

BREACHES OF OLYMPIC TRUCE IN ANCIENT TIMES: CAUSES AND PENALTIES

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1. The holders of the Olympia's Truce

The IOC's President Thomas Bach spoke a speech at the 68th United Nations Session in New York in November 2013 in which he addressed a call for the Olympic Truce because of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. He invoked "*a tradition dating from thousands of years ago in Ancient Greece: the ekecheiria*". He mentioned the sacredness of the institution that was established by the political power: "*this sacred truce, the Olympic Truce, is based on the tradition which followed an agreement between three ancient Greek Kings (...) The ekecheiria ensured a halt to hostilities, allowing athletes and spectators to travel safely to Olympia and home again. This shows that already, thousands of years ago, a partnership between sport and politics existed*". President Bach expressed the necessity of adapting the Ancient truce to the modern world¹.

The Truce that inspires the current one lasted for centuries and the geographer Strabo, who lived during the Imperial times, remembered its origins and achievements: "*Iphitos established the Olympic Games, since the citizens of Elis were very pious. Because of such things, these men prospered. While the other cities were always at war with one another, these people enjoyed a general peace, not only for themselves, but also for visitors*" (Strab. Geogr. 8.3.33). The Greek word *ekecheiria* meant 'to keep off the hand' and it was a sacred agreement to protect the territory where a religious festival was taking place. It also protected the athletes, spectators and official delegations traveling to this festival, and back home. The Olympic Games aren't to be considered as totally different to other PanHellenic games.

¹ "*At the time, three city-states came together. At the UN today, we are talking about an association of 193 States, and, at the IOC, 204 recognized NOC's. This is a new dimension of the challenge in our partnership between politics and sport*".

The Olympic Truce, which wasn't a general or common peace agreement (*eirene*), was sacred to Zeus, as most elements concerning the Games: the athletes pronounced an oath next to a sculpture of the god, the statues dedicated to him (*zanes*) by the athletes punished for cheating, the religious ceremonies, the crown of holy olive and basically the fact that the games were one of many activities held in the sanctuary. The same origin for respecting a sacred area was a religious element. It preserved the rated purity and sacredness of the place and its visitors avoiding the entry of those people who could spoil it. Such principle allowed the pilgrims and guaranteed their assistance restricting the access to armed soldiers because they would sully the sanctuary².

Olympia, as the other three sanctuaries where the other PanHellenic crown games that formed together with the Olympics the 'grand slam' (*periodos*) took place (Delphi, Isthmia and Nemea), developed the agonistic festival in the period known as Archaism (from 9th to 6th centuries BCE). This era characterizes a Greek civilization that experienced many changes and transformations, which influenced the coetaneous growth of athletic activities. The birth of the city-state (*polis*) caused social-political phenomena (aristocratic regimes were established and they sometimes turned on tyrannies), social-economical phenomena (the Greek expansion along the Mediterranean sea: trade and colonization) and configured the Greek art and culture. Those circumstances were the context that determined those four sanctuaries with a local influence became PanHellenic and the athletic activities grew to be an essential feature of Greek identity³.

The evolution of Olympia along the archaic centuries made many alterations in the sanctuary. It mainly acquired a new dimension of its religious and athletic faces: the number of pilgrims increased, the assistance from farer regions and the prestige of the games stepped up. Eventually, the sanctuary needed a more complex administration expanding the number of the major official (*hellanodikai*) to nine, the days of competition to five and a system to ensure the presence of thousands of Greek men was required. Olympia and the other biggest sanctuaries employed the *ekecheiria* to avoid dangers produced by long journeys done by most pilgrims, athletes, etc. The *hellanodikai* were in charge of it. They had other responsibilities like accepting

² Crowther 2004 p. 3; Kyle 2007 pp. 115-116. Whereas the word *eirene* referred peace or armistice with a military sense, *ekecheiria* (also known as *hieromenia* and *spondai*) was just a mechanism for organizing the Games. They weren't universal or ecumenical (*oikoumene*: the entire inhabited world) but the Truce concerned all the peoples allowed to participate: the entire Greek world.

³ Kyle 2007 pp. 73-78. Many influences that were the consequence of the politic development (in *poleis*) of the Greek world, as the exclusive participation of aristocrats or the growth of religious places like Olympia, shaped in the Archaism the agonistic competitions.

or excluding athletes, expelling them from the games, fining those who infringed the rules, judging the competitions and keeping the Truce throughout the Greek world⁴. Those 'Greek judges' were from Elis and enjoyed a great prestige as peacekeepers. A good sample of that is the fact they mediated the peace signed by many cities in 476 BCE (Thuc. 1.1).

Olympia and the Games weren't ruled by any Greek federation or any political union of states. It was controlled by the small *polis* of Elis because nothing like the modern IOC existed. Elis controlled the sanctuary and for that reason managed the Games and their Olympic Truce: the city decided who was allowed to participate⁵. The prerogative to admit or reject from the sanctuary and Games whomever it pleased brought it prestige and political clout because the controlling city had a considerable power over the festival. Every four summers, at the time of the second full moon after the solstice, Elean heralds proclaimed around the Greek regions the forthcoming Games and the start of the Olympic Truce. The assistance was voluntary but assuming some rules, so Elis could decide who was in breach. The Eleans, as the organizers, had the right to exclude a city from the games until it paid the appropriate fine. It was the main penalty, which we'll see further later⁶.

The Olympic Games are today an universal event managed by an international body, the IOC. However, the Ancient Olympic, Pithians, Nemean and Isthmian Games had a PanHellenic character but a single state entity managed each of them. The breaches were pondered depending of the subjective criteria of independent *poleis* like Elis. The first purpose of the Truce was to declare the territory of the host city sacred and inviolate. Eventually, the institution also guaranteed the safe passage and assistance of competitors, spectators and others when the festival increased its importance. It wasn't broken very often, because there aren't many episodes relating it in the literary sources. It's probably telling us it was ordinarily respected. Authors from different periods wrote about it into diverse contexts.

The Athenian rhetorician Isocrates praised it because "*the founders of our great festivals are justly praised for handing down to us a custom by which, having proclaimed a truce and resolved*

⁴ Crowther 2007 pp. 48-52; Kyle 2007 p. 59.

⁵ Crowther 2004 pp. 15-16. Elis decided the *hellenodikai* and built a specific edifice, called *bouleuterion*, where they met.

⁶ Crowther 2007 pp. 47-48; Golden 2004 p. 169. Eventually, Olympia became an extension of the city of Elis, with official buildings such as the council house (*bouleuterion*) and Eleans coins containing the image of Olympic Zeus. But it was a PanHellenic sanctuary, so other Greek communities could send envoys, known as *theoroi*, to act on behalf of their athletes

our pending quarrels, we come together in one place, where, as we make our prayers and sacrifices in common” (Isocrates 4.43). At the same 4th century, the writer of military tactics writer Aeneas had a different intention when he used the respect in which the Olympic Truce worked as a strategy for an unexpected attack to the region of Elis during the Olympics (Aeneas Tacticus 4.8). Authors who lived under the Roman Empire commented moments when the Truce worked, which tells us this institution kept its prestige during the Christian Era. Plutarch mentioned it telling that Lycurgus established it with Iphitus at Olympia, its implementation by Delphian oracles and the only time the Nemean Truce was broken (Plut. *Lyc.* 1.1; *De Defect.* 413d; *Arat.* 28.3–4). The geographer Pausanias also refereed it (Paus. 5.2.1, 5.20.1). The satirist Lucian too, in one of his fictional novels (Luc. *Icar.* 1).

2. Best-known Truce breaches

Obviously, the most commented truce in the Greek literature is the Olympic Truce, because of the predominance of Olympia, but the issues and features are common for the four main festivals. The early history of the Olympic Games is problematic because much information about the origins wasn't written in the 8th century but later. Much information was transmitted from Elis, which was interested in its legitimation arguing its primitive hegemony over Olympia. However, the effective control of this *polis* wasn't immediate and was gained along the 8th century. The neighbour Pisa claimed to be the first in charge of the sanctuary, also of the origin of the Truce (Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.28; Paus. 6.22.2), so Eleans had to prove they were the only legitimized people to rule the sanctuary and the prestigious institution that involved its territory of a sacred inviolability when this hegemony was challenged. It happened during the second part (421-404 BCE) of the Peloponnesian War, when the territorial ambitions of the traditional ally Sparta threatened the Elean influential area. Elis broke the good relations with Sparta and joined Athens and Argos. Those circumstances provoked the best-known episode of the Olympic Truce breaches⁷. This and other episodes were as follows:

- Iphitus of Elis – 776 BCE. This dispute between Elis and Sparta at the end of the 5th century, which we'll detail then, was striking because three centuries ago they were the two

⁷ Christensen 2007 pp. 47-55. Hippias of Elis, who lived during and after the Peloponnesian War, composed 'Olympionikai', the first Olympic victor list in which 776 BCE appeared as the first recorded competition, and 'Anagraphe', which became a source of the foundation of the Games and the Truce by Iphitos of Elis and Lycurgus.

states that agreed to provide the Truce to the Olympic Games. Plutarch wrote the biography of the Archaic Spartan lawgiver Lycurgos (he wasn't a king) and wrote about him "*some say that he flourished at the same time with Iphitos, and in concert with him established the Olympic Truce. Among these is Aristotle the philosopher*" (Plut. Lyc. 1.2). However, not all the Ancient sources agreed that Lycurgos worked together with the Elean king Iphitos to create the Truce nor the festival, like the Hellenistic writer Hermippos of Smyrna: "*some who affirm that at the beginning Lycurgos was not involved in any way in Iphitos' enterprise, but that one day he was accidentally staying at the games as a spectator*" (Hermippos Lyc. 23, 3-4).

But he agreed with Aristotle and Plutarch about the physical coincidence of both statesmen. Some orators and philosophers like Aristotle enhanced after the Peloponnesian War the Panhellenic movement, which ensured friendship, harmony and peace, in which the Olympic Truce was really significant. One of the firsts who connected the birth of the sacred institution was the Elean sophist Hippias, author of the original catalogue of Olympic victors 'Olympionikai'⁸. When the tension between his city and Sparta was very high, maybe at the time of the Lacedemonian attack in 401, he composed 'Anagraphe' thinking Sparta was going to terminate the Elean control over Olympia. This work used the remembrance of the Archaic king of Elis Iphitos for claiming that his own *polis* had been declared sacred and inviolable by agreement of Lycurgos, father of the Spartan constitution. The role of the Spartan cooperation in the foundation of the Olympic Truce was intentionally implemented by Hippias of Elis for making the Greek world thought Sparta instituted the Olympic Truce but eventually it was in a breach and violating the memory of its admired ancestor (Phlegon, FGH 257 F 1; Paus. 5.4.5-6)⁹.

- Pheidon of Argos – 668 BCE. An early breach on the sovereignty of Elis over Olympia happened in the 7th century when this king/tyrant of Argos assisted Pisa to expel the Eleans and seized control of Olympia from Elis. He presided over the Olympic festival and the *ekecheiria* was stated under his rule, so the Truce wasn't necessarily broken: "*he drove out the Elean contest-directors and held the contests at Olympia himself*". Elis was reinstated in the

⁸ Christensen 2007 p. 51. The first written compilation of the Olympic winners that states the first Olympiad with the Games of 776 was produced by Hippias of Elis in the last quarter of the 5th century, when the polis engaged in a prolonged struggle with Sparta that almost resulted in the termination of Elean control over Olympia. He couldn't ignore that transcendental circumstance when he wrote his work.

⁹ Christensen 2007 pp. 61-65; Bollansée 1999 562-567. The role assigned to Sparta and Lycurgos by Hippias made sense against the background of the Spartan-Elean conflict.

possession of the sanctuary with the military help of Sparta and the *hellenodikai* decided not to recognize the Olympiad held under the control of Argos and Pisa (Hdt. 6.127; Paus. 6.22.2). However, Hippias of Elis included some centuries late the results into his 'Olympionikai'.

- Menandrus and Aristolochus – 476/472 BCE. They were two *hellenodikai* whose decision was reversed, which was very strange at the Olympic Games. The *mastroi*, the Elean board of control, overturned the resolution that the judges Menandrus and Aristolochus took after the authorities at Olympia evaluated a political episode in which they declared the Olympic Truce was broken. They considered most Boetian cities and Thessaly were in a breach of the Truce (arguing they submitted to the Persians) because of their past support to Persia, so the Boeotian city Thespieae and Athens (two states that resisted the Persian army) were favored. There wasn't an agonistic misconduct, but the result of the competition was changed¹⁰. The story is known because of an epigraph (SEG 26.475).

- Lichas of Sparta – 420 BCE. Sparta conquered the settlement of Lepreon, 25 km far from Olympia to the south (even nearer than the northern Elis), so this *polis* felt it as hostility. Although the Spartan garrison was established in the summer of 421, one year later the heralds (*spondophoroi*) spread throughout Greece the imminent Games and the start of the Olympic Truce. The Eleans concluded that once the Olympic Truce had been declared, the maintenance of the Spartan garrison in Lepreon, which they considered as part of their governance, was actually a breach of the sacred Truce. However, the Spartan troops hadn't made any movement or any kind of attack since the *spondophoroi* announced the *ekecheiria*. Elis was a democracy at that time, which was a political regime opposed to the Spartan monarchy, and had been expanding its territory since the previous century, clashing in Lepreon with the territorial ambitions of the Lacedemonian power (Thuc., 5.31).

Elis, although it wasn't a very powerful state into the Greek affairs, used its considerable political influence through Olympia to enhance its claim of Lepreon. Once the sanctuary ruled by Eleans stipulated a breach of the Truce was produced, the *hellenodikai* had to sanction it. As the Lacedemonian army broke the *ekecheiria*, the *polis* of Sparta was found guilty and had to pay a heavy fine. Sparta refused to pay the fine arguing the troops established the garrison one year before the heralds stated the Truce in Lacedemonia. They were acting against the Olympic laws, so the following punishment was harder. All the Spartan citizens were officially excluded

¹⁰ Crowther 2004 p. 429.

of the Games and religious ceremonies like sacrifices at the sanctuary. Sparta still denied they were in breach of the rules, so the episode went further (Thuc. 5.49–50).

The Olympic rules said all competitors should be citizens of a Greek city state (Philostr. *Gym.* 25), which meant that a citizen from a banned *polis* wasn't allowed to compete. The prominent Spartan statesman Lichas nevertheless decided to take part at the 420 Olympic Games as a Theban (Thebes was ally of Sparta during the Peloponnesian War) in the chariot race. His chariot could participate in the name of the Theban people, and he got the victory (although he wasn't the driver, just the owner). He got in the chariot and celebrated the victory as a Spartan triumph. It became a new breach of the Truce, therefore the *hellenodikai* ordered to stop him. The sources coincide that Lichas suffered a physical penalty, although he was a political authority: "*they had scourged him, an old man, and driven him out*" and "*for this offence he was scourged by the umpires*". They recorded the victor in the name of the Thebans, not in the Lichas' one (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.21; Paus. 6.2.2)¹¹.

- Philip II of Macedonia – 348 BCE. His PanHellenic compromise existed since he became Olympic victor in 352. The father of Alexander the Great started the expansion of the Kingdom of Macedonia and he tried to avoid the opposition of the Southern Greek *poleis* and exhibited respect to the PanHellenic sanctuary of Olympia as a planned strategy. It happened after an Athenian named Phrynon was going to the 348 Olympic Games as competitor or spectator and was seized by some Macedonian troops (Demosth. *De falsa legatione, Hypoth.* 335; Aeschin. 2.12). It was into the previous month before the Games, after the Truce was already declared. It occurred in a time when the Macedonian king was reinforcing the isOlympian Games at Dion and he was expanding his kingdom to central Greece provoking intermittent clashes with Athens.

The incident was solved as Demosthenes details: "*Phrynon went to Athens and asked that the Athenians appoint him ambassador so that he could approach Philip to get back his stolen items. The Athenians were persuaded and appointed him and Ktesiphon. When they went to Macedonia, Philip received them in a kindly and friendly way and returned to Phymon everything that his soldiers had robbed and more in addition from his own pocket, and apologized that his soldiers had not known that it was the Sacred Month*". Therefore, Philip the

¹¹ Christensen 2007 p. 55; Golden 2004 p. 69. The incident increased Lichas's political prestige and was argued as major cause when the Spartan king Agis attacked Elis in 401. It's unclear if the Spartans were allowed at the 416 Olympics, but king Agis was refused to come to Olympia to sacrifice honoring a victory over Athens in 413.

father of Alexander tactfully showed deference to Olympia by quickly redressing a Macedonian infraction of the Olympic Truce¹².

- Aratus of Sycion – 235 BCE. This commander and statesman practiced pentathlon when he was young and won the chariot race at Olympia in 232 (Plut., *Aratus* 3.1–2; Paus. 6.12.6). Three years before, he was the leader of the Achaean League and removed Argos from organizing the Nemean Games as a political punishment. Unlike Olympia under Elis, the Nemeans' management changed frequently and belonged to different states like Cleonae, Corinth and Argos (all of them affiliated to the Achaean League, Argos after 229). He was prompted to arrange for Cleonae, a previous host, to hold the Nemean Games in 235. The Argives were very disappointed and their disagreement carried them to the celebration of their own Nemeans, during which they seized Achaean competitors in defiance of the Nemean *ekecheiria*¹³. Aratus' biography by Plutarch informed us that "*the games were also celebrated at Argos, and then for the first time the privilege of asylum and safe-conduct which had been granted to contestants in the games was violated, since the Achaeans treated as enemies and sold into slavery all contestants in the games at Argos whom they caught travelling through their territory*" (Plut., *Aratus* 3. 28.3-4).

- Sulla of Rome – 80 BCE. After the Roman general Mummius conquered and sacked Corinth in 146 BCE, the mainland Greece became a province of the Republic of Rome. Mummius compensated the defeated Corinth restoring the sanctuary of Isthmia and repairing its Games. Moreover he decorated Olympia and Delphi with temples and dedications (Polyb. 39.6.1): the first Roman ruler Mummius and the following ones exhibited a big respect to the celebration of the four main athletic festivals and the Truces were guaranteed under the Roman authority. However, a biggest indignity against the PanHellenic *agones* started in 86 BCE when the Roman general Sulla fighting against the king of Pontus Mithridates VI (current Northern Turkey) and coming to Rome pillaged statues and treasures from Olympia. However, it occurred in the middle of the 174th Olympiad, so any Truce was declared and Romans weren't in a breach¹⁴.

¹² Kyle 2007 p. 234. Philip II also showed deference to Delphi protecting the sacred place during the III Sacred War of 346 and later.

¹³ Golden 2004 p. 14. There was a double Nemean Truce and the Aratus' troops violated the Truce declared by Argos.

¹⁴ Scanlon 2002 p. 42.

But six years later Sulla assumed the extraordinary Republican charge of the dictatorship and he decided to cancel the 80 Olympics and promoted the performance of dramatic and athletic competitions at the city of Rome. Consequently, the Olympic Games weren't celebrated (only took place in Olympia the short footrace for boys, winning an Argive citizen). The animosity of Sulla against Olympia is understood after knowing the good relations of his Roman rival the general Marius with the Elean officials. Although the Truce wasn't officially broken neither, because without the Games it wasn't declared, Greeks considered the dictator Sulla was in a breach. It was seen as an insult and an injury because the athletic festival could only be held in the sacred territory of Olympia. Of course, the military superiority of Sulla avoided any punishment or penalty against such political authority that died one year later (Appian, *Civil War* 1.99; IG 2² 1039; I.Ol. 326).

3. Conclusions: the importance and effectiveness of the Ancient Truce

The success of the Olympic Truce, also the truces at Delphi, Nemea and Isthmia, is easily noted after reading that few breaches occurred after a very long period, twelve centuries in which the many Ancient Greek writers always would report everything significant such a Truce's violation. Especially when the Truce became a symbol of the peaceful ideal for a PanHellenic common culture since the Classical period. The strength of the institution inspired minor athletic contests born after the Alexander's power. Like the Pamboeotia festival, which was reserved for members of the Boeotian confederacy but also open to outsiders who were encouraged to attend by a sacred *ekecheiria* (Polyb. 9.34.11).

The athletic competitions were involved of a violent nature. It's obvious in the heavy events (wrestling, boxing and *pankration*) but the military elements were also essential at the equestrian events (spectacular and dangerous accidents usually occurred during the chariot races), the pentathlon (the javelin and the discus were weapons) and the race in armor. However, they were sacred events and the violence was part of an activity under strict rules. It wasn't irrational or wild violence. The latter competition, called *hoplitodromos*, was a footrace wearing a helmet and a shield, decked out as heavy infantrymen (*hoplitai*). Philostratos argued it was the final event of the Olympic program because of a return to hostilities after the Truce was about to finish (Philostr. *Gym.* 24, 32–33).

Maybe the injuries and blood were very common during the athletic contests, but it was under the rules of a competition held in very sacred sanctuaries that represented the heart of the PanHellenic civilization¹⁵. However, there was a practice carried out at the sanctuaries that was strongly criticized for its association with war rather than with peace. It was normal that Greek states and statesmen offered arms and weapons to Zeus at Olympia and Apollo at Delphi in thanksgiving for some military triumph. Some Greek authors showed their disagreement with this practice. Plato and Plutarch opposed the association of weapons and warfare with Olympia and Delphi, the PanHellenic sanctuaries whose festivals “*preserved friendly relations with the other Greeks*” through the prestigious sacred Truce. It wasn’t a breach although those weapons, very often taken from other defeated Greeks, “*polluted the temples*” (Plato *Rep.* 5,469a–470a; Plut. *Moral.* 401c–d)¹⁶.

The Olympic Truce was mostly successful because of the religious nature of the Games. The Truce was sacred, the PanHellenic agonistic festivals were sacred and a breach was seen as a dishonorable impiety. It was the key. The religious character of the athletic festivals remained until they disappeared under the growth of Christianity. It was always a constant and explains why the violence or the wars almost never interfered the development of the competitions. The few documented cases of Truce’s breaches never concern violent episodes like revolts or riots among the spectators. The respect for these holy activities and places was deep and strong. On the other hand, the Roman amphitheatres and circus and the Byzantine hippodromes were basically secular spectacles. And the riots and violent incidents were recurrent, like when big battles were provoked by faced supporters in the Pompeii’s amphitheater in 59 CE and in the Constantinople’s hippodrome in 532 (Tac. *Ann.* 14.17; Procop. *Pers.* 1.24.32-54). However, political or ethnical rivalries never became episodes of brutality nor riots at the big four PanHellenic Games because the ideological and religious authority of the *ekeichiria* was very deep and persuasive¹⁷. Athletes and spectators never fought battles at the Olympic Games because they were attending a sacred activity reinforced by the sacred Truce: therefore violence was absolutely banned into a PanHellenic sanctuary.

¹⁵ Young 2004 pp. 43-44; Golden 2008 pp. 72-75. The usual athletic violence wasn’t avoided because it was civilized, in the Greek sense.

¹⁶ Crowther 2004 pp. 16-17. Many times a war among Greeks was commemorated. After the Classical period monumental memorials were used more often than leaving weapons, which was common in the Roman times.

¹⁷ García Romero 2011 pp. 94-95. The athletic activities were ideologically seen by the Greeks themselves as one of the strongest cultural elements of the Greek identity opposed to the barbarian peoples.

480 BCE was a fundamental year of the Greco-Persian Wars: Persia sought to conquer all of Greece but was stopped by most Greek states in famous episodes like the Battle of Thermopylae. During that summer the Olympic Truce was declared, the war never stopped, Greeks were fighting against the Persian army only a few hundred kilometers away from Olympia but the Olympic Games took place because the Truce provoked Greek states allowed athletes and visitors to travel. Assistants from very distant Greek regions came to Olympia and there were Olympic champions like Theogenes of Thasos, a Northern island closely bypassed by the Persians. The episode of 420 shows Elean rulers of Olympia maintained the Olympic regulations in case of a breach of the *ekeicheria*. Although Elis had a total authority for allowing the assistance of pilgrims and competitors to Olympia, the city only excluded states from taking part at the Games in some few breaks of the Truce we've previously detailed. The Truce did never mean a cessation of the Greek wars but assisted a safe travel to Olympia.

States almost always respected it. In the case of particulars, especially pirates, only sometimes because the *ekeichiria* and its sacredness generally worked although pirates and bandits weren't affected by the penalties¹⁸. Although the Roman civil wars of Cesar against Pompey and Octavius-Augustus against Mark Antony affected economically the Greek regions and the sanctuaries too, the Roman rulers always after Sulla respected the Greek athletic festivals and the Roman army guaranteed the Truce (with the exceptions of some pirates and robbers' attacks to travelers). Under the Imperial regime, this protection was reinforced and some emperors especially promoted the activities of sanctuaries like Olympia. The Spanish philhellene Hadrian was one of the emperors who showed devotion to the cult of Zeus, was a benefactor of Olympia and implemented the military security for travelling during the Truce¹⁹. The satirist Lucian confirmed the validity of the Truce during this period (Luc. *Icar*. 33).

The religious character is one of the biggest differences between Ancient and Modern Olympic Games. However, the Olympic Truce should be respected today as a sacred institution. The Olympics are a very special social phenomenon that spread universal values and principles to the entire World. Olympism is a worldwide philosophy of life conformed by all the countries and continents of the Earth and the Games are an event understood as unique, magical and different than other sport competitions and spectacles. The IOC has used the artifice of allowing

¹⁸ Crowther 2004 pp. 16 and 41.

¹⁹ Scanlon 2002 pp. 53-55; I.Ol. 236; CIL II 4511. He tried to universalize the Olympics and non-Greeks competed under his rules and his successors. Lucius Minicius Natalis of Barcino, the today's Barcelona, was a general protected by Hadrian and won the chariot race in 129 CE.

'individual' or 'Olympic' competitors from countries whose NOC was banned from the Olympics (like Yugoslavia in Barcelona 1992 and India in Sochi 2014) in order to avoid penalizing athletes from the nations concerned. Coubertin transformed sport into a sacred but secular universal singularity. It should be the key for implementing the modern Olympic Truce. The secular Olympic sacredness, as the Ancient holy inviolability of the big PanHellenic Games, has to be the modern motor that could inspire an universal peace through the sport. As IOC President Thomas Bach said, we need to adapt the effectiveness of the Ancient Olympic Truce to the world of today.

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