

The Bolanachi Story – Egypt goes Olympic with Greek Entrepreneurship*

By Christian Wacker¹

Angelo Bolanachi, the athlete. His first success was winning the French schools' tennis championship in 1896. In 1899 and 1900 he was Egyptian champion at 100 and 200 m. In 1902, he ran 100 m in 10.8 seconds, making him the simultaneous record holder of Egypt, the Ottoman Empire and Greece. Before 1949 he called himself "Bolanachi", derived from the Arabic linguistic usage. Thereafter he changed to the spelling "Bolanaki".

© Revue de Paris L'Education Physique, No. 17, 15th December 1904.



In the early years of the Olympic Movement, that is to say from the latter years of the 19th century, the IOC reached out to new continents and countries by means of excellent networks established in Europe. Egypt became an Olympic "player" in 1910, when the first IOC Member in Egypt was nominated: He was Angelo Bolanachi, a Greek national, born and raised in Alexandria and belonging to the wealthy Greek bourgeoisie. He founded the Egyptian Olympic Committee EOC in 1914, becoming its first Secretary-General and planning for an African Games in 1929. Egypt did not exist as a separate nation before 1922 as it was still part of the Ottoman Empire. Through Bolanachi and other Europeans, sport, its organisations and infrastructure were imported into Egypt. During the 19th century, mainly the Greek and Italian communities founded clubs based on European models in Alexandria. It was only later that Egyptian nationals followed the example and established their own clubs.²

The Olympic Idea reaches Egypt: the role of the Greek minority and Angelo Bolanachi

Minorities in Egypt acted as "collaborative elites". In particular, the Greek minority became organised as mediators to the centres of power. There were many Greek merchants, industrialists and families with access to cultural life.³ The legal status of Egyptian Greeks was complex, and most members of this minority even acquired foreign passports. Following the Ottoman concept, non-islamic religious groups were known as *millet*.⁴ Over the centuries Greek-orthodox communities, i.e. not only Greek-speaking Greek-orthodox but also Arab-speaking Greek-orthodox, formed one *millet* and their traditions continued into the 20th century. To be part of a *millet* in the Ottoman Empire would have meant benefits for the individuals. These were defined in contracts, known as *capitula* or "Capitulations".

These documents granted certain concessions. Personal, religious and commercial freedom was guaranteed to foreigners. They did not have to pay taxes and were subject to their own consular authorities.⁵ Following Ottoman practice, Greeks and other minorities inside the Ottoman Empire were permitted to organise and rule themselves under those "Capitulations", which were in fact regulations for juridical, religious and economical autonomy. This empowered the Greek community, especially in Alexandria, where the benefactor behind the restoration of the stadium for the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens, Georgios Averoff, was a prominent figure from 1885 to 1899. The Greek community in Alexandria acted like a sovereign, secular entity, with parliamentary structures inside Egypt.⁶

The Egyptian census from the first decades of the 20th century indicates a steady increase in the number of foreigners and minorities in Egypt. Between 1897 and 1927 the number nearly doubled, and approximately 40% of them were Greek. In 1919, 20% of the population of Alexandria was Greek, but some had lived in Egypt for generations. Seventy-six thousand Greeks lived in Egypt in 1927, although Greek census records give the figure as nearer 100,000. As a result of changes in Egyptian politics and the new self-consciousness of the young nation, many foreigners left the country during the 1930s and, by 1947, the Greek population had dipped to 57,000.⁷

Angelo Bolanachi (written Αγγελός Χ. Βολανάκης in Greek) was born in Alexandria in 1878 and died in Lausanne in 1963. He was an IOC Member in Egypt from 1910 to 1932 and an IOC Member in Greece from 1933 until his death. He eventually became the doyen of the IOC. He established a National Olympic Committee for Egypt, which was recognised by the IOC in 1914. In 1949, Bolanachi became the 18th recipient of the Olympic diploma.⁸

Bolanachi could dedicate his entire life to the development of sport in Egypt and become an active part of the Olympic Movement, as he had been a member of one of the wealthiest and most influential families in Egypt. In 1884, his father Christos had founded a distillery in Alexandria. Bolanachi & Sons produced cognac, rum and whiskey. In the first decade, the production did not exceed 15,000 litres and was not meant for export. Over the years, the distillery increased its portfolio of brands and also produced champagnes, and the famous Bolanachi's Egyptian Brandy, mainly for export to England.

This product brought wealth to the family before the First World War, became popular even among collectors, and later was taken over by the Zottos distillery. Today it can still be purchased from the Al Ahram Beverages Company. In its heyday between 1910 and 1920, the distillery occupied an area of 90,000 sqm and employed 300 people. In 1921 liquor was classified as a luxury good with high taxation and, during the same time, the 'Capitulation' for the Greek-orthodox community had been sold to Great Britain. As a result of these changes, the decline of the distillery was inevitable and, by the end of the twenties, the number of employees had shrunk to 50.⁹

In his autobiography Angelo Bolanachi describes himself as the first athlete competing outside Egypt.¹⁰ As a sprinter, he took part in races over 100 and 200 metres in Alexandria, Athens and Smyrna (today Izmir), beating Olympic records of the day. Even though he did not participate in the first Olympic Games 1896 in Athens, he held the 100 metre record in those days. His time of 10 sec 4/5 was faster than that of the winner in Athens. He had also been an excellent long and high jumper.

After 1906 he became a sports official, was the instigator of modern sport administration in Egypt, and the founder of many sport organisations in his country. He established the General Sports Club as an umbrella organisation for sports in Egypt. From 1908 onwards, he organised annual national championships in Alexandria and Cairo. 1910, the General Sports Club was transformed into the Sports Federation of Egypt under the patronage of the Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha and Omar Toussoun Pasha, who later became President of the Egyptian Olympic Committee.¹¹

In 1906, Bolanachi seems to have met Pierre de Coubertin for the first time in Paris (Bolanachi, 1956, 3: "[...] que j'avais connu à Paris en 1906, ayant apprécié mes qualités sportives, [...]"),¹² but it seems clear that he was not particularly close to the founder of the modern Olympic Games. His correspondence with IOC officials clearly shows that his access to the IOC was, in the most part, down to his contact with the Vice-President of the IOC, Godefroy de Blonay. Following the correspondence in the IOC Archives, the Bolanachi and Blonay families were well known to each other. During the Olympic Session in Luxembourg (11th to 13th June 1910), Bolanachi was nominated as the first IOC Member in Egypt, even though he held a Greek passport.



Label from
Bolanachi Rum.

© Christian Wacker.

At that time Egypt was under Ottoman control and Bolanachi belonged to the Greek minority. His ambition was to lead an Egyptian bid for the 1916 Olympic Games. The local delegates must have been convinced by his concrete plans for a stadium, which dated back to 1909. Bolanachi intended to construct the stadium in Alexandria, on top of the estimated location of the stadium of the Ptolemies from the 2nd century BCE.¹³ This followed the example of the Panathenaic Stadium rebuilt in Athens for the 1896 Games upon the site of the ancient stadium.

The Olympic Idea reaches Egypt: foundation of the Egyptian Olympic Committee

The first President of the EOC, Omar Toussoun Pasha, had been a strong supporter of sports since the late 19th century and was one of the driving forces of the "Physical Culture Movement" (al-riyada al-badaniyya) in Egypt. As a result of this and other similar initiatives, physical education became a more or less regular part of school

life in 1897. The first evidence for the foundation of the EOC appears in a letter sent by Omar Toussoun Pasha to the President of the Council of Ministers, Muhammad Pasha Said, 6th Sept. 1913 (Sources, No.: 22). In it Omar Toussoun Pasha requested the appointment of two delegates, one from the Ministry of Public Instruction and the other from the Ministry of War. Both offices nominated British representatives, A.H. Sharman (Principal of the Saidiyya Secondary School) and Macintosh Bey (Assistant of the Adjutant General).

At a time of British occupation, associations which necessitated interaction with foreign organisations also seemed obliged to include British representatives. It might be assumed that the nomination of British delegates, on behalf of Egyptian ministries, was not willingly done and that those nominees supported Bolanachi, himself a foreigner by law, in his bid to become the first Secretary-General of the Egyptian Olympic Committee.¹⁴ The formation of the committee was announced on 19th January 1914, as documented in local Egyptian archives.¹⁵ On the same day, in his capacity as IOC Member in Egypt, and now EOC General Secretary, Bolanachi sent an official letter to the President of the IOC, Pierre de Coubertin (Sources, No.: 2).

Kamel 2015 mistakenly states that the EOC had been founded on 13th June 1910 with Omar Toussoun Pasha as President and Angelo Bolanachi as Secretary-General. It quotes author Al-Faraj 1988 who dates the foundation of the EOC in the year 1910 without offering any further evidence for this date (Jacobi, 2011: 89, FN 95).¹⁶ Perhaps

the confusion arises because Bolanachi was installed as an IOC Member in 1910. Both the EOC and IOC websites list 1910 instead of 1914 as year for the official foundation.

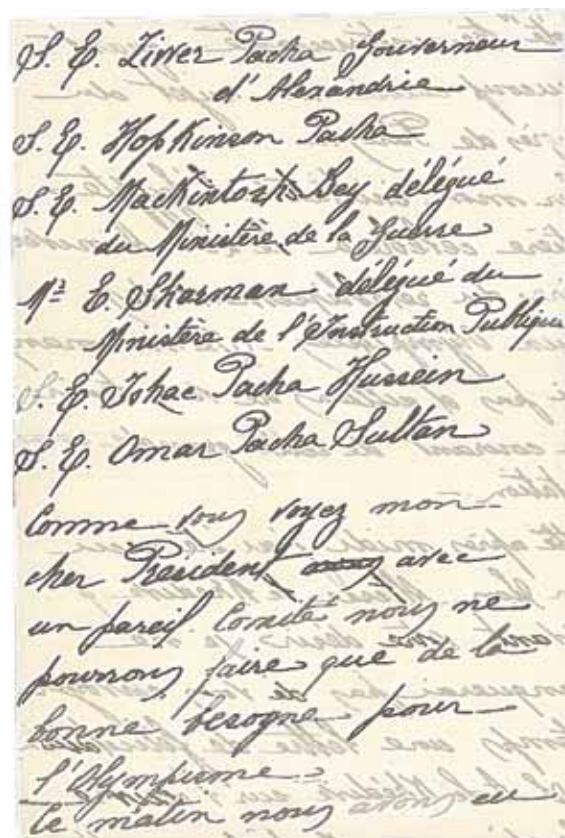
The Olympic Idea reaches Egypt: Egypt enters the Olympic stage

In a letter dated 19th January 1914, Bolanachi also announced the organisation of a sports festival to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 1894 congress at the Sorbonne in Paris at which the IOC had been founded (Sources, No.: 2). In order to underline Alexandria's ambition to host the 1916 Olympic Games, he quoted the official letter from the municipality confirming the intention to host the Games.¹⁷ He used the sports festival as a means of supporting, encouraging and hastening the construction of the stadium. The Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha, ruler of Egypt and Sudan under nominal Ottoman sovereignty, personally attended the event. In this way he acknowledged the importance of the 20th anniversary of the IOC and also boosted Alexandria's candidature for the 1916 Olympics.

On 5th April 1914, a flag bearing the Olympic rings was raised for the first time at this gathering in Alexandria's Chatby Stadium. Pierre de Coubertin had personally designed the Olympic logo with the five rings in 1913. He first mentioned this in the August 1913 edition of *Revue Olympique* without showing illustrations, even though some earlier letterheads had already carried a version of this symbol.¹⁸ Bolanachi asked permission to use the

Letter from Angelo Bolanachi to IOC President Pierre de Coubertin about the foundation of the EOC, 19th January 1914.

© IOC Archives





At the request of Bolanachi, the Alexandria town council allocated a central site in the Chatby district for the purpose of constructing a stadium. It was here that under Bolanachi's direction, the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the Olympic Movement was celebrated in April 1914. The Olympic flag with the five rings was raised for the first time on this occasion. To celebrate this, vignettes appeared (left). The stadium seen in the photo (taken c 1930) was erected between 1921 and 1928. Built in Graeco Roman style, it held 22,000 spectators.

© National Archives Cairo

Olympic rings on a flag. Unfortunately, evidence has not yet come to light to confirm whether it was Bolanachi who produced this flag or if he received it from Coubertin in Paris. The flag was hoisted again in June 1914 during the Olympic Congress in Paris and became part of the Olympic rituals in 1920. In 1958 Bolanachi handed over his Olympic collection to the Olympic Museum in Lausanne. The items included that flag.¹⁹

The African Games: the role of sport in colonisation

Sport should play an intelligent and effective role in colonisation. Such an educational idea of a so-called "Kindergarten" of Olympism was first published in 1912. Sport should not be used as a disciplinary instrument of colonial governance, but as a side institution to instil values such as social hygiene, cleanliness, order and self-control (Source, No.: 1: "Le sport peut donc jouer un rôle en colonisation, un rôle intelligent et efficace." (p. 8); "Les sports sont en somme un instrument vigoureux de disciplinisation. Ils engendrent toutes sortes de bonnes qualités sociales d'hygiène, de propreté, d'ordre, de self-control." (p. 9); „En somme le sport ne doit pas être un instrument de gouvernement en matière de colonisation mais une institution à côté, très propre à rendre d'éminents services." (p. 10)).²⁰ It is important here to quote the original wording because some translations have misinterpreted the meaning ("[...] the natives of colonies who had to be 'civilized'."²¹). For Charitas the IOC, under the presidency of Coubertin, followed a colonial philosophy with the principle "all games, all nations".²² The IOC supported games in Asia and Latin America with the aim of universalising the Olympic Idea.²³

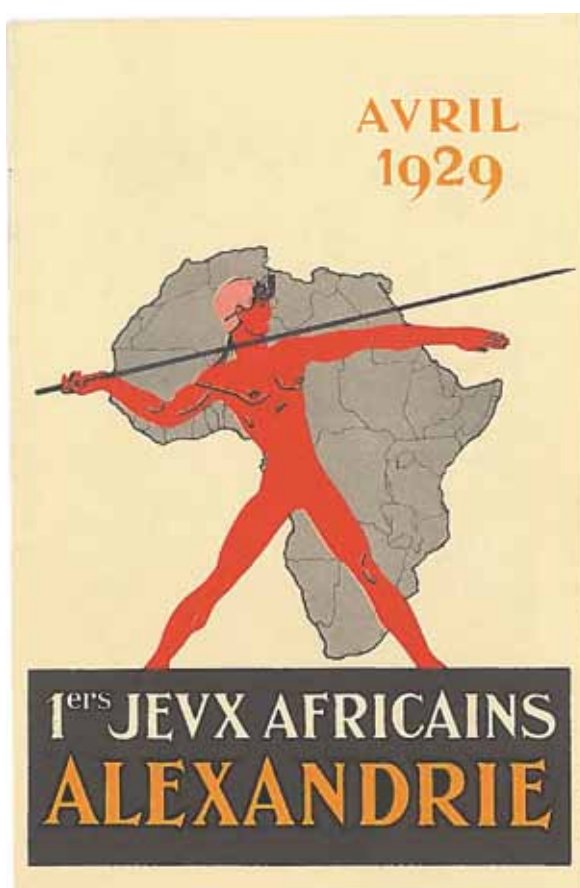


The African Games: the Alexandria Stadium project

After the First World War, the political situation in Egypt changed significantly. The Ottoman Empire fell apart and Britain finally took control of the area as a protectorate. Ahmed Fouad Pasha, of the Muhammad Ali dynasty, was nominated ruler of Egypt as Sultan Fouad I. When independence came in 1922 he became King of Egypt.²⁴

Bolanachi had also been successful convincing the new leaders to develop sports on a national level, and organised a sports festival with the *Union des Sociétés Sportives d'Egypte* over which he presided in 1918. Again, the main goal of this festival had been to gather support for the plan to build a new sports arena in Alexandria. The attendance of Sultan Fouad I obviously bore fruits and, in October 1919, the municipality of Alexandria announced that it had received personal donations from Sultan Fouad I (3000 LE/livre égyptienne), Omar Toussoun Pasha, the President of the Egyptian Olympic Committee (2000 LE) and Angelo Bolanachi (1000 LE). With the addition of the municipality's own contribution (500 LE), the budget for the construction was secured. The total sum of 6500 LE corresponds to an actual value of about 350,000 GBP (British Pounds). Taking into account construction costs in Egypt after the First World War, this sum was enough to build the stadium.²⁵

In 1921 stadium construction began. The architecture and facilities of the stadium in Alexandria were groundbreaking for the late twenties. In a letter to Bolanachi written in 1930, the later IOC President J. Sigfrid Edström praised the stadium of Alexandria as the most modern in the world and said that he wanted something similar for the 1932 Olympic Games in Los



Angeles (quoted in: Bolanachi 1956, 13: "Je félicite la Ville d'Alexandrie de posséder le stade que je considère le plus moderne du monde et que je souhaiterais avoir à Los-Angeles pour les Jeux Olympiques qui doivent avoir lieu dans cette ville en 1932.").²⁶

The stadium of Alexandria was completed in 1928, ready to be used for hosting the African Games, which were scheduled for 1929. In fact, these Games never took place, but the hope was that the stadium would later stage Olympic and Mediterranean Games. The facilities were designed to satisfy the needs of modern international sports events (Bolanachi 1956, 12: "On peut dire aujourd'hui que dans le stade d'Alexandrie toute manifestation sportive de la plus grande envergure peut être organisée de la manière la plus satisfaisante.").²⁷ The first international mega-event organised at this stadium was to be the inaugural Mediterranean Games in 1951.

Preparation and cancellation of the 1st African Games

The African Games project had been announced for the first time at the IOC Session held in Rome 1923. They had IOC patronage, but the project suffered at the hands of nationalist movements in Africa and the restrictions of colonial powers. At the Rome Session, an official decision had been made to establish African Games,

and it was proposed that Algiers would be the first host city in 1925. The IOC wanted to "conquer Africa" as emphasised in a text, probably written by Coubertin in 1931 (Sources, No.: 14: 12: "[...] le Comité International Olympique décida de 'conquérir l'Afrique' et créa les Jeux Africains.").²⁸

Following original plans, the first African Games were intended for Algiers in 1925, but the Algerian official responsible for *Affaires Indigènes* wrote to Coubertin on 21st March 1924 to say that Algiers would neither have the budget to organise the Games, nor were there any sports organisations or indigenous sports men interested in participating. Algiers would, therefore, be unable to organise the African Games (Sources, No.: 4). The appeal from Coubertin to set up an African Games, to be organised for the first time in Alexandria 1927, does not mention the Algerian plan. It must, therefore, have been written only after March 1924. They should "be in the main reserved for natives" (Sources, No.: 3).

After the withdrawal of Algiers from the organisation of the first African Games in 1925, Bolanachi as IOC Member in Egypt and General Commissioner for the African Games, received an official letter from the IOC in December 1925 inviting him to make preparations for African Games in 1927. Alexandria was envisaged as host city. Bolanachi's response a week later outlined the difficult political situation in Egypt and, instead, proposed holding the games in 1929, which had been accepted by the IOC. In an additional letter he further confirmed that the stadium would not be ready for 1927 (Sources, No.: 5: "[...] qu'il me sera presque impossible de pouvoir organiser les 1^{ers} Jeux Africains de 1927 [...]"; Sources, No.: 6).²⁹

Construction of the stadium was completed in 1928 and the official invitation letter had been sent out to the Ministers responsible in the relevant colonies on 25th January 1928. The Games were scheduled for April 1929 (Sources, No.: 24). Officials in a number of colonies refused to sanction teams for Alexandria. J.E.W. Flood, the official responsible for Nigerian affairs called African Games a silly idea: "It seems to me a totally evil show conceived in Pan-Africanism and Egyptian propaganda." He went on to assert that Omar Toussoun Pasha is "[...] probably the most dangerous, and anti-British, man in Egypt." (Sources, No.: 23). Finally, on 11th May 1928 the British colonial governments announced that they would not participate in the Games. Other colonies followed suit shortly afterwards.³⁰

The Games themselves were formally cancelled on 19th February 1929, mainly for the following political reasons (Sources, No.: 11): The qualification rules had been modified and the colonial powers were asked to nominate athletes. By February, France, Italy, Belgium and Great Britain had signalled their refusal to do so. By this point the only registered participants were four from

Morocco, 20 from Abyssinia and 50 from Tunisia. Thirteen hundred athletes were expected from Egypt and some hope existed that footballers from Europe would join.

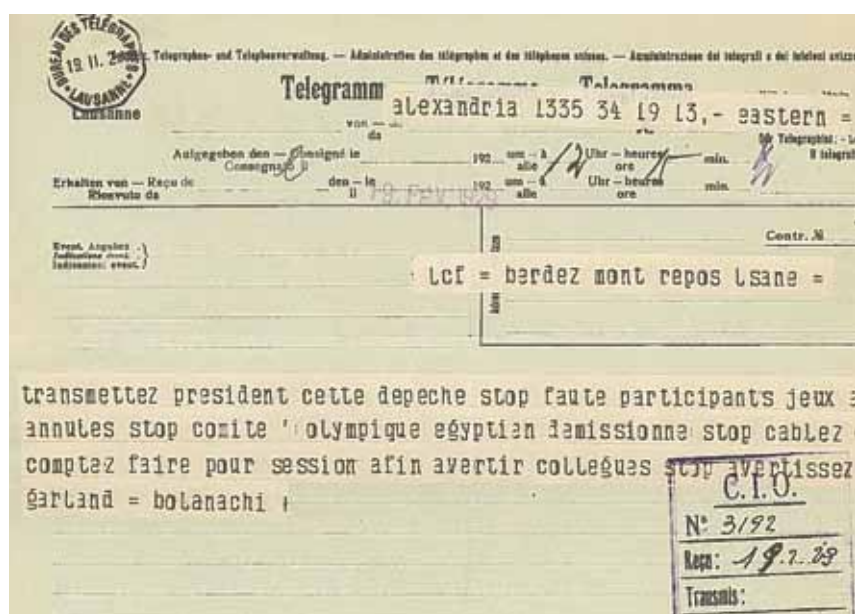
Although the Alexandrian *Journal de Réforme* reflected that the Olympic Games do not have many more participants, the result was disastrous and reflected nationalist movements inside the colonies (Sources, No.: 8, 9, 13). Locals simply set themselves against the colonial powers, and even Bolanachi experienced opposition to the Games inside Egypt. He made it clear that the Egyptian Minister of War had been the driving force behind the cancellation of the games. The minister also opposed the continued presence of Bolanachi as IOC Member in Egypt. Influential members of the EOC also viewed him as a "foreigner" and that Bolanachi should not remain an IOC Member in Egypt. Bolanachi annotated a press article (Sources, No.: 12: "Le membre le plus éminent c'est le Ministre de la Guerre qui pour des raisons personnelles à cherché l'occasion de faire annuler les Jeux et qui cherche maintenant à obliger le gouvernement pour imposer le C.I.O. un nouveau membre pour Egypte.")³¹; another similar personal note was made by Bolanachi on the French summary of an article published in *Al-Ahram*, without a date (IOC Archives).³²

The delays to the first African Games took place in the years following independence, at a time of power struggles between the Wafd party, the Palace and the British. It is a real possibility that King Fouad I purposely blocked the Games. The cancellation also had been motivated by the British and other colonial powers who did not want to bring together so many colonial subjects in one place.³³ Bolanachi had been the driving force behind the African Games project, but also behind ongoing ambitions to host the Olympics and other events in Alexandria. At the 1928 IOC Session in Amsterdam, he had been asked by the municipality to deliver documents proposing Mediterranean Games to be organised there in 1930 or 1931, as well as a bid for the 1936 Olympic Games (Sources, No.: 7, 10).³⁴

Egyptian Sports Politics in the 1920s and 1930s: Nationalisation after Independency

The nationalist movement in Egypt had found radical expression in the riots of 1919 in Alexandria and grew in strength until 1922, when Egypt became independent. The plan was for liberal experimentation in the country with constitutional government, political parties, freedom of speech and the right to opposition – in total, a modern democratic government in favour of the majority. But the reality turned out to be very different after accession of Sultan Fouad I to the throne, the prominence of the unity party Wafd, and the Misr Bank as an economical force for nationalism.³⁵

After the First World War, Egypt saw the rise of a national bourgeoisie rooted in agrarian societies to become an industrial bourgeoisie. In 1920 this new and self proclaimed "high society" opened the Misr Bank. This was planned as a nationalist project, fed by local money from Egyptian investors and taken from mostly foreign banks to provide the backbone for moving the economy from foreign hands to national ownership. Misr Bank soon became the biggest bank in Egypt, and an expression of Egyptian self-confidence and of resistance to British control in Egypt. With the establishment of the Misr Bank, the Egyptian society created a method to develop national economy without excluding foreign investment, but channel it towards national interest. Egyptian Jews and Greeks also made use of the Misr Bank and entrepreneurs from these minorities increased slightly or maintained constancy. During the same time more than 100 new Egyptian companies were created.³⁶



For the British protectorate before 1922, a ban against the "Capitulations" described above was an important move to secure political and economic control over Egypt. The first attempts to ban the "Capitulations" can be traced back to the British Governor, Lord Cromer in 1904. Their efforts finally bore fruit in 1920, when the Greeks in Egypt signed a treaty with Britain to hand over their "Capitulation" to them. Obviously, the Greeks preferred their communities to be under the control of the British rather than Egyptian authorities.³⁷ The ban of the "Capitulations" on the one side, and the foundation of the quasi-governmental bank Misr Group with its emphasis on support for local national industries, dramatically reduced the economic influence of the Greeks, Italians, French and other foreigners living in Egypt from the twenties. After the independence of

Telegram No. 3192
from Angelo Bolanachi
to IOC Secretary
Albert Berdez about
the cancellation of
the First African
Games, 19 February
1929.

© IOC Archives.

Envelope for the first
Mediterranean Games
1951.

Below: vignette with
the poster for these
Games.

© Christian Wacker.



Egypt and the cancellation of the "Capitulations", the Greek community was offered a choice of Egyptian or Greek citizenship. Only 17% of Greeks decided to take up Egyptian nationality; others, including Bolanachi, opted to remain Greek. Today it is difficult to say if he might have had a better chance of keeping his positions in sport by changing his nationality. Double nationality, i.e. Greek and Egyptian, only became possible after 1937, and long after his resignation.³⁸

Omar Toussoun Pasha figured prominently in the press in the 1920s. He stood for sport as a unifying element. He was closely involved with the Boy Scout Movement and international sports. He became even more important as a role model for those sports integrated in the development of the young Egyptian nation, and became a real sports hero of the time.³⁹ Egypt took part in the 1920, 1924 and 1928 Olympic Games but with little success. The Egyptian press reacted harshly. Their anger was mainly directed against Bolanachi as EOC General Secretary. Critics said he was incapable of guiding Egyptian athletes who should present their nation, because he himself had not been Egyptian. The athletes' performances were set alongside a cultivation of nationalist consciousness. In the opinion of many Egyptian journalists, the Olympic Games offered a stage to exhibit Egyptian culture and character. Egypt should present itself patriotically as a modern nation and not "[...] walking around naked like the rest of the peoples in Africa" (quote from *Al-Ahram* 8/2, 1st March 1924: 3).⁴⁰



Egyptian Sports Politics in the 1920s and 1930s: Bolanachi moves on

That Egypt did not send athletes to the Olympic Games in Los Angeles 1932 was a direct consequence of their worsening relationship with Bolanachi. The EOC boycotted this Olympics, due to the refusal of the IOC to change the representatives for Egypt. This refusal of course had been very much supported by Bolanachi, who wanted to remain as the only IOC Member in Egypt. Only later did he agree to a second member. For the newspaper *Al-Ahram* it had been clear, that Bolanachi had not served the interests of Egypt in Olympic circles, but had been the delegate of the IOC in Egypt.⁴¹

Although Bolanachi was still Secretary-General of the EOC and IOC Member in Egypt, he had already been put under pressure to stand down. The young Egyptian nation had decided on a policy to nationalise key positions in politics, economics and sports. As a result, they could no longer give their backing to a man they saw as a "foreigner", although he had been of considerable benefit to the Olympic Movement in the country. In 1932 a small booklet entitled *Situation actuelle d'Egypte par rapport aux Jeux Olympiques* was published. It set out a new policy that the IOC Member in Egypt should be Egyptian and included a number of letters from national sports federations (Sources, No.: 15). Each of these supported an effective vote of no confidence in Bolanachi.

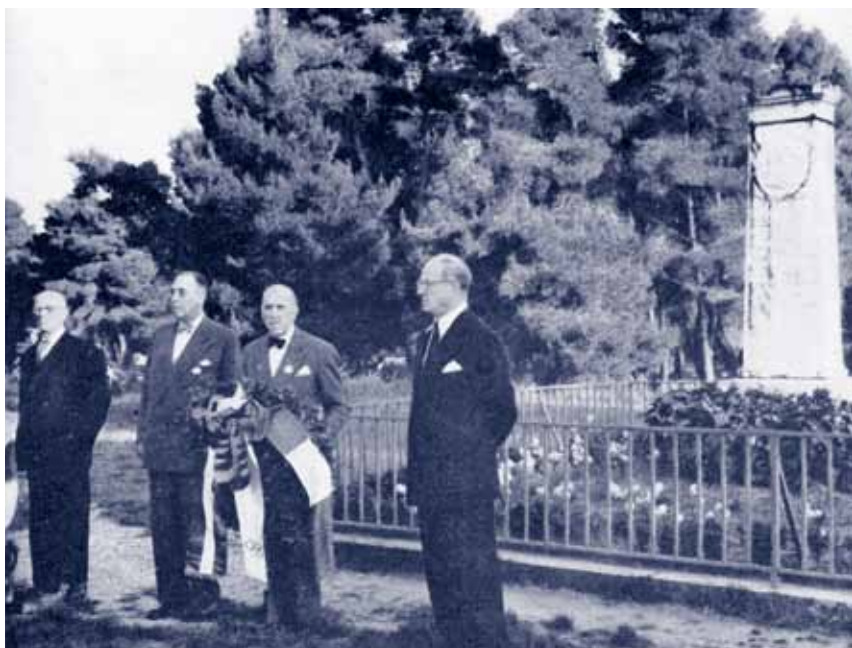
A further message from Hussein Sabry Pasha, President of the Egyptian Football Federation, delegate of all Egyptian sports federations and Governor of Alexandria, did not appear in the booklet, but it summarised the general feeling of sports organisations in Egypt (Sources, No.: 16). Without an Egyptian IOC Member, this federation would never again participate in Olympic Games.

The IOC President reacted and sent a letter to EOC President, Omar Toussoun Pasha, suggesting a second Egyptian IOC Member: Hussein Sabry Pasha. It was clear from the outset that Hussain Sabry Pasha would be unwilling to serve in the IOC alongside Bolanachi, because Egyptian sports governing bodies had already indicated where their support lay (Sources, No.: 17, 18: "[...] que Mr. Bolanachi était inamovible.")⁴²

For years, Bolanachi had been unwilling to resign, even though he must have been well aware that his refusal to do so would jeopardise the appearance of Egyptian competitors in Los Angeles. He finally stood down as an IOC Member in Egypt on 21st November 1932 (Sources, No.: 19: "Devant les circonstances complexes qui me semblent contraires aux intérêts réels du sport en Egypte, je crois devoir prendre la décision de mettre à votre disposition ma démission comme délégué du C.I.O. en Egypte.")⁴³ Two days later, he announced that he would be a candidate as an IOC Member in Greece.

The existing Member in Greece, Nikolas Politis, had been willing to stand down. And Bolanachi remained an IOC Member until the end of his life. He had, therefore, served for 53 years (Sources, No.: 20: "[...] car après tout ce qu'en a fait contre moi en Egypte, je compte ne plus m'intéresser à elle [...]"; see also Egyptian press in *La Liberté* from 7th February 1933, *Il giornale d'oriente* from 26th June 1932 and various articles in *Al-Ahram*).⁴⁴

For the EOC the changes had been significant and they were set down in the *Statuts du Comité Olympique Egyptien sous le Haut Patronage de sa Majeste le Roi* from 11th May 1934 (Sources, No.: 21). After Bolanachi's resignation, Muhammad Taher Pasha, a nephew of the king, was elected as the new IOC Member in Egypt in 1934.⁴⁵ Until that time, clubs and federations formed by foreigners had dominated sport in Egypt. The integration of the local population had been a slow process. For 20 years, Bolanachi had directed sport politics and developed sports infrastructure in the country. After the independence of Egypt in 1922, nationalist forces became stronger. Ultimately, he was forced to leave his positions and his economic situation was also worsening. It was not until 1955 that Bolanachi was honoured with an award of merit by the EOC for his efforts to develop sports in Egypt from 1906. Obviously, he had not left Egypt in amicable circumstances, as he had been forced to resign as IOC Member in 1932. As a



foreigner, Bolanachi had been unable to maintain his exalted position in sport as nationalism grew in the country (Bolanachi, 1956: 32bis).⁴⁶ ■

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After the 50th IOC Session in May 1954, the IOC Members travelled to Ancient Olympia. At the column commemorating the founding of the Olympic Movement (in which the heart of Pierre de Coubertin is laid to rest), Bolanachi laid a wreath. To his right is IOC President Avery Brundage, on his left Vice-President Armand Massard and the Mayor of Olympia.

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Angelo Bolanachi (second from left) on his arrival in Munich in 1959, where he was received by his German host Karl Ritter von Halt (far left). It was the last IOC Session in which he took part. Bolanachi died in 1963 at the age of 86. He was a member of the IOC for 53 years – a record. Because of the age limit of 80 years, which only applies to members elected before the conclusion of the 110th Session of 1999, his record is hardly likely to be surpassed. It could, theoretically, be broken by Prince Albert of Monaco, who was elected to the IOC in 1985 at the age of 27.

Photo: Volker Kluge Archive

Toussoun Pasha (one of them confidential) to Baillet-Latour.

19. Ref. Code: CIO MBR-BOLAN-CORR, 21st November 1932: Letter from Bolanachi to Baillet-Latour.

20. Ref. Code: CIO MBR-BOLAN-CORR, 23rd/27th November 1932: Letter from Bolanachi to Godefroy de Blonay.

21. Ref. Code: D-RMD 1/EGYPT/003, 11th May 1934: *Statuts du Comité Olympique Egyptien sous le Haut Patronage de sa Majesté le Roi.*

Other Archives:

22. 6th September 1913: Letter from Omar Tousoun Pasha to the President of the Council of Ministers Muhammad Pasha Said. (Archive Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya, Alexandria; Jacob, 2011: FN 95).

23. 1928: The National Archives London; PRO FO 848/6, Part B.

24. 25th January 1928: Invitation letter from Tousoun Pasha and Bolanachi to the ministers of the colonies. (Jacob, 2011: 128, Fig. 7).

25. 11th May 1928: Letter from the British colonial governments to Egyptian Olympic Committee. (Jacob, 2011: 134).

1 This paper is an adapted version of the essay: Wacker, Ch: Egypt goes Olympic – 1914 to 1932. In: *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation* 39, 1:2, 2017, pp. 155–170. Many thanks to: Philip Barker, sports journalist London; Martin Schäfer, Archaeological Society at Athens Library; Stéphanie Moreno, Patricia Reymond at the IOC Archives, Lausanne; Pavlos Wacker, Freiburg.

2 Kamel, A. (Ed.): Hyperlink [http://www.egyptianolympic.org/history.html]. Retrieved 21st February 2016.

3 Abdulhaq, N.: *Entrepreneurial minorities in modern Egyptian history: Jews and Greeks 1885–1960*. Dissertation, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2012, p. 17f.

4 Ibid., p. 79.

5 Ibid., p. 79f.

6 Ibid., p. 82f.; Kitroeff, A.: *The Greeks in Egypt 1919–1937. Ethnicity and Class*. London: Ithaca Press (Saint Antony's Middle East monographs, 20), 1989, p. 45.

7 Ibid., p. 90 Tab. 2.1; Kitroeff 1989, p. 42.

8 Bulletin du Comité International Olympique (Ed.): *The Olympic Family, Obituaries*, 84, Nov. 1963, p. 46.

9 Kitroeff 1989, 115; Politis, A. G.: *Ο Ελληνισμός και η νεότερα Αίγυπτος* (2 Vols.). Alexandria/Athens: Εκδοτικός οίκος Γράμματτα, 1930, p. 310ff.

10 Bolanachi, A.: *Historique du Sport en Egypt. Le Stade d'Alexandrie. La Renaissance de l'Olympisme. 1894–1954*, 1956, p. 3.

11 Ibid., 3f., 10f.; Buchanan, I. & Lyberg, W.: The Biographies of all IOC

Members. In: *Journal of Olympic History*, 18.1, 2010, p. 53; Bulletin 1963, p. 46.

12 "[...] whom I got to know in Paris 1906, he appreciated my sportive qualities [...]" (translation by the author).

13 Bolanachi 1956, p. 4.

14 Jacob, W. Ch.: *Working out Egypt. Effendi masculinity and subject formation in colonial modernity, 1870–1940*. Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2011, p. 88f.; Kitroeff 1989, p. 38.

15 Jacob 2011, 89 FN p. 98.

16 Al-Faraj, S.: *Ruwwad al-riyada fi Misr* (The pioneers of sport in Egypt), Cairo 1988; Jacob 2011, 89 FN 95.

17 Bolanachi 1956, p. 5.

18 Lennartz, K.: The story of the rings. In: *JOH* 2001/2002, p. 37.

19 *Olympic Review*, No. 63, August 1958, p. 61

20 "Sport should therefore play a role in colonisation, an intelligent and efficient role." (p. 8), "The sports in all are a convincing instrument of discipline. They encompass all kinds of good social hygiene qualities, cleanliness, order and self-control." (p. 9), "To sum it up, sport must not be a governmental instrument related to colonisation, but a side institution honest to execute eminent services." (p. 10) (translation by the author); Comité International Olympique & Müller, N. (Eds.): *Edition de textes choisis de Pierre de Coubertin* (3 Vols.). Zurich – Hildesheim – New York: Weidmann, 1986, p. 676ff.

21 Auger, F.: The African Games. The IOC's Colonial Modernisation 1920–1930. In: *JOH, Special Issue* 13, Olympic Congress, Copenhagen, 2009, p. 230.

22 Charitas, P.: Imperialism in the Olympics, 1910–1965: British and French Empires to the IOC. In: *JOH*, 21.1, 2013, p. 42.

23 De Franceschi Neto, M. & Wacker, Ch.: *Brazil goes Olympic*. Kassel 2010, 145–168; Jacob 2011, p. 133.

24 Al Sayyid Marsot, A. L.: *A history of Egypt. From the Arab conquest to the present* (2nd ed.). Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 81.

25 Bolanachi 1956, p. 8.

26 "I congratulate the city of Alexandria to own the stadium I consider the most modern of the world and which I would wish to have in Los Angeles for the Olympic Games, which will happen in that city in 1932." (translation by the author).

27 "One should say today, that all sport manifestations of the biggest dimensions can be organised in a very satisfactory manner in the stadium of Alexandria." (translation by the author).

28 "[...] the International Olympic Committee decided to 'conquer Africa' and create the African Games." (translation by the author).

29 "[...] it seems to me impossible to be able to organise the First African Games in 1927 [...]" (translation by the author).

30 Jacob 2011, 134.

31 "The most influential member had been the Minister of War, who had chosen a reason for the cancellation of the Games and who is going to force the government now to impose the IOC for a new member for Egypt." (translation by the author).

32 Auger 2009, pp. 230, 234.

33 Jacob 2011, p. 132.

34 Bolanachi 1956, p. 8.

35 Al Sayyid Marsot 1985, 81; Kitroeff 1989, p. 120.

36 Abdulhaq 2012, pp. 174–186.

37 Ibid., p. 85; Kitroeff 1989, pp. 37, 42.

38 Ibid., p. 197.

39 Jacob 2011, p. 89.

40 Ibid., p. 129f.

41 Buchanan/Lyberg 2010, p. 53; Jacob 2011, p. 139f.

42 "[...] that Mr. Bolanachi is not movable." (translation by the author).

43 "Because of complex reasons, which seem to me the opposite of the real interests of sport in Egypt, I think that I have to take the decision to hand over my resignation as a IOC delegate for Egypt for your disposability." (translation by the author).

44 "[...] after all they did against myself in Egypt, I guess not to be interested in them anymore [...]" (translation by the author); Auger 2009, p. 234.

45 Jacob 2011, p. 141.

46 Bolanachi 1956, p. 32bis.