



THE PANEGRIC OPENING OF THE

2008-08-08 BEIJING OLYMPICS

HOMAGE TO A HELLENIC HERITAGE

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Tears came down my cheeks in a torrent during the **Opening Ceremony** of the **Beijing Olympics** on **2008/08/08** Friday evening @ **8:08** - 3 PM afternoon in Greece. I could not stop crying. I was moved! When and why I cried, you ask? I will tell you.

It happened when the fantastic visual extravaganza ended and, as the **Olympic Games Flag** was being raised, Oriental toddlers began to sing **in Greek** the **Olympic Anthem** written by the Greek poet K. Palamas for the first modern Olympics held in Athens in 1896.

Why I cried? I had been watching intently for hours the magnificent spectacle [foto]. When it ended, owed by its enormity, I began to relax and to think. **Suddenly**, out of the depths of time, a thought came to my mind and I began to cry as I reflected that my tiny homeland was the originator of this simple but powerful idea **2784 years ago** in a remote forested field [foto next page] by the confluence of 2 rivers in **Olympia**, in west-central Peloponnesus peninsula of Greece.



The idea of the Olympics was to get belligerents to cease all hostilities and to compete in peace to show their prowess in athletic pursuits not in bloody wars. Three millennia later, the idea reached its **apogee** on the other side of the globe, in **Beijing**, the capital of the most populous country in the world, and the cradle of the **Oriental culture** that, after eons of gestation, is emerging to compete **peaceably** and fully with the **Hellenic Ethos** inspired Western civilization.

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The Opening ceremony of the **2004 Olympics in Athens** [foto to the right and on the next page] was for me **my epiphany**. It was the first time that I sensed fully the pride of my Greek cultural heritage. A tiny country such as Greece organized in 2004 the greatest and biggest sport event of the entire world. I did not cry in 2004 because I was relieved that the 90-minute show went on without a glitz, something not many of us had predicted. The other time tears came to my eyes was while watching the **2000 Sydney Olympics Closing Ceremonies**. It was at the moment Greek **nymphs** shrouded in **Eleusinian** trance encircled the Olympic flag beseeching the **Olympian Gods** to descent to the **Hesperides** - what **Homer** called in 776 BC the Australia continent - and bring the **Olympic spirits back home to Greece**.



I watched the 2008 Opening ceremony of **Beijing** at one of the cafes [καφενειο] in the medieval tiny village of **Avdou**, on the island of Crete in Greece. It had a plasma screen of big dimensions [made in China]. It was siesta time when most are sleeping. Only 2 **old men** [younger than me, I found out later] and a group of boisterous young men were in the cafe. They all kept talking to each other, while I watched in silence and in deep owe of the **incredible spectacle**. The entire show was broadcast **live and without commercials**, which allowed me to enjoy uninterrupted the technologically perfect display of **Chinese history and culture**. The only time everyone in the room showed attention was when the parade of nations began and the **Greek athletes came in first waving high the Greek flag** to remind everyone in the world of the origin of the Olympic Games. [By the way, the flag carrier Ilias Iliades, a 2004 Olympics Gold

medalist, was originally from the Republic of **Georgia**; he had become a Greek citizen in time for the 2004 Olympics]. The others left soon after the Greek legation marched in. I stayed to the end.

It occurred to me that in the **pantheon of great global ideas**, no other nation can boast as being the cradle of the **2 greatest beneficial ideas** in the history of the world; **the idea of Olympic Games** – i.e., wars and other hostilities to cease for the duration of the Games and that victory in peaceful athletic competition should be honored as much or more as bravery in war; and **the idea of Periclean Democracy** – i.e., people to be allowed to vote on issues affecting them. These 2 very simple ideas have **revolutionized our world** and, interestingly enough, are reaching their **pinnacle in our own life-time!**

Since the end of the **Cold War**, during which dictatorships were not only tolerated but also formed by both sides, there are more nations today practicing democratic governance than ever before. Based on the record that 204 states sent athletes to the Beijing Olympics, there is **NO** place on our planet that has not been touched by the Olympic idea. It is the **ONLY EVENT** in which every country in the world participates!

The Olympic Games were being broadcast **live** on 5 public TV stations in Greece, from early morning until the evening. The sacred **Olympic Games** deserve such treatment and respect, especially when seeing what **China** did for the honor of hosting the Olympic Games. The news media that haunted the Beijing organizers about not allowing politically motivated and sponsored demonstrators during the Games showed their ignorance of the sacredness of the Games! All hostile acts, including demonstrations, must be suspended during the **Olympic Games**.

The belligerence of President **Saakashvili** of the Republic of **Georgia**, the mythical **Golden Fleece** [*foto; the sculpture "Argus" in Jilin City, Manchuria, NE China*] region of **Caucasus** that has been in contention from the time of **Jason** and the **Argonauts**, marred the otherwise peaceful Olympics. Saakashvili breached the **Olympic Ethos** code by starting a war during the **sacred period** of the **Olympic Games**. Putin of Russia reacted the same way his homologous Bush of the USA would if **Castro** of Cuba were to bomb residents in Guantanamo Bay. **Saakashvili** committed a criminal provocative act and, in the process, exposed his patrons.



Hercules, my homologous environmental engineer of mythical Greece who originated the Games after cleaning the Augean stables of pollution from a 30-year accumulation of wastes from the king's cattle and pigs - one of his 12 "*mission impossible*" accomplishments - would agree with me that the **Beijing Olympics dwarfed all** previous Olympics in scale, in ingenuity, in spectacle, in size, in facilities, in technology, in organization, in money invested, all done in honor of his **OLYMPIC GAMES idea**.



LET THE GAMES BEGIN for the other great Greek idea ... **DEMOCRATIZATION** of the world!

