



## The Hellenic Society Prometheas

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Dear Friends,

The summer is upon us. Many of us are heading to or are already in Greece, enjoying the win of the *European Championship* by the Greek National Team (CONGRATULATIONS!!!!) and preparing to watch the Olympics. As usual, there are no Prometheas activities in the summer. However, we thought of keeping you informed with some interesting articles, mostly about the Olympics and by communicating the lecture, delivered by Professor Alexander Kitroeff on January, 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004 on the occasion of the celebration of the Greek Letters Day.

### **Professor Alexander Kitroeff's Lecture to Prometheas**

The following is an amended and expanded version of a lecture on modern Greece's role in the Olympics presented by Alexander Kitroeff, author of *Wrestling With the Ancients: Modern Greek Identity and the Olympics* (New York: greekworks.com, 2004) on January 30, 2004 at an event organized by the Hellenic Society Prometheas at St George Greek Orthodox Church, Bethesda Md. in honor of Greek Letters Day. Professor Kitroeff is a Professor of history at Haverford College, and his book has been widely praised as the most authoritative study on Greece's role in the Olympic movement, from the nineteenth century to the present. It is available on the web at <http://www.greekworks.com/WWTA/index.asp>

### **“Modern Greece’s Role in the Olympics”**

Modern Greece is cornerstone of the elaborate symbolism through which the modern Olympic movement asserts its ties with the ideals of the Ancient Olympics. Indeed, the more the Olympics have been threatened by war, commercialization, politics and performance enhancing drugs, the more they have a need to ground their image in the sporting legacies of Ancient Greece. Modern Greece figures in the Olympic movement as the bridge between the present and the past, as the steward of the legacy of Ancient Greece.

This is confirmed by a series of symbolic practices that are integral to the Olympic Games, the only international sporting competition that relies on an extensive set of rituals. I am referring of course to the lighting of the flame in Olympia, the torch relays to the host city and the lighting of the cauldron, the entrance of the Greek team and flag ahead of the parade of nations, the raising of the Greek flag next to that of the host nation, the playing of the Greek national anthem at the closing ceremony and so on.

For many people, modern Greece's position of privilege in the Olympic movement is something natural and self-evident: the modern Olympics trace their origins to Ancient Greece, therefore Ancient Greece's heir, modern Greece obviously plays an important role in the movement.

But if one looks carefully at the history of the Olympic Games, one sees that these symbolic practices I mentioned were introduced relatively late, in the 1920s and the 1930s, a result of very specific and real needs the Olympics were experiencing in the wake of World War I.

What I intend to do is tell you the story of how this happened – this is just part of a bigger story I tell in my book, *Wrestling with the Ancients: Modern Greek Identity and the Olympics*. This evening I will be focusing mainly on the period that ended with the Los Angeles Olympics of 1932.

The Olympic Games are a unique international sporting competition because they are modeled on the idealist principles of Games that were held in Antiquity. The purpose of the Olympic Games is to evoke the Olympic spirit, not merely to produce winners, as is the case with other international competitions in sports such as golf, soccer and tennis.

The Olympic spirit is the brainchild of the founder of the Modern Olympics, the baron Pierre de Coubertin, who was inspired by the earlier efforts of revival in Greece, the so-called Zappas Olympics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Olympic spirit amounts to basically a modern application of the ideals of the Ancient Olympics, as conceived in the context of C19th European romantic philhellenism.

The Ancient Olympics did not always match their lofty ideals and Coubertin was aware of that, but for him the important point was the high standards they set and the ways they enabled sport to become a means of fulfilling human potential.

Coubertin proposed the revival of the Ancient Olympics at a meeting held at the University of the Sorbonne in Paris in 1894. There, he also proposed that the first modern Olympic Games be held in Athens, in order to honor the country that was the modern heir of Ancient Greek civilization that spawned the Ancient Olympics. The Greek delegate at the meeting, the writer Demetrios Vikelas, concurred enthusiastically, assuming the government in Athens would also agree.

The baron Pierre de Coubertin is the first Frenchman Greek schoolchildren learn about. I certainly encountered him very early on – at my school in Athens - even before learning about the French philhellenes who fought for Greece's liberation in the 1821 uprising against the Ottomans. The reason is that Coubertin is considered a philhellene who revived an Ancient Greek institution.

It is important here for us to understand that Coubertin's philhellenism was of the C19th romantic type, regarded modern as a landscape through which one could commune with

Ancient Greece. The romantic philhellenes thought of modern Greece as an environment that conveyed the spirit of the place, the spirit of Ancient Greece.

It is as important to understand that the baron also considered himself to be a pedagogue, indeed, a pedagogue with a mission, namely to improve the human condition internationally through the appropriate use of sport. He wished to apply the ideals of Ancient Greece to the modern world.

Coubertin's vision ran into an anticipated obstacle when he arrived in Greece later in 1894 to discuss the preparations for the first modern Olympics. The government, under Charilaos Trikoupis, in serious financial trouble, was unwilling to undertake the first Olympic Games. A little earlier, Trikoupis had stood in the Greek parliament and uttered the now infamous phrase, *Kyrioi, Dystichos Eptochefsame* Gentlemen, unfortunately we are bankrupt.

Greece had defaulted on paying the enormous foreign loans Trikoupis had contracted while leading the country through a decade of unprecedented growth and modernization. Understandably, he was worried that Greece could not shoulder the costs of preparing the Games, even though Coubertin cheerfully underestimated the total costs.

But the Royal family, its eye on anything that could ensure popularity, supported the plan of holding the first Olympics in Athens. The Trikoupis government was overcome – in fact it was overthrown – and Greece began preparing for the Games.

The first modern Olympics held in Athens in 1896 are considered by all observers to have been a tremendous success – even though the preparations went on until the last minute.

There were 241 athletes from 14 nations and they competed in 43 athletic events - it was the greatest international sporting event held in the C19th.

Aside from learning early on about Coubertin, another thing you pick up very soon if you are growing up in Greece is that the Greek runner Spyros Louis won the marathon race in 1896. Many accounts of the 1896 Games describe in detail the eruption of national pride as Louis entered the Panathenaic stadium and crossed the finishing line.

On the final day, a Greek had managed to come first in a track and field event – no wonder the crowd erupted.

But it is also true that the Greek people were the ideal host for this event, applauding generously all competitors and especially the winners, many of whom were Americans.

There was an atmosphere of international camaraderie among the spectators in the stadium, even though the home crowd was initially shocked and amused when they heard the American cheers for the first time. The custom in Greece was to applaud and shout

hurrah (*Zeto!*) but the Americans introduced more startling combinations including loud cries of Rah-rah-rah! Rah-rah-rah!

But in a move that evokes the atmosphere in the stadium, King George of the Hellenes was so fascinated, he asked the Americans to perform the cheer again so that the royal family could learn it.

The Americans were only too happy to oblige, and serenaded the Vip section with rhythmic cries of Rah, Rah, Rah! Ellas, Ellas Ellas! Rah, Rah Rah! Zeto, Zeto, Zeto!

An important effect of the 1896 Games was that the atmosphere in Athens was conducive to making many foreigners sense a connection with the Ancient Greek traditions that the modern Olympics wished to recreate. For example, U.S. athlete Ellery Clark, winner of the high jump and the long jump, described it as experiencing: “ the flavor of the Athenian soil [that helped] to bridge the gap between the old and the new – the indefinable poetic charm of knowing one’s self thus linked to the past, a successor to the great heroic figures of olden times...” Many other contemporary observers evoked similar feelings.

One would have expected that Coubertin would be preparing to leave Athens gladdened by the outcome of the Games. The first modern Olympics had taken place in an atmosphere of international cooperation and with many explicit and implicit allusions to Ancient Greece and the ancient idealist spirit of the Games. His two-part philosophy, of internationalism and of evoking the ancient spirit had been realized.

However, riding high on the crest of enthusiasm over the success of the games, King George proposed that Greece becomes the permanent venue of the Olympic Games. Many foreign delegates, including the Americans, applauded the idea. But Coubertin, whom his hosts had ignored during the Games, disagreed strongly, fearing that it would compromise the international scope of the Olympics. He left embittered and suspicious of the Greeks.

This difference between the Greeks and Coubertin exemplified the difficulties the Olympic movement faced in arriving at a commonly accepted role for modern Greece in the context of invoking the legacy of Ancient Greece.

This is the type of problem Greece has encountered in arriving at a satisfactory and balanced way at representing its sense of continuity with the ancients. Greece has an especially big historical burden to carry, and striking the right balance between evoking ancient traditions or modernity has always been difficult.

This wrestling with the ancients was reconciled by a compromise: the Olympic Games would take place in different international venues every four years, but Greece would organize interim Olympics in between. Ultimately, this happened only once, when the Olympics took place in Athens in 1906.

Nonetheless, the 1906 interim Olympics in Athens served to strengthen the Olympic Games and guarantee their viability. This was because the second Olympics, held in Paris in 1900 and the third Olympics, held in St. Louis in 1904 were not well conceived. In both cases, they were overshadowed by world exhibitions that were going at the same time in both those cities. As several historians of the Games have stated, the Olympic movement was in a major crisis after 1904, and their future was in jeopardy.

Fortunately for the movement, Greece spared no effort and no expense to ensure the success of the 1906 games. All of those who study the Olympic movement are unanimous in believing that their success was crucial to the future prosperity of the Games.

Again, Athens played its role as a city that enabled its foreign visitors to connect with the ancient past and understand that the Olympics were not just about sport but also about the ideals of the ancients.

Nonetheless, it took a while for Coubertin to acknowledge Greece's special function, because he was focused on the international dimension of the Games. He was concerned that regularly held interim Games in Athens would detract from the importance of the Games held at other venues across the world.

But two developments helped change this. First, Greece was unable to stage any more interim Games. Domestic political turmoil put a quick end to plans to hold them in 1910 and the Balkan Wars and the escalating international tension on the eve of WWI precluded the holding of interim Games in 1914. After that, the idea of interim Games faded.

Second, WWI not only prevented the regular Olympics to take place in 1916, but it also threatened the very existence of the Games. The brutality of the war shattered the idealism of a whole generation and questioned the very usefulness of the modern Olympics and the relevance of the Olympic spirit. The games were supposed to replace armed conflict by goodwill and sportsmanship, but there seemed little left of that vision in the wake of the carnage of trench warfare.

With the Olympics facing the worst crisis of their existence, Coubertin realized that the movement had to return to its roots and draw sustenance from its Ancient origins. What better way to respond to the cynicism of the modern age than by offering the timeless idealism of Ancient Greek civilization?

Coubertin set about implementing this strategy by including a great deal of ritual and symbolism that evoked Ancient Greece with the inclusion of modern Greece. Given Greece's post-war social upheavals, it was impractical to take the Olympics back to Athens, nor did Greece make any such request.



In the next Olympics, that were held in Berlin, the symbolism was taken a step further with the lighting of the flame in Ancient Olympia and the torchbearers' relay to the host city.

All this remained after Coubertin's death in 1937. As the founder of a movement so fond of ritual and symbolism, the French baron inevitably became a symbol himself. The old fashioned, romantic philhellenism that inspired him became a credo of the Olympic movement by virtue of his canonization as its founder and guiding spirit in the aftermath of his death.

It remained also precisely because of its functional significance to the Olympic movement: modern Greece was not merely there for decorative purposes. Rather, it earned privileged role in the ritual and symbolism of the Olympics, as the bridge between past and present and as an indispensable element in the attempts of the Olympic movement to instill purity in sports by recourse to the Ancient Greek spirit.

After WWII, Greece continued to play its important role that was rendered all the more significant given the pressures the Olympic movement faced during the Cold War, the rise of commercialization and the spread of performance enhancing drugs. Ancient Olympia's uncovering through excavations and its accessibility through newly cut roads in the post-war era, along with a renewed sense that the Greek landscape evoked the spirit of the place made the ancient site a focal point of the Olympic movement. It also would solidified Greece's role in the movement in the second half of the twentieth century.

The Athens 2004 organizers have promised us a creative and effective evocation of Ancient Greece and the spirit of the Olympics. This spirit of friendship obviously takes on a special importance in the context of a world that is so divided and polarized after 9/11 and the war in Iraq.

Instead of organizing what would have been the shortest-ever torch relay from Ancient Olympia to the host city, they have organized a global relay that went through Peloponessos, to the Panathenaic Stadium and is presently in Asia and will arrive in this city in a few days.

This relay echoes the ancient practice of sending messengers to the other cities inviting them to the Games and proclaiming an *ekechereia*, a truce, an obligation to halt combat during the Olympics.

But can Greece's status and long-standing contribution the Olympic movement be jeopardized nonetheless, by security or organizational problems this August?

No one can predict the future, least of all a historian. But it is worth making four points here.

First, the issue of security looms large over the 2004 Games, but everything has been done to secure a safe Olympics. In the face of new dangers, the security budget has

tripled to 800 million dollars US and major security services plus NATO are cooperating to ensure the safety of the 2 million visitors that will descend on Athens this August. It is hard to imagine what else the Greek hosts are supposed to do in terms of security.

Second: Let's be the first to concede that there were months and months of delays in Athens before the preparations started. But let us also recognize how much Greece has caught up over the past few months. The latest news coming out of Athens is extremely encouraging. The infamous stadium roof is now in place, the second section slid in successfully 48 hours ago. Many reports are now cautiously painting complimentary pictures of all that has been achieved over the past few months.

Third, we should also remember that Greece is the smallest country hosting the Olympics for the past 50 years. In the meantime, the needs of the competition have grown to gigantic proportions. It is doubtful that any mid-sized country such as Greece would have been able to get everything ready without certain difficulties. We should consider that the Olympics are a global competition enveloping the whole world: if we do not give mid-sized countries the chance to host the games, as Greece is doing so this summer, then the Olympics will become the monopoly of the powerful nations of the world and thus the Games will lose their universalism.

Fourth: a divided world needs the Ancient Olympic spirit more than ever. These 2004 Olympics are the first after 9/11 and the Iraq war, events that have spawned such animosity and division in an already polarized world. Athens is the only city that can furnish the games with this badly needed Olympic spirit. It is not by chance that International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge, responding to pressing questions about Athens' preparations has said that above all, Athens is in a unique position to offer the Olympics its sense of ancient history.

And we know that the Olympics, and the world, need that inspirational ancient history more than ever. And given Greece's central role in the Olympic movement since 1896, I feel we can be confident that when the Olympics go back home this summer, the world will witness a memorable event that will honor Greece's past and its present.

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### **Miscellaneous Articles of Interest**

**July 18, 2004**

**WHAT'S DOING**

## **In Athens**

**By CORINNE LaBALME**

Athens embarked on a herculean task when it successfully bid to bring the Olympic Summer Games back to home turf. The municipal projects were so numerous, and so

wildly ambitious, that not all of them will be completed on schedule. Restoration work on the Acropolis, for instance, will be going on for years after the last medals have been awarded.

Nevertheless, the amount that has been accomplished is impressive. Athens has many gorgeous new hotels, renovated museums, an efficient new airport, and an elegant Olympic Stadium with a winglike steel-and-glass dome designed by the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava. The stadium defied naysayers by being ready last month.

The most lasting and efficient monument to the 2004 Games, which will be held Aug. 13 to 29, is buried underground. Additions to the Athens subway system have already helped ease congestion. And, as every dig in downtown Athens turns up archaeological treasure, the new stations have been turned into mini- museums. Beneath Syntagma Square, commuters can commune with Submycenaean graves, painted terra-cotta drainpipes from the fifth century B.C., and parts of an aqueduct, all preserved behind glass.

The good news for last-minute travelers is that, because the initial reports of Athens's readiness were so dismal and concern for security remains great, tickets and hotel rooms are still available. The bad: The city is still hit by summer blackouts, as a power failure July 12 reaffirmed.

The "Cultural Olympics" program, started by Greece and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, means that museums and concert halls have all prepared blockbuster programs for the summer. Ticket information for sports events is available at (800) 360-2004 or (877) 457-4647; online at [www.cartan.com](http://www.cartan.com) or [www.cosport.com](http://www.cosport.com). Last-minute hotel accommodations during the Games can be found online at [www.athenshousing.com](http://www.athenshousing.com).

The 2004 Paralympics, which will take place at various Olympic sites around Athens, are scheduled for Sept. 17 to 28. Information: [www.athens2004.com](http://www.athens2004.com).

### **Events**

Expect sport-oriented shows in many Athenian museums, and longer hours than usual during the Games. Through Sept. 15, "Magna Graecia: Athletics and the Olympic Spirit," at the Museum of Cycladic Art, 4 Neophytou Douka Street, telephone (30-210) 722 8321, online at [www.cycladic-m.gr](http://www.cycladic-m.gr), traces the Olympic ideal to the frontiers of the Greek world with more than 270 archaeological objects from 30 museums in Southern Italy and Greece, including the first known stone model of a stadium, second century A.D., from Hadrian's villa at Tivoli. Open Monday and Wednesday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Aug. 15. Admission: about \$4.40 (at \$1.25 to the euro). From Aug. 9 to 30, it will be open at no charge, Wednesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Tuesday to 5 p.m.

After nearly two years of renovation, the National Archaeological Museum, 44 Patission Street, (30-210) 821 7717, will reopen with "Agon Sport Spirit in Ancient Greece," through Oct. 31, with 280 artifacts relating to everything from Olympic wrestling to poetry contests. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission: \$7.50.

A major fashion exhibition runs through Oct. 17 at the new annex of the chic Benaki Museum, 138 Pireos Street, (30-210) 367 1000, [www.benaki.gr](http://www.benaki.gr). The exhibition, "Drapery: Ancient Greece to the 21st Century," juxtaposes classical statues with gowns by Mariano Fortuny, Madame Vionnet and Issey Miyake. Some gowns adorn mannequins; others are strung up like mobiles or spread on the floor. Open 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; admission is \$3.75.

Many Athenian galleries that typically close in August will remain open this year. The British artists Gilbert and George, known for their provocative use of nudity, religious symbolism and profanity, examine the dark side of team spirit with "Thirteen Hooligan Pictures - 2004" at the Bernier-Eliades Gallery, 11 Eptachalkou Street, (30-210) 341 3936, Aug. 3 to 30, 8 p.m. to midnight.

Through Sept. 28, the Athens Festival presents open-air drama, dance and music in the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, built in A.D. 161, at the foot of the Acropolis. The London Symphony Orchestra performs Aug. 7 to 9; tickets are \$43 to \$137.50. The Lyceum of Greek Women presents traditional folk dance and songs on Aug. 16 and 17; tickets are \$27.50 to \$87.50. Comedy reigns on Sept. 9 with the Greek National Theater production of Aristophanes' antiwar "Lysistrata"; tickets are \$18.75 to \$68.75. The main box office is in the arcade at 39 Panepistimiou Street, (30-210) 928 2900, fax (30-210) 928 2933, online at [www.hellenicfestival.gr](http://www.hellenicfestival.gr). Tickets go on sale three weeks before shows.

### **Sightseeing**

Avant-garde got a slow start in antiquity-obsessed Athens, but it is gaining ground quickly. The Rebecca Camhi Gallery, [www.rebeccacamhi.com](http://www.rebeccacamhi.com), which opened next to the gritty Central Food Market in 1995, is usually credited with kick-starting the hip downtown scene centered in the rough-edged Psirri district. Although Camhi is closed for renovation this summer, many Psirri galleries, like A. Antonopoulou, on the fourth floor at 20 Aristofanous Street, (30-210) 321 4994, will open from 8 p.m. to midnight during the Olympics. It is a neighborhood of busy nightclubs and jazz bars, which generally open at 11 on weeknights and go till dawn or later on weekends, but many are closed till after the summer. Stoa Athanaton, 19 Sofokleus, (30-210) 321 4362, a popular spot for Greek-Turkish rembetika blues, will reopen in October.

In the quest for open space, "downtown" Athenian art and mainstream museums like the new Benaki Annex are moving westward from Psirri to a neighborhood called Gazi. Greece's largest contemporary fine arts complex is housed in an abandoned 19th-century gasworks dubbed Technopolis, 100 Pireos Street, (30-210) 346 0981. Through Aug. 30, the site's Kostis Palmas Hall will welcome an exhibit devoted to the Baron Pierre de Coubertin and the first modern Games, which he helped organize in Athens in 1896. Open daily, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; free. Technopolis also houses the first Greek museum dedicated to Maria Callas. The fledgling museum presents some of her letters, personal photographs and clothes.

A few blocks north, an early 20th-century brick textile factory has been converted into a museum-conference center called Athinai, at 34-36 Kastorias Street, (30-210) 348 0000, [www.Athinai.com.gr](http://www.Athinai.com.gr), with restaurants and exhibition rooms. The in-house Pierides Museum presents "3,200 Years of Cypriot Art" through Dec. 31. Open daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission: \$3.75.

### **Where to Stay**

With double-glazed windows and air-conditioning, the Omonia Grand Hotel, (30-210) 523 5230, fax (30-210) 523 4955, [www.grecotel.gr](http://www.grecotel.gr), is an oasis of calm in Athens's answer to Times Square: noisy, central Omonia Square. The 115 rooms, renovated in 2000, have CD players, cable television, voice mail and a pleasing, modern décor that incorporates trompe l'oeil Greek key friezes as room accents. Amenities include marble bathrooms. Doubles: \$187.50.

Two blocks south of the Acropolis, the Hotel Herodion, 4 Rovertou Galli Street, (30-210) 923 6832, fax (30-210) 921 1650, [www.herodion.gr](http://www.herodion.gr), has 90 air-conditioned rooms decorated in soft pastel shades of peach and pistachio with marble bathrooms. ISDN lines and handicapped-access rooms are available. The restaurant is off the ground-floor garden, and the lounge chairs on the rooftop terrace offer priceless views of the Parthenon. Doubles: \$187.50.

All 176 rooms at the Best Western Esperia Palace Hotel, 22 Stadiou Street, (30-210) 323 8001, fax (30-210) 323 8100, [www.esperia.gr](http://www.esperia.gr), should be freshly redecorated with pale gold walls and red carpets in time for Olympic guests. The copious breakfast buffet is a bonus at this city-center hotel four blocks from Syntagma Square. Doubles: \$218.75.

Budget: Open since May, the Hotel Amazon, 19 Mitropoleos Street, (30-210) 323 4002, fax (30-210) 322 6672, [www.amazonhotel.gr](http://www.amazonhotel.gr), has 40 simple but spotless air-conditioned rooms and glossy white bathrooms with showers. Convenient to Syntagma Square and Ermou Street shopping, the hotel is directly across from one of the city's most charming curiosities: the tiny 16th-century Agia Dinami chapel wedged beneath a high-rise office building. Doubles: From \$112.50.

Luxury: In 1896, the Baron Pierre de Coubertin stayed at the Grande Bretagne, Syntagma Square, (30-210) 333 0000, fax (30-210) 322 8034, [www.grandebretagne.gr](http://www.grandebretagne.gr). After a 15-month makeover, this 19th-century landmark reopened in March 2003 with two swimming pools, a flashy spa and 321 enlarged rooms with walk-in wooden closets, elaborate chandeliers and an impressive array of neo-Classical furniture collected at European auction houses. Doubles: \$312.50 to \$587.50. Closed for 14 years, the King George II, Syntagma Square, (30-210) 322 2210, fax (30-210) 325 0504, [www.grecotel.gr](http://www.grecotel.gr), reopened on May 31. Parquet floors, intricate Venetian lamps and antique furniture lend a boutique-hotel flair to the 102 rooms. The two-bedroom penthouse suite, \$9,375 a night, has a private outdoor pool. The spa and indoor pool open this month. Doubles: from \$456.25.

### **Where to Eat**

In a garden courtyard adjoining the National Historical Museum, Palia Vouli, 9 Anthimou Gazi in the Syntagma district, (30-210) 321 1311, serves full meals (toasted cheese appetizers, \$11.25; grilled shrimp in lemon and olive oil, \$30), plus pasta and copious main course salads. The Old Parliament salad - piled high with mixed lettuce, steamed vegetables, pine nuts and raisins in a sweet mustard vinaigrette - is \$14.40. A bottle of Greek chardonnay averages \$37.50.

The ivory-tinted Tudor Hall restaurant that opened May 31 atop the King George II Hotel on Syntagma Square offers sweeping views of downtown Athens and the Acropolis. The lavish menu created by Sotiris Evangelou in conjunction with Alain Ducasse features spiny lobster Caesar salad with coral sauce, red mullet in zucchini marmalade, and lamb filets in black olive crust. Dinner for two with wine: \$312.50.

On a secluded street in the touristy Plaka district, the romantic, grapevine-draped Sholarheion, 14 Tripodon, (30-210) 324 7605, presents classic Greek bistro fare like yogurt-cucumber salad, white beans, greens simmered in olive oil, garlic cod, and stuffed vine leaves on a dim-sum style tray. Each dish is \$2.50 to \$5. All the wine and ouzo is made on the family's country property. Dinner for two with wine: \$31.25.

The car-free plaza in front of the 19th-century Megali Mitropoli and the 12th-century Mikri Mitropoli churches provides the casual Metropol café, Place Mitropoleos, (30-210) 321 1980, with fresh air and fine views. Club sandwiches are \$8.75, and a feta-topped Greek salad is \$7.75. Banana milkshakes are \$5, and a bottle of retsina is \$13.10.

The new nightclub scene in the avant-garde Gazi district starts late. Get a head start on the evening with a barbecue buffet \$25 at the Café Votanikos in the Athinais Center, 34-36 Kastorias Street, (30-210) 348 0000. The charcoal is fired up at 9 every night, and the party lasts until everyone but the cows go home.

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**July 18, 2004**

## **Where Athletes Once Ran**

**By SHERRY MARKER**

THIS summer, when the games return to Greece for the Athens 2004 Olympics, athletes will again compete in the ancient stadiums at Olympia and Nemea. On July 31, some 700 contestants from more than 20 countries are registered to race in groups of 12 for 100 meters on the clay surface of Nemea's stadium.

The 100-meter races are sponsored by the Society for the Revival of the Nemean Games, founded in 1994 by the citizens of the villages of Ancient and New Nemea to revive the spirit of the ancient contest. The society's stated hope is that "anyone and everyone" will participate, and contestants ranging in age from 10 to 97 have signed up to run in the 100 meters, the 7.5-kilometer "Footsteps of Herakles" race or both. Then, on Aug. 18, the shot put event in the

Athens 2004 Olympics - the XXVIII International Olympiad - will take place at Olympia, bringing the games back to the place where they began.

Every four years from 776 B.C. to A.D. 394, athletes from throughout the Greek world came to Olympia to compete for a victor's wreath of olive fronds - a prize more appropriate for a goat, as one ancient cynic remarked. For almost 200 years, Olympia held the monopoly on the Panhellenic games, but during the sixth century B.C., games were founded at three other sanctuaries: Delphi (586 B.C.), Isthmia (580 B.C.) and Nemea (573 B.C.). Of the four, Delphi in central Greece was best known both then and now for its famous oracle. By contrast, the three Panhellenic sites in the Peloponnesus - Olympia, Isthmia and Nemea - all owed their fame to their games.

Recently, I set out by car to revisit the Peloponnesian sites where most of the athletic action in ancient Greece took place. It is technically possible to leave Athens in the morning, see Isthmia and Nemea by midafternoon, pull into Olympia in the early evening and take on the imposing site, a 10-minute walk from the village, and its three excellent museums the next day. I prefer to leave endurance contests to the athletes and spent a day at Isthmia and Nemea and two full days at Olympia.

I've seldom encountered any other visitors at Isthmia, or enough visitors at Nemea that I wanted to flee, but Olympia gets a steady inundation of tour groups. The best way to avoid the throngs is to arrive precisely when the site opens, leave when it becomes hard to see the monuments because of the groups, and return an hour or two before the site closes, when most visitors are long gone. Still, crowds at Olympia are hardly a new problem. The first/second century A.D. philosopher Epictetus grouched: "Aren't you crushed by the crowd. Aren't you bothered by the noise, the din and other nuisances?"

Olympia sprawls along a green valley in the northwest Peloponnesus, shaded by olive, pine and poplar trees, watered by the Alpheus and Kladeus Rivers. Olympia usually smells wonderful, scented by wildflowers in the spring, and oregano, thyme and the pine trees in the summer. In late antiquity, the two rivers repeatedly burst their banks, flooded and finally buried the sanctuary. It's almost impossible to believe, but this vast site went missing for more than a thousand years. Then, in 1766, the English antiquarian Richard Chandler rediscovered Olympia, and in 1875, German excavators began to unearth the monuments from under 16 feet of silt.

The modest excavation house where the first archaeologists lived overlooks the site and has recently been converted into the new Museum of the History of the Excavations in Olympia. Photographs show understandably startled and confused 19th-century workers staring down into the deep excavation pits from which ancient Olympia was re-emerging. The shovels and small whisk brooms on display uncovered much that one now admires, including the remains of baths and gymnasiums, the clusters of administrative offices, the stadium and the sacred precinct with the stolid temples of Zeus and Hera, shrines and treasuries.

Like other Panhellenic sanctuaries, Olympia was not a city, but an amalgam of a religious shrine and athletic complex. Now, as in antiquity, the stadium and the temples of Hera and Zeus are easy to spot. At present, archaeologists are racing to re-erect one of the columns in the Temple of Zeus before this summer's Olympics. Nearby, workers are also restoring the base of the Philippeion, the round shrine that Philip of Macedon less than modestly commissioned after he conquered Greece in 338 B.C.

It is not always easy to be sure what's what in the extensive remains of athletic and administrative buildings that flank Olympia's sacred precinct. As a result, many visitors walk through the site with the same half-startled, half-confused expressions as those early excavators. I once sat writing postcards saying that I was in the famous gymnasium at Olympia only to discover later that I had been in the less-famous palestra, where athletes also practiced. Plans of the sanctuary sometimes do and sometimes do not help to pinpoint your location or destination: the Great Altar

of Zeus, where 100 oxen were slaughtered and burned during the games, has not survived, but is shown on most plans. Gone, too, is the sensible little shrine that was dedicated to Zeus the Averter of Flies.

Olympia's hippodrome, where two- and four-horse chariots raced and often crashed, has yet to be found, but was probably near the well-preserved stadium. If you're curious to know just how big an ancient chariot wheel was, you can see one by heading uphill from the site to the second new museum, the Museum of the History of the Olympic Games in Antiquity. In the handsome 19th-century building that housed Olympia's first archaeological museum, it is a real delight. An impressive terra-cotta owl guards the museum from the red tile roof above its colonnaded portico. The museum's 12 galleries show that the games began modestly enough with one foot race on one day: the roughly 200-meter dash known as the stadion, from which the word stadium derives. In time, the games lasted five days, as events including boxing and wrestling (breaking fingers was forbidden), running in armor and chariot races were added. Although athletes still competed for the glory of a victor's wreath, they were awarded free meals for life and large sums of money when they returned home. Throughout the museum, statues, vases and athletic gear show how the athletes trained and competed.

Olympia's Archaeological Museum is directly opposite the ancient site. The museum was built in 1972, and its recent renovations did not enliven its dull exterior. However, the reinstalled galleries, arranged chronologically, are now well lighted, and the exhibits make clear that nothing but the best was good enough for Ancient Olympia. Almost every victorious athlete dedicated a statue here, and victorious generals and triumphant cities erected monuments. The Hermes of Praxiteles, the Nike of Paionios and the sculpture from the Temple of Zeus are the museum's superstars. One new display is a poignant reminder of how much has been lost: a case of delicate bronze ringlets that are all that remain from statues that once stood in the sanctuary.

From Olympia, I headed across the Peloponnesus to the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia, on the eastern side of the narrow isthmus of Corinth. The site is on the main road through the desultory village of Kryas Vrissi, on a parched plateau cut through by deep ravines. I keep trying to like Isthmia, but, I must confess, I find it the kind of site best described as "of interest primarily to the professional archaeologist." In fact, Oscar Broneer, the University of Chicago archaeologist who excavated here from 1952 to 1967, remarked of the Temple of Poseidon that "the casual visitor will marvel chiefly, perhaps, at the thoroughness of its destruction." Dr. Broneer showed extraordinary restraint in his remark: there is little left even of the temple's foundations. In short, if you didn't know, you'd never guess from what's here that Isthmia was once both an important Panhellenic sanctuary and a thriving market town on the main road between Athens and Corinth. In troubled times, the sanctuary's monuments were an irresistible quarry for those who needed nicely hewn blocks to build a defense wall or augment a fortress - hence today's meager remains.

The Sanctuary of Zeus in the valley of Nemea, 25 miles southwest of Isthmia, is circled by hills, many covered with the vineyards that produce excellent wines. One red wine, known as the Blood of Hercules, honors the hero who slew the Nemean lion and, according to some accounts, founded the games both here and at Olympia.

If there's simply not enough to see at Isthmia, and perhaps too much to digest easily at Olympia, Nemea is just right. The Temple of Zeus stands at the center of Nemea's sacred precinct. Flanking it are the remains, as at Olympia, of the sports complex and administrative buildings. Nemea's excellent archaeological museum has windows overlooking the site, which allow visitors the unusual treat of being able to see where many exhibits were found.

Nemea is a wonderful place to get a sense of how the centuries rub elbows in Greece: the site's fifth-century A.D. Christian basilica was built in part from stones pillaged from the fourth-century B.C. Temple of Zeus. And the basilica itself rests on the foundations of a large fourth-century B.C. hotel where participants in the Nemean games once stayed.

For centuries, only three of the slender Doric limestone columns of the Temple of Zeus remained standing. After three years of work, two additional columns were re-erected in 2002, and there are plans to restore at least four others. It is often possible to watch as workers flute replacement column drums and restore ancient drums from fragments that were once shattered and scattered. THE Romans are justly famous for their baths, but Nemea boasts the remains of a fourth-century B.C. Greek bathing establishment, the first built at any Panhellenic sanctuary. It was hot when I visited Nemea recently, and it was easy to imagine myself splashing about in the bath's plunge pool. Alas, it was only a fantasy: the pool is nicely restored, but empty.

And my fantasy totally repressed the realities of ancient athletics, which were almost entirely male. With few exceptions, women neither competed in, nor watched, the games, although contests for women honoring Zeus's long-suffering wife Hera were held at Olympia. Still, most Greeks derided the famously fit Spartan women, who exercised in scanty costumes that revealed their thighs. A few very wealthy matrons are known to have sponsored teams in chariot races. Their male relatives, able to watch the races, presumably told them who won.

The New Nemean Games this July 31 will make several accommodations to modern conventions: both men and women will race, none naked, although all will run barefoot. Contestants will wear a chiton (short tunic), which they will put on in what the excavation director, Stephen G. Miller, a classics professor at the University of California, Berkeley, has identified as the stadium's locker room. Then, they will sprint through the limestone entrance tunnel into the stadium to "toe the line" incised in the ancient starting block for their 100-meter race. And then, as Dr. Miller puts it, they will "add their footsteps to those first made here 2,300 years ago."

#### **Site Information**

**Olympia:** The ancient site of Olympia, (30-26240) 22-517, in the modern village of Olympia, known as Archaia Olympia, is open daily 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. in summer; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year. (End dates for summer hours vary for these sites and museums, but generally end Nov. 1; it is always best to call ahead.)

For Olympics information, visit [athens2004.com](http://athens2004.com); for information on museums, sites and events, try [www.culture.gr](http://www.culture.gr).

The **Archaeological Museum**, (30-26240) 22-742, is open Tuesday to Sunday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Monday noon to 7 p.m. in summer; Tuesday to Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Monday noon to 5 p.m. the rest of the year. Admission to the site and the museum is \$7.50 each, \$11.25 for both, at \$1.25 to the euro.

The **Museum of the History of the Olympic Games in Antiquity** is open Tuesday to Sunday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Monday noon to 7 p.m. in summer; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday and Monday noon to 5 p.m. the rest of the year. Free.

The **Museum of the History of Excavations** in Olympia, (30-26240) 29-128, is open Tuesday to Sunday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Monday noon to 7 p.m. in summer; Tuesday to Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Monday noon to 5 p.m. the rest of the year. Free.

The heart of Pierre de Coubertin (1862-1937), the French aristocrat who was instrumental in reviving the modern Olympics, is interred in a stele on the grounds of the **International Olympic Academy**, a five-minute walk from the ancient site.

**Isthmia:** The ancient site of Isthmia and the museum, (30-27410) 37-244, in the village of Kyras Vrisi, are open daily 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. this summer (closed Monday the rest of the year); \$2.50; under 18 free.

**Nemea:** The ancient site of Nemea, the stadium and museum, (30-27460) 22-739, in the village of Archaia Nemea, are open daily 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; admission to all three, \$5. Information on Nemea and its games can be found at [www.nemea.org](http://www.nemea.org).

### **Lodging and Dining**

There is no shortage of hotels and restaurants in the modern village of Olympia. The most congenial place to stay when visiting Isthmia and Nemea is the town of Nafplio, which also has a wide range of hotels. Useful Web sites for hotel information are [www.gnto.gr](http://www.gnto.gr) and [www.all-hotels-in-greece.com](http://www.all-hotels-in-greece.com).

*SHERRY MARKER spends part of the year in Greece.*

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## **Book reviews**

### **Streaking to Victory**

Reviewed by Tracy Lee Simmons

Sunday, July 11, 2004; Page BW04

#### THE NAKED OLYMPICS

The True Story of the Ancient Games

By Tony Perrottet. Random House. 214 pp. Paperback, \$12.95

The ancient Greek Olympic games, according to the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, presented Western man with what we are now pleased to call a metaphor for human existence. Life is struggle and strife. Out in the dusty arena, all is desire, practice, noise, hope, exertion, sweat, agony -- and at the end of the day stand few winners and many, many losers. Athletes got to prove their mettle, and victory meant certain fame. But what was in it for those in the stands? Why would so many people travel vast, arduous distances to witness repeated renditions of human frustration? To see the winners crowned with laurel, some say; to sympathize with and celebrate the human condition, say others. But mostly they flocked to them, the old philosopher said, because the games were "an unforgettable spectacle," the ultimate amusement. The games were, in a word -- and in all senses of the word -- vulgar.

So we might also say of war, that other proving ground for manhood. Yet an ongoing athletic gathering posed a splendid way for young men to test their physical prowess, and even to gain immortality of a sort, without hacking off limbs. As we might expect of this hardy people, they played as hard as they fought. The reigning images of classical Greek culture for us now may include the philosopher and poet, warrior and statesman, but the ancient Greeks were also like the rest of us, which is another way of saying that they were frivolous as well as profound.

Just in time for the modern Olympic games to return to Greece this summer for the first time in more than a century, Tony Perrottet offers up a diverting primer on the Olympics of the ancient kind. For while the modern games still bear the marks of their ancestry, the old and the new Olympics should not be confused. The title points to the first and most obvious difference. Athletes in the original events at Olympia, "the focus of the greatest recurring festival in Western history," performed largely gymnos -- in the nude, an ancient practice unlikely to be revived. (From gymnos comes the word "gymnasium.") The ancient Olympic games, which began in 776 B.C. and were little interrupted for 12 centuries, came tightly -- and for us, inexplicably -- entwined with Greek religion.

Hercules, a demigod, was said to have blocked off the paces of the runners' track. "Greece is full of wonderful sights and stories," wrote Pausanias in the second century A.D., "but nowhere is the aura of divinity so powerful as during . . . the Olympic Games." And the original games could also be, as Perrottet reveals, revoltingly bloody.

The ancient games at Olympia lasted five days and followed a ritual much like a cultic liturgy. The first day saw the swearing in of athletes, trainers and judges, after which athletes would make sacrifices to the gods and, if they wished, seek advice from oracles. Later in the day, attendees could wander the Sacred Grove of Zeus to view paintings and statues; poets recited; philosophers philosophized. The second day brought the equestrian events, followed by the pentathlon, that medley of running, jumping, throwing the discus and javelin, and wrestling, all topped off by choral singing and banquets for those who had won the day. The next three days were much the same, an exuberant mix of races, wrestling, boxing, sacrifices, banquets and victory processions.

All this, the stuff of Olympic myth, we could learn elsewhere. But Perrottet is keen to turn over a few dirty rocks and expose them. The legend should not be whitewashed. He refutes any view that the games were somehow freer from the lust for lucre than their modern, brazenly commercial counterparts. Nor were the games, contrary to the stubbornly repeated legend, guarantees of truce from the Mediterranean world's interminable wars.

We're treated to some peculiarly amusing bits. Spectators found themselves spectacularly uncomfortable. Accommodations went only to the rich, and probably not to all of them. Hygiene was unknown, to put it delicately (and let's leave it at that). Mostly on account of the crowds and filth, not everyone fancied the games, despite their popularity. So bad were the conditions that a disobedient slave was once threatened with a trip to Olympia. And eroticism was everywhere. "Not for nothing," Perrottet tells us, "does our word chaos derive from the ancient Greek; with its lack of sanitation or facilities, the Olympic festival was the Woodstock of antiquity." No wonder the Christians shut the games down in the fourth century A.D.

Perrottet has done his homework. *The Naked Olympics* is not a work of scholarship as commonly understood, studded with extensive footnoting, though it's well researched; his sources are as solid as sources come. It's also well written, which might not have been true of a more conventional study. It could have been much longer, but it didn't need to be. Perhaps no book of the season will show us so briefly and entertainingly just how complete is our inheritance from the Greeks, vulgarity and all.

*Tracy Lee Simmons is the author of "Climbing Parnassus: A New Apologia for Greek and Latin" and director of the Dow Journalism program at Hillsdale College.*

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## **Dire Strait**

Reviewed by Bernard Knox

Sunday, July 11, 2004; Page BW05

### THE BATTLE OF SALAMIS

The Naval Encounter That Saved Greece -- and Western Civilization

By Barry Strauss. Simon & Schuster. 294 pp. \$25

In 1851, Edward Creasey published his famous book on 15 "decisive" battles, battles that had determined the course of history. The most recent was Waterloo (1815 A.D.) and the earliest Salamis (480 B.C.), a naval battle between a small alliance of Greek city-states and an empire that ruled the territory from the Indus river to the Greek islands of the Aegean. It was indeed a decisive battle; a Persian victory would have strangled Athenian democracy before it could produce the work of the tragic poets, historians and philosophers that shaped and inspired the European Renaissance. But Salamis was no easy victory, and this account of it by a history professor who is an expert on naval warfare with a gift for vivid narrative brings it, in all its suspense, its complications, its surprises and its cast of extraordinary characters, to fervent and turbulent life.

In 490 B.C., the Persian Great King Darius, as retaliation for Athenian support of Greek cities that had rebelled against Persian rule, sent an expeditionary force that landed at Marathon, only to be defeated and driven back to its ships by Athenian infantry. Darius vowed revenge, but it was his successor, Xerxes, who in 480 B.C. moved against Greece in overwhelming military and naval force, not just to punish Athens but to add the whole of Greece to the Persian empire. In the intervening years, however, Athens, on the initiative of Themistocles, had transformed itself into a major naval power, with a fleet of 200 triremes.

A trireme was a war galley propelled by 170 oarsmen seated at three different levels. It is only in recent years that scholars and naval experts have figured out how the oars were arranged, and the Greek navy now has a flagship trireme for use on ceremonial occasions. The oarsmen were Athenian citizens, not, as in some galleys that sailed the Mediterranean in later centuries, slaves or convicts; the ship also carried archers and marines for boarding. But the main offensive technique was the use of the metal-sheathed ram that projected from the prow at water level; it was driven into the stern of the enemy vessel and then withdrawn. Another offensive technique was to come alongside the enemy from the rear, ship oars and crash through the oars on the enemy ship, leaving it helpless, to be dealt with later. The combined fleets of the Greek coalition -- Athens, Aegina and Corinth prominent among them -- amounted to 333 ships at its peak; the Persian fleet sailed for Greek waters with 1,227, but a three-day storm off Mount Pelion reduced the number to 927.

Strauss gives a clear and fascinating account, made easy to follow by his sketch-maps, of the maneuvers that led up to the battle: the Greek fleet at Artemisium successfully testing the mettle of the Persians; the breakthrough of the Persians at Thermopylae, where a force of 300 Spartans had held it up for three days in the narrows between mountains and the sea; the swift transfer of the Greek fleet to Salamis, where the Athenians evacuated their women, children and old men from Athens and the Persian army destroyed the city; the arrival of the Persian fleet at Phaleron on the Attic coast opposite Salamis; and the preliminaries of the battle, including the erection of a throne on Mount Aegaleos from which Xerxes could watch the climactic battle of the two fleets.

It looked at first as if the decisive battle of Salamis might not take place. Strauss gives a trenchant picture of the situation among the Greek ships: "a navy whose main admirals cordially hated each other. A naval commander in chief who came from a city [Sparta] famous for its inattention to ships. A naval base teeming with refugees whom it could not feed for long. A set of allies who were itching to leave the war zone." The Corinthians, whose ships were the largest contingent after Athens's, were planning to leave for the Isthmus of Corinth to protect their own city. The situation seemed desperate, and Themistocles resorted to what he was famous for: deceit. He sent a trusted emissary, who spoke Persian, secretly by night in a small boat to the Persian fleet with a message for Xerxes: He despaired of the Greek situation and wished to come over to the Persian side and offered this information, that in the morning the Greek fleet would disperse, leaving the Bay of Salamis. Xerxes fell for the trap and ordered his weary fleet, tired from a long day of battle, to prepare for an attack on the Greeks. There was much to be done, as Strauss puts it: "There are always repairs to be made to wooden boats, especially boats as fragile as the trireme. Oars break, ropes snap, sails tear, leather oar holes break, seats split. . . ." It was with tired and dispirited crews that the Persian ships moved out to block the Greeks' "escape" only to find themselves the target of a fierce Greek attack.

The battle raged all day, watched by Xerxes from his throne, and by evening it was clear that the Persian fleet had been defeated. Xerxes moved north with his fleet and army, leaving Mardonius with the army in Greece to be defeated in the next year by a Spartan and Athenian infantry force. The Athenians proceeded to liberate the Ionian island and the Greek coastal cities that had been annexed by the Persians, forming the Delian League that later became the Athenian empire, and Athens was launched on its glorious century.

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"ANCIENT GREEKS AND MODERN SCIENCE: Who Discovered the Heliocentric System?"

By Leonidas Petrakis, Ph.D.

The theory that the Earth revolves around the Sun was a truly revolutionary scientific advance. It also provided great impetus to the development of the modern scientific method, which was finally liberated in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century from the constraints of dogma and nonscientific considerations. This breakthrough is often but mistakenly attributed to the great Polish astronomer Nicholas Copernicus, and despite indisputable evidence to the contrary, the true discoverer of the theory, the astronomer Aristarchos of Samos that lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC in Alexandria, is still sometimes denied his due credit.

A case in point is a book published in 2004 by the American astronomer Owen Gingerich that received much publicity including National Public Radio, the Chicago Tribune and the Boston Globe. The book attempts to track the history of Copernicus's seminal treatise "De Revolutionibus Orbium Celestium" in which he presented the theory of the heliocentric system. Yet Mr Gingerich does not even mention Aristarchos's contribution! Moreover, the publishers of the book on their web site state that it was Copernicus who first suggested that the Sun was the center of the Universe; and the author in interviews has maintained that no other cultures had put forth heliocentric ideas!

Over the years, we have witnessed time and again attempts, perhaps out of ignorance, that question, diminish and even deny important ancient Greek contributions to the development of modern science and civilization. A recent offensive example has been the attempt of so-called Afro-centrists to claim that Aristotle and other notable Greeks stole their ideas from African sources. Serious scholarship has of course debunked these absurd and unfounded assertions. Especially noteworthy in this endeavor have been the efforts of the distinguished classicist Mary Lefkowitz, whose two books *Not Out of Africa* and *Black Athena Revisited*, have been invaluable in restoring the truth among those less well informed.

The case of the origin of the theory of the heliocentric solar system has been particularly vexing given its importance, but also because the evidence is so overwhelming. Copernicus (who was quite fluent in classical Greek) himself has written that he was familiar with the extensive Greek ideas of heliocentricity from the Pythagoreans to Aristotle to Aristarchos. Yet, by a peculiar and very puzzling action of his, he contributed to this persisting misconception.

Just before Copernicus sent his manuscript to be published in 1543, he removed two pages from the submitted manuscript that acknowledged his indebtedness to the ancient Greeks. However, he kept the two pages in his own personal copy, which was not discovered until 300 years later, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Professor Edward Rosen, a leading scholar on Copernicus, has addressed the issue. Rosen quotes the passage that Copernicus deleted from the published manuscript, but kept in his autograph: '...Philolaus believed in the earth's motion for these and similar reasons. This is plausible because Aristarchus of Samos too held the same view according to some people, who were not motivated by the argumentation put forward by Aristotle and rejected by him.'

Scholarship has recognized the importance of the passage for a long time, since Copernicus himself clearly states that he knew that the theory had been proposed by Aristarchos. George Sarton, the distinguished professor at Harvard University, has written in his monumental "A History of Science": "Aristarchos had conceived what we call the Copernican universe, eighteen centuries before Copernicus. The name that has been given to him in modern times, "The Copernicus of Antiquity", is fully deserved, because Aristarchos's other treatise proves that he was a conscientious astronomer". Sir Thomas Heath has written in his definitive study on Aristarchos: "Copernicus himself admitted that the theory was attributed to Aristarchus, though this does not seem to be generally known..... But it is a curious fact that Copernicus did mention the theory of Aristarchus in a passage which he afterwards suppressed".

And another distinguished scholar, Herbert Westren Turnbull, has written as follows: ".....Aristarchus, the friend of Archimedes, who supposed that the Earth travels around the Sun. When, therefore, Copernicus superseded the Ptolemaic theory by his own well-known system, centered on the Sun, he was restoring a far older theory to its rightful place".

Some critics have contended that Aristarchos merely proposed the heliocentric system. That in itself was quite revolutionary preceding as it did by 1800 years the Copernicus theory. But Aristarchos in fact not only proposed the idea, but wrote a volume on the subject expanding and developing suggestions of the Pythagoreans, who were loath to write down their ideas, and preferred oral transmission to their initiates. We know of Aristarchos's volume from the writing of his younger contemporary Archimedes, who wrote to Gelon II, King of Syracuse, sometime before 216 BC in the Sand Reckoner: " ... Aristarchos of Samos brought out a book consisting of hypotheses, wherein it appears, as a consequence of assumptions made, that the [real] universe is many times greater than the one just mentioned. His hypotheses are that the fixed stars and the Sun remain unmoved, that the Earth revolves about the Sun..."

This book of Aristarchos is unfortunately lost, as were many thousands of books from the great Library of Alexandria. A key word in the Greek text of Archimedes is "graphas", which is the plural, and thus indicates multiple writings and drawings. This is another clear indication that the Aristarchos proposal was much more fully developed, as George Sarton has stated, even though the idea was so revolutionary and it went against the scientific canon of the times. So it is high time to recognize the historical truth and give Aristarchos his due. Perhaps what is known popularly as the Copernican System should really be called the "Aristarchean System".

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\*Dr Petrakis was Senior Scientist and Department Chairman, now retired, at Brookhaven National Laboratory"