of Orpheus, Gymnasium, Hermes (Burnova) as well as individual athletes. The events included mainly races, medium distance races and jumps. In the course of time the events included throws (discus throw and shot put), while the number of athletes and clubs participating in the games increased. It is worth mentioning that in the sixth games (1902) all the sporting clubs of Smyrna (Panionios, Apollo, Hermes and the Sporting Club of Peraia) as well as clubs from other places, such as the Popular Sporting Club of Samos, Theseus of Constantinople, the Sporting Club of Alexandria and individual athletes, took part in the games. It should be pointed out that several foreign, mainly English, athletes also took part in the games.

The 8th Panionian Games created conflict between Panionios and Apollo, the two most powerful clubs of Smyrna. Apollo did not take part in the games but held similar games at the stadium of Burnova; the games were called 1st Apollonian Games and were held between 23 and 25 April 1904 with the participation of 54 athletes. Apart from the athletes of Apollo, there were athletes of the Burnova Sporting Club and the Athletic Union.

Shortly later, apart from clubs of Smyrna, clubs from the Greek state started to participate, such as Ethnikos of Athens, the Sporting Club of Piraeus and Panachaikos of Patras. The athletes of these clubs were accompanied by representatives of the Greek sporting organisations and federations (Hellenic Olympic Committee-HOC, SEGAS).

From the games of 1904 on the participation of clubs from Greece increased. Moreover, the number of events grew (weightlifting, gymnastics) and the games became more important. Besides, it was not by chance that the participating athletes were particularly interested in both their performance in the games and their preparation. In addition, the games became a meeting place for representatives of local authorities, Greek authorities and members of diplomatic missions.

The unstable international scene and the military operations of the years 1912 and 1913 (Balkan Wars) affected the way the games were organised as well as their range. In the 15th games (1913) the participation was low because there were no athletes of Greek clubs. The games were held with the participation of Smyrna clubs, while it should be underlined that the athletes of Apollo returned to the games.

The following years (1914-1918) the unstable international scene (World War I) was again unfavourable for the games. However, after unremitting efforts of the organisers, the games were held in 1915 and 1918, although there were few athletes.

When the Greek forces landed on Asia Minor, the enthusiasm many of the Greeks in the region felt affected the people of Panionios. They anticipated that the military operations of the Greek forces would be successful and announced the 'panegyric national celebration' of the 19th games in the spring of 1919. They also sent circular letters to all Greek clubs so that the latter would send their athletes to the specific games:

'Panionios Sporting Club, in the shade of slavery and the horrible Turkish tyranny, has unperturbedly maintained its sacred Greek spirit

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and decided, on saluting the grandly rising sun of the Panhellenic freedom, that it will hold the celebration of the 19th Panionian Games in the metropolis of Greek Ionia, which is destined to become one of the most gorgeous diamonds of Magna Graecia (Megali Ellas)'.[10]

However, the High Commissary of Greece Aristeidis Stergiadis forbade the celebration of the games 'for national reasons.' After long discussions it was finally decided that the games would be held in September 1921 on the following conditions: 1) the games would not be called 'Eleftheria' (freedom), 2) no athletes of Greek clubs would participate but only athletes from Smyrna with the exception of individual athletes of Greek clubs as long as they were serving the Greek army in Asia Minor outfits. They would participate as individuals and would not represent any Greek sporting club.

In order to avoid cancelling the games, the members of Panionios complied with the above terms, but sent confidential letters to all Greek clubs and suggested that the latter send their athletes even if they did not have to join the army. They would appear in Smyrna as 'passers-by' and would apply for participation. Among all clubs, only Ethnikos accepted the proposal of Panionios. Thus, the games were held with the participation of athletes of Smyrna clubs and athletes of Ethnikos, who happened to be there 'by chance.'[11]

The last Panionian Games were held in July 1922, shortly before the front of Asia Minor collapsed.

8. The Panionian Stadium in Smyrna

Twenty years after it was established, the club still did not have its own centre. At first, the athletes trained in poorly equipped gymnasiums. In 1900 the club hired out a court from the French company of Smyrna waterfronts. The court was renovated and the members of Panionios covered the cost. As a result, a remarkable gymnasium and race courses were constructed. Although the company had leased the place for several years, it retained the right to sell it without recompensing the club, which finally happened in 1910.

Following this development and at the suggestion of the metropolitan Chrysostomos, the Orthodox community of the city immediately granted a plot beside the Greek cemetery so that the new home of the club could be built there. The project was carried out quickly and included race courses and a gym. The new stadium opened on the occasion of the XIV Panionian Games in 1911.[12]

9. Panionios in Athens

When the members and athletes of Panionios arrived in Greece in 1922, there was an attempt at reestablishing the club despite the enormous obstacles in the path of the venture. On the initiative of the president of the club Dimitrios Dallas, Panionios was temporarily accommodated in a small space in the changing rooms of the Panathenaikon Stadium. This space became a meeting place for the members, athletes and fans of the club who managed to travel from Smyrna to Athens.

The first board of the new era consisted of S. Sperantsas, G. Saridakis, A. Athinogenis, G. Alevras, S. Stamelos and other members and was presided over by Dimitrios Dallas. The reorganisation of the club started with the establishment of the sections of classical sports and football. Not before long, the section of volleyball was also reestablished.

In the autumn of 1923 the club hosted the 20th Panionian Games at the packed Panathenaikon Stadium. The games were attended by several eminent figures of the time, who went there to honour the new start of the refugee club. The same games were repeated in 1925 in order to honour the 35th anniversary of the club. From then on, the athletes of Panionios have been participating in several events in the Greek national championships of all categories.

However, among the first things the people of the club concerned about was to find a permanent sports centre, which would become the home of all its activities. The director of physical education of the Ministry of Education, I. Chrysafis, right from the start suggested that the home of Club Panionios should be in the Athens neighbourhood Nea Smyrni (New Smyrna) – an opinion adopted by the member and subsequent president of the club A. Athinogenis.

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The matter was in suspense until 1927. It was then that the then Minister of Welfare Apostolos Orfanidis became president of Panionios and adopted the opinion of Chrysafis. The latter, in the meanwhile, was preparing the establishment of a school sports centre in Nea Smyrni. In 1930 the board of the club tried Panionios to be allowed to use this centre. Thus, the Ministry of Education, following a suggestion of Chrysafis and actions of Orfanidis, accepted the request of the club. However, the lack of money was a major obstacle for the quick construction of the centre. The required amount of money was secured in 1937 following the intervention of state officials sympathising the club.

Finally, the gymnasium was established in September 1938 during a great celebration. Among those present were the dictator and prime minister Ioannis Metaxas and the Minister of 'Athens Administration', K. Kotzias, one of the persons who had managed to raise the funds required for the construction of the sports centre.

Today both professional and amateur sporting sections of Panionios are accommodated in Nea Smyrni – an area where most of its fans live. The athletes of the club have achieved great distinctions in individual and team events both in Greek and international meetings.

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1. See Σολομωνίδης, Χ., *Της Σμύρνης* (Athens 1957), p. 182.

2. Newspaper *Ιωνία*, issue 21 July 1874. The cold shower, according to the beliefs prevailing in sports at the time, was considered beneficial for the health of the body thanks to its reaction to cold water. See Vigerello G., *Από το παιχνίδι στο αθλητικό θέαμα. Η γέννηση ενός μύθου* (Athens, Alexandria 2004), from p. 86 onward.

3. See Σολομωνίδης, Χ. – Λωρέντης, Ν., *Πανιώνιος Γυμναστικός Σύλλογος* (Athens 1967), pp. 28-29.

4. See Σολομωνίδης, Χ. – Λωρέντης, Ν., *Πανιώνιος Γυμναστικός Σύλλογος* (Athens 1967), pp. 29-31.

5. See Σολομωνίδης, Χ. – Λωρέντης, Ν., *Πανιώνιος Γυμναστικός Σύλλογος* (Athens 1967), p. 32.

6. Newspaper *Αμάλθεια*, issue 26 March 1901.

7. See Σολομωνίδης, Χ. – Λωρέντης, Ν., *Πανιώνιος Γυμναστικός Σύλλογος* (Athens 1967), pp. 45, 48.

8. See Σολομωνίδης, Χ. – Λωρέντης, Ν., *Πανιώνιος Γυμναστικός Σύλλογος* (Athens 1967), pp. 50-51, 54.

9. About the involvement of Panionios in the organisation of the games, see Λινάρδος, Π., *Η Σμύρνη του Πανιωνίου* (Nea Smyrni 1998), from p. 46 onward.

10. See Σολομωνίδης, Χ. – Λωρέντης, Ν., *Πανιώνιος Γυμναστικός Σύλλογος* (Athens 1967), pp. 98-99.

11. See Σολομωνίδης, Χ. – Λωρέντης, Ν., *Πανιώνιος Γυμναστικός Σύλλογος* (Athens 1967), pp. 100-101.

12. See Σολομωνίδης, Χ. – Λωρέντης, Ν., *Πανιώνιος Γυμναστικός Σύλλογος* (Athens 1967), pp. 111, 114.

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