



The Hellenic Society Prometheas

Newsletter 40

February 2005

Mark your Calendar

Upcoming Activities

(Information should be considered tentative until detailed announcement is issued)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Theme/Speakers</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Notes/Contact</u>
Lecture	The Greek Economy: Recent Developments and Prospects, Hari Vittas	Friday, 8:00 pm 2/11/05	St. George, Bethesda	Contact: Dimitri Vittas (301-996-0302; dvittas@worldbank.org)
Annual Dance	Masquerade Ball (Apokriatiko with live music)	Saturday, 2/26/05	Double Tree Hotel, Rockville, MD	Contact: A. Alexandrou (301-762-5619; ajalexandrou@yahoo.com)
Greek Independence Day Celebration	Prof. John Anton, University of South Florida	Sunday, 3/27/05	St. George, Bethesda	Contact: Lefteris Karmiris (301-229-9389; lefteris.karmiris@verizon.net)

Events by Other Organizations:

- ***February 5th in Charlottesville, VA: The Hellenic Society of University of Virginia has its "Winter Ball" with live music by Achilles & Company.*** For information, call 804-247-4565 or email: ELLHNIDA@gmail.com
- ***February 4-5, and 10-12, 8:00 pm: Sophocles' Antigone,*** presented by the American University's Dept of Performing Arts and the College of Arts and Sciences. For more information: www.american.edu/perf_arts

- **February 20th: the Macedonian Association of the Greater Washington DC has its 15th Annual Dinner Dance;** Music by Apollonia Band. Reservations by Feb 10th. For information call:
 - Angelo Abatzis: 703-281-7318
 - Stelios Kirimlis: 301-948-3570

Prometheas' Greek Letters Day Celebration

On January 28th at St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Bethesda, MD, **Prometheas** celebrated the Greek Letters Day and cut the Vassilopita. Guest speakers were:

- Professor Carlos Montemayor, who spoke on “The Influence of Ancient Greek Literature and Philosophy on Contemporary Thought” and
- Dr. Achilles Adamantiades, whose speech was entitled: “The Three Hierarchs – Why does the Church celebrate them together?”

The speeches were excellent and the meeting was well-attended. ***Copies of the speeches are attached***

Two developments related to Greek language:

US Regional Council of Hellenic Education to be established

NEW YORK 25/1/2005 (ANA/P.Panayiotou)

Theodore Spyropoulos, president of the Greek-American National Council announced on Monday that a US Regional Council of Hellenic Education will be established in order to promote the Greek language, history and its legacy.

The initiative, first proposed in November, 2003, is being undertaken by a number of well-known figures in the Greek-American community in an effort to support and promote Greek education and culture.

Within this context, a special education fund for Greeks living in the US will be set up in order to provide financial support to schools, organizations and initiatives promoting Greek education in the US. The fund will be managed by the Council's executive board.

The Greek Foreign Ministry would like to make visitors more familiar with the Greek language

The website of the Greek Foreign Ministry would like to make the Greek language more familiar to its visitors, to the extent of existing capabilities.

This is why we decided to support the effort undertaken by the Greek Institute for Language and Speech Processing (ILSP), through its program "Filoglossia", to offer the possibility to learn Greek as a foreign language on the Web. You can access the services provided by "Filoglossia" by connecting to the relevant web page. [Click here.](#)

<http://www.xanthi.ilsp.gr/filog/>

New Publications

- *A Century of Greek Poetry: 1900-2000*, Bilingual Edition, Poems selected and edited by Peter Bien, Peter Constantine, Edmund Keely and Karen van Dyck, Cosmos Publishing, March 2004
- *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950*, By Mark Mazower, Harper Collins Publishing, Sept 2004
- *Their smell makes me want to cry*, By Menis Koumandareas, University of Birmingham Institute of Archeology and Antiquity, 2004
- *Life in the tomb*, By Stratis Myrivilis, Cosmos Publishing, Jan 2004
- *The Propylaia to the Athenian Akropolis: Volume II: The Classical Building*, By William B. Dinsmoor and William B. Dinsmoor Jr., Oxbow Books, Sept 2004
- *Circle Dance*, By Lynne and Valerie Constantine, Cosmos Publishing, April 2004

If you want to listen to an excellent Greek music station on-line, check this site
http://www.melodia.gr/4dcgi/news/mel/frontpage_melodia
Click on “Ακουστε Live”

Misc. News

Los Angeles Times
Sunday, January 16, 2005

COMMENTARY

Since When Is Greece's Culture Obscene?

By Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki

Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki is President of the Athens 2004 Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games.

Greece does not wish to be drawn into an American culture war. Yet that is exactly what is happening. The Federal Communications Commission has launched an investigation into the broadcast of the opening ceremonies of the Athens 2004 Summer Olympic Games.

The first step was taken in December, when the commission demanded that NBC provide it with tapes of the broadcast. This was in response to nine complaints about indecency from U.S. citizens (globally, viewers exceeded 3.9 billion).

The FCC posted the complaints on its website. One person reported hearing an obscenity; one objected to the male anatomy on a representation of Greek sculpture; another thought a woman's breast had been revealed; and yet another claimed to have seen a couple making love.

If NBC is punished for airing our opening ceremonies — which in reality depicted Greek contributions to civilization — it would, in effect, label a presentation of our culture on your airwaves as "indecent." We resent it, and I feel duty-bound to respond.

Let's remember the context. Greece waited 108 years for the modern Olympic Games to return to our country, where the Olympics were invented in 776 BC, and to Athens, where they were revived in 1896. Greece overcame enormous obstacles to host the games. We had to complete preparations that were supposed to take seven years in four years' time, and ours were the first post-9/11 Summer Games, which required us to provide unprecedented security.

After essentially running a marathon at a sprinters' pace, and facing the doubts of foreign skeptics, Greece was ready on time. We fought over-commercialization by sponsors and cheating by athletes. We had great Games in a safe environment. World records were shattered. For 17 triumphant days, the world saw the remarkable things that its athletes and we Greeks could accomplish.

Our Games' positive first impression was created by the opening ceremonies. Before 72,000 spectators in the open-air stadium, lighted by pyrotechnics, with performers and props flying through the air on wires and moving en masse across the infield, the ceremonies presented the Greek origins of democracy, philosophy, theater, sport and the Olympic Games. In this context, we represented the Greek sculpture people see in museums, realistic human beings as God made them. We also showed a couple enjoying their love of the Greek sea and each other. And we told the history of Eros, the god of love. Turning love, yearning and desire into a deity is an important part of our contribution to civilization.

Far from being indecent, the opening ceremonies were beautiful, enlightening, uplifting and enjoyable. There was no cause for shame or complaint.

As Americans surely are aware, there is great hostility in the world today to cultural domination in which a single value system created elsewhere diminishes and degrades local cultures. There is also a vast and violent global culture war raging between the forces of modernism and fundamentalism, a battle whose outcome cannot be known. In this context, it is astonishingly unwise for an agency of the U.S. government to engage in an investigation that could label a presentation of the Greek origins of civilization as unfit

for

television

viewing.

It is my hope that Americans will consider this advice: Don't punish NBC or Greece for accurately portraying Greek culture in your living rooms.

In the past, the U.S. has been open to the world, incorporating the best it has to offer into its culture. Turning away from this tradition would bring about a close-minded, fortress mentality that would endanger the U.S. and its relations with other countries.

Accept us as we are. It's the decent thing to do.

December 31, 2004

ANTIQUES

The World of Alexander Was Rich and Beautiful Even Before the Movies

By WENDY MOONAN

"We archaeologists have to start with the materials at hand and then go to history," Dimitrios Pandermalis, a professor of classical archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, said on a recent trip to New York. "We do not start with history."

He was discussing the significance of the finds from Greek excavations now on display in "Alexander the Great: Treasures From an Epic Era of Hellenism," an exhibition at the Onassis Cultural Center in the Olympic Tower, 645 Fifth Avenue, at 51st Street, through April 16.

The discoveries include a magnificent third-century-B.C. marble portrait bust of Alexander, a fourth-century-B.C. solid silver drinking cup, an alabaster perfume vial as modern-looking as any by Armani, royal bronze armor and weapons, a panoply of gold jewelry, ivory, wall paintings from tombs and ancient coins.

"The Macedonians were living like the people in Homer's epics," Professor Pandermalis said.

Archaeologists derive much of their information from artifacts, since so much of Alexander's history is unknown. Some facts are accepted. He was born in 356 B.C., the son of Philip II, the mighty warrior king of Macedon, a region of northern Greece that Athenians considered highly provincial. Alexander became king in 336 B.C., after his father was assassinated at a royal wedding party, and soon set out to the East with his armies to fulfill his father's dream, the conquest of Asia. He died in 323 B.C., the ruler of two million square miles in the Middle East, the steppes of central Asia, northern India and Egypt. "To move for 12 years without stopping is an amazing thing," Professor Pandermalis said. "His tendency was to recognize no limits."

"More than 20 contemporaries wrote books on Alexander, and not one of them survives," Robin Lane Fox writes in "Alexander the Great" (Penguin, 1986). "They are known by quotations from later authors, not one of whom preserved the original wording."

Mr. Fox is certain of few facts about Alexander, apart from his looks. "As an adult, he would only sit to be painted by Apelles, sculpted by Lysippos or carved on gems by Pyrgoteles," Mr. Fox writes.

Alexander is easily recognized in busts, statuettes and gold coins in the show. He was movie-star handsome, with a straight nose, prominent chin, deep-set eyes and soft, sensuous lips. An early master of propaganda, he is always portrayed as a youth, with a slight indentation in his forehead (probably a war wound) and a cowlick. He has an upward gaze.

"Unlike his father and all previous Macedonian kings, he kept his beard cleanshaven," Mr. Fox writes. "His hair stood up off his brow and fell into a central parting; it framed his face and grew long and low on his neck."

The show includes two fine Greek marble portraits and a first-century-B.C. bronze statuette known as the "Equestrian Alexander," found in 1761 in Herculaneum, the ancient city in Italy. It is thought to be a copy of a famous lost statue by Lysippos showing Alexander astride his fabled horse, Bucephalus, about to spear an attacker.

"There are only a few sculptures of Alexander on horseback and only one is almost perfect," Professor Pandermalis said. "Here Alexander is wearing fourth-century-B.C. sandals and the style and movement of the horse go back to the fourth century B.C. The first equestrian portrait of Alexander was by Lysippos, Alexander's preferred sculptor. It is not a common type of portrait. The movement is crucial." Alexander loved riding, hunting and fighting, but he also appreciated music and poetry. He could play the lyre and recite Homer's "Iliad." (He identified with Achilles, the Greek warrior hero killed at Troy.) Alexander grew up in the Macedonian court, which once welcomed Euripides the playwright and Pindar the poet. There he met visitors from all over the known world: Persia, Egypt, Crete, Sicily and the Dardanelles. Philip II hired Aristotle to tutor Alexander at age 14 in Greek, Hebrew, Babylonian and Latin, rhetoric and justice. From him Alexander probably acquired his lifelong love of learning and openness to foreign cultures.

"He respected the religions of foreign kings, so their peoples proclaimed him a hero," Professor Pandermalis said. "It is unbelievable that someone behaved that way in antiquity."

More than a dozen artifacts from Philip II's tomb in the show include his royal table service, with silver wine cups, pitchers, bronze ladles and libation bowls. They would have been the objects seen at symposiums, lavish entertainments with food, wine, music and talk. The Macedonians lived well, partly because of the ample supply of gold being mined in the west and the constant arrival of war booty from the East.

"In 1776 we found the first royal tombs, of Philip II and Alexander IV, the son of Alexander the Great," Professor Pandermalis said. "In 1987 we found another group of

royal graves in Aigai," now Edessa, "with the tombs of queens, including the mother of Philip II. After 25 years, we thought it was time to show these new materials."

Alexander, like his father, was considered a brilliant military strategist. In the show, his battles are recalled in a section on Macedonian weapons and armor, including spears, sabers, helmets, shin guards and a royal shield.

"In the time of Alexander the Great, weapons were to men what jewelry was to women," Angeliki Kottaridi, an archaeologist with the Greek Ministry of Culture, writes in the show's catalog. "Expensive possessions, companions in war, they became symbols of a man's status in the world and followed him - warrior and hunter - to the grave."

There is even an original sarissa, a long spear introduced by Philip II. It is a wood shaft topped with a pyramidal bronze spike that proved lethal.

The women of Macedonia are represented by a set of ancient terra-cotta figurines that reveal contemporary hairstyles and dress fashions. Extensive toiletry sets include mirrors, cream containers and alabaster perfume flasks. "One was found in the tomb of Alexander's grandmother," Professor Pandermalis said.

The workmanship of the golden earrings, pendants, rings, bracelets and diadems is superb. From the most recent excavation of an ancient queen's tomb in Vergina come pure gold dress decorations in the forms of rosettes, pins, jewelry and ivory and gold shoes. Only the dress itself has disintegrated. Here is the world of Alexander in all its glory.

[Copyright 2004 The New York Times Company](#)