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Strengthening Male Bodies and Building Robust Communities: Physical Culture in the
Late Ottoman Empire

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

Murat Cihan Yıldız

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Strengthening Male Bodies and Building Robust Communities: Physical Culture in the
Late Ottoman Empire

by

Murat Cihan Yıldız

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor James L. Gelvin, Chair

This dissertation examines the making of modernity in the late Ottoman Empire by tracing the connections between sports, the body, male subject formation, nation building, and communal and imperial identity. It focuses on the development of a shared Ottoman physical culture amongst upper and middle-class Muslim, Christian, and Jewish men of Istanbul from the 1870s until World War I. My research draws from a diverse array of archives and primary sources written in Ottoman-Turkish, Armenian, Armeno-Turkish, French, English, German, and Greek, such as government reports and documents, school and association records, private correspondence, periodicals, books, and pamphlets, as well as vernacular photographs, in order to present an alternative understanding of cultural transformations and the historical linkages between different ethno-religious communities of the late Ottoman Empire. The central argument of this

dissertation is that Muslims, Christians, and Jews of Istanbul engaged sports as a shared civic activity that offered benefits for the individual, community, and empire.

This study investigates how Ottoman physical culture was underpinned by novel understandings of the body and implicated in larger debates and processes concerning the self, gender, ethno-religious communal identity, and the nation by pursuing three principle areas of inquiry. The first area of focus is the institutionalization of Ottoman physical culture in schools, voluntary associations, and government ministries. The study begins by exploring the development of athleticism as an educational ideology in a government lycée, Mekteb-i Sultani, and a foreign missionary school, Robert College. It demonstrates that many of the leading physical culture enthusiasts first encountered discussions about the educational significance of exercise and corporeal development as students in these two schools, and went on to establish voluntary athletic associations, as private spaces, in which young men formed, negotiated, and performed novel male subjectivities and identities. Ottoman government officials in the Ministry of Public Education recognized the success of these institutions in popularizing physical culture and sought to harness its potential in order to create strong and healthy Ottoman young men. In order to achieve this, the Ottoman government created the Physical Training Inspectorate and the position of Inspector to teach physical training to Ottoman teachers and oversee the integration of physical training classes in all state schools throughout the imperial domains. The second area of inquiry is Istanbul's multilingual physical culture press, which consisted of illustrated magazines, daily newspapers, and sports periodicals. These experimental publications constituted a public forum that offered an aspiring middle-class textual and visual instructions on how to cultivate a modern male subject

and community on the soccer field, in the gymnasium, and at the sports club. The final area of inquiry is the public display of sports in newly constructed urban spaces. Two spaces in particular, theatres and stadiums, served as the venues in which schools, athletic associations, and the state exhibited physical dexterity, celebrated sports as civilized activities, and redefined communal divisions separating Muslims, Christians, and Jews during the period.

This dissertation of Murat Cihan Yıldız is approved.

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2015

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

In transliterating Ottoman Turkish terms, I have used a modified version of the style of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. For Armenian sources, I have utilized the transliteration system of the Library of Congress. All foreign words have been italicized save for those that are proper nouns. For the most part, Armenian proper names have been transliterated according to Western Armenian pronunciation and not the transliteration system of the Library of Congress; for example, Krikor versus Grigor. I have used the modern Turkish equivalent for Ottoman Turkish names; for example, Murat versus Murad.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Archives in Turkey:

Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA)
Galatasaray Müzesi Arşivi (GMA)
Beşiktaş Müzesi Arşivi (BMA)
Kurtuluş Spor Kulübü Arşivi (KSKA)
Robert Kolej Archive (RKA)
Sakoulidis Kütüphanesi/Sismanoglio Megaro (SM)
Olimpiyat Evi (OE)

Archives in the United States:

The Kautz Family YMCA Archives (KF)
Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University: Robert College Records (RBML)

Archives in Israel:

The Central Zionist Archive (CZA)
The Wingate Institute (WI)
The Pierre Gildesgame Maccabi Museum (PGMM)

Archives In France:

Alliance Israélite Universelle Archives (ALUA)

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Nov. 2010 “Re-reading Hamidian Morality as a Subject of Study and as a Text: Identifying Multiple Sources of Authority.” *Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting*.

Publications

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Introduction

“Do you know what was the first sports club established in Istanbul?” Dino Belalilis, the president of the Kurtuluş Sports Club (Kurtuluş Spor Kulübü), asked rhetorically. “Not Besiktas and not Galatasaray; established in 1896, Kurtuluş Sports Club is Istanbul’s first sports club.” It was the winter of 2012. A friend of mine, Yorgo Demir, had arranged a meeting between Belalilis and me at the Kurtuluş Sports Club, a predominantly Greek amateur athletic club. Kurtuluş, where the club is located, is a historically Greek neighborhood on the European side of Istanbul. During our hour-long meeting in the club’s reading room over tea and pastries, we discussed my dissertation project, the history of the club, and the neighborhood of Kurtuluş. Belalilis pointed to and described the various trophies in the trophy case and the photographs of the club’s various athletic teams and individual athletes hung on the walls. “Look around you,” Belalilis proclaimed, “you have come to the right place. You can write the history of sports in Turkey right here, at the Kurtuluş Sports Club.”

Belalilis was correct, the history of sports in Istanbul could be told from the vantage point of the Kurtuluş Sports Club. In 1896, Ottoman Greek (*Rum*) notables from Tatavla, a heavily Greek-populated area of Istanbul, established the club for young Greek men of the neighborhood. Its creation reflected the growing popularity of gymnastics and team sports, namely football, among upper- and middle-class young men of the city during the late nineteenth century. The club’s original name was not Kurtuluş Sports Club, but rather the Hercules Gymnastics Association (Gymnastikos Syllogos Eraklis). Kurtuluş, like many other voluntary associations created during the late Ottoman Empire, embraced a new identity after the post-World War I collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent creation in 1923 of the Republic of Turkey.

Then, administrators of Hercules changed its Greek name to the Kurtuluş Sports Club when the name of the club's neighborhood, Tatavla, was also changed to Kurtuluş (meaning independence in Turkish). Both name changes were not unique. Rather, they were constitutive of broader Turkification policies and processes instituted during the early republic, which aimed to erase the visibility of the republic's Armenian, Greek, and Jewish citizens.¹

As I conducted research and developed relations with other sports club administrators, museum directors, and football enthusiasts, I realized that each club had created a distinct narrative of sports in the city in which it had played a preeminent role. Supporters of the Beşiktaş Gymnastics Club (Beşiktaş Jimnastik Kulübü), my father included, insisted that Beşiktaş was Turkey's most important club. Established in 1903, it was the first of Turkey's "big three" (*üç büyükler*) football teams—the Beşiktaş Gymnastics Club, the Galatasaray Sports Club (Galatasaray Spor Kulübü), and the Fenerbahçe Sports Club (Fenerbahçe Spor Kulübü). Devotees of the Galatasaray Sports Club (Galatasaray Spor Kulübü) would counter by stating that Beşiktaş was exclusively a gymnastics club. Galatasaray, on the other hand, was founded as a football club and, as such, constituted the first football team. Devotees of amateur clubs, such as the Vefa Sports Club (Vefa Spor Kulübü), challenged the monopoly of Turkey's "big three" over football and sports by contending that they were elitist. They argued that clubs like Vefa, which was established after the Young Turk revolution in 1908, for example, better represented the diffusion of sports throughout Istanbul. Pointing to photographs on the club's wall and

¹ For an overview of these transformations during the republic, see Ayhan Aktar, "Homogenising the Nation, Turkifying the Economy: The Turkish Experience of Population Exchange Reconsidered," in Renée Hirschon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Population Exchange Between Greece and Turkey* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), pp. 79-95; Rifat Bali, *Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni 1923-1945* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 2002); Marc David Baer, *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), especially pp. 213-241; Amy Mills, *Streets of Memory: Landscape, Tolerance, and National Identity in Istanbul* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), pp. 50-58.

showing me the club's collection of the *Vefa Weekly Sports Newspaper (Vefa Haftalık Spor Gazetesi)*, Hasan Bey, a longstanding member of the club in his early seventies, highlighted the club's Turkish/Muslim homogeneity as a source of legitimacy.

Istanbul's residents have offered competing readings of sports and athletic clubs for a very long time. In 1913, Ali Sami, the founder and president of Galatasaray, for example, boasted that Galatasaray was "the first Turkish club in our country."² Galatasaray even printed the statement on its official letterhead, albeit slightly tweaked for new Republican sensibilities. The 1923 letterhead reads: "the first Turkish club in Turkey."³ These claims were not limited to Galatasaray. Early-twentieth-century supporters of the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople (Israelitische Turnverein Konstantinopel) described the organization as the oldest Jewish club in the world and the city.⁴

Why are these different historical and contemporary narratives important? What do they have in common? These are the questions I asked myself the more I encountered them along with other discussions about sports clubs in early-twentieth-century documents and in conversations I had with people across the city. After I suspended my urge to identify which narrative was most "accurate," I was able to make sense of the significance of these different readings. Each narrative was highlighting the importance of an individual club in the creation of a larger transformation that had taken place in the city: the emergence of a sports culture. Each of these clubs was an ethnically and religiously homogenous male space that residents of Istanbul became members of in order to play sports, exercise, train their bodies, socialize, and build a group identity. For example, Beşiktaş, Galatasaray, and Vefa were predominantly Turkish clubs,

² Ali Sami, "Galatasaray Kulübü'nün Tarihçesi," *İdman* (May 28, 1913), p. 9.

³ GMA, GSM-KL-2 Galatasaray letterhead [December 3, 1923].

⁴ *Die Jüdische Turnzeitung* (April 1903), p. 69.

while Hercules/Kurtuluş was a Greek organization, and the Jewish Gymnastics Club was a Jewish association. Together, the ethno-religious affiliation of these athletic clubs and their contributions to a broader sports culture demonstrate that sports serve as a vantage from which we are able to observe the ways in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews collectively shaped these and other socio-cultural transformations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This dissertation examines how late Ottoman residents of Istanbul from a plethora of different ethno-religious backgrounds experimented with novel ideas about leisure time, the body, masculinity, and group identity by exercising, performing gymnastics, and playing “Western” team sports—namely football. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish sports enthusiasts encouraged people to play sports and join an athletic club, and stressed that the regular performance of physical exercise “is necessary for the life of the nation (*millet*).”⁵ They did so by focusing on an exclusive ethno-religious community, writing in a separate language, and publishing in a different periodical. Despite these forms of exclusion, a shared assumption undergirded their message: individuals, communities, and the Ottoman Empire were biological organisms that lived and died such that the performance of physical exercise was necessary for their survival.

Together, the ideas that these Muslim, Christian, and Jewish sports enthusiasts espoused were constitutive of a common physical culture that Ottomans “worked out” in schools, on the soccer field, at the sports club, and in the pages of Istanbul’s multilingual press during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This culture centered around the belief that gymnastics, free movement calisthenics, and team sports were fun civic activities that modern young men should perform and the most effective means to forming robust male bodies, modern communities, and a civilized empire. By combining elements of pleasure and didactic objectives,

⁵ “İslav Memleketlerinde: Jimnastik Cemiyetleri,” *İkdam* (May 25, 1913), p. 3.

sports in the empire constituted “serious fun.”⁶ The periodization of this dissertation is structured around the creation of a shared (sports) culture among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. As a result, it begins during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II and ends before the outbreak of World War I.

By exploring the development of a shared set of activities, institutions, and assumptions among Muslims, Christians, and Jews, my project challenges the “mosaic model” of the late Ottoman Empire.⁷ According to the model, the Ottoman Empire was composed of isolated and autonomous ethno-religious communities, which inhabited entirely separate spheres of life and rarely interacted. Scholarship in the past two decades has problematized this approach for being ahistorical and static.⁸ In order to explore the historical linkages between people from different ethno-religious communities and the similar ways in which they experienced and played an active role in the development of cultural, social, and political changes, a “new school” of scholarship has emerged that investigates late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century transformations in the empire across sectarian divisions and draws from a linguistically diverse source base.⁹ By analyzing the ways in which Ottoman citizens from a plethora of ethno-

⁶ This term is borrowed from Robert Edelman’s study of sports in the USSR. Robert Edelman *A History of Spectator Sports in the USSR* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. x.

⁷ H. A. R. Gibb & Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West. Volume I: Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

⁸ For example, see Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes, 1982).

⁹ For example, see Richard Edward Antaramian, *In Subversive Service of the Sublime State: Armenians and Ottoman State Power, 1844-1896* (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2014); Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, *Improvising Turkishness: Being Armenian in Post-Ottoman Istanbul (1918-1933)* (Ph.D. dissertation: NYU, 2010); Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2014); Amy Singer, Christoph K. Neumann, and S. Akşin Somel, (eds.), *Untold Histories of the Middle East: Recovering Voices from the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2011); Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2011); François Georgeon and Paul Dumont (eds.), *Vivre dans L’ Empire Ottoman: Sociabilités et relations intercommunautaires (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997); Nicholas Doumanis, *Before the Nation: Muslim-Christian Coexistence and its Destruction in Late-Ottoman Anatolia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Baer, *The Dönme*. Hourı

religious backgrounds shaped sports collectively, *Strengthening Male Bodies and Building Robust Communities* builds on this body of literature.

This project explores the ways in which Muslim, Christian, and Jewish sports enthusiasts engaged sports as a means to foster both ethno-religious and shared civic bonds. Athletic clubs and the press, for example, were both ethnically and religiously homogenous and structured around a shared civic activity, sports. To date, scholars have struggled to account for the ways in which an emerging civic imperial order and the Ottoman Empire's expanding public sphere facilitated these developments, preferring to focus on either how Ottomans created novel forms of individual and group identities that transcended ethno-religious divisions,¹⁰ or exclusive ties and fissiparous movements.¹¹ A new approach emphasizes the internal contradictions of the late Ottoman state project, namely the unwillingness of the architects of the 1908 revolution, the Young Turks, to accommodate the political aspirations of Ottoman Arabs, Jews, and Armenians.¹²

Strengthening Male Bodies and Building Robust Communities departs from these readings. It advances the view that civic and exclusive ethno-religious ties were often mutually constitutive, rather than exclusive in the Ottoman Empire. Sports serve as a unique vantage point

Berberian's scholarship focuses on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution; however, her critical approach towards Armenian nationalist historiography and her nuanced treatment of Armenians in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, as well as the Russian and Ottoman revolutions of the early twentieth century render, her work incredibly relevant to this section. See Houri Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911: "The Love for Freedom Has No Fatherland"* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001); Houri Berberian, "Traversing Boundaries and Selves: Iranian Armenian Identities during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and Middle East* 25/2 (Summer 2005), pp. 279-96.

¹⁰ For example, see Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹¹ For example, see Fatma Müge Göçek, "The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish, and Arab Nationalisms," in Fatma Müge Göçek (ed.), *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 15-84.

¹² Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*.

from which to explore this phenomenon. Scholars have largely consulted Ottoman sources that explicitly deal with political issues in order to investigate questions of Ottoman citizenship, an imperial civic order, as well as the relationship between shared imperial bonds and exclusive ethno-religious ones. On the other hand, my project engages an understudied body of material connected to sports that allows me to offer new insights into these discussions. Voluntary athletic associations, sports competitions and exhibitions, gymnastics curriculum, and discussions about physical culture in Istanbul's multilingual press provide insights into connections, civic ties, and shared practices that explicitly political conversations do not. In other words, physical culture serves a unique lens through which I can examine the quotidian ways in which Ottomans experienced, lived, and shaped their identities.

Such an approach enables me to make an innovative contribution to the growing literature on multiethnic and multireligious cities in the Ottoman Empire and the broader Middle East.¹³ This study focuses on the empire's capital and largest city, Istanbul. During the early twentieth century, the population of the city, which hovered around 900,000, was roughly divided between Muslims and non-Muslims.¹⁴ According to the Ottoman government's official

¹³ This body of literature focuses on Salonica, Izmir, Istanbul, Jerusalem, and Beirut. For example, see Meropi Anastassiadou, *Salonique 1830-1912: Une ville ottomane à l'âge des réformes* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997); Malte Fuhrmann & Vangelis Kechriotis, "The Late Ottoman Port Cities and Their Inhabitants: Subjectivity, Urbanity, and Conflicting Orders," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24/2 (December 2009); Haris Exertzoglou, "The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating Class, Gender and Nation in Ottoman Urban Centers during the 19th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35/1 (February 2003); Vangelis Kechriotis, *The Greeks of Izmir at the end of the Empire a non-Muslim Ottoman Community between autonomy and Patriotism* (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Leiden, 2005); Hervé Georgelin, *La fin de Smyrne, du cosmopolitisme aux nationalisms* (Paris: CNRS, 2005); Brant William Downes, *Constructing the Modern Ottoman Waterfront: Salonica and Beirut in the late Nineteenth Century* (Ph.D. dissertation: Stanford University, 2008); Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*; Nora Cherishian Lessersohn, "Provincial Cosmopolitanism in Late Ottoman Anatolia: An Armenian Shoemaker's Memoir," *Comparative Studies In Society & History* 57/2 (2015), pp. 528-556; Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi (eds.), *Urban Governance Under the Ottomans: Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters (eds.), *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (New York, Cambridge University, 1999).

¹⁴ Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 170-171.

census taken in 1906, the population of Istanbul was made up of approximately fifty percent Muslims, twenty percent Greek Orthodox Christians, fifteen percent foreigners, seven percent Armenian Christians, five percent Jews, and one percent Catholics.¹⁵

Like in other mixed cities throughout the empire and the broader Middle East, urban transformations in Istanbul encouraged interactions between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The emergence of a modern state educational project that created public schools, the expansion of new public spaces, the creation of new neighborhoods, and the development of a system of mass transportation brought Muslims and non-Muslims into greater degrees of physical proximity to each other. Istanbul's multiethnic and multiconfessional population traditionally resided in neighborhoods that were mixed in terms of social class, wealth, and status. According to historian Cem Behar, "residential patterns usually ran along lines of ethnicity and religion. However, ethnically and/or religiously mixed *mahalles* [neighborhoods] were not infrequent either."¹⁶ During the early twentieth century, new mixed upper and upper-middle-class neighborhoods mushroomed in both the European and Asian parts of the city, such as Şişli, Nişantaşı, Teşvikiye, Moda, and Kadıköy.¹⁷ This development thereby increased interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims in neighborhoods throughout Istanbul.

¹⁵ Stanford J. Shaw, "The Population of Istanbul in the Nineteenth Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10/2 (May, 1979), pp. 266-267. These figures by no means remained static. Political developments during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, which resulted in the empire losing its remaining territories in Europe, led to huge waves of Muslims seeking refuge in Istanbul. For example, between 1885 and 1914, the size of the non-Muslim population declined from 489,000 to 350,000, while the Muslim population grew from 385,000 to 560,000. Also see Karpas, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914*, pp. 170-171.

¹⁶ Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap Ilyas Mahalle* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 4-5.

¹⁷ Edhem Eldem, "(A Quest for) The Bourgeoisie of Istanbul: Identities, Roles, and Conflicts Urban Governance Under the Ottomans: Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict," in Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi (eds.), *Urban Governance Under the Ottomans: Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 176.



[Figure 0.1 Map of the various ferry, tram, and train lines in early-twentieth-century Istanbul. Personal collection of the author, not dated.]

The development of a mass transportation system during the nineteenth century was also incredibly important for bringing the city’s population together in public (figure 0.1).¹⁸ Boats, trams, and tunnels enabled Istanbulites living in different neighborhoods to easily move across space to attend different events spread across the city.¹⁹ The city’s interconnected urban landscape enabled Istanbul’s residents, both those living in mixed and homogenous neighborhoods, to move around the city with relative ease. This was particularly important for

¹⁸ For an overview of the literature on the emergence of mass transportation in Istanbul, see James Ryan, “Technology, Modernity, and the State Approaches to the History of Transit in Istanbul,” *Mobility in History* 6 (2015), pp. 113–119.

¹⁹ The Istanbul Ferry Boat Company (Şirket-i Hayriye), which was founded in 1851, provided Istanbulites with steam-powered boats. Over the course of the next thirty years, the company created a regular water transportation network that connected villages along the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn and Eminönü. Most significant, however, was the Üsküdar-Beşiktaş and Harem-Kabataş lines that connected the Asian and European sides of the city. The Istanbul Tramway Company (İstanbul Tramvay Şirketi) also helped connect the city. Formed in 1869, the Tramway Company created a horse-drawn tram service throughout the city. Tramlines connected Beşiktaş to Tophane, Azapkapı and Aksaray, Aksaray and Yedikule, and Aksaray and Topkapı. In 1875, an underground railway tunnel also connected Karaköy and Galata. See Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 82–87; Demetrius Coufopoulos, *A Guide to Constantinople* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1895), p. 178; Murat Gül, *Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

the development of a shared sports culture in the city. Muslims, Christians, and Jews were able to attend athletic events and competitions in newly constructed urban spaces, such as gardens, theatres, and stadium, participate in conferences in lecture halls, and join athletic clubs. While certain areas, namely Kadıköy and Beyoğlu, emerged as centers of athletic performances, people living throughout the city were able to frequent them. As a result, the growing popularity of Western sports and gymnastics was not confined to one specific ethno-religious community.

The creation of mixed neighborhoods and a system of mass transportation were not the only transformations that created new realities for Istanbul's residents. The development of a shared imperial identity undifferentiated by ethno-religious communal affiliation—Ottomanism in English and *Osmanlılık* in Ottoman Turkish—provided Ottomans with a new lens through which they made sense of themselves, others, and their surroundings. In an attempt to harness the full potential of its population, Ottoman officials promoted the idea that the empire's heterogeneous population needed to consist of a community of equal Muslim, Christian, and Jewish citizens who were united by their commitment to the Ottoman imperial project and homeland.²⁰ This idea was enshrined in the promulgation of two decrees, the *Hatt-ı Şerif* of Gülhane in 1839 and the *Islahat Fermanı* in 1856, which promised all Ottoman subjects “perfect security for life, honor, and property” and religious liberty and equality for non-Muslims, and bolstered by the creation of a constitution that called for the establishment of a parliament in

²⁰ The citizenship law (*vatandaş kanunu*) of 1869 provided new legal definitions of Ottoman citizenship. It declared all those born in the empire to be Ottoman citizens. For a discussion about the law, see Karen M. Kern, *Imperial Citizen: Marriage and Citizenship in the Ottoman Frontier Provinces* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011). This idea was enshrined in the promulgation of two decrees, the *Hatt-ı Şerif* of Gülhane in 1839 and the *Islahat Fermanı* in 1856, which promised all Ottoman subjects “perfect security for life, honor, and property” and religious liberty and equality for non-Muslims. For both the *Hatt-ı Şerif* of Gülhane the *Islahat Fermanı*, see James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* 4th ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

1876.²¹ Both the constitution and the parliament were short-lived. The outbreak of war with Russia in 1878 provided the new sultan, Abdülhamid II, with the pretext needed to prorogue Parliament and abrogate the Constitution. Throughout his thirty-three-year reign (1876-1909), Abdülhamid II highlighted the centrality of Muslims to the Ottoman state project and promoted Islamic Ottomanism, which privileged the empire's Muslims citizens.²² In 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti in Ottoman Turkish, hereafter CUP) staged a coup d'état, the slogans of which were "liberty, equality, and fraternity," and reinstated the constitution.²³

It is in this context of the modification of the boundaries separating the empire's different ethno-religious communities and the cultivation of a civic concept of Ottoman identity that I investigate physical culture among upper- and middle-class Muslims, Christians, and Jews of Istanbul. In doing so, this project builds on revisionist scholarship that understands "categories of identity" in the late Ottoman Empire to have been polysemic.²⁴ *Strengthening Male Bodies and Building Robust Communities* uncovers the fluidity of ethno-religious and imperial identities in

²¹ For both the *Hatt-ı Şerif* of Gülhane the *Islahat Fermanı*, see James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* 4th ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²² For an extensive discussion about the novelty and far-reaching implications of Sultan Abdülhamid II's reign, see Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimization of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998). Julia Phillips Cohen has recently offered a novel reading of the Hamidian era by demonstrating the ways in which Ottoman Islamism gained favor among Ottoman Jews. See Julia Phillips Cohen, "Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism: Jewish Imperial Citizenship in the Hamidian Era," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44/2 (May 2012), pp. 237-255.

²³ There is a large literature on both the Young Turks and the 1908 revolution. For example, see Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution; Campos, Ottoman Brothers*.

²⁴ Kent Schull, "Conceptualizing Difference during the Second Constitutional Period: New Sources, Old Challenges" in Jorgen Nielson (ed.), *Religion, Ethnicity and Contested Nationhood in the Former Ottoman Space* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2012), p. 70. For an extensive treatment of identity in the Ottoman Empire during the early modern and modern period, see Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull (eds.), *Living in the Ottoman Realm Empire and Identity, 13th to 20th Centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

the Ottoman Empire, in which it was possible to be simultaneously a member of a Jewish, an Ottoman-Jewish, and an Ottoman nation. It does so by analyzing the similar ways in which Turkish, Armenian, and Jewish athletes, educators, doctors, and government officials used team sports and gymnastics as a means to build a nation of robust, healthy brothers.²⁵ By treating young men and the male body as the building blocks of the nation, sports enthusiasts contributed to a gendered rendering of citizenship, which largely excluded women. As a result, there was a discursive overlap between the homosocial bonds connecting sports enthusiasts and members of voluntary athletics clubs and bonds of citizenship expressed in the press, pamphlets, parliament, and associations during the period. My research thereby reveals the ways in which sports contributed to the spread of new social imaginaries and gendered conceptions of citizenship during the period.

By combining social and cultural historical methods, I document how novel understandings of the body and larger debates on the self, gender, ethno-religious identity, and the nation underpinned the production of a shared sports culture. My research demonstrates that the city's heterogeneous denizens envisioned and engaged physical culture as a necessary means to cultivate masculine virtue among young men and provide physical and moral rehabilitation of

²⁵ While organizing activities, speaking at conferences, and writing books and articles, these physical culture enthusiasts deployed the term nation (*millet* in Ottoman Turkish, *azg* in Armenian, *ethnos* in Greek, and *nation* in French and Ladino). There were important similarities and differences in the ways in which they used the term. Turkish sports enthusiasts oscillated between referring to a Turkish and Ottoman millet, especially after 1908, and non-Muslims exclusively used millet in their "own" languages to refer to their exclusive ethno-religious community. It is important to remember that "nation" in the late Ottoman Empire could mean ethno-religious community and nation-state. For example, Armenians referred to events abroad between different nation-states and in Istanbul between different ethno-religious communities as "international" (*mijazgayin*). The important difference, however, is that when writing about sports in the empire, non-Muslims used the word "nation" to refer to their own ethno-religious community in the context of an Ottoman civic order. As a result, this study uses both ethno-religious community and nation to describe Ottoman Turks, Armenians, Jews, and Greeks' categories of identity. In both instances, however, neither ethno-religious community nor nation should be read as nationalist. Read retrospectively after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the writings of sports enthusiasts appear to be nationalist. Prior to World War I, national/communal activities were not thought of as contradicting the imperial civic order in which civic and exclusive bonds were not mutually exclusive. For example, both Ottoman state officials and the empire's Muslim and non-Muslim subjects promoted the idea that the development and strength of the empire required the "unity of elements" (*ittihad-ı anasır*), i.e., ethno-religious communities.

the individual, community, and empire. It thus highlights how the resultant physical culture was constitutive of a broader gendered civic order upon which Ottomans constructed new social and political imaginaries. In doing so, it broadens our understanding of the history of the body. Scholarship on the history of the nineteenth century establishes the centrality of the human body to making modernity.²⁶ The supervision, objectification, and disciplining of the body were integrally connected to the creation of modern modes of governance, social organizations, masculinity and femininity, political and social imaginaries, and subject formation.²⁷ My research builds on this literature by examining the centrality of the body to modernizing the self, community, and nation.

Throughout the dissertation, I use physical culture and sports culture interchangeably to refer to team sports and sport-related leisure activities. My use of the terms reflects the ways in which Ottomans during the period understood physical culture to consist of team-sports, gymnastics, scouting and other sport-related activities, as well as discussions about health,

²⁶ For example, see Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (eds.), *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Caroline Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body?," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1995), pp. 1-33; Kathleen Canning, "The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History," in Kathleen Canning (ed.), *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class and Citizenship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 168-190; Roy Porter, "History of the Body Reconsidered," in Kathleen Canning (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001), pp. 233-260; Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

²⁷ Mervat F. Hatem, "The Professionalization of Health and the Control of Women's Bodies as Modern Governmentalities in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 66-80; Cyrus Schayegh, "'A Sound Mind lives in a Healthy Body': Texts and Contexts in the Iranian Modernists' Scientific Discourse of Health, 1910s-40s," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37/2 (2005), pp. 167-188; Tuba Demirci and Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Women's Bodies, Demography, and Public Health: Abortion Policy and Perspectives in the Ottoman Empire of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17/3 (September 2008), pp. 377-420; Sara Scalenghe, *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World, 1500-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), especially pp. 76-159.

hygiene, and lifestyle.²⁸ Not all Ottomans were enthusiastic about the ways in which people blurred the distinction between these activities. Instructors, doctors, and writers, like Mehmet Sami, a gymnastics instructor at the Darüşşafaka (House of Compassion) boarding school in Istanbul, were adamant that there were differences between gymnastics and sports. Sami writes, “Yes, first gymnastics (*jimnastik*) and then sports (*spor*). These are separate words and they are separate things.”²⁹ Sami argued that gymnastics (*jimnastik*) and physical training (*terbiye-i bedeniye*) are any movement that can be thought of as ensuring the health of the body, whereas sports are concerned with competition and winning. Despite his attempt to raise awareness about the objective differences between these activities, he conceded that his perspective was not the predominant one. In fact, he went so far as to write, “even our most intelligent individuals (*en akıllı efendilerimiz*) do not make a distinction between the two [sports and gymnastics].”³⁰

Physical culture in late Ottoman Istanbul reveals the centrality of the body to a modern, middle-class identity. Sports enthusiasts treated a defined, healthy, and proportionate male body as the defining characteristic of a new masculine subjective. Two spaces in particular, sports clubs and the sports press, served as testing grounds of an emerging middle-class masculinity, where new conceptions of the self, defined in relation to the body, physical dexterity, a distinct masculine aesthetic, and communal affiliation, came into being. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish

²⁸ At the same time, sports enthusiasts developed a multilingual vocabulary to refer to and distinguish these activities from one another. For example, Ottomans used *turnverein*, *gymnastikos*, *gymnastique*, and *jimnastik* to refer to “gymnastics” in German, Greek, French, and Ottoman Turkish respectively. Ottoman Turkish speakers used *spor* and *idman* to refer to “sport.” Ottoman Turkish speakers used *terbiye-i bedeniye*, *mümaresat-ı bedeniye*, *riyazet-i bedeniye*, while Armenian speakers used *marmnamarz* for physical training or exercise. Linguistics purists advocated that an equivalent for football be adopted in Ottoman Turkish—*ayaktopu* was proposed and used in some publications; however, it was far more common for Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, and Greek speakers to use the word “football” when writing and speaking.

²⁹ M. Sami, “Jimnastik ve Spor,” *İdman* (May 18, 1913), p. 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

young men experimented with how to walk, talk, dress, undress, and socialize by reading about sports, exercising, and competing. In these spaces, a new middle-class sociability was produced through the activities young men did together: attending conferences, playing games, competing, reading books and magazines, writing articles, and taking pictures.³¹ Physical culture in late Ottoman Istanbul thereby serves as a vantage from which to observe the ways in which middle-class male subjectivities were formed, negotiated, and performed.³²

Examining this process enables me to make a contribution to the literature on gender and masculinity studies. Over the past two decades, historians of the modern Middle East have treated gender as both an insightful analytical tool and promising subject of study.³³ They explore how the process of modernization in the Middle East played an important role in the binarization and normativization of distinct gender roles during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, it is relatively silent on the issue of masculinity. Despite notable recent investigations of modern masculinity, the bulk of this literature focuses on the gendered

³¹ This view of class draws insights from a growing body of literature that understands the middle class in the region as a cultural construct, not an empirical category. For example, see Lucie Ryzova, *The Age of the Efendiyya Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Yoav Di-Capua, "Common Skies Divided Horizons: Aviation, Class and Modernity in Early Twentieth Century Egypt," *Journal of Social History* 41/4 (2008), pp. 917-942; Watenpugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*.

³² The dissertation focuses on men; however, it should be noted that that photographs, drawings and caricatures of women exercising also appeared in the late Ottoman press. See Elizabeth B. Frierson, *Unimagined Communities: State, Press, and Gender in the Hamidian Era* (Ph.D. dissertation: Princeton University, 2006).

³³ For example, see Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.), *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Elizabeth B. Frierson, "Gender, Consumption, and Patriotism: The Emergence of an Ottoman Public Sphere," in Armando Salvatore, and Dale F. Eickelman, (eds.), *Public Islam and the Common Good* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 99-126; Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Mona L. Russell, *Creating the New Woman: Consumerism, Education and National Identity in Egypt, 1863-1922* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Conceiving Citizens: Women and the Politics of Motherhood in Iran* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, Spring 2011).

female subject.³⁴ This literature, despite its nuance, spends considerably less time investigating masculinity. My work will fill this gap and examine how inhabitants of Istanbul from different ethnic and religious communities treated modern sports and exercise as tools through which they could shape and mold the ideal male subject.

Nineteenth-Century Reforms and Sports in the Imperial Domains

The nineteenth century, according to historian John E. Efron, was a period in which “robustness and virility were seen as the true hallmarks of national greatness.”³⁵ Physical culture enthusiasts in urban centers of the United States, Europe, and China grew increasingly concerned with the theme of robustness and degeneration, creating beneficial leisure activities and encouraging men and women to regularly train and discipline their bodies.³⁶ Thus, the spread of

³⁴ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Afterword: Some Akward Questions on Women and Modernity in Turkey,” in Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.), *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007); Joseph Massad, “Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism,” *The Middle East Journal* 49/3 (Summer 1995), pp. 467-483; Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Masculinity and Subject Formation Between Colonial Modernity and Nationalism, 1870-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Paul Amar, “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of ‘Men in Crisis,’ Industries of Gender in Revolution,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 7/3 (Fall 2011), pp. 36-70; Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1923-1945* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), especially pp. 22-77.

³⁵ John M. Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: a History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 105.

³⁶ There is a large literature on the global spread of modern sports. For example, see *Andrew D. Morris, Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004); Edelman *A History of Spectator Sports in the USSR*; J.A. Mangan and Fan Hong (eds.), *Sport in Asian Society: Past and Present* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2003); Katrin Bromber, Birgit Krawiets, and Joseph Maguire (eds.), *Sport Across Asia: Politics, Cultures, and Identities* (New York and London, Routledge, 2013); Scott A.G.M. Crawford (ed.), *‘Serious Sport’: J.A. Mangan’s Contribution to the History of Sports* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2004); Richard Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France* (London: Macmillan, 1981); Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); Tony Ladd and James A. Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sport* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1991); Harvey Green, *Fit For America: Health, Fitness, Sport and American Society* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). There is a growing body of scholarship on sports in the Middle East. See Shaun Lopez, “Football as National Allegory: Al-Ahram and the Olympics in 1920’s Egypt,” *History Compass* 7/1 (January 2009), pp. 282-30; Alon Raab and Issam Khalidi (eds.), *Soccer in the Middle East* (New York and London, Routledge, 2015); Mahfoud

sports and physical activities throughout the Ottoman Empire reflected a global transformation in the ways in which people thought about their bodies, gender, and leisure time. The activities and writings of physical culture enthusiasts in Istanbul demonstrate that Ottoman Muslims, Christians, and Jews established a direct link between the wellbeing of the individual and the community. Educators, club administrators and members, doctors, and government officials were all concerned with the theme of degeneration and treated physical training as a means of regenerating the individual and constructing a robust, developed community.

In the Ottoman Empire, physical culture was constitutive of a broader reformist discourse that described society as an organism and offered competing prescriptions for how to remedy its current insalubrious state. Editors, writers, and educators argued that if properly performed, gymnastics, regularly exercise, and team sports, could help strengthen the individual, as well as

Amara, *Sport, Politics and Society in the Arab World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Nina S. Spiegel, *Embodying Hebrew Culture: Aesthetics, Athletics and Dance in the Jewish Community of Mandate Palestine* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013); Samuel Dolbee, *Mandatory Body Building, Nationalism, Masculinities, Class, and Physical Activity in 1930s Syria* (M.A. Thesis: Georgetown University, 2009); Tamir Sorek, *Arab Soccer in a Jewish State: The Integrative Enclave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Shawki Ebeid El-Zatmah, *Aha Goal!: A Social and Cultural History of Soccer in Egypt* (Ph.D. dissertation: University of California Los Angeles, 2011); Yaşar Tolga Cora, *Constructing and Mobilizing the Nation through Sport: State, Physical Education, and Nationalism Under the Young Turk Rule (1908-1918)* (M.A. Thesis: Central European University, 2007); Yiğit Akın, “Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatları” *Erken Cumhuriyet’te Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004); H.E. Chehabi, “A Political History of Football in Iran.” *Iranian Studies* (2002), pp. 371-402. Jacob, *Working Out Egypt*. Non-professional historians of sport writing in Turkish serve as the main source of knowledge about sports clubs in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republic of Turkey. Most studies focus on the activities of an individual club and do not confine their descriptive analysis to a single period. The majority of studies focus on Turkey’s three major clubs Galatasaray’s official magazine and Fenerbahçe’s fan association recently produced two impressively large studies of their respective clubs: Mehmet Şenol & Ali Gökaçtı, *Yüzyılın Öyküsü Galatasaray Spor Kulübü 1905-2008* (İstanbul: Galatasaray Dergisi, 2008) & Melih Esen Cengiz, *Asr-ı Fener, Bir Efsanenin Tarihi* (İstanbul: 1907 Fenerbahçe Derneği, 2008). Beşiktaş’s association also produced a study, albeit more modest in size: Hakan Aytekin & Kenan Baltaş, *2000 Yılına Doğru Türk Spor ve Beşiktaş* (İstanbul: Beşiktaş 2000 Derneği Yayınları, 1996). Yapı Kredi publishing house published individual studies of each of the three clubs in 2002: Mehmet Durupınar, *Beşiktaş Tarihi: İlkleriyle Unutulmayanlarıyla Yüzüncü Yılında* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002); Bülent Tuncay, *Galatasaray Tarihi: Avrupa Zaferleriyle Unutulmaz Yıldızlarıyla* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002); Altan Tanrıku, *Fenerbahçe Tarihi: Efsaneleriyle Kahramanlarıyla Rakamlarıyla* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002). Other non-professional sport historians writing in Turkish have composed encyclopedic studies of the *longue durée* of what they refer to as “the history of Turkish sports” (*Türk Spor Tarihi*). For example, see Cem Atabeyoğlu, *1453-1991 Türk Spor Tarihi Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Fotospor, 1991); Doğan Yıldız, *Türk Spor Tarihi* (İstanbul: Eko Matbaası, 1979); Atif Kahraman, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Spor* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1995). For a recent study of football, see Mehmet Yüce, *Osmanlı Melekleri: Futbol Tarihimizin Kadim Devreleri: Türkiye Futbol Tarihi-Birinci Cilt* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014).

the community. The individual and the community, after all, were not separate, but integrally connected. According to early-twentieth-century biological understandings of society espoused in Istanbul and other urban cities around the world, the rejuvenation of the community was contingent upon the physical, moral, and spiritual rehabilitation of the individual. While all three realms were important, sports enthusiasts highlighted man's corporeal dimension and treated the male body as the main site in which the strength, development, and progress of the community should be measured and exhibited.³⁷

The writings and activities of Ottoman physical culture enthusiasts displayed biological understandings of society and accepted the notion that the modern world was engaged in a perpetual struggle. As a result, they were embedded in and constitutive of a broader reformist discourse that described society as an organism and offered competing prescriptions for how to remedy its current degenerate state. Does this mean that late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Ottoman reformists were Social Darwinists? Many scholars have attempted to answer this question by presenting an intellectual history of Social Darwinism in the imperial domains.³⁸ Others offer an alternative approach that describes Ottoman reformists' "organic articulation of society and the accompanying wish to remedy its ills" as "becoming a dominant theme

³⁷ For example, see Selim Sırrı, "Spor: Hakikata Doğru," *Musavver Muhit* (March 11, 1909), p. 286.

³⁸ For example, see Atila Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006). Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*; Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*; M. Şükrü Hanioglu, "Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion, and Art," in Elizabeth Özdalga (ed.), *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 29-116; Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010); Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). For a discussion which categorizes proponents of sports, the boy scouts, and physical training after the Balkan Wars and during World War I as Social Darwinists, see Cora, *Constructing and Mobilizing the Nation through Sport*; Yaşar Tolga Cora, "Asker-Vatandaşlar ve Kahraman Erkekler: Balkan Savaşları ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı Dönemlerinde Beden Terbiyesi Aracılığıyla İdeal Erkekliğin Kurgulanması," in Nurseli Yeşim Sünbuloğlu (ed.), *Erkek Millet Asker Millet: Türkiye'de Militarizm, Milliyetçilik ve Erkek(lik)ler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), pp. 45-74.

throughout the world of socialists, social reformists, and anarchists.”³⁹ This dissertation seeks to build on the insights of the latter approach by opting not to categorize proponents of physical training and sports as Social Darwinists. It is tempting to interpret the writings of physical culture enthusiasts as being exclusively Darwinian. However, it is more productive to situate physical culture within a biological understanding of society, which Social Darwinism was only one expression.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by profound and systemic changes in the Ottoman Empire as a result of the empire and broader region’s integration into both the world economy and the international system of nation states.⁴⁰ During this period, the Ottoman government promulgated a series of reforms, starting in the early nineteenth century until its defeat in World War I, aimed at restructuring state-society relations and government institutions and strengthening and centralizing imperial power through the adoption of European techniques. Three transformations in particular created the context in which Ottomans developed a shared sports culture in Istanbul.

The first transformation is the organization of a modern army and navy.⁴¹ Many Ottoman officials and intellectuals believed that the survival of the empire required a fundamental

³⁹ Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism: 1860-1916* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), p. 43.

⁴⁰ See James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* 4th ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988); Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Donald Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881-1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1983); Donald Quataert (ed.) *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).

⁴¹ For a discussion about military reforms during the late empire, see Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: the Rise Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 55-271; Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International/ABC-CLIO, 2009).

reorganization of its military and naval institutions. Based on this reasoning, the government created a new army, with up-to-date weaponry, Western-style order, and training and uniforms. Gymnastics manuals, military correspondence, and mid-to-late-nineteenth-century photographs demonstrate that physical exercise was considered to be an important means to create robust, disciplined, and fit soldiers.

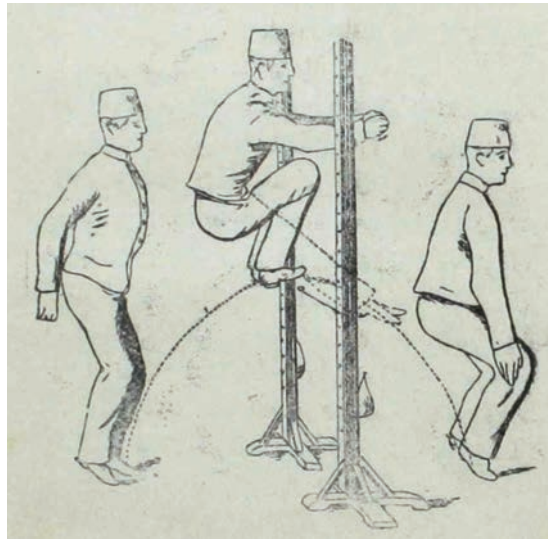


[Figure 0.2 Students of the Imperial Naval Academy doing gymnastics exercises, Library of Congress, Abdul Hamid II Collection]

During the 1890s, the Imperial Military Engineering School (Mühendishane-i Berri-i Hümayun), the Imperial Navel Engineering School (Mühendishane-i Bahri-i Hümayun), and the Imperial Military School (Mekteb-i Harbiye-i Şahane) started offering gymnastics, sports, and fencing courses and constructing gymnasiums on their campuses.⁴² The photograph above (figure 0.2), which is taken from one of the 51 albums that Sultan Abdülhamid II sent as official state gifts to the British Museum Library in London and The Library of Congress in Washington D.C. in 1893, for example, shows male students performing gymnastics at the Imperial Navel

⁴² For example, see BOA, MF.MKT 394/30 [May 16, 1898]; BOA, MF.MKT 41/12 [March 28, 1899]; BOA, BEO 1321/99042 [June 7, 1899]; BOA, MF.MKT 497/6 [April 3, 1900]; BOA, İ.TAL 168/19 [March 19, 1899]; BOA, İ.MF 5/54 [June 3, 1899]; BOA, Y.PRK-ASK 138/68 [1897 c.]; BOA, Y.Mtv 234/5 [August 6, 1902].

Engineering School. The fact that Abdülhamid II included this photograph suggests that he believed that images of young Ottoman military officers performing gymnastics demonstrated the development of the empire.⁴³ This is significant because these albums were aimed at providing Europe and the United States with an alternative image of the Ottoman Empire: Abdülhamid’s empire was a modern and robust one, thus challenging the notion that it was the “sick man of Europe.”



[Figure 0.3 Physical exercises in a late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Turkish gymnastics manual that was published by the Ottoman Imperial Military Academy. Mehmet Faik, *Jimnastik Talimnamesi* (İstanbul: Mekteb-i Fünun-ı Harbiye-i Şahane Matbaası, 1895), p. 79.]

By integrating gymnastics into the curriculum of the Imperial Military Engineering School, the Imperial Navel Engineering School, and Imperial War College, Ottoman officials demonstrated that they envisioned physical training played a role in strengthening the Ottoman military. The books that Ottoman educators wrote during the period about physical training also reflect this process. For example, in 1895, the War College printed a book, entitled, *The Gymnastics Manual (Jimnastik Talimnamesi)*.⁴⁴ “Gymnastics exercises (*jimnastik talimi*),”

⁴³ Library of Congress, Abdul Hamid II Collection.

⁴⁴ Mehmet Faik, *Jimnastik Talimnamesi* (İstanbul: Mekteb-i Fünun-ı Harbiye-i Şahane Matbaası, 1895).

according to the book's author, Mehmet Faik, provided the military with enormous benefits. Physical exercises helped soldiers train their bodies, increase their corporeal strength, and thereby prepared them for fighting in battle.⁴⁵ "The Gymnastics Manual" provided caricatures of Ottoman soldiers performing gymnastics exercises and wearing uniforms and fezzes.

The expansion of civil public and private schools throughout the imperial domains also played an integral in the spread of sports throughout Istanbul. The first half of the nineteenth century featured the creation of a framework for Ottoman state educational policy. In 1857, the Ottoman state founded the Ministry of Public Education (Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti).⁴⁶ The creation of the ministry marks an important step towards the centralization of Ottoman education.⁴⁷ A little more than a decade later in 1869, the Ottoman state promulgated the Regulation of Public Education (Maarif-i Umumiyye Nizamnamesi), which served as a uniform code and source of reference that all state officials throughout the imperial domains could consult. The regulation provides important insights into the importance that Ottoman state officials attributed to education. More specifically, it reveals the dominance of the idea among both state officials that the development of ethno-religious communities and the empire was contingent upon the spread of a worldly body of knowledge, science (*fen*), and the new concept of education (*maarif*).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁶ For a detailed description of both the motivations behind the establishment of and the make of The Ministry of Public Education, see S. Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001).

⁴⁷ According to Somel, the establishment of the ministry was shaped by two integrally connected objectives: first, to effectively coordinate and oversee the development of government schools; and second, to supervise the creation and functioning of both Ottoman non-Muslim and foreign non-Muslim educational institutions. Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁸ See Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 86-87; Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), p. 99. According to Şemseddin Sami's late nineteenth-century Ottoman Turkish dictionary, *Kamus-ı Türki*, science (*fen*) "is a type and branch of knowledge (*maarif*)" that is attained "by reason, testing, and demonstrating." He lists the following as examples of

It is at the intersection of these attempts to identify and assimilate new bodies of knowledge, and divide and categorize other ones, as well as to create a curriculum and educational system that could produce mentally, physically, and spiritually sound young men that educators began to integrate gymnastics and physical training into the curriculum of public schools in the imperial domains.⁴⁹ This led to Ottoman educators writing educational books about exercise and gymnastics. For example, Nazım Şerefüddin’s “Gymnastics Exercises in the Garden and Halls” (*Bahçe ve Salonlarda Jimnastik Talimi*) treated gymnastics as the ideal means to bolster hygiene and the health of students and young men.⁵⁰ In addition to Ottoman Turkish, there are references to Armenian and French gymnastic manuals and discussions in Greek and Ladino about physical culture in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Istanbul.⁵¹

fen: “science of medicine (*fen-i tib*), science of agriculture (*fen-i ziraat*), and science of chemistry (*fen-i kimiya*).” Sami lists the following as examples of *fen*: “science of medicine (*fen-i tib*) science of agriculture (*fen-i ziraat*) and science of chemistry (*fen-i kimiya*).” He goes on to state what *fen* is not: *fen* does not refer to grammar and syntax, like sciences of philology, grammar, prosody, rhetoric, and logic, jurisprudence, and the collected prophetic sayings. *Fen* also does not refer to *ulum-ı nakliye*,” which are “the branches of science that relate to religious practice as to precepts received.” In short, *fen* referred to a worldly body of knowledge that humans produced through the use of research, reason, and evidence. Şemseddin Sami, *Kamus-ı Türki* (Dersaadat: İkdam Matbaası, 1899), p. 1005.

⁴⁹ Gymnastics was not confined to Ottoman state schools. Starting as early as the 1870s, Greek schools in Istanbul began introducing, albeit in a non-systematic fashion, gymnastics into school curriculum. These initiatives continued throughout the community during the late nineteenth century. In 1909, the Greek community of Istanbul’s most prestigious educational institution, the Greek Literary Association of Constantinople (Ellenikos Filologikos Syllogos Konstantinoupolleos), which was established in 1861, organized an educational congress to discuss the importance of physical education in community schools.⁴⁹ Three years later, gymnastics and physical training were integrated into all levels of Greek education throughout the city. See Georges Kokkinos, “La communauté grecque orthodoxe de l’Empire ottoman et la culture physique. Réactions et application graduelle,” *Etudes Balkaniques* (2004). For a description of the Greek Literary Association of Constantinople, see Haris Exertzoglou, *Osmanlı’da Cemiyetler ve Rum Cemaati. Dersaadet Rum Cemiyeti Edebiyesi* (İstanbul: Türk Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2004); Dimitris Kamouzis, “Elites and the formation of national identity: the case of the Greek Orthodox millet (mid-nineteenth century to 1922),” in Benjamin C. Fortna, Stefanos Katsikas, and Dimitris Kamouzis (eds.), *State-Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey: Orthodox and Muslims, 1830-1945* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁵⁰ Nazım Şerefüddin, *Bahçe ve Salonlarda Jimnastik Talimi Yahut Bi’t-tedric Cümle-i Adaliyenin Neş-ü Nemasına Mahsus Tecarib-i Bedeniye Eğlenceleriyle Her Yerde İcrası Kabil Bila-Echiza Talimat-ı Makleden Bahis Sıhhatnuma* (İstanbul: A.K. Tozliyan İdare-i Şirket-i Mürettebiye Matbaası, 1886).

⁵¹ For example, there is an Ottoman government report about an Armenian communal school in Istanbul using a French gymnastic manual in 1906. See BOA, MF.MKT 911/46 [February 16, 1906]. Another report mentions that Nişan Berberyan, an Armenian publisher (*maatbacı*), applied for and received permission from the Ottoman authorities to publish a physical training (*terbiye-i bedeniye*) book in Armenian in 1906. See BOA, MF.MKT 908/2 [January 25, 1906]. In addition to Armenian and French, the Greek community presumably had access to books and

The third transformation that facilitated the spread of sports was the proliferation and institutionalization of discussions on public health and hygiene. Government officials, doctors, educators, and writers grew increasingly concerned about maintaining clean and healthy bodies, preventing diseases, and creating sanitized urban spaces during the nineteenth century.⁵² This development found expression in the emergence of various government and civilian institutions, such as the Committee of Public Health (Meclis-i Sıhhiye-i Umumiye), the Civilian Medical School (Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Mülkiye), the Society of Ottoman Medicine (Cemiyet-i Tıbbiye-i Osmaniye), as well as various discussions in the press, pamphlets, and books about hygiene, sanitation, and cleanliness, all of which established that a clean, healthy population was key to the success of the empire.⁵³

manuals about physical training during the late nineteenth century. Georges Kokkinos demonstrates that the main organ of the Greek Patriarchy, *The Ecclesiastical Truth (Ekklesiastiki Alitheia)*, started discussing the merits of physical culture in the late nineteenth century and the Greek Philological Society of Constantinople followed suit in the early twentieth century. Georges Kokkinos, “La communauté grecque orthodoxe de l’Empire ottoman et la culture physique. Réactions et application graduelle,” *Etudes Balkaniques* 11 (2004), p. 5. Sarah Stein highlights the fact that the Ladino press of Istanbul discussed exercise during the same period. Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 123-24.

⁵² For a discussion about public health in the late Ottoman Empire, see Nadir Özbek, *The Politics of Welfare: Philanthropy, Voluntarism and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1918* (Ph.D. dissertation: Binghamton University, 2001); Ibrahim H. Kalkan, *Medicine and Politics in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876-1909)* (M.A. Thesis: Boğaziçi University, 2004). Also see Gülhan Balsoy, *The Politics of Reproduction in Ottoman Society, 1838-1900* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013).

⁵³ Hygiene was an important subject that educators and doctors in Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, Armeno-Turkish, Greek, French, and Ladino published books and articles about in the daily press. Besim Ömer, a Muslim doctor and educator, wrote copiously about hygiene (*hıfzıssıhhat*) in Ottoman Turkish during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, see Besim Ömer, *Sıhhatnüma-i Etfal, Yahut, Validelere Nasihat* (İstanbul: A.M. Şirket-i Mürettibiye Matbaası, 1886); Besim Ömer, *Hıfzıssıhhat* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, c. 1900); Besim Ömer, *Nevsal-i Afiyet: Salname-i Tıbbi* (İstanbul: Nevsal-i Afiyet, 1899-1906). Ottoman Turkish daily periodicals also published regular articles explaining what hygiene was, its importance, and how to preserve it. For example, see “Hıfzıssıhhat,” *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (September 21, 1880), p. 2; “Hıfzıssıhhat,” *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (September 24, 1880), p. 3; “Hıfzıssıhhat,” *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (October 7, 1880), p. 7. These discussions were not confined to Ottoman Turkish publications. Sarah Stein demonstrates that hygiene was an important theme in Ladino publications, also. See Stein, *Making Jews Modern*, pp. 134-135. Armenian publications also discussed the importance of hygiene in various publications during the early twentieth century. For example, see *Marmnamarz* (1911-1914); *Hratarakutun Azgayin Usanoghneru Khnamakalut'yan: Tarets'oyts'* (Bolis: Tpagrut'un Shant', 1914), p. 87; *Taryts'oyts' : Pjshkakan Ew Araghchabahakan* (Bolis: Tbaran Arak's, 1914). In addition to Armenian, Armeno-Turkish publications addressed the significance of hygiene. For example, see Karapet Keshishian, *Sharg Salnamesi*

These three transformations demonstrate that the development of sports in the imperial domains reflected the spread of “Western” activities, tastes, and aesthetics, which were associated with concepts like “progress” and “civilization.” However, the integration of these activities into the daily lives of upper- and middle-class young men was not merely a process of imitation. After all, their spread was made possible by the new assumptions and understandings about the self, body, community, and leisure time developed in the military, schools, new government ministries, hospitals, and a multilingual press. In other words, the idea that young men needed to regularly train their bodies and exercise made sense to people in the imperial domains. It is also important to remember that while Ottoman reforms associated these physical activities with Europe, they also stressed that gymnastics were not inherently foreign or Western. On the contrary, they were activities, movements, and a means of taking care of the body that people around the world had historically performed, but had now become institutionalized in Europe. “The people of India and China,” “the noble Arab people” (*kavm-i necip Arap*), as well as the inhabitants of “Greece” (*Yunanistan*) and “ancient Egypt” (*Mısır-ı kadim*), according to Doctor Mehmet Fahri, all used physical training (*riyazet-i bedeni*) in the past as a means to prevent diseases and build healthy bodies.⁵⁴

Outline of the Study

Strengthening Male Bodies and Building Robust Communities investigates a shared civic culture in Istanbul from the 1870s until World War I by pursuing three principle areas of inquiry. First, I trace the institutionalization of this civic culture in schools, voluntary athletic associations,

(Bolis, 1914), see especially, “*tabibi kısım*,” pp. 53-96. For discussions about hygiene in Greek, see Kokkinos, “La communauté grecque orthodoxe de l’Empire ottoman et la culture physique,” pp. 11-13.

⁵⁴ Doktor Mehmet Fahri, *Sihhi ve Devai Oda Jimnastik* (Istanbul: Asaduryan, 1892), pp. 4-25.

and government ministries. Second, I explore the defining discursive contours of physical culture in Istanbul's multilingual print media. Finally, I examine the performative and competitive aspect of sports culture by focusing on the organization of athletic events and competitions. In doing so, my research seeks to bring institutional and discursive transformations in the Ottoman Empire into conversation with each other.

Chapter one, "Turning Boys into Men: Athleticism at Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College," examines one of the first spaces in which residents of Istanbul experimented with physical exercise and sports: schools. It focuses on two of Istanbul's most significant preparatory schools, the Imperial School (Mekteb-i Sultani) and Robert College. Rather than following the orders of the Ministry of Public Education, Ottoman, American, French, and Italian instructors at these schools experimented with physical exercise and created a shared understanding of athletics as both a subject of study and an extracurricular activity.

Chapter two, "Centers of Male Sociability, Training, and Fun: Voluntary Athletic Associations," focuses on an integral part of late Ottoman physical culture: voluntary athletic associations. Drawing on government reports and registration records, association records and correspondence, association internal regulations, as well as periodicals and magazines, this chapter investigates how voluntary athletic associations served as a central site of identity formation. Athletic clubs taught Muslim, Christian, and Jewish young men proper hygiene, what to do with their leisure time, what to read, as well as how to walk, dress, talk and carry themselves. These associations also intended to reinforce the centrality of ethno-religious forms of identity by creating an ethnically and religiously homogenous space for young men to socialize, gossip, debate and discuss ideas, as well as to train their bodies.

Chapter three, “Educators, Trainers, and Inspectors: the Ottoman Government and Physical Training,” examines the role of the Ottoman government in organizing and spreading physical culture throughout Istanbul. Ottoman state officials recognized that physical culture could be used to create strong and healthy Ottoman subjects. In order to achieve this, the Ottoman government created the General Inspectorate of Physical Training Inspectorate to integrate physical training into the curriculum of state schools throughout the imperial domains. This chapter draws from a diverse array of government reports and published articles.

Chapter four, “Ottoman Connections, Strong Communities, and Robust Bodies: Istanbul’s Multilingual Physical Culture Press,” investigates the role that Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, French, German, English, and Greek magazines and daily newspapers played in shaping the defining discursive contours of physical culture, as well as in spreading novel understandings of the male body and physical training throughout Istanbul and in other urban centers of the empire during the period. This chapter concentrates on the relationship between the body, masculinity, subject formation, and nation building by focusing on common themes and approaches to training the body in the press from 1908 until World War I.

Chapter five, “Performing and Competing in Istanbul’s Newly Constructed Spaces,” examines the performative and competitive aspect of physical culture by drawing from Istanbul’s multilingual press, government reports, as well as internal records of various sports clubs. The emergence of newly constructed sites, such as theatres, gymnasiums, gardens, and athletic fields, served as the spaces in which both Ottoman state officials and the empire’s diverse subjects exhibited and celebrated individual, national, and imperial strength and rejuvenation.

Together, these five substantive chapters investigate the top-down and bottom-up production of a physical culture that transcended ethno-religious divisions in late Ottoman

Istanbul. In order to map the various ways in which Ottoman citizens, foreign residents, and the government popularized and institutionalized physical exercise, sports, and novel ideas about the male body and community, I analyze a complex and multilingual array of sources written in Ottoman Turkish, Turkish, Armenian, French, English, German and, to a lesser extent, Armeno-Turkish and Greek. I conducted research in state, organizational, and personal archives in Istanbul, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Paris, Minneapolis, Washington D.C., as well as New York City.

School reports from the archives of Galatasaray High School and Robert College offer insights into the ways in which educators at both institutions experimented with exercise and sports during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The minutes of school administrators' meetings, correspondence between teachers and administrators, and published memoirs reveal both the idealized understandings of these activities and their actual institutionalization. Voluntary athletic association records, which include the minutes of board meetings, membership records, trophies, internal regulations, identity cards, photograph albums, as well as private correspondence between members from the archives of various sports clubs, museums, and private archives in Istanbul, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem open up a rich window into associational life during the late empire. Government reports from the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office, which include police reports, school inspections, reports about sports clubs and athletic competitions in Istanbul and the broader empire, correspondence between bureaucrats in different government ministries, as well as letters exchanged between the Ottoman government and the organizers of different international conferences reveal the process in which the government officials attempted to mobilize the potential of gymnastics and sports in order to create healthy and robust Ottoman citizens.

Istanbul's multilingual newspapers and magazines demonstrate the similar and dissimilar ways in which Muslim, Christian, and Jewish journalists, educators, administrators and members of sports clubs, as well as government officials treated exercise and sports as activities through which they and their readers could imagine and construct new notions of male sociability that were defined in relation to the body, athletic prowess, and a distinct look. They also serve as a window from which we can observe the growing popularity of athletic competitions and exhibitions in theatres, fields, and stadiums in the city. Finally, photographs serve as a rich and understudied source in late Ottoman history. I draw insights from a rich visual archive of images found in the dusty cabinets of sports clubs, photograph albums, and the press. Photographs offer insights into the making of a modern masculine subjectivity. I investigate the ways in which the meaning and value of photographs reside both "in the image" as well as the diverse modes of exchange and circulation in which they are embedded.

By bringing these sources, archives, and histories into dialogue with one another, this project is able to offer a more textured and multidimensional reading of late Ottoman Istanbul. Together, they reveal the varied actors that indelibly shaped the defining contours of cultural, social, and political transformations in the empire. Moreover, the sources reveal the shared linkages, practices, and epistemological assumptions that were part of the daily experience of many Ottoman citizens during the period.

Chapter 1

Turning Boys into Men: Athleticism at Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College

During the mid to late nineteenth century, educators at Ottoman civil and military, foreign missionary, and non-Muslim communal schools began to expose students to gymnastics, physical exercise, and, to a lesser extent, team sports. Muslims, Christians, and Jews at these institutions believed that students needed to perform these physical activities in order to develop physical strength and athletic prowess, build character, cultivate mental and physical discipline, as well as acquire a competitive toughness and respect for objective rules and regulations. Educators asserted that by exercising and cultivating these characteristics on campus, students would develop into physically, morally, and spiritually sound young men. Together, the institutionalization of these activities and the assumptions about the connection between exercise, team sports, character building, corporeal strength, and masculinity formed the defining pillars of athleticism in late Ottoman Istanbul.

The emergence of a culture of athleticism in the Ottoman Empire was integrally connected to the spread of the notion that the individual was “composed of two separate entities, the body and soul.”¹ Many school administrators accepted this ontological division of the person and attempted to assimilate new bodies of knowledge, divide and categorize other ones, as well as to create a curriculum and educational system, which, they believed could produce complete young men. It is in this context of these transformations and the growing spread of Western tastes, norms, and values that educators introduced gymnastics and physical training in the

¹ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), p. 101.

imperial domains during the mid to late nineteenth century. In this chapter, I focus on this process in two of Istanbul's most significant preparatory schools, the Imperial School (Mekteb-i Sultani) and Robert College.

This chapter explores the process of experimenting with gymnastics, exercise, and team sports playing in late Ottoman schools. It does by tracing the development of athletics as a subject of study and an extracurricular activity at Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College starting in the late nineteenth century until World War I. Both institutions were built in the 1860s and maintained a competitive relationship. Robert College was founded as an American private college, while Mekteb-i Sultani was based on the French lycée model and was a government institution. Despite their differences, administrators and educators at both institutions experimented with exposing students to a culture of athleticism. They accomplished this by gradually integrating athletics into school curriculum and organizing athletic exhibitions and sports competitions on campus. Educators at Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College engaged gymnastics, physical exercise, and team sports as modern, civilized activities through which they could help young male students construct healthy, strong bodies and moral values.

This chapter will also demonstrate that Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College served as social hubs where students, faculty and officials met, formed relationships and socialized, and created a shared physical culture. Students and graduates of both institutions played a disproportionately large role in the development of a shared late Ottoman sports culture both inside and outside the walls of Robert College and Mekteb-i Sultani. Many of these Ottoman Turkish, Greek, and Armenian young men regarded sports as more than subjects of study and events on campus: they were activities around and through which communities of like minded modern men could be built.

Late Ottoman Education

Educators, writers, and state officials living in urban centers around the world during the mid to late nineteenth century believed that education maintained an almost transformative ability to produce loyal, honest, moral, and productive subjects. The Ottoman Empire was no exception. The imperial domains served as a stage in which the Ottoman state, Christian missionaries, Jewish international organizations, as well as Ottoman Muslim, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish lay and religious leaders all competed for the hearts, minds, and bodies of the empire's future generation. Education was understood to be the primary means through which the empire, ethno-religious communities, and foreign missionaries created and preserved 'traditions,' inculcated distinct values and knowledge, and produced ideal young men. It is in the context of these transformations that Muslims, Christians, and Jews worked out new understandings of education throughout the imperial domains.

The historiography of the late Ottoman Empire has provided important insights into these educational innovations. The bulk of this scholarship focuses on three strands of modern education in the empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Ottoman state civil education,² foreign missionary educational projects,³ and non-Muslim (i.e., Ottoman Greek,

² For example, see Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*; Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908*.

³ For example, see Betty Anderson, *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education* (University of Texas Press, 2011); Betty Anderson, "Liberal Education at the American University of Beirut (AUB): Protest, Protestantism, and the Meaning of Freedom," in Christoph Shumann (ed.), *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean: Late 19th Century until the 1960s* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), pp. 99-122; Frank Andrews Stone, *Academies for Anatolia: A Study of the Rationale, Program, and Impact of the Educational Institutions Sponsored by the American Board in Turkey, 1830-1980* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); Paul Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity: Evangelicals, Reformers and Education in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2011).

Armenian, and Jewish) schools.⁴ Each body of literature demonstrates the significance of its area of focus in shaping cultural, social, and political transformations during the late Ottoman Empire.⁵ This chapter attempts to build on these insights by offering an alternative methodological approach to late Ottoman education by examining the similar and dissimilar ways in which educators coevally institutionalized athleticism in a government lycée and a foreign missionary school. As a result, the chapter explores two significant constituents of modern education that are typically analyzed separately. Moreover, the chapter seeks to broaden our understanding of athleticism. Historians have heretofore focused on athleticism as an educational ideology that developed in Europe during the mid to late nineteenth century.⁶ According to this body of literature, athleticism reflected and shaped late Victorian and Edwardian notions of education and middle-class masculinity. Although athleticism developed outside of the imperial domains, I will demonstrate that its integration into the curriculum of

⁴ For example, see Selçuk Akşin Somel, “Osmanlı Ermenilerinde kültür modernleşmesi, cemaat okulları ve Abdülhamid rejimi,” *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 5 (2007), pp. 71-92; Selçuk Akşin Somel, “Gayrimüslim okulları nasıl azınlık okullarına dönüştü,” *Tarih Vakfı* (May 2013); Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); Kevork A. Sarafian, *History of Education in Armenia* (La Verne: the La Verne Leader, 1930); Oya Dağlar Macar, “Ottoman Greek Education System and Greek Girls' Schools in Istanbul (19th and 20th Centuries),” *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri* 10 (Spring 2010), pp. 805-817.

⁵ Michael Provence identifies two major strands of Ottoman education, civil education and missionary education, and calls for scholarly investigation of a heretofore neglected area of study, military education. Michael Provence, “Late Ottoman Education,” in Jørgen Nielsen (ed.), *Religion, Ethnicity and Contested Nationhood in the Former Ottoman Space* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 115-128.

⁶ For example, see J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: the Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); J. A. Mangan, “‘Muscular, Militaristic and Manly’: the British Middle-Class Hero as Moral Messenger,” in Richard Hold, J. A. Mangan, and Pierre Lanfranchi (eds.), *European Heroes: Myth, Identity, and Sport* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 1996), pp. 28-47; J. A. Mangan “Athleticism in the Service of the Proletariat: Preparing for the English Elementary School and the Extension of Middle-Class Manliness,” in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Making European Masculinities: Sport Europe, Gender Volume 2* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 112-139; Dean Farrar, “Athleticism: A Case Study of the Evolution of an Educational Ideology,” in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *‘Manufactured’ Masculinity: Making Imperial Manliness, Morality an Militarism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 60-97.

Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College reveals the ways in which Ottomans and foreigners living in the Ottoman Empire drew insights from and localized it.

Mekteb-i Sultani

The Imperial School (Mekteb-i Sultani), which was also known as the Galatasaray lycée, was the most prestigious state secondary school in the imperial domains. The Imperial School educated countless civil servants, intellectuals, and professionals from all corners of the empire and beyond.⁷ Founded in 1868, Mekteb-i Sultani was located in the heart of the capital's most Europeanized districts, Pera, and on its most fashionable street, Grand Rue de Pera, which was lined with restaurants, cafes, theatres, and department stores. Mekteb-i Sultani was envisioned as the model state secondary school that would educate all the empire's subjects, irrespective of their ethno-religious orientation.⁸ The establishment of Mekteb-i Sultani was shaped by the Ottoman state's attempt to promote Ottomanism among all Ottoman subjects, the efforts of the French government to integrate non-Muslims in all spheres of life throughout the empire, and the belief in the transformative power of modern education.⁹

Administrators of Mekteb-i Sultani attempted to inculcate a modern concept of knowledge to its students by exposing them to a new curriculum. This curriculum was modeled after the French lycées and included courses on natural sciences, philosophy, law, classical European languages, as well as gymnastics.¹⁰ The integration of physical exercise into the

⁷ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, p. 71.

⁸ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, p. 100.

⁹ For a discussion about its foundation, see, Georgeon François, "La formation des élites à la fin de l'Empire ottoman. Le cas de Galatasaray," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 72 (1994), pp. 15-25; Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*.

¹⁰ Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 52.

school's curriculum during the 1870s reflected the growing popularity of gymnastics as a subject of study in France during the period.¹¹ Gymnastics, which was referred to as both *jimnastik* and *riyazet-i bedeniye* in Ottoman Turkish,¹² in Mekteb-i Sultani introduced novel ideals about the body, hygiene, morality, and masculinity, and served as a shared physical activity.



[Figure 1.1 Fourth grade students exercising during the morning in the courtyard of the Imperial School (GMA, ALB 39, undated)]

Not surprising, the first instructors to teach gymnastics at the school were not Ottoman subjects.¹³ Monsieur Moiroux and Curel were French, Martinetti was Italian, and Stangali was Greek.¹⁴ Their diverse educational and professional backgrounds reflect both the dearth of gymnastic instructors and the novelty of physical exercise in Istanbul during the period. For example, Moiroux studied gymnastics at the Army Gymnastics School in Joinville, France

¹¹ Gymnastics was integrated into school curriculum in France during the second half of the nineteenth century. See, Eugen Weber, "Gymnastics and Sports in *Fin-de-Siècle* France: Opium of the Masses?" *American Historical Review* 76/1 (1971), pp. 70-98.

¹² For example, see Ahmet Mithat Efendi, "Bend-i Mahsus-ı Sihhi: Jimnastik yani Riyazet-i Bedeniye," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (July 12, 1889), pp. 5-6. Ahmet Mithat Efendi, a prominent writer, journalist, translator, and publisher, referred to gymnastics as both *jimnastik* and *riyazet-i bedeniye*.

¹³ BOA, MF.MKT 62/28 [May 4, 1879].

¹⁴ Selim Sırrı, *Terbiye-i Bedeniye Tarihi* (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1928), pp. 141-143.

(L'École normale militaire de gymnastique de Joinville),¹⁵ Stangali was a talented acrobat (*canbaz*), and Martinetti was a gymnastics instructor who also worked at the Parisian department store Bon Marché in Pera.¹⁶ Each taught for a short period of time at Mekteb-i Sultani during the 1870s.¹⁷ Together, they laid the foundations of a culture of athleticism in the school that would develop over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Institutionalization and Ottomanization

The frequency of physical exercises on campus increased after Mekteb-i Sultani hired its first Ottoman Muslim gymnastics instructor, Ali Faik.¹⁸ Faik, who came from an elite Muslim family of Ottoman bureaucrats, studied at Mekteb-i Sultani. He first developed an interest in gymnastics as a student listening to and exercising with Moiroux, Martinetti, and Stangali. After graduating from Mekteb-i Sultani, Faik set out to expand both his theoretical and applied knowledge of gymnastics by traveling to Germany in 1874, where he studied at the Central Gymnastics Institute in Berlin.¹⁹ Although gymnastic courses were taught at Mekteb-i Sultani,

¹⁵ For a discussion about *L'École normale militaire de gymnastique de Joinville*, see, Marcel Spivak, "Le développement de l'éducation physique et du sport français de 1852 à 1914," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 1 (January-March 1977), pp. 28-48; Weber, *Gymnastics and Sports in Fin-de-Siècle France*, p. 76.

¹⁶ Selim Sırrı writes that Martinetti taught classes early in the morning at Mekteb-i Sultani. After the classes finished, he would start work at Bon Marché in Pera. Sırrı, *Terbiye-i Bedeniye Tarihi*, p. 142. For a discussion about Bon Marché more specifically and European department stores more generally in Istanbul during the period, see Yavuz Köşe, "Vertical Bazaars of Modernity: Western Department Stores and Their Staff in Istanbul (1889–1921)," in Touraj Atabaki and Gavin Brockett (eds.), *Ottoman and Republican Turkish Labour History: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 91-114.

¹⁷ Writers during the early republic differ on who was the first instructor; however, all agree that Monsieur Moiroux, Curel, Martinetti, and Stangali each taught for a short period of time at the school. According to Hüseyin Zeki and İsmail Sefa, the order of the instructors was the following: Monsieur Curel, Moiroux, Martinetti, and Stangali. On the other hand, Selim Sırrı writes that Moiroux preceded Curel. See, Hüseyin Zeki, "İdmançılar Şeyhi Faik Bey'in Hayat Sayine ait Atideki Satırları Muhtarem Karilerimiz Takdim Ediyoruz," *Türkiye İdman Mecmuası* (June 16, 1923), p. 439; İsmail Sefa, "En Eski Cimnastik Öretmeni Faik Hoca'yı Kaybettik," *Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor* (April 1943), pp. 11-12; Sırrı, *Terbiye-i Bedeniye Tarihi*.

¹⁸ Suat Aray, *Bir Galatasaraylı'nın Hatıraları* (Ankara: İnkilap Kitapevi, 1959), p. 76.

¹⁹ Hüseyin Zeki, "İdmançılar Şeyhi Faik Bey'in Hayat Sayine ait Atideki Satırları Muhtarem Karilerimiz Takdim Ediyoruz," *Türkiye İdman Mecmuası* (June 16, 1923), p. 439.

one could not pursue an advanced study of them in the Ottoman Empire during the Hamidian era. Faik's journey to Europe was not exceptional. Many Ottoman subjects during the nineteenth century traveled to various cities throughout Europe in order to pursue higher education. Nevertheless, there was something unique about Faik's journey: his decision to study gymnastics. By traveling to Europe to study calisthenics, Faik established a precedent that many other Ottoman subjects, such as Shavarsh Chrissian and Selim Sırrı, would follow during the early twentieth century.

After completing his studies, Faik returned to Istanbul and found employment as an instructor of gymnastics at Mekteb-i Sultani in 1879 with a salary of 289 kuruş.²⁰ Serving as an instructor until 1924, Faik left an indelible mark on the development of physical training and gymnastics at the school and throughout the city. Known as "the leader of athletes" (*ıdmancılar şeyhi*) and "the superior athlete" (*üstünidman*),²¹ Faik played a leading role in institutionalizing German gymnastics as well as the belief that students needed to regularly perform gymnastics and exercise.

Faik's appointment took place in the context of Sultan Abdülhamid II's efforts to bolster, what he perceived to be, the Ottoman and Muslim qualities of Mekteb-i Sultani. He did so by appointing the school's first Muslim director, Ali Suavi Efendi, encouraging the enrollment of Muslim students, eradicating immoral behavior, and altering the curriculum.²² Historian Benjamin Fortna notes, Ali Suavi "increased the frequency of courses he deemed useful but had

²⁰ GMA, Mekteb-i Sultani Sicil Defteri, pp. 82-3.

²¹ For example, see Zeki, "İdmancılar Şeyhi Faik Bey'in Hayat Sayine ait Atideki Satırları Muhtarem Karilerimiz Takdim Ediyoruz" and Sefa, "En Eski Cımnastik Öretmeni Faik Hoca'yı Kaybettik."

²² Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, p. 108.

been previously neglected, such as physical sciences, biology, and statistics.”²³ Suavi also balanced Western courses with “study of works in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Persian on such traditional Islamic subjects as *kalam*, *adab*, *insha’*, and *fiqh*.”²⁴

The frequency of gymnastic courses also increased during the Hamidian period. Students in each grade were regularly exposed to gymnastic courses in the mornings and the evenings. In order to convey the notion that gymnastics were as important as other subjects of study, Mekteb-i Sultani awarded students with the highest marks in gymnastics an award (*mükafat*) at the school’s annual award ceremony. Records of these ceremonies reveal that Muslim and non-Muslim students, such as Hüseyin, Hayk, Vitalis, Viktor, Samuel, Adolf, and Josef, received awards for outstanding performances in gymnastics.²⁵ Students also won prizes in Ottoman literature, Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, handwriting, religious jurisprudence, literature, history, morality, religious sciences, the principles of religion, as well as the Quran.²⁶

During the second constitutional period, Mekteb-i Sultani also created additional teaching opportunities for physical culture specialists at the school. Mazhar Bey, a gymnastics instructor (*jimnastik muallimi*) at the Imperial Military School of Medicine (Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Askeriye-i Şahane), started teaching gymnastics at Mekteb-i Sultani in March 1909.²⁷ He served as an instructor at the school from 1909 until 1917.²⁸ In addition to Mazhar Bey, two graduates of Mekteb-i Sultani, Ahmet and Abdurrahman Robenson, also served as gymnastics instructors.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mektebi Sultani’nin Ellinci Sene Devre-i Tesisi Münasebetiyle Neşir Olunmuştur (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1918), p. 84.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ BOA, MF.MKT 1105/30 [March 10, 1909]; BOA, MF.MKT 1109/10 [March 22, 1909].

²⁸ Mektebi Sultani 1314 sene-i hicri si tevzi-i mükafat cetvelidir (Konstantiniye: Ebuziya, 1896).

Ahmet served as an instructor from 1910 until 1913. While, Abdurrahman served as an instructor from 1913 until 1915.²⁹

In addition to integrating and normalizing the presence of physical exercise on campus, Faik also made strides toward creating a standardized body of knowledge about a culture of athleticism by authoring one of the first comprehensive Ottoman-Turkish gymnastic manuals, “Gymnastics or Physical Training” (*Jimnastik Yahut Riyazet-i Bedeniye*) in 1890.³⁰ The Ottoman state recognized the importance of Faik’s work by awarding him an Ottoman fourth-rank medal (*dördüncü rütbeden nişan-i aliye Osmani*) in 1892.³¹ Not surprising, Faik treated his book as the source of authority on physical training when teaching on campus. Faik’s book offers detailed descriptions of how students should perform free movement gymnastics, physical training on equipment, when exercises should be performed during the day, and the ideal type of clothing they should wear when performing them (figure 1.2 & 1.3).³² In addition to offering instructions, he also engaged a systematic discussion about the connection between physical training, education, health, morality, and character building.

The regular performance of gymnastics, Faik argued, ensured multiple benefits. One of the primary ones was good health. Lifting weights, stretching, and exercising helped students develop a firm body and fight off “different types of diseases.”³³ While the book highlighted the centrality of corporeal development, it also stressed that students must cultivate a more holistic understanding of the self in which the body (*cisim*) and the spirit (*ruh*) are integrally connected.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 77.

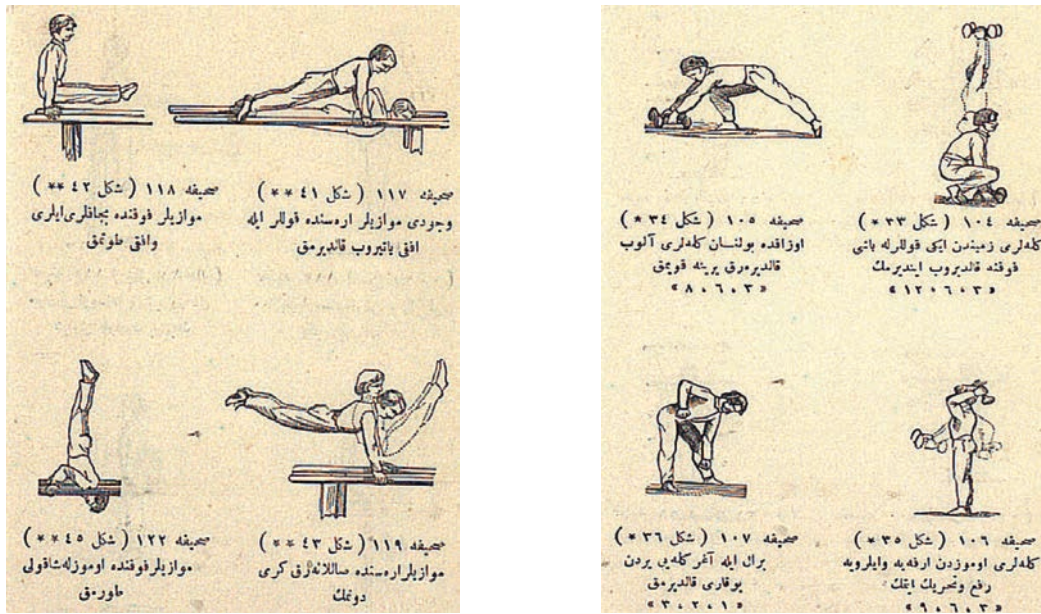
³⁰ Ali Faik, *Jimnastik Yahut Riyazet-i Bedeniye* (Der Saadet: Mahmut Bey Matbaası, 1890).

³¹ BAO, İDH 1258/98788 [January 21, 1892].

³² Faik, *Jimnastik Yahut Riyazet-i Bedeniye*.

³³ Ibid., p. 10.

“Gymnastics,” according to Faik, served as “the means (*vasıta*) through which everyone can develop these two realms [the body and spirit].”³⁴ In short, gymnastics helped produce a complete person by simultaneously developing the body and spirit. Faik underscored the importance of gymnastics in producing a complete person by citing the Latin maxim “*mens sana in corpore sane*” (a sound mind in a healthy body) and translating it into Ottoman Turkish as “*salim akıl sağlam vücutta bulunur.*”³⁵



[Figure 1.2 & 1.3 Visual instruction of how young men should perform gymnastics and lift weights. Ali Faik, *Jimnastik Yahut Riyazet-i Bedeniye* (Der Saadet: Mahmut Bey Matbaası, 1890), p. 14 & 12.]

Central to the development of a complete person was morality. According to Faik, gymnastics’ primary objective was to strengthen morality (*ahlak*). He attempted to buttress this claim by appealing to the popularity of physical culture around the world, “if gymnastics, together with [the development] of the human body, had not served the spread of ideas, education, and morality, it would not have been so popular.”³⁶ Faik’s description of gymnastics

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

as a panacea for immoral behavior coincided with the emergence of morality as a subject of study in Ottoman schools and a popular theme of discussion in the press and books during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II.³⁷ Educators, bureaucrats, religious scholars, and secular intellectuals treated morality as a distinct body of knowledge and genre of literature in which they constructed and celebrated the defining contours of the ideal moral, orderly, clean, and disciplined student.³⁸ Thus, Faik’s insistence on the moral benefits of physical exercise was in dialogue with and reflected a broader late Ottoman discourse on morality.

Ottoman bureaucrats also grew increasingly worried about the moral wellbeing of students during the period. Imperial School’s proximity to licentious behavior in Pera and Galata was particularly disturbing for many. In 1893, Zühdü Paşa, the Ottoman Minister of Education, for example, wrote a memorandum in which he expressed his unease about students visiting “beerhouses, *café*s, *chantants* and similarly inappropriate places.”³⁹ In order to prevent students from frequenting such venues and engaging in immoral behavior, he proposed that the state hire inspectors to monitor the whereabouts of young, impressionable students. The Council of State and the Hamidian regime both shared Zühdü’s concerns: After the Council of State read and approved the memorandum, the Sultan turned it into an imperial decree.⁴⁰

³⁷ Over the past two decades, historical studies have started examining Ottoman-Turkish writings on morality in the Ottoman Empire. For example, see Baer, *The Dönme*, pp. 44-64; Nuri Doğan, *İlk ve Orta Dereceli Okul Ders Kitapları ve Sosyalleşme (1876-1918)* (İstanbul: Bağlam, 1994); Benjamin Fortna, “Islamic Morality in Late Ottoman ‘Secular’ Schools,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Aug., 2001), pp. 369-393; Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, pp. 202-247; Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 166-202; Melis Hafez, *The Lazy, the Idle, the Industrious: Discourse and Practice of Work and Productivity in Late Ottoman Society* (Ph.D. dissertation: UCLA, 2012), pp. 12-76.

³⁸ For an example of a late-nineteenth-century morality textbook, see, Ali İrfan Eğriboz, *Çocuklara Talim-i Fazail-i Ahlak* (İstanbul: Mahmut Bey, c. 1894).

³⁹ As cited in *Imperial Classroom*, p, 111.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Part of the appeal of gymnastics as a panacea for immorality and an effective means to building complete Ottoman young men was its association with Europe. The Imperial School's first instructors were Europeans and Faik's nineteen-page bibliography is made up entirely of French, Italian, English, and German publications.⁴¹ Despite Europe being the main object of influence, Faik underlined the notion that gymnastics was a universal subject of study and physical activity, which all nations around the world at one point and time had demonstrated an interest in. He encouraged those who understood gymnastics to be a foreign physical activity to take a closer look at what he referred to as "our past" (*tarihimiz*) and "our ancestors" (*ecdadımız*) for historical examples of physical prowess and gymnastics among Ottomans:

Let us have a look at the past. What were our ancestors' hobbies, which included arrows, javelins, exercises, horseback riding, and other similar activities? If they were not gymnastics, what were they? Just because they did not have a separate time for these activities does not mean that they did perform gymnastics. Our ancestors possessed strong bodies and elevated ideas. Our ancestors were extremely zealous and exalted, just look at our history.⁴²

In short, Faik presented readers with a historical narrative in which Ottomans invested time and energy to training their bodies like other people around the world.

Multiple photographs taken during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century of students from the Imperial School wearing gymnastic attire provide insight into the efforts that Faik made to assimilate and Ottomanize gymnastics as well as novel corporeal and sartorial aesthetics. The photograph below (figure 1.4), for example, features seventeen students of all ages and Faik surrounded by typical early-twentieth-century gymnastic equipment, such as ropes and free weights (clubbells, kettlebells, and dumbbells). The students are flexing their muscles and wearing athletic attire, which consisted of loose fitting pants and tight long-sleeved shirts.

⁴¹ Faik, *Jimnastik Yahut Riyazet-i Bedeniye*, pp. 232-250.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The star and crescent symbol sown onto the students' shirts and the three Ottoman flags that are carefully positioned around them convey the idea that this is a group of modern Ottoman gymnasts.



[Figure 1.4 Ali Faik and students from the Imperial School posing for a group photograph in athletic attire and surrounded by gymnastic equipment (GMA, ALB 39, undated)]

The names written on the back of the photograph reveal that the students were both Muslim and non-Muslim.⁴³ The multi-religious orientation of the group mirrors the diversity of the school. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish students studied at Mekteb-i Sultani.⁴⁴ This is significant because both Muslim and non-Muslim young men were exposed to a culture of athleticism at the school. Some of these men would go onto to play a significant role in establishing voluntary sports associations, writing articles about physical culture, and organizing

⁴³ The names of the students that are written on the back of the undated photograph are the following: Nikola, Şefik, Matlum (?), Ragıp, Nuri, Hamid, Sermet (?), Fuat, Jan, Paidrof (?), Faik Bey, Miltiadi (?), Ragıp, Salahettin, Fahr..(?), Cemil.

⁴⁴ Although the Imperial School remained mixed, the enrollment of Muslim students increased by 37 percent during the Hamidian era. See, Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, p. 107.

and participating in various athletic performances and competitions in Istanbul after they graduated. Thus, in addition to serving as the first Ottoman civil school to institutionalize gymnastics,⁴⁵ it also served as a space where Muslims, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Bulgarians developed relations with one another and shared understandings about the connection between the body, strength, exercise, and masculinity.

Shortly after introducing gymnastics to students at Mekteb-i Sultani, school administrators began discussing the benefits of creating an indoor space where young men could exercise. Correspondence between the Directorate of Mekteb-i Sultani and the Ministry of Education reveals that these discussions date back to the 1870s.⁴⁶ The creation of the school's gymnasium, which was translated into Ottoman Turkish as *jimnastikhanesi*—literally the “house of gymnastics”—, was an equally novel and impressive accomplishment. Mekteb-i Sultani's gymnasium had high ceilings, was spacious, and maintained a complete set of gymnastic equipment, which included rope ladders, various dumbbells and clubs, parallel bars, gymnastic mattresses, a vaulting horse, and still rings. Faik and his students took great pride in the gymnasium and posed for many photographs inside of it. The photograph below (figure 1.5) depicts Faik dressed in a suit and students clothed in athletic attire in the gymnasium, where they are surrounded by modern gymnastic equipment, framed photographs of the school's gymnasts, and Ottoman flags.

⁴⁵ BOA, MF.MKT 394/30 [May 16, 1898]. This letter from the Imperial School of Civil Administration states that there has been an imperial decree promulgated stipulating that gymnastic training will now be included in Mekteb-i Sultani's curriculum. According to the document, Ali Faik is the person who initially urged the Education Council (Meclis-i Maarif) to institutionalize gymnastics exercises (*jimnastik talimler*) in the school. It also stresses that Mekteb-i Sultani is the only Ottoman civil school to teach gymnastics.

⁴⁶ For example, see BOA, MF.MKT 22/140 [December 17, 1874], BOA, MF.MKT 25/65 [February 14, 1875], BOA, MF.MKT 26/126 [March 26, 1875], BOA, MF.MKT 108/7 [April 15, 1889]. Moiroux played a central role in creating such a space and organizing the purchase of gymnastic equipment, such as rings, rope, a trapeze, and a rope ladder, from France. Sırrı, *Terbiye-i Bedeniye Tarihi*, p. 142.



[Figure 1.5 Faik and students posing inside of the Imperial School's gymnasium. *Mekteb-i Sultani'nin Ellinci Sene Devre-i Tesisi Münasebetiyle Neşir Olunmuştur* (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1918), p. 44.]

The gymnasium served as the ideal indoor space where students could exercise all year round. Selim Sırrı, who studied at Mekteb-i Sultani, graduated from the Imperial Military Engineering School, and later became the Ottoman government's General Inspector of Physical Training (Terbiye-i Bedeniye Müfettiş-i Umumisi), lucidly articulated this view in article he wrote in Ottoman Turkish in 1912. Sırrı went so far as to describe the school's gymnasium as the only one in the Ottoman Empire during the Hamidian era.⁴⁷ Sırrı wrote this despite the fact that he knew that Robert College, the Hercules Gymnastics Association (Gymnastikos Syllogos Eraklis), and the German Jewish School, "Goldschmidt School" (Goldschmidtschule or Fondation Goldschmidt) had each constructed indoor gymnasiums during the period. Not only were he and other physical culture enthusiasts aware of these spaces, Sırrı had visited them on separate occasions. Therefore, Sırrı's description can be read two ways. First, he was engaging in

⁴⁷Selim Sırrı, "Eski ve Yeni Jimnastikhaneler," *Terbiye ve Oyun* (January 28, 1912), p. 182.

hyperbole. Second, Sırrı was not denying the presence of a gymnasium in Hercules, the German Jewish School, and Robert College; he was merely establishing that Mekteb-i Sultani's gymnasium was the only gymnasium that mattered, because it was a predominantly, although not exclusively, Muslim space and he was writing for a Turkish-speaking Muslim audience. Irrespective of how we read Sırrı's description, what remains clear is that he was impressed by the sophistication of Mekteb-i Sultani's gymnasium.

The gymnasium was the laboratory where Faik and the school's other gymnastic instructors helped young boys build robust physiques and develop into modern, strong, and moral men. Sırrı's first encounter with Faik in the gymnasium in 1885 provides insights into the significance and interconnection of the gymnasium, the equipment, the body, and masculinity. Sırrı colorfully describes Faik as "a twenty-five years old young man (*delikanlı*) whose head remained uncovered, hair was carefully combed, wore white cotton pants and a navy blue jacket... [and] had a wide chest and massive biceps."⁴⁸ Thus, not only were Faik's muscles impressive, so were his dapper clothes. Faik asked the students, all of whom, according to Sırrı, had no idea what a gymnasium was, the following questions:

Do you know where we are? This is a gymnasium (*jimnastikhanesi*). You are going to climb these ropes and polls. You are going to run and jump. You are going to be strong like me by struggling! ... Come and feel my arms.⁴⁹

Physical Exercise as a Source of Concern

Although Sırrı and other students were impressed by the potential of gymnastics to create healthy and robust young men, not all Ottomans shared their enthusiasm. In 1890, Faik wrote: "People (*halk*) are very suspicious about gymnastics. They say, 'what will all this skipping and

⁴⁸ Selim Sırrı Tarcan, *Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi, 1946), p. 11.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

hanging amount to?’ I do not want to my son to be a wrestler (*pehlivan*) or an acrobat (*cambaz*).’⁵⁰ Both the wrestler and the acrobat conjured up notions of an inferior social status and values: the former with “traditional” notions of masculinity and strength, the latter with performance. Thus, students performing gymnastics and exercising dangerously blurred the accepted cultural and socio-economic boundaries separating upper and middle-class values, traditional behavior, and working-class activities.

Sırrı’s description of his mother’s response to him receiving an award at school also reveals the novelty of physical exercise and the ways in which gymnastics was associated with frivolous games and entertainment in some circles. As a student at Mekteb-i Sultani, Sırrı received an “illuminated” (*yaldıızlı*) copy of Faik’s book as a prize for his athletic skills.⁵¹ Sırrı’s mother, Zeynep Hanım, who was initially overjoyed when he told her that he won a prize at school, became furious after Sırrı explained what the award was for:

Mother, I was number one in gymnastics! You would be amazed to see me in school: I climb to the top of the rod and rope all in one breath. I pull myself up and down from my knees on the horizontal ladder. I walk on my hands! You have no idea what I can do.⁵²

Zeynep Hanım indignantly responded to her son by saying: “I sent you to school in order for you to study and be a man (*adam olsun*), not to climb up ropes! Get out of here! Such an award means nothing to me.”⁵³ In other words, gymnastics and modern education were fundamentally separate. According to Zeynep Hanım’s reasoning, gymnastics was nothing more than a childish

⁵⁰ Faik, *Jimnastik Yahut Riyazet-i Bedeniye*, p. 7.

⁵¹ Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 11. Faik’s *Jimnastik Yahut Riyazet-i Bedeniye* was given as a prize to students with the highest marks in gymnastics. For example, see the inside cover of the book awarded to Orhan in 1890 in the Olimpiyatevi’s archive. I want to thank Güner Canbay, the director of the Olimpiyatevi’s library, for granting me access to the library’s special collection.

⁵² Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

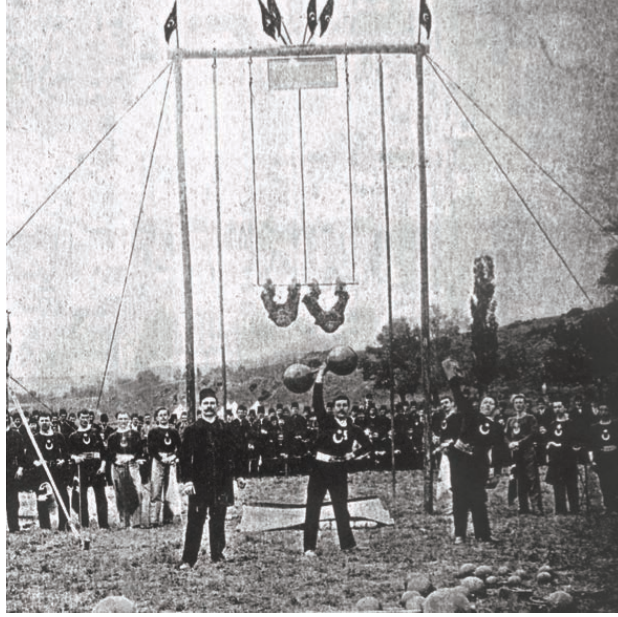
activity, whereas modern education was a means to elevating a young man's social status and turning him into a modern, civilized man.

Faik went to great lengths to challenge this perspective by establishing that gymnastics was an integral component of modern education and that physical exercises in schools were fundamentally different than wrestling and acrobatics. "Physical training," according to Faik, "is not for turning our children and sons into wrestlers or acrobats; it is only for producing a robust person."⁵⁴ Moreover, he stressed, "gymnastics is neither the amazing skill (*maharet*) that acrobats perform during their exercises nor is it [gymnastics] concerned with eliciting the amazement and the attention of people."⁵⁵

Despite the attempt to disassociate gymnastics from what Faik referred to as "professionalism" (*mesleki*), showmanship, and the idea that young men who trained their bodies would become performers, Faik did organize gymnastic exhibitions. These exhibitions, which included gymnastic performances on parallel bars, an iron cross, horizontal bars, and weight lifting, served as spaces where students displayed their athletic dexterity and strength. The exhibitions attracted various spectators and reveal the growing interest and curiosity in athletics during the period. The undated photograph below (figure 1.6) features Faik and student gymnasts dressed in school athletic attire. The photograph also includes gymnastics equipment, Ottoman flags, and young men wearing fezzes, some of whom are standing and sitting down on short four legged stools, surrounding the gymnasts. The position of the latter suggests that they were spectators.

⁵⁴ Faik, *Jimmastik Yahut Riyazet-i Bedeniye*, p. 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.



[Figure 1.6 Ali Faik and students during a gymnastic exhibition (Galatasaray Museum Archive, undated)]

The location of the exhibition is not provided; however, the photograph's rustic background demonstrates that it was not on campus. The event was most likely organized in Kağıthane, a popular outside area that is close to Pera. Kağıthane, which Western travelers referred to as the "Sweet Waters of Europe," attracted men and women from various ethno-religious communities and socio-economic backgrounds who wanted to escape the hustle and bustle of the city and retreat to a serene area. According to Dwight Griswold Harrison, who was raised in Istanbul during the late nineteenth century and born in the United States, "Visitors at Constantinople rarely fail to visit the Sweet Waters [...] and remember the beautiful little river and the multitude of boats and the masses of people enjoying themselves on the grass."⁵⁶ Kağıthane was a favorite spot for wrestling matches, archery games, and other outdoor gatherings during the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ Mekteb-i Sultani also arranged various activities in

⁵⁶ Dwight Griswold Harrison, *Constantinople and its Problems: Its Peoples, Customs, Religions and Progress* (New York, Chicago, Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901), p. 183.

⁵⁷ Luigi Acquarone, who was one of the court artists of Sultan Abdülhamid II, painted an archery game (*cirit* in Ottoman Turkish) that took place in Kağıthane. Luigi Acquarone, *A Jereed Game in Kağıthane*, 1891. Antoine

Kağıthane during the period. For example, Curel organized Mekteb-i Sultani's first gymnastic performances in Kağıthane,⁵⁸ while school administrators also preferred to host festivities and lunches there.⁵⁹

Robert College

Five years prior to the establishment of Mekteb-i Sultani, Robert College was founded along the banks of the Bosphorus in Bebek. The idea to create an American college in the imperial capital developed in the United States in the 1850s.⁶⁰ After thirteen years of struggling to find financial support, define its educational message, and procure the permission of the Ottoman government, Robert College was established in 1863. The founders of Robert College wanted to create an American school that would offer a different educational outlook and curriculum than the schools that the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) had created throughout the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century.⁶¹ Robert College was to remain independent from the ABCFM and not be a missionary school.⁶²

Ignace Melling, *Voyage Pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore* (Paris, Strasburg and London: Treuttel et Würtz, [1809]-1819).

⁵⁸ Sefa, "En Eski Cimnastik Öretmeni Faik Hoca'yı Kaybettik."

⁵⁹ Gülsün Düzenli, "Özel Dosya—Galatasaray Lisesi," *Toplumsal Tarih* (Şubat 1996), p. 36.

⁶⁰ For a history of Robert College, see Keith M. Greenwood, *Robert College: the American Founders* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2000). *Robert College* was originally submitted as a Ph.D. dissertation to the Department of History at Johns Hopkins University in 1964.

⁶¹ The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was founded in Boston in 1810. The organization serves as the first Protestant mission aimed at spreading the evangelical message overseas. The ABCFM sent its first missionaries to the Ottoman Empire in 1820. For a discussion about American missionaries in the Middle East, see Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008); Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Nearest East: American Millennialism and Mission to the Middle East* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010).

⁶² The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions established many missionary schools throughout the imperial domains during the nineteenth century. For a discussion about these schools, see, Stone *Academies for Anatolia*.

Nevertheless, Robert College's presidents and administrators remained committed to the idea that Robert College was a Christian institution that provided its students with a holistic education by inculcating and celebrating reason, Christian values, and American modernity.⁶³

Morality, Corporal Development, and Athleticism

“Moral development” and “the formation of character” were the cornerstones of Robert College's educational mission during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁴ While students could build both in the “chapel and the classroom,” Robert College's administrators and educators also stressed that young men needed to be exposed to a culture of athleticism. School administrators engaged athletics as a means to build complete young men and a panacea for immorality, which school they believed was on the rise during the early twentieth century. During the academic year of 1903-04, Robert College expelled ten boys for immoral behavior, which consisted of circulating and reading “salacious literature and obscene pictures,” and engaging in “illicit sexual relations.”⁶⁵ It was hoped that regularly exposing impressionable youth to physical training would help them cultivate discipline, respect, and moral values and discourage such scandalous behavior. According to the memoirs of Caleb Frank Gates, Robert College's third president:

If we were to raise the moral standards of the student body, it was clear that one of our duties was to provide plenty of recreation for the boy's leisure hours. With this obligation in view, I did everything I could to encourage physical education and the playing of games.⁶⁶

⁶³ For example, see Minutes of the Trustees [May 7, 1900]; Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey, pp. 5-6. Caleb Frank Gates, the third president of Robert College, expresses what the motto of the school should be in letter to in a letter to Mr. D.B. Coe: “Every student a Christian and every Christian a better Christian.” Caleb Gates to trustees re acceptance of presidency, 1902; Robert College Records; Box 9, Folder 47; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁶⁴ Report of the President of Robert College to the Trustees, 1897; Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey, p. 11.

⁶⁵ Caleb Frank Gates, *Not to Me Only* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 277.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

Robert College's president and faculty report from 1906, which was produced and sent annually to the board of Trustees in New York City, also highlights this relationship between morality and athletics by stating: "An increasing number of students are taking interest in athletics, and in some cases the beginning of the moral reformation of boys may be traced back to the time when they began, 'to go in for athletics.'"⁶⁷

The idea that athletics were indispensable to the development of moral, strong young men, which Gates and others espoused at Robert College, reflected a broader discourse on Christian rejuvenation and strength in the United States and England. Supporters of muscular Christianity advocated the spread of physical training and team sports as a means to reform Christian churches and unhealthy, immoral, and effeminate men.⁶⁸ Religious leaders, educators, and missionaries, for example, in the United States authored pamphlets and books that advocated the necessity of exercise in all educational institutions.⁶⁹ Christian missionaries spread throughout the Ottoman Empire, as well as Christian educators in Robert College, many of whom were born and raised in the United States, shared many of these views and highlighted the importance of building strong and moral men.⁷⁰ According to Gates, "the first object of College training is to develop manhood, to make men strong."⁷¹

⁶⁷ Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1906, pp. 9-11

⁶⁸ For a discussion about muscular Christianity, see Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); Tony Ladd and James A. Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sport* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1991).

⁶⁹ For example, see William Gilbert Anderson, *Physical Education* (New York: A.D. Dana, 1897); Edward Increase Bosworth, *The Weak Church and the Strong Man* (New York: Student Young Men's Christian Association, 1909).

⁷⁰ For example, see "Western Turkey Mission: Protestantism and Manliness," *The Missionary Herald* (April 1872), p. 114. The Missionary Herald served as the official publication of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Although Robert College was officially separate from the ABCFM, *The Missionary Herald* often published laudatory article about the school. For example, see *The Missionary Herald* (July 1878), p. 218. "Robert College has no warmer friends than the missionaries, though there may be differences of opinion

Communal Tensions, Ethnic Divisions, and Protestantism

In addition to helping students become moral men, administrators at Robert College also envisioned physical training and team sports alleviating communal tensions by providing “a common meeting ground for all the nationalities.”⁷² Indeed, it was hoped that by playing and exercising together students would establish bonds that transcended their ethno-religious divisions. School officials often made reference to the presence of “national jealousies” and the “difficulty of maintaining brotherly feelings” between students of different nationalities.⁷³ According to school administrators, not only did sports encourage greater “harmony between students,”⁷⁴ it also fostered a “spirit of internationalism,” which was considered imperative for all men living in the “Near East,” a place where “so many nations meet.”⁷⁵

Robert College attracted a diverse array of Christian Armenians, Greeks, and Bulgarians from both the Ottoman Empire and beyond. Administrators were proud of this diversity and attempted to inculcate a shared Christian identity, while at the same time preserving and redefining a distinct communal one among its predominantly Christian student body.⁷⁶ In describing Robert College’s student body in 1873, the school’s annual report states, “we have the

among them as to the degree of religious influence which is, or can be, exercised by such an institution. Robert College is a noble institution, has already done great good, and has a splendid future before it.”

⁷¹ “Robert College,” *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (June 20, 1908), p. 243.

⁷² Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1911, pp. 25-6.

⁷³ Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1907, p. 14.

⁷⁴ Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1904, pp. 11-12

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Despite these restrictions, the school maintained a small number of Muslim and Jewish students. For example, see Robert College Archive, Robert College Student Files. Although Muslims were formally admitted during the second constitutional era, it wasn’t until the establishment of the republic in 1923 that the school attracted a larger Muslim student body. School reports do explicitly state that Ottoman government “forbad Mohammedans [from] attending foreign schools” during the Hamidian era. Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1903, p. 8.

three chief Christian races, the Armenians, the Greek, and the Slavonic [sic].”⁷⁷ It was hoped that after graduating, students from these “vigorous and manly races” would inculcate, institutionalize, and spread the novel ideas and concepts that they had learned and internalized during their studies at Robert College.

The creation and division of an independent YMCA on campus in the 1890s provides insights into the school administrators’ efforts at promoting a shared Christian identity, while at the same time preparing students to think of themselves as the vanguards of change within their own respective communities.⁷⁸ YMCA meetings, which were initially confined to reading and discussing Protestant material, were separated into four sections for its “Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek and English” students.⁷⁹ Each section “use[d] its own language, and assume[d] most of the responsibility for the personal work to be done for its own nationality.”⁸⁰ Fluency in their “own language” was imperative to Robert College’s goal of creating future protestant Christian ambassadors for each community. As a result, Greek, Armenian, and Bulgarian students had to take separate language courses in what school officials considered to be their native language.⁸¹

Students also took the initiative to emphasize communal differences on campus. One of

⁷⁷ Robert College Archive, Report of the President of Robert College to the Trustees, 1873-74, p. 6.

⁷⁸ According to internal YMCA reports, there were three independent YMCA associations in Istanbul during the late nineteenth century. This changed after the constitutional revolution in 1908. In 1912, the foreign division of the international committee of the YMCA established a branch in Istanbul. See, The Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Box 1 Folder: Correspondence and Reports N.D. (No Date), 1884, 1907-09. The Key to the Near East, pp. 2-3. YMCA Archives, Box 2 Folder: Constantinople Correspondence 1927.

⁷⁹ According to internal YMCA reports, there were three independent YMCA associations in Istanbul during the late nineteenth century. This changed after the constitutional revolution in 1908. In 1912, the foreign division of the international committee of the YMCA established a branch in Istanbul. See, The Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Box 1 Folder: Correspondence and Reports N.D. (No Date), 1884, 1907-09. The Key to the Near East, pp. 2-3. YMCA Archives, Box 2 Folder: Constantinople Correspondence 1927.

⁸⁰ Robert College Archive, Report of the President of Robert College to the Trustees, 1891-1892, p. 10.

⁸¹ Jewish students, on the other hand, were not allowed to have a “vernacular Department for Jews.” See, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. Correspondence to Washburn from Gates 1914 Box 15, Folder 96 [March 7, 1914].

the main ways in which they did so was by creating separate student organizations that were organized around ethnic divisions. Armenian, Greek, and Bulgarian students, for example, created their own Armenian, Greek, and Bulgarian student organizations. While the majority of the Armenian students were Ottoman subjects, many of the Greek and Bulgarian students were not. Thus, Greek and Bulgarian student organizations served as spaces where a pan Greek and Bulgarian identity was implicitly encouraged. Robert College officials often felt the need to reiterate the school's commitment to remaining an "educational institutional institution, with no political ends" and stress its disapproval of political activity, such as when "Greek students ran away to enlist as Greek volunteers in the Greek army in 1897."⁸²

The majority of Armenian students in the college were either from Istanbul or its surrounding environs, as the Ottoman government made it "extremely difficult for Armenians" living outside of the capital to study in Istanbul at Robert College during the Hamidian Era.⁸³ Nevertheless, it attracted a diversity of religious persuasions within Istanbul's Armenian community. As a result, the Armenian student association was a space that encouraged Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Armenians to embrace a shared Armenian identity, which transcended religious affiliation.⁸⁴ For example, *Marmnamarz (Physical Training)*, an Armenian sporting periodical that Shavarsh Chrissian, an Armenian student at Robert College,⁸⁵ founded during the

⁸² Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1897, pp. 5-6.

⁸³ According to Robert College reports, it was easier for Armenians to study in Izmir and Beirut during the period. For example, see Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1903, p. 8.

⁸⁴ The name of the organization's Armenian newspaper, "Unity" (*Miut'ewn*), reflects the importance of this goal.

⁸⁵ Sources from the Robert College Archive in Istanbul establish that Chrissian (his name is spelled Chavarz in the Robert College files) was a student at Robert College from 1903-05. However, it is clear that he did not graduate from the institution, as his name was not included in the graduation records from the time period. For example, see Robert College Archive. Robert College Student Records (1903-1904), pp. 64-65 & Robert College Student Records (1904-1905), pp. 98-99.

Second Constitutional era, explicitly highlighted the ability of Robert College's Armenian Student Association (Robert Kolēchi Hay Usanoghut'yun) to bring Armenian students together at school by creating shared activities and projects, such as lectures and athletics.⁸⁶ Many of the most active Armenian physical culture enthusiasts, such as Chrissian, Vahram Papazian, and Levon Hagopian, met and formed relations as students on campus and in the Armenian Student Association where they were exposed to a shared culture of athleticism.

The inscription of communal and ethnic differences that these organizations and language courses facilitated provide insights into the overlap and tension between a shared Christian identity and separate ethno-religious ones. For many graduates of Robert College, their communal affiliation served as the primary site around which they organized secular activities, such as athletics, throughout Istanbul and beyond. Greek and Armenian graduates, who developed a profound level of interest in physical culture at school, for example, established voluntary sports associations, organized athletic events, and published articles around ethno-religious divisions, not a shared Christian identity.

Physical Exercise and Team Sports

Although the exact date of their introduction is not provided, George Washburn, the second president of the college, suggested in his memoirs that the presence of physical exercises on campus stretched back to the school's establishment. According to Washburn, "we had never ignored our responsibility for the physical culture of our students. As far as our means allowed we had provided gymnastic apparatus and exercised out students in some system of light

⁸⁶ "Sbori Keank'," Marmnamarz (Mart 1, 1912), p. 77. Also see, Hisanameay Hangruan Hratarakuats Robert Kolēchi Hay Sanuts' Miut'ean Hiasameay Hopeleanin Arıt'ov: 1871-1921 (Bolis, 1922).

gymnastics.”⁸⁷ In 1896, Mr. Ostrander, a tutor at the school, felt the need to create a more organized space for students to exercise and perform gymnastics by creating an athletic club on campus.⁸⁸ Students from a specific ethno-religious community did not dominate the Athletic Club, which was also referred to as the Athletic Association. Bulgarian, Armenian, Greek, and English students all joined the club by paying a ten-piaster annual membership fee.⁸⁹ Students became members in order to be part of a fraternity of young men that was enthusiastic about exercising and playing football on campus. Members celebrated and recorded their commitment to athletics by having group photographs of the club taken, such as the one below (figure 1.7), in which they posed flexing their muscles in their dashing white uniforms.

⁸⁷ George Washburn, *Fifty years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), pp. 259. Such gymnastic equipment was more than likely procured from the Bebec seminary, which had also encouraged physical exercises for its students. Cyrus Hamlin, the founder of Robert College, established the Bebec seminary local Ottoman Armenian and Greek subjects in the 1840s. For mention of “a gymnasium at the Bebec seminary,” see Robert College Records; RC Box 11 Subseries III.1: Cyrus Hamlin, Folder 27; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁸⁸ Washburn, *Fifty years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College*, pp. 19 & 259. *Marmnamarz* challenges this. According to *Marmnamarz*, “Robert College’s Physical Training Club ‘Doj’ was established by M. Tuyumjian.” *Marmnamarz* (May 15, 1912), p. 187. The Athletic Club is also referred to as the Athletics Association in Robert College’s internal records from the period. See, Robert College Archive, Faculty Minutes [1910].

⁸⁹ In 1912, Robert College’s Committee on Athletics voted on a tax for athletics in which “every student in Robert College be charged ten piasters (gold) for outdoor athletics. This sum will be collected by the College Treasurer and placed to the credit of the Athletic Associations of Robert College and Theodorus Hall. The sum of ten piasters being the membership fee of the Athletic Association, every student will by payment of the sum proposed ipso facto a member of the Athletic Association with all the privileges thereof.” Robert College Archive, Faculty Minutes [April 12, 1912].



[Figure 1.7 Photograph of Robert College's sports club that was formed on campus in 1896. (*Marmnamarz*, May 15, 1912, p. 187)]

Team sports, such as baseball, football, basketball,⁹⁰ developed shortly after the creation of the athletic club. While gymnastics were deemed an important physical activity, school officials were more concerned with encouraging team sports and forming school teams.⁹¹ It was believed that team sports, even more so than gymnastics, helped students build trust in each other and cultivate a respect for rules. As a result, team sports served as an effective medium for teaching “good citizenship.”⁹² It was also hoped that team sports could assuage class tensions between students.⁹³ For example, Howard Bliss, the president of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, an institution that maintained institutional connections with Robert College during the period, underscored the importance of team sports in creating a shared activity for young men in

⁹⁰ Cricket was also one of the first sports introduced in school, but quickly fell out of favor.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² See, Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1922-23, p. 13. Being good citizens on the Ottoman Empire was a point that presidents of Robert College stressed. For example, see “Robert College,” *The Orient* (June 22, 1910), p. 4.

⁹³ See, Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1912, pp. 50-51.

the Ottoman Empire: “You will find the son of a prince plying [sic] foot-ball under the captain of a peasant or the son of a cook. We believe in foot-ball.”⁹⁴



[Figure 1.8 Photograph of Robert College’s mixed Baseball team (Robert College Records, Box 68, Baseball team 1900, Columbia University)]

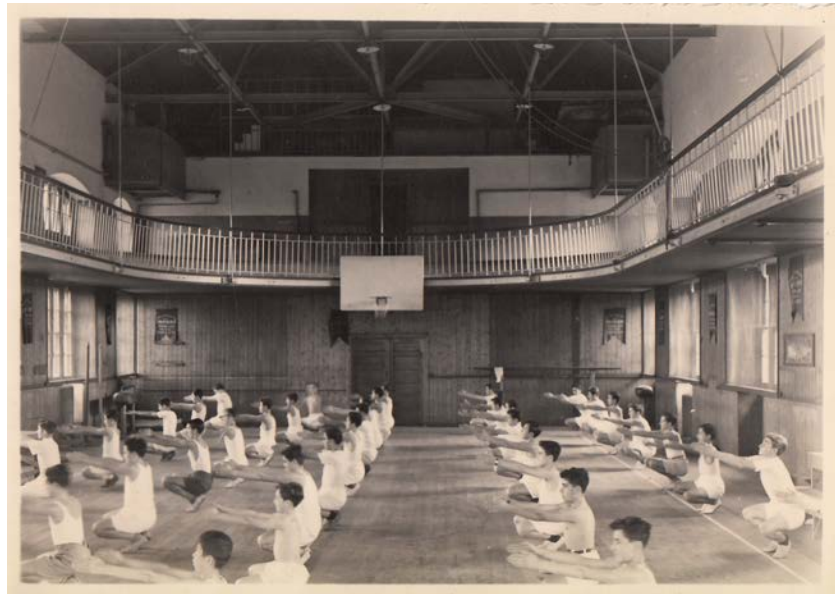
Despite the important strides that officials made in encouraging gymnastic and athletic activities on campus, school officials stressed the futility of such efforts if there was not a permanent indoor space in which students could exercise, play games, and train their bodies. As a result, Robert College’s board of trustees started to discuss the idea of constructing an indoor gymnasium during the early twentieth century.⁹⁵ In 1902, Cleveland H. Dodge, the president of Trustees, sent president Washburn, a sketch plan of the proposed gymnasium, which was organized by the same architects who designed the American Protestant College’s gymnasium in Beirut.⁹⁶ Within a span of two years, Sultan Abdülhamid II issued an *irade* granting permission

⁹⁴ Howard Bliss, “Sunshine in Turkey,” *National Geographic Magazine* (January 1909), p. 75.

⁹⁵ For example, see Correspondence to Washburn from Dodge 1895, 1900-03; Robert College Records; Box 14, Folder 7; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

⁹⁶ Correspondence to Washburn 1902; January 10, 1902; Robert College Records; Box 15, Folder 87; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

for the construction of the gymnasium,⁹⁷ and the college started constructing the gymnasium on the school premises.⁹⁸ Supporters of the project at the school hoped that the gymnasium would “give a decided impetus to the athletics of the College,” and invoked the idea that athletics would “keep the moral tone of the students high” and “promot[e] a spirit of harmony between students of different nationalities.”⁹⁹



[Figure 1.9 Students performing physical exercises in the Dodge Gymnasium (Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey Folder 7-A, undated)]

Completed in 1904, Dodge Gymnasium was an impressive structure (figure 1.9).¹⁰⁰ It maintained a complete set of gymnastic equipment, an indoor track, a basketball court, as well as

⁹⁷ Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1904, pp. 11-12. The construction of the gymnasium was part of a broader project to expand and develop the school campus. In addition to the gymnasium, the *irade* also granted permission for the establishment of a study hall and two houses, for professors to reside in, on campus.

⁹⁸ Washburn, Fifty years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College, p. 288

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ The entire cost of the gymnasium was \$19,370.69. Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. Correspondence to Washburn from Gates 1905; January 21, 1905; Robert College Records; Box 15, Folder 87.

modern baths where students could shower and change their clothes after exercising.¹⁰¹ It served as the main space where students performed their athletic exercises twice a week,¹⁰² as well as where school officials organized gymnastic exhibitions and indoor track competitions all year round, but especially during Istanbul's cold winters. School officials at Robert College were so proud of the structure that they promoted the idea that it was not only the first school gymnasium in the empire, but all of Europe.¹⁰³

Prior to the construction of the gymnasium, reports about athletics were situated within a broader discussion about biology and hygiene.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, one faculty member was responsible for teaching courses on athletics, biology, and hygiene. Dr. Charles W. Ottley, a physician taught athletics and biology classes in the basement of Theodorus Hall in 1903.¹⁰⁵ The completion of the gymnasium coincided with greater attention being given to athletics. First, annual school reports started creating separate sections for the school's athletic updates.¹⁰⁶ Second, school administrators were no longer content with a temporary tutor teaching students how to exercise; they now wanted to hire a permanent athletics instructor.¹⁰⁷ The first instructors whom the school

¹⁰¹ For discussions about the importance of baths, see Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. RC Minutes, 1863-November 1905 Box 107, Folder 1 [May 7, 1900].

¹⁰² Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1912, p. 49.

¹⁰³ For example, see the back of the photography of Robert College staff inside of the Dodge Gymnasium: "the first school gymnasium in Europe. It contained the only indoor track in Turkey." Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey Folder 7-A, c. 1924.

¹⁰⁴ For example, see Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1902, p. 15.

¹⁰⁵ Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1903, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1907, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Correspondence to Washburn from Gates 1905; April 21, 1905; Robert College Records; Box 15, Folder 87; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

hired were Clarence Garlough Weiffenbach, Albert T. Melvin, and Bertram V.D. Post.¹⁰⁸ All three were Americans and had studied physical culture respectively at the Chicago Young Men's Christian Association Training School, Dartmouth College, and Princeton University.¹⁰⁹

Exhibiting, Performing, and Competing: Robert College's Annual Field Day Events

While athletic equipment and the Dodge Gymnasium helped students build stronger, healthier, and more moral bodies, field day events served as the space where young men exhibited their athletic dexterity and competed. Robert College's "first public field day for athletics" dates back to 1897, a year after the establishment of the school's Athletic Club and the organization of the modern Olympic Games in Athens.¹¹⁰ The Olympic Games celebrated and popularized the idea that physical prowess and strength were integral components of proper masculine bourgeois gentility. The events performed at the games also provided a model that associations and schools, such as Robert College, could imitate. Robert College's field day events, for example, included several track and field competitions, such as the pole vault, hurdles, long jump, high jump, discus throw, 100-yard dash, 110-yard hurdle, quarter mile, half mile, mile, shot put, as well as an obstacle race. Robert College's field day events also emulated the Olympic Games by distributing prizes to the top performers and a gold medal to the best field day athlete.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Robert College Archive, Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1905 & 1906. Robert College Series XVI: (Trustees) Minutes, RC Minutes, 1863-November 1905 Box 107, Folder 1; RC Minutes, April 1906- Nov. 1928, Box 107, Folder 2. Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

¹⁰⁹ Robert College Archive, Teacher's Record, Clarence Garlough Weiffenbach & Bertram V.D. Post.

¹¹⁰ Washburn, Fifty years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College, p. 259.

¹¹¹ Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1909; Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey, p. 28. Robert College Archive, Faculty Minutes [October 19, 1911].



[Figure 1.10 & 1.11 Starting from left to right Robert College's annual field day festivities, (Robert College Records; Box 68, Baseball team 1900, Columbia University, no date). Robert College students performing a human pyramid during the school's annual field day celebrations (Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey, Folder 7-A, undated)]

Robert College's field day events attracted considerable attention throughout the city. Figure 1.10 demonstrates that both men and women attended the games and sat next to each other in Robert College's Grand Stand, which the school specifically built for athletics events, while they watched the festivities.¹¹² The image also reveals a range of sartorial preferences: men wore fezzes, boat hats, suits, ties and bowties, while the majority of women wore long dresses and hats. According to Istanbul's English and French daily newspapers, which published advertisements for and descriptions of the field day events,¹¹³ the attendees included diplomatic officials, such as the British Ambassador, the American Charge d'Affaires, and the

¹¹² Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. Correspondence to Washburn from Gates 1905, Box 15, Folder 93 [April 21, 1905] [May 11, 1905].

¹¹³ For example, see "Robert College: Field Day," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (June 9, 1903), p. 265; "Robert College," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (March 28, 1904), p. 141; "Robert College," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (June 12, 1905), p. 272; "Robert College," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (May 24, 1906), p. 133; "Robert College," *The Orient* (June 22, 1910), pp. 3-4; "Field Day at Robert College," *The Orient* (May 17, 1911), p. 3; "Athletics at Robert College" *The Orient* (May 22, 1912), p. 2; "Field day at Robert College," *The Orient* (June 5, 1912), p. 5.

representative of the Greek minister, as well as “many well known American and English residents.”¹¹⁴

Robert College’s records explicitly referred to the field day events as a means to spread “democratic ideals” and “good fellowship.”¹¹⁵ While they could be used to inculcate good sportsmanship, respect for rules, and camaraderie, officials at the school also feared that the athletic field could easily turn into a political arena where young men competed for their ethno-religious community.¹¹⁶ Annual reports during the early twentieth century reveal that such concerns were warranted. For example, according to a 1907 report, “often athletic contests become entangled with national or race rivalries.”¹¹⁷ Other accounts speak of specific instances, like in 1911, when Robert College’s Bulgarian students refused to participate in the annual field day events because of “national feeling.”¹¹⁸ As a result, these reports reveal the ways in which students looked to athletics on campus as an opportunity in which they could express broader grievances as well as assert ethnic solidarity.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the emergence of athleticism in late-nineteenth-century Istanbul. It has demonstrated that Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College served as two of the first

¹¹⁴ “Robert College: Field Day,” *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (June 9, 1903), p. 265. Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1906; Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey, pp. 9-11.

¹¹⁵ See caption on the back of the undated photograph of Robert College’s annual field day event. Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey Folder 7-A, undated.

¹¹⁶ For example, see Robert College Series XVI: (Trustees) Minutes, April 1906- Nov. 1928 Box 107, Folder 2 [November 20, 1913].

¹¹⁷ Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1907; Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey, p. 16.

¹¹⁸ Report of the President and Faculty of Robert College to the Trustees, 1911; Robert College Archive, Istanbul, Turkey, p. 25.

and most important schools in which educators worked out a shared understanding of athleticism. Educators in both schools engaged physical exercise, gymnastics, and team sports as an effective means through which students strengthened their bodies, built character, cultivated moral values, and developed into modern young men. Together, Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College's reputation as elite educational institutions played an important role in spreading the notion that youth needed to regularly exercise, lift weights, sweat, and play team sports increased among upper and middle-class circles of Muslims, Christians, and Jews of the city.

Despite a shared belief in both schools that physical exercise played a central role in the moral, physical, and mental development of young men, the integration of athletics into the daily lives of students at Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College also reveal important differences. Because the majority of Robert College's athletic instructors were educated in American institutions, their understanding of athletics foregrounded the role of team sports. Sports like baseball and football were envisioned as activities through which young men cultivated comradarie and trust in and loyalty to one another. Educators at Robert College also stressed the importance of team sports as a panacea for national rivalries and a means to encouraging a shared Christian identity.

Educators at Mekteb-i Sultani drew from a different historical legacy of athleticism. The school's first instructors during the 1870s, Moiroux Curel, Martinetti, and Stangali, were Europeans who came from diverse educational and professional backgrounds. Moiroux studied gymnastics at the Army Gymnastics School in Joinville, France, Stangali was an acrobat, and Martinetti was a gymnastics instructor who also worked at the Parisian department store in Istanbul. Together, they helped create a space for physical exercise on campus. However, it was Ali Faik, Mekteb-i Sultani's first Muslim gymnastics instructor, who institutionalized a method

and approach to exercising and performing gymnastics on campus. Faik's studies in Germany exposed him to German gymnastics, which highlighted the importance of exercising on athletic equipment.

It is also important to emphasize that the integration of athleticism was very much a work in progress and a process of experimentation in both schools. Educators at Mekteb-i Sultani and Robert College were autonomously testing and working out the connection between exercise, physical strength, character building, morality, and masculinity, rather than following the orders of the Ministry of Public Education and introducing foreign physical activities on campus—Chapter 3 will explore this process during the Second Constitutional era. Students did not passively receive the novel ideas that educators experimented with. On the contrary, many of the students at both schools developed their own understanding of gymnastics, physical exercise, and team sports on campus and beyond.

It is important to emphasize that the athleticism represents one of the main strands of a shared late Ottoman sports culture. School administrators and educators developed this culture. Thus, it spread from the top to the bottom. Nevertheless, students did not passively receive the ideas and views that teachers inculcated. On the contrary, students worked out their own understanding of gymnastics, physical exercise, and team sports both on campus and beyond.

Chapter 2

Centers of Male Sociability, Training, and Fun: Voluntary Athletic Associations

On February 13, 1915, Abdurrahman Robenson, a member of the Galatasaray Physical Training Club (Galatasaray Terbiye-i Bedeniye Kulübü) and gymnastics instructor at the Imperial School, sent Ali Sami, the president and founder of Galatasaray, a letter. Written in Erzurum, while serving in the Ottoman army during World War I, Abdurrahman juxtaposed descriptions of his experiences in the army and his unwavering loyalty to the Galatasaray club. Abdurrahman writes, “I always carry the [Galatasaray] club medals with me on my chest. I will take them with me into war. If I die, I will be buried with them. Long live Galatasaray (*yaşasın Galatasaray*).”¹ Abdurrahman’s letter was not unique; rather, it was representative of correspondence that club members serving in the Ottoman army shared with Sami and others living in Istanbul during the war.² Abdurrahman’s brother, Ahmet Robenson, for example, sent Sami a portrait photograph of himself dressed in army attire on March 14, 1916 and signed it as “Ahmet Robenson, member of the third army, sledge instructor, [and] member of the Galatasaray club (*Galatasaraylı*).”³ Together, these messages from the front lines of war offer insights into the homosocial bonds connecting members of sports clubs and the centrality of association affiliation to the identity of many Ottoman male subjects during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter turns to the development of voluntary athletic associations, and examines how they served as one of the central sites of a shared Ottoman physical culture, identity formation, and male sociability.

¹ GMA, GSM-KL-28, Letter from Abdurrahman Robenson to Ali Sami [February 13, 1915].

² For example, see GMA, GSM-KL-28.

³ GMA, GSM-KL-22, Signed portrait photograph from Ahmet Robenson to Ali Sami [March 14, 1916].

This chapter explores the emergence of Istanbul's voluntary athletic associations starting in the late nineteenth century until World War I. It does not attempt to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the athletic associations in the city;⁴ rather, it focuses on the creation and expansion of clubs in five separate communities. By tracing the proliferation of clubs among Ottoman Muslim, Armenian, Greek, and Jewish citizens as well as foreign residents of Istanbul, the chapter highlights the similar (and dissimilar) ways in which young men from different ethno-religious communities constructed, celebrated, performed, and displayed novel understandings of the self, the body, masculinity, and community in sports clubs. Athletic associations served as popular spaces where Muslims, Christians, and Jews from similar backgrounds spent their leisure time having fun, playing sports, exercising, and socializing. These sports clubs were not confined to one area of Istanbul. On the contrary, they mushroomed in a diverse array of neighborhoods spread throughout the city. The diffusion of these clubs amongst Istanbulites from a plethora of backgrounds living in different neighborhoods played an instrumental role in creating a common physical culture and spreading the notion that team sports, gymnastics, and physical exercise were modern, middle-class activities during the period.

This chapter argues that athletic associations serve as an understudied vantage point from which we can gain insights into cultural, social, and political transformations in the late empire across sectarian divisions. Each section focuses on a separate club and the activities of men from a specific ethno-religious community. Read together, they reveal how late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century cultural transformations in the imperial domains were a collective endeavor. They also provide insights into the ways in which many novel activities, such as sports, were organized by and within modern ethno-religious communities. This process demonstrates that while young men from the city's different communities were all exposed to gymnastics, physical exercise, and team sports, many Ottoman subjects developed these new practices, ideas, and

⁴ There were more than fifty voluntary athletic clubs in the city during the Second Constitutional era.

beliefs within social spaces that simultaneously embraced shared civic values and exclusive ethno-religious ties. Thus, this chapter attempts to provide novel insights into late Ottoman civil society by examining the following questions: How does an investigation of sports clubs enable us to develop a more textured understanding of the making of modernity in the Ottoman Empire? How was the emergence of voluntary athletic associations made possible by a modern public sphere and in what ways did these civic spaces contribute to its expansion? What were the stakes of joining a sports club during the period? How did young men (and, to a more limited extent, girls and young women) work out new understandings of the self and community in these clubs? How did members treat these associations as instruments to simultaneously strengthen civic and ethno-religious ties?

Late Ottoman Associations and Sports Clubs

The emergence of sports clubs in Istanbul was constitutive of a broader development throughout the empire: the creation of the voluntary association.⁵ These associations were not confined to one region of the empire; rather they mushroomed in other urban centers, such as Izmir, Salonica, Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Cairo. Ottoman Muslim, Christian, and Jewish citizens established different types of associations, such as educational, philanthropic, political, scientific, literary, and sports clubs. These associations were private,

⁵ Although this chapter and dissertation focuses on Istanbul, athletic associations were not confined to the imperial center. For example, there are references to clubs in Trabzon. See BOA, BEO 147/10961 [January 30, 1893], BEO 172/12859 [February 16, 1893], BOA, BEO 155/11625 [February 15, 1893]; BOA, BEO 355/26588 [February 6, 1894]. There are various references to different types of associations in Salonica. For example, there is a reference to a Bulgarian Gymnastic School (Bulgar Jimnastik Mektebi). See BOA, MF.MKT 969/22 [December 20, 1906]. There is a reference to a Jewish Musical and Gymnastic Association (Musevi Musiki ve Jimnastik Cemiyeti). See, BOA, TFR.I.SL 216/21600 [August 20, 1909]. There are also references to the Société Juive de Gymnastique, Maccabi Salonique. For example, see CZA S25/659, Letter from the Société Juive de Gymnastique Maccabi to the Bureau Sioniste Copenhague [June 18, 1916]. Finally, there is a reference to a Sporting Üstad Cemiyeti in Salonica. See, BOA, DH.SYS 53/8 [May 28, 1911]. There are references to Greek clubs in Midilli. For example, see DH.MKT 2840/90 [June 12, 1909]. *Marmnamarz* informed readers that there were Armenian clubs in larger urban centers, such as Izmir, Salonica, Alexandria, and Cairo, as well as smaller cities, such as Sivas, Erzurum, Trabzon, Marzavan, etc. In addition to Armenian clubs in Alexandria, there were also Jewish ones like Union Juive Sportive et Litteraire Macchabée, Alexandira. For example, see CZA A192/42.

social spaces where Ottoman upper- and middle-class men organized, discussed, socialized, and built group identity. Indeed, voluntary associations helped Ottomans perform their commitment to novel ideas and activities, popularize new values and practices, and distinguish themselves from others. Moreover, by establishing and becoming members of a society, Ottomans staked a claim to the empire's expanding public sphere.

The historiography of the late Ottoman Empire has offered a limited assessment of these organizations. Scholars have either focused on how voluntary associations created novel forms of individual and group identities that foregrounded civic bonds and transcended ethno-religious divisions,⁶ or the role of ethnically and religiously homogenous organizations in the development of fissiparous movements during the late empire.⁷ Both approaches fail to account for the fact that many late Ottoman voluntary associations fostered both ethno-religious and shared civic bonds and were far from being ideologically pure spaces.⁸ Athletic clubs, for example, were both ethnically and religiously homogenous and structured around a shared civic activity.

The foundation of sports clubs reflected the spread of two interconnected ideas among upper- and middle-class circles of Istanbul: First, exercise, health, and a strong, robust body became the requirements for being a modern, cultivated, and successful young man, member of an ethno-religious community, and citizen of the empire; and, second, a "sedentary life (*oturucu bir hayat*)" had adverse effects on the bodies of Ottoman subjects.⁹ According to Selim Sırrı, an Ottoman Muslim educator who studied at Mekteb-i Sultani, was affiliated with a number of voluntary athletic associations in Istanbul, and would go on to become the Ottoman Empire's

⁶ For example, see Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*; Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*.

⁷ For example, see Göçek, "The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish, and Arab Nationalisms," pp. 15-84.

⁸ For a novel approach, which examines sports clubs as centers of nationalist social reform in an international context, see, Stacy Fahrenthold, "Sound Bodies in Sound Minds: Transnational Philanthropy and Patriotic Masculinity in al-Nadi al-Homsi and Syrian Brazil, 1920-32," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014), pp. 2259-283. Fahrenthold explores the role of the sports club among Syrians of Brazil in creating nationalist Syrian boys and men.

⁹ Sırrı, "Gençlere," p. 89.

General Inspector of Physical Training, “one of the most important reasons for our illnesses is a sedentary life. We are always sitting in houses, government offices, workplaces, coffee houses, and casinos.”¹⁰ Sirri encouraged young men “to bring an end to this life of sitting” by walking, performing gymnastics, and training their bodies.¹¹

Voluntary athletic associations served as the main civic spaces in which young men could put these ideas into practice. These civic spaces attracted like-minded young men by offering them a private space where they could spend their leisure time exercising, competing, training their bodies, and socializing. Sports clubs were almost exclusively homosocial male spaces.¹² By paying monthly membership dues, which ranged from one to ten piasters,¹³ and agreeing to abide by the club’s internal regulation (*nizamname*), a young man become a member of a club, which enabled him to have access to the gymnasium, athletic equipment, lecture hall, as well as a library filled with books and magazines about the body, hygiene, and physical training. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish members learned how to dress, talk, and socialize through, and in between, exercising, playing, competing, listening to lectures, taking and sharing photographs, and reading in athletic clubs. Sports clubs thereby served as were a testing grounds of an emerging middle-class masculinity, where new conceptions of the self, defined in relation to the body, masculinity, and one’s ethno-religious community, came into being.

Athletic clubs spread throughout Istanbul adopted a nomenclature that explicitly connected them to a shared civic physical culture. Some clubs employed “gymnastics” in their titles in German, Greek, French, and Ottoman Turkish: *turnverein*, *gymnastikos*, *gymnastique*,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² There were exceptions, however. For example, the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople (*Israelitische Turnverein Konstantinopel*) created a women’s section in 1906.

¹³ For a discussion about wages and the cost of living in Istanbul during the late empire, see, Alen Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880-1940* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), especially, pp. 36-46.

jimnastik. Other associations adopted either the word “sports” in Ottoman Turkish: *spor*, *idman*, or “physical training” in Ottoman Turkish and Western Armenian: *terbiye-i bedeniye* and *marmnamarzakan*. Finally, others defined themselves as “football” clubs in Armenian, English, French, and Ottoman Turkish.

The strongest differences existed between “football” clubs on the one hand, and “sports,” “gymnastics,” and “physical training” associations. Football clubs tended to only stress one physical activity, football, a team sport, whereas sports, gymnastics, and physical training associations practiced a variety of individual athletic activities and team sports, football being only one of them. Despite these differences, all the clubs were organized around and based on a set of physical activities for young men, and in some cases women. Late Ottoman magazines, articles in newspapers, and books focusing on physical culture all discussed gymnastics, sports, physical training, football, and hygiene; this suggests that, like the writers of these magazines, newspapers, and books, residents of Istanbul conceptualized all these activities and bodies of knowledge as part and parcel of physical culture.

Sports clubs were established along ethno-religious communal lines and attracted members from a specific ethno-religious community. Indeed, these clubs were spaces where young men built ethnic-based solidarity. Associations did not explicitly deny young men from other ethno-religious groups the ability to become members. Nevertheless, membership was predominantly ethnically and religiously homogenous. The main language and symbols used and the eponyms that organizations adopted projected a distinct ethno-religious identity. Some clubs explicitly adopted religious names, while others were named after a heroic or mythological figure of the club’s respective community.¹⁴ In so doing, club founders sought to construct and

¹⁴ It is important to point out that for the most part, Turkish clubs were not named after heroic figures. However, there were exceptions, for example, *Yıldırım Terbiye-i Bedeniye Yurdu*. Lightning (*Yıldırım*) was the epithet of Sultan Bayezid I (1354-1403). This club was established in Kasımpaşa in September 1910. See, BOA, DH.EUM.6.Şb 53/78 [not dated]; BOA, DH.HMŞ 4-1/4-138 [September 1, 1920].

raise an awareness of a deep history in which their communities celebrated the connection between the body, strength, and masculinity.

Sports clubs and other voluntary associations emerged in urban centers throughout the imperial domains during the mid nineteenth century despite legal and political obstacles. The regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) displayed a general distrust of autonomous organizations and assumed that these spaces were centers of oppositional forces and ideas. This distrust of voluntary associations was not unique to the Ottoman government; rather, it was a global phenomenon that developed during the nineteenth century as a result of the rapid growth of state centralization projects and citizens establishing a claim to the expanding public sphere. For example, historian Carol E. Harrison notes, “all French regimes of the nineteenth century treated voluntary associations as if they constituted a permanent threat of subversion and a threat to national security.”¹⁵

Ottoman subjects were denied the right of association during the Hamidian era. Nevertheless, they found creative ways to develop civic initiatives and different forms of public activism during the period.¹⁶ For example, those who wished to establish an association had three options: First, they could seek out the protection of a foreign embassy.¹⁷ Second, they could procure permission from the Sultan in the form of an imperial decree (*irade-i seniyye*).¹⁸ Third,

¹⁵ Carol E. Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 24.

¹⁶ For example, see Julia Phillips Cohen, “Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism: Jewish Imperial Citizenship in the Hamidian Era,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (2012), pp. 237-255; Nadir Özbek, “Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005), pp. 59-81.

¹⁷ This option was restricted to non-Muslim citizens. While many non-Muslims placed themselves under the protection of foreign embassies when establishing associations, Haris Exertzoglou notes that this was not case for many Ottoman Greeks. Haris Exertzoglou, “The Development of a Greek Ottoman Bourgeoisie: Investment Patterns in the Ottoman Empire, 1850-1914,” in Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi (eds.), *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism* (New Jersey: The Darwin Press, Inc, 1999), p. 91.

¹⁸ Yusuf Ziya Karabıçak, *The Development of Ottoman Government's Policies Towards Greek Associations 1861-1912* (Bogazici University, M.A. Thesis, 2012).

they could take their chances establishing the association without the protection of a foreign embassy or the support of the Sultan.

The wide sweeping reforms ushered in during the Second Constitutional era resulted in the mushrooming of political, literary, social, educational, philanthropic, and athletic associations throughout the empire. The Young Turk revolution of 1908 also created a context in which many associations that were already established expanded their activities and embraced a more public identity. This sudden proliferation of associations and their activities served as a source of concern for Ottoman authorities because they were neither registered nor did many of them take the time to produce an internal regulation (*nizamname*).¹⁹ The Ottoman government responded to this development by promulgating the Law of Associations (*Cemiyetler Kanunu*) on August 16, 1909. The Law of Associations established that Ottoman subjects were legally guaranteed the right of association. More importantly, it created a legal framework through which Ottoman subjects needed to establish and register associations in order for them to be considered official.²⁰

Despite the Ottoman government's attempt to regulate these private, civic organizations, state registers of associations from the Ottoman Interior Ministry (*Dahiliye Nezareti*) reveal that associations in the imperial capital did not adopt a uniform approach to dealing with state authorities.²¹ The ministry failed to include a number of better and lesser-known associations on the list; nevertheless, these registers demonstrate that some associations opted to register with government authorities, while others did not. Moreover, they also confirm that, despite some

¹⁹ This notion is lucidly articulated in a report from the Gendarme (*Zaptiye*) to the Interior Ministry (*Dahiliye Nezareti*) that predates the promulgation of the Law of Associations. For example, see BOA, ZB 331/78 [March 31, 1909]. It is interesting to note that different registers specify that clubs “do not have a Turkish internal regulation” (*Türkçe nizamnamesi yok*).

²⁰ See, “Mevad-ı Umumiye: Kararname Sureti,” *Takvim-i Vekayi* (August 23, 1909), pp. 11-13; “Cemiyetler Kanunu,” *Düstur* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1911), pp. 604-608.

²¹ For example, see BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 64/48 [not dated]; BOA, DH.İD 126/11 [March 26, 1911]; BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 64/49 [c. 1916].

blind spots, Ottoman state authorities were fully aware of many of the associations that were and were not officially registered.

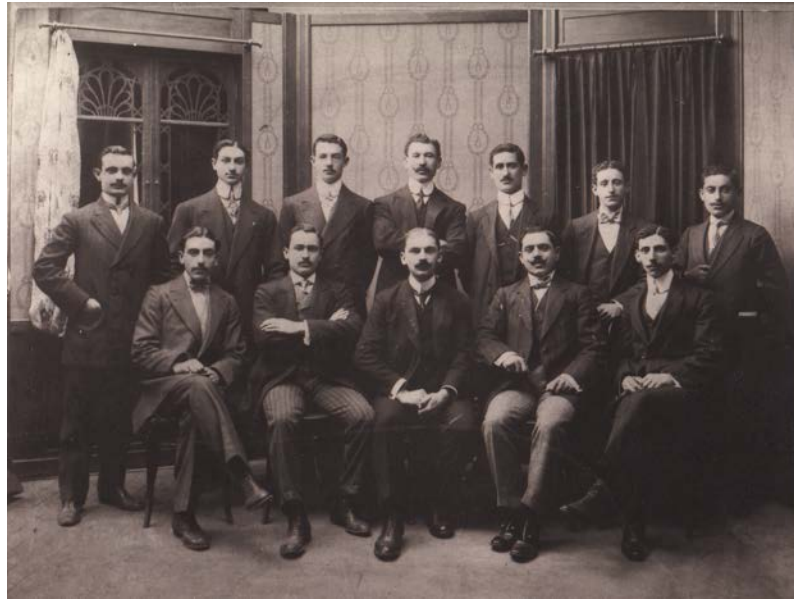
“Long live Our Gymnastics Club”: German-Speaking Jews, Strong Bodies, and the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople

During the late nineteenth century, Jewish Istanbulites, who lived and socialized in the ethnically mixed, albeit predominantly non-Muslim area of Pera, grew increasingly interested in physical activities. This interest reflected the growing popularity of sports and gymnastics as civilized leisure activities in the broader German-speaking community of the city during the period. German-speakers created German gymnastics clubs,²² and organized athletic events in the popular, bourgeois Teutonia Club of Pera.²³ By doing so, they demonstrated that the nineteenth-century efflorescence of physical culture in Germany also resonated with their cultural outlook in the Ottoman Empire.²⁴

²² For references to “German Gymnastics Clubs” (*Alman Jimnastik Kulüpleri*) in Istanbul, see, BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 11/62 [July 31, 1892]; BOA, İ.DH 784/63762 [April 11, 1879].

²³ Referred to as the German Teutonia (*Almanlar’ın Teutonia*) in Ottoman Turkish, the German Society Teutonia in English, and simply Teutonia in German, Teutonia developed into a popular bourgeois club during the period. Upper class young men gathered, socialized, and organized novel forms of leisure activities, such as gymnastics, in Teutonia during the period. BOA, ŞD 2634/44 [June 23, 1894]. In this report to the Şurayı Devlet Riyaseti Vekalet Celilesi, the Sadrazam makes reference to the “German Teutonia club in Beyoğlu” (*Beyoğlu’nda Almanlar’ın Teutonia*). Kader Konuk, *East West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 103-106; Sir Charles William Wilson, *Handbook for Travellers in Constantinople, Brûsa, and the Troad with Maps and Plans* (London: J. Murray, 1900), p. 161; Elli Kohen, *The Kohens del de Campavias: a Family’s Sweet and Sour Story in Ottoman and Republican Turkey* (Istanbul: Isis, 2004), p. 106.

²⁴ For a discussion about the development of the physical culture movement in Germany during the nineteenth century, see, George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).



[Figure 2.1 The founding members of the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople posing for a group photograph on the day of the association's establishment. (The Pierre Gildesgame Maccabi Museum, 1895)]

Jews were among the many Istanbulites who developed a linguistic and social identity by frequenting these social circles and participating in athletic events. However, the emergence of, what some sources describe as, a progressively discriminatory environment towards Jews in these spaces seems to have motivated a group of them to establish a separate gymnastics association. On January 8, 1895, twelve Jewish men declared the foundation of the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople (Israelitische Turnverein Konstantinopel).²⁵ The Jewish Gymnastics Club served as private space where Jewish men exercised, trained their bodies, socialized, and had fun. These men were committed to the belief that membership in an association was a defining component of their expanding middle-class background. Moreover, they believed that the regular performance of gymnastics and physical exercise would enable them to cultivate strong, healthy physiques, discipline, and modern values and norms. In order to

²⁵ According to some sources, these men opted to create a separate Jewish club because of the development of a progressively discriminatory environment towards Jewish men who attended the Teutonia "La Société 'Maccabi'," *L'Aurore* (July 2, 1909) p. 2; "Israelitischer Turnverein Constantinopel" *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (November 1906), p. 189. Also see, David Rimon, *HaMaccabi Be'Artzot HaBalkan: Bulgaryah, Romanyah, Turkyah, Yavan, Yugoslavyah* (Tel Aviv: Nesi'ut ha-Histadrut ha-'Olamit Makabi, 1945), p. 96. Rimon notes that after 1894, the Teutonia club decided to forbid any more Jews from becoming members. In response, the Jews, who were already members of the club opted to leave it as a form of protest. I want to thank Munder Shoufany for his translation of this section in Hebrew.

record the club's official establishment, this fraternity of Jewish men, like so many of Istanbul's expanding middle-class, gathered together and posed for a group photograph. The image below (figure 2.1) shows the founding club members posing as gentlemen with neatly combed hair, shaved checks, handlebar moustaches, starched shirts, neckties (and bowties), jackets, and waxed leather shoes.

Although the club was established in 1895, it was not able to openly embrace an independent associational identity because of the Hamidian regime's general distrust of this novel type of civic organization. In order to simultaneously function as a gymnastics association and avoid the radar of the government, the founders of the Jewish Gymnastics club described the club as a "philanthropic community" (*presentphilantropischen Gesellschaft*) and created an affiliation with the German Jewish School, "Goldschmidt School" (Goldschmidtschule or Fondation Goldschmidt),²⁶ which was under Austrian protection.²⁷ Together, the Jewish Gymnastics Club's institutional affiliation and purported exclusive philanthropic aims enabled club members to organize during the Hamidian period.

The club's affiliation with the Goldschmidtschule reveals the centrality of an aspirational German-speaking, social identity to the club. The Jewish Gymnastics Club exclusively used a German title and flag, which simultaneously projected a Jewish and German sports identity. The club flag consisted of its German name, Israelitische Turnverein Konstantinopel, as well as a Star of David, which had four capital "F" letters positioned inside of it (figure 2.2). These letters represented the four principles, *frisch, frei, fröhlich, fromm* (lively, free, happy, pious), that the nineteenth-century German gymnastics enthusiast and educator, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, argued

²⁶ "Konstantinople. Israelitischer Turnverein," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (August/September, 1908), p. 180. The school is also referred to as the "Deutsch israelitische Schule" in Alliance reports. For example, see AIU Rapport annuels de l'Alliance Israélite (Constantinople: Deutsch israelitische Schule 1882). Ottoman-Turkish reports refer to the school as "*German Izrailiyet*." For example, see BAO, DH.EUM.THR 29/61 [June 27, 1920]. Also see, Clarence Richard Johnson, *Constantinople to-day: or, The Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1922), p. 277. The report refers to The Goldschmidt school as "an important Galata community."

²⁷ "Konstantinople. Israelitischer Turnverein," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (August/September, 1908), p. 180.

Germans needed to embody while performing physical exercise in order for them to develop into physically robust and healthy young men.²⁸ Members of the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople cultivated an awareness of the German physical culture movement by reading and maintaining a rapport with the leading German Jewish sports journal based in Berlin, *Jüdische Turnzeitung*.²⁹

The Goldschmidt School was the Jewish Gymnastics Club's central location. In exchange for an "annual fee of 36 Turkish pounds," the club was granted unfettered access to the school in Pera.³⁰ This relationship helped boost membership among the school's students. The club's affiliation with the school also helped legitimize and popularize the spectacle of young men dressed in tight athletic attire (figure 2.2), lifting weights, jumping up and down, and performing gymnastics, which undoubtedly seemed strange to some students and families in the community. Finally, the school's amenities proved to be incredibly useful. The school's indoor and outdoor facilities enabled club members to exercise and gather there throughout the year, irrespective of the vagaries of Istanbul's weather. According to an early-twentieth-century description of the Goldschmidt School, "the youth can exercise inside the gymnasium during the cold months, while they can also exercise outside in the courtyard during the summer and autumn."³¹

²⁸ For example, see Karin Greuer, "Competing Masculinities: Fraternities, Gender and Nationality in the German Confederation, 1815–30," *Gender & History* 20/2 (August 2008), pp. 270–287. Selim Sırrı also exposed Ottoman Muslims to these concepts in his "History of Physical Training" (*Terbiye-i Bedeniye Tarihi*). See, Sırrı, *Terbiye-i Bedeniye Tarihi*, p. 62.

²⁹ *Jüdische Turnzeitung* served as "the 'official organ' of Berlin's Jewish Gymnastic Association, Bar Kochba," and, according to Todd Presner, would eventually "become the most widely read and circulated journal dedicated to Jewish corporeal regeneration." Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: the Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 122. Members of the club maintained a rapport with the editors of the journal. Starting in December 1901, club members started sending *Jüdische Turnzeitung* regular reports and updates, which described the activities of the club.

³⁰ For example, see "Inventar des Israelitischen Turnvereins zu Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (May 1907), p. 83. In order to use the gymnasium, the club provided the school with an "annual fee of 36 Turkish pounds," in addition to regular donations. See, "Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (August 1905), p. 64; "Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (March 1904), p. 52.

³¹ "Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (December 1904), p. 231.



[Figure 2.2 Members of The Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople posing in club attire. (The Pierre Gildesgame Maccabi Museum, c. 1905)]

The school's gymnasium, which was decorated with paintings and various maxims emphasizing the importance of corporeal strength and physical dexterity and a large Ottoman flag, functioned as the club's private space, where members stored their clothes, read books, exercised, and socialized. Two large wardrobe cabinets with over 100 drawers provided members with a space to keep their clothes while exercising.³² The club's bookshelf offered members an ample supply of reading material, should they want to read inside the gymnasium.³³ The school's gymnasium also played a central role in the club's athletic activities.³⁴ The gym provided a spacious, indoor area where the club kept its complete set of gymnastic equipment.³⁵

In addition to serving as a space where club members lifted weights and performed gymnastics, it also functioned as the main venue of the club's social activities. For example, the club held its general assemblies and organized educational conferences and gymnastic

³² "Inventar des Israelitischen Turnvereins zu Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (May 1907), p. 84

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

exhibitions in the gymnasium.³⁶ Gymnastic exhibitions were particularly popular. Described as “family entertainment” events, Jewish families from the surrounding neighborhood attended evening festivities which consisted of club members performing bar exercises, building human pyramids, musical and theatrical performances in German and, on occasion, fencing.³⁷ These events also included food, drink, and other types of merrymaking. For example, according to a description of one such evening in December 1906, members of the club drank Bavarian beer and chanted, “long live our gymnastics club” (*Hoch lebe unser Turnverein*).³⁸

The club’s German name and affiliation with the Goldschmidt School helped it cultivate a Jewish associational identity, albeit a German-speaking one. Like-minded German-speaking Jewish men were particularly attracted to the club, which celebrated an aspirational social and linguistic identity. Some of the earliest members of the club were Jewish men who were fluent in German, among other languages, worked in offices, dressed in the latest European fashion, and believed that leisure time was best spent training their bodies and the bodies of their community. Men like Albert (Avram) Ziffer, an Ashkenazi Jew from Galatz in Romania whose family sought refuge in Istanbul from pogroms during the late nineteenth century, played a prominent role in the organization.³⁹ Albert served as the club’s trainer (*Turnwart*) during both the Hamidian and Second Constitutional era and was often the main supervisor and trainer of the club’s gymnastics performances. He was a polyglot and spoke Yiddish, German, French, Romanian, and Ottoman Turkish.⁴⁰ Like other club administrators, who were educators, merchants, and bankers,⁴¹ Ziffer

³⁶ “Konstantinopel,” *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (August 1905), p. 64; “Konstantinopel,” *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (March 1904), p. 52.

³⁷ For example, see “Konstantinopel. Israelitischer Turnverein,” *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (March 3, 1903), p. 52; “Konstantinopel,” *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (January 1907), pp. 13-14.

³⁸ “Konstantinopel,” *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (December 1904), p. 231.

³⁹ According to Albert (Avram) Ziffer and Rose Firehes’ marriage certificate, Albert Ziffer was born on May 4, 1884 in Galatz. Private Archive of Daniel Ziffer, “Marriage Certificate” (Trauungs-Zeugnis) [June 25, 1920].

⁴⁰ Although he was from Galatz, his mother tongue was not Romanian, like his wife, Rosa. Daniel Ziffer. Personal interview (June 3, 2012).

was also part of the expanding Jewish middle-class of the city: he worked for the Oriental Railway briefly for two years and served as the secretary of the Austro-Hungarian Delegate at the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (Düyun-u Umumiye-i Osmaniye Varidat-ı Muhassasa İdaresi) from 1903 to 1919.⁴²

The Jewish Gymnastics Club was a space where men like Ziffer strengthened homosocial bonds, built ethnic solidarity, performed gymnastics, lifted weights, discussed the latest cultural developments, and built a community around the notion that they needed to regularly perform physical exercise and strengthen their bodies in order to be modern, civilized Jews. As a result, the Jewish Gymnastics Club served as testing ground for a distinct understanding of the body, self, and community. The two images below (figure 2.3 & 2.4), for example, provide visual representations of the gentleman athlete that members celebrated and promoted in the club. They also demonstrate how members used photography as a medium to both record a distinct look and cement homosocial bonds by sharing these images with members in the club. Figure 2.4 shows three members of the club, Albert Ziffer, L. Shoenmass, and J. Kornfeld, dressed in white tight-fitting club athletic apparel, sporting handlebar mustaches, and surrounded by a balance beam, dumbbells, and clubbells. Figure 2.5 offers a similar group picture. However, this image captures a different look that the club was also promoting among its members: the dapperly dressed gentlemen.

⁴¹ The president of the club in 1908, Maurice Abramowitz, was an employee of the Imperial Ottoman Bank. See, The Ottoman Bank Archive, PP 102. I want to thank Edhem Eldem for sharing this information with me.

⁴² For example, see Private Archive of Daniel Ziffer, Letter of Certificat de Service, Compagnie D'Exploitation des Chemins de Fer Orientaux [February 23, 1903]. According of the Certificat de Service, Albert Ziffer worked for the Imperial Ottoman Bank from April 23, 1901 until February 21, 1903. Also see, Private Archive of Daniel Ziffer, Letter of Certificat de Services Administratifs, Administration des Revenues Concédés à la Dette Publique Ottomane [March 1, 1919]. According to the Certificat de Services Administratifs, Albert Ziffer worked for the Public Debt Administration from February 21, 1903 until March 1, 1919. Also see, Private Archive of Daniel Ziffer, Letter from Conseil d'Administration la Dette Publique Ottomane's Secretary General [June 22, 1903]. Written in French, the letter states that Monsieur A. Ziffer has been named the secretary of the Austrian-Hungarian Delegate (Secrétaire de M. le Délégué Austro-Hongrois).



[Figure 2.3 & 2.4 Starting from left to right. J. Kornfeld, L. Shoenmass, Albert Ziffer of the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople posing in club attire (Private archive of Daniel Ziffer, 1907). Members of the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople taking a group photo. (Private Archive of Daniel Abraham, c. 1908)]

Membership records reveal that the Jewish Gymnastics Club functioned as a predominantly male space of sociability during its first ten years. This changed in 1906, when the club created a space for Jewish children and women in the association. Club administrators, such as Ziffer, promoted the idea that gymnastics and exercise were not only mediums through which a new Jewish man was created; they were fun, modern, leisure activities that all Jews—men, women, and children—should perform. By 1906, the club’s membership had exceeded 100 and included three separate divisions: a male gymnastics group with 98 members, a youth gymnastics group with 30 members, and a young women’s gymnastics group with twenty members.⁴³

While all members were encouraged to think of exercise as a means to build strong, healthy bodies, the club made sure to establish a degree of separation between men and women.

⁴³ “Israelitischer Turnverein Constantinopel,” *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (November 1906), p. 189. The division created modern gender and age-based divisions: eighteen was treated as the age in which youth became men and/or women.

Men and women exercised in separate areas in the gymnasium and had separate gymnastics instructors.⁴⁴ Women were also excluded from certain activities, such as all day excursions throughout the city, during which members hiked, explored nature, played soccer, sang songs, and engaged in other sorts of fun activities. For example, a description of the club's daylong excursion to the Belgrade forest stated, "women were not allowed to participate in these excursions and marches. While the excursion was beautiful and rewarding, it would have been difficult for women to join."⁴⁵

Spreading 'Jewish National Sentiment': Société Juive de Gymnastique, 'Maccabi' during the Second Constitutional Period

After the Young Turk revolution and the promulgation of the Law of Associations leaders of the Jewish Gymnastics Club decided to drastically expand the club's activities and redefine its self-image. On November 9, 1909, Maurice Abramowitz, the president of the club, turned the organization into an official Ottoman association by registering it with government officials.⁴⁶ Abramowitz proudly announced the registration of the club in Istanbul's French Jewish daily newspaper *L'Aurore* and introduced readers to the association's new name: the Jewish Gymnastics Society, Maccabi (Société Juive de Gymnastique, 'Maccabi').⁴⁷ The announcement featured the club's new name only in French; however, official letterhead included the name of the association in three languages: French (Société Juive de Gymnastique, 'Maccabi'), Ottoman Turkish (Makabi Musevi Jimnastik Cemiyeti), and Hebrew ('Aguda Le-Hit'amlut Maccabi Kushta). Maccabi also adopted a tweaked version of their original club symbol of the Star of David. Its new symbol included a laurel wreath, with the word Maccabi

⁴⁴ The male members of the club had five trainers, while the female members had only one. See, "Israelitischer Turnverein Constantinopel" *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (November 1906), p. 189.

⁴⁵ "Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (June 1908), p. 121. Despite the fact that women were not allowed to participate, the description of the event speaks of a future excursion "in which women will participate."

⁴⁶ *L'Aurore* (November 28, 1909), p. 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

written in Hebrew inside of the Star of David, a small dumbbell, and the word “peace” (*shalom*) written in Hebrew (figure 2.5).



[Figure 2.5 Maccabi's new club symbol during the Second Constitutional era. The Hebrew text reads “Maccabi Kushta [Constantinople] Shalom [Peace]!” and the date of its foundation, 1895 (Private archive of Daniel Ziffer)]

By changing the club’s name to Maccabi, club officials were establishing a link between the athletic activities of the association in Istanbul and an ancient strong Jewish past.⁴⁸ The name change reflected a broader trend among late-nineteenth-century Jewish thinkers in Europe and beyond, in which they identified and associated the Maccabees with heroic resistance, commitment, and Jewish strength.⁴⁹ In short, by exercising and developing robust, healthy bodies,

⁴⁸ Articles from *L’Aurore* demonstrate that Maccabi Constantinople did not have a monopoly on the name; among other cities in Europe, there were Maccabi organizations in Salonica, Philippopoli, Tatar-Pazardjik, and Yamboli. We also know that in 1909, these Maccabi clubs visited Istanbul and participated in athletic celebrations and events. For example, see “La Macbi de Bulgarie,” *L’Aurore* (July 30, 1909), p. 2; “A Propos des Macbi,” *L’Aurore* (August 3, 1909), pp. 1-2. Other than coordinating events and sharing epistemological assumptions about an abstract Jewish nation that needed to be rejuvenated and strengthened through physical training, there does not seem to have any structural connection between these Maccabi organizations until 1921, when the Maccabi World Union was established in Berlin. See, Nina S. Spiegel, *Embodying Hebrew Culture: Aesthetics, Athletics, and Dance in the Jewish Community of Mandate Palestine* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), p. 74.

⁴⁹ The Maccabees refer to the descendants of Mattathias who resisted pressure to incorporate polytheistic practices, regained the Temple in Jerusalem, and fought against and drove the Seleucids entirely from Palestine. See, Todd Presner’s discussion about the connection between the historical legacy of the Maccabees and the politics of Jewish regeneration in Germany. Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, p. 67.

members of the club in Istanbul were building a community of modern Maccabees in the city, which physically and spiritually resembled an ancient one.⁵⁰

The Ottoman government association registration records reveal that Maccabi was committed to a new goal during the Second Constitutional period: “the spread of gymnastics and the perpetuation of national Jewish sentiment (*hissiyat-ı milliye-i musevi*) among its members.”⁵¹ The club understood national Jewish sentiment to mean communal pride, awareness, and rejuvenation. Members stressed that the club’s commitment to using physical training as a tool to inculcate national sentiment among Jewish youth was in no way subversive of the unity of the Ottoman Empire. For example, these men published articles in the press describing themselves as Ottoman Jews (*Juifs ottomans*) and affirming their support of the empire,⁵² organized events to raise money for an Ottoman Navy fleet,⁵³ and participated in the anniversary celebrations throughout Istanbul for Sultan Mehmet V.⁵⁴

Official club postcards (figure 2.6), such as the one below, also reflect Maccabi’s concerted attempt to present itself as a Jewish association that was firmly committed to both the rejuvenation of Jewish youth and the Ottoman imperial project. The postcard juxtaposes two Maccabi flags: the one on the left is a flag with the crimson star-and-crescent symbol and the club’s name written in Ottoman Turkish; the one on the right is a flag with the Star of David and Maccabi’s name written in Hebrew. Separating the two flags is banner with the word Maccabi

⁵⁰ There are many references to the Jewish youth of Istanbul and the members of the Maccabi club as the real Maccabees (*Makkabaer*). For example, see “Der J.T.V. ‘Makkabi’ in Konstantinopel (Beichte über das XIV. Vereinsjahr 1908/09),” *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (August 1909), p. 149.

⁵¹ BAO, DH.EUM. AYŞ 64/48 [1916]; BAO, DH.EUM.6.Şb 53/78 [February 8, 1921]: “maksad-ı tesis: jimnastik ve saire hareket-i bedeniyenin tamimi ve azası meyanında hissiyat-ı milliye-i musevi’nin idamesinden ibarettir.”

⁵² For example, see “*Appel de la Société Maccabi*” *L’Aurore* (January 20, 1911), p. 2.

⁵³ “La Maccabi et la flotte,” *L’Aurore* (January 27, 1911), p. 2; “Société juive de gymnastique ‘Makkabi’ en faveur de la flotte,” *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (January 24, 1911), p. 2; *The Orient* (January 25, 1911), p. 6.

⁵⁴ “L’anniversaire imperial,” *L’Aurore* (May 2, 1911), p. 2.

written in Hebrew inside the Star of David. In addition to the banners, the Ottoman fezzes worn by its male members also conveyed an Ottoman club identity.



[Figure 2.6 Postcard of the Jewish Gymnastics Society, Maccabi and its sections: Pera, Hasköy, Ortaköy, Balat, and Sirkeci (Private Archive of Naim Güleriyüz, May 2, 1910)]

The spread of gymnastics and national sentiment were not separate endeavors, rather both were integrally connected. In order to cultivate an awareness of a larger Jewish community among Jewish young men and women through the performance of gymnastics and sports, Maccabi drastically expanded its activities. Over the course of two years (1908-1910), club officials established branches in different neighborhoods of Istanbul, which were considered to be the city's "main Jewish centers."⁵⁵ These included Balat and Hasköy on the Golden Horn, Kuzguncuk and Ortaköy on opposite sides of the Bosphorus, Haydar Paşa on the Marmara and Sirkeci in the Eminönü neighborhood on the Golden Horn;⁵⁶ and its original location in Pera, which Maccabi renamed the *Comité Central* or *Merkez-i Umumi*. Maccabi's new expansion led to a significant increase in the size of the organization. According to a February 1913 club report,

⁵⁵ Marie-Christine Bornes-Varol, "The Balat Quarter and its Image: a Study of a Jewish Neighborhood in Istanbul," in Avigdor Levy (ed.), *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1994), p. 634.

⁵⁶ In 1911, the organization also requested state authorization, which it did receive, to open separate branches in both Aleppo and Jerusalem. For the report on Aleppo, see BOA, DH-ID 126/9 [October 24, 1911]. According to *L'Aurore*, a Maccabi club was recently established in Aleppo in January 1911. *L'Aurore* (January 27, 1911), p. 2. For the report on Jerusalem, see, BOA, DH-ID 126/26 [November 23, 1911].

the number of its members had mushroomed to 851.⁵⁷ Not only did the size of the club grow, it also opened its ranks to Jewish youth from less privileged backgrounds in the city. By establishing separate branches, Jewish youth living in different neighborhoods spread throughout Istanbul, not just in Pera, joined the association, developed ethno-religious-based solidarity, and cultivated a novel understanding of the body, self, and community through, and in between, exercising, playing, listening to lectures, socializing, and reading in the club's various branches.

Members of the club received a Maccabi identity card written in French and Hebrew, which featured the name of and date in which the member was registered.⁵⁸ Membership enabled young men, and to a lesser extent, women access to the various amenities of the club's central and individual branch facilities.⁵⁹ Members exercised, played sports, and were exposed to modern ideas about personal hygiene in each branch. In addition to novel physical activities, Maccabi administrators also organized lectures and conferences on Hebrew poetry, literature, and Jewish history.⁶⁰ These events reflected the belief that there remained a strong connection between gymnastics, history, and communal rejuvenation. According to an article written by an unnamed club member in 1908, "History goes hand in hand with gymnastics—only through its careful study is it possible to strengthen the consciousness of our duty. Only in this way—through care of both parts—is it possible to train national-Jewish gymnasts."⁶¹ In order to ensure that the content of the presentations was understood, the activities were held in the language that the members of the different branches felt most comfortable speaking. For example, lectures

⁵⁷ The Wingate Institute (WI), AD2.02/31 [February 21, 1913].

⁵⁸ For example, see Franz Weinstein's identity card. The Wingate Institute, AD2.02/31 [c. 1912].

⁵⁹ Ibid., There were a total of 751 male and 100 female members in the association in February 1913. Only Pera and Hasköy had female members. The breakdown of each branches' membership is the following: Pera had 280 male and 53 female members; Hasköy had 106 male and 25 female members; Balat had 89 male and 0 female members; Kusguncuk had 105 male and 0 female members; Ortaköy had 75 male and 0 female members; and, Haydarpaşa had 93 male and 0 female members.

⁶⁰ For example, see "Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (July/August 1910), pp. 108-10; "La Société Maccabi," *L'Aurore* (November 7, 1910), p. 3.

⁶¹ "Brief aus Konstantinopel. Am Tischebeaw!," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (August/September 1908), p. 71.

presented at the Balat and Hasköy branches were generally given in Ladino,⁶² whereas French was the preferred language for events at Maccabi's central committee in Pera.⁶³ Thus, while the separate branches were all part of the larger Maccabi association, each one maintained a distinct identity. By attending the club's separate branches and central committee, members met, interacted, attended lectures, played sports, exercised, and socialized with Jews from different socio-economic backgrounds. Indeed, dedication to sports, corporeal development, and communal rejuvenation united members and helped them cultivate a shared Jewish associational identity.⁶⁴

“The Sons of Tattavla”: the Hercules Gymnastics Association

A little less than a year after the establishment of the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople, Ottoman Greek subjects (*Rum*) founded the Hercules Gymnastics Association (Gymnastikos Syllogos Eraklis) in October 1896.⁶⁵ Hercules was established in Tattavla, a heavily Greek populated neighborhood that served as a center of Ottoman Greek religious and cultural life in Istanbul.⁶⁶ The emergence of Hercules was connected to two developments: first, was the integration of gymnastics courses into the curriculum of Mekteb-i Sultani, Robert

⁶² For example, see *L'Aurore* (March 10, 1910), p. 3.

⁶³ For example, see *L'Aurore* (January 6, 1910), p. 3.

⁶⁴ For a discussion about Ottoman Jewish self-fashioning during the period, see Julia Phillips Cohen, “Oriental by Design: Ottoman Jews, Imperial Style, and the Performance of Heritage,” *American Historical Review* 119/2 (April 2014), pp. 364-398.

⁶⁵ “Rum” is the Ottoman-Turkish term for Greek Ottoman citizens. “Yunanlı” is the Ottoman-Turkish term for citizens of the Greek Kingdom. This subtle and important nuance is completely missed when using the word “Greek” to refer to both in English. For a more extension discussion, see Edhem Eldem, “Greece and the Greeks in Ottoman History and Turkish Historiography,” *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* (2009), pp. 27-40.

⁶⁶ Faithful Greeks living in the imperial center visited Tattavla annually for the first day of Great Lent, also known as “Clean Monday” (*Kathari Theftera*). As a result of Tattavla's significance to the celebration, “Clean Monday” came to be referred to as “Tattavla Day.” For example, see H.G. Dwight, “Greek Feasts,” *Subscriber's Magazine* (April 1914), pp. 486-487; H.G. Dwight, *Constantinople Old and New* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), p. 324.

College, and private Greek schools throughout the imperial capital;⁶⁷ and, second, was the revival of the modern Olympic Games in 1896.⁶⁸ Together, these transformations popularized the notion among many Greeks of the city that gymnastics and sports were modern activities that bourgeois people around the world considered important.



[Figure 2.7 Group photograph of the Hercules Gymnastics Association (Kurtuluş Sports Club Archive, undated)]

The founder of Hercules, Menelaos Karrotsieris, an Ottoman Greek notable from Tatavla, sought to harness and channel what *Takhydromos*, Istanbul’s most widely read daily Greek newspaper during the period, referred to as “the spirit born out of the recreation of the [Olympic] Games”⁶⁹ by creating a voluntary athletic association. The establishment of Hercules as a private, social space reflected the notion that young Ottoman Greek men from an expanding middle class

⁶⁷ Starting as early as the 1870s, Greek schools in Istanbul began integrating, albeit in non-systematic fashion, gymnastics into school curriculum. See, Georges Kokkinos, “La communauté grecque orthodoxe de l’Empire ottoman et la culture physique. Réactions et application graduelle,” *Etudes Balkaniques* (2004), pp. 93-126.

⁶⁸ It should be mentioned that the proliferation of Greek athletic clubs in Greece also coincided with the establishment of the modern Olympic Games. For example, see Christina Koulouri, “Voluntary Associations and New Forms of Sociability: Greek Sport Clubs at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” in Philip Carabott (ed.), *Greek Society in the Making, 1863–1913: Realities, Symbols and Visions* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 1997), p. 146.

⁶⁹ *Takhydromos* (April 15, 1906), p. 1.

considered gymnastics and sports more than just subjects of study in school;⁷⁰ they were social, middle-class activities around and through which young men could develop physical prowess and strength as well as cultivate self-control and discipline. Together, these characteristics and values were celebrated in Hercules as integral components of proper masculine bourgeois gentility as well as prerequisites to being an ideal member of the Greek community and citizen of the Ottoman Empire. In short, Hercules was envisioned as a testing ground of a community of modern, refined, and physically and morally sound young Greek men.

Hercules' primary goal, according to the club's first internal regulation (*kanonismos*), was the spread of physical training and sports throughout the neighborhood of Tatavla.⁷¹ One of the ways in which club officials sought to accomplish this goal was by building relations with schools in the neighborhood and providing them with a gymnastics instructor from the club to teach physical training courses.⁷² Integrating gymnastics into local schools served as an effective approach to popularizing sports and inculcating an appreciation of corporeal development; however, the primary focus was creating an autonomous space, an athletics club, where young Greek men could exercise, play sports, and develop their bodies.

Hercules provided its members with a variety of athletic activities, such as gymnastics, cycling, tracking, and football.⁷³ Central to the club's athletic activities was the gymnasium. Built in 1906, the gymnasium (figure 2.8) served as a testament to the club's progress and resources. Hercules' gymnasium had high ceilings, wood floors, and a full set of athletic

⁷⁰ For a discussion about this expanding middle class, see, Haris Exertzoglou, "The Cultural Uses of Consumptions: Class, Gender, and Nation in Ottoman Urban Center During the 19th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003), pp. 77-101.

⁷¹ *Kanonismos Tou En Tataoulis Gymnastikou Syllogou Hirakleous* (Constantinople, 1896), p. 3.

⁷² According to Panfilu Melisinu's early twentieth-century history of Tatavla, Hercules provided a gymnastics instructor free of charge to two of Tavla's schools. Panfilos Episkoposu Melisinos, *Ta Tatavla: Iti istoria ton Tatavlon* (Istanbul: Koromila Tipis, 1913), pp. 210-11. In fact the relationship between Hercules and Tatavla's Greek schools was so strong that one of the schools served as the association's base of operations after it was founded in 1896. See, *Takhydromos*, 1906 (April 15, 1906), p. 1.

⁷³ *Kanonismos Tou En Tataoulis Gymnastikou Syllogou Hirakleous* (Athens, 1906), p. 3.

equipment from Germany.⁷⁴ Club members were granted unrestrained access to the gym, while students from the neighborhood, who were not members, were able to frequent the facility for free at specified times during the day, granted they were accompanied and supervised by one of Hercules' physical education instructors (*didaskalos*).⁷⁵

The gymnasium served as a modern, indoor space where members of the club exercised and trained their bodies. However, the club also used it as a social space. Conferences, classes, exhibitions (*teleti*), as well as other social events were organized in the gymnasium.⁷⁶ Administrators supported and encouraged these social events in the club, but made sure to point out that discussions about “religion or the state” were unequivocally forbidden.⁷⁷ Members thus experimented with how to walk, talk, dress, and socialize as well as cultivated a middle-class masculine identity by attending and participating in these activities.



[Figure 2.8 An athletic exhibition inside of the Hercules Gymnastics Association's gymnasium (Kurtulus Sports Club Archive, not dated)]

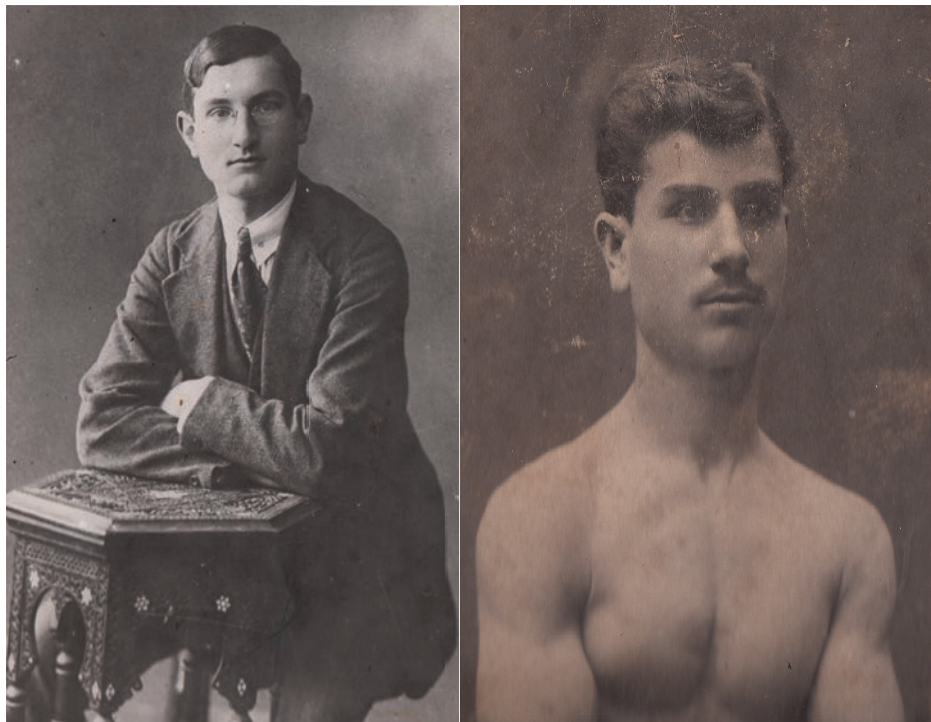
⁷⁴ *Takhydromos* (April 15, 1906), p. 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁶ *Kanonismos Tou En Tataoulis Gymnastikou Syllogou Hirakleous* (Constantinople, 1896), p. 4.

⁷⁷ See, *Kanonismos Tou En Tataoulis Gymnastikou Syllogou Hirakleous* (Constantinople, 1903), p. 11.

Central to this identity was a distinct aesthetic and look. Members of Hercules treated portable and small sized photographs of themselves as visual representations of a new conception of masculinity. The two images below (figure 2.9 & 2.10) provide visual representations of two interconnected tastes and looks of the refined gentleman athlete that club members celebrated and promoted. Like many of the photos the club members preserved in photograph albums, and stored in Hercules' library, one of the images has the member's name written on it in Greek and the other does not. Figure 2.9 depicts I. Makropoulos sitting on a chair, wearing a white button down shirt, dark tie, and a matching vest and jacket. He has neatly parted hair and is clean-shaven. This image presents a clean, tidy, fashionable, and western sartorial taste. Figure 2.10 celebrates a different look. The photograph extols the unknown club member's beautiful semi-nude body by capturing him flexing his shaved upper chest.



[Figure 2.9 & 2.10 Starting from left to right. I. Makropoulos, a member of the Hercules Gymnastics Association (Kurtuluş Sports Club Archive, October 10, 1915). An unknown member (Kurtuluş Sports Club Archive, c. 1906)]

Together, the refined masculine look and aesthetic that club members cultivated, the homosocial bonds developed, and the social functions and amenities offered inside the club helped ensure that residents of the neighborhood considered Hercules to be a modern space.

These views were not confined to the neighborhood, but were also expressed in the daily press. *Tachydromos*, for example, praised Hercules' amenities and described its gymnasium as "the finest in the city." Selim Sırrı, who maintained close relations with members of Hercules, also praised Hercules for helping cultivate "an interest in and love of physical training."⁷⁸

Similar to the Jewish Gymnastics Club and the other Greek voluntary associations established in Tatavla and other areas of Istanbul, Hercules projected an exclusive Greek communal identity. Such an identity, which historian Haris Exertzoglou states "was neither related inevitably to irredentism nor was it necessarily incompatible with loyalty to the Ottoman state,"⁷⁹ attracted many young Greeks who wanted to exercise and socialize in a Greek civic space. Hercules projected a distinct Greek identity through a variety of ways. First was through its name. The name *Gymnastikos Syllogos Eraklis* conveyed to both Greek and non-Greek speakers the idea that Hercules was Greek.⁸⁰ In addition to the club's name, the use of the Greek as the language of Hercules' internal regulations and records also conveyed the idea that Hercules was a Greek communal club.⁸¹

Two other factors supported the notion that Hercules was a Greek bourgeois space. First, was the background of Hercules' founders and board members. These men were local Ottoman Greek notables, teachers, dentists, financiers, and merchants, many of whom also played administrative roles in other local Greek educational institutions.⁸² Second, was the special

⁷⁸ Selim Sırrı, "İçtimai: Memleketimizdeki Rumlar Nasıl Çalışıyor?," *Terbiye ve Oyun* (October 14, 1911), p. 71.

⁷⁹ Exertzoglou, "The Cultural Uses of Consumptions," p. 89.

⁸⁰ The decision to name the club after Hercules, the son of Zeus and Alcmena who exemplified ancient Greek strength, beauty, and masculinity, is also significant. By drawing inspiration from ancient Greek mythology, Hercules' founders consciously sought to establish a connection between the club's activities and antiquity. Hercules was not unique in this regard. Greek sports clubs in both Greece and the Ottoman Empire revisited the legacies of antiquity when choosing club names. Alexander Kitroeff, *Wrestling with the Ancients: Modern Greek Identity and the Olympics* (New York: Greekworks, 2004), pp. 82-3.

⁸¹ Nevertheless, Hercules' internal regulations stipulate that it made no distinction in terms of its members' nationality (*ethnos*) or religion (*thriskeia*). *Kanonismos Tou En Tataoulis Gymnastikou Syllogou Hirakleous* (Constantinople, 1903), pp. 3-4.

⁸² "Les écoles grecques de Tatavla," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (March 5, 1907), p. 2.

relationship between Hercules and the Greek embassy. The current Greek ambassador served as the honorary president of Hercules,⁸³ while the club maintained an affiliation with the embassy.⁸⁴ The Greek Ambassador to the Porte, Jean Gryparis, and the staff at the embassy maintained close relations with Hercules and often frequented events that the club organized.⁸⁵ Thus, Hercules members cultivated relations with both Ottoman Greeks and Greek citizens living in the city.

Together, Hercules' name, affiliation with the Greek embassy, bourgeois identity, and amenities attracted many Greeks from the community. Hercules served as an exclusive space of male sociability where Greek youth trained their bodies, attended conferences, read the latest publications, socialized, built a sense of community, and cultivated bonds with other like-minded Greek young men. Membership in Hercules offered young men novel opportunities. It facilitated and legitimized the appearance of a young Greek man in Istanbul's expanding public sphere wearing his striking uniform, which consisted of a white sleeveless shirt with a sash and the club's Greek acronyms (Gamma Sigma Eta) sewn onto it (figure 2.6), and performing novel and physically challenging activities.

By performing physical activities and wearing club uniforms, members proclaimed their modern, middle-class identity and affiliation to a Greek association. Together, this affiliation and commitment to middle-class values served as cultural capital and enabled members to cultivate relations with other Greek voluntary associations in Tatabla by frequenting social functions and events.

⁸³ *Kanonismos Tou En Tataoulis Gymnastikou Syllogou Hirakleous* (Constantinople, 1903).

⁸⁴ Both Istanbul's *Takhydromos* and *Le Moniteur orientale* highlighted the significance of the relationship between Hercules and the embassy. According to the former, Hercules was "placed under the *direct supervision* and *protection* of the Greek embassy [emphasis mine]," whereas the latter asserted that the association was brought "under the *indirect protection* (*la protection indirecte*) of the diplomatic mission of Greece [emphasis mine]." *Takhydromos*, 1906 (April 15, 1906), p. 1; "Les Lauréat Constantinopolitains des Jeux Olympiques," *Le Moniteur orientale* (April 15, 1906), p. 1.

⁸⁵ "Le Syllogue Hermès," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (January 1, 1907), p. 2.

Istanbul's English Merchants and the Kadikeui Football Club

Hercules and Maccabi were communal, sports clubs, whose early athletic activities initially consisted of physical training and gymnastics. Gradually, both associations also started incorporating team sports, the most important being football. Although this is a general tendency that many other athletic associations in the city demonstrated, there were other clubs that solely focused on football. These latter clubs played a significant role in spreading physical culture, popularizing competitive sports, and providing a space where young men developed homosocial bonds and worked out novel ideas about sportsmanship and masculinity.

“Football,” according to *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, “has been played in Constantinople for a large number of years, but its successful introduction really dates to 1895/97 during which period many matches were contested with H.M.S. Cockatrice, Melita and other dispatch boats.”⁸⁶ While British sailors stationed aboard the British gunboats in Istanbul were the first to play the game in the city,⁸⁷ it did not take very long for other British citizens living permanently in Istanbul to also develop an affinity for the game.⁸⁸ According to descriptions in the Ottoman-Turkish press, “British merchants” (*ticaretle meşgul olan İngilizler*) were particularly interested in football as a physical activity that they could play during their leisure time.⁸⁹

Early-twentieth-century telegrams from the chief commander of Üsküdar (*Üsküdar Kumandanı*) describe the popularity of football, which he referred to as “cannon/ball play” (*top laba*), being played by both male and female “British citizens” (*İngiliz tebaa*) from Moda,

⁸⁶ “Constantinople Association Football League,” *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (December 1, 1906), p. 609.

⁸⁷ “Naval Force of Powers at Constantinople,” in *Parliamentary Debates Authorised Edition, Commencing with the Third Session of the Twenty-Sixth Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Waterlow & Sons Limited, 1897), p. 717.

⁸⁸ “Spor: Haftalık Musahabe: Galatasaray-Fenerbahçe Futbol,” *Tasvir-i Efkar* (Mayis 21, 1913), p. 5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* It is important to mention that in addition to Football, English residents of Istanbul during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century also played Cricket. For example, see “Constantinople Cricket League,” *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (June 23, 1906), p. 289.

Tarabya, and Beyoğlu in Kadiköy's Kuşdili field.⁹⁰ These British citizens played a significant role in organizing football matches and popularizing the game among upper class young men, British and non-British alike, in the city. According to an article describing the growing popularity of the game in 1906, "the young generation thinks of nothing else but football, and many streets and squares in Kadikeui, more especially, are the battle ground of hard fought matches between opposing factions."⁹¹

Sensing the burgeoning interest in football among foreign residents of the city, James La Fontaine and Horace Armitage,⁹² two English men from what *The Levant Herald* described as the "Moda British colony" in Istanbul, opted to create a space where young men could exercise and play football.⁹³ In 1902, Fontaine and Armitage established the Kadikeui Football Club.⁹⁴ The name Kadikeui was an Anglicized rendition of Kadiköy, an ethnically and religiously mixed upper class neighborhood located on the northern shore of the Sea of Marmara on the Asian side of the city. The football club attracted men from the area, who shared an interest in exercising and playing football. Kadikeui offered these men an organized bourgeois space where they could socialize, have fun, and display their commitment to modern values and activities by playing soccer while wearing dashing white club uniforms (figure 2.11).

⁹⁰ BOA, Y.PRK-ASK 172/114 [August 15, 1901]; BOA, Y.PRK-ASK 172/124 [August 15, 1901].

⁹¹ *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (December 1, 1906), p. 609.

⁹² James La Fontaine and Horace Armitage came from English merchant families living in Istanbul. The La Fontaine family owned a series of business ventures, namely Edward La Fontaine & Sons and La Fontaine Brothers Limited and had roots in Istanbul dating back to at least 1845. See, Sidney E. P. Nowill, *Constantinople and Istanbul: 72 Years of Life in Turkey* (Leicestershire: Matador, 2011), p. 9; "Circular: Edward La Fontaine & Sons" and "La Fontaine Brothers Limited," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (January 3, 1911), p. 1.

⁹³ *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (December 1, 1906), p. 609.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*



[Figure 2.11 Members of the Kadikeui Club posing for a team picture (Galatasaray Museum Archive, Album 22, c. 1903)]

Kadikeui developed a reputation as an English club. However, the club membership was not homogeneous. The team included English and Greek young men, and also featured one Turkish player, Hasan Fuat. This encouraged Istanbul's English and French press to describe Kadikeui as being an "international" club.⁹⁵ Although Kadikeui initially functioned as an "international" football club, internal strife led some of its English members to leave the club and establish the Moda Football Club in 1903.⁹⁶ Over the course of the next three years, the makeup of Moda became more ethnically homogenous. This transformation led writers during the period to describe Moda as a "national institution," which attracted upper class English men living in the surrounding area.⁹⁷ In doing so, the club's homogenous ethno-religious makeup shared many similarities with Maccabi and the Hercules.

⁹⁵ "Football: Association Football in Constantinople: Letter to the Editor of the 'Levant Herald,'" *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (March 27, 1908), pp. 93-94.

⁹⁶ Erdoğan Arıpınar (ed.), *Türk Futbol Tarihi, 1904-1991: 1. Cilt* (İstanbul: Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu, 1992), p. 14.

⁹⁷ *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (March 27, 1908), p. 93. Cadikeui also became ethnically homogenous. According to an article in *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, "Cadikeui lost its international character by the withdrawal of its English president and two of its most prominent players, both English, and became practically a national Greek Club even to the extent of changing its name from the Cadikeui A.F.C. [Athletic Football Club] to that of the 'Potostairikkos Omilos Kadikeui.'"

Creating “*Bons sportsmen*” and “the First Turkish Club in Our Country”: the Galatasaray Physical Training Club

By the turn of the century, many Muslim Istanbulites were developing an appreciation for physical culture. Like Ottoman Greeks and Jews as well as foreigners living Istanbul, Muslims embraced the notion that gymnastics and sports were fun, modern activities that could be used to build strong, healthy bodies and cultivate masculine virtue and honor. As a result, many concluded that it was imperative that they also create private spaces where Muslim youth could exercise, play sports, and socialize. It was in this context that Ali Sami [Yen], a student at the Imperial School, founded the Galatasaray Football Club (Galatasaray Futbol Kulübü).⁹⁸

Students at the Imperial School established Galatasaray as a football club in October 1905. Although football was not part of the school’s curriculum during the period, many young men on campus were first exposed to the sport when an English student brought a ball on campus.⁹⁹ An early-twentieth-century Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) survey of Istanbul’s various athletic associations describes the event: “All the students at the Imperial School became fascinated with the idea of kicking the ball and soon windows were broken.”¹⁰⁰ Not only were the students enthusiastic about playing a sport associated with Europe on campus, they also wanted to create a football team. Not everyone was as supportive of the idea, however. According to the same survey, the initiative was met with state opposition, which seems to have been caused by a bit of misunderstanding.

Sultan [Abdül]Hamid’s spies reported to him that, the Galata Serai students have balls and play with Englishmen. There is no Turkish word for ‘football,’ so the

⁹⁸ The two other predominantly, although not exclusively, Turkish clubs to emerge in Istanbul during the Hamidian era are the Beşiktaş Ottoman Gymnastics Club (*Beşiktaş Osmanlı Jimnastik Kulübü*) and the Fenerbahçe Sports Club (*Fenerbahçe Spor Kulübü*). The Young Turk revolution in 1908 and the promulgation of the Law of Associations in 1909 created a context in which Muslims throughout the imperial capital, in areas like Vefa, Süleymaniye, Anadoluhisarı, and Beykoz, established other athletic clubs.

⁹⁹ The Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Box 16 Folder: Recreational Surveys 1922-26. Recreational Survey of Athletic Clubs: History.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Turks used the word ‘tope,’ now tope translated literally, means ‘cannon.’ Sultan [Abdül]Hamid thus read in the report, that the Galata Serai students have cannons and are with Englishmen. He then ordered the Minister of Gendarmes to arrest the Turkish students. A long explanation was given and the officials released the students realising that the ‘tope’ was a harmless cannon, allowed the boys to play the game.¹⁰¹

After it was established that the students did not harbor any nefarious political motives, Ali Sami and his friends set out to establish a separate organization, a sports club, for students and graduates of Mekteb-i Sultani who were interested in playing football and regularly exercising together. In October 1905, they declared the establishment of the Galatasaray Football Club.¹⁰² By establishing a sports club for students and graduates, Sami sought to emulate, what he described as, the relationship between “the large universities of Europe” and sporting associations.¹⁰³ Galatasaray was to be affiliated with Mekteb-i Sultani, but separate from it. Sami intended Galatasaray to restrictive active membership, “to the extent possible, to students of the Lycée Imperial Ottoman de Galata-Serai,” albeit still providing an autonomous space where young men who were not Mekteb-i Sultani graduates could exercise and play football.¹⁰⁴

Galatasaray’s membership records reveal that by the outbreak of World War I, over 250 young men had become members of the club. The majority of these them had been exposed to a culture of athleticism at Mekteb-i Sultani as well as sporting events around the city.¹⁰⁵ As students and/or graduates of Mekteb-i Sultani, members of Galatasaray were socialized in an elite educational and cultural space that instilled a particular identity and sense of community. These young men kept up to date with Istanbul’s latest fashion, were fluent in at least Ottoman

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² GMA, Reglement General du ‘Galata-Serai’ A.F.C. /Galatasaray ‘Futbol’ Kulübü Nizamname Umumiyesi.

¹⁰³ GMA, GSM-KL-5, Ali Samy, Plan d’action et but vise par le ‘galata-sarai’ foot-ball club [c. 1910-11], p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Out of the 258 members of the club, 191 had studied at the Imperial School. GMA, Aza Defteri.

Turkish and French, were exposed to similar cultural and social activities inside and outside of the confines of school, and came from upper- and middle-class families.

While studying at Mekteb-i Sultani certainly helped a young man become a member of Galatasaray, it did not ensure it. In order to become a member of the club, young men needed to demonstrate a commitment to sports, exercise, and a masculine physical culture. The majority of the men who displayed this commitment and became club members were Muslims, many of whom were lawyers, doctors, teachers, translators, writers, bankers, journalists, as well as government tax and education inspectors.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Galatasaray was neither religiously nor ethnically homogenous. Non-Muslim students at the Imperial school, such as Migirdich Dikranian, an Armenian, Boris Nikoloff, a Bulgarian, and Tullius Bey, a Greek, also joined the association.¹⁰⁷ Not all of the non-Muslim members were students and Ottoman subjects. For example, Horace Armitage, who played a major role in organizing football matches in Kadıköy, as well as Joseph and Emil Oberli, a German electrical engineer and banker respectively, were also Galatasaray members.¹⁰⁸

Despite the lack of religious homogeneity, Istanbul's multiethnic and multireligious denizens thought of Galatasaray as a Turkish association. Ali Sami's article entitled "The History of the Galatasaray Club," which was published in 1913 in *İdman (Sports)*, an Ottoman-Turkish physical culture magazine, left little ambiguity about what he considered Galatasaray's communal affiliation and identity by describing it as a Turkish club. He boasted that Galatasaray was "the first Turkish club in our country" (*memleketimizde ilk Türk futbol kulübü*).¹⁰⁹ Sami was not the only one to maintain this perspective. For example, Cemi Bey, the founder of *İdman*,

¹⁰⁶ GMA, *Aza Defteri*.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. The memoir of Ruşen Eşref [Ünaydın], a member of the club, describes the Bulgarian, English, and German players on Galatasaray's roster during its early years of competition. Ruşen Eşref Ünaydın, *Galatasaray ve Futbol – Hatıralar* (İstanbul: Yenilik Basımevi, 1957), p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Ali Sami, "Galatasaray Kulübünün Tarihçesi," *İdman* (May 28, 1913), p. 9.

described Galatasaray as one of the most important Turkish athletic associations in Istanbul.¹¹⁰ By 1923, the notion that Galatasaray served as “the first Turkish club in the country” became axiomatic: Galatasaray even printed the statement on its official letterhead, albeit slightly tweaked for new republican sensibilities; the 1923 letterhead reads: “the first Turkish club in Turkey” (*Türkiye’de ilk Türk futbol kulübü*).¹¹¹

While Sami openly referred to Galatasaray as a Turkish club, others described it as an Ottoman (*Osmanlı*) one. Physical culture enthusiasts writing in the Ottoman-Turkish daily press referred to Galatasaray as both an Ottoman and Turkish club. According to an article describing a football match between Galatasaray and the Fenerbahçe Sports Club, which was published in *Tasvir-i Efkar*’s new sports column entitled “Sport” in 1913, Galatasaray was an “Ottoman youth club” (*genç Osmanlı kulübü*) that “maintains an important position in the world of Ottoman sports (*Osmanlı spor aleminde*).”¹¹² Members of Galatasaray also adopted this nomenclature. The minutes of the club’s meetings, for example, demonstrate that members used the phrase “the development of Ottoman Sports Clubs” (*Osmanlı spor kulüplerin terakkisi*) in reference to Galatasaray and other associations, whose members were predominantly Muslim.¹¹³ As a result, the use of Ottoman as an adjective to describe Galatasaray and an abstract world of sports in the imperial domains reflects a broader practice in which Ottoman Muslims used the terms Ottoman and Turkish interchangeably during the early twentieth century.¹¹⁴

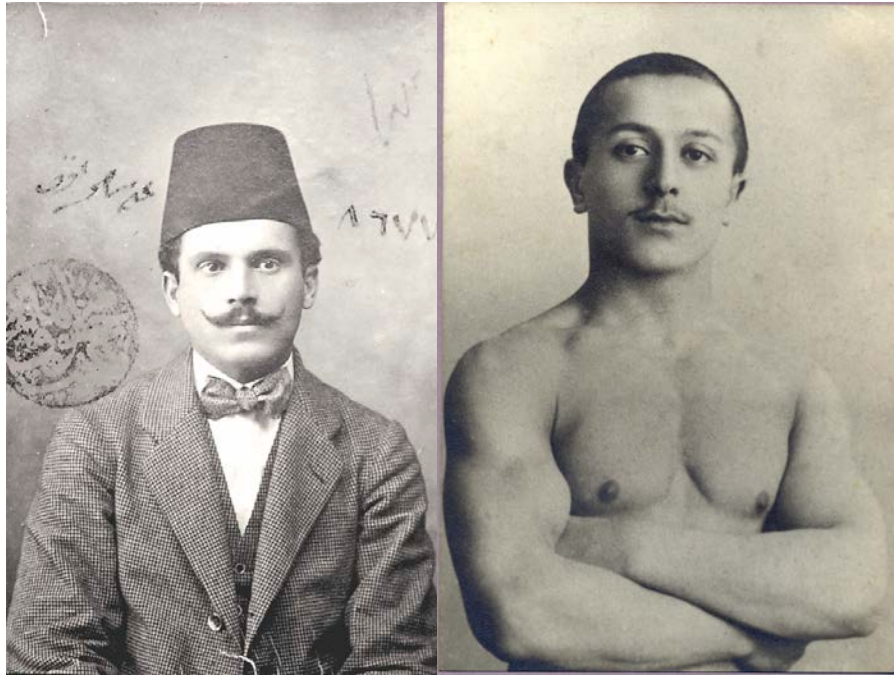
¹¹⁰ Cemi Bey, “Bir Kaç Söz,” *İdman* (May 28, 1913), p. 1. Cemi Bey also mentioned the importance of Fenerbahçe.

¹¹¹ For example, see GMA, GSM-KL-2 Galatasaray letterhead [December 3, 1923].

¹¹² “Spor: Haftalık Musahabe. Galatasaray-Fenerbahçe Futbol,” *Tasvir-i Efkar* (Mayis 21 1913), p. 5.

¹¹³ GMA, *Galatasaray Karar Defteri* [January 24, 1914].

¹¹⁴ See, Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores*, p. 16; Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 113.



[Figure 2.12 & 2.13 Two members of the Galatasaray Physical Training Club. From left to right: Ali Sami, founder and president of the Galatasaray Physical Training Club (Galatasaray Museum Archive Album 42, undated). An unnamed member of the Galatasaray Physical Training Club (Galatasaray Museum Archive Album 42, undated)]

Becoming a member of Galatasaray was an enticing prospect for upper- and middle-class young men. It promised them the opportunity of belonging to a fraternity of men that was committed to personal development through exercising, playing sports, and socializing. Cultivating physical strength, athletic prowess, and a distinct aesthetic were defining characteristics of membership in Galatasaray. Like in other clubs, members of Galatasaray treated photographs as a means to record and express their commitment to this new conception of masculinity. The two images above (figure 2.12 & 2.13) offer visual representations of the gentleman athlete, whose masculinity was defined in relation to his clothes and body. Figure 2.12 shows Sami, the founder and president of the club, with shaved cheeks and a handlebar moustache, sitting on a chair, and wearing a fez, starched white shirt, bowtie, and matching vest and jacket. This image presents a refined, sartorial look. Figure 2.13 celebrates a different aesthetic. The photograph extols the unknown member's defined upper body by capturing him flexing his shaved upper chest and crossing his arms.

When Galatasaray opened its doors in October 1905, it functioned exclusively as a football club.¹¹⁵ Thus, football was envisioned as the primary activity through which members could cultivate the proper masculine values and etiquette needed to become, what Sami referred to as, a “good sportsman” (*bons sportsmen*).¹¹⁶ A good sportsman meant embodying the characteristics of a modern, civilized man, which included honesty, discipline, respect for one’s opponent and the objective rules of the sport, graciousness in winning and losing, and being a team player. Members of the club were given the opportunity to display their commitment to these values by competing against different football clubs, such as Kadikeuy and Moda.¹¹⁷ The majority of these matches took place in Kadiköy’s Kuşdili field prior to 1908 and the Union Club after 1908, both of which were regarded as novel upper- and middle-class spaces where many of Istanbul’s modern denizens spent their leisure time.

Football was not the only activity through which members developed into ideal young men. Members of the club were exposed to a variety of other athletic activities, such as field hockey, water polo, boxing, scouting, as well as tug-of-war. Together, these activities enabled members to develop bonds with one another, cultivate novel understandings about the body, hygiene, and cleanliness, and distinct views about the connection between strength, physical prowess, and masculinity.¹¹⁸ Each activity also exposed members to different parts of the city. For example, as a member of Galatasaray’s hockey and tug-of-war team, young men were able

¹¹⁵ The club’s official name was the Galatasaray Football Club (*‘galata-sarai’ foot-ball club/Galatasaray Futbol kulübü*).

¹¹⁶ GMA, GSM-KL-5, Ali Samy, Plan d’action et but vise par le ‘galata-sarai’ foot-ball club [c. 1910-11], p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Galatasaray’s football team started regularly competing in football matches when it joined the Constantinople Football League in 1906. In 1906, Galatasaray started competing in the Constantinople Football League, which had been established the year prior in 1905. After 1908, Galatasaray developed into competitive and formidable force. Galatasaray won the Constantinople Association Football League’s championship shield in 1908, 1909, and 1910. Chapter 5 discusses the competitive and performative aspect of sports in Istanbul.

¹¹⁸ The section entitled “The Different Sports that Members of Galatasaray Established in the Imperial Domains” (*Galatasaraylılar’ın Memalik-i Osmaniyyede Tesis Edecekleri Muhtalif İdmanlar*) of a larger untitled notebook provides a list of the dates in which these branches and teams were formed. For example, boxing (1907), water polo (1910), hockey (1911), scouting (1912), and tug-of-war (1913).

to explore and socialize in new upper- and middle-class social venues, such as the Skating Palace, which was located in the heart of Pera. The expansion of the club's activities and the creation of these various teams and athletic branches coincided with the Galatasaray changing its official title from a "football" to a "physical training" club. Thus, when Galatasaray registered as an association in August 1913, it did so as the "Galatasaray Physical Training Club" (Galatasaray Terbiye-i Bedeniye Kulübü).¹¹⁹

Members developed a sense of fraternity by playing sports outside as well socializing and training their bodies inside. Because of Galatasaray's affiliation with the Imperial School, club members were granted access to the school's various amenities. The most significant of these were the school's modern showers and gymnasium. The gymnasium provided members with a spacious indoor facility where they could exercise throughout the year. The gymnasium's complete set of gymnastic equipment and weights was an added bonus, which members used in order to develop their bodies.¹²⁰ After working out and sweating, they washed up in the school's showers and changed into their regular attire.

In addition to the gymnasium, members also gathered in the top floor of the Etoile Cinema in Pera on Grande Rue de Péra, which the club rented as its private salon.¹²¹ The salon served as a space where members played billiards, socialized, and read. The salon's library owned a diverse collection of French and Ottoman-Turkish publications, all of which were

¹¹⁹ According to Galatasaray's official certificate (*ilmühaber*) of registration, the club's founding objective (*maksad-i tescisi*) was "[t]o serve the development and spread of physical training among the graduates and frequent visitors of Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultani and to enroll and register those who are younger than twenty years old." GMA, Galatasaray Terbiye-i Bedeniye Kulübü's official certificate of registration [August 14, 1913].

¹²⁰ Mekteb-i Sultani provided Galatasaray with a considerable amount of institutional support during its formative years, especially from 1909 until 1910, when Tevfik Fikret, who was a celebrated intellectual and poet, served as the thirteenth head of the institution. For example, see Şenol & Gökaçtı, *Yüzyılın Öyküsü Galatasaray Spor Kulübü 1905-2008*, p. 52; *Mekteb-i Sultani Sicil Defteri*, p. 2.

¹²¹ Şenol & Gökaçtı, *Yüzyılın Öyküsü Galatasaray Spor Kulübü 1905-2008*, p. 52. Galatasaray seems to have received confiscated boxing and billiard equipment (*bilyardolar ve boks edevat*) from the Darülfünun Muduriyet Umumisi. The material was confiscated by the law branch (*hukuk şubesi*), which Ali Sami was affiliated with. Ali Sami entered Darülfünun's Law School (*Hukuk Mektebi*) in 1911. BOA, MK.MKT 1212/73 [October 17, 1915].

considered part of a broader late Ottoman sports culture.¹²² These publications included French and Ottoman-Turkish sporting magazines,¹²³ Selim Sırrı's educational books about sports,¹²⁴ scouting pamphlets,¹²⁵ gymnastics manuals,¹²⁶ and exercise booklets that were used in Ottoman military schools.¹²⁷ Galatasaray's library enabled members to develop their own ideas about physical culture, the significance of sports, and corporeal development. It also demonstrated that the association encouraged young men to cultivate both their bodies and minds.

Conviviality also played a significant role in developing physically fit and socially refined young men. Events, such as the anniversary celebrations of the Ottoman Beşiktaş Club (Osmanlı Beşiktaş Kulübü), offer insights into the various social gathering that members from the Galatasaray club attended. On May 10, 1911, the Beşiktaş Ottoman Gymnastics Club sent a handwritten letter in Ottoman Turkish inviting Galatasaray's honorable members (*aza-ı muhterem*) to participate in Beşiktaş's anniversary celebration at the club's facility in Akaretler, a neighborhood in Beşiktaş.¹²⁸ Members of Galatastasaray were not the only people invited to participate in the festivities. Government officials like Kani Bey, the governor of Beyoğlu, Naci Bey, the Military College's Regiment Commander, Behçet Bey, the Military College's Fencing

¹²² GMA, *Galatasaray Terbiye-i Bedeniye Kulübü Karar Defteri: 1913-1930* [August 13, 1913], p. 1; GMA, *Galatasaray Terbiye-i Bedeniye Kulübü Eşya Mevcut Defteri* [December 3, 1923], pp. 4-5. The club owned a total of 62 physical culture books, newspapers, and magazines: there were 38 Ottoman-Turkish publications and 24 French publications.

¹²³ *La vie au grand air, La Vie au grand air, L'aviron, La revue olympique, Compte rendu des jeux olympiques, İdman, and Tasvir-i Efkar*

¹²⁴ Selim Sırrı, *Terbevi-i İsveç Usulü ve Mektep Oyunları* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Ebu Ziya, 1911), Selim Sırrı, *Spor, İsveç Usulu Spor* (uç kısım); Selim Sırrı, *Doğru Sözcükler* (İstanbul: Tefeyyüz kitaphanesi, c. 1916); Selim Sırrı, *İsveç Ahvali Terbiye-i Bedeniye ve Mektep Oyunları, Tebiyevi ... Çocuk Jimnastikleri, Terbiye ve Oyun*.

¹²⁵ M. Sami, *İzci Rehberi* (İstanbul: Zarafet Matbaası, 1915).

¹²⁶ Ali Faik, *Jimnastik Yahud Riyazat-ı Bedeniye* (İstanbul: Mahmut Bey, 1891); Ahmet Nazmi & Bekir Sıdkı, *Yeni Usul Osmanlı Terbiye-i Bedeniye Dersleri* (İstanbul: Necm-i İstikbal Matbaası, 1911).

¹²⁷ These include the following: Mehmed Fetgeray Şuenu, *Terbiye-i Bedeniye Yahut Yirmi Hareketle Kendi Kendine Jimnastik, Harbiye Mektebi, İdman Talimi* (c. 1905), Doktor Fahri Mehmet, *Sihhi ve Deva-i Oda Jimnastik* (İstanbul: Asaduryan, 1894), Bahriye Nezareti, *Donanmanın Terbiye-i Bedeniye Talimatnamesi* (no date of publication).

¹²⁸ GMA, GSM-KL-5, Letter from Osmanlı Jimnastik Kulübü Beşiktaş to Galatasaray and their Honorable Members (*aza-ı muhterem*) [May 10, 1911].

Instructor, who was also a member of Beşiktaş, as well as important other figures in the world of late Ottoman physical culture attended Beşiktaş's anniversary celebrations over the course of the next few years.¹²⁹



[Figure 2.14 Members of the Galatasaray Physical Physical Training Club posing for a group photograph in Adnan Bey's garden in Paşabahçe (June 8, 1913)]



[Figure 2.15 Members traveling up the Bosphorus on a ferry to Paşabahçe (June 8, 1913)]

Members also established social bonds and cultivated distinct masculine norms during the various social excursions that they made throughout the city. Figure 2.14, for example, reveals one such social outing. The image depicts club members posing for a group photograph outside in a garden in Paşabahçe, an upscale neighborhood on the Asian side of the city. Their

¹²⁹ “Şehrimizde İdman: Beşiktaş Jimnastik Kulübünde,” *Sabah* (May 30, 1914), p. 5.

jackets and ties, moustaches, neatly combed hair, and fezzes present a clean, tidy, fashionable, and western look and a distinct bourgeois notion of masculinity. Like many other upper- and middle-class Istanbulites during the period, these young men escaped Istanbul's summer heat by spending the day outside in the cool shade, conversing, enjoying food and drink, and relaxing.

While spending time socializing in Paşabahçe was the main objective, the journey was also significant. Figure 2.15 depicts club members on the ferry that they took up the Bosphorus to Paşabahçe. Sitting around and posing for the camera on the back of the ferry, these young men were developing, performing, and displaying their commitment to being modern, civilized Ottoman men. Indeed, the image also reveals that while many young men became members of an athletic club in order to exercise, train their bodies, and play sports, the cultivation of homosocial bonds by exploring Istanbul's expanding public sphere was also a key motivating factor.

Armenian Bodies, Pagan Gods, and Protestant Connections: the Kuruçeşme Artavazt Athletic Club and the Armenian Dork Club

During the early twentieth century, Armenian Istanbulites also created voluntary athletic associations as spaces where Armenian youth could exercise and play sports. These sports clubs were not confined to a single area of the city, rather they mushroomed in different neighborhoods spread throughout the imperial capital, such as Beşiktaş, Pera, Nişantaşı, Kumkapı, Makriköy, Şişli, Pangaltı, Balat, Kuruçeşme, Kadıköy, as well as Üsküdar.¹³⁰ This section will focus on two associations, the Kuruçeşme Artavazt Athletic Club (Kurucheshme Marmnamarzagan

¹³⁰ There were many Armenian athletic associations established throughout Istanbul and beyond during the Second Constitutional era. *Marmnamarz*, for example, provided the following list to its readers of Armenian clubs spread throughout the city: Aharonean of Beşiktaş, Arak's of Pera, Ararat of Nişantaşı, Artsiw of Kumkapı, Bröt'i of Kınalı [ada], Êsaeian of Pera, Zhoghovrdayin of Makriköy, Kilikia of Kumkapı, Maslak' of Şişli, Marmnamarzakan of Pera, Mkhit'araan of Kadıköy, Nor Dprots' of Pangaltı, Sant'ral of Balat, Dork' of Kumkapı, and Raffi of Üsküdar. "Bolsoy Hamar Futboli Haykakan Lik," *Marmnamarz* (July 1911), p. 187.

Artavazd Agump) and the Armenian Dork Club of Kumkapı (Haykakan Tork‘ Agump), which opened during the Second Constitutional period on opposite ends of the city.¹³¹

Many of the founding members of Artavazt and Dork were first exposed to sports at Robert College. Football, track and field, and gymnastics served as fun, physical activities that students performed in the school’s gymnasium, outside on the grassy field, and during the annual field day competitions. By playing football, lifting weights, and exercising they demonstrated their commitment to the modern, Christian values and activities that the administrators of the school were championing. At the same time, however, many of these young men also treated them as an opportunity to cultivate an exclusive identity. Robert College offered students a diverse assortment of athletic amenities; however, many Armenian students wanted to belong to an autonomous space, a sports club, where they and other Armenians of the city, not just the school, could construct a fraternity of modern, strong Armenian youth.

It is in this context that young Armenian men in Kuruçeşme and Kumkapı founded and became members of Artavazt and Dork. Armenian youth joined both clubs in order to have fun, exercise, socialize, attend educational conferences and events, read books, and establish homosocial bonds in an Armenian middle-class space. Part of the attraction of both clubs was their conspicuous Armenian associational identity, which they projected by using an Armenian title and adopting a name of an Armenian historical figure. While Artavazt and Dork might not have meant much to Ottoman Turks, Jews, and/or Greeks of Istanbul, it did to an expanding Armenian middle-class. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many Armenian intellectuals were enamored by and incorporated Armenian pagan symbols and mythology in

¹³¹ Hagop Baronyan, the well-known Ottoman Armenian satirist, lists Kuruçeşme and Kumkapı as major Armenian centers of the city in his late-nineteenth-century work entitled *A Stroll in Istanbul’s Quarters (Ptut mē Polso T’agheru Mej)*. See, Hagop Baronyan, *İstanbul Mahallelerinde Bir Gezinti* (İstanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları, 2014)

their writings.¹³² Two of these popular figures were Artavazt and Dork. Artavazt, the son of Artashes I, was a pagan Armenian king who embodied noble characteristics like strength and virtue, as well as conjured up deep apocalyptic associations. Dork was a “legendary Armenian hero or minor deity” who symbolized Armenian strength.¹³³ Naming both clubs after pre-Christian pagan figures served two purposes: first, it established a connection between the club’s athletic activities and a glorious Armenian past that extolled physical prowess;¹³⁴ and, second, it served as the basis of a secular Armenian identity that transcended confessional divisions of the Armenian community.¹³⁵

Artavazt and Dork’s Armenian middle-class identity and their various amenities were enticing features for Armenian young men. Artavazt and Dork provided its members with an institution where they could play sports. For example, young men, like Vahram Papazian, who attended Robert College and lived close to the Kuruçeşme neighborhood, joined Artavazt in order to participate in various track and field events that the club organized around the city.¹³⁶

¹³² Nishan Parlakian and S. Peter Cowe, *Modern Armenian Drama: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. xx-xxi. Marc Nichanian, *Mourning Philology: Art and Religion at the Margins of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

¹³³ For example, see Agop J. Hacikyan, Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, Nourhan Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature: Volume III From the Eighteenth Century to Modern Times* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), especially, pp. 384-85.

¹³⁴ Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Armenians identified a historical celebration of the corporeal dimension of humans in pre-Christian Armenian pagan past. Kevork B. Bardakjian writes, “[The first two decades of the twentieth century] was a time when the politically doomed Western Armenians found their spiritual fortitude. There was a return to the pagan past, when aesthetic beauty and physical prowess were extolled.” (p. 152) Kevork B. Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature 1500-1920: with an Introductory History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), p. 152.

¹³⁵ Many Armenian writers were highly critical of the Armenian community’s religious divisions in late Ottoman Istanbul and appealed to a secular Armenian ethnic identity that transcended these fissures. For example, see Krikor Zohrab’s short story entitled “Armenissa” for insights into these issues. Krikor Zohrab, *Voice of Conscience: The Stories of Krikor Zohrab* (New York: St. Vartan Press, 1983), pp. 44-57. In addition to the Armenian millet, the Ottoman authorities recognized two other separate religious Armenian millets during the nineteenth century: the Catholic Armenian millet and the Protestant Armenian millet. For a discussion about the emergence of these separate Armenian millets, see Hagop Barsoumian, “The Eastern Question and the Tanzimat Era,” in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times, Volume II* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), pp. 175-201.

¹³⁶ Vahram Papazian was a member of the 1907-08 class at Robert College and graduated in 1913. His nationality is listed as Armenian and his father’s occupation is listed as “servant.” RKA, Student files (1873-1908), pp. 214-215; RKA, Robert College Alumni Register, p. 28.

Indeed, Artavazt served as an Armenian association, separate from Robert College, where he could exercise and compete. In addition to track and field and gymnastics, members also played football for Artavatz.

On the other end of town in Kumkapı, a predominantly Armenian and Greek neighborhood, Armenians established Dork as an association committed to “the physical development of Armenian youth.”¹³⁷ Dork provided young Armenian men with a space where they could exercise and play football.¹³⁸ Dork maintained three well-respected football teams, each of which competed against Armenian, Greek, and Turkish football clubs throughout Istanbul, in Kağıthane, Balta-Liman, Beykoz, Üsküdar, Makrıköy, and Kadıköy.¹³⁹

In addition to playing sports and exercising, members of Dork were also exposed to a variety of other activities. For example, club administrators regularly organized educational lectures on the necessity and the benefits of physical training for its members at the club.¹⁴⁰ Members cultivated modern, middle-class ideas about hygiene, exercise, sports, as well as distinct notions of masculine subjectivity that foregrounded corporeal and moral prowess by attending these lectures. Moreover, participation in these events, which required that young men remain seated in chairs and patiently and attentively listen to the content of a formal presentation, enabled members to hone middle-class social skills and norms.

Members were also expected to improve themselves by reading books and magazines in Dork’s reading room. The club library owned a diverse collection of publications on sports, hygiene, and physiology, many of which were donated to the club by members of the Armenian community of Kumkapı. In 1912, for example, Vahram Mateosian donated a year’s subscription

¹³⁷ *Enthanur Ganonakir Dork Hay Marmnamarzagan Miutyan* (Bolis: Manuk Kochunyani, 1912), p. 3.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³⁹ For example, see “Marmnashkharh: Bolsoy Hamar Fuwt‘boli Haygagan Lik,” *Marmnamarz* (July 1911), p. 186. Dork’s first team participated in the second division of the Constantinople football league in 1912, as well as the “Rumeli” football league in Makrıköy. “Futpolë Bolsoy Mēj,” *Marmnamarz* (October 1, 1912), p. 360.

¹⁴⁰ “Marmnamarzagan Banakhōsut‘ivn,” *Marmnamarz* (January 1, 1912), p. 15

of *Marmnamarz* (*Physical Training*) to Dork.¹⁴¹ In addition to receiving donations, Dork also donated annual subscriptions of *Marmnamarz* to Armenian communal (*azgayin*) schools.¹⁴² Club members not only read *Marmnamarz*, they also established a rapport with the publication. This rapport entailed members sending Chrissian, the editor and founder of the journal, updates about the activities of the club, which he in turn published and Istanbul’s expanding Armenian reading public followed in *Marmnamarz*.¹⁴³



[Figure 2.16 & 2.17 Starting from left to right. Photograph of Vahram Papazian of the Artavazt Club. (*Marmnamarz* June 1911, p. 133). Photograph of Yetvart Shahnazar. The caption reads: “Yetvart Shahnazar: [a] young man who possesses a well trained body and [is a] member of the Artavazt club.” (*Marmnamarz*, June 1911, p. 142)]

By playing sports, exercising, socializing, attending lectures, and reading, members of both clubs worked out a novel middle-class masculine Armenian identity. Central to this identity was a distinct understanding of the body. A defined body conveyed that a man was healthy, physically fit, and modern. Club members recorded and performed their commitment to such a middle-class masculine identity by having their pictures taken. The two images above of Vahram

¹⁴¹ *Marmnamarz* (March 1912), p. 80.

¹⁴² “Marmnamarz Noiwohner,” *Marmnamarz* (August 1911), p. 224.

¹⁴³ “Chig më, yet’ē gëchig,” *Marmnamarz* (January 15, 1912), p. 17; “Gavarë Bolisin Orinak,” *Marmnamarz* (June 15, 1912), p. 217.

Papazian wearing tight athletic attire and Yetvart Shahnazar taking off his shirt are examples of such photographs (figures 2.17 & 2.18). Like the other portrait photographs above, these two pictures were more than likely taken and shared with friends and members of the club. The circulation of many of these images did not stop there, however. Papazian and Shahnazar's photographs were sent to and published in *Marmnamarz*, in order to demonstrate to denizens of the city, not just members of the club, how modern and developed Artavazt was.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the role that voluntary athletic associations played in creating a shared sports culture in late Ottoman Istanbul. Sports clubs were ethnically and religiously homogenous spaces where young men worked out definitions of the self and community by playing sports, exercising, reading, attending lectures, exploring the city, taking and sharing photographs, as well as socializing. They served as a testing ground of an emerging middle-class masculine identity, whose defining characteristics were athletic prowess, physical strength, corporeal development, a distinct aesthetic, and a modern understanding of communal affiliation. These clubs both encouraged members to cultivate a shared corporeal aesthetic and understanding of the body and strengthened exclusive homosocial bonds and new social networks. Thus, they provided Muslim, Christian, and Jewish young men with a space where they simultaneously established shared civic values and exclusive ethno-religious ties.

Club members deployed photography as a means by which they recorded their commitment to a shared identity and look. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish young men had their photographs taken while dressing in dapper suits, starched shirts, ties, and leather shoes as well as posing bare-chested in order to highlight their proportionality, slim waist, defined biceps, straight back, and broad and hairless chest. Together, these images embodied the ideal look of the gentlemen athlete that clubs celebrated and promoted. In addition to recording a distinct aesthetic, young men also used photographs as tokens of friendship as well as a means to perform their

masculinity and homosocial bonds. This was accomplished by sharing these vernacular portrait and group photographs with club members, friends, and colleagues.

The establishment of athletic associations also demonstrates how civic actors redefined the function of physical culture. By establishing and becoming a member of a sports club, Ottoman citizens and foreigners living in Istanbul conveyed the notion that gymnastics and football were more than subjects of study and games that students performed on school campus; they were activities around and through which Muslims, Christians, and Jews built a fraternity of young men. The establishment of these civic spaces across communal divides reveals the similar ways in which Istanbul's multiethnic and multireligious denizens organized, perceived sports, and staked out a claim to the expanding public sphere.

Despite sharing similarities, these clubs also maintained significant differences, which offer insights into the implications of belonging to a “minority” community and the “majority” Turkish one during the period.¹⁴⁴ Non-Muslims were more likely to become members of Turkish athletic associations than Turks were to join non-Muslim clubs. For example, Hercules, Maccabi, Artavazt, and Dork almost exclusively attracted young men from the Greek, Jewish, and Armenian communities respectively. On the other hand, Galatasaray, which projected both a Turkish and Ottoman associational identity, was not ethnically and religiously homogenous. Membership records of the club reveal that Ottoman Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and foreign residents were members of Galatasaray. Membership in the club entailed both tangible and intangible benefits, among which was the ability of a young non-Muslim man to claim that he had gained access to a bourgeois space that oscillated between embracing an Ottoman and Turkish identity.

¹⁴⁴ Similar to Julia Philips Cohen, I am using the term minority after careful thought and consideration. Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*, p. xii. For a discussion about the problems of using the term minority during the empire, see, Aron Rodrigue, “Reflections on *Millets* and Minorities: Ottoman Legacies,” in Riva Kastoryano (ed.), *Turkey between Nationalism and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2013), 36-46. Also see Benjamin White's study on the emergence of the political concepts of minority and majority in Syria during the French Mandate, Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

Chapter 3

Educators, Trainers, and Inspectors: the Ottoman Government and Physical Training

Chapters 1 and 2 examined two institutions in which residents of Istanbul experimented with exercise and sports during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, elite preparatory schools and voluntary athletic associations. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish physical culture enthusiasts in both spaces popularized the idea that the regular performance of exercise and team sports was a requirement for being a cultivated, modern young man. While these institutions and the ideas related to exercise espoused within them constituted two of the defining pillars of physical culture in late Ottoman Istanbul, there were others: Ottoman Turkish educators, many of whom were affiliated with the Ministry of Public Education, carved out their own space in Istanbul's market place of ideas by advocating a more utilitarian approach towards exercise and calling for the systematic integration of gymnastics in all Ottoman public schools. This chapter turns to these educators and the institutionalization of the belief that physical exercise served as the most effective instrument for creating strong and healthy citizens and a robust empire.

In 1911, Mustafa Satı Bey, the Director of the Teachers Training School (Darülmüallimin), presented Ottoman Turkish readers with his perspectives on modern education in the empire in a 368-page book entitled "The Science of Education: Theoretical Insights and its Application" (*Fenn-i Terbiye: Nazariyat ve Tatbikati*).¹ The book established that the empire's future was integrally connected to its schools more specifically and its educational system more generally. Physical exercise played an integral role in this project, just as important as core

¹ M. Satı, *Fenn-i Terbiye: Nazariyat ve Tatbikati* (İstanbul: Kütüphane-i İslam ve Askeri, 1911).

subjects of study that developed students' minds and strengthened their morals. "In addition to the health and strength of the body being intrinsically important," Satı argued, physical training "has a lot of effects on the intellect and morality; therefore, with respect to education, neglecting the body is completely impermissible."²

Satı's treatment of physical exercise was part of a broader state project aimed at institutionalizing and spreading exercise in all Ottoman government schools that increasingly gained momentum after the Young Turk revolution in 1908. The idea that Ottoman citizens from all walks of life, not just men from upper- and middle-class families, needed to regularly exercise, sweat, and strengthen their bodies underpinned this project. Men performing manual labor outside, such as porters (*hamals*) and laborers (*ameles*), as well as working inside, such as teachers (*muallims*) and writers (*muharrirs*), needed their bodies to be strong and healthy in order to be efficient.³ This understanding of the relationship between exercise and the empire reflected two assumptions espoused in the Imperial School, Robert College, and the various sports club spread across the city: first, the body needed to be disciplined, reformed, and strengthened; and, second, physical exercise, gymnastics, and team sports served as the most effective means to accomplishing this goal. However, Satı's understanding of the role of physical exercise was more expansive than the sports enthusiasts in these two schools and Istanbul's voluntary athletic clubs. Satı and other Ottoman educators were interested in strengthening and developing the bodies of all Ottoman men, not just those from an expanding middle strata of society.

² Ibid., p. 32.

³ Ibid., p. 29.

In order to map the development of the Ottoman government's physical training project, this chapter focuses on the career of Selim Sırrı. Reading this project through the lens of an individual provides three major advantages. First, this approach offers a more nuanced understanding of the Ottoman government, enabling us to reflect on how individual actors shaped government policies. Second, Sırrı's career reveals the ways in which many educational entrepreneurs increasingly sought state patronage in order to advance their ideas. Third, analyzing Sırrı's schooling in Istanbul and abroad, his various personal initiatives aimed at educating his compatriots about the importance of sports, his participation in international conferences, and his position as the General Inspector of Physical Training helps elucidate the intersection of the local and international, civil and government, and public and private to this Ottoman state project.

Selim Sırrı: "a New Type of Reformer"⁴

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, according to Niyazi Berkes, "a new type of reformer," whom he referred to as a "mass educator," emerged in the Ottoman Empire.⁵ These young men, many of whom studied in Hamidian civil and military schools, played an instrumental role in popularizing new ideas about education and pioneered novel approaches to teaching subjects of study, such as hygiene, art, history, morality, as well as exercise.⁶ One of these figures was Selim Sırrı, a Turkish military officer from humble origins who went on to become the leading advocate for the systematic integration of gymnastics

⁴ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), p. 401.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

courses in schools throughout the imperial domains and the Ottoman Empire's first General Inspector of Physical Training.⁷

Sırrı was first exposed to gymnastics and physical exercise at the Imperial School. As a student, Sırrı lifted weights, exercised, and performed gymnastics with his classmates under the guidance of Ali Faik Bey, whose position as the head instructor of gymnastics I discussed in Chapter 1. With two years left until he graduated, Sırrı was forced to abruptly leave the Imperial School because of his family's modest financial situation. Soon after his departure, he came across an announcement in the popular Ottoman-Turkish daily newspaper, *İkdam (Effort)*,⁸ stating that the Imperial School of Military Engineering (Mühendishane-i Berr-i Hümayun), which trained army engineers, was accepting students.⁹ If young men could pass the school's entrance exam, they would be immediately enrolled as a student. Sırrı rushed down to the school, passed the entrance exam, and was immediately registered as a student.

After graduating from the Imperial School of Military Engineering in 1896, Sırrı was appointed to the Military Engineering Unit (İstihkamlar) of Yenikale in İzmir.¹⁰ During his four-

⁷ Selim Sırrı was born in 1874 in the city of Yenişehir (now Larissa, Greece). After his father's death, Yusuf Bey, who was a colonel in the Ottoman army, and the end of the Ottoman-Russian War (1877-1878), which resulted in Yenişehir being incorporated into Greece, he and his family moved to Istanbul. The family, which included his mother, two sisters and Sırrı, struggled financially, living in a modest three-room house, which he compared to the "chicken house" (*tavuk kümesi*) next to his family's villa in Yenişehir, in the district of Üsküdar. Scrapping together as much money as she could by working on a Singer sewing machine and selling in the bazaar any remaining jewelry she had accumulated over the years, Sırrı's mother, Zeynep Hanım, decided to invest in Sırrı's future by enrolling him in a school. Narrowing the list to the Imperial School and Darüşşafaka (House of Compassion), a private boarding school for poor and orphaned Muslim children school that the Society for Islamic Education (Cemiyet-i Tedrisiye-i İslamiye) had founded in 1873, she opted to register him as a student at the Imperial School. Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 53. The school's annual tuition of 45 pieces of gold was beyond the family's means; however, Sırrı's status as a fatherless-child (*yetim*) enabled Zeynep Hanım to register him for fifteen pieces of gold. Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 7.

⁸ According to Selçuk Akşin Somel, *İkdam* served as "the most widely read paper" during the early twentieth century. Selçuk Akşin Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2011), p. 148.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

year stay in İzmir, Sırrı started to develop a more serious interest in physical exercise and began writing articles in the *Hizmet (Service)*, an Ottoman-Turkish daily newspaper published in the city.¹¹ In addition to publishing articles, he also taught gymnastics in the city's middle school. His presence and unwavering belief that regular exercise protected the wellbeing of students, seems to have played a role in integrating gymnastics into the school curriculum. According to correspondence in 1899 between the Educational Directorship in the province of Aydın (Aydın Vilayeti Maarif Müdürlüğü) and the Ministry of Public Education in the capital, Sırrı had been teaching gymnastics courses “without payment” (*fahriyen*) during the period when the administrators of İzmir middle school decided to purchase gymnastics equipment for the school garden and incorporate gymnastics into the regular school curriculum.¹² Sırrı was given a salary for 200 kuruş, according to the letter, “in order for gymnastics classes to be added to the school program in an orderly fashion.”¹³ The exchange between officials in İzmir and Istanbul demonstrates that although gymnastics courses were not integrated into all schools throughout the empire, the Ministry of Public Education did pay the salaries of teachers who could teach the subject, in the event that there was a demand for them.

When Sırrı moved back to the capital in 1900, he found growing opportunities to teach gymnastics. Together, the articles about corporeal reform that he had written in İzmir and his promotion to military captain (*yüzbaşı*) garnered the attention of many Ottoman officials, namely Mehmet Zeki Paşa, who was the Cannon Foundry Field Marshall (Tophane Müşiri).¹⁴ Zeki was particularly impressed by the views that Sırrı espoused and decided to hire Sırrı as the private

¹¹ Selim Sırrı Tarcan, *Radyo Konferanslarım* (İstanbul: Ülkü Matbaası, 1935), pp. 11-12.

¹² BOA, MF.MKT 456/43 [August 18, 1899].

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 25.

gymnastics tutor of his son, Sedat. Sırrı's courses, which had a transformative effect on Sedat's body, and Zeki's connections enabled Sırrı to procure a position as instructor of gymnastics at his alma mater, the Imperial School of Military Engineering, as well as the Mathematical School (Hendese-i Mülkiye Mektebi), the Ottoman Military Academy (Mekteb-i Erkan-ı Harbiye), and the Ottoman School for Tribes (Aşiret Mektebi).¹⁵



[Figure 3.1 Photograph of Selim Sırrı (Selim Sırrı, "Jimnastik Hakkında," *Resimli Kitap*, December 1908, p. 266)]

¹⁵ The inclusion of gymnastics courses at the School for Tribes (1892-1907) is particularly interesting, given that Ottoman officials regarded it as an instrument for educating and promoting Ottoman imperial culture to the sons of tribal chiefs. For a discussion about Aşiret Mektebi, see Eugene Rogan, "Aşiret Mektebi: Abdulhamid II's School for Tribes: 1892-1907," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28/1 (1996), pp. 83-107.

Personal Initiatives: Conferences and the Physical Training School

The gradual integration of gymnastics into the curriculum of a limited number of government schools during the Hamidian era ensured that there were opportunities, albeit limited ones, for Sırrı to teach the subject to students.¹⁶ This provided Sırrı with a source of income teaching physical training; at the same time, he sought out more public venues, such as theatres and public squares, from which he could expose a broader audience to the significance of exercise and sports.¹⁷ His penchant for organizing conferences (*konferanslar*) about physical culture led to Sırrı developing the sobriquet “sport crazy” (*spor delisi*).¹⁸

Some of Sırrı’s most well attended conferences were held at the Tepebaşı Millet Garden Yazlık Theatre (Tepebaşı Millet Bahçesinin Yazlık Tiyatrosu). One of these events was organized on September 15, 1908. *İkdam* ran advertisements and descriptions of the conference, which consisted of a diverse array of activities, such as lectures and fencing, boxing, and alafranga style wrestling exhibitions.¹⁹ Sırrı opened the event by talking about the history and current state of physical exercise. He established the idea that exercise was not a novel activity and practice that emerged in Europe. On the contrary, people around the world had incorporated exercise throughout their daily lives throughout history. By regularly moving, sweating, and jumping, people were able to create a balanced and health body. Such a balance was conspicuously missing today in the Ottoman Empire, where people were consistently trying to reform the mind, while neglecting the importance of the body. Sırrı stressed that such an

¹⁶ BOA, MF.MKT 1056/20 [May 4, 1908].

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 43-44. According to his memoirs, he even spoke about gymnastics at Sultan Abdülhamid II’s Yıldız Palace.

¹⁸ Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 25.

¹⁹ “Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mektebi ve Spor Konferansı,” *İkdam* (September 15, 1908), p. 3; “Selim Sırrı Bey’in Konferansı,” *İkdam* (September 26, 1908), p. 3.

approach was misguided: “first the body is to be strengthened, then the mind should be cured.”²⁰ Physical exercise, therefore, served as the most effective instrument for advancing this goal and creating a community of robust, healthy individuals.

The conference attracted a diverse crowd of Ottoman citizens from a plethora of ethno-religious backgrounds as well as foreign residents of Istanbul; members of the Hercules Gymnastics Club as well as political officials, such as the Iranian Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, attended the event. In order to ensure that all understood the content of the lectures, the presentations were delivered in Ottoman Turkish, French, and English. Tickets were sold at the Islam and Military Library (Kütüphane-i İslami ve Askeri). At a time when an Istanbul laborer earned a monthly income of around 350 kuruş and an Ottoman civil servant was paid approximately 1,666 kuruş,²¹ tickets for the conference were considerably expensive: tickets for the first, second, and third rows were 60 kuruş; tickets for the fourth and fifth rows were 40 kuruş; tickets for the back of the room were 20 kuruş; and, finally, tickets to stand in the entrance of the theatre were 10 kuruş.²²

Ticket prices were conspicuously high for a reason: the proceeds of the event were going toward the establishment of a private physical training school. According to *İkdam*, Sırrı’s Physical Training School (Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mektebi) was being established “in order to serve the physical development of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish youth.”²³ In other words, the school was being established to serve all Ottoman citizens, irrespective of their ethno-religious backgrounds. The establishment of such an institution was unprecedented. It served as a

²⁰ Selim Sırrı Bey’in Konferansı,” *İkdam* (September 26, 1908), p. 3.

²¹ Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households*, pp. 37-38.

²² “Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mektebi ve Spor Konferansı,” *İkdam* (September 15, 1908), p. 3.

²³ *Ibid.*

departure from both the handful of schools that taught gymnastics and the sports clubs that upper- and middle-class young men joined in order to play sports, socialize, and compete. Sırrı's school was a private, independent institution. Although Sırrı was a government employee, teaching gymnastics at various government schools, the Physical Training School did not receive state support. Sırrı envisioned the school as a civic space in which "discussions about religion and politics were forbidden," and young men could focus on learning about physical exercise and training their bodies.²⁴

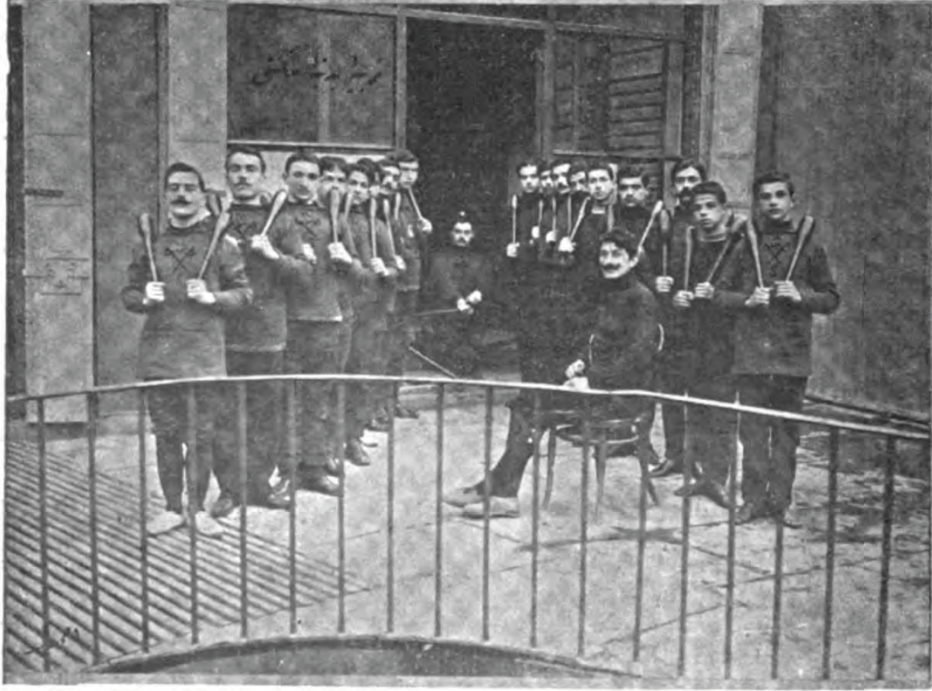
In order to promote the school, Sırrı took out advertisements in some of the leading Ottoman-Turkish cultural magazines, such as *Resimli Kitap (Illustrated Book)* and *Musavver Muhit (Illustrated Encyclopedia)*. These advertisements explained to readers that by paying a small fee, they could become members of the school and learn how to box, fence, row, as well as perform Swedish gymnastics and military training. The school, which was located in the Rızapaşa Yokuşu in Eminönü, was open from the morning until the evening, seven days a week.²⁵ As a result, boys and young men could frequent the school after classes, while men could visit the institution after finishing work. The school was open to all males, ages seven through sixty.²⁶ The school did not accept females as members; however, Sırrı explicitly stated that the school intended to open a separate branch for girls in the near future. The branch would be for girls, ages twelve and below. By restricting the age limit to twelve and using the words

²⁴ "Muallim Selim Sırrı Bey'in Tesis Kerdesi Olan Rızapaşa Yokuşunda Kain Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mektebinde Nizamnamesi," *Serbesti* (December 2, 1908), p. 2.

²⁵ It was located in the Sadıkiye Han in Rızapaşa Yokuşu. "Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mektebine," *Musavver Muhit* (February 4, 1909), p. 209.

²⁶ The school offered people four separate types of membership: hususi heveskaran, mecburi heveskaran, ihtiyari heveskaran, and keyfi. Each type of membership provided a person with different levels of access to the school and required a separate monthly fee. For example, hususi heveskaran members could access and work out in the school without the guidance of an instructor anytime they want. While Keyfi members could only access the school when it was "suitable."

“girl children” (*kız çocuklar*), Sırrı was highlighting the potential female students’ prepubescent characteristics.



سليم سري بك تربية بدنيه مکتبده
L'Ecole de Gymnastique

[Figure 3.2 Selim Sırrı and his students in the Physical Training School (*Resimli Kitap*, January 1909, p. 402)]

The establishment of the Physical Training School, according to Sırrı, carried a symbolic meaning: it demonstrated that the capital of the Ottoman Empire had reached a civilizational level comparable to other urban cities in Europe and the United States. This idea was enshrined in the first article of the school’s internal regulation (*nizamname*), which stated that like in London, Paris, Saint Petersburg, New York, and Stockholm, people in Istanbul could now strengthen their muscles and train their bodies in the recently established Physical Training School.²⁷ Educators living in cities throughout Europe understood the importance of regular exercise and built institutions where they and others could study gymnastics and sports in a

²⁷ “Muallim Selim Sırrı Bey’in Tesis Kerdesi Olan Rızapaşa Yokuşunda Kain Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mektebinde Nizamnamesi,” *Serbesti* (December 2, 1908), p. 2

scientific setting. Until the establishment of Sırrı's school, however, no such institution had been created in the Ottoman Empire.

The school officially opened its doors on December 20, 1908. In order to celebrate the opening, Sırrı organized a festive event for members and those interested in the school at 8 o'clock in the evening. The celebration consisted of fencing and wrestling competitions and speeches that were delivered by Ottoman and non-Ottoman residents of Istanbul. Together, the speeches and the performances conveyed to spectators the theoretical and applied knowledge that members of the school would cultivate.

One of the club's registered members, Sabahattin Bey, spoke about the interconnection between corporeal and national development. He argued that the current state of the Anglo-Saxon people was because of the widespread practice of physical exercise. This historical example as well as the interconnection between a healthy body and mind, which, he stated, was enshrined in the concept of "a healthy mind in a healthy body" (*Salim fikir sağlam vücutta bulunur*), ensured that all people around the world needed to regularly exercise. Sırrı's new school, according to Sabahattin, was built around these ideas; as a result, the school served as both a "human and patriotic initiative" (*teşebbüs-ü insaniyet ve vatanperverane*).²⁸

The three other speakers echoed these ideas. Sırrı, for example, described the goals of the school as being the following: teaching "a person of the nation (*bir millet-i efradi*)" how to be a good "marksman" (*nişancı*) and "teacher," as well inculcating "the importance and necessity of physical training" (*riyazat-i bedeniye*).²⁹ By referencing both the marksman and the teacher, Sırrı was suggesting that in the sphere of exercise and sports, civilian and military concerns converged.

²⁸ "Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mektebinin Resmi Kuşadı," *Serbesti* (December 21, 1908), p. 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Ali Faik, the gymnastics instructor at the Imperial School, under whose tutelage Sırrı first learned about the significance of exercise, delivered a passionate speech about German gymnastics. Finally, the Physical Training School's gymnastic teacher, Monsieur Miglivich, stressed the importance of sports for all Ottomans (*Osmanlılar için*).³⁰

Supporters of the school writing in the Ottoman-Turkish press made a point to highlight the inclusive nature of the school, by highlighting the fact that “all of our citizens” (*bütün vatandaşlarımız*) were encouraged to frequent the school.³¹ The Ottoman Empire, according to the article, was in desperate need of an institution that is committed to building strong and proportionate Ottoman men. In short, the school was envisioned as an instrument to build ideal citizens.

The opening of the school also coincided with Sırrı expanding his role as an educator. Not only did he teach courses in the new school, he also wrote articles about the importance of exercise in popular Ottoman-Turkish magazines, such as *Resimli Kitap (Illustrated Book)* and *Musavver Muhit (Illustrated Encyclopedia)*. Articles such as “About Gymnastics” and “To the Youth” were aimed at providing Istanbul's general reading public with basic information about gymnastics and corporeal reform.³² Sırrı's title, which these journals published, “Director and Founder of the Physical Training,” provided him and his articles with a unique degree of authoritative credibility because there had never been a similar institution established before in the imperial domains. Many of these articles praised the advances made across Europe in spreading awareness about physical exercise; at the same time, Sırrı criticized the current state of

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 3.

³² Selim Sırrı, “Jimnastik Hakkında,” *Resimli Kitap* (December 1908), pp. 266-269; Selim Sırrı, “Gençlere,” *Musavver Muhit* (December 10, 1908), pp.89-90.

knowledge of gymnastics and ubiquity of lethargic young men in the empire, who were obese and unhealthy.³³ While Sırrı planned the Physical Training School to serve as an instrument for training the bodies and minds of all Ottomans, irrespective of their ethno-religious backgrounds, these articles displayed a far more narrow exclusive reading of the category Ottoman to mean Turks.³⁴ He implored his Ottoman Turkish readers to remember that Turks were historically strong and robust people. “There was a time when Europeans had a saying ‘Strong like a Turk.’ In order to demonstrate this, it is necessary to change our lifestyles.”³⁵

The integration of gymnastics and physical exercise into the daily lives of students in schools was a central theme in Sırrı’s articles.³⁶ Schools that valued the wellbeing of their students had incorporated gymnastics courses. He cited examples of this phenomenon outside of the Ottoman Empire, in countries like England, Switzerland, Sweden, Germany, and France. Ottoman schools significantly lagged behind in terms of these developments. Conceding that there were institutions in the imperial domains whose curriculum included gymnastics, Sırrı argued that these schools remained oblivious to the relationship between sports and health and, as such, failed to properly expose students to exercise.³⁷ In an article entitled “Our Schools and Sports” (*Mekteplerimiz ve Spor*), Sırrı wrote: “there is no doubt that the Ministry of Education’s most important organizational school reforms is in the elementary schools (*mekatib-i ibtidaiye*).”³⁸ Unfortunately, the majority of these schools deprived children of fresh air and

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Sırrı, “Gençlere,” p. 90.

³⁶ Selim Sırrı, “Spor: Hakikata Doğru,” *Musavver Muhit* (March 11, 1909), p. 286.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Selim Sırrı, “Mekteplerimiz ve Spor,” *Musavver Muhit* (April 17, 1908), p. 108.

sunlight and were in a squalid state. This was particularly appalling because students needed to run, jump, and exercise in order to build their bodies at this age.

The Ottoman Teacher-Training School and the *Journal of Elementary Education*

By establishing the Physical Training School, regularly organizing athletic conferences, and penning articles, Sırrı was carving out a space in Istanbul's public sphere for his ideas about the relationship between education and sports. Although Sırrı was one of the most influential advocates of integrating exercise into the curriculum of schools, he was not alone. Gradually, other Ottomans who were affiliated with government institutions also contributed to spreading the idea that children at an early age needed to be exposed to gymnastics and sports on a regular basis in schools. The Ottoman Teacher-Training School (Darülmualimin) played an integral role in institutionalizing and popularizing this idea.³⁹

The emergence of the Darülmualimin was interconnected with government efforts to create a modern education system in the Ottoman Empire during the first half of the nineteenth century. Ottoman education reformers realized that they could not create a modern public school system without professionally trained teachers. It was in this context that the Ottoman government established the first Teacher-Training School in Istanbul in 1848. The creation of the Ministry of Public Education in 1857 and the promulgation of the Regulation of Public Education in 1869 led to the expansion of the Ottoman Teacher-Training School system during the nineteenth century. During the Hamidian era, the Ministry of Public Education opened the Great Teacher-Training School (Darülmualimin-i Aliye), which was made up of three

³⁹ For a description of the Darülmualimin from its inception until the Second Constitutional period, see Osman Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi Cilt: 2* (İstanbul: Osmanbey Matbaası, 1940), pp. 475-489; for a discussion about the Darülmualimin from 1847 until 1908, see Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 129-135

departments for the different levels of public education, primary (*iptidai*), middle (*idadi*), and lycée (*sultani*).⁴⁰

It was only after the Young Turk revolution that educators in the Darülmualimin started to espouse the idea that physical exercise constituted one of the pillars of a modern educational system. Mustafa Satı Bey, who served as the Director of the Great Teacher-Training School from 1909 until 1912 and wrote copiously about education and pedagogy, played a central role in this process.⁴¹ According to historian Osman Ergin, “as soon as Satı Bey came the Darülmualimin, and saw how much of a disaster the bodies of children and youth had become in the old Darülmualimin and in primary schools, middle schools and high schools, he institutionalized physical exercise there.”⁴²

During his tenure as the director, according to historian William L. Cleveland, Satı radically changed the institutional culture of the Darülmualimin. Satı reorganized the school by replacing the overwhelming majority of older staff members from the Hamidian era with younger teachers who embraced the practice based teaching methods and concepts that Satı

⁴⁰ Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 131.

⁴¹ Satı Bey came from prominent merchant family from Aleppo. He was born in the city of Sana, the capital of the province of Yemen, in 1880. Because of his father’s position as the Director of the Court of Appeals (Mahkeme-i İstinaf), he and his family frequently moved between Sana, Adana, Ankara, Tripolitana, and Konya during the first thirteen years of Satı’s life. After graduating from the Imperial School of the Civil Administration (Mekteb-i Mülkiye-i Şahane) in Istanbul in 1900, spent eight years in the Balkans, serving as a teacher of the natural sciences in the Yanya Province Middle School (Yanya Vilayeti İdadisi) and the *kaymakam* in the province of Kosova and the province of Manastir (present day Bitola in Macedonia). After the Young Turk revolution, Satı decided to return to Istanbul. During this period, he and his brother, Badi Nuri, founded a magazine entitled “the Lights of Science” (*Envar-ı Ulum*), which focused on sociology, philosophy, the natural sciences, and history. Although the journal was short-lived, publishing only six editions, it helped bolster Satı’s credentials as one of the empire’s brightest visionaries of educational reform. The growing popularity of his writings on pedagogy and the connections that Satı had cultivated with CUP officials in Manastir and Istanbul helped Satı assume a new position as the Director of the Great Teacher-Training School in 1909. For a biography of Mustafa Satı’s life, see William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist; Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati’ al-Husri* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971). There are many Turkish biographies of him; for example, see Mustafa Gündüz, *Mustafa Satı Bey ve Eğitim Bilimi* (Ankara: Otorite, 2010), pp. 13-17.

⁴² Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi*, p. 487.

advocated. He also introduced a number of new subjects of study, such as pedagogy, psychology, and physical exercise. The new ideas and subjects that Satı advocated were presented in the journal that he founded and edited, *the Journal of Elementary Education (Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası)*.

Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası served as the organ of the Darülmualimin and the main forum from which Satı propagated his views on education in the Ottoman Empire. The journal was divided into theoretical and practical sections and offered readers detailed discussions about the various subjects of study that modern schools needed to expose students to and the most effective teaching methods that instructors needed to apply when teaching them. One of the subjects of study that the journal advocated was physical exercise.

Articles about exercise included both theoretical and practical insights. The first article published on exercise, entitled, “Physical Exercise: Mental Fatigue – Insalubrious Results – Remedies,” set out to demonstrate to readers that physical exercise was one of the most important subjects of study.⁴³ The author, Cevat, argued that the body and mind were integrally connected, and, as such, each must be simultaneously developed. Cevat also added a third axis to the make of the human being: the spiritual dimension (*maneviyat*).⁴⁴ Students, therefore, needed to be exposed to subjects of study that would unite and strengthen all three realms.

Cevat drew on various sources of authority, both secular and religious, and European and Ottoman, in order to buttress the idea that the mental, physical, and spiritual well-being of students required that they regularly perform physical exercises. Such an approach was common

⁴³ Cevat, “Terbiye-i Cismani: Tab Zihni – Netaiç Vahimesi – Çareleri,” *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası* 1/4 (August 14, 1910), pp. 127-134.

⁴⁴ The Hamidian educational project had placed a great deal of emphasis on creating novel subjects of study, namely morality (*ahlak*), as a means to create moral and loyal Ottoman citizens. Cevat did not challenge the importance of morality; rather, he argued that morality was just as important a subject of study as physical exercise.

and reflected the ways in which Ottomans subsumed Islam under a larger and more encompassing discourse on modernity.⁴⁵ For example, according to Cevat, Rousseau stated the following: “In order to make the soul firm, the muscles of the body needed to be strengthened.”⁴⁶ According to Cevat, the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad fully supported these ideas. The Messenger of God (*Cenab-ı Risaletpenahi*) had separated knowledge into two categories, “knowledge of religions” (*ilm-i edyan*) and “knowledge of material matters” (*ilm-i ebdan*)—literally knowledge of bodies—, and, according to his teachings, the latter is even more important than the former. For example, in order to perform the obligatory daily prayers, which consisted of various physical movements, such as standing erect, bowing, kneeling, and prostrating, the body had to be clean. In short, without a clean body, a Muslim’s prayers were invalid.

Taking care of the body, he assured readers, is compulsory in Islam; therefore, “failing to take care of the body is a sin (*asim ve zenb*).”⁴⁷ The language that Cevat uses to describe the neglect (*asim ve zenb*) of this responsibility, “*farz vacip*,” is drawn from an Islamic lexicon, and, therefore, conveys the idea that taking care of the body is a divine obligation. Despite the centrality of the body to the teachings of Islam, which Cevat refers to as “our clear religion” (*din-i mübinimiz*), Ottomans have neglected their bodies.⁴⁸ The explicit references to Islam and the Prophet Muhammad reveal the growing exclusion of non-Muslims to the Ottoman nation-

⁴⁵ Authors of morality textbooks, for example, referred to multiple sources of authority, such as Islam, God, the Prophet(s), the Sultan, religious leaders, social utility, Islamic law, human laws, conscience, as well as social etiquette. For a discussion about the use of multiple sources of authority in late Ottoman school textbooks, see Murat C. Yıldız, “Re-reading Morality as a Subject of Study and as a Text: Identifying Multiple Sources of Authority and Re-constructing the Moral, Orderly, Clean and Disciplined Student” (unpublished paper).

⁴⁶ Cevat, “Terbiye-i Cismani,” p. 127.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

building project that, theoretically, included all citizens, irrespective of their ethno-religious backgrounds.

After the journal established the centrality of taking care of the body to Islam and secular bodies of knowledge in Europe, it provided detailed descriptions of physical exercise. Satı asserted that “physical exercise,” which “served the development and growth of the parts and muscles of the body,” consisted of three types of activity: game, sport, and gymnastics.⁴⁹ Each was treated as the most effective means to turning students into physically, mentally, and morally sound Ottomans. Games and sports, for example, encouraged “humans and, especially, children to enjoy things in an innocent fashion.”⁵⁰ This was considered important because it helped them “preserve their morality.” At the same time, students were able to cultivate competitive characteristics, such as “equanimity (*soğuk kanlılık*), vigilance (*uyanıklık*), courage (*cesaret*), and self-confidence (*itimad-ı nefis*),” when they played games and sports.⁵¹ The performance of gymnastics inculcated other values, namely “discipline” (*inzibat*). “By getting children used to moving in an orderly fashion under the lead of a commander,” Satı argued, “gymnastics encourages and strengthens discipline in schools.”⁵² In short, gymnastics not only created strong and healthy bodies, it helped develop an orderly and disciplined school.

Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası conveyed to readers that there were essentially two different types of gymnastics, gymnastics with equipment and without equipment (*cihazlı cihazsız jimnastik*). While people around the world practiced both types, Satı assured readers,

⁴⁹ Satı, “Riyazet-i Bedeniye,” *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası* 1/8 (October 14, 1910), pp. 125-129. Games, such as tag, consisted of free movements and were played in order to have fun. Sports, which included swimming, rowing, and horse riding, required strength and order. Gymnastics were made of movements like raising the arms and striding that were only used for strengthening the body.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 127.

“from a physical training perspective, the performance of gymnastics without equipment was preferred.”⁵³ In short, the “Swedish method” (*İsveç usulu*) was the superior form of free movement gymnastics. After establishing this, Satı published a regular series of gymnastics guides. These guides, both textually and visually, provided readers with descriptions and pictures of the various positions that the different parts of the body needed to be in and descriptions of the common problems that teachers would encounter when instructing students. These guides illustrate how concerned educators were about correcting incorrect movements as well as instructing proper ones. The guide below (figure 3.3), for example, is the “basic position” (*esas vaziyeti*) that students needed to form when starting the gymnastics exercise. The teacher, according to the guide, would instruct the students to assume the “basic position” by saying in a loud voice, “attention!” (*hazır ol!*). “As soon as the student hears the last syllable of the command, he immediately assumes the basic position.”⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Feridun, “Terbiye-i Bedeniye,” *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası* 2/13 (August 28, 1911), p. 21.



[Figure 3.3 Description of the proper positions that students need to be in when performing physical exercises at school. (Feridun, "Terbiye-i Bedeniye," *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası* 2/13, August 24, 1911, p. 22)]

References to the military, discipline, and strict loyalty in articles about exercise reveal the ways in which educators writing in *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası* established a connection between exercise and the military. Feridun, for example, who was an instructor at the Darülmualimin, argued that the effects of neglecting physical exercise were apparent in all spheres of life, not least of which was the military. Small men couldn't possibly defend the nation if they were not strong. According Feridun, young Ottoman men were weak and feeble, and, thus, not prepared to serve in the army. Physical exercise served as the most effective means to altering the bodies of Ottoman men and strengthening the army. As a result, teachers had an obligation to make sure that students were regularly exercising in schools, especially at the elementary level.

Stockholm and the Gymnastic Central Institute

Feridun was not the only person who believed that sports simultaneously served the nation and the army. Officials in the Ministry of War (Harbiye Nezareti), for example, shared these views. According to Sırrı's memoirs, the Ministry of War was about to promote him to the position of major (*binbaşı*) and send him to Paris, where he was going to serve as the Ottoman Empire's military attaché, when Sırrı proposed that he study gymnastics instead. The Ministry of War agreed, and opted to send him to Sweden in order to study in a "gymnastics school" (*jimnastik mektebi*). The novelty of the decision led *İkdam* to publish the details of Sırrı's upcoming trip in the newspaper:

Permission has been given from the Sublime Porte in order for the Ministry of War to send the Ottoman gymnastics teacher at the [Imperial] School of Military Engineering, Selim Sırrı, to study at the Physical Training School in Stockholm.⁵⁵

By the time Sırrı arrived in 1909, the Gymnastic Central Institute (Gymnastiska Centralinstitutet) had established itself as one of the most renowned gymnastics institutes in the world.⁵⁶ Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839) created the Gymnastic Central Institute in 1813, as an institution where Swedes could study gymnastics and properly learn how to train the human body.⁵⁷ During the nineteenth century, administrators at the school, namely T.J. Hartelius, Gustaf Nyblaeus, and Hjalmar Ling, treated physical exercise as the only means through which all

⁵⁵ "Selim Sırrı Bey," *İkdam* (March 16, 1909), p. 3.

⁵⁶ For example, see *The Gymnastic Central Institute at Stockholm* (Stockholm: Tryckeri-Aktiebolaget Ferm, 1913). This English brochure for the Gymnastic Central Institute was created for the fourth international congress on school hygiene in Buffalo, New York in 1913. Its publication and the presence of the Swedish committee, which represented the Gymnastic Central Institute, demonstrates how the institution participated in international educational forums about gymnastics and physical culture during the period. For a discussion about the emergence of Ling gymnastics, see Jens Ljunggren, "The Masculine Road Through Modernity: Ling Gymnastics and Male Socialisation in Nineteenth-Century Sweden," in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Making European Masculinities: Sport, Europe, Gender* (London & Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), pp. 86-111.

⁵⁷ Prof. L.M. Törngren, "Swedish Gymnastics," in Gustav Sundbärg (ed.), *Sweden: Its People and Its Industry* (Stockholm: Government Printing-Office, 1904), p. 348.

Swedes, both the working class and the wealthy, could overcome their unhealthy urban modern environment and equally develop their physical, mental, and spiritual states.⁵⁸ In order to teach gymnastics in both civil and military schools in Sweden, instructors, men and women, had to study at the Gymnastic Central Institute. Students could complete three sets of courses: a one, two, and three-year course for men, and a two-course for women. Each of the three courses for male students was preparatory for the next one (i.e., completion of the one-year course served as a requirement for the second-year one).⁵⁹

Sırrı spent a year studying in Stockholm. His time as a student at the institute was a formative one. According to his memoirs, Sırrı arrived in Sweden passionate about gymnastics and sports; however, he soon realized how much the Gymnastic Central Institute had to offer him. Sırrı describes his first meeting with Professor L.M. Törngren, an instructor at and the previous director of the Gymnastic Central Institute, as one in which he tried to demonstrate his level of knowledge with his “biceps and skill” and Törngren and others laughed. He uses this encounter to illustrate how much he learned in Sweden.⁶⁰ Over time, according to Sırrı, the instructors at the school taught him “the necessary physiology, anatomy, psychology, and biology of the exercise of the body” as well as the idea that “gymnastics were the educational instrument of the human senses.”⁶¹

Sırrı’s education in Sweden also extended beyond the Gymnastic Central Institute. The entire city of Stockholm, with all of its wonders, served as school in which he and the city’s

⁵⁸ Ljunggren, “The Masculine Road Through Modernity,” pp. 92-93.

⁵⁹ Törngren, “Swedish Gymnastics,” p. 352. For a description of different courses at the Gymnastic Central Institute at Stockholm, see Fred Eugene Leonard, *A Guide to the History of Physical Education* (Philadelphia and New York: Lea & Febiger, 1923), pp. 163-170.

⁶⁰ Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 45.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

residents were exposed to the various daily manifestations of civilization. Sırrı shared his reflections on his stay in Sweden with Istanbul's reading public in a series of articles, entitled, "Swedish Memoirs" (*İsveç Hatıraları*), which the Ottoman-Turkish magazine *Şehbal* published over the course of a year.⁶² The articles played two interconnected functions: First, they established that Sweden and Stockholm were centers of civilization. The organization of streets, the ubiquitous presence of parks, libraries, and museums, the development of modern schools, the presence of charitable organizations, and the popularity of gymnastics and sports amongst Swedish people of all ages ensured that Stockholm, like Paris and Berlin, was one of the world's most developed cities in the world. Second, by publishing his reflections on his stay in Sweden, Sırrı conveyed to readers that both his travels and scholarly pursuits were noteworthy. Sırrı, "the gymnastics instructor" (*jimnastik muallimi*), as he referred to himself in each article, was studying a subject matter that enlightened people around the world considered to be of the utmost importance in their daily lives.

The General Inspectorate of Physical Training

Sırrı returned to Istanbul in spring 1910 not knowing exactly how he would benefit from his yearlong stint in Stockholm; while there was a precedent for the Ottoman government sending students to study "new knowledge" in Europe dating back to the eighteenth century, these young men did not focus their studies on gymnastics and physical exercise.⁶³ Despite Sırrı's concerns about his subject of study, together, the growing interest in corporeal reform amongst Ottoman reforms and the novelty of Sırrı's journey to study gymnastics abroad led to

⁶² See, *Şehbal* (June 1909-June 1910).

⁶³ For a discussion about these students and the process of sending them abroad, see Yalçınkaya, *Learned Patriots*.

the creation of opportunities both for him and the institutionalization of physical training. Shortly after Sirri arrived in Istanbul, he received a letter from Emrullah Efendi, the Minister of Education, stating that he had been “appointed to the General Inspectorate of Physical Training of the schools in Istanbul and throughout all the Ottoman provinces with a salary of 200 kuruş.”⁶⁴ Sirri reported to the Ministry of Public Education, thanked Emrullah and asked him about the new position: “but sir, what am I going to inspect? Other than Galatasaray [the Imperial School], there isn’t another high school with gymnastics courses. Moreover, the name of this course isn’t even known in girls schools.”⁶⁵ To which Emrullah replied,

My dear, you are going to be both an inspector (*müfettiş*) and a founder (*müessis*). We reformed the teacher training school for boys. We added physical training courses into the curriculum twice a week. You will give classes there and train teachers. Worry about the girl schools later.⁶⁶

The creation of the inspectorate reveals the Ottoman government’s explicit acknowledgement of the importance of physical training for strengthening the bodies of young Ottoman citizens. It also suggests that Ottoman reformers believed that the government needed to get involved in this cultural and social transformation, which, until 1910, civic voluntary associations and committed educators had largely shaped. The position was unprecedented; however its creation was part of a broader Ottoman educational reform program in which the Ministry of Public Education established “twelve general education inspectors” (*maarif-i müfettiş umumiyesi*) in order to inspect the status of schools throughout the empire.⁶⁷ Each inspector was responsible for inspecting two fields of study, which included the religious

⁶⁴ Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 47.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ “Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti Teşkilatı Hakkında Nizamname,” *Düstur* (March 12, 1910), pp. 171-172. For functioning of these different inspectors, see BOA, MF.HTF.

sciences, Arabic, Turkish, mathematics, physical sciences, teaching and pedagogy, philosophy, physical training, architecture, medicine, geography and history, and foreign languages.⁶⁸

In practice, inspectors were not confined to one or two areas of study; on the contrary, they tended to write reports about various aspects of the day-to-day management of Ottoman public schools.⁶⁹ Inspection reports from the Ministry of Public Education, for example, reveal that the inspectors visited and inspected the functioning of Ottoman government schools spread throughout the capital.⁷⁰ These reports covered a diverse array of issues, such as the hygienic standards of the schools, teacher attendance, and the accessibility of school libraries to students. Sırrı's report of the Istanbul High School (İstanbul Sultanisi) that was sent to the Ministry of Public Education, for example, states that "with the exception of the physical training instructor, Ahmet Robenson Efendi, all the teachers and staff were performing their duties."⁷¹ His report of the "Girls School" (İnas Mektebi) was particularly critical of the insalubrious state of the classrooms, which he described as "contravening hygienic standards."⁷²

In addition to visiting and writing reports about schools in the capital, Sırrı pursued a number of other activities aimed at spreading the idea that physical exercise was an integral component of the Ottoman Empire's educational system. First, he regularly taught gymnastics

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ By 1914, the Ministry of Publication Education made efforts to standardize the roles and responsibilities of the inspectors. The result of these efforts was the publication of a twelve-page booklet, entitled, "The Regulations for the Responsibilities of the Province Inspectors" (*Vilayet Maarif Müfettişlerinin Vazife[si]ne Dair Talimatname*). As the title suggests, the publication was envisioned as a manual for the inspectors to follow. BOA, MF.HTF 1/79 [June 9, 1914]. Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti, *Vilayet Maarif Müfettişlerinin Vazife[si]ne Dair Talimatname* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1914).

⁷⁰ See, BOA, MF.HTF. Reports of the inspections from the Ministry of Public Education demonstrate that the majority of the schools inspected were Ottoman government ones. However, inspectors also inspected non-Muslim schools. See, for example, a report of a Jewish Alliance Israélite Universelle school in Hasköy. BOA, MF.HTF 1/92 [September 15, 1914].

⁷¹ BOA, MF.HTF 1/75 [December 6, 1913].

⁷² Ibid.

courses to students at the Darülmüallimin. Like many other educators during the period, Sırrı believed that education reforms needed to simultaneously target students and teachers. According to this view, it was not sufficient to introduce new subjects of study to students; the ministry also needed to cultivate a new cadre of instructors who were committed to the new ideas and courses of study.

Among the young men that the majority of the students at the Darülmüallimin that Sırrı taught “gymnastics and foundations of teaching” were students of religious colleges, or *medreses*.⁷³ The presence of these students at Darülmüallimin reflected a broader transformation during the period: Ottoman public schools increasingly became the primary institution through which young men could better their and their families’ socio-economic status. As a result, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Ottomans either simultaneously pursued their studies in *medreses* and public schools or supplemented their “religious education with other forms of schools.”⁷⁴ Access to both new subjects of study and the government schools in which they were taught, according to Amit Bein, enabled young men to “boost their credentials in a social environment increasingly less appreciative of traditional religious scholarship” and increase the likelihood of them receiving a teaching position after their studies.⁷⁵

Many Ottoman intellectuals ridiculed these students. Ömer Seyfeddin, a prominent novelist, for example, referred to “‘medrese folk’ as enemies of progress.”⁷⁶ Sırrı mocked

⁷³ Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 47.

⁷⁴ Amit Bein, “The Ulama and Political Activism in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Career of Şeyhülislam Mustafa Sabri Efendi (1869-1954),” in Meir Hatina (ed.), *Guardians of Faith in Modern Times: Ulama in the Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 69.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Somel stresses the institutional benefits of studying at the Darülmüallimin. Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 130.

⁷⁶ Amit Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic. Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 23.

medrese students by describing their unwillingness to discard their turbans, which, he symbolically highlights, rolled off their heads, when exercising.⁷⁷ The fact that the students wore a headdress during their exercises seems to not have been the issue—the image below (figure 3.4), for example, demonstrates that Sırrı taught gymnastics courses in a fez; rather, it was the type of head covering, the turban, which many associated with antiquated ideas and beliefs. Administrators of the Darülmualimin, who were cognizant of just how widespread such ideas were in late Ottoman society and might have even shared them, made sure to print photographs of young men in turbans exercising their bodies in *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası*. These images conveyed the idea that if religious students and scholars, who personified “traditional” beliefs and opposition to novel ideas and practices, could train and discipline their bodies through exercise, anybody and everyone in the empire could.



[Figure 3.4 Photograph of Selim Sırrı instructing religious students during a gymnastics course. The caption reads, “Religious Students of Physical Exercise” (*Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası: Ameliyat ve Tatbikat Kısmı* 5/32, Mat 28, 1914, unnumbered.)]

⁷⁷ Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 49.

Conferences and lectures served as another means through which Sırrı attempted to popularize the idea that physical exercise was a central component of the Ottoman Empire's educational project. Before traveling to Stockholm and closing the Physical Training School in 1909, Sırrı rented theatres around the city in order to organize formal presentations about sports; after becoming the General Inspector of Physical Training, he substituted the theatre for the Imperial University (Darülfünun).⁷⁸ Starting in 1911, Sırrı regularly organized conferences on the campus of the Ottoman Empire's first modern university.⁷⁹ Faculty, students, and likeminded reformers attended these and other conferences, which were organized around specific themes. For example, while Sırrı lectured about physical development and gymnastics, Satı lectured about broader issues related to education and pedagogy.⁸⁰

During early twentieth century, many prominent figures were affiliated with the Darülfünun. For example, Ahmet Mithat Efendi, a well-known writer and journalist, taught history; Agop Boyacıyan, a printer and the leader of the Armenian Protestant community, was the head of the mathematics department; and, Rıza Tevfik, a member of parliament, prolific writer, and sports enthusiast, who was friend of Selim Sırrı, taught history at Darülfünun.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 47. For a discussion about the establishment and various transformations of the Darülfünun experienced starting in the mid nineteenth until the establishment of the Turkish republic, see Sevtap Kadioğlu, "Darülfünun," in Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Facts On File, 2009), pp. 203-204; Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, "Darülfünun," in İbrahim Kalın, Salim Ayduz, and Caner K Dagli (eds.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 169-172; M. Alper Yalçınkaya, *Learned Patriots: Debating Science, State, Society in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), particularly, pp. 72-75, 77-78.

⁷⁹ Tarcan, *Hatıralarım*, p. 47; "Selim Sırrı Bey," *Nevsal-ı Milli* (İstanbul: Artin Asadoryan ve Mahdumları Matbaası, 1911), p. 384.

⁸⁰ The content of some of the conferences was subsequently published. See, for example, Satı Bey, *Vatan için: Beş Konferans* (İstanbul: Kader Matbaası, 1913). Darülfünun was not the only place when people organized these conferences. The Darülmüallimin also hosted conferences. For example, see "Riyazet i Bedeniye" *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası: Ameliyat ve Tatbikat Kısmı* 4/26 (May 28, 1913), pp. 326-328.

⁸¹ Sara Nur Yıldız, "Karamanoğlu Mehmed Bey: Medieval Anatolian warlord or Kemalist Language Reformer? Nationalist Historiography, Language Politics and the Celebration of the Language Festival in Karaman, Turkey,

Therefore, the organization of conferences about corporeal reform at the Ottoman Empire's first modern university marks a significant development for both Sirri and physical training in late Ottoman society. It demonstrated that not only did sports enthusiasts value Sirri's ideas about exercise, the body, and education, other Ottoman intellectuals and scholars did so as well.

International conferences about sports held outside of the imperial borders also helped legitimize the ideas about sports that these Ottoman reformers espoused. Organized in cities across Europe during the early twentieth century, these conferences demonstrated that the Ottoman physical training project maintained striking similarities and concerns with others around the world. Ottoman officials had established a rapport with physical training advocates and were invited to the international conferences that these educators organized prior to the creation of the General Inspectorate of Physical Training. For example, in 1905, the organizers of the Second International Congress for Physical Education (*deuxième Congrès international de l'Éducation physique de la Jeunesse*) encouraged Ottoman officials to attend the conference in Liege, Belgium.⁸² Nevertheless, the Ottoman government's presence at such international forums increased during Sirri's tenure as the General Inspector of Physical Training. For example, Sirri attended the International Congress for Physical Education (*Congrès international de l'éducation physique*) in Odense, Denmark in July 1911⁸³ as well as the International Congress for Physical Education (*Congrès international de l'éducation physique*) in Paris in March 1913.⁸⁴ The conferences served as international forums in which representatives of gymnastics societies

1961-2008," in Jorgen Nielson (ed.), *Religion, Ethnicity and Contested Nationhood in the Former Ottoman Space* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2012), pp. 147-170.

⁸² The first conference was held in 1900 in Paris. For the formal invitation to Tevfik Paşa of the Ottoman Empire, see BOA, MF.MKT 874/68 [August 4, 1905].

⁸³ BOA, BEO 3891/291765 [May 1, 1911].

⁸⁴ BOA, MF.MKT 1193/26 [December 25, 1913].

and/or government officials from across the globe came together to build a rapport, promote the importance of physical exercise, and advocate a distinct method to train the body.⁸⁵

Both the Ottoman Empire's invitation to and Sırrı's participation in these conferences were celebrated in the press. *Alemdar* (Standard-bearer), an Ottoman-Turkish daily newspaper that was affiliated with the Freedom and Accord Party (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası*), for example, highlighted the significance of Sırrı's trip to Paris.⁸⁶ By participating in the International Congress for Physical Education, according to an article, entitled "Selim Sırrı, Education and France," "Selim Sırrı ... honorably represented Ottomans [and] Ottomanness" (*Osmanlılar Osmanlılık*).⁸⁷ In addition to attending the conference, he traveled to various cities in Europe, such as London, Berlin, and Budapest, where he established relations with other sports enthusiasts, and conveyed to people the importance of sports amongst Turks, both in the past and now. Extemporaneously addressing a large group of sports enthusiasts and French president Raymond Poincaré at France's Teacher-Training School, Sırrı stated:

Oh Frenchmen! You have a saying in your language: strong like a Turk...Turks have always been strong and are still strong. The reason of the current disasters has been attributed to their lack of strength. The reason for their defeat is not a lack of strength (*kuvvetsizlik*), but their lack of skill (*maharetsizlik*). You will see again Turks like the ancient warriors and experts of battle. In the near future, they will wake from their slumber, gather all of their strength, and, with their skill, get their retribution. Be sure of this!...⁸⁸

Sırrı's speech made clear to Ottoman Turkish readers the importance of his mission to Europe. The Ottoman Empire was participating at an international forum that many people considered to

⁸⁵ For a list of the various presentations made at the conferences, see *Procès-verbal du Congrès international de l'éducation physique à Odense (Danmark) le 7, 8, 9, & 10 juillet 1911* (Odense: J.H. Schultz, 1911); *Congrès international de l'éducation physique: Paris 17-20 mars 1913* (Paris: Baillièere et Fils, 1913)

⁸⁶ "Fıkra-ı Mahsusa: Selim Sırrı, Maarif ve Fransa," *Alemdar* (April 29, 1913), pp. 2-3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

be central to their nation building projects. At the same time, it conveyed an exclusive reading of the Ottoman Empire: Turks and their corporeal strength, according to Sırrı, were the cornerstones of the Ottoman Empire, not its multiethnic and multireligious population.

Method and Mandatory Curriculum

The establishment of the Inspectorate, the gradual incorporation of gymnastics courses into Ottoman public schools, and Sırrı's participation in international conferences reflected the growing popularity of gymnastics and exercise as core subjects of study in Ottoman schools. Recognizing the importance of this development, Sırrı turned to the printed word in order to advocate a distinct method and approach to training the body. In 1910 and 1911, he wrote *Swedish Style Gymnastics: Physical Training (İsveç Usulünde Jimnastik: Terbiye-i Bedeniye)* and *Educational Gymnastics and School Games (Terbiyevi İsveç Jimnastikleri ve Mektep Oyunları)* respectively.⁸⁹ In order to spread the word about his approach to training the body, Sırrı took advertisements for the books in Ottoman newspapers, such as *İkdam*.⁹⁰ In both books, he highlighted both the growing interest in and lack of knowledge about gymnastics in the empire. For example, “some people,” according to Sırrı, “think that gymnastics is a dangerous pastime...that is unnecessary for children, dangerous for the elderly, [and] ill-advised for women.”⁹¹ On the other hand, there were Ottomans who believed that gymnastics was “a beneficial sport,” which served as an instrument “to make the body hard and strong like steel.”⁹² These variegated impressions were in part due to people associating gymnastics with the

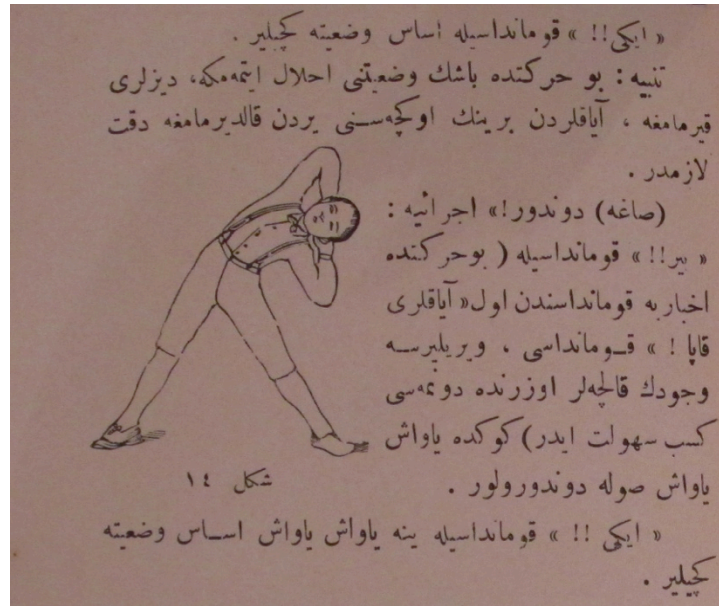
⁸⁹ Selim Sırrı, *İsveç Usulünde Jimnastik: Terbiye-i Bedeniye* (İstanbul: Kütüphane-i Askeri, 1910); Selim Sırrı, *Terbiyevi İsveç Jimnastikleri ve Mektep Oyunları* (Konstantiniye: Matbaa-i Ebüzziya, 1911).

⁹⁰ For example, see, *İkdam* (September 16, 1912), p. 5.

⁹¹ Sırrı, *Terbiyevi İsveç Jimnastikleri*, p. 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*

physical activities that acrobats, trapeze artists, and weight lifters performed. Gymnastics, Sirri assured readers, was none of these things. “Gymnastics is the name given to all the sports and movements that rely on scientific means to safeguard a healthy and agile body, to increase the power and strength of muscles, and to develop all the different body parts.”⁹³



[Figure 3.5 Core body exercises. Selim Sırrı, *Terbiyevi İsveç Jimnastikleri ve Mektep Oyunları* (Konstantiniye: Matbaa-i Ebüzziya, 1911), p. 61.]

Both books advocated a distinct method to training the body: Swedish gymnastics. “The goal of the Swedish method” (*İsveç usulü*), Sırrı stressed, “is a healthy and sound body.”⁹⁴ In other words, Swedish gymnastics emphasized the creation of the entire body, not individual muscles. Advocates of the Swedish method envisioned free movement exercises as the ideal means through which all the different parts of the body could be properly developed in a balanced fashion. The body served as both the object to be exercised and the instrument through which it was trained.⁹⁵ As a result, Swedish gymnastics made minimal use of apparatus. Sırrı

⁹³ Ibid., p. 5.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

⁹⁵ *The Gymnastic Central Institute at Stockholm*, p. 5.

fully supported this approach. In *Educational Gymnastics and School Games*, he divided the different parts of the body into individual sections. Sırrı textually and visually provided readers with guides on how to perform free movement exercises for each body part.

Not all Ottomans remained as committed to one gymnastics method. Ahmed Nazmi and Bekir Sıtkı, for example, embraced a more eclectic approach.⁹⁶ Their coauthored book, entitled, *New Style Ottoman Physical Training Classes (Yeni Usul Osmanlı Terbiye-i Bedeniyye Dersleri)*, combined different gymnastics methods in Europe, namely Swedish and German.⁹⁷ Exercises without equipment were divided into three sections, surface exercises (*hareket-i basita*), compounded exercises (*hareket-i mürekkep*), and united exercises (*hareket-i müttehida*). Students of all ages could perform these three exercises; on the other hand, young men needed to be at least fifteen years old age in order to perform exercises with apparatus (*aletli idman hareketi*). Exercises with clubs, batons, ladders, as well as parallel and pull-up bars, according to Nazmi and Sıtkı, required that young men had strong arms, a wide chest, and sturdy legs.

The creation of Ottoman-Turkish textbooks advocating different methods to training the body reveals that there was not a consensus about which method to use when exercising. Sırrı sought to change this, however, by institutionalizing a distinct approach to exercising in schools. In September 1911, Sırrı wrote a letter to the Ministry of Public Education stating that he was enclosing a teaching manual (*talimatname*) for gymnastics to be used by teachers throughout the empire.⁹⁸ A little less than a month later, the High Education Council (Meclis-i Kebir-i Maarif),

⁹⁶ Both Ahmet Nazmi and Bekir Sıtkı were gymnastics instructors at the Kuleli Military School (Kuleli İdadisi). Nazmi was a first lieutenant (*mülâzım-ı evvel*) and Sıtkı was a captain (*yüzbaşı*).

⁹⁷ Ahmet Nazmi & Bekir Sıtkı, *Yeni Usul Osmanlı Terbiye-i Bedeniyye Dersleri* (İstanbul: Necim İkbâl Matbaası, 1911).

⁹⁸ BOA, MF.MKT 1175/95 [September 20, 1911].

authorized the eight-article manual, entitled, “Special Instructions for Public Middle Schools, High Schools, and the Teacher Training Schools’ Physical Training Courses.”⁹⁹

The promulgation of the manual represents an important shift in the institutionalization of physical training. It established that physical training courses were henceforth mandatory for all government middle schools, high schools, and teacher training schools. Students were required to perform physical exercises for two hours in the mornings or evenings. In order to ensure that instructors were properly prepared to teach these courses, the instruction manual required that they attend the “applied courses” (*tatbikat dersleri*) for one hour during the week at the Darülmüallimin. In addition to being required to teach a distinct method, Swedish gymnastics, instructors had to follow the lessons offered in Sirri’s book, “Educational Swedish Gymnastics.”¹⁰⁰

By 1913, the Ministry of Public Education also considered gymnastics to be one of the core classes taught at the elementary school level, throughout the empire.¹⁰¹ The details of these classes were not left up to the instructors teaching these classes. On the contrary, teachers were required to follow the detailed curriculum that the ministry crafted and made available to them in a booklet, entitled *Elementary School Curriculum (Mekاتب-i İptidaiye Ders Müfredatı)*.¹⁰² Thirty-three pages are allotted to “physical training.”¹⁰³ According to the booklet, instructors had to teach physical training to all students twice a week at “fixed times.” These classes were to last

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti, *Tedrisat-ı İptidaiye Kanun-ı Muvakkatı* (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1913), p. 7.

¹⁰² Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti, *Mekاتب-i İptidaiye Ders Müfredatı* (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1913)

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 59-92.

thirty weeks, beginning in the first week of classes and finishing at the end of the semester. The booklet stipulated the various exercises that students needed to perform during each week.

Conclusion

By 1914, officials in the Ministry of Public Education had decided to build a Physical Training School. *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası* announced the decision and the concrete steps that were being taken to establish it: “Like in all civilized countries, the Ministry of Public Education has started to make the necessary initiatives to build a physical training school in Istanbul.”¹⁰⁴ The school would offer students theoretical courses in anatomy, physiology, hygiene, and show them proper gymnastics methods.¹⁰⁵ The school, according to the description in the journal, was envisioned as the institution that would train a cadre of professional physical training instructors.

Teachers never got the opportunity to enroll in the school during the late empire; they had to wait until 1927, after the establishment of the Turkish Republic.¹⁰⁶ Despite the delay, the mere decision to create the school reveals the expansion of the Ottoman government’s physical training project during the period. The chapter demonstrates the ways in which Selim Sırrı played an instrumental role in articulating, institutionalizing, and popularizing the idea that in order for all Ottomans to develop healthy and robust bodies, Swedish gymnastics needed to be integrated into the core curriculum of all schools throughout the empire. As the General Inspector of Physical Training and a member of the Higher Education Council, Sırrı developed a

¹⁰⁴ “Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mektebi,” *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası* 4/23 (April 14, 1913), p. 42.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Çelebizade Sait Tefvik, “Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mekteb Aliyesinde Bir Kaç Saat,” *Spor Alemi* (January 27, 1927), p. 2.

government project whose defining characteristic was the belief that physical exercise were more than fun activities that middle and upper-class young men performed on campus after class and/or in voluntary sports clubs, they were the instruments through which all Ottomans developed into physical, mentally, and morally sound citizens. Theoretically the category Ottoman encompassed all citizens of the empire, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. However, Sırrı's consistent use of Turk and Ottoman interchangeably both in the press and abroad as well as the writings of other educators about gymnastics in *Tedrisat-ı İbtidaiye Mecmuası* reveals that the Ottoman government's educational project increasingly excluded Armenians, Greeks, and Jews.

Chapter 4

Ottoman Connections, Strong Communities, and Robust Bodies: Istanbul's Multilingual Physical Culture Press

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ottoman citizens created a vibrant print media devoted entirely to physical culture. This physical culture press consisted of illustrated magazines, daily newspapers, and sports periodicals written in Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, Greek, French, and English. These experimental publications constituted a public forum that provided Istanbul's growing reading public with copious articles about gymnastics, football, hockey, scouting, hygiene, voluntary sports associations, as well as athletic exhibitions and competitions in Istanbul, Europe, and the United States. Together, these discussions offered an aspiring middle-class with instructions on how to cultivate a community by playing sports, having fun, exercising, and training their bodies. As a result, this press served as a mouthpiece of Ottoman physical culture enthusiasts who treated exercise and sports as activities through which they and their readers could imagine and construct new conceptions of the self and community, defined in relation to the body and masculinity.

This chapter focuses on the publications that made up Istanbul's physical culture press. Contributors to this press were Muslim, Christian, and Jewish journalists, educators, administrators and members of sports clubs, as well as government officials. Together, their articles provided readers with a diverse range of content, ranging from argumentative pieces about the necessity of integrating gymnastics into schools, detailed descriptions of various athletic competitions, as well as analytical discussions about the importance of exercise and sports. While the content of the discussions differed, they intersected at the level of the

assumption that the male body served as a transparent reflection of the current state of the community and empire. Moreover, these publications all treated sports and exercise as the ideal means by which readers, schools, and athletic associations could rejuvenate both the body of the community and the individual. As a result, the press carved out a space for physical culture in late Ottoman Istanbul's expanding public sphere and textually and visually established the interconnection between sports and individual and communal identities.

This chapter explores the development of Istanbul's multilingual physical culture press from 1908 until World War I. By tracing its construction, it highlights the linkages between Muslim, Christian, and Jewish upper and middle class men who fervently believed in the transformative power of physical exercise and sports. It examines how Ottoman subjects visually and textually established connections between sports, strength, the development of the community and the individual. The content and form of the articles reveals striking similarities and reflects a shared understanding of exercise and the body; however, it also demonstrates that Ottoman Turks, Armenians, Jews, and to a lesser extent Greeks treated the press as exclusive sites from they could disseminate sports among their own respective ethno-religious community. Thus, the press demonstrates how late Ottoman physical culture was constitutive of shared assumptions, practices, and linkages, as well as exclusive ones.

The Creation of Istanbul's Physical Culture Press

Discussions about physical culture first emerged in Istanbul's multilingual press during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909).¹ These articles were limited to intermittent reflections on the significance of gymnastics and hygiene, as well as coverage of local and

¹ For a discussion about the Hamidian press, see Frierson, *Unimagined Communities*; Paul Fesch, *Constantinople aux derniers jours d'Abdul-Hamid* (Paris: M. Rivière, 1907).

international athletic events in daily newspapers.² Regular discussions about sports in the press had to wait until the Young Turk revolution in 1908, which ushered in a period of unprecedented levels of printing. After the first year of the revolution, for example, the number of periodicals in Istanbul alone mushroomed to two hundred.³ The wide sweeping reforms ushered in during the second constitutional era, namely the promulgation of the Press Law (*Matbuat Kanunu*) in 1909, created a context in which editors and writers no longer worried about the Hamidian regime's censors inspecting articles and pictures. As a result, Ottoman subjects were more willing to write and publish articles about novel ideas and discussions, such as gymnastics, team sports, and corporeal reform.⁴

Illustrated Ottoman-Turkish Periodicals

² For example, see the Ottoman-Turkish newspaper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* sporadically ran articles about gymnastics and hygiene during the late nineteenth century. For example, see Ahmet Mithat Efendi, "Bend-i Mahsus-ı Sihhi: Cimnastik yani Riyazet-i Bedeniye," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (July 12, 1889), pp. 5-6; "Hıfzıssıhhat," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (September 21, 1880), p. 3. Other Ottoman-Turkish newspapers such as *İkdam* and *Sabah* published articles about the Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. For example, see "Olimpiyat Müsabakaları," *Sabah* (April 9, 1896), p. 3; "Olimpiyat Müsabakaları," *İkdam* (April 14, 1896), p. 3. The daily English-French newspaper *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* irregularly published articles related to sports in Istanbul during the Hamidian period. This coverage focused on football, tennis, and cricket among Istanbul's foreign residents and Ottoman non-Muslim subjects. For example, see "Football: Constantinople Football vs. Greek Club of Moda," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (January 27, 1902), p. 32; "Lawn Tennis," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (March 24, 1902), p. 131; "Constantinople Cricket League," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (June 2, 1902), p. 247.

³ Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, pp. 136. For an account of the press during the period, see F. G. Aflal F. G. Aflal, *Regilding the Crescent* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1911), especially, pp. 197-222. Ahmed Emin, *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by its Press* (New York: AMS Press, 1968).

⁴ The Committee of Inspection and Control (*Encümen-i Teftiş ve Muayene*) was the main body that inspected written and visual material printed in the imperial domains. Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz, *Matbuat Hatıralarım (1888-1914)* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012), especially pp. 100-114; Strauss, "'Kütüp ve Resail-i Mevkute'." For a discussion about the Press Law, see Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). The Ottoman Parliament's Lower House (*Meclis-i Mebusan*) approved the Press Law on July 14, 1909 and the Ottoman Parliament's Upper House (*Ayan Meclisi*) approved it on July 18, 1909. Although there was a mushrooming of periodicals and a rolling back of Hamidian style censorship during the second constitutional period, censorship continued to function. For a discussion about the centralization of censorship during the period, see İpek K. Yosmaoğlu, "Chasing the Written Word: Press Censorship in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1913," *Turkish Studies Association Journal* 27 (2003), pp. 15-49.

The first periodicals to publish articles about physical culture during the period were *Resimli Kitap* (*Illustrated Book*) and *Musavver Muhit* (*Illustrated Encyclopedia*). Both of these illustrated Ottoman-Turkish magazines were self-described as “literary, political, scientific, philosophical, [and] social” journals and edited by the same person, Sabri Faik. The articles published in both journals that focused on physical culture accomplished two things. First, they provided readers with basic information about the spread of gymnastics in Europe and its ability to create strong, healthy, and moral subjects there.⁵ Second, they conveyed the idea that gymnastics consisted of a set of salubrious activities that urban, literate, and civilized young men should perform. Sabri Faik’s willingness to publish these articles in *Resimli Kitap* and *Musavver Muhit* as well as the letters that he received from readers in Salonica, Edirne, Damascus, Izmir, and Istanbul,⁶ all of which expressed an interest in physical culture, demonstrate that literate circles in urban centers of the empire increasingly considered corporeal reform and physical exercise to be relevant discussions and activities during the period.

Ottoman-Turkish and Armenian Sports Journals

The popularity of these conversations gradually created a demand for publications focusing exclusively on physical culture. Turkish and Armenian sports enthusiasts responded to this growing interest by creating four publications, three of which were written in Ottoman Turkish, *Futbol* (*Football*), *Terbiye ve Oyun* (*Training and Game*), and *İdman* (*Sports*), and one in Western Armenian, *Marmnamarz* (*Physical Training*). All four magazines developed over the

⁵ For example, see Selim Sırrı, “Jimnastik Hakkında,” *Resimli Kitap* (December 1908), pp. 266-269; Selim Sırrı, “Alman Jimnastikleri,” *Resimli Kitap* (February 1909), pp. 476-478; Ömer Lütfi, “Terbiye-i Bedeniye Dair,” *Musavver Muhit* (March 2, 1909), pp. 268-69.

⁶ Selim Sırrı, “Nasıl Jimnastik Yapalım?,” *Resimli Kitap* (March 1909), pp. 600-608.

span of five years: *Futbol* (1910), *Marmnamarz* (1911-14), *Terbiye ve Oyun* (1911),⁷ and *İdman* (1913-14). The content of the articles published in these four journals provided Turkish and Armenian readers with a broader array of articles about physical culture than those in *Resimli Kitap* and *Musavver Muhit*. In addition to introductory pieces about how to perform gymnastics and team sports, these journals offered detailed analytical pieces about the significance of physical exercise, gymnastics courses in school, team sports, scouting, coverage of the activities of athletic clubs, as well as images of young men performing sports and exhibiting their robust, modern bodies.

Futbol was Istanbul's first sports magazine. *Futbol*'s owner, Mustafa Ziya, and editor in chief, Ali Macit, established the magazine in October 1910 as an Ottoman-Turkish and French weekly publication.⁸ The inaugural article of *Futbol* described a situation in which there was both a growing interest in sports (*spor*) and football (*futbol*) and a dearth of information about them “in our precious dominion (*mülk-i kıymettarımız*).”⁹ Ziya and Macit envisioned the publication serving as a vehicle that would spread knowledge about the game of football in the empire and help “Ottomans (*Osmanlılar*) occupy a position among international football matches.”¹⁰ As its title and inaugural article suggest, *Futbol* devoted more space and attention to discussing the importance of football, which it described as both a game (*oyun*) and science

⁷ *Terbiye ve Oyun* published twenty-four editions over the course of a year from August 11, 1911 until August 14, 1912. After which, it resumed publishing in August 1922.

⁸ “Beyan-ı İtizar,” *Futbol* (October 10, 1910), p 1. Despite the intention to publish *Futbol* equally in Ottoman Turkish and French, the journal was predominantly an Ottoman-Turkish publication. The majority of *Futbol*'s articles were written in Ottoman Turkish, while it provided short one-page summaries in French of Istanbul's weekly athletic events at the end of each issue.

⁹ “Takdim-i Meslek,” *Futbol* (October 10, 1910), p 1. The inaugural article explicitly states, “until now, neither a newspaper (*gazete*) nor a booklet (*risale*) has been published about sports or football in our precious dominion (*mülk-i kıymettarımız*).”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

(*fen*),¹¹ as well as providing coverage of football matches between different clubs in Istanbul;¹² however, *Futbol*'s seven issues were not confined to football: the publication also ran articles about integrating gymnastics into the curriculum of schools, as well as analytical pieces about the benefits of corporeal reform and physical exercise.

Shortly after the closure of *Futbol*, Shavarsh Chrissian created *Marmnamarz* as a monthly Armenian physical culture magazine in February 1911.¹³ By bringing together discussions about physical training, corporeal development, hygiene, nutrition, scouting, as well as football, *Marmnamarz* presented a much broader range of articles than was offered in *Futbol*. Armenian educators, biologists, and doctors wrote the majority of these articles. *Marmnamarz* was also peppered with Armenian articles translated from English, French, and German.¹⁴ In addition to analytical pieces, *Marmnamarz* provided coverage of athletic competitions.¹⁵ Therein, readers learned about Armenian athletic competitions in Istanbul, Alexandria, Izmir, as well as outside of the empire.

In August 1911, Selim Sırrı created *Terbiye ve Oyun* as an Ottoman-Turkish bimonthly magazine. According to *Terbiye ve Oyun*'s inaugural article, the journal would focus on “the most important and fundamental sciences (*fen*) that are connected to social life and civilization:

¹¹ For example, see Burhanettin, “Futbol Muarızlarına: İlk Söz,” *Futbol* (October 10, 1910), p 2.

¹² For *Futbol*'s coverage of local matches, see “Pazar Günkü Musabakalar,” *Futbol* (October 10, 1910), pp. 3-4.

¹³ After a year of publishing the magazine monthly, *Marmnamarz* became a bimonthly publication.

¹⁴ Publishing translated French, English, and German articles was a common practice in Istanbul's multilingual press. For examples from the Ladino press, see Sarah Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 123-124.

¹⁵ Much of this coverage was provided in a section entitled “The World of Sports” (*Marmnashkharh*). Events in this section were limited to the imperial domains. For example, see “Marmnashkharh,” *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), p. 30. An entire section entitled “Outside of the Borders” (*Mrts'umnerë Artasahmani Mej*) was created for athletic events outside of the empire. For example, see “Mrts'umnerë Artasahmani Mej,” *Marmnamarz* (January 15, 1912), p. 31.

training and games (*terbiye ve oyun*).¹⁶ At the time of its establishment, Sırrı had been appointed the General Inspector of Physical Training in the Ottoman Empire. Despite Sırrı's government position, *Terbiye ve Oyun* was not a state sponsored project, rather a private one.¹⁷ Articles in *Terbiye ve Oyun* rarely refer to Sırrı as the General Inspector, preferring the less conspicuous title "teacher" (*muallim*).¹⁸ Nevertheless, as the journal's founder and editor, his personal and professional interests in developing physical training in Ottoman government schools indelibly shaped the content of the publication. Sırrı described *Terbiye ve Oyun* as a "servant to the youths' mental and physical training" (*gençlerin terbiye-i fikriye ve bedeniyesine hadim*) and consistently made reference to the importance of educators in offering guidance to people.¹⁹ Letters from teachers throughout the empire demonstrate that many of its readers were drawn to the magazine because of its educational content.²⁰ Many of the journal's articles focused on gymnastics and corporeal reform in schools;²¹ however, *Terbiye ve Oyun* also ran pieces about sports clubs and provided coverage of athletic competitions in Istanbul.²² Sırrı and other Turkish educators wrote the majority of the articles about physical training, while *Terbiye ve Oyun* also featured Ottoman-Turkish pieces translated from English and French.

¹⁶ Selim Sırrı, "Aramızda Meslek ve Maksatımız," *Terbiye ve Oyun* (August 11, 1911), p. 1.

¹⁷ *Marmnamarz* makes this point lucidly clear by stating the following: "an extremely rich [unnamed] Turkish man wanted to recognize Selim Sırrı Bey's efforts and decided to fully fund the costs of the newspaper [*Terbiye ve Oyun*]." "Hachets'ek Tal," *Marmnamarz* (January 1, 1912), p. 2.

¹⁸ For example, see *Terbiye ve Oyun* (September 14, 1911), p. 48.

¹⁹ Sırrı, "Aramızda Meslek ve Maksatımız," p. 1. Sırrı opens the first article of *Terbiye ve Oyun* with the following untranslated Arabic adage: "If there was no teacher/trainer, I would have not known my Lord" (*law la almurabbi lima 'arafat rabbi*).

²⁰ For example, see Selim Sırrı, "Manastir Darulmuallimin Müdürü Necat Bey Efendi'ye," *Terbiye ve Oyun* (September 14, 1911), p. 48.

²¹ Sırrı created an entire section entitled "school games" (*mektep oyunları*). For example, see "Mektep Oyunları," *Terbiye ve Oyun* (August 11, 1911), pp. 10-13.

²² For example, see Ahmet Robenson, "Spor Aleminde: İstanbul 1911-1912 Ligleri," *Terbiye ve Oyun* (August 11, 1911), pp. 26-30.

Ten months after *Terbiye ve Oyun* ceased publishing in August 1912, another sports journal, *İdman*, was created. The founder of *İdman*, Cemi Bey, was the proprietor of the Cemi Library (Cemi Kütüphanesi) in Istanbul and a member of the Anadoluhisarı Sports Home (Anadoluhisarı İdman Yurdu). Together, Cemi and *İdman*'s director, Mehmet Saidi Bey, offered Ottoman-Turkish readers with more extensive content than *Terbiye ve Oyun* by bringing together articles from educators, sports club administrators and members, and government officials about calisthenics, corporeal development, team sports, and scouting, as well as detailed coverage of athletic competitions in Istanbul and outside of the empire.²³

Multilingual Daily Newspapers

In addition to sports periodicals, Istanbul's expanding reading public also turned to multilingual daily newspapers as a source of information about sports. After the Young Turk revolution, Ottoman Turkish, French, English, Greek, and Armenian newspapers increasingly provided a space for discussions about physical culture. The regularity of the coverage as well as its substance differed, however. For example, Istanbul's Ladino and French Jewish press offered articles about exercise, hygiene, as well as sports.²⁴ Two French newspapers, *L'Aurore* (*The Dawn*) and *Le Jeune Turc* (*The Young Turk*), both of which were highly supportive of Zionism in

²³ According to *İdman*'s official letterhead, the publication served as a "magazine that speaks about sports, gymnastics, and scouting" (*Spor'dan, Jimnastik'ten, Keşşaflık'tan bahs eder mecmua*). GSM-KL-16, letter from *İdman* Magazine to Galatasaray [May 25, 1914]. *İdman* separated its coverage of athletic events in Istanbul and outside of the empire into two separate sections: "Sporting Events" (*Spor Havadisleri*) and "Sports in the West" (*Garp'ta Spor*). For examples of both, see "Spor Havadisleri," *İdman* (May 28, 1913), p. 13; "Garp'ta Spor," *İdman* (February 12, 1914), p. 313.

²⁴ There were discussions about health, hygiene, and exercise in the Ladino press. Stein, *Making Jews Modern*, pp. 123-149. For a discussion about the multilingual Jewish press in the Ottoman Empire, see Gad Nassi (ed.), *Jewish Journalism and Printing Houses in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Istanbul: Gorgias Press & The Isis Press, 2001). Sarah Stein notes that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "French was acquiring ever-more importance as the language of print and public life for Ottoman Jews." Although Istanbul had a vibrant Ladino press, French served "as the *lingua franca* of the Jewish bourgeoisie." Stein, *Making Jews Modern*, p. 59.

the Ottoman Empire,²⁵ consistently ran introductory articles about sports as well as coverage of athletic competitions after 1908.²⁶ *L'Aurore* and *Le Jeune-Turc* focused their coverage on the Jewish Gymnastics Society, Maccabi more specifically and physical culture within the Jewish community more generally.²⁷ Other publications such as *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, a four-page daily newspaper published partly in English and French, and *Takhydromos* (*Postman*), Istanbul's most widely read daily Greek newspaper, provided irregular coverage of sporting events in Istanbul.²⁸ *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* focused on the athletic activities of Istanbul's foreign residents and Ottoman non-Muslim subjects, whereas *Takhydromos* concentrated its attention on Ottoman Greek sports clubs and competitions.

Starting in 1912, Ottoman-Turkish daily newspapers, such as *İkdam* (*Effort*), *Sabah* (*Morning*), *Tasvir-i Efkar* (*Representation of Opinions*), and *Tanin* (*Echo*), as well as *Stamboul*,

²⁵ Rodrigue describes *L'Aurore* as one of the most important Zionist newspapers in Istanbul. Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, p. 131. Mandel states that *Le Jeune-Turc* "was subsidized by Zionist funds." Neville Mandel, "Attempts at an Arab-Zionist Entente: 1913-1914," *Middle Eastern Studies* 1 (1965), p. 238. Yaron Ben Naeh describes *Le Jeune-Turc* as a non-Jewish newspaper that was heavily supported by Zionists. See, Yaron Ben Naeh, "The Zionist Struggle as Reflected in the Jewish Press in Istanbul in the Aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution, 1908-18," in Yuval Ben-Bassat and Eyal Ginio (eds.), *Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp. 241-258.

²⁶ *Le Jeune Turc* was previously entitled *Courier d'Orient*. *Le Jeune-Turc* and *L'Aurore* were not the only newspapers that provided coverage of athletic activity within the Jewish community of Istanbul and Jewish physical culture enthusiasts read. Administrators of the Maccabi Gymnastics Club, men like Ziffer and the club's presidents were fluent in German, followed the latest developments in German discussions about gymnastics and hygiene, and maintained relationships with members of the Jewish German physical culture movement. For example, the club sent regular reports to the German Jewish physical culture journal, *Jüdische Turnzeitung*, which was "the 'official organ' of Berlin's Jewish Gymnastics Association, Bar Kochba." *Jüdische Turnzeitung* started printing updates of the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople in December 1901, which members of the club presumably sent to the publication.

²⁷ For example, see "A Propos des Macbi," *L'Aurore* (August 3, 1909), pp. 1-2; "La Société Maccabi," *L'Aurore* (August 3, 1909), p. 3; "Société Juive de Gymnastique Maccabi," *Le Jeune-Turc* (October 5, 1912), p. 3; "Excursion de la 'Maccabi'," *Le Jeune-Turc* (June 6, 1912), p. 3.

²⁸ *Takhydromos* focused on Greek athletic clubs. *Takhydromos* provides the most extensive coverage of sports within the Greek press, as the Ottoman Greek community of Istanbul did not create a sports journal in Greek, despite the fact that Greek physical culture enthusiasts created many voluntary athletic associations and regularly organized athletic competitions.

a French daily newspaper, regularly published sports columns.²⁹ Therein, writers offered introductory articles about football, hockey, boxing, scouting, as well as detailed descriptions of the weekly athletic events in Istanbul. Coverage of athletic events in the Ottoman-Turkish daily press concentrated on sports clubs, whose members were predominantly, although not exclusively Turkish.

Projecting Ethno-Religious Identities

Together, the editors of and contributors to the illustrated periodicals, sports magazines, and daily newspapers created a specialized press, a shared sporting vocabulary in Ottoman Turkish, French, Greek, and Armenian, as well a distinct form of journalistic coverage and prose. They did so while projecting a shared ethno-religious communal identity. This exclusive ethno-religious identity did not necessarily contradict, nor was it subversive of a shared civic one that Muslim, Christian, and Jewish citizens worked out in the press during the period.

One of the ways in which a publication conveyed to its readers that it served as mouthpiece of a particular community was by explicitly stating so. For example, Chrissian defined *Marmnamarz* as the “Organ of National Physical Education” (*Orkan Azgayin Fizik’akan Krt’ut’yan*) and the leader of the “Armenian Physical Education Movement” (*Hay*

²⁹ For examples of the sports columns of *İkdam*, *Sabah*, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, *Tanin*, *Peyam-ı Sabah*, and *Stamboul*, each of which used a different name, see Selim Sırrı, “Spor: Boks (1),” *İkdam* (August 15, 1913), p. 5; Selim Sırrı, “Spor: Spor Nedir? (3),” *İkdam* (August 29, 1913), p. 5; Selim Sırrı, “Spor: Les Bov Scouts-Boy Skot-Keşşafklar (6),” *İkdam* (September 26, 1913), p. 5; “Şehrimizde İdman,” *Sabah* (May 23, 1914), p. 3; “Şehrimizde İdman,” *Sabah* (May 26, 1914), p. 3; “Şehrimizde İdman,” *Sabah* (May 30, 1914), p. 3; “Spor: Haftalık Musahabe: Terakkide İntizam,” *Tasvir-i Efkâr* (May 3, 1913), p. 5; “Spor: Haftalık Musahabe: Ferahlı Bir Gün,” *Tasvir-i Efkâr* (May 12, 1913), p. 5; “Top Oyunları,” *Tanin* (May 26, 1913), p. 5; “Top Oyunları,” *Tanin* (June 16, 1913), p. 5; “Spor: Boks,” *Peyam-ı Sabah* (December 1, 1913), pp. 3-4; “İdman Haberleri: Hokey Musabakası,” *Peyam-ı Sabah* (December 7, 1913), p. 4; “Les Sports,” *Stamboul* (September 6, 1912), p. 2; “Les Sports: Union Club de Cadikeuy,” *Stamboul* (September 3, 1912), p. 2.

Marmnagartanke Sharjoom). Similarly, *L'Aurure*'s editor, Lucien Sciuto, referred to the newspaper publication as "the organ of the interests of Ottoman Jews."³⁰

The sports press also projected an exclusive ethno-religious identity by stressing that its readers belonged to a distinct community. For example, Ottoman-Turkish sports periodicals, like *İdman* and *Terbiye ve Oyun*, juxtaposed discussions about "the vigorous Turkish generation" (*dinç Türk nesil*), "our race" (*ırkımız*), "our athletes" (*idmancılarımız*),³¹ used the first person plural "we" (*biz*) and "Turks" (*Türkler*) interchangeably,³² while articles in Ottoman-Turkish daily newspapers like *Tasvir-i Efkar* routinely referred to "Turkish youth" (*Türk gençleri*) as "our youth" (*gençlerimiz*).³³ *Marmnamarz* emphasized the Armenianness of its readers by referring to them as "Istanbul's Armenians" (*Bolsahay*) and "Armenians of Turkey" (*Turkihay*).³⁴ Moreover, *Marmnamarz* stressed that irrespective of the social, political, and economic backgrounds of its readers and the journal, "we belong to the same community (*azg*)."³⁵ References to religious holidays and celebrations also served as an effective means of reminding readers of their religious bonds. *Terbiye ve Oyun* accomplished this by congratulating its readers on the commencement of the month of Ramadan (*Ramazan-ı Şerif*) and the holiday

³⁰ The first page of *L'Aurore* featured the following description: "L'Aurore: Organe des intérêts des Juifs de l'Empire Ottoman."

³¹ "Neslimiz," *İdman* (January 18, 1914), p. 189; "Zaf-ı İrk (1)," *İdman* (August 14, 1913), p. 79; "Sağlam Vücutlar Meşheri," *İdman* (December 25, 1913), p. 219.

³² For example, see Selim Sırrı, "Eski ve Yeni Olimpiyatları," *Terbiye ve Oyun* (February 28, 1912), p. 213.

³³ "Ferahlı Bir Gün," *Tasvir-i Efkar* (Mayıs 12, 1913), p. 5.

³⁴ "Arazin Khosk'," *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), p. 1.

³⁵ "Hachets'ek Tal," *Marmnamarz* (January 1, 1912), p. 2.

(*bayram*) that followed it, both of which would only have been celebrated by Ottoman Muslim subjects.³⁶

Another way in which the sports press projected an exclusive ethno-religious identity was through its treatment of voluntary athletic associations. Editors of periodicals provided readers with selective coverage of sports clubs, by focusing all or the bulk of their attention on clubs associated with their own community. For example, *L'Aurore* only ran sports related articles about the Jewish Gymnastics Society, Maccabi.³⁷ *Marmnamarz*, on the other hand, expanded its attention beyond a specific association, while concentrating on Armenian clubs. This coverage consisted of lists of Armenian clubs spread throughout Istanbul,³⁸ as well as argumentative articles in which “Armenian youth” (*Hay yeridasardut'ian*) were encouraged to become members of and/or establish athletic associations “in every community, every city, [and] county.”³⁹ Similarly, *Tackydromos* focused its attention on Ottoman Greek sports clubs.

Ottoman-Turkish sports journals also treated sports clubs as one of the most important agents for spreading and popularizing physical culture. *Futbol*, *Terbiye ve Oyun*, and *İdman*

³⁶ *Terbiye ve Oyun* (August 28, 1911), p. 17. “‘Terbiye’ whole-heartedly congratulates its readers on the month of Ramadan” (*‘Terbiye’ karilerine Ramazan-ı Şerifi hararetle tebrik eder*). *Terbiye ve Oyun* (September 28, 1911), p. 49. “‘Terbiye’ whole-heartedly congratulates its readers on the holiday” (*‘Terbiye’ karilerine bayramı hararetle tebrik eder*).

³⁷ The only instance in which *L'Aurore* ran articles about other clubs was when Maccabi Istanbul hosted events for Jewish athletic clubs from Philippopoli, Tatar-Pazardjik, and Yamboli. “A Propos des Macbi,” *L'Aurore* (August 3, 1909), pp. 1-2.

³⁸ *Marmnamarz* published a list of sixteen Armenian Football clubs spread throughout Istanbul in July 1911. This list included the name of the club and the area in which it was located in parenthesis: “Aharonean (Bēch'ik't'ach'), Arak's (Pera), Ararat (Nishan-T'ash), Artsiw (Gowmgabow), Artavazd (Gowrowshēch'mē), Brōt'i (Gnalë), Ēsaeen (Pera), Zhoghovrdayin (Magrigiwgh), Kilikia (Gowmgabow), Maslak' (Shishli), Marmnamarzakan (Pera), Mkhith'araan (Gatigiwgh), Nor Dprots' (Bankalt'i), Sant'ral (Palat'), Dork' (Gowmgabow), Raffi (Skiwtar).” “Bolsoy Hamar Futboli Haykakan Lik,” *Marmnamarz* (July 1911), p. 187. *Marmnamarz* also printed updates about Armenian clubs that were established in Istanbul and the broader empire. For example, see “Nor Agumb Mal,” *Marmnamarz* (August 1911), p. 222.

³⁹ “Hay Yeridasardut'ean,” *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), p. 30; “Agumpneru Kazmut'unë,” *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), p. 30.

visually and textually offered its readers information about clubs, whose members were predominantly, although not exclusively Turkish, and stressed the idea that they were Turkish spaces.⁴⁰ *İdman*, for example, published histories of associations in which Galatasaray was referred to as “the first Turkish club in our country,” and the Turkish character of Fenerbahçe was underscored.⁴¹ By publishing articles about clubs and images of individual players and teams, these publications projected an ethno-religious identity as well as buttressed the notion that athletic clubs in Istanbul were ethnically and religiously homogenous spaces where young men trained and disciplined their bodies and learned how to become civilized, modern members of their exclusive community and the citizens of the empire.

Finally, educators and writers self-consciously highlighted ethno-religious communal affiliations and reinscribed communal divisions by pointing to the athletic accomplishments of particular communities, while at the same time encouraging the corporeal development of their own one. For example, both Selim Sırrı and Vahram Papazian attempted to motivate their own community by extolling the athletic development of the Ottoman Greeks. In an article entitled “To the Youth” (*Gençlere*), which was published a few months after the Young Turk revolution, Sırrı sought to motivate his readers to begin taking concrete steps in forming athletic associations. He did so by criticizing how the repression of the Hamidian period, which he referred to as the “*devr-i istibdat*” (the despotic era), disproportionately affected the development of sporting among Istanbul’s different ethno-religious communities:

⁴⁰ For example, see “‘Şut’larından Emin! Bir Oyuncu: Emin Bey,” *Futbol* (October 18, 1910), p. 1. “Darülfünun Gençleri Terbiye-i Bedeniye Nizamnamesi,” *Terbiye ve Oyun* (August 11, 1911), pp. 15-16. “Makriköy Numune Mektebi Terbiye-i Bedeniye Mafili Nizamnamesi,” *İdman* (February 24, 1914), p. 280-281.

⁴¹ For the club history of Galatasaray, see Ali Sami, “Galatasaray Kulübünün Tarihçesi,” *İdman* (May 18, 1913), p. 1. For the club history of Fenerbahçe, see Mehmet Nasuhi, “Fenerbahçe Spor Kulübü Tarihçesi,” *İdman* (June 28, 1913), pp. 46-47.

Why are we still not organizing [athletically]? In our country (*memleket*), the Greeks have sixteen gymnastic clubs. We do not have more than one. Let's have some unity and work together. From now on, there are going to be many [athletic] events organized, are we going to remain bystanders?⁴²

Important to note in this is quote the way in which Sırrı inclusively uses the possessive first person plural personal pronoun when referring to “country” (*memleket*),⁴³ the first personal pronoun when encouraging his readers to take action, and immediately after, seems to exclude the Greek community from this first person category by pointing to their athletic success.⁴⁴

Similar to Sırrı, Vahram Papazian attempted to motivate Armenians to organize athletic associations and participate in athletic events. He did so by criticizing the current state of affairs in the Armenian community and praising the initiatives of the Greek community:

[W]hen I go to Istanbul, I see lots of unhealthy youth. We call them the future generation...but they do not pay attention to their physical training. Although there are weak youth in all societies, I am jealous of the Greeks. Their youth are always training in schools and every time they train they see their happy youth in front of them. We will do our part to train [...]⁴⁵

Together, the writings of Sırrı and Papazian as well as other educators and writers stressed communal cohesion, while reinscribing the divisions separating different ethno-religious communities.⁴⁶

⁴² Selim Sırrı, “Gençlere,” *Musaver Muhit* (December 10, 1908), p. 89.

⁴³ Redhouse defines *memleket* as the following: “A dominion; country; town; a person’s home district; native land.” Redhouse, p. 752

⁴⁴ The term used in the Ottoman-Turkish text is Rum. Because Rum is a Turkish term, I will continue to use Greek throughout the article. However, it is important to point out that the term Greek completely misses the nuances and implication of the term *Rum* (Ottoman Greek Nationals) and *Yunanlı* (Greek Nationals) in Turkish. For a similar discussion, see, Edhem Eldem, “Greece and the Greeks in Ottoman History and Turkish Historiography,” *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 6 (2009): pp. 27-40.

⁴⁵ Vahram Papazyan, “Yaridasardutyun,” *Marmnamarz* (March, 1911), p. 56.

⁴⁶ The physical culture press was not the only genre that textually stressed the ethno-religious affiliation of both the reader and publication. For examples from the Ladino press, see, Stein, *Making Jews Modern*, pp. 55-82.

Late Ottoman Linkages

In his article about late Ottoman print media, Johan Strauss writes, “printing and publishing in the Ottoman Empire must be regarded very much as the result of the collective effort of all the communities comprising this multi-ethnic empire.”⁴⁷ The creation of Istanbul’s multilingual physical culture press confirms this statement, as Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, Greek, and Armenian subjects all shaped the discursive contours of this specialized press. While the creation of the physical culture was an intercommunal endeavor, it was also constitutive of a variety of networks, some of which conformed to and others transcended ethno-religious divisions. Retracing both types in the press offers insights into the variegated ties that the sports in late Ottoman Istanbul facilitated.

The Ottoman-Turkish physical press reveals a vast intracommunal network of upper and middle-class Turkish men who wrote about sports. Contributors to the illustrated journals, sports magazines, and the daily press were Turkish educators, government officials, as well as administrators and members of predominantly Turkish athletic associations. The articles that these men wrote were rarely confined to a single publication; on the contrary, Turkish sports enthusiasts had their articles published in different Ottoman-Turkish sports periodicals. For example, Selim Sırrı, Ali Faik, Abdurrahman Robenson, Ahmet Robenson, as well as Mehmet Burhanettin regularly published articles in *Futbol, Terbiye ve Oyun, İkdam*, as well as the Ottoman-Turkish daily press. These individuals knew each other well, maintained close relations with the editors of all these publications, and came from similar urban, middle class backgrounds.

⁴⁷ Johann Strauss, “‘Kütüp ve Resail-i Mevkute’: Printing and Publishing in a Multi-Ethnic Society,” in Özdalga, Elisabeth (ed.), *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, pp. (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 228.

With the exception of Burhanettin, each had studied at the prestigious Imperial School in Istanbul.⁴⁸

This intracommunal network of letters was not limited to the contributors to the press; it also included its readers. *İdman*'s special edition (*Nüsha-ı Mümtaze*) in particular serves as a window into the diversity of its readers as well as the personal relationships that many individuals maintained with *İdman*. This section included portrait photographs of Talat Bey, the Interior Minister, Pirizade İbrahim Hayrullah Bey, the Minister of Justice, İsmet Bey, a Member of Parliament from Istanbul and the president of the National Defense Association, Feridun Bey, the Director of the Teacher-Training School, Selim Sırrı, the General Inspector of Physical Training in the Ottoman Empire, Atıf Bey, the president of Turkish Strength (Türk Gücü), Abdurrahman Robenson Bey, a physical training instructor at the Imperial School, Cevat Rüştü Bey, an agricultural specialist, Raşit Bey, the president of the Altınordu Sports Club (Altınordu Spor Kulübü), Ali Sami, the president of the Galatasaray Physical Training Club, Doctor Hamit Hüsnü Bey, the president of the Fenerbahçe Sports Club, and Ali Seyfi Bey, a physical training instructor at Mercan and Davutpaşa High Schools.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ For example, see the letter from *İdman* Magazine to the Galatasaray Physical Training Club, GSM-KL-16, letter from *İdman* to Galatasaray [May 25, 1914].

⁴⁹ *İdman: Nüsha-ı Mümtaze* (undated), pp. 481-508.



[Figure 4.1 & 4.2 Starting from left to right: Portrait photographs of Talat Bey and Selim Sırrı Bey which *İdman* published in its special edition. *İdman: Nüsha-ı Mümtaze* (undated), p. 482; *İdman: Nüsha-ı Mümtaze* (undated), p. 485.]

The images (figure 4.1 & 4.2) depict a similar look and aesthetic: a dapperly dressed gentleman. By juxtaposing these photographs with semi nude images of young men flexing their muscles, the editors celebrated the idea that the ideal modern man sported refined Western clothes, trimmed facial hair, and maintained a defined physique. As a result, *İdman* and the various voluntary athletic associations examined in Chapter Two maintained identical views about the defining characteristics of the gentlemen athlete. Moreover, the fact that these images were signed, addressed, and sent to the editors of *İdman* reveal the ways in which photographs were circulate among friends and colleagues in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Istanbul.

In addition to the images, *İdman*'s special edition also included a selection of handwritten notes from many of the abovementioned figures, all of which expressed a deep appreciation for

İdman's content and services. For example, İsmet Bey wrote, "I congratulate *İdman* because of its service as the leader of the development and progress of Turkish sports (*Türk idmancılığın inkişaf ve terakkisi*)."⁵⁰ Similarly, Talat Bey's letter, which was addressed directly to *İdman*, patronizingly stated:

The defining characteristic of Ottoman youth has to be 'strength in body and mind (*Osmanlı gençliğinin şiarı 'vücutta ve dimağta kuvvet' olmalıdır*). As a result, I am pleased with your magazine, which works towards the development and progress of physical training.⁵¹

Together, the images and the letters, which provided *İdman* with a significant degree of legitimacy, reveal the intracommunal relationships that the publication facilitated between Ottoman Turkish government officials, educators, and administrators and members of Turkish sports clubs.

Istanbul's physical culture press also demonstrates that Muslim, Christian, and Jewish editors and authors did not work in isolation from each other and, despite linguistic obstacles, were familiar with what was being written about sports in other languages throughout the city.⁵² In May 1912, for example, *Terbiye ve Oyun* featured a photograph of Sırrı and his associates with a caption written in both Ottoman Turkish and French: "Selim Sırrı and his friends who devote themselves to spreading and circulating Swedish style [gymnastics] in our country" and "the National Institution of Physical Education."⁵³ The photograph included seven figures, six of whom were Muslims, Selim Sırrı, Feridun Bey, Abdurrahman Robenson, Ahmet Robenson, Fuat Bey, Doctor İhsan Bey, and one Armenian, Shavarsh Chrissian. Not only did Chrissian's name

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 484.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 482.

⁵² Strauss makes a similar argument about Ottoman journalists being "relatively aware of what was written by their compatriots from other *millets*." Strauss, "Kütüp ve Resail-i Mevkute," p. 241.

⁵³ "İsveç Usulunun Memleketimizde neşir ve tamimine hasr-ı vücut eden Selim Sırrı Bey ve Rufakayı Mesaisi: Institution nationale de l'éducation physique," *Terbiye ve Oyun* (May 9, 1912), p. 304.

convey his Armenian background, *Terbiye ve Oyun* explicitly described him as “a teacher at Armenian schools, who studied Swedish calisthenics in London.” The photograph establishes that although this was a predominantly Turkish circle of physical enthusiasts, there were also non-Muslims.



[Figure 4.3 “Selim Sırrı and his friends who devote themselves to spreading and circulating Swedish style [gymnastics] in our country.” (*Terbiye ve Oyun*, May 9, 1912, p. 304)]

Further reflective of these linkages are pictures and articles published in *Marmnamarz*. Chrissian ran the same image featured above (figure 4.3), but opted to change the caption in Ottoman Turkish from “Selim Sırrı and his friends who devote themselves to spreading and circulating Swedish style [gymnastics] in our country” to the following in Armenian: “A group of Swedish trained Instructors in Turkey.”⁵⁴ This was not the only instance in which Chrissian sought to convey his relationship with Selim to the readers of *Marmnamarz*. *Marmnamarz* also

⁵⁴ “Turkiu mech Shuētagan Drutyamp Marzichneru Khump mē,” *Marmnamarz* (May 15, 1912), p. 195.

published an article focused entirely on Sırrı entitled “The Physical Education Turkish Instructor: Selim Sırrı” (*Marmnamarzi Turk Usuts‘ich: Sēlim Sērrı*).⁵⁵ The article featured a photograph of Sırrı, with the following French handwritten note on it: “1-2-1911, to my dear colleague Mr. Chrissian, Selim Sırrı” (*A mon cher collegue M. Chrisian. Selim Sirry*).⁵⁶ The article referred to Sırrı in Armenian as “our colleague” (*mer ashkhadagits‘*), a “patriotic revolutionary” (*hayrenaser haghapokhakan*), and described him as someone who has “now taken it upon himself to increase the important role of physical education in the future of the Ottoman youth’s development.”⁵⁷

At the time of the article, Sırrı had already been appointed to the position of General Inspector of Physical Education, thus the article and the vernacular photograph confirmed the importance of Chrissian and *Marmnamarz*. Moreover, it reflects how Chrissian’s network of physical culture enthusiasts included Ottoman state officials. *Marmnamarz*’s reference to the development of “Ottoman youth” and not Turkish youth is also significant. The latter was an ethno-religious category that excluded Armenians, whereas Armenians and other non-Muslim subjects could be thought of as being part of the former group. This is important because Ottoman-Turkish sports publications increasingly made reference to “Ottomans” (*Osmanlılar*) and “Turks” (*Türkler*) interchangeably during the period. Therefore, *Marmnamarz*’s use of “Ottoman” and not “Turkish” to describe the youth that Sırrı was training reflected a conscious and calculated decision to connect both the activities of Sırrı and Chrissian to the empire and demonstrate that *Marmnamarz* was invested in and connected to the Ottoman state.

⁵⁵ “Marmnamarzi Turk Usuts‘ich: Sēlim Sērrı,” *Marmnamarz* (March, 1911), p. 59.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.



[Figure 4.4 & 4.5 Two images that *Marmnamarz* published, both of which established a relationship between Selim Sırrı and Shavarsh Chriessian. Starting from left to right: (“Marmnamarzi Turk Usuts’ich: Sēlim Sērrı,” *Marmnamarz*, March, 1911, p. 59); (“Turkiu mech Shuētagan Drutyamp Marzichneru Khump mē,” *Marmnamarz*, May 15, 1912, p. 195)]

While non-Muslim publications established and demonstrated to their readers that there were linkages between their own “minority” community and the “majority” Turkish one, Ottoman-Turkish publications, such as *Terbiye ve Oyun*, also presented ties between Turkish and non-Muslim educators and physical trainers. In short, these late Ottoman linkages were not unidirectional, but went both ways. For example, in Sırrı’s article entitled “How are the Greeks of Our Country Working?” (*Memleketimizdeki Rumlar Nasıl Çalışıyor?*), Sırrı highlights his relationship with Leonidas Limarakis, the president of the Greek Philological Syllagos of Constantinople,⁵⁸ and Professor Hrisofisi, “Athen’s most famous gymnastic instructor,” whom

⁵⁸ Limaraki served as the president of the Greek Philological Syllagos of Constantinople for five terms (1906-1911). He was also an accomplished Ottoman Greek doctor, who wrote reports on the status of Hamidian hospitals. For example, see L.D. Limaraki, “L’Assistance Publique en Turquie,” in *Annales Médicales et Bulletin de statistique de l’Hopital des enfants Hamidié: Publié au jour Anniversaire de l’Avènement au trône de S.M.I. le Sultan, sous la direction der Medécin en chef en collaboration avec les Medécins de l’hopital* (Constantinople: Imprimerie Osmanié, 1902), pp. 127-129.

Limarakis had brought to Istanbul to train Ottoman Greek girls and boys.⁵⁹ Sırrı explained to his readers that he asked Hrisofisi if he was using Greek style gymnastics to train Greek youth. Hrisofisi laughed and responded: “Of course not. What is Greek style [gymnastics]? It’s Swedish style!” (*yok canım nasıl Yunan usulu, İsveç usulu!*).⁶⁰ Sırrı used this exchange to demonstrate that he and Hrisofisi, and by extension, enlightened Turkish and the Greek educators, applied the same type of physical training, free movement Swedish gymnastics. As discussed in Chapter Three, many Ottoman physical cultural enthusiasts were divided when it came to the subject of gymnastic training. For example, Sırrı and Chrissian were fervent supporters of Swedish gymnastics, whereas Ali Faik and Mazhar Bey favored German gymnastics.

While literate Muslims of Istanbul were more than likely unable to follow discussions about physical culture in Armenian and Greek, articles printed in *Marmnamarz* about Ottoman-Turkish journals suggest that Armenians did read Ottoman-Turkish publications. For example, four months after the establishment of *Terbiye ve Oyun*, the editors of *Marmnamarz* printed a front-page article stating, “Selim Sırrı Bey... has started a newspaper about physical training that is published in Turkish.”⁶¹ Not only were the editors of *Marmnamarz* interested in informing its readers about this development, they also attempted to link Sırrı’s initiative to their own publication:

we kept reiterating that physical education is not just a past time, leisurely activity for the rich...today when our pursuit of our goal benefits even the Turks (*Turkeren*) who are publishing a paper, *we cannot help but be elated and congratulate ourselves that they followed our endeared idea...*[emphasis mine].⁶²

⁵⁹ Selim Sırrı, “İçtimai: Memleketimizdeki Rumlar Nasıl Çalışıyor?,” *Terbiye ve Oyun* (October 14, 1911), p. 71.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “Hachets’ek Tal,” *Marmanmaraz* (January 1, 1912), p. 1.

⁶² Ibid.

In short, Chrissian was suggesting that Sırrı and other Ottoman Muslims were not only aware of *Marmnamarz*; they followed its development closely and drew inspiration from it. Irrespective of the veracity of this statement, it hints at the ways in which the empire's ethnically and religiously diverse subjects all indelibly shaped the development of Ottoman physical culture.

Rehabilitating the Community

Discussions in Istanbul's press about physical culture demonstrate that Ottoman Muslims, Christians, and Jews established a direct link between the wellbeing of the individual and the community. Educators, club administrators and members, doctors, and government officials were all concerned with the theme of degeneration and treated physical training as a means of regenerating the individual and constructing a robust, developed community. The writings of physical culture enthusiasts displayed biological understandings of society, treated race as a meaningful object of study, as well as accepted the notion that the modern world was engaged in a perpetual struggle. As a result, they reflect and were constitutive of a broader late Ottoman reformist discourse that described society as an organism and offered competing prescriptions for how to remedy its current degenerate state.

Degeneracy

Discussions about degeneracy in the physical culture press emerged in a context in which European statesmen and newspapers routinely described the Ottoman Empire as the "Sick Man of Europe."⁶³ Despite the continuity of these discussions during the second constitutional era, the contraction of the empire's borders and its resettlement of Muslim refugees from the Balkans

⁶³ For discussions about the trope, see, Renée Worringer, "'Sick Man of Europe' or 'Japan of the Near East'?: Constructing Ottoman Modernity in the Hamidian and Young Turk Eras," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (May 2004), pp. 207-30; Aslı Çırakman, *From the 'Terror of the World' to the 'Sick Man of Europe': European Images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth* (New York: P. Lang, 2002).

throughout the imperial domains instilled a genuine sense of trepidation among many Ottomans from all walks of life.⁶⁴ As a result, the Tripolitanian and Balkan Wars served as turning points in the decline language and exacerbated the notion that there was a national danger and that drastic action needed to be taken in order to strengthen the empire.⁶⁵ Many Turkish educators and writers tapped into this concern in order to bolster the arguments for the necessity of physical training by interviewing references to war, battle, and defeat when discussing the importance of sports after 1913. As a result, some scholars argue that the war fundamentally altered the debates about physical training and, thus, should constitute a separate periodization of study.⁶⁶ Discussions about degeneracy among various ethno-religious communities, however, challenge the efficacy of such periodization because of the profound levels of continuity that existed before and after the Balkan Wars.

Degeneracy was envisioned as a pressing issue in all physical culture publications. Despite this shared basic concern, Turkish, Armenian, and Jewish writers and educators offered different views on what they considered to be emblematic of degeneration. *Futbol*, for example, stressed that the physical characteristics of a “people” (*kavm*) reflected their level of national development and degeneracy. In an article that discussed the importance of integrating

⁶⁴ For example, see M. Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi (eds.), *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, and their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013). M. Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi’s new edited volume brings together a wide array of political, social, cultural, and military historians to offer a revisionist reading of the various factors that precipitated the Balkan Wars, as well as an analysis of their consequences.

⁶⁵ “Nesilimiz,” *İdman* (January 28, 1914), p. 189.

⁶⁶ See, Yaşar Tolga Cora, “Asker-Vatandaşlar ve Kahraman Erkekler: Balkan Savaşları ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı Dönemlerinde Beden Terbiyesi Aracılığıyla İdeal Erkekliğin Kurgulanması,” in Nurseli Yeşim Sünbuloğlu (ed.) *Erkek Millet Asker Millet: Türkiye’de Militarizm, Milliyetçilik ve Erkek(lik)ler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), pp. 45-74. For a discussion that focuses on the effects of the Balkan Wars on late Ottoman understandings of the body, see, Melis Hafez, “‘And the Awakening Came in the Wake of the Balkan War’: The Changing Conceptualization of the Body in Late Ottoman Society,” in Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi (eds.), *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, and their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013), pp. 570-593.

gymnastics into “our schools,”⁶⁷ İhsan Ziya, a Turkish physical training instructor at the Ottoman Unity School (*İttihat-ı Osmani Mektebi*) in Kadıköy, encouraged readers of *Futbol* to compare the bodies of Turkish and English people:

What do we seen when we look at the English people (*İngiliz kavmi*), [with their] wide chests, upright body, [and] lack of hunchbacks? Isn't [the English] body like a lion and face bright red? You see our ancient Turks (*bizim eski Türklerimiz*) were also like that. However, today as you can see, English and German people, who are busy with sports, inherit these characterizes and pray.⁶⁸

In short, English people's bodies revealed their physical and moral superiority and development. Turks, on the other hand, had at one point in time been a robust and morally upright people, but were now feeble and weak. Their bodies had become decayed and “rotten” (*çürük*) because Turks neglected the importance of sports.⁶⁹ According to Ziya, “the majority of our youth are always coughing and uncomfortable... sick... [and] faint like a seventy year old man when walking a lot.”⁷⁰ A person with “such a body” not only harmed himself, but also his family and country. A feeble person, for example, was unable to father a healthy and strong child and serve his “homeland” (*vatan*).⁷¹ According to this assumption, if a man did not have a robust physique he was unable to be a productive and responsible member of his community and citizen of the empire. Sports, therefore, provided “our homeland” (*vatanımız*) with both “tangible and intangible benefits” by developing and strengthening the bodies of “the future generation.”⁷²

⁶⁷ Kadıköy ‘İttihat-ı Osmani’ Mektebi Terbiye-i Bedeniye Muallimi İhsan Ziya, “Bir Kaç Söz,” *Futbol* (October 18, 1910), p. 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. “Şehreminine Açık Mektup,” *İdman* (February 1, 1914), p. 221.

Other Turkish writers highlighted the Ottoman Empire's defeat in the Tripolitanian and Balkan Wars, which were also known as the "Balkan disaster" (*Balkan fecaisi*), as examples of imperial degeneracy.⁷³ According to an article that *İdman* ran in January 1914, the cowardice and ineptitude of Ottoman soldiers caused the empire's disastrous defeat during the Balkan Wars and the "slaughter of thousands of innocent people."⁷⁴ Moreover, the inability of the soldiers to protect the delicate and precious homeland proved them to be effeminate: "They [soldiers] are in the strictest sense of the term...women."⁷⁵ Another article entitled "Physical Training Must be Supported" (*İdmançılık Himaye Edilmelidir*) stated that neglecting the importance of physical training had caused "bloodlessness, heartlessness, and laziness" (*kansızlık, kalpsizlik, tembellikler*).⁷⁶ In short, Ottoman young men's lack of virility, robustness, and vigor made them ineffective soldiers and compromised their virility.

Armenian and Jewish educators writing about corporeal reform also stressed the significance of degeneracy; however, unlike Turkish writers, they referenced an abstract concept of degeneracy and avoided providing specific examples of its manifestation. Moreover, both Armenian and Jewish publications criticized the physical state of their own ethno-religious community, while at the same never explicitly endorsing the notion that it was degenerate. They created a degree of separation between the publication and its discussion of degeneracy by referencing an independent assessment of the community. For example, according to an article that *L'Aurore* ran in 1909 about the Maccabi Gymnastic Club in Haydarpaşa, many people perceived Jews to be weak: "It is said that the Jew (*L'Israelite*) is generally represented as being

⁷³ "Nesilimiz," *İdman* (January 28, 1914), p. 189.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ "İdmançılık Himaye Edilmelidir," *İdman* (December 11, 1913), p. 173.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

weak, feeble, emaciated and caring little about using physical exercises in order to build a muscular build [emphasis mine].”⁷⁷

Marmnamarz echoed a similar message in an article about that stressed the benefits of integrating physical training courses in Armenian schools.⁷⁸ Therein, the author asserted, “many [people] assumed that the Armenian nation (*azg*) was degenerate and weak,” because of the “lack of attention and care that our people (*joghovurt*) have given to their bodies.”⁷⁹ The theme of degeneracy was not confined to articles about gymnastics and school in *Marmnamarz*. Discussions about competitions also reflected on the feeble corporeal state of Armenians. An article entitled “World of the Body: Rural Competition in Bolis” (*Marmnashkharh: Dashtayin Mrts‘uwmner Bolsoy Mēj*) established that many people claimed, “the Armenian youth (*yeridasartutyun*) are dead (*meradz*).”⁸⁰ While Chrissian and the contributors to *Marmnamarz* accepted the notion that Armenians were known for various “negative characteristics,” they refused to describe Armenians as being dead, rather preferring to characterize them as “sleeping (*k‘nanal*).”⁸¹ In an article entitled “To the Armenian Youth” (*Hay Yeridasardut‘ean*), the author underscored the idea that this sleepless state was not caused by a “lack of his muscle (*mkan*) and blood (*ariwn*),” but a lack of awareness of physical training.⁸² In order to develop the energy needed to break free from this communal lethargy, Armenians, who were described as

⁷⁷ “Société de gymnastique de Haidar Pasha,” *L’Aurore* (September 19, 1909), p. 3.

⁷⁸ “Marmnamarzē Hay Varzharannerow Mēj,” *Marmnamarz* (August 1911), p. 193.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ “Marmnashkharh: Dashtayin Mrts‘uwmner Bolsoy Mēj,” *Marmnamarz* (August 1911), p. 215.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² “Hay Yeridasardut‘yan,” *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), p. 30.

possessing “sturdy blood (*dogoon ariwn*),”⁸³ needed to discipline their bodies and join athletic clubs.⁸⁴

Race

Physical culture enthusiasts often used nation (*millet* in Ottoman Turkish, *azg* in Armenian, and *nation* in both French and Ladino) and race (*ırk* in Ottoman Turkish, *ts‘egh* in Armenian, and *race* in French) interchangeably when discussing physical degeneracy and regeneration. Thus, a person’s race more or less corresponded with his *millet*, i.e., ethno-religious community. For example, an Ottoman Jewish man, for example, belonged to the Jewish race, as well as the Ottoman Jewish *millet*. The historiography of the late empire has recently started to explore the ways in which race as a category was used during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁸⁵ However, this body of literature overwhelmingly focuses on the political writings of a small cadre of Muslim thinkers in order to demonstrate how Muslims replaced “Ottoman” with “Turk.”⁸⁶ As a result, it has obscured the profoundly similar ways in

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ For example, see Kent Schull, “Conceptualizing Difference during the Second Constitutional Period: New Sources, Old Challenges” in Jorgen Nielson (ed.), *Religion, Ethnicity and Contested Nationhood in the Former Ottoman Space* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2012), pp. 63-87; Baer, *The Dönme* Other scholarship examines the concept of race (and racism) during the early republic. Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a Turk?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Philips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*, p. 95; Howard Eissenstat, “Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and the Beginnings of Nationalism in the Turkish Republic,” in Paul Spickard (ed.), *Race and Nation: Ethnic Systems in the Modern World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 123-140; Nazan Maksudyan, “The *Turkish Review of Anthropology* and the Racist Face of Turkish Nationalism,” *Cultural Dynamics* 17 (2005), pp. 291-322.

⁸⁶ There are studies that explore how Jews and Greeks used the term race during the late empire. For example, see Stein, *Making Jews Modern*, p. 71; Sia Anagnostopoulou, *The Passage from the Ottoman Empire to the Nation-States: A Long and Difficult Process: the Greek Case* (The Isis Press: Istanbul, 2004). Sarah Stein points out how the term “Jewish race” (*rasa judea*) was used in the Ladino press during the period. Sia Anagnostopoulou examines the different ways in which the concepts race and nation were used the Ottoman Greek Patriarchate and the Greek irredentists. Also see Michelle Campos’ treatment of how elite members from the empire’s various ethno-religious communities were familiar with the term race and explicitly pointed out that the empire’s different subjects were equal and that no distinctions would be made based on race or religion. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, p. 2.

which a broader spectrum of Ottoman Muslims, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews deployed the term race in an experimental fashion during the period.

Discussions about sports in the physical press serve as an underexplored vantage point from which we can trace the relationship between degeneracy, nation, and race during the late empire. For example, Mehmet Burhanettin, who established the Anatolian Club (Anadolu Kulübü) in Üsküdar in 1908 and was a regular contributor to discussions about physical culture in *İdman*,⁸⁷ stated in an article entitled “Weakness of Race” (*Zaf-ı Irk*) “one cannot imagine a more complete example of weakness of race than us.”⁸⁸ This weakness, according to Burhanettin, should not be taken lightly, as it served as “a national danger (*milli bir tehlike*).”⁸⁹

From every corner there is a complaint, from every front there is a groaning, in every endeavor there is failure, there is a lack of ‘attainment’ in our thinkers, [as a result] we feel a national pain (*derd-i milli*).⁹⁰

Burhanettin defined “weakness of race” first and foremost as “the weakness of body.”⁹¹ He blamed this physical weakness on people neglecting the importance of physical training. Physical training, therefore, was treated as a “duty” (*ifa-i vazife*) that all Turks needed to carry out. After all, the welfare of the nation depended upon it. “Statistics,” whose veracity Burhanettin and others emphasized was irrefutable, served as an important source of authority on

⁸⁷ Mehmet Burhanettin (Burhan Felek) was a physical culture enthusiast who wrote articles and played a significant role in institutionalizing sports in Istanbul during the late empire and early republic. He was a founding member of the Turkish Sports Associations Union (*Türkiye İdman Cemiyetleri İttifakı*), which was created in 1923; and the chief editor of *Spor Alemi* (*Sport World*), an Ottoman-Turkish physical culture publication that was established during the Allied occupation of Istanbul and continued to be published during the early republic. For a discussion about Burhanettin and *Spor Alemi*, see Ali Eroğul, *Spor Alemi (1919-1929). A Turkish Sports Magazine In The Transition Period From The Ottoman Empire To The Turkish Republic* (Boğaziçi University: M.A. Thesis, 2010); Zafer Toprak, “Türkiye’de Sporun Tarihi: Spor Alemi Dergisi ve Türkiye’de İdmân,” *Tombak* (June 1998), pp. 4-9.

⁸⁸ Burhanettin, “Zaf-ı Irk (1),” *İdman* (August 14, 1913), pp. 79-80.

⁸⁹ Burhanettin, “Zaf-ı Irk (2): Terbiye-i Bedeniye Irkı Sağlamlaştırır mı?,” *İdman* (September 14, 1913), pp. 100-104.

⁹⁰ Burhanettin, “Zaf-ı Irk (1),” p. 79.

⁹¹ Burhanettin, “Zaf-ı Irk (2),” p. 101.

racial strength. Referencing the work of the mid-nineteenth-century French hygienist Dr. Philippe Tissié, Burhanettin stated that physical training had enabled Swedish people to increase their life expectancy:

In Sweden the age length has increased with gymnastics. In 1840, the age length was 41.5 years old. In 1890, it increased to 50 years old...The number of people dying has also decreased from 35.7 % in 1840 to 21.7 % in 1890.

Not only were Swedish people living longer, their bodies also experienced growth: “The height of people at age 50 increased from 167 to 180 centimeters.”⁹²

Burhanettin presented Tissié’s findings in order to demonstrate that like the Swedes, Turks could strengthen their race by training and taking care of their bodies. Therefore, Burhanettin proposed taking a two-pronged approach to “strengthening the [Turkish] race (*irkin takviyesi*)” that entailed forbidding “alcohol and tobacco” and performing physical training.⁹³ His opposition to alcohol and tobacco was not couched in religious language, but a shared civic conception of morality that transcended religious divisions. In short, alcohol, tobacco, as well as gambling were dangerous because they caused immorality (*ahlaksızlık*) and threatened the welfare of the race, not because they violated Islamic precepts. “Strengthening the race (*irkin takviyesi*),” according to Burhanettin, required that people (*halk*) give importance to physical training.⁹⁴ Before this could be possible, however, it was necessary “to awaken ideas of sports in the people.”⁹⁵

Many articles in the Ottoman-Turkish press rebuked the level of attention that Turks gave to sports. For example, an article published in *İkdam*’s new sports column in 1913 states, “we

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Burhanettin, “Zaf-ı Irk (2),” p., 102.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

completely neglect discussing the importance of physical training. It is necessary for the life of a nation (*bir milletin hayatı için*).”⁹⁶ What was so troubling to the author of the article was the progress that other people around the world were making: “in other countries, each nation (*her millet*) is using physical training and gymnastic exercises in order to raise the young generation as strong [and] powerful and strengthen their races.”⁹⁷

Race and racial development were also treated as important subjects in Armenian and Jewish physical culture publications. Armenian and Jewish educators treated racial development as an important endeavor, while at the same time sidestepping the issue of whether their own race was weak. For example, authors in *L’Aurore* treated discussions about Maccabi as a space in which they could denounce and implore the newspaper’s readers to counter the notion that Jews were a feeble race.⁹⁸ Contributors to *L’Aurore* explained that it had been argued that Jews could easily strengthen their bodies and embrace the noble “racial qualities” that were enshrined and celebrated in the “Scriptures” (*Écritures*).⁹⁹ As a result, Jewish writers hinted at the idea of Jews being weak, while identifying a historical precedent of “strength and noble aspirations that decades of oppression had decreased in our race (*notre race*).”¹⁰⁰

Discussions about corporeal reform in *Marmnamarz* also employed racial language.¹⁰¹ Armenian writers asserted that Armenians constituted their own race (*ts’egh*). They

⁹⁶ “İslav Memleketlerinde: Jimnastik Cemiyetleri,” *İkdam* (May 25, 1913), p. 3.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ “Société de gymnastique de Haidar Pasha,” *L’Aurore*, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ The editors and writers of *Marmnamarz* were contributing to a broader discussion in Istanbul’s Armenian press about the Armenian race. The manifesto of the acclaimed Armenian literary journal *Mehyan* (Temple) that was published for seven months in 1914, for example, asserts that Armenians are part of the “Arian race” (*Ariakan ts’egh*). Daniël Varujan, Hagop Kufējian, Aharon, Kostan Zarian, Keghan Parseghian, “Mer Hanganakē,” *Mehyan*

avoided explicitly endorsing the notion that the “Armenian race (*hay ts‘egh*)” was degenerate, but affirmed that *Marmnamarz*’s goal remained nothing less than “the physical renaissance (*veradznunt*) of the Armenian race (*hay ts‘egh*).”¹⁰² In describing the importance of the “Armenian Physical Training General Union” (*Hay Marmnamarzagan Endhanur Miut‘yun*), an athletic organization that was founded in 1913 in order to centralize Armenian sporting activities in Istanbul,¹⁰³ Chrissian asserted: “the motto of the Union is the development of the physical and moral aspects of the Armenian race.”¹⁰⁴

The Struggle of Life

Turkish, Armenian, and Jewish physical culture publications all made reference to a perpetual struggle of life that all people, not just their own community, were engaged in. These discussions were used to bolster arguments about the importance of treating sports as a means to develop their own community’s race. *İdman*, for example, ran an article entitled “Our Generation” (*Neslimiz*) stating that the “the Turkish generation” was currently in “the throes of death.”¹⁰⁵ Their precarious situation was because of the “the struggle of life (*mücadele-i hayat*)” that all people were engaged in.¹⁰⁶ According to this struggle, which served as the “law” (*kaide*)

(January 1, 1914), p. 2. I want to thank Hagop Kouloujian for drawing my attention to *Mehyan*’s treatment of race. For a discussion about *Mehyan*, see Marc Nichanian, G.M. Goshgarian, Jeff Fort (eds.), *Mourning Philology: Art and Religion at the Margins of the Ottoman Empire* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2014).

¹⁰² “Pats’uts ē: ‘Marmnamarz’i G Mariwoy Pajanordagut’iwně,” *Marmnamarz* (November 1912), p. 411.

¹⁰³ The Union’s first conference, which was described as an Armenian “pan-national (*hamazgayin*) celebration for all of those who consider the physical reawakening (*fizik’akan verazart’numě*) one of the most important issues,” was scheduled for July 29, 1912 in Istanbul. After being postponed multiple times, the conference was finally cancelled because of the Balkan War.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, the Union was able to reorganize itself in May 1913. “Hay Marmnamarzagan Miowt’ewně,” *Marmnamarz* (July 1911), p. 188; “Harachikay Hamajoghově,” *Marmnamarz* (July 1, 1912), p. 221; “Hay Marmnamarzakan Miut’ean Hamazhoghovi,” *Marmnamarz* (November 1912), p. 442; Shavarsh Chrissian, “H.M.Ĕ Miut’ewně ew Ir Gortsunēut’uně,” *Marmnamarz* (May 1913), p. 83-86.

¹⁰⁴ Shavarsh Chrissian, “H.M.Ĕ Miut’ewně ew Ir Gortsunēut’uně,” *Marmnamarz* (May 1913), p. 83.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Burhanettin, “Zaf-i Irk (2),” p. 101.

of the modern era, if the Turkish people did not strengthen their bodies, a stronger race would replace them.¹⁰⁷ The article's author, Burhanettin, described the struggle of life as follows:

In the struggle of life (*mücadele-i hayat*), those who struggle take the place of those who do not struggle. Organizations that are made up of decayed individuals (*çürük efratlar*) are themselves decayed. If they are rotten, they are unable to work until they are strong.¹⁰⁸

L'Aurore and *Marmnamarz* also referred to a continuous struggle when discussing corporeal reform and sports, but avoided providing detailed descriptions of what would happen in the event that young men from their own community failed to develop their bodies. According to an article entitled "Why we others, Jews, Perform Gymnastics" (*Pourquoi nous autres, Juifs, nous faisons de la gymnastique*), the "struggle for life" confirmed that it was imperative that Jews who cared about the wellbeing and future of the Jewish community should exercise and perform gymnastics.

Gymnastics is not a hobby, much less an unnecessary luxury; no, for us gymnastics is indispensable, as well as beneficial, because it arms us for the *Struggle for life*, it makes us brave in the combat that all of us have to engage in to attain a social position and for the honor and the prestige of the Jewish name [emphasis and English in the original].¹⁰⁹

Marmnamarz's regular column entitled "World of the Body" (*Marmnashkharh*) presented a similar message by writing that the physical, mental, and moral development of Armenian youth would prepare them for "the struggle of life" (*gyanki baykarin*).¹¹⁰ According to the column, the photographs of beautiful and well defined Armenian young men that *Marmnamarz* published, as well as the "nude (*merg*) thighs, ankles...[and] breasts (*kourts*)" of

¹⁰⁷ "Neslimiz," p. 189.

¹⁰⁸ "Neslimiz," p. 189.

¹⁰⁹ Un Maccabiste, "Pourquoi nous autres, Juifs, nous faisons de la gymnastique," *L'Aurore* (May 20, 1910), p. 4.

¹¹⁰ "Marmnashkharh: Dashtayin Mrts'uwmmner Bolsoy Mēj," *Marmnamarz* (August 1911), p. 215.

Armenian youth that were displayed when performing athletic exhibitions throughout the city demonstrated that the community was well on its way to preparing itself for this battle and being “resurrected” (*haroutyun*).¹¹¹ By juxtaposing “the struggle of life,” “the resurrection” (*haroutyun*) of Armenian youth and “human miracles (*mardkayin hrashk‘i*),” and descriptions of nude Armenian bodies, *Marmnamarz* combined religious and secular language to describe the necessity of sports for the rejuvenation of the individual and the community.¹¹²

Creating a Future Generation

Articles about degeneracy and regeneration were integrally connected in the physical culture press. Ottoman-Turkish publications established a connection between corporeal reform, sports and a future generation. For example, discussions about physical culture in the popular Islamist magazine *Sebilürreşat* highlighted the ability of physical training and football in Ottoman schools to create a “future generation” that was “physically strong, mentally enlightened, and spiritually virtuous.”¹¹³ A separate article in *Futbol* envisioned these activities in schools as an important service “to the homeland (*vatan*) and nation (*millet*)” because of their ability to produce individuals with a healthy and strong body and sound mind.¹¹⁴ Turkish educators like İhsan Ziya cited the Latin adage: *Mens sana in corpore sano* in order to stress the interconnection between a strong body and mind:

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ M. Şemsettin, “Terbiye ve Talim: Mekteplerde Hıfzısıhha ve Terbiye-i Bedeniye,” *Sebilürreşat* (September 1912), p. 110. For a discussion about *Sebilürreşat* (formerly *Sırat-ı Müstakim*), which was founded in 1908, see, Selçuk Akşin Somel, *Sırat-ı Müstakim: Islamic thought in the Ottoman Empire (1908-1912)* (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1987); Hasan Kayalı, “Islam in the Thought and Politics of Two Late Ottoman Intellectuals: Mehmed Akif and Said Halim,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 19 (2001), pp. 307-333; Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic*.

¹¹⁴ Kadıköy ‘İttihat-ı Osmani’ Mektebi Terbiye-i Bedeniye Muallimi İhsan Ziya, “Bir Kaç Söz,” *Futbol* (October 18, 1910), p. 2.

If we think about the maxim ‘a sound mind in a healthy body’ (*sağlam vücutta salim bir fikir bulunur*), we understand that there are many things that the improvements of sports teaches us with regard to the needs of human life (*hayat-ı beşeriye*).¹¹⁵

Other Turkish educators and writers like Ali Faik foregrounded the centrality of sports in building character and strengthening young men’s commitment to morality (*ahlak*) in article published in *İdman*.¹¹⁶ The popularity of sports in Europe, according to Faik, was because of its ability to develop men’s “bodies, morality and mind.”¹¹⁷

While Faik, Ziya, and Şemsettin reflected on the potentiality of sports to build a future generation, others underscored the idea that performing physical exercise was not enough. In order to harness the full potential of gymnastics and sports, Burhanettin stressed that Turks needed to maintain a “national goal (*milli gaye*).”¹¹⁸ This goal, according to Burhanettin’s article entitled “The National Goal in Physical Training and Sports: Football” (*Terbiye-i Bedeniye ve Spor’da Milli Gaye: Futbol*), consisted of shunning competition and club rivalry and foregrounding the importance of strengthening “the individual (*fert*) and the race (*ırk*).”¹¹⁹ The article treated the corporeal development of the individual and the community and/or race as integrally connected. By privileging “national goals” (*milli gayeler*), according to Burhanettin, “every nation (*millet*)” could use sports as “a means to develop itself.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ali Faik, “Olmaya Devlet Cihanda bir Nefes Sıhhat Gibi,” *İdman* (June 28, 1913), p. 40. The title of the article, “Health is Better than Wealth,” is a maxim that is attributed to Sultan Süleyman.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Burhanettin, “Terbiye-i Bedeniye ve Spor’da Milli Gaye: Futbol,” *İdman* (December 25, 1913), p. 209.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.



[Figure 4.6 Image of Muslim religious teachers performing gymnastics. *Terbiye ve Oyun* (April 25, 1912), p. 280]

According to other educators, the performance of physical training by specific segments of Istanbul's denizens served as reflection of the development of an advanced, future generation. In April 1912, *Terbiye ve Oyun* ran an image (figure 4.6) of Muslim religious teachers of Istanbul's Darülmüallimin dressed in robes and wearing turbans and performing gymnastics in a gymnasium with the following caption: "If you want proof of the intellectual development of the homeland (*vatan'ın inkişaf-ı fikrisi*), look at the meaning that this image's mentality inspires."¹²¹ This statement was premised on the assumption that if Muslim clerics, who embodied antiquated beliefs and resistance to novel ideas and practices, could embrace physical exercise, anyone could and should. Moreover, *Terbiye ve Oyun* treated the photograph as an opportunity to establish that "Ottomanism" (*Osmanlılık*) was "always based on the strength of the body (*kuva-ı*

¹²¹ *Terbiye ve Oyun* (April 25, 1912), p. 280.

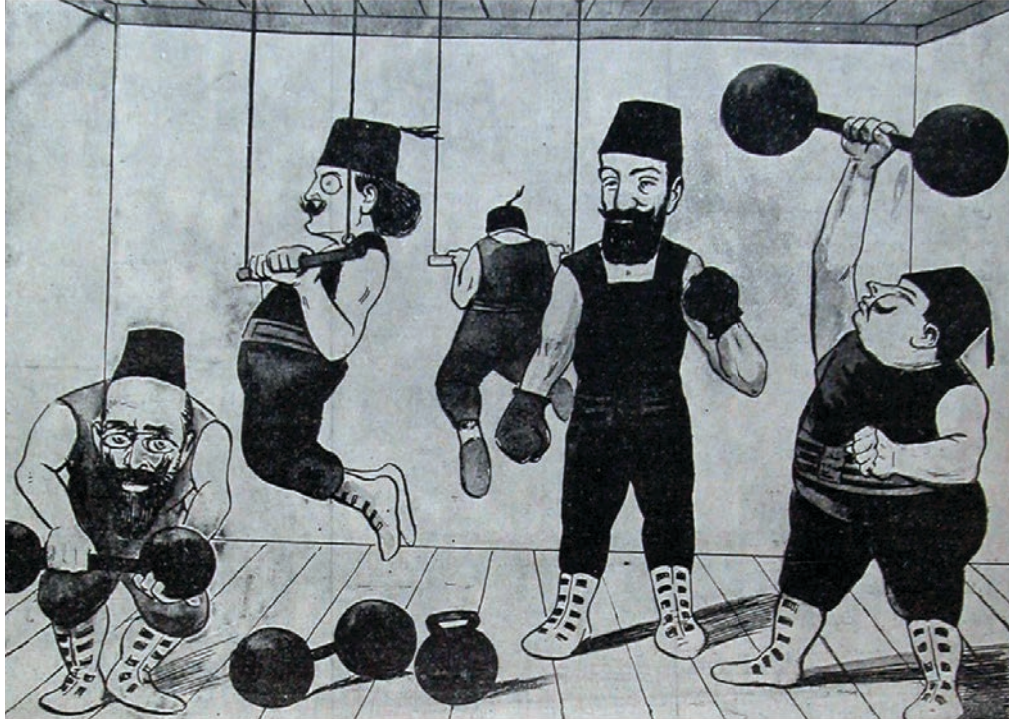
cismaniye)” and would continue to “appoint a strong, powerful element to be active.”¹²² While the journal established a connection between an enlightened cadre of men and the empire, it also implicitly offered an exclusive reading of Ottomanism that highlighted the centrality of Muslims and erased the presence of the empire’s non-Muslim communities.

This view was not confined to the Ottoman-Turkish physical culture press. Even satirical publications printed illustrations of sports and gymnastics. For example, the caricature below (figure 4.7) of Ottoman politicians exercising, four of whom maintain a striking resemblance to Talat, Enver, Cemal, and Mahmut Şevket, sheds light on the role that Ottoman subjects believed gymnastics could play in rejuvenating the empire.¹²³ Both the illustration and its caption, “now that we are compelled, sports are necessary for us,”¹²⁴ convey a satirical message. However, they also suggest that the notion that sports and corporeal reform could bring about political change and benefit the empire had expanded beyond the confines of physical culture enthusiasts and entered into the broader cultural, social, and political lexicon of literate Ottoman subjects in early-twentieth-century Istanbul.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ *Çekirge* (March 30, 1911), p. 4. I want to thank Elizabeth Williams for bringing this caricature to my attention.

¹²⁴ Ibid. The Ottoman Turkish reads as follows: “mademki iş tokata bindi, idman bize vacip oldu şimdi.”



[Figure 4.7 The caption reads: “Now that we are compelled, sports is necessary for us.” (*Çekirge*, March 30, 1911, p. 4)]

Jewish writers also stressed the importance of physical training as a means of “strengthening the Jewish community” and “regenerating Jewish youth.”¹²⁵ An article that *L’Aurore* ran about the Maccabi club in 1909 unequivocally stated that exercise enabled the Jewish community to cultivate “robust and courageous elements.”¹²⁶ In addition to building strong bodies, exercise also helped Jews “attain the harmony of the soul (*l’âme*) and the body (*corps*).”¹²⁷ Thus, this “physical and spiritual regeneration”¹²⁸ facilitated the creation of a new generation of modern Jews. *L’Aurore* emphasized that this rejuvenation of Ottoman Jews (*Juifs*

¹²⁵ “La Société Maccabi,” *L’Aurore* (July 2, 1909), p. 2; “La Société Maccabi,” *L’Aurore* (March 10, 1909), p. 2.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ “Société de gymnastique de Haidar Pasha,” *L’Aurore*, p. 3.

¹²⁸ “Das Makkabäerfest des jüdischen Turnvereins 'Makkabi'-Konstantinopel,” *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (January 1910), pp. 11-12.

ottomans) and the development of “Jewish national sentiment” (*le sentiment national juif*) was in no way subversive of the unity of the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁹

Armenian writers and educators also described physical training as the primary means by which Armenians could “resurrect” individuals and the wider Armenian community.¹³⁰ Chrissian described the *Marmnamarz* as the vanguard of the “Armenian physical education movement” (*Hay marmnagartanke sharjumin*), which would rejuvenate the Armenian people by educating them about the importance of corporeal reform. It was only through exercise, according to *Marmnamarz*, that Armenians could replace “our current lethargic and weak skinned generation” with “a healthy and vibrant generation.”¹³¹

Central to creating a new generation was the relationship between the “Armenian body and mind” (*marmin ew mitk*).¹³² Similar to Ottoman-Turkish and Jewish sports publications, *Marmnamarz* stressed that Armenians could not have a “healthy mind without a healthy body.”¹³³ In an article about gymnastics in Armenian communal schools, Hagop Chrissian, an Armenian educator, posited that the “Armenian physical education movement” had made important progress in challenging the “old mindset” (*hasgatsoghutyun*) of educators who understood “the spirit and the body” as “two separate entities.”¹³⁴ “Historical sources,” according to *Marmnamarz*, unequivocally demonstrated that the progress of a nation was contingent on its ability to equally develop “the body and the mind” of its people.¹³⁵ Thus, physical training would

¹²⁹ “Fetes sportives,” *L’Aurore* (July 2, 1909), p. 2.

¹³⁰ “Marmnashkharh,” *Marmnamarz*, p. 215.

¹³¹ “Hay Marmnamarzakakan Miutyun Arachin Hamajoghovë,” *Marmnamarz* (June 15, 1912), p. 219.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Hagop Chrissian, “Marmnamarzë Mer Varjarannerun Mech,” *Marmnamarz* (February 15, 1912), p. 59.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

help strengthen the Armenian nation and race by creating physically, spiritually, and morally upright individuals.¹³⁶

Gymnastics and sports, according to *Marmnamarz*, should also be thought of as a means to serving the empire by preparing Armenian men for service in the Ottoman military. By explicitly drawing a connection between the development and reform of a future Armenian generation made up of robust, healthy male bodies and military service, Chrissian was demonstrating how the writings of *Marmnamarz* and the spread of sports served both the Armenian community and the empire. Many Ottoman subjects, both Muslims and non-Muslims alike, viewed and wrote about military service as necessary for the protection of the homeland as well as for maintaining equality for the empire's various different ethno-religious communities.¹³⁷

“Like all non-Muslim nations,” according to an article entitled “Before Military Life,” (*Zinuvorakan Kyank‘in Archev*), “Armenian youth also has to be ready for military service.”¹³⁸ *Marmnamarz* described “military enlistment” (*zinvorakrotyun*) as a new “service to the fatherland (*hayranik*).”¹³⁹ Because of the promulgation of the second constitution, Armenians

¹³⁵ “Aṛachin Khosk’,” *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), p. 1.

¹³⁶ For example, see Vahram Papazyan, “Marmnamarzē Hay Azgayin Varzharannerēn Ners,” *Marmnamarz* (October 15, 1915), p. 368.

¹³⁷ In 1909, the Ottoman parliament established universal military conscription by ending the exemption tax (*bedel-i askeriye*). As a result, all male Ottoman citizens, irrespective of religious affiliation, were eligible for conscription. For a discussion about military conscription, see Erik-Jan Zürcher, “The Ottoman Conscription System In Theory And Practice, 1844-1918,” *International Review of Social History* 3 (1998), pp. 437-449; Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Ufuk Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2000); Salim Tamari, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). For a discussion about the perspectives of various Ottoman non-Muslim subjects, see Murat Koptaş, *Armenian Political Thinking in the Second Constitutional Period: The Case of Krikor Zohrab* (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2005), especially, pp. 118-121; Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, especially, pp. 86-87.

¹³⁸ “Zinuvorakan Kyank‘in Archev,” *Marmnamarz* (March 1911), p. 33.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

“saw themselves as soldiers of the future, with the readiness to die for the motherland.”¹⁴⁰ Despite this enthusiasm, according to an article entitled “Soldier Life” (*Zinvorakan Gyanki*), “very few Armenians are considered ready for the soldier life.”¹⁴¹ Physical training and membership in an Armenian athletic association, however, could help Armenian youth “prepare for a strict soldier like (*zinvoratrutyun*) life.”¹⁴²

Representing the Rehabilitation of the Individual

The individual played a central role in discussions about sport. Istanbul’s physical culture press established a direct connection between communal rejuvenation and the individual male body. According to Ottoman Muslim, Christian, and Jewish physical culture enthusiasts, the development of the community and empire could not be achieved without the corporeal reconstruction of the individual. The editors of and contributors to the press textually and visually conveyed the idea that the two realms were integrally connected, as well as the notion that the male body served as a transparent reflection of the current state of the community and the empire. As a result, the press played a central role in the confessionalization of the bodies of young men by juxtaposing images of robust male bodies with discussions about how corporeal reform of the individual would strengthen his race, rejuvenate his community, as well as create a healthy future generation.

Creating Robust Bodies

Photography played a central role in providing readers with both an idealized representation of the individual male body as well as a guide to mold their physiques. For

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ “Zinvorakan Gyanki,” *Marmnamarz* (July 1911), p. 184.

¹⁴² “Hay Yeridasardut‘ean,” *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), p. 30.

example, magazines published detailed descriptions, caricatures, and photographs of the proper ways to perform Swedish calisthenics. Sirri and Chrissian both studied Swedish style gymnastics in Stockholm and London respectively and explicitly extolled the superiority of free movement exercises over training with physical equipment. These images share striking similarities with the caricatures of gymnasts in the Gymnastics Institute in Stockholm’s *A Collection of Gymnastic Positions* and Ottoman-Turkish physical training books and manuals used in government schools during the period.¹⁴³ *Marmnamarz*, for example, published such images and descriptions in February 1912 in a section entitled “Swedish Domestic Exercise” (*Shiētakan Artnin Marzank*).¹⁴⁴



[Figure 4.8 Instructions on how to perform Swedish gymnastics in *Marmnamarz* (“Shiētakan Artnin Marzank,” *Marmnamarz*, February 15, 1912, p. 56)]

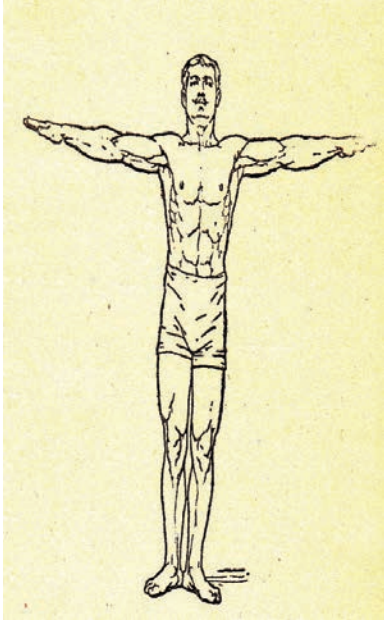
The image and caption above, for example, instructs readers how to strengthen their forearms:

Hands closed, and side straight, bring the forearms towards the front and upward, then with a straight back, lower them. Then stand still for a moment and bring them [forearms] down to the sides. In this exercise, one must not hold their

¹⁴³ The Royal Gymnastics Central Institute, *A Collection of Gymnastic Positions* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Sons, 1893). For Ottoman-Turkish manuals and books, see Ali Faik, *Jimnastik Yahud Riyazat-ı Bedeniye* (İstanbul: Mahmut Bey, 1891); Doktor Fahri Mehmet, *Sihhi ve Deva-i Oda Jimnastik* (İstanbul: Asaduryan, 1894); Ahmet Nazmi & Bekir Sıdkı, *Yeni Usul Osmanlı Terbiye-i Bedeniye Dersleri* (İstanbul: Necm-i İstikbal Matbaası, 1911).

¹⁴⁴ “Shiētakan Artnin Marzank,” *Marmnamarz* (February 15, 1912), p. 56.

breath. (10 times)¹⁴⁵



[Figure 4.9 & 4.10 Instructions on how to perform gymnastics in two Ottoman-Turkish journals. Image on the left, “Mihanikit-i Hareket: (1) Harekat-i Mufassaliye,” *Terbiye ve Oyun* (August 28, 1911), p. 239; Image on the right, “İstihzarat-ı Talimleri,” *İdman* (August 14, 1913), p. 78.]

Marmnamarz was not the only magazine to publish such sections. *Terbiye ve Oyun* and *İdman*, for example, provided readers with similar images and descriptions. Like *Marmnamarz*, these publications offered detailed descriptions of how young men should perform calisthenics and train all the different parts of their body, what types of equipment they should use, and the proper times during the day they should eat. These guides on how to properly perform physical training were aimed at instructing individuals, as well as institutions, like athletic associations and schools, how properly to train young male bodies and create well-built physiques. Although there were exceptions, the Ottoman-Turkish and Armenian press generally favored Swedish Calisthenics. For example, an Ottoman-Turkish article entitled “Education and Training: Hygiene and Physical Training in Schools” (*Terbiye ve Talim: Mekteplerde Hıfzısıhha ve Terbiye-i Bedeniye*) explicitly stated, “Swedish Gymnastics superseded German and French

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Gymnastics.”¹⁴⁶ Although many sports associations envisioned athletic equipment, such as weights, as helpful tools to strengthen the bodies of their young members, advocates of Swedish Calisthenics, which consisted of free movements, remained vehemently opposed to them. Responding to a letter from the administration of the newly formed “Movement Club” (*Sharjum Agump*) in Yenikapı, a neighborhood in Istanbul that is situated along the Marmara, about whether “physical training with equipment (parallel, bar fix, trapeze, ring, etc.) is useful or not,”

Marmnamarz’s editors wrote:

physical training on equipment is harmful, it is harmful when we do not have a spotter. The objective of physical training is the overall development of the body; equipment only allows you to train one part of the body... Therefore, it is wrong to regard whatever is done on equipment as physical training. Those who insist on using equipment need to first strengthen their bodies on the floor and only then should they try [training] with equipment.¹⁴⁷

Not only was Swedish Gymnastics considered “more regular, more uniform, [and] more comprehensive,” it also helped people construct more beautiful and proportionate bodies:

Rather than attaining amazing (*hayretbahş*) muscles [and] producing strong champions and wrestlers (*pehlivan*), Swedish Gymnastics produces healthy bodies, complete muscles, and completely strong and robust individuals.¹⁴⁸

Physical culture enthusiasts reminded their readers about the main objective of gymnastics. “The purpose of physical training,” according to Ali Sami’s article entitled “How Should Physical Training Associations be Administered?” (*Terbiye-i Bedeniye Külüpleri Nasıl İdare Edilmelidir?*), “is not to climb a two-meter wall, but rather to have a healthy body, a well proportioned figure, and clean morality (*temiz ahlak*).”¹⁴⁹ *Marmnamarz* echoed a similar

¹⁴⁶ “Terbiye ve Talim: Mekteplerde Hıfzısıhha ve Terbiye-i Bedeniye,” *Sebilürreşat* (September 1912), p. 110.

¹⁴⁷ “Agumpi Mě Harts'umnerě,” *Marmnamarz* (September 1911), p. 256.

¹⁴⁸ “Terbiye ve Talim: Mekteplerde Hıfzısıhha ve Terbiye-i Bedeniye,” *Sebilürreşat*, p. 110.

¹⁴⁹ Ali Sami, “Terbiye-i Bedeniye Külüpleri Nasıl İdare Edilmelidir?,” *İdman* (May 28, 1913), p. 18.

message by stating that physical training's aim was "to improve and take care of the body."¹⁵⁰ *L'Aurore* also stressed the importance of gymnastics for creating strong and beautiful male bodies.¹⁵¹

In addition to images, editors of Istanbul's multilingual physical culture press also used letters that were sent to them as a means to instruct readers. *İdman*, for example, published a letter from Ahmet Şevki the gymnast (*jimnastikçi*) describing how he first started gymnastics in a private school in 1905.¹⁵² Şevki's interest in gymnastics continued to grow over the years and he sought out the guidance of two gymnastics instructors, Rıza Bey and Seyfi Bey, the latter was the same Seyfi Bey whose semi-nude photograph *İdman* published under the section "The Exhibition of Robust Bodies." Şevki explained that over the course of three years, he diligently followed the program that Seyfi drew up for him. As a result, he was able to construct a well-defined, muscular, and healthy body.

Marmnamarz published a similar article entitled "How I Became Strong" (*Inchbēs Ujovts'ay*).¹⁵³ Therein, Levon Hagopian describes how he was very weak, frail, and constantly sick when he was ten years old. His feeble appearance served as a source of embarrassment for Hagopian and was mocked by classmates at school. It was at this time that Hagopian met Chrissian, whom he described as strong, healthy, and powerful, at Robert College. Chrissian showed him "beautiful sculptures and pictures of other athletes" and explained Hagopian could also develop a beautiful and strong body if he followed a physical training program.¹⁵⁴ Similar to

¹⁵⁰ "Arazin Khosk'," *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), p.1.

¹⁵¹ "La Fete de la Maccabi," *L'Aurore* (December 19, 1911), p. 2.

¹⁵² Jimnastikçi Ahmet Şevki, [untitled article], *İdman* (July 14, 1911), p. 71.

¹⁵³ Levon Hagopian, "Inchbēs Ujovts'ay," *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), pp. 20-22.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Şevki, Hagopian attentively followed the program that Chrissian procured from “his teacher in London.”¹⁵⁵ Subsequently, he started to develop a robust and healthy body, participate in athletic events, and organize an unnamed Armenian athletic association. As a result, Hagopian demonstrated how physical training and sports strengthened the individual and national body, and served as a space in which its development and progress could be measured.

İdman and *Marmnamarz* did not rely solely on Şevki and Hagopian’s personal narratives to demonstrate the transformative potential of physical training; both journals also published corporeal measurements. These measurements included the size of their neck, chest, waist, arm, forearm, leg, calf, as well as their height and weight.¹⁵⁶ Both Şevki and Hagopian’s articles provided two separate measurements of their bodies: the date when they started training and a second measurement three to four years later. According to Şevki and Hagopyan’s measurements, the size of both their bodies grew substantially.¹⁵⁷

Promoting an Ideal Male Aesthetic

By visually and textually stressing the importance of using physical activities to produce strong, healthy bodies, Istanbul’s physical culture press also promoted and celebrated a new masculine corporeal aesthetic, and by consequence a condemned an older one. The defining characteristics of this new body were proportionality, a slim waist, defined biceps, a straight

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁵⁶ *İdman* (July 14, 1911), p. 71; “Inchbēs Ujovts‘ay,” *Marmnamarz* (February 1911), p. 21.

¹⁵⁷ Şevki’s measurements include the following for 1908: biceps 29.5 centimeters, chest 93 centimeters. Şevki’s measurements include the following for 1911: biceps 40.5 centimeters, chest 111 centimeters, and calves 41 centimeters. Hagopian’s measurements include the following for 1907: neck 34 centimeters, chest 85 centimeters, waist 69 centimeters, arm 29 centimeters, forearm 26 centimeters, leg 48 centimeters, calf 35 centimeters, height 159 centimeters, weight 59 kilograms. Hagopian’s measurements include the following for 1910: neck 45 centimeters, chest 114 centimeters, waist 80 centimeters, arm 40 centimeters, forearm 32 centimeters, leg 63 centimeters, calf 40 centimeters, height 174 centimeters, weight 90 kilograms.

back, and a broad and hairless chest.¹⁵⁸ Ottoman sports enthusiasts treated this new ‘sportsman’ look as ‘beautiful’ and ‘civilized’ and a defining characteristic of a late Ottoman conception of modern, urban masculinity.¹⁵⁹ This reading of the ‘sportsman’ stood in stark contrast to traditional Ottoman views on both the body and status. Whereas a corpulent physique had historically exemplified financial prosperity and strength, with Ottoman men even embracing the sobriquet “the fat one” (*şişman*), a plump belly now came to represent incompetence, lethargy, and physical inferiority.¹⁶⁰

The new ideal, strong male body also differed from the stout frame of Ottoman oil wrestlers (*güreşçi*), whose bodies were traditionally bulky, round, and massive.¹⁶¹ Although Muslim educators and writers generally did not promote wrestling with the same vigor as gymnastics or football,¹⁶² they did treat these Ottoman Muslim wrestlers as paragons of Turkish strength and examples of “traditional” Turkish athletes. Sırrı, for example, praised them as remnants of a foregone era when Ottomans were powerful and Europeans would say “Strong like

¹⁵⁸ The majority of the shirtless portrait photographs that I have encountered in the private archives of athletic clubs and in the press depict a hairless upper body. However, there are exceptions. This suggests that although it was common for young men to use depilatories, some continued to regard body hair as a marker of virility during the period.

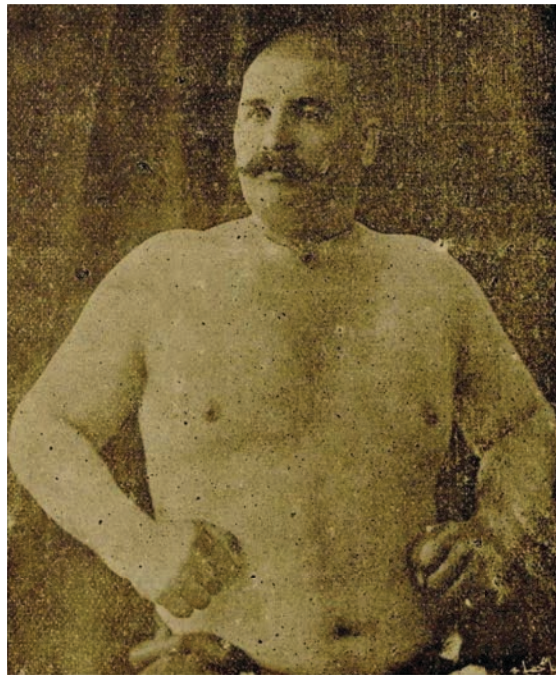
¹⁵⁹ This masculine corporeal aesthetic was not unique to the Ottoman Empire. A similar conception of male corporeality emerged in urban centers around the world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result, this process resulted in the emergence of a global body.

¹⁶⁰ For the use of the epithet “*şişman*,” see Eyal Ginio, “When Coffee Brought about Wealth and Prestige: the Impact of Egyptian Trade on Salonica,” *Oriente Moderno* 86 (2006), p. 93.

¹⁶¹ For a discussion about late Ottoman and early Republican wrestlers, see Birgit Krawietz, “The Sportification and Heritagisation of Traditional Turkish Oil Wrestling,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* (October 2012), pp. 2145–2161. During the late-nineteenth century, Ottoman oil wrestlers achieved great fame in Istanbul and Europe because of their success wrestling in Greco-Roman style in London and Paris.

¹⁶² It is important to note that the Beşiktaş Ottoman Gymnastics Club did organize wrestling matches during the early twentieth century in Istanbul. These were not oil wrestling matches, which became labeled as *alaturca*, but *alafranga*. For a discussion about wrestling in the Ottoman-Turkish sports press, see “Güreş,” *İdman* (February 26, 1914), pp. 337-338.

a Turk” (*Türk gibi kuvvetli*).¹⁶³ In 1910, *Futbol* published an article about Kurtdereli Mehmet Pehlivan, a renowned Muslim wrestler in the empire during the mid and late nineteenth century.¹⁶⁴ Therein, the article extolls Kurtdereli’s achievements and juxtaposes a bare-chested photograph of him with a caption reading “A Rarity of Strength” (*Bir Nadire-i Kuvvet*).¹⁶⁵



[Figure 4.11 Image of the renowned mid and late-nineteenth-century Muslim wrestler, Kurtdereli Mehmet Pehlivan. “Bir Nadire-i Kuvvet,” *Futbol* (October 25, 1910), p. 1]

The centrality of the new corporeal aesthetic to discussions about physical culture necessitated that writers also address the physique of these internationally renowned Ottoman wrestlers. This posed a bit of a challenge, however, as their bodies and attire hardly resembled those that educators and writers celebrated in Istanbul’s multi-lingual press. Kurtdereli, for example, weighed a whopping 304 pounds and did not possess defined physical features. In order to praise Kurtdereli’s figure, *Futbol* highlighted its “elegance of proportion” (*tenasüp*

¹⁶³ Selim Sirri, “Gençlere,” *Musaver Muhit* (December 10, 1908), p. 90. Also see “La gymnastique en Turquie: Interview de Selim Sirry Bey,” *Le Jeune Turc* (October 16, 1913), p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ “Kurtdereli Mehmet Pehlivan,” *Futbol* (October 25, 1910), pp. 2-3.

¹⁶⁵ *Futbol* (October 25, 1910), p. 1.

zarifesi) and stressed that “his waist [was] visible,” despite the striking disconnect between this textual description and Kurtdereli picture.¹⁶⁶

A “proportionate” (*tenasip*) and “graceful body” (*zarafet-i endam*) served as two of the defining features of the ideal new man. According to Sırrı, the graceful body was comprised of “beauty [and] proportion in posture and movement of the body.”¹⁶⁷ Proportionality, strength, and health were treated as being interconnected: “Of course a strong, healthy, and proportionate body is powerful, it is strong.”¹⁶⁸ Sırrı stressed the importance of proportionality by presenting his readers with a rhetorical question in an article published in 1908: “In the bathhouses (*hamamlarda*), aren’t we disgusted seeing each other’s ill-proportioned bodies (*biçimsiz vücutları*)?”¹⁶⁹

In addition to indicating acumen and competency, the proportionate, flexible, and defined male body also represented beauty. Something that is considered “beautiful” (*güzel*), according to Şemseddin Sami’s late nineteenth-century Ottoman-Turkish dictionary, *Kamus-ı Türki*, “draws attention and intimate conversation.”¹⁷⁰ The dictionary provides examples of both a “beautiful man” and a “beautiful girl.”¹⁷¹ Therefore, beauty was gender neutral and could be used to describe both men and women. Similar to its use in Ottoman Turkish, Ottoman Armenians and Jews employed the word beautiful—“*keghets’ig*” in Armenian and “*beau*” in French—when describing men with a straight back, defined muscles, and upright posture. *Marmnamarz*, for

¹⁶⁶ “Kurtdereli Mehmet Pehlivan,” *Futbol* (November 2, 1910), p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Selim Sırrı, “Nasıl Jimnastik Yapmalı,” *Terbiye ve Oyun* (October 28, 1911), p. 86.

¹⁶⁸ Selim Sırrı, “Hareketin Arifi ve Meyhanikiti,” *Terbiye ve Oyun* (August 1, 1911), p. 7.

¹⁶⁹ Sırrı, “Gençlere,” p. 90.

¹⁷⁰ Şemseddin Sami, *Kamus-ı Türki* (Dersaadat [İstanbul]: İkdam Matbaası, c. 1899, p. 1201.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

example, stressed that a “well-trained body” (*lav marzavadz marmin*) was beautiful.¹⁷² When praising the beautiful bodies of Jewish young men, *L’Aurore*, stressed the importance of their solid biceps (*biceps solides*).¹⁷³

Photography played a central role in promoting and providing readers with representations of the ideal male body. Editors of Istanbul’s multilingual press used pictures of semi-nude young men flexing their muscles to provide a visual representation of the ideal male physique. Journals created entire sections for photographs of semi-nude young men. For example, *İdman*’s section was entitled “The Exhibition of Robust Bodies” (*Sağlam Vücutlar Meşheri*).¹⁷⁴ Similarly, the editor of the Armenian magazine *Marmnamarz*, Shavarsh Chrissian, regularly published pictures of young men and encouraged readers to admire and emulate these examples. The portrait photographs published in *İdman* and *Marmnamarz* also included captions, which reveals the exclusive ethno-religious identity of the robust bodies. The image below of Krikor Hagopian (figure 4.13), for example, is collated with a description that establishes that he and his brother Levon Hagopian are among the “few Armenian youth who take care of their bodies... [and] glorify the Armenian name (*Hay anunë*) through their bodies, will, and muscle.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² *Marmnamarz* (June 1911), p. 142.

¹⁷³ “La Fete de la Maccabi,” *L’Aurore* (December 19, 1911), p. 2.

¹⁷⁴ The use of the word *fukara*, which literally means “poor men” is significant. Muslims have historically used the term *fukara* (singular is *faqir*) when referring to mendicants and Sufis as servants of God. *İdman*’s use of *fukara* also conveyed the meaning of servant, but challenged the traditional Sufi understanding by replacing God with the body and health. According to *İdman*, men should be extolled for their service to their body, not to God.

¹⁷⁵ *Marmnamarz* (April 1911), p. 88.



Editors encouraged their readers to send images to their publication in order to show what robust and strong bodies looked like.¹⁷⁶ The images that physical culture journals published share many similarities with the photographs that members of voluntary athletic clubs had taken. However, the editors of *İdman* made sure to print images of men from a broader spectrum of society, not just members of sports clubs, in order to demonstrate the spread of this corporeal aesthetic amongst middle-class young men. For example, the images above from *İdman* are of Seyfi Bey, an instructor in an Ottoman public school, and Cevat Bey, an educated Muslim who studied in Europe.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ “Sağlam Vücutlar Meşheri,” *İdman* (December 25, 1913), p. 219.

¹⁷⁷ *Donanma Mecmuası* (June 3, 1915), p. 28. Cevat (Rüşti) Bey studied at St. Benoit high school in Istanbul and completed his university degree in France.

Conclusion

Istanbul's multilingual press was one of the most important sites of physical culture in late Ottoman Istanbul. The press served as a space in which the goals and aspirations of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish educators, sporting club administrators and members, and government officials converged. In addition to bringing the writings of different actors together, the press served as a public forum in which their ideas intersected at the level of the rejuvenation of the community and the individual. According to the physical culture press, gymnastics, corporeal reform, and team sports served as the ideal means through which individuals and the community could be physically, morally, and spiritually rejuvenated and developed. Thus, these discussions serve as a unique vantage point from which we can trace inter-communal connections in the empire and challenge the notion that Turks, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews from similar educational and socio-economic backgrounds inhabited entirely separate spatial and cultural spheres.

These ideas about using sports to create strong communities/nations and robust individuals were not novel; educators and administrators first started disseminating them among students in schools and members of athletic associations starting in the late nineteenth century. What differed, however, was the space in which they were being distributed. The press was as a more public space than both the school and the association. The growth of literacy and the mushrooming of reading rooms (*kiraathanes*) throughout Istanbul and other urban centers of the empire ensured that a wider array of the empire's denizens, not just members of athletic associations and/or students, were visually and textually exposed to the view that young men

should perform gymnastics, participate in team sports, and their bodies served as transparent reflections of the current state of the community and empire.¹⁷⁸

Discussions in the multilingual press about physical culture also serve as a unique window into the aspirations and fears of Ottoman subjects who were members of different ethno-religious communities. Despite writing about sports with a shared sense of anxiety and optimism, Muslims, Christians, and Jews expressed these emotions differently. Thus, these discussions reveal how belonging to a majority and minority community shaped Ottoman subjects' experiences and understanding of sports, the self, and larger collective. Ottoman Muslims explicitly discussed the issue of communal/national and imperial degeneracy, while castigating Turkish men's' lack of virility, robustness, and vigor. On the other hand, Armenian and Jewish educators writing about corporeal reform also underscored the significance of degeneracy; however, they sidestepped the issue of whether their communities were degenerate.

¹⁷⁸ Johann Strauss, "Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th Centuries)," *Middle Eastern Literature* 6/1 (2003), p. 47.

Chapter 5

Performing and Competing in Istanbul's Newly Constructed Spaces

On May 29, 1914, Istanbulites gathered together for an evening of entertainment, competition, good sportsmanship, and merrymaking. The occasion of the gathering was the fourth official anniversary of the Ottoman Beşiktaş Club (Osmanlı Beşiktaş Kulübü), one of the first predominantly Turkish sports club established in the imperial capital during the early twentieth century. Ottoman-Turkish daily newspapers encouraged men and women to attend the festivities and provided readers with a description, the location, time, and significance of the event.¹ The festivities were scheduled to begin at around 7 o'clock in the evening in the club's indoor training facility (*talimhanesi*) in Beşiktaş. Spectators were given three ticket options: ten kuruş for the first sitting area, five kuruş for the sitting second area, and two and a half kuruş for a standing area, as well as a "special area" designated for women. The evening, which amounted to nothing less than a "large sports holiday" (*büyük spor bayramı*), consisted of young men competing against each other and participating in high jumps, fencing, *alafranga* wrestling, Swedish gymnastics, and boxing. The celebration was not limited to cardholding members of the Ottoman Beşiktaş Club; Istanbul's "youth" (*gençler*), who were interested in participating in the festivities, could do so as long as they demonstrated membership in one of the city's sports club and signed up before the event.²

¹ "Büyük Spor Bayramı," *Tanin* (May 29, 1914), p. 5; "Büyük Spor Musabakası," *İkdam* (May 27, 1914), p. 4

² Ibid.

By running an advertisement in *Tanin*'s "spectacle" column (*temaşa*) and inviting the youth of the city to the athletic celebration, the Ottoman Beşiktaş Club conveyed to readers that athletic events were popular, public activities.³ This chapter turns to the performative and competitive aspect of these activities. It does not attempt to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the athletic activities organized throughout the city during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries; rather, it focuses on football matches, athletic contests, and gymnastics exhibitions in an outdoor stadium in Kadıköy and in two theatres in Pera (Beyoğlu). These and other civil spaces were embedded in a broader late imperial urban public sphere that accommodated the refashioning and celebration of civic and exclusively ethno-religious ties. Both the venues and the activities that were staged in them emerged as a visible part of everyday life in early-twentieth-century Istanbul. Multilingual newspapers and magazines ran advertisements for and published articles about athletic events, photographers took photographs of athletes while they competed, and men and women attended sports festivals. An analysis of these festivities, thereby, provides insights into the intersection of performance, leisure time, fun, identity, and communal boundaries during the period.

The growing popularity of both the events and their venues legitimized sports and gymnastics as modern middle-class activities. The appearance of young Muslim, Christian, and Jewish men dressed in tight-fitting athletic attire jumping up and down, hanging from ropes, and kicking and running after a small ball in the same spaces played an important role in the development of sports as a shared civic culture during the period. This culture, however, was not exclusively based on inclusive civic ties, but also exclusive ethno-religious ones. The chapter examines Istanbulites from a plethora of backgrounds who treated the physical prowess of the

³ "Büyük Spor Bayramı," *Tanin* (May 29, 1914), p. 5.

athlete on the pitch, around the racetrack, and/or on the stage as a representation of the current state of the community. It thereby demonstrates that sports enthusiasts performing and competing in public established a direct link between the physical acumen of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish youth and communal regeneration.

Entertainment, Performance, and Fun in the Late Ottoman Empire

The athletic celebration at the Beşiktaş Club in Istanbul was not an isolated incident; rather, it was part of the introduction of a broader set of novel activities organized in cities spread throughout the empire, such as Izmir, Salonica, Beirut, Alexandria, and Cairo. During the mid nineteenth century, men and women were exposed to a diverse array of performances, celebrations, and public ceremonies in newly constructed urban spaces. The historiography of the late Ottoman Empire and modern Middle East has provided insights into these developments. Scholars have examined the emergence of musical and theatrical performances in modern theaters during the nineteenth century as spaces where men and women were exposed to radical ideas and developed new forms of entertainment and class divisions.⁴ Others have focused on public ceremonies as sites where people in the region performed and redrew the boundaries of communities.⁵ Each body of literature demonstrates the significance of performance to shaping

⁴ There is a large body of literature on Ottoman theatre in Turkish. The work of Metin And and Refik Ahmet Sevensil during the 1960s and 1970s is particularly important. For example, see Metin And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu Kuruluşu Geçişimi Katkısı* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi, 1976); Refik Ahmet Sevensil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi: Tanzimat Tiyatrosu* (İstanbul: Devlet Kanseratuarı, 1961). For a new body of literature in English, see, Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global*, pp. 60-93; Adam Mestyan, 'A garden with mellow fruits of refinement'— *Music Theatres and Politics in Istanbul and Cairo (1867-1892)* (Ph.D. dissertation: Central European University, 2011); Merih Erol, "Surveillance, Urban Governance, and Legitimacy in Late Ottoman Istanbul: Spying on Music and Entertainment During the Hamidian Regime (1876-1909)," *Urban History* 40/4 (2013), pp. 706-725; Suraiya Faroqhi and Arzu Öztürkmen (eds.), *Celebration, Entertainment and Theatre in the Ottoman World* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2014).

⁵ For example, see, Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, especially, pp. 22-26; James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of

cultural, social, and political transformations during the late Ottoman Empire. This chapter attempts to build on these insights by examining how public ceremonies and entertainment converged in the realm of sports and athletic exhibitions in Istanbul.

The organization of athletic performances and contests in new public buildings, theaters, gardens, and associations took place despite the Ottoman government's growing distrust of Istanbulites gathering together in public spaces during the late nineteenth century. Two institutions played a formative role in monitoring the activities of men and women in the capital during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. First was the Ottoman Police Corps (Zaptiye Müşirliği). The emergence of the police corps dates back to the mid nineteenth century; however, it was only during the Hamidian era that the police corps developed a distinct identity and mission as an institution separate from the gendarmerie that provided security for the imperial center.⁶ Second was a vast network of spies (*jurnal* in Ottoman Turkish). Abdülhamid's spies were made up of men from various ethno-religious communities and diverse socio-economic backgrounds and regularly monitored the activities of men and women in private and public spaces.⁷

Together, these two institutions significantly limited the public performance of modern sports and athletic competitions during the Hamidian era. Ottoman government reports and foreign newspapers demonstrate that government officials were simultaneously concerned with and confused about the site of Istanbulites meeting to compete, exercise, and watch others play modern sports. Early-twentieth-century telegrams from the chief commander of Üsküdar

California Press, 1998), especially, pp. 225-286; Der Motassian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*, especially, pp. 23-48.

⁶ Erol, "Surveillance, Urban Governance, and Legitimacy in Late Ottoman Istanbul," p. 711.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

(Üsküdar Kumandanı), for example, offer descriptions of male and female “English citizens” (*İngiliz tebaa*) from Moda, Tarabya, and Beyoğlu meeting to play what he referred to as “*top laba*.”⁸ *Top* was a particularly troubling word because it was commonly used in Ottoman Turkish to mean cannon. The Ottoman Empire’s largest and most important canon foundry, for example, was the Tophane-i Amire (The Imperial Canon Foundry). Thus, while it was clear to the person writing the telegram in Üsküdar, whose information was based on the observations of the local spies watching the novel activities, that “*top laba*” meant football, or, more literally, as “ball play,” the recipients of the message more than likely thought it meant cannon games.

This misunderstanding led to the arrest of Turkish men who were playing with a *top* in nearby Kadıköy. One such instance occurred when Ottoman policemen arrested a Turkish man, Reşat Danyal, in the middle of the night at his house and ushered him off to the Üsküdar police station.⁹ The policemen decided to immediately arrest Reşat on account of the fact that he founded a “*top laba*” team named “Black Stocking,” which consisted of Turkish, Armenian, and Greek young men. The notion that “Turks and Greeks were allegedly building castles (*kale yapmışlar*) and throwing cannons (*top atıyorlar*) at one another” suggested that nefarious political activities were taking place. After a thorough investigation of the words *top* and *kale*, which were translated as cannons and castle respectively, but were used to mean ball and goalie, and the club’s uniforms at a separate police station and the Yıldız Palace, it was concluded that

⁸ BOA, Y.PRK-ASK 172/114 [August 15, 1901]; BOA, Y.PRK-ASK 172/124 [August 15, 1901].

⁹ This alleged incident was covered in the English press of the period. Sport and Play: Football in Turkey,” *Lancashire Evening Post* (November 26, 1900), p. 5; “Football in Turkey,” *Northants Evening Telegraph* (June 14, 1902), p. 6; “Football in Turkey,” *Evening Telegraph* (January 13, 1902), p. 3; “Football in Turkey: Amusing Experience of Rechad Bey as a Club Secretary,” *Lincolnshire Echo* (January 11, 1902), p. 3. An Ottoman-Turkish article, entitled “The Development and History of Football in Our City,” doesn’t explicitly mention Reşat’s name, but says that a few people were arrested. Saat Hayri, “Futbol Şehrimiz’de Suret-i İnkişafı ve Tarihçesi,” *Nevsal-i Milli* (Dersaadet: Asar-ı Müfide Kitaphanesi, 1914), p. 404.

the “cannons” amounted to nothing less than the harmless “balls” that young men kicked around and played with in an open field.

The wide sweeping reforms ushered in after the Young Turk revolution in 1908 facilitated the development of a more robust and open public sphere. Chapters 2 and 4 demonstrated that the revolution created a context in which there was an efflorescence of associational life and publications. While many voluntary associations predated 1908, it was during the period that already established clubs significantly expanded their activities and embraced a more public identity. Central to the expansion of their activities and identity was the staging of performances and competitions in public spaces. The regular organization of public festivals and parades in garden, open spaces, and halls, in which flags and banners were festooned and pro-constitutional and revolutionary slogans chanted, conveyed to Muslim, Christian, and Jewish sports enthusiasts that they could also organize events unimpeded.

A more open public sphere ensured that sporting events attracted a diverse group of people during the early twentieth century. Sports magazines and newspapers recognized this diversity as a sign of the growing popularity of exercise and sports in the daily lives of the city’s inhabitants. In 1913, for example, *İdman* published a caricature (figure 5.1) entitled, “the faces one sees in the world of sports.” The caricature featured men and women dressed in dissimilar attire and headgear. There are three women: one is sporting a black headscarf with her hair protruding from the front and the side, the second one is wearing a white headscarf and a translucent face veil, and the final woman is dressed in a felt hat. Among the various men are military officers, a boy scout, a man smoking a pipe in a flat hat, seven men in fezzes, two of whom are black and standing with hunched backs, two bearded men in clerical headgear, and an elderly bareheaded man. By sketching each man and woman differently, Sedat Süleyman, the

cartoonist, attempted to convey to Istanbul's expanding reading public that 'modern' denizens of the city from diverse ethno-religious and professional backgrounds shared an interest in attending and watching athletic competitions, exhibitions, and matches.



[Figure 5.1 Caricature of the different people that made up the world of sports in late Ottoman Istanbul. (Sedat Süleyman, "İdman Meydanlarında Görülen Simalar," *İdman*, May 4, 1914, p. 460)]

Football at Union Club

Kadıköy and Moda served as two of the main areas where men and women gathered outside to exercise and play sports during the late nineteenth century. Kadıköy and Moda were located on the northern shore of the Sea of Marmara. Although Istanbul's regular water transportation network provided residents with steamboats that left Galata Bridge and Kadıköy roughly every half hour, many Istanbulites viewed the neighborhoods as culturally and

geographically separate from the rest of the city.¹⁰ This perceived cultural and spatial distance was because of the high concentration of foreign English and Ottoman non-Muslim families residing in both neighborhoods. According to the memoir of Ruşen Eşref, a member of the Galatasaray Physical Training Club, “Moda was an English colony that inhabited its own world and what might be called the forefront of Turkish Istanbul’s capitulations...”¹¹ Sir Charles William Wilson’s late-nineteenth-century handbook for travelers in Istanbul, Bursa, and Biga, also refers to Kadıköy as a neighborhood with a “large English colony.”¹²

The high concentration of English men in Kadıköy seems to account for the fact that it was the main area that Istanbulites started to play football in the city. According to an article describing the growing popularity of the game in 1906, “the young generation thinks of nothing else but football, and many streets and squares in Kadikeui [*sic*], more especially, are the battle ground of hard fought matches between opposing factions.”¹³ The Rosemary Field (Kuşdili Çayırı), which was also referred to as served as the Priest’s Field (Papazın Çayırı), served as the preferred location where the newly created local sports clubs competed.¹⁴ The first teams to play irregular matches against each other were four clubs from Kadıköy and Moda, the Kadikeui Football Club, Moda Football Club, Elpis Football Club, and Imogen.¹⁵

The founders and administrators of these predominantly English and Greek football clubs decided that they should create an umbrella association, which would bring clubs together on the

¹⁰ Demetrius Coufopoulos, *A Guide to Constantinople* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1895), p. 178.

¹¹ Ünaydın, *Galatasaray ve Futbol*, p. 68.

¹² Sir Charles William Wilson, *Handbook for Travellers in Constantinople, Brûsa, and the Troad with Maps and Plans* (London: J. Murray, 1900), p. 114.

¹³ *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (December 1, 1906), p. 609.

¹⁴ Hayri, “Futbol Şehrimiz’de Suret-i İnkışafı ve Tarihçesi,” p. 404.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

field and beyond, organize football matches, and help popularize football.¹⁶ This decision led to the creation of the Constantinople Association Football League in 1905. Made up of the four abovementioned teams, the league created a schedule for matches, drew up a set of rules that these clubs were required to follow, and purchased a championship shield.¹⁷ The first three seasons led to an intense rivalry between the Moda Football Club and the Kadikeui Football Club that gradually attracted a large number of spectators. According to one article, “enthusiasm for the game runs fever high and it is no uncommon sight to witness an attendance of 4/5000 people on the Kadikeui football ground be the weather wet or fine.”¹⁸

Football matches in Kadıköy were able to attract a large group of people. However, the main field in which the games were played did not have a proper structure in which spectators could sit down and socialize. The Young Turk revolution of 1908 created the context in which prominent English and Turkish men living in Kadıköy decided to create a stadium in which matches could be organized and spectators could gather.

In order to celebrate the revolution and honor Ottoman citizens who were in exile during the Hamidian era, Cemil Topuzlu, a well-known Turkish doctor, who would go on to serve as the Mayor of Istanbul (İstanbul şehremini), organized a party in his villa in Çiftehavuzlar, an upscale area in Kadıköy.¹⁹ The party, according to Topuzlu’s memoir, was filled with “locals and foreigners (*yerli ve ecnebi bir çok şahıslar*).”²⁰ Among the foreigners who attended the party was Frederick Edwin Whittall, a prominent English citizen who was born and raised in Istanbul and

¹⁶ “Association Football in Constantinople,” *The Levant Herald and Daily Express* (March 27, 1908), pp. 93-94.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “Constantinople Association Football League,” *The Levant Herald and Daily Express* (December 1, 1906), p. 609.

¹⁹ Dr. Cemil Topuzlu, *İstibdat-Meşrutiyet-Cumhuriyet Devirlerinde: 80 Yıllık Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Güven Basım ve Yayınevi, 1951), pp. 82-90.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 88.

served as one of the directors of the National Bank of Turkey.²¹ At some point of the party, Whittall said to Topuzlu in Ottoman Turkish:

Paşa, thank God, you have obtained freedom. Now it will be easier for your youth to gather together. I see that you [the Turks] have recently become interested in football; however, in England, this sport has developed into a public and national game (*umumi ve milli bir oyun*). Football has a number of important benefits for the improvement of the race and youth of a people. I sincerely want football to develop among the youth in Turkey (*Türkiye*). As such, why don't we establish a football stadium in Kadıköy? In doing so, we will increase the popularity of football, develop the game, and we will benefit financially as the owners of this club.²²

The day after, Topuzlu invited Arif Hikmet Paşa, who was the Minister of the Navy, Whittall and few of his English relatives, James La Fontaine, who was one of the founders of the Kadikeui Football Club, and Nurizade Ziya Bey, who was one of the founders of the Fenerbahçe Sports Club, to his house in order to further discuss building a football stadium. During the meeting, the ground works for the stadium were laid. Together, they raised over 3,000 pieces of gold amongst themselves,²³ agreed on the location of the stadium, which was an open field in Yoğurtçu, an area in Kadıköy, and decided that Topuzlu would go to Yıldız Palace and inquire about the possibility of renting the field.²⁴

The following day, Topuzlu went to the palace, where he was granted a meeting with the sultan's head clerk (*başkatip*), Cevat Bey. After Topuzlu formally requested the plot of land, Cevat explained that there were other people who had visited the palace and presented a similar request. According to Cevat, Cemil Paşa and Ahmet Rıza Bey came to the palace the other day

²¹ Frederick Edwin Whittall came from a prominent English family from Izmir that had moved to Istanbul during the mid nineteenth century. He was the son of Sir 'James' William Whittall, who established J.W. Whittall & Co.

²² Topuzlu, *İstibdat-Meşrutiyet-Cumhuriyet Devirlerinde*, p. 88.

²³ According to Topuzlu, the English men alone contributed 3,000 pieces of gold, while he and Arif Hikmet each contributed 250 pieces. Topuzlu, *İstibdat-Meşrutiyet-Cumhuriyet Devirlerinde*, p. 89.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

and requested the same plot of land in order to build a school. Sensing that there was more to this explanation than building a school, Topuzlu offered Cevat 30 pieces of gold for the land's annual rent. After which, Cevat consulted the sultan and then informed Topuzlu that Abdülhamid II had granted his request. Promptly after, a contract was drawn up, which granted Topuzlu a 20 to 30 year *irade* from the sultan to rent the plot of land.²⁵

The name the founders of the stadium decided on was Union Club. Its name is attributed to the fact that its Ottoman Turkish and foreign English founders were united by their commitment to developing football and providing Istanbul's heterogeneous residents with a center where athletic activities could be held.²⁶ The official committee of Union Club consisted of four English men, Frederick Edwin Whittall, Earnest Thompson, James La Fontaine, and C.B. Charnaud, and three Turks, Cemil Topuzlu, Rifat Bey, and Zia Bey.²⁷ When construction finished in 1909, Union Club consisted of a race course, an athletic field, which thousands of spectators could gather around to watch matches, a grand stand house, which sat up to 1,000 people, a separate closed grand stand, which was capable of seating up to 150 people, and an enclosed club house.²⁸ The club's different amenities and popularity led one foreigner living in Istanbul during the early twentieth century to describe Union Club as the "the Mecca for sportsmen."²⁹

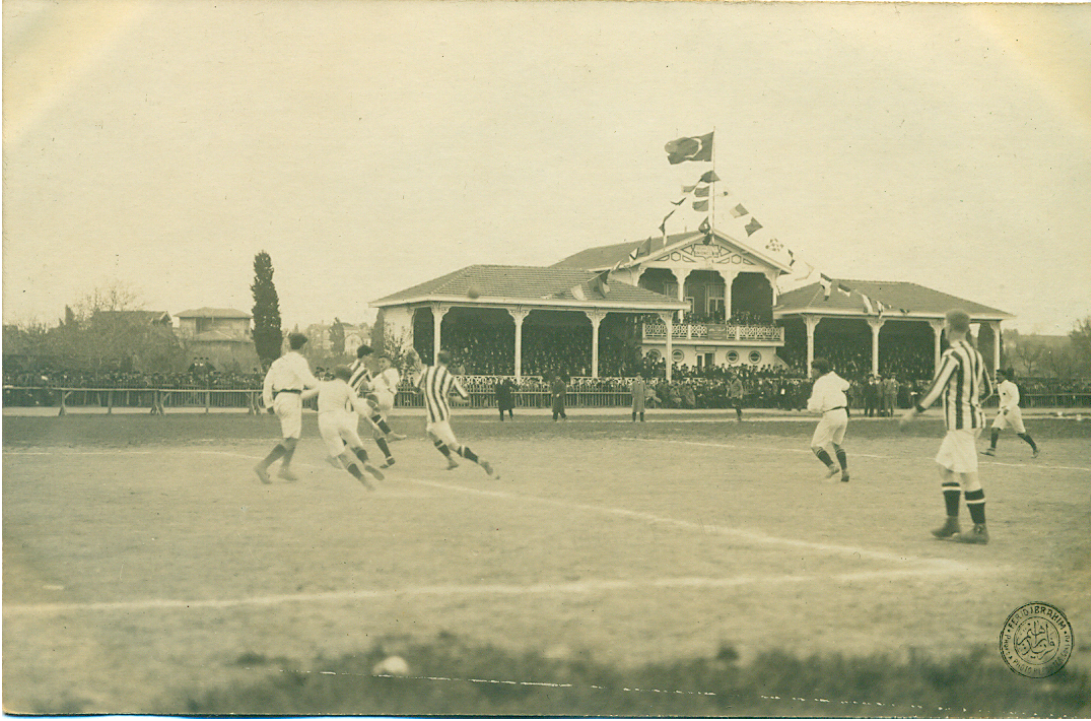
²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Box 16 Folder: Recreational Surveys 1922-26.

²⁷ "Union Club," *The Levant Herald and Daily Express* (August 7, 1909), pp. 252-3.

²⁸ "Union Club," *The Levant Herald* (August 7, 1909), pp. 252-3.

²⁹ The Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Box 16 Folder: Recreational Surveys 1922-26.



[Figure 5.2 Football match at Union Club (GMA, Album 22, 1913)]

Spectators wishing to attend events at Union Club had three options in terms of where they could watch matches: stand around the track, sit in the stands, or sit in the box seats, each of which required a separate fee and ticket. Men paid five kuruş to stand around the field, while students and members of sports clubs were given a special discount of three kuruş. Access to the stands (*tribunler*) and the special area (*mevki mahsus*) cost ten and twenty kuruş respectively.³⁰ “Muslim ladies” (*İslam hanımlar*) and “foreign women” (*ecnebi kadınlar*) used the balconies, which also had curtains, as the section in which they could “comfortably” watch the match.³¹ Thus, the different seating areas and ticket prices enabled spectators to participate in a shared middle-class activity, while at the same time to reinscribe class differences. Unlike voluntary athletic associations, which were almost exclusively male spaces, Union Club’s seating

³⁰ “Spor Şunu: İstanbullular ile Romanyalılar Arasında Futbol Musabakaları Bugün Başlıyor,” *Tasvir-i Efkar* (April 17, 1914), p. 3.

³¹ “Türklerle ve Romanyalılar Arasında Muhim Futbol Müsabakaları,” *Tasvir-i Efkar* (April 18, 1914), p. 3.

arrangements ensured that women were able to attend and participate in the spectacle of athletic competition.

The construction and growing popularity of Union Club coincided with the expansion of the Constantinople Association Football League. Prior to the establishment of Union Club, athletic associations from the surrounding Kadıköy neighborhood were the main participants in the league. Starting in 1909-10, however, clubs from around the city began to sign up to compete in one of the league's two divisions. This geographic expansion also reflected a diversification of the ethno-religious orientation of the clubs. The 1910-11, and 1911-12 seasons, for example, were made of up clubs that consciously projected a Turkish, Armenian, Greek, and English associational identity. Turkish clubs, such as the Galatasaray Physical Training Club, Progress International, and the Fenerbahçe Sports Club, Greek clubs, like the Hercules Gymnastics Club, the Strugglers Football Club, Armenian clubs, such as the Dork Club and Yasson Club, as well as the English Cadikeuy Football Club competed against each other.³²

The ethno-religious background of the League's administration also reflected its diversification. In 1910, the President of the League was Horace Armitage, a foreign English resident of Istanbul, the Vice-President of the League was Ali Sami, an Ottoman Turkish citizen, and the Secretary of the League was Jean Mistides (?), an Ottoman Greek.³³ In order to accommodate the various linguistic capabilities of the participants in the league, Ali Sami proposed that French be made the League's official language in 1910.³⁴ League regulations and

³² For example, see "Football Association-Divisions I & II" Galatasaray Museum Archive, GSM-KL-16 [c. 1910]. For a list of the clubs competing in the Constantinople Association Football League, see Arıpınar, *Türk Futbol Tarihi, 1904-1991*; Yüce, *Osmanlı Melekleri*.

³³ Untitled, GSM-KL-16 [November 12, 1910].

³⁴ GMA, GSM-KL-16, untitled report [January 10, 1910]. Horace Armitage served as league's president and Jean Mistides as its secretary. Sami became the league's president after Armitage resigned as president on January 16, 1911. *Reglement et status de la ligue des foot-ball de constantinople* GSA, GSM-KL-16 [c. 1911].

schedules were written in French and English, while all of the correspondence related to the league exchanged between participating clubs was in French.³⁵



[Figure 5.3 Spectators watching a football match at Union Club. (GMA, Album 22, May 18, 1913)]

In addition to logistical matters, these handwritten letters exchanged between the Constantinople Football League, Union Club, as well as other clubs provide insight into relations between club officials and a shared bourgeois gentility in Istanbul during the time.³⁶ Administrators of clubs and important figures in the world of sports exchanged greetings during religious holidays (*bayram*). The Greek secretary of the Strugglers Foot-ball Club sent Galatasaray a letter written in French in which he offered Galatasaray his most sincere compliments (*félicitations*) on the holiday.³⁷ While exchanges of pleasantries and congratulations

³⁵ For example, see GSA, GSM-KL-16, “Dates des jeux (fixtures) des foot-ball matches [sic] de la saison 1910-1911” [November 12, 1910].

³⁶ For example, see GMA, GS Fotograf Dokuman GSM-KL-1, Strugglers Foot-Ball Club Moda to Galatasaray (October 25, 1910), Cadi-Keuy Association Football Club to Galatasaray (January 25, 1910).

³⁷ GMA, GSM-KL-5, Letter from “le Secretaire” of the Strugglers Foot-ball Club, Moda to Galatasaray [September 23, 1911 & September 12, 1912].

were exchanged in French between Turkish and non-Turkish figures, Turks tended to exclusively write in Ottoman Turkish for these purposes when writing to other Turks.³⁸

The adoption of French as the *lingua franca* of the league was a product of the diversification of the Constantinople Football League. At the same time, Istanbulites from all walks of life also started to develop an interest in football. Football matches attracted thousands of people from “all classes” (*her sınıfa mensup*), students, the elderly, members of sports clubs, and women.³⁹ Ottoman-Turkish publications highlighted the heightened interest in football at Union Club amongst Turks. “Eleven to twelve years ago,” according to an article published in April 1913 in *İkdam*, “this interest and attraction (*cazibedar*) to football among Turks was completely strange and unheard of. During this period, we started to develop an interest in sports.”⁴⁰ Istanbulites rushed to attend football matches in Union Club. The stadium was especially packed in order to watch matches played by and between Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe. Spectators showed up extra early to attend these matches and procure the best seats and standing areas that their tickets provided them with.⁴¹ It was during this period that Istanbulites started to create a shared culture in the stands. Unlike the *lingua franca* used between clubs, the language of the stands, especially when the matches were played between predominantly Turkish clubs, was Ottoman Turkish. For example, an article published in *İdman* describes spectators chanting “long live” (*yaşa*) when the Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe match finished.⁴²

³⁸ GMA, GSM-KL-16.

³⁹ See, for example, “İdman Hevadisleri: Pazar Günü Yunyun Kulübünde İcra Edelen Musabakalar,” *İdman*; “Dünkü Spor Musabakaları: Romanyalılar Mağlup Oldular,” *Tanin* (April 18, 1914), p. 1;

⁴⁰ “Terbiye-i Bedeniye: Futbol iki Haftanın Muvaffakiyeti,” *İkdam* (April 14, 1913).

⁴¹ Nasih Sait, “Spor: Fenerbahçe ve Galatasaray Kulüplerinin ilk Futbol Musabakası,” *İkdam* (October 6, 1914), p. 4.

⁴² “Galatasaray Fenerbahçe ve Futbol Maçı,” *İdman* (October 28, 1913), p. 138.



[Figure 5.4 The Constantinople Association Football League's shield champions: Kadıköy Futbol Kulübü 1905-1906, Kadıköy Futbol Kulübü 1906-1907, Moda Futbol Kulübü 1908-09, Galatasaray Futbol Kulübü 1909-1910, Galatasaray Futbol Kulübü 1910-11, Fenerbahçe Futbol Kulübü 1911-1912 (Sa'at Hayri, "Futbol Şehrimiz'de Suret-i İnkışafı ve Tarihçesi," *Nevsal-ı Milli*, Dersaadet: Asar-ı Müfide Kitaphanesi, 1914, p. 405)]

This burgeoning interest in football coincided with the growing success of predominantly Turkish clubs: Galatasaray won the Constantinople Association Football League championship during the 1908-9, 1909-10, and the 1901-1911 season, while Fenerbahçe won the 1911-12 season championship.⁴³ Ottoman-Turkish daily newspapers' new sports columns stressed the importance of these two clubs and regularly referred to Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe as playing the most important role "in the world of Ottoman sports" (*Osmanlı spor aleminde*).⁴⁴ *İdman* published clubs histories of Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe.⁴⁵ Even the official government yearbook (*Nevsal-ı Milli*) featured an article that provided a history of football of Galatasaray

⁴³ "Futbol Şehrimiz'de Suret-i İnkışafı ve Tarihçesi," *Nevsal-ı Milli* (Dersaadet: Asar-ı Müfide Kitaphanesi, 1914), p. 405.

⁴⁴ "Spor: Haftalık Musahibe—Galatasaray ve Fenerbahçe Futbol," *Tasvir-i Efkar* (Mayis 21, 1913), p. 4.

⁴⁵ Ali Sami, "Galatasaray Kulübünün Tarihçesi," *İdman* (May 28, 1913), p. 9; Mehmet Nasuhi, "Fenerbahçe Spor Kulübü Tarihçesi," *İdman* (June 28, 1913), pp. 46-47.

and Fenerbahçe.⁴⁶ Figure 5.4 above is taken from this article and depicts the various clubs that won the Constantinople Association Football League's shield.

“The two Turkish clubs,” according to one Turkish journalist, “made the country (*memleket*) proud.”⁴⁷ Others, however, were more critical of Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe's success. The football matches between Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe were described as fiercely competitive (*rekabetkar*)⁴⁸ and likened to “a war that would take place between France and German.”⁴⁹ The editors of *İdman* lambasted “the feeling of rivalry (*his-i rekabet*) between clubs today.”⁵⁰ The administrators of Union Club were also critical of the fierce competitive spirit of some players, which led to “unfortunate incidents” taking place during matches. One such incident took place between Galatasaray and Elpis, when two of its players, Sabri Mahir and Isac Cohen, started to fight during a match in September 1909. Union Club responded to the fight by sending an appeal to all the clubs participating in the League:

Union Club appeals to all members of the clubs that take part in the football matches, by asking them to continue as in the past to deploy all their efforts to ensure that the matches are played with moderation and composure, and according the rules of true sport. By this means alone can do we reach the goal of promoting the spirit of sports and make it popular in the country play football like any other athletic competition.⁵¹

Others were less concerned with unsportsmanlike behavior and identified another problem associated with excessive forms of competition. When young men are fixated on winning matches, according to Burhanettin, they lost sight of the primary goal of all forms of

⁴⁶ “Futbol Şehrimiz’de Suret-i İnkışafı ve Tarihesi.”

⁴⁷ Nasih Sait, “Spor: Fenerbahçe ve Galatasaray Kulüplerinin ilk Futbol Musabakası,” *İkdam* (October 6, 1914), p. 4.

⁴⁸ “Galatasaray Fenerbahçe ve Futbol Maçı,” *İdman* (October 28, 1913), p. 138.

⁴⁹ Nasih Sait, “Spor: Fenerbahçe ve Galatasaray Kulüplerinin ilk Futbol Musabakası,” *İkdam* (October 6, 1914), p. 4.

⁵⁰ “Tehlikeli bir Zihneyetler,” *İdman* (March 26, 1914), p. 386.

⁵¹ GLA, GSM-KL-5, Union Club letter to all Clubs and Union Club letter to Galatasaray [October 2, 1909].

physical exercise and football: the corporeal development of “the individual (*fert*) and the race (*ırk*).”⁵² Burhanettin was particularly troubled by the fact that administrators of Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe focused on players’ talent, not ethno-religious background, when they assembled their football teams. They thereby created mixed teams that were made up of Muslim and non-Muslim players. According to Burhanettin, “we see that foreign elements (*ecnebi unsurlar*) are playing important roles and providing the most significant contributions to these teams these days.” The presence of Armenian, Greek, and German players on both the Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe rosters ensured that “such a team could never be a completely Turkish team” (*tam bir Türk timi olamaz*).⁵³ In order to assuage the burgeoning level of club rivalry and “trickery” plaguing teams as well as rid the clubs of their “foreign elements,” Burhanettin advocated creating a single “Turkish team” out of the Turkish players who were members of the Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe clubs.

Burhanettin’s plea for the creation of an exclusively Turkish team reflected a broader discussion on the importance of creating ethnically and religiously homogenous spaces in which young men competed. In 1913, Turkish football enthusiasts created the Friday League (*Cuma Ligi*) in order to “to ensure that there are matches between the Turkish teams, which until now had neglected general matches.”⁵⁴ The League’s official internal regulation, which *İdman* published in December 1913, went on to state that it was the hope of the League that Turkish clubs would morally and physically benefit from regularly playing matches amongst other Turkish teams.⁵⁵ Divided into two divisions based on how competitive they were, the League

⁵² Burhanettin, “Terbiye-i Bedeniye ve Spor’da Milli Gaye: Futbol,” *İdman* (December 25, 1913), p. 209.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ “Cuma Ligi Futbol Nizamnamesi,” *İdman* (December 3, 1914), pp. 167-169.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

was made up of exclusively Turkish clubs. The first division consisted of the following teams: the Anadolu Spor Kulübü (Anatolian Sports Club), İstanbul Jimnastik Kulübü (Istanbul Gymnastics Club), Darülfünun Terbiye-i Bedeniye Kulübü (Darülfünun Physical Training Club), Sanayi Mektebi Futbol Kulübü (Trade School Club), Şehremini Mümaresat-ı Bedeniye Kulübü (Governor Physical Training Club), and Fenerbahçe Spor Kulübü (Fenerbahçe Sports Club).⁵⁶

Not surprising, Turkish educators were not the only ones to express concerns about club rivalry and the importance of creating homogenous institutions in which clubs could compete; Armenians did as well. The efflorescence of Armenian football clubs, according to an article published in *Marmnamarz* in 1912, ensured that it was feasible to create “an Armenian soccer league” (*Futboli Haygagan Ligi*).⁵⁷ The creation of such a league, it was hoped, would “promote relations between all the [Armenian] clubs.” *Marmnamarz* led the initiative to organize such a league by sending letters to each Armenian football club, inviting them to join the league. It seems like not all the Armenian club administrators were as enthusiastic as *Marmnamarz* about the proposal: out of the eighteen Armenian clubs, only Artavazt and Araks responded favorably to the invitation by sending representatives to discuss the matter at an event that *Marmnamarz* organized.

Athletic Competitions at Union Club

The idea to establish an exclusively Turkish and Armenian football league stemmed from the same logic: young men should compete against athletes from their own ethno-religious community. Such ideas were not confined to the football pitch, but also included other activities, namely multi-sport competitions, such as track and field, weightlifting, and gymnastics. Many

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “Marmnashkharh: Bolsoy Hamar Fuwt‘boli Haygagan Lig,” *Marmnamarz* (July 1911), p. 186.

Armenian, Turkish, Jewish, and Greek sports enthusiasts treated athletic festivities, tournaments, and competitions as intracommunal activities in which athletes could develop the individual and communal body. Organized in front of a large audience over the course of a few hours at Union Club, these events served as the stage from which young men dressed in athletic attire and displayed the moral robustness and modernity of the community.

This section will focus on three such events: a Turkish sports “show” (*musamere*), a Jewish “sports tournament” (*tournoi sportif*), and the Armenian Olympics (*Haygagan Voghimpiyagan*). Each event was organized for a separate community by a different institution: a sports union, a sports club, and a semi-governmental aid society. Nevertheless, the three events maintained striking similarities. By creating similar programs, which consisted of an opening ceremony, track and field competitions, and a closing ceremony, the organizers were drawing inspiration from most important international sporting event of the period, the modern Olympic Games. The Olympics popularized the idea that physical prowess and strength were integral components of proper masculine bourgeois gentility as well as provided a model that sports enthusiasts in Istanbul and around the globe often emulated. As a result, the similarities of the athletic competitions in Istanbul serve as a vantage point from which to look at a shared civic and global sports culture that Muslims, Christians, and Jews in late Ottoman Istanbul collectively shaped.

Sports clubs organized many of the athletic competitions held at Union Club. Some of these events were staged on an irregular basis, while others were held annually. From 1912-1914, members of the Jewish Gymnastics Society, Maccabi organized an annual sports festival at Union Club. Maccabi took out advertisements for their annual athletic tournament in Istanbul’s leading French and English newspapers, such as *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, *Le*

Moniteur Orientale, and *Stamboul*. For example, on May 6, 1912, *Le Moniteur Orientale* ran an advertisement that explained to readers that the Jewish Gymnastics Society, Maccabi is staging a “large sports tournament (*grand tournoi sportif*) on May 12, 1912 at Kadıköy’s Union Club. More than 300 gymnasts will take part in the contest, which promises to be the most splendid event that the organization has yet organized.”⁵⁸ Coverage of the club’s annual festivities was not limited to the French and English press, however. Ottoman-Turkish newspapers, such as *Tasvir-i Efkar* and *Tanin*, ran articles that offered detailed description about the annual festivities.⁵⁹

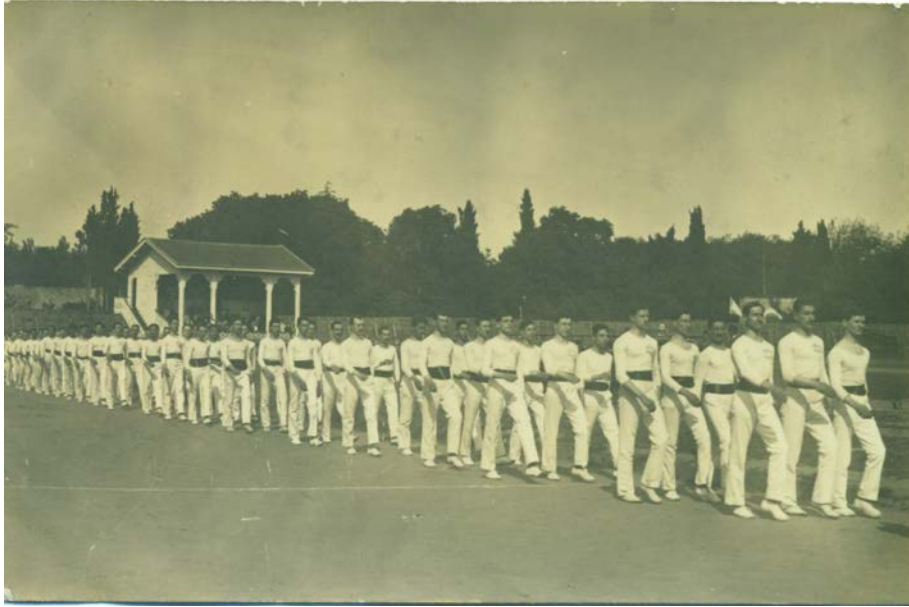
Journalists were not the only people interested in Maccabi’s annual spring sports spectacles. The events attracted more than 2,000 spectators.⁶⁰ Jewish men and women of various social classes living in neighborhoods spread across the city took the ferry to Kadıköy in order to watch the events. An article published in *Tasvir-i Efkar* pointed out that the spectators consisted of men and women who were both committed and indifferent to the idea that sports were important. This was particularly impressive because it demonstrated that sports had become so popular that people from all walks of life were willing to purchase tickets and spend the afternoon watching a sports event. The author provided readers with a description of an encounter he had with one spectator at the tournament, whom he refers to as “a Jew” (*bir*

⁵⁸ “Grand Tournoi Sportif,” *Le Moniteur Orientale* (May 6, 1912), p. 3; “Maccabi: Grand tournoi sportif,” *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (April 30, 1912), p. 3; “Maccabi: Grand tournoi sportif,” *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (May 1, 1912), p. 3; “Maccabi: Grand tournoi sportif,” *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (May 2, 1912), p. 3; “Maccabi: Grand tournoi sportif,” *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express* (May 8, 1912), p. 3.

⁵⁹ “Spor: Jimnastik Oyunları,” *Tanin* (June 2, 1913), p. 4; “Spor: Haftalık Musahabe-Makabi Cemiyeti ve Spor Eğlenceleri,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*: (June 7, 1913), p. 5.

⁶⁰ “Spor: Haftalık Musahabe-Makabi Cemiyeti ve Spor Eğlenceleri,” *Tasvir-i Efkar* (June 7, 1913), p. 5; “La fête sportive de Maccabi,” *Stamboul* (June 10, 1914, p. 2), p. 548.

museviye), who “had no interest in sports,” but still “bought three 20-kuruş tickets in order to come and enjoy the festivities.”⁶¹



[Figure 5.5 Male members of Maccabi marching in the opening ceremony. (GMA, Album 22. June 1, 1913)]



[Figure 5.6 Female members of Maccabi marching in the opening ceremony. (GMA, Album 22. June 1, 1913)]

⁶¹ “Spor: Haftalık Musahabe-Makabi Cemiyeti ve Spor Eğlenceleri,” *Tasvir-i Efkar* (June 7, 1913), p. 5.

The festivities began with members of Maccabi's Pera, Hasköy, Balat, and Kuzguncuk branches marching in groups from Kadıköy's ferry docks to Union Club. Once inside the stadium, male and female members of the club were divided for the opening ceremony. The ceremony was a particularly impressive sight. Articles in *Tanin* and *Tasvir-i Efkar* both mention the ceremony and describe in great detail the clothing that the athletes wore when marching. Together, the articles and the two photographs that Ferit İbrahim took on June 1, 1913 (figure 5.5 & 5.6) reveal the striking attire that club members wore.⁶² The male members sported identical tight-fitting white pants and long-sleeved shirts, red belts, and white shoes. The female members also wore identical club attire: they donned knee-length blue dresses, black opaque tights, and white shoes. Sown onto the left side of the male and female members' shirts was the Star of David, which was the official symbol of the Jewish Gymnastics Society.

Spectators were exposed to a full day of athletic events, which were split into two sections, at each of Maccabi's annual sports tournaments.⁶³ The first section consisted of various group exercises in which members of Maccabi's different branches performed their strength and athleticism. In order to demonstrate that physical exercise was for the entire Jewish community, not just men, the organizers made sure to have male and female members of all ages perform different drills. The exercises were always separated by age and gender, however. The children sections of the Pera, Hasköy, Balat, and Kuzguncuk opened the athletic exercises by performing free movement gymnastics exercises. Next, young men from the Hasköy branch performed a group rifle exercise in the center of the stadium, during which members twirled rifles. Female

⁶² Ferit İbrahim was one of the most prominent Turkish photojournalists of the period. *İdman* later published the images. The images were not only confined to the press; they were also stored in club photograph albums. For example, the Galatasaray Physical Training Club included both of Ferit İbrahim's images in one of the club's photograph albums. *İdman* (December 25, 1913), pp. 208 & 210.

⁶³ "Grand Tournoi Sportif," *Le Moniteur Orientale* (May 6, 1912), p. 3.

members of the Pera and Kuzguncuk branches also demonstrated their athletic dexterity by performing flag exercises. Finally, men from the Pera, Hasköy, Balat, and Kuzguncuk branches performed various jumping exercises.

Sports clubs were not the only institution that organized athletic competitions after 1908. Informal sports unions, such as the Armenian Physical Education Movement (*Hay Marmnagartanke Sharjoomin*), did as well. Armenian educators, doctors, instructors, and writers, who were committed to the spread of physical exercise amongst the Armenians of Istanbul, formed the Armenian Physical Education Movement in early 1911. Two of its most significant accomplishments were the establishment of an annual athletics event and a sports journal, *Marmnamarz*. Both the written word and the spectacle of Armenian youth competing and performing physically challenging exercises were considered imperative for Armenians to develop an appreciation for sports and regular exercise.

In April 1911, *Marmnamarz* started to publish articles about the upcoming Olympic Games. An article entitled “the Armenian Olympics” (*Haygagan Voghimpiyagan*) established that Armenian youth in the past paid little heed to exercise, their bodies and health.⁶⁴ This, however, was beginning to change, according to the writer, because of the excitement that talk of the Armenian Olympic Games was stirring within the community. The title of the athletic event connected the efforts of the Armenian Physical Education Movement to a global sports culture, while at the same time highlighting the exclusive Armenian character of the games. Moreover, the ability of the organizers to rent out Istanbul’s largest outdoor public venue for an intracomunal athletic competition helped legitimize both sports and the movement. Until then, many Armenian Istanbulites regarded physical exercise as an exclusively novel educational

⁶⁴ “Haygagan Voghimpiyagan,” *Marmnamarz* (April 1911), p. 95.

activity that children performed in schools and sports clubs. The staging of the games, therefore, helped bolster the legitimacy of exercise and sports as modern activities that *all* Armenians should participate in and support.

The first Armenian Olympics attracted a large number of spectators and participants. More than 2,000 Armenian Istanbulites showed up to watch the festivities on May 1, 1911. Armenian athletes who were affiliated with a variety of different associations, schools, and student groups signed up to compete in the athletic competitions. In order to participate in the games, the organizers stipulated that athletes had to meet three requirements: first be a man; second belong to a sports club; and, third wear a club uniform. By doing so, the organizers established that sports was an exclusively male activity and that physical training clubs were the only legitimate civic institution in which young men could compete athletically. Both of these notions, however, ran counter to the ideas espoused in *Marmnamarz*. For example, articles in *Marmnamarz* encouraged women to regularly exercise as well as supported the idea that Armenian youth, both women and men, could exercise at home, in school, and at the sports club.

The incongruence between the ideas espoused in the press and at the Armenians Olympic Games reveals more about the limits and opportunities of the two spaces than the fickleness of the Armenian Physical Education Movement. The written word provided educators with a forum in which they felt more comfortable experimenting with novel ideas and pushing the boundaries of social propriety. The stakes for writing what many regarded as a radical article and organizing a provocative event were fundamentally different. While readers generally knew the names of writers penning an article, they were not immediately accessible the same way that organizers of an event were to spectators. In other words, an article provided a level of distance between

readers and a writer that organizers of and participants in a public celebration and/or social function could not and, most likely, did not want to achieve.

Participation in the Olympics was theoretically limited to male members of sports clubs; however, the dearth of Armenian sports clubs during the period motivated the organizers to allow Armenians affiliated with various types of organizations to compete. For example, participants were affiliated with sports clubs, such as the Kuruçeşme Artavazt Physical Training Club (Kurucheshmeyı Marmnamarzagán Artavaz Akumbě), Üsküdar Raffı Union (Skivatri Raffı Miut'ıwně), Pera Araks Club (Perayı Arak's Akumbě), and the Kumkapı Dork Club (Gowmgabowı Dork Akumbě), as well as youth clubs, such as the Samatya Youth Club (Samat'ıoy Zhoghıvrđ Lsaraně) and the Kadıköy Youth Club (Katakıvghı Jokhovurdakan Akumbě), political associations, like the Pera Dashnaktsutyun Club (Perayı Dashnakts'akan Akumbě), schools, such as the Kumkapı Asbarēz Lsaraně (Gowmgabowı Asbarēz Lsaraně) and the Topkapı Gugıan School (Topkapı Kukunyan Lsaraně), and student groups, such as the Robert College Student Group (Robert Koleji Hay Oosanokhootyun).⁶⁵

The opening ceremony marked the beginning of the Armenian Olympics Games. On May 11, 1911 at 2:30 in the afternoon, the "Olympians" gathered at the center of the stadium and received a round of applause from the spectators. After which, the competitions were underway. Armenians from twenty organizations participated in a variety of different competitions throughout the day, such as the pole vault, discus throw, shot put, long jump, hurdle race, tug of

⁶⁵ Twenty institutions participated in the first Armenian Olympic Games: Bēch'ik't'ach'ı Aharonean Akumbě, Gowmgabowı Asbarēz Lsaraně, Perayı Arak's Akumbě, Perayı Dashnakts'akan Akumbě, Perayı Ēsaeán Sanuts' Miut'ıwně, Samat'ıoy Zhoghıvrđ Lsaraně, Katakıvghı Jokhovurdakan Akumbě, Topkapı Kukunyan Lsaraně, Gatasgughı Hay Akumbě, Perayı Hay Yerıtasardatz, Shıshlı Hay Yerksér Miut'ıwně, Robert College Hay Oosanokhootyun, Marmnamarız Khambartutyun, Katıkui Masiats' Akumbě, Kurucheshmeyı Marmnamarzagán Artavaz Akumbě, Skıvadrı Arachtımagannıyutun Miut'ıwně, Oosanoghakan Inknazargatzogkakan Miut'ıwně, Skıvadrı Raffı Miut'ıwně, Gowmgabowı Dork Akumbě. See, "Marmnashkharh: Mayıs Mēgi Haykakan Mrts'ahandēsē," *Marmnamarız* (April 1911), p. 89.

war, high jump, quarter mile race, hundred-yard dash, half mile race, one mile race, relay race, and a sack race. In addition to track and field races, a football match was scheduled between a team from Istanbul and a team from Izmir. The football game did not take place, however, as the Armenian athletes from Izmir were unable to make the trip to Istanbul.⁶⁶

The award ceremony brought the games to a close. The first and second place winners of the various competitions, the seven members of the Armenian Olympic Game's jury, Aram Kkalanter, Kivork Terjemanian, Yeghishe Kashuni, Levon Hagopian, Shavarsh Chrissian, Mighirdich Kuyumjian, Hovannes Savaian, and the Queen of the Day, Marten Hagopian and the Maids of Honor, Yevk. Beshiktashian and Serpouhi Hagopian, gathered together in the center of the stadium. The awards ceremony consisted of Levon Hagopian reading out the names of the first and second place winners of the seventeen competitions and the Queen of the Day passing out the medals. Members of the Kurucesme Artavazt Club, the Robert College Student Club, and the Armenian Dork Club dominated the competitions. Vahram Papazian, a student at Robert College and member of the Artavazt Physical Training Club, also set a record for the fastest mile and half a mile in Istanbul.⁶⁷ The inclusion of Armenian women in the awards ceremony is significant. Armenian women were barred from participating as athletes in the competitions. However, their presence during the awards ceremony ensured that they also contributed to the broader physical training movement.

Armenian sports enthusiasts treated the organization of the Armenian Olympic Games in May 1911 as a watershed movement in the spread of sports throughout the community. Two months after the games were held, for example, *Marmnamarz* explicitly established a connection

⁶⁶ The team from Izmir sent the organizers of the Armenian Olympics a telegram explaining that they were not going to be able to attend the Olympics. *Marmnamarz* (May 1911), p. 120.

⁶⁷ *Marmnamarz* (April 1911), p. 115.

between with the mushrooming of Armenian sports clubs, the integration of physical training courses into the curriculum of Armenian communal schools, and the creation of the Armenian Olympics.⁶⁸ *Marmnamarz* sought to capitalize on the increased legitimacy that the Armenian Olympic Games provided sports. In April 1912, the journal ran an article entitled “Second Armenian Olympics.” Therein, the editors asserted the ancient Olympic games served as a festivity around which people set aside their differences and celebrated athletic prowess. It was hoped that this historical precedent in Ancient Greece would motivate readers to embrace a similar understanding of the games in modern-day Istanbul. The Olympic Games, after all, were for the entire Armenian community. “The Armenian Olympian,” the author argued, “does not represent the Armenian peasant, wealthy person, intellectual, or simpleton.”⁶⁹ Rather, he represented what *Marmnamarz* referred to as “Armenianness” (*hanur hayutyun*).⁷⁰ Thus, the success of the Olympian was inextricably connected to the broader community, and what the journal referred to as “our salvation.”⁷¹

The editorial staff of *Marmnamarz* argued that the second Olympic Games “must serve as one of the sources that connect and strengthen the idea of “Armenian national unity” (*azgayin miutyun*).⁷² Both the organizers of the games and the Armenian Olympics were referred to as “pan-national (*hamazgayin*)” because they were “equally for the son of the agha, the efendi, the artisan, and the periodical-owner.”⁷³ Thus, the exhibition of the body of the Armenian youth at

⁶⁸ “Marmnashkharh: Bolsoy Hamar Fuwt’boli Haygagan Lig,” *Marmnamarz* (July 1911), p. 186.

⁶⁹ “Yrgort Hay Voghimpigaganē,” *Marmnamarz* (April 15, 1912), p. 121.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² “Papandzoghnerē,” *Marmnamarz* (June 15, 1912), p. 201.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

the games served as the site around which political, social, economic, and religious differences collapsed and a consciously secular Armenian identity was constructed and performed. *Marmnamarz*'s editorial staff was not the only Istanbulites who thought of the athletic festivities as a communal event for all Armenians. More than 2,000 Armenians from "every class" and "different neighborhoods of Istanbul" came to Kadıköy to watch the festivities. According to an article that praised the success of the games, "[t]he Armenian socialist, the conservative, the liberal, the craftsman, as well as the rich and the intelligentsia with all its segments were present at the Armenian Olympics."⁷⁴

In order to ensure a larger turnout, the organizers of the second Armenian Olympic Games went to great lengths to provide the Armenian community of Istanbul with information for the upcoming festivities. Posters were circulated around the city, providing the details of the Armenian Olympic Games written in Armenian.⁷⁵ Posters like the one below (figure 5.7) informed people that the games would begin on May 20, 1912 at 2:30 in the afternoon. Men and women wishing to attend the event could purchase tickets for ten kuruş.⁷⁶ Spectators who purchased a ticket were given a program. Printed in Armenian, the five-page program provided spectators with a detailed breakdown of the day's activities as well as the names of the athletes competing in each race and the names of the referees and the organizing committee of the Armenian Olympics.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ "Papandzoghnerë," *Marmnamarz* (June 15, 1912), p. 201.

⁷⁵ I want to thank Mayda Saris for sharing this poster with me.

⁷⁶ There seems to have been discrepancy with the price of tickets, however. The poster only features one price, 10 kuruş, where as *Marmnamarz* lists three prices, 5, 10, 20 kuruş. See, "Spori Gyank: Haygagan Yrgort Voghimpiaganë," *Marmnamarz* (April 15, 1912), p. 158.

⁷⁷ "Haydakir" Mayda Saris' private collection [c. 1912].



[Figure 5.7 Union Club's advertisement for the second Armenian Olympics in Armenian and a "special event" in Ottoman Turkish. (Mayda Saris' private collection, c. 1912)]

In addition to better advertising, the second Armenian Olympic Games also featured new activities. Unlike the previous year, the second Olympic Games were not limited to the stadium. The organizers strove to create a festive atmosphere both inside and outside of Union Club. Members of Armenian sports clubs marched on Kadıköy's main street and into the stadium. In doing so, the Olympians performed for and marched in front of both the spectators who purchased tickets and the residents of the district of Kadıköy. Once inside Union Club, the Diran Sports Club of Makriköy (Didan Marmmarzagan Akumbë) and the Vahakan Sports Club of Samatya (Vahakan Marmmarzagan Akumbë) marched in unison around the stadium, holding club flags and performing free movement exercises and a human pyramid. A musical performance by a band from Gedikpaşa, a predominantly Armenian neighborhood of Istanbul,

was also added to the opening ceremony. The closing ceremony of the second Armenian Games was also slightly tweaked. The first place winners of the competitions received decorated silver medals, which had inscriptions reading the “the second Armenian Olympic, 1912” and the sport that they had competed in.⁷⁸ The second and third place winners were also awarded received bronze decorated medals with the same inscriptions.⁷⁹ Athletic clubs were also included in the ceremony. The Armenian Dork Club received a decorated cup for winning the club races.⁸⁰



[Figure 5.8 Members of the Diran and Vahakan Clubs marching through Union Club at the Second Armenian Olympics. (*Marmnamarz*, June 15, 1912, p. 211)]

Many Armenian sports enthusiasts considered the second Armenian Olympics to be a resounding success. The festivities attracted more competitors and spectators. The large crowd of men and women who paid money to spend the afternoon socializing and watching young men perform and compete at Union Club demonstrated that many people within the Armenian

⁷⁸ *Marmnamarz* (June 15, 1912), p. 215.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

community were intrigued by the novelty and significance of the festivities. At the same time, however, Istanbul's Armenian daily press offered scant coverage of the events. In an article entitled "Those Who Remain Silent," the editors of *Marmnamarz* highlighted this tension by praising the growing interest in sports and the Armenian Olympics and castigating the Armenian daily press for not writing about activities and developments that concerned the entire Armenian community, and, thus, failing to perform its "basic communal duty."⁸¹

It is in this context that the Armenian Physical Education Movement sought to accomplish three goals: first, to make the upcoming third Armenian Olympics "more glorious and more pan-national (*hamazgayin*)" than the previous two; second, to encourage Armenians from both Istanbul and the provinces (*kavar*) to participate in and attend them; and, third, to ensure that the all Armenians considered them to be a communal event. One of the ways in which the organizers of the games attempted to accomplish these goals was by inviting the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, Hovhannes Arsharuni, to attend and sponsor the upcoming Olympics at Union Club.

This was a strategic decision that reflected the significance of the power and functions of the Patriarchate as an institution and the Patriarch as a figure to the Armenians of Istanbul. During the mid nineteenth, the Patriarchate of Istanbul developed into what historian Richard Antaramian describes as a *de facto* office of the Ottoman government.⁸² This development was fundamentally connected to the creation of the Armenian Communal Constitution (*Azgayin Sahmanadrutiun*) in 1860 that institutionalized and streamlined control of the Armenian millet. The constitution created an Armenian National Assembly that was made up of Armenian men

⁸¹ For example, *Jamanak*, *Azadamart* and *Manzome*.

⁸² Antaramian, *In Subversive Service of the Sublime State*, p. 9.

who were elected by Armenians living throughout the empire.⁸³ The assembly in turn chose the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, who served as the head of the National Assembly. In addition to reconfiguring the function of the Patriarch and his position vis-à-vis the Ottoman government, these developments also legitimized the supremacy of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul over other offices within the broader Armenian spiritual community, namely the “Catholicosates of Sis and Aghtamar and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.”⁸⁴

It is in this context that the organizers sought Patriarch Hovhannes Arsharuni’s sponsorship of and presence at the Armenian Olympic Games. Not all people within the community were as enthusiastic about this idea, however. An article published in *Biwzandion* (*Byzantium*), an Armenian newspaper, for example, categorically condemned the prospect of the Patriarch sponsoring and attending the Olympics at Union Club. “During this period of crisis,” according to the author, Jirayr Shiragatsi, it was incumbent on the Patriarch to strengthen relations with other Ottoman officials. When not engaged in these important responsibilities, the Patriarch needed to attend to the Armenian widows and orphans who were in desperate need of the Patriarch’s sponsorship and support.

Articles published in *Marmnamarz* offered Armenian readers a different perspective. In June 1913, *Marmnamarz* ran an article on its front page entitled “The Patriarch and the Third

⁸³ The “constitution was issued in 1860 but suspended soon after until the sultan responded to the pleas of leading Armenians and reluctantly granted a ‘regulation’ (*nizamname*) in 1863 that authorized the formation of a central assembly for the Armenian millet.” Ronald Grigor Suny, “They Can Live *in the Desert but Nowhere Else*”: *A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton University Press, 2015)

⁸⁴ Antaramian, *In Subversive Service of the Sublime State*, p. 15. The Young Turk revolution in 1908 facilitated a reshuffling of power within the Armenian community, which led to the overthrow of Patriarch Maghakia Omanian. However, what remained intact was the institution of the Patriarchate and the Patriarch’s symbolic role as the figurehead of the Armenian millet. Bedross Der Motassian argues that this transformation constituted an “Armenian microrevolution” and revealed a shift in the locus of power from the Armenian Patriarchate to the Armenian National Assembly. Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*, pp. 74-81.

Armenian Olympics.”⁸⁵ Therein, Chrissian asserted that while Jirayr Shiragatsi demands that “the Patriarch beg for the safety of Armenian lives” from the Ottoman government, the organizers of the Armenian Olympics “think differently and say that the Armenian Patriarch’s place must be on the side of the Armenian youth.”⁸⁶ Being on the side of the Armenian youth in this context, Chrissian argued, required that Patriarch Arsharuni be present at and sponsor the upcoming games on June 16, 1913.

Chrissian asserted that the organizers of the Armenian Olympics purposely approached “the head of the [Armenian] nation” (*azgayin bedē*) for his sponsorship in order to give a “national character” (*azkayin negadvil*) to the year’s most celebrated intracommunal athletic event. In doing so, the Patriarch would bolster the “national safety” of the Armenian community and help bring about its “rebirth.”⁸⁷ This was because of two reasons. First, it would encourage Armenian youth to participate in the games and “get used to effort, struggle, laughter, and enjoyment.” Second, it would increase the visibility of Armenians who were competing in the event. Chrissian felt particularly strong about how the Olympics served as a space in which Armenians could demonstrate their participation in a global sports movement and attract the attention of Europeans. “Nations sympathize with other nations,” according to Chrissians, based on “their intellectual, moral, and physical capabilities.”⁸⁸ In other words, the more that Armenians displayed their national development and commitment to a global sports culture, the

⁸⁵ Shavarsh Chrissian, “A. Badriarke yev Haygagan K. Voghimpigaganē,” *Marmnamarz* (June 1913), p. 100.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

more likely they would attract the attention of “Europeans,” who would then say, “the Armenians are just like us in this area.”⁸⁹

When all was said and done, neither Shiragatsi nor Chrissian were completely satisfied. Patriarch Arsharuni sponsored the events and participated in the closing ceremonies; however, he did not attend the competitions. As a result, Chrissian reprimanded the Armenian National Assembly for failing to engage in what he referred to as a “nation-building (*azkshen*)” activity. Notwithstanding both Shiragatsi and Chrissian’s displeasure, an important transformation had taken place. By the third Armenian Olympic games, the festivities had achieved a level of unprecedented legitimacy. By sponsoring the Armenian Olympics, posing for photographs at the closing ceremony, and allowing his name to be associated with Armenian youth competing and exercising, the Armenian Patriarch had consecrated both the bodies of athletes and the festivities.

Ottoman government officials and semi-government organizations also sponsored and organized athletic competitions during the period. However, not all sports clubs had equal access to such organizations and figures. The majority of such events included predominantly Turkish athletic associations. The Ottoman Navy Association (*Osmanlı Donanma Cemiyeti*), a popular semi-governmental aid society, organized one such event in 1914.⁹⁰ The organization’s decision to sponsor the event reflects how the Ottoman government and semi-official government organizations increasingly sought to get involved in athletic activities during the period. By 1914, the Ottoman government had mandated that gymnastics courses be integrated into the curriculum of all government schools and created the General Inspectorate of Physical Training in the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ For a discussion about the Ottoman Navy League, see Nadir Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire: War, Mass Mobilization and the Young Turk Regime (1908–18),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43/5 (2007), pp. 795-809; Süleyman Emre Sunu, *The Great War and the Visual Mobilization of the Ottoman Public Sphere: the Case of “Donanma” Journal* (MA Thesis, Sabancı University, 2007).

Ministry of Public Education to oversee this process. Both the inspectorate and the courses were constitutive of a government policy aimed at encouraging Ottomans to conceptualize physical exercise as a fundamental component of modern education. By organizing the athletic event and inviting well-known state officials, the Ottoman Navy Association buttressed the belief that sports were more than subjects of study; they were worthwhile leisure activities that *all* Ottomans should care about, attend, and participate in. In short, exercise and sports were both subjects of study and fun leisure activities.

Thousands of spectators turned out to watch the festivities on May 22, 1914. The atmosphere was an extremely festive one. Together, the Ottoman flags that were festooned throughout the stadium, the men and women who sat in the stands and stood around the railing of the field, and the athletes who competed on the field led one writer to describe the event as a “sports holiday” (*idman bayramı*).⁹¹ The festivities not only captured the attention of Istanbulites looking for an afternoon of entertainment, it also attracted a number of young men who were either affiliated with sports clubs and/or students at different government schools. According to an article published in *Tanin*, “all of the sports clubs in our city (*şehrimiz*) participated in the festivities.”⁹² Despite the author’s claims, not all of Istanbul’s clubs attended. In fact, only predominantly Turkish clubs competed. The author of the article was undoubtedly aware of the noticeable absence of non-Turkish clubs. By erasing the presence of non-Turkish clubs and discussing only Turkish ones, the author established the idea that the only criteria that determined whether a club mattered, or even existed, was its ethno-religious affiliation.

⁹¹ “Spor Şuunu: Dünkü İdman Bayramı,” *Tasvir-i Efkar* (May 23, 1914), p. 3.

⁹² “Dünkü Musabakalar,” *Tanin* (May 23, 1914), p. 1.



[Figure 5.9 Photograph of the Ottoman Navy League's "sports holiday" at Union Club. GMA, Album 41. May 22, 1914]

Members of the Galatasaray Physical Training Club, the Istanbul Gymnastics Club (İstanbul Jimnastik Kulübü), the Altınordu Sports Club (Altınordu Spor Kulübü), and the Turkish Sports Hearth (Türk İdman Ocağı) and students from Üsküdar High School (Üsküdar Sultanisi), Gelenbevi High School (Gelenbevi Sultanisi), Kadıköy Model School (Kadıköy Numune Mektebi), and the Commerce Navy School (Ticaret Bahriye Mektebi) competed throughout the day. Like the participants of the Armenian Olympics, these athletes wore the uniforms of the institutions that they were affiliated with. Photographs taken at and coverage of the "sports holiday" demonstrate that athletes competed in a variety of contests, which included a bicycle race, 100 meter race, weight throw competition, pole vault, mile race, 100 meter obstacle race, high jump, girls and boys race, as well as a relay race between clubs.

The organizers made sure that the athletic competitions were not the only highlight of the day; the award ceremony was to be equally impressive. The award ceremony, which was held in the middle of the stadium, brought together the winners of the day's competitions and Ottoman

officials. One figure in particular, the Minister of the Navy (Bahriye Nazırı), Cemal Paşa, played a particularly important role. Cemal Paşa distributed medals to the athletes and spoke about the impressive display of strength and agility that he witnessed throughout the day. He was particularly impressed with the young men from the Galatasaray Physical Training Club and the Imperial School who won first prizes in seven out of the nine competitions, referring to the Imperial School as an institution that will continue to “produce both intelligent and strong individuals.”⁹³ Istanbul’s Ottoman-Turkish daily press highlighted the significance of his words and presence at the ceremony by asserting that Ottoman government officials’ support of public athletic events helped develop sports in “our country” (*memleketimiz*).⁹⁴

Staging the Community, Performing, and Socializing Inside

Union Club’s impressive track, football pitch, and seating areas made the stadium the ideal space in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews sought to stage athletic competitions and events. As a result, the area of Kadıköy was often associated with outdoor sports matches. Another part of town also developed into a center of entertainment, the district of Pera. By the end of the nineteenth century, Pera, which had a particularly high concentration of European embassies, foreign residents, and non-Muslim residents, had developed a bustling theatre culture.⁹⁵ Musical and theatrical performances provided the main forms of entertainment at these venues. However, they were not the only ones. Gymnastics exhibitions were also regularly staged in theatres.

⁹³ “Spor Şuunu: Dünkü İdman Bayramı,” *Tasvir-i Efkar* (May 23, 1914), p. 3.

⁹⁴ “İdman Bayramı İntibatından,” *Tasvir-i Efkar* (May 24, 1914), p. 1.

⁹⁵ For a list of theatres in Istanbul during the period, see Mestyan, pp. 100-102.

The theatre was an attractive space for sports enthusiasts. Because of its association with “modern” and “civilized” activities, such as plays and musical performances, the theatre helped popularize the belief that gymnastic exhibitions and athletic competitions were modern, middle-class events. The theatre also helped transform the sports competition from an afternoon leisure activity to a social one during the evening. Electricity inside of the theatre and a lack thereof on the athletic field at Union Club ensured that associations could organize events after the sun went down. Theatres provided an additional advantage: they offered an intimate space to organize events. Unlike Union Club, which enabled the number of spectators to climb to the thousands, theatres in Pera could seat no more than a few hundred people. The intimate setting at the theatre, thereby, ensured that the organizers did not need to restrict their events to gymnastic competitions and exhibitions; rather, they could also include speeches, songs, as well as musical performances. Together, songs, speeches, and the bodies of young athletes helped the organizers establish the belief that sports were a shared activity around and through which a community of robust and modern young men and, depending on the sports club, women could be built.

Two of Pera’s most popular theatres in which athletic celebrations were held during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the Teutonia Club and the theatres of the *Jardin du Petit-Champs*. The Teutonia Club was established in 1850 and started to organize regular theatrical performances in 1859.⁹⁶ Referred to as the German Teutonia (*Almanlar’ın Teutonia*) in Ottoman Turkish, the German Society Teutonia in English, and simply Teutonia in German, Teutonia developed into a popular bourgeois club during the mid to late nineteenth

⁹⁶ According to Akyoldaş, only German-speakers could be members of the club, whereas others could attend the club as a guest if accompanied by another member. Seren Akyoldaş, “A German Institution in the Late Ottoman Empire: Music, Theatre and Festivities at the Teutonia Club,” in Suraiya Faroqhi and Arzu Öztürkmen (eds.), *Celebration, Entertainment and Theatre in the Ottoman World* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2014), pp. 449.

century. German speaking residents of Istanbul predominantly frequented the club's various activities, although non-German speaking Ottoman citizens also attended many events.⁹⁷

The other theatre was housed in Istanbul's first European style garden, Jardin du Petit-Champs. Referred to as Tepebaşı Bahçesi in Ottoman Turkish and Petits Champs Municipality Gardens in English, Petits Champs consisted of a garden, a restaurant and two theaters where performances, conferences, and exhibitions were held.⁹⁸ The garden was located near the largest non-Muslim cemetery in Istanbul, Petits Champs de Morts, in Tepebaşı, a neighborhood of Pera that was predominantly inhabited by non-Muslims.⁹⁹

One sports club that staged gymnastic exhibitions in both Petits Champs and Teutonia Club was the Jewish Gymnastics Club of Constantinople. From 1903 until 1908, the majority of the Jewish Gymnastics Club's events were either organized in their central location, the German Jewish School in Galata, or Teutonia. Described as providing "family entertainment," these events mainly attracted Jewish families from the surrounding neighborhood and consisted of gymnastics performances and speeches in German.¹⁰⁰

After the staging of the Young Turk revolution in 1908, which legally guaranteed the right of association and created a more open social and political climate, the Jewish Gymnastics Club embraced a more public identity. This was accomplished by changing its name to the Jewish Gymnastics Society, Maccabi and regularly organizing events in theatres in Pera. Selim

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Wilson, *Handbook for travellers in Constantinople*, p. 19.

⁹⁹ See, Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul*, p. 39. Beyoğlu was the Ottoman-Turkish name for Pera. All the references to space of Pera in Ottoman Turkish during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that I have seen use Beyoğlu.

¹⁰⁰ For example, see "Konstantinopel. Israelitischer Turnverein," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (March 1903), p. 52; "Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (December 1905), p. 229; "Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (January/February 1906), p. 21. "Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (January 1907), pp. 13-14; "Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (April 1907), p. 66.

Sırrı highlighted this transformation by writing in 1910: “for the past couple of years, since the establishment of the revolution, this “group of young men” (*zümre-i şübban*), which has increased its activities, has started to make its existence more known.”¹⁰¹ After the revolution, Sırrı was invited to both attend and participate in what he referred to as “gymnastic festivities” (*jimnastik şenlikleri*) at Teutonia, by speaking about the importance of physical exercise and sports.¹⁰²

Further reflective of the club’s development of a conspicuously more public identity in theatres during the period was Maccabi’s new annual Hanukkah celebration. Starting in 1909, Maccabi administrators organized a “large sports festival on the occasion of Hanukkah” (*grande fête sportive à l’occasion de Hanoukah*). Hanukkah, according to an article praising the Maccabi club in *L’Aurore*, “is the commemoration of the large victory won by a handful of resolute men whose national sentiment made their physical force grow tenfold.”¹⁰³ The author of the article went on to argue that because Maccabi was a Jewish institution committed “to physical culture and the worship of a sound national tradition,” it was imperative that Hanukkah serve “as the official festival of the society.”¹⁰⁴ This decision presented an opportunity for the society to promote and connect their activities to Judaism. The ancient Maccabees, whom the club was named after, were the heroes of the Hanukkah story.

By treating Hanukkah as the association’s official holiday, Maccabi claimed and refashioned the holiday and, thereby, actively participated in “the invention of tradition.”

¹⁰¹ Selim Sırrı, “Makabi Musevi Cemiyeti’nin Jimnastik Şenlikleri,” *Resimli Kitap* (November and December 1910), p. 166.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ “La Fete De Hanoukah a la Maccabi,” *L’Aurore* (Jan 2, 1914), p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Nevertheless, its celebration amongst Jews did extend beyond the association. For example, Jews observed Hanukkah in nineteenth-century Palestine in the home by “lighting of diminutive candles,”¹⁰⁵ In other regions of the empire, such as Izmir, Hanukkah was a time for giving charity.¹⁰⁶ What separated Maccabi’s understanding of Hanukkah in Istanbul, therefore, was its treatment of the holiday as a public affair that the Jewish community should observe by celebrating “the regeneration and renaissance” of the Jewish body.¹⁰⁷

Maccabi’s transformation of Hanukkah from a “traditionally minor Jewish holiday” to a public celebration in the theatre was also part of a broader project that Zionists living outside of the Ottoman Empire were engaged in. During the early twentieth century, European Zionists treated Hanukkah as the Zionist festival *par excellence*. According to scholar Gilya Gerda Schmidt, Zionists embraced the holiday because it celebrated the “physical strength and self help” of the Jewish people.¹⁰⁸ At the center of the Zionist reading of the holiday was the heroic resistance of the Maccaabees and their victory over Hellenic paganism. Zionist Hanukkah highlighted these attributes by commemorating how the Maccaabees preserved the monotheistic Jewish tradition through regaining and purifying the Temple in Jerusalem.

¹⁰⁵ Focusing on the Jewish colony of Rehovot in late Ottoman Palestine, Arie Saposnik, examines the local Maccabi club’s celebration of Hannukah during the Second Constitutional period. See, Arie Bruce Saposnik *Becoming Hebrew: The Creation of a Jewish National Culture in Ottoman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 111-12.

¹⁰⁶ The Sabbath of Hanukkah, according to Dina Danon, was known as “Shabbat Halbasha,” or the “Sabbath of Clothing Distribution,” and was treated as a day when poor children would receive clothing. For a more extensive study about Jews in late Ottoman Izmir, see, Dina Danon, *The Transformation of the Jewish Community of Izmir, 1847-1918* (Ph.D. dissertation: Stanford University, 2012).

¹⁰⁷ “La Fete De Hanoukah a la Maccabi,” *L’Aurore* (Jan 2, 1914), p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Gilya Gerda Schmidt, *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 1901: Heralds of a New Age* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), p. 230. Zionists displayed works of art that depicted Jewish robustness at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel in December 1901. For a discussion about the Jewish art exhibit and Jehuda Epstein’s *Die Maccabäer* (the Maccabees), see, Schmidt, *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 1901*; Presner, pp. 65-105.



[Figure 5.10 Advertisement for Maccabi's grand sports festivity that was organized on the occasion of Hanukkah. (*L'Aurore*, December 9, 1910, p. 3)]

Istanbulites learned about Maccabi's annual Hanukkah festival in the daily press. Unlike the advertisements that Maccabi ran in the newspapers for its events at Union Club, the Hanukkah advertisements were featured exclusively in the city's daily Jewish press, namely *L'Aurore*. These advertisements, like figure 5.10 above, included the occasion, time, date, and location of the celebration. Maccabi also circulated the invitations to friends and members of the society.¹⁰⁹

From 1909 until 1914, Maccabi's Hanukkah celebrations attracted a diverse group of spectators. Men and women from Istanbul's "different Jewish communities" and "different layers of society" showed up to watch the festivities.¹¹⁰ Publications went out of their way to encourage all members of the family, young and old, to attend the celebration. An article

¹⁰⁹ According to Selim Sırrı, Maccabi sent him and others programs prior to the event. See, Sırrı, "Makabi Musevi Cemiyeti'nin Jimnastik Şenlikleri."

¹¹⁰ "Das Makkabäerfest des jüdischen Turnvereins 'Makkabi'-Konstantinopel," *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (January 1910), pp. 11-12; "La Fête de la Maccabi," *L'Aurore* (December 19, 1909), p. 2.

published in *L'Aurore*, for example, assured “moms and dads” that they would enjoy the performances.¹¹¹ The events attracted non-Jewish figures as well. Ottoman Muslim officials, military officers, the Director of the Ottoman Red Crescent Society, the Governor of Pera (Beyoğlu Mutasarrıfı), Muhittin Bey, as well as foreign political representatives, such as two United States Ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire, Oscar S. Straus and Henry Morgenthau, attended the festivities.¹¹² In addition to attending the celebrations, Muhittin Bey served as the patron of the 1910 and 1911 Hanukkah festivities. Patronage of the events during the period did not necessarily involve money. What patronage did provide, however, was symbolic value. By having Muhittin Bey serve as the patron of the Hanukkah event, Maccabi strategically conveyed to people who attended the celebrations and/or read about them in the daily press that the Ottoman government supported and endorsed both the society and the festivity.

Music was also a central component of the Hanukkah celebrations. For example, the Hanukkah event that was organized in Petits Champs in December 1911 opened with musical performances of three songs, *Ma'oz Tzur Yeshu'ati*, *Hatikvah*, and *Vatan*.¹¹³ *Maos Zur Yeshu'ati* (*Stronghold of Rock*) is a Hebrew liturgical poem that was composed sometime between the thirteenth and fifteenth century in Germany and narrates how God protected the Jewish people from four enemies mentioned in the Bible, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman and Antiochus.¹¹⁴ Written in the late nineteenth century, *Hatikvah* is a Hebrew song, whose verses touch on themes

¹¹¹ “Societe Maccabi,” *L'Aurore* (December 6, 1910), p. 3.

¹¹² French, English, and German publications during the period spelled Muhittin Bey's name the following: Muhieddine Bey. Muhittin, who took the surname Akyüz in the 1930s, became the Governor of Pera after the Young Turk revolution in 1909.

¹¹³ “Das Makkabäerfest des jüdischen Turnvereins 'Makkabi'-Konstantinopel,” *Jüdische Turnzeitung* (January 1910), p. 11.

¹¹⁴ Eugene Mayer, “A German-Jewish Miscellany” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (1958): pp. 202-223.

such as exile, redemption, and Zion.¹¹⁵ *Hatikvah (the Hope)* was particularly popular amongst Zionist circles during the period and ended up becoming the Zionist Movement's official anthem.¹¹⁶ *Vatan (Homeland)* was the only Ottoman-Turkish song performed. Namık Kemal, a prominent Ottoman intellectual, play write, painter, and poet, wrote the poem, *Vatan*, during the late nineteenth century. The poem, like his well-known play, *Vatan yahut Silistre (Homeland, or Silistra)* treats the concept of “homeland” as a holy domain and its defense as a sacred obligation for all Ottomans. Together, the songs offer insights into the diverse cultural toolbox that Maccabi pulled from when staging a festive gymnastics program.¹¹⁷

After spectators listened to the songs, they watched the exhibition of athletic young bodies. Albert Ziffer, Maccabi's head trainer, oversaw each year's gymnastics presentations, which consisted of Swedish gymnastics exercises, barfix workouts, fencing drills, and rifle exercises. Sports devotees, educators, as well as men and women with little interest in physical exercise marveled at the sound of Hebrew commands and the sight of athletes demonstrating great physical discipline by balancing and twisting their bodies, lifting themselves up and down from a bar, lunging an *épée*, and twirling a rifle. Performing these athletic performances in club attire were the male and female members of the club's six branches spread throughout the city in Balat, Hasköy, Haydar Paşa, Kuzguncuk, Ortaköy, and Sirkeci and Maccabi's central location in Pera. While each branch organized celebrations, such as Purim, and athletic tournaments at their own gymnasium throughout the year, Hanukkah served as one of the few opportunities when all

¹¹⁵ For example, see Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry Before the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 21.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Between the First and the Second Zionist Congresses, 1897 and 1898 respectively, Theodor Herzl and Maz Nordau decided to hold a contest for an official anthem for the Zionist Movement. Despite their objections to his immoral standing—historian Michael Berkowitz writes that Imber had a “reputation for drunkenness, philandering, *schmorrning*, and swindling”—, his song served as the people's choice.

¹¹⁷ A Jewish musical club named Renanah, which was for all intents and purposes affiliated with Maccabi, performed Ma'oz Tzur and Hatikvah during the event.

the members of the Maccabi's six branches of the society came together. In doing so, Maccabi sought to perform and display the unity and development of the society.

The organizers of the Hanukkah events made sure to integrate speeches into the program of each celebration. It was hoped that these speeches would provide spectators with insights about the society as well as interpret the significance of the performances that they were watching. At the Teutonia Club in 1909, Maccabi's President, Maurice Abramowitz, explained, in French, that the gymnastics exhibitions that they had just witnessed were more than a spectacle to be enjoyed during one's leisure time;¹¹⁸ rather, these exercises were the means through which a people physically and morally developed themselves. Jews of Istanbul desperately needed to heed this message, according to Abramowitz, as "there aren't a people in the world that need gymnastics exercise more than the Jews."¹¹⁹ He made sure to establish that Jews were not inherently weak or feeble; on the contrary, they had at one point in time been a strong and robust people. Abramowitz established that it was Maccabi's goal to turn "our people into a strong people again," by "returning them to a prestigious past that was for Israel a glorious period of strength, beauty and courage."¹²⁰

Speeches were also given in Hebrew. In 1911, for example, Haim Abraham, a Bulgarian Jew who moved to Istanbul following the Young Turk revolution, spoke in Hebrew about the importance of Hebrew for all Jews around the world.¹²¹ Articles in *L'Aurore* extolled the significance of the Hebrew at these events. Both the "the beautiful males exercises" that

¹¹⁸ "La Fête de la Maccabi," *L'Aurore* (December 19, 1909), p. 2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ "La Fête de la Maccabi," *L'Aurore* (December 26, 1911), pp. 2-3. Haim Abraham, who was born and raised in Rustchuk, Bulgaria, where he played a leading role in Maccabi Jewish Gymnastics Club. He and his brother, Maurice, moved to Istanbul following the Second Constitutional revolution.

followed Hebrew commands and the Hebrew were part of what the newspaper referred to as Hebrew culture (*la culture de l'hébreu*).¹²² While supporters of the club praised the significance of the language in the press, they did not address the ability of spectators at the festivities to comprehend Hebrew. Selim Sırrı, on the other, who referred to himself as a “friend” of Maccabi and attended their festivities in theatres wrote that few people actually understood what was being said in Hebrew at the events. “Like many of the Jewish people, we listened to the Hebrew speech without understanding anything.”¹²³

Speeches were not limited to club members. In 1911, for example, Maccabi invited Muhittin Bey to address the audience at Petits Champs. The Governor of Pera praised Maccabi for its commitment to both the Jewish community and the Ottoman Empire, saying “I want to congratulate you all for the feelings that drive you to respect our one and indivisible fatherland.”¹²⁴ Together, the speeches provided spectators with an interpretative guide to make sense of the impressive display of strength and athleticism that they just witnessed.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the development of a shared sports culture in Istanbul’s expanding public sphere during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Focusing on football matches, athletic competitions, and gymnastics exhibitions in three spaces: an open-air stadium in Kadıköy and two theatres in Pera, it argued that that people from a plethora of ethno-religious and professional backgrounds collectively shaped the performative and competitive aspects of

¹²² “La Fête de Hanoukah à la Maccabi,” *L’Aurore* (Jan 2, 1914), p. 1.

¹²³ Selim Sırrı, “Makabi Musevi Cemiyeti’nin Jimnastik Şenlikleri,” *Resimli Kitap* (November and December 1910), p. 167.

¹²⁴ “La Fête de la Maccabi,” *L’Aurore* (December 26, 1911), pp. 2-3.

this culture. The administrators of sports clubs, athletic unions, and non-government organizations who organized events and rented out spaces, the athletes who competed and performed, the educators and journalists who penned articles about competitions, the photographers who took pictures, as well as the spectators who attended these events reveal that Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Istanbulites from an expanding middle-strata of society increasingly considered sports and athletics to be modern activities that were relevant to their lives, bodies, and communities.

Sports, athletics competitions, and gymnastics exhibitions served as activities that young men and women paid money to spend an afternoon and evening watching with family members and/or friends. These spectators consisted of both sports enthusiasts, who believed that it was imperative for all modern individuals to perform and support athletics, and the less committed bunch, who were merely looking for a good time and/or wanted to know what all the fuss was about. By 1913, contributors to the mushrooming sports press castigated those spectators who were more interested in being seen at an athletic event than the event itself. Notwithstanding the significance of people's different motives, what remains most important for this chapter is that both types showed up to watch athletes compete and display their strength and physical prowess.

The organizers of the events made a concerted effort to make these athletic celebrations and holidays, as they were routinely referred to in the daily press, as festive and fun as possible. Music was performed, matches were played, contests were held, exhibitions were staged, awards were given, and speeches were made. At the same time, these events served as didactic opportunities for them to perform to a large audience the ideas espoused about sports and exercise in schools, at the sports club, in textbooks, and in the press: sports were activities around and through which a modern, robust community could be fashioned. These activities,

thereby, served as spaces where the exclusive boundaries of ethno-religious communities could be reinscribed. Although the ideal individuals and communities that Turkish, Armenian, and Jewish sports devotees sought to create on the field and in the stands were mutually exclusive, both the structure of the programs that they organized and the messages that they articulated in the press maintained striking similarities. These similarities were not coincidental. Ottoman Muslims, Christians, and Jews and the foreign residents living in Istanbul emulated each other and drew insights from the modern Olympic Games.

The chapter has also demonstrated that Istanbul's shared performative and competitive sports culture included both mixed and intracommunal events. The majority of the events that brought together young men from different ethno-religious backgrounds were football competitions at Union Club. Predominantly Turkish, Greek, Armenian, English, and Jewish teams played against each other in both league and non-league matches from 1908 to 1914, despite the efforts of Turkish and Armenian educators to create ethnically and religiously homogenous leagues. Mixed sporting events were not limited to the football pitch, however. There were other instances when clubs organized athletic events in which predominantly Turkish, Armenian, Greek, and Jewish clubs competed. These mixed and heterogeneous events reveal that one cannot obtain a full picture of late Ottoman culture without examining various ethnic-religious communities together, through a single lens.

Many Istanbulites also structured athletic competitions around ethno-religious communities. These intracommunal events provide important insights into the similar and dissimilar ways in which Turkish, Armenian, and Jewish Istanbulites who competed, performed, and attended these festivities treated sports as activities around and through which they could reconfigure the boundaries of "their" communities. For example, the Ottoman Navy League's

“sports holiday” brought Turkish clubs and athletes together for an afternoon of entertainment and fun. The conspicuous presence of Ottoman flags, Turkish government officials, Turkish athletes, and Cemal Paşa conveyed to fans in the audience and readers of the press that this was a state-sponsored Turkish sports event.

The Armenian Physical Education Movement also created a homogenous athletic celebration, which included Armenian clubs of the capital. From 1911 until 1913, Armenian educators stressed that the Armenian Olympics served as an opportunity in which Armenians, irrespective of their confessional and political orientation and/or their socio-economic background, could unite around a shared goal of strengthening the bodies of the Armenian youth through exercise. In order to galvanize support for this goal, they sought out the patronage and support of the Armenian Patriarch. It would be wise not to read too much into the fact the organizers of the Armenian Olympics advertised almost exclusively in Armenian, did not invite Turkish officials to, and opted not to decorate the stadium with Ottoman flags during the event. In fact, the noticeable absence of these figures and symbols demonstrates the quotidian ways in which Ottomans carved out a space for themselves and a broader community within an expanding public sphere. Turkish writers even pointed to the ability of Armenian educators in spreading an appreciation for sports throughout *their* community. An article published in *İdman* in January 1914, for example, praised the athletic achievements of the city’s Armenians by writing, “Look at the Armenian youth: what a big difference there is in terms of the[ir] state today and five years ago.”¹²⁵

From 1909 until 1914, the events that the Maccabi Gymnastics Society staged in Union Club, Teutonia Club, and Petits Champs, namely the Hannukah celebration and their annual

¹²⁵ “Türk Gençliği ve Spor,” *İdman* (January 24, 1914), p. 270.

tournament, provided a mixture of heterogenous and homogenous elements. The athletes who competed and performed at these events were exclusively Jewish. However, the club also made a concerted effort to integrate Ottoman and Jewish songs and performances and to invite Ottoman and foreign non-Jewish officials to attend and participate in the events. This choice emerged in a context in which Maccabi was walking a political tightrope and fighting a battle on multiple fronts. Maccabi's new public and Zionist identity and rapid growth during the Second Constitutional period troubled many Jews and Turks. In 1910, the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community of Istanbul, Haim Nahum, who had at one point been an honorary member of the club, came to see the Maccabi Society as an unpatriotic organization that had aligned with and served as a refuge for Zionists in the capital.¹²⁶ Ottoman Turkish officials also grew increasingly worried about the organization during the period. For example, a report in 1910 from the General Directorate of Security (Emniyeti Umumiye Müdüriyeti) to Istanbul's Police Directorate (İstanbul Polis Müdüriyeti) describes Maccabi as an "association that, although was established on the basis of inviting Jewish youth to physical training, clandestinely listened to Zionism and served the hopes and thoughts of separation."¹²⁷ Cognizant of these suspicions, Maccabi administrators envisioned public events as an opportunity for them to garner support amongst Ottoman Jews and non-Jews alike, establish their Ottoman and Jewish credentials, and perform their commitment to using physical training as a tool to rejuvenate the Jewish community.

¹²⁶ Aron Rodrigue and Esther Benbassa have explored the tension between Maccabi and the Alliance Israélite Universelle more generally and the antagonism between Maccabi and the Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire, Haim Nahum, as well between Maccabi and David Fresco, the editor of the anti-Zionist Ladino newspaper *El Tiempo*. For example, see Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, p. 130; Esther Benbassa, *Haim Nahum: A Sephardic Chief Rabbi in Politics, 1892-1923* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1995), p. 67.

¹²⁷ BOA, DH.EUM. THR 105/9 [July 6, 1910].

Conclusion

No other city in the world presents such a baffling diversity as Constantinople. The ties which ordinarily unite the inhabitants of American or European, and most Oriental municipalities, are hardly found in Constantinople. Language, religion, nationality, race, education, customs, and to a greater extent, government separate rather than unite people.¹

Clarence Richard Johnson's description of Istanbul was not unique. Like many other foreign residents living in and/or traveling throughout the empire during the period, Johnson, a US citizen who taught sociology at Robert College, highlighted two characteristics of the city: first, Istanbul had an incredibly diverse population; and, second, this diversity ensured that the city's residents lived separate lives. It was assumed that the confluence of people in one city speaking different languages, adhering to diverse religions, and belonging to dissimilar ethnicities ensured that they were unable to establish meaningful relations that transcended these divisions. These differences, according to Alexander van Millingen, "render[ed] impossible any close social cohesion, or the development of a common civic life."²

This dissertation has presented an alternative reading of the capital of the Ottoman Empire and its multiconfessional population. It advances the idea that Turks, Armenians, Jews, and Greeks as well as foreign residents of Istanbul did not live entirely disconnected from one another. On the contrary, they interacted and maintained a number of assumptions about the relationships between the body, masculinity, community, and exercise. Together, their shared assumptions and exposure to people from different ethno-religious backgrounds enabled the development of a civic physical culture in the city.

¹ Clarence Richard Johnson, *Constantinople to-day: or, The Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1922), p. 13.

² Alexander van Millingen, "Constantinople," *Encyclopedia Britannica* 11th ed., vol. 7 (New York: University Press, 1911), p. 9.

This physical culture centered around the belief that gymnastics, free movement calisthenics, and team sports were shared activities that modern young men, irrespective of their religious affiliation, should perform. They were the most effective means to forming robust male bodies, modern communities, and a civilized empire. Upper- and middle-class residents considered these activities to be a shared form of entertainment and experience. At the same time, they served as the means through which many people attempted to build a community of physically, mentally, and morally sound individuals. As a result, both shared and exclusive ethno-religious bonds underpinned the production of this civic sports culture.

The militarization of Ottoman society and the ethnic cleansing of non-Muslims during World War I make it difficult to imagine that such a world existed in Istanbul during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fact that athletes and educators were not spared from the brutalities of the period makes it even more challenging. For example, some non-Muslim young men were expelled from predominately Turkish sports clubs in order to create ethnically pure spaces during the war. Other less fortunate Armenian athletes and sports enthusiasts, such as Shavarsh Chrissian, Kevork Terjimanian, and Mihritad Haygazn, were arrested on April 24, 1915, deported, and killed sometime afterwards in the massacres that amounted to the Armenian genocide.³

This dissertation has focused on the spread and institutionalization of this culture in five spaces: schools, voluntary athletic associations, the Ministry of Public Education, the press, and newly constructed urban spaces. By drawing from a complex and diverse array of published and

³ Shavarsh Chrissian founded *Marmnamarz* and organized the Armenian Olympics, Kevork Terjimanian, established the Masis Sports Club in Kadıköy, and Mihritad Haygazn was the president of the Aharonyan Sports Club in Beşiktaş. Chrissian, Terjimanian, and Haygazn's names and biographies are included in this work. See O. Arzumanian, *Hushartsan Abril 11-I. 1919. Theodik: 11 Nisan Anıtı* (Belge Yayınları, İstanbul, 2010), pp. 54-55, 78-79, and 80-81. This encyclopedia first appeared in 1919 in Istanbul and was dedicated to the 761 Armenian intellectuals, educators, businessmen, and clergy from Istanbul and Anatolia who were arrested and killed in 1915.

non-published sources, I mapped the ways in which Ottomans collectively developed this civic culture. Schools served as one of the first spaces in which physical culture enthusiasts experimented with physical exercise. Focusing on two elite schools, the Imperial School and Robert College, which, until now, historians have not analyzed together, Chapter 1 demonstrated that foreign Christian and Ottoman Muslim educators both treated gymnastics, physical exercise, and team sports as modern activities through which they could help young male students construct healthy, strong bodies and moral values. These institutions were important for another reason: Both served as social hubs where students, faculty and officials met, formed relationships, and socialized. Students and graduates of both institutions played a disproportionately large role in popularizing the idea that sports were more than subjects of study and extracurricular activities on campus: they were means through which communities of like minded modern men could be built.

Chapter 2 focused on the main space in which residents of the city institutionalized this idea: the sports club. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Muslims, Christians, and Jews established sports clubs in various neighborhoods throughout Istanbul. The emergence of sports clubs was connected to the growing popularity of sports as well as constitutive of a broader development throughout the empire: the creation of the voluntary association. Educational, philanthropic, political, scientific, literary, and sports clubs were private, social spaces where Ottomans organized, discussed, socialized, and built group identity. Becoming a member of a sports club was an enticing prospect for middle-class young men. It promised them the opportunity of belonging to a fraternity of men that was committed to personal development through the cultivation of athletic prowess, a distinct aesthetic, and ‘civilized’ norms and values. The rich archive of personal letters, photo albums, and club records

reveals the deep bonds of friendship and brotherhood that members “worked out” by exercising, competing, performing civic duties in the community, listening to lectures, taking and sharing photographs, socializing, and reading.

By 1908, both the limited integration of gymnastics into elite civil schools and the mushrooming of sports clubs in Istanbul and other urban centers of the Ottoman Empire ensured that upper- and middle-class young men increasingly thought of sports and physical exercise as modern activities that they needed to regularly perform. Ottoman technocrats recognized the important inroads that educators and sports clubs had made in popularizing these activities, and sought to develop a utilitarian approach to teaching exercise to Ottomans from all walks of life in public schools. Chapter 3 traced the career of one of these technocrats, Selim Sırrı, and the concrete steps he took towards creating a government educational program aimed at harnessing the potential of physical exercise. The chapter also highlights a tendency within this government educational program towards a more utilitarian and potentially militaristic approach towards exercise.

Chapter 4 examined the site in which educators, administrators and members of sports clubs and Ottoman technocrats came together, the press. Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, French, German, English, and Greek articles published in daily newspapers and magazines offered readers an eclectic array of discussions about sports, ranging from argumentative pieces about the importance of integrating gymnastics into the curriculum of all schools and the necessity of joining an athletic club, descriptions of athletic competitions in Istanbul and abroad, as well as lengthy analytical discussions about the role of physical exercise and sports in a modern society. While the content of the articles differed, they intersected at the level of the assumption that the male body served as a transparent reflection of the current state of the community and empire.

The chapter thereby demonstrated that the male body emerged as the formative site of the modern subject and nation across communal divides in the press. The press also reveals that Muslims, Christians, and Jews embraced a similar middle-class masculine gender norm; however, there were important differences in the ways in which Ottoman Muslim, Christian, and Jewish citizens discussed and politically deployed masculinity's specific meanings in Istanbul's expanding public sphere. Muslims openly castigated Muslim men's lack of virility, robustness, and vigor, while Christians and Jews were extremely reluctant to discuss male degeneracy in their own communities. These differences extend beyond rhetorical style. They reflect broader structures of power among Muslims, Christians, and Jews of the city and the broader empire.

The press was not the only site that brought together physical culture enthusiasts—theatres, gymnasiums, gardens, and stadiums did so as well. Chapter 5 examined the competitive and performative aspect of sports. Muslims, Christians, and Jews regularly organized gymnastics exhibitions, athletics competitions, and football matches in Istanbul's newly constructed urban spaces. The organization of these events, which attracted a large, diverse array of spectators, played an integral role in ensuring that young men considered sports to be a shared experience and form of entertainment that they and likeminded people paid money to attend. The growing popularity of attending and reading about these events in the press facilitated the development of a common sports vocabulary and technical knowledge about football, track and field, and gymnastics. Statistics in particular enabled people to compare and keep track of the fastest runner, the highest jumper, as well as the best goalie in the city. Moreover, it played an important role in ensuring, at least theoretically, that all people, irrespective of their ethno-religious orientation, were able to stake a claim to the city's sports culture. *Marmnamarz* drew on this objective and scientific information to authoritatively claim that Vahram Papazian, an

Ottoman Armenian, who studied at Robert College, was a member of the Artavazt Club, wrote articles in *Marmnamarz*, and competed in the Armenian Olympics and other athletic events in the city, held “Istanbul’s record for the mile and half mile.”⁴

The five chapters that make up this dissertation demonstrate that while Muslims, Christians, and Jews collectively shaped sports in the city, this was far from a collaborative project. Physical culture enthusiasts from different confessional backgrounds knew one another and often maintained cordial relations. However, they tended to organize events and institutions around communal divisions. Muslims, Christians, and Jews engaged sports in voluntary associations, the press, and newly constructed urban spaces as the most effective means to forming robust young men, and by extension, a modern community. As a result, these transformations demonstrate that sports and other civic activities were often organized within religious communities. Exploring this process reveals the ways in which Istanbul’s population simultaneously negotiated their identities, experimented with new activities, redefined the meaning of communal institutions, embraced shared civic values, and projected exclusive ethno-religious ties.

This process of negotiation was not without its challenges. Athletic events and competitions in particular reveal some of the tensions inherent in the civic sports culture. One such event, which was explicitly referred to as an “intercommunal” (*michazgayin*) competition in the Armenian press, took place after the Muslim holiday celebrating the end of Ramadan (*Şeker Bayramı*) in 1912.⁵ What is so interesting about this event, which the predominantly Turkish

⁴ *Marmnamarz* (June 1911), p. 133.

⁵ “Mijazgayin Mrts‘umner Polsoy Mēj: Hayerun Arajnut‘unē,” *Marmnamarz* (September 15, 1912), pp. 326-327. Also see “Les Sports: Union Club de Cadikeuy,” *Stamboul* (September 3, 1912), p. 2.

Fenerbahçe Sports Club organized, was the conflict that arose among fans. Armenian athletes won the majority of the races at the event, while Turkish young men performed rather poorly. Tensions started to escalate, according to *Marmnamarz*, when Armenians sitting in the stands started clapping for “their co-nationals” (*azgagitsner*).⁶ Turks in the audience took exception and indignantly declared, “What is this discrimination? Aren’t they all Ottomans (*Osmantsiyadan*)?”⁷ The article responded to this question by writing that “they consider our Armenian accomplishments and successes as being Ottoman; however, when it comes to the issue of massacres, lootings and plundering, we are thought of as Armenians, not Ottomans.”⁸ This encounter is not necessarily representative of the relations that Muslim, Christian, and Jewish athletes and sports enthusiasts maintained. Nevertheless, the encounter serves as a vantage point from which to observe the moments in which deep-seated tensions, grievances about ethno-religious favoritism, and sports intersected during the period.

Descriptions of athletic events in the press also reveal some of the ways in which non-Muslims were excluded from sports in the city. Journalists and club members implicitly projected the idea that the ideal Ottoman citizen was Turkish by blurring the boundaries between a relatively exclusive Turkish ethnic identity and a purportedly inclusive Ottoman one. Thus, supporters and members of the Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray could claim to be both Ottoman and Turkish sports clubs, whereas Maccabi, Hercules, and Artavazt could only claim to be a Jewish, Greek, and Armenian club respectively. This development reveals how many non-Muslims became discursively excluded from the same Ottoman world of sports that they had ineradicably shaped over four decades.

⁶ “Mijazgayin Mrts‘umner Polsoy Mēj: Hayerun Arajnūt‘unē,” *Marmnamarz* p. 326.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Despite these tensions and forms of exclusions, this dissertation demonstrates that people from a plethora of ethnic and religious backgrounds shaped the corporeal and gendered underpinnings of modernity in late Ottoman Istanbul. As a result, my research encourages us to expand our understanding of the actors who shaped the various practices that constituted modernity in the imperial domains. By exercising and playing team sports, Ottoman Muslims, Christians, and Jews, as well as foreign residents, maintained, disciplined, and objectified the male body. In other words, the emergence of voluntary sports clubs, the integration of physical exercise into school curriculum, the creation of a government educational project, the development of a multilingual physical culture press, and the staging of athletic events in newly constructed urban spaces all serve as vantage points from which to observe the ways in which the population participated in the transformation of the region.

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