

Greece national day

Past glories will lead Greeks to a more hopeful future

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AMBASSADOR OF GREECE

Today Greece celebrates its independence and the foundation of the modern Greek state. March 25 is also a religious holiday, the Annunciation — “Evangelismos” in Greek — that commemorates the occasion when the archangel Gabriel informed the Virgin Mary that she would give birth to Jesus Christ. Thus, it is a day of joyful news and celebration.



On this auspicious day for Greeks, I would like on behalf of the government and people of Greece to articulate my heartfelt and abiding wishes of health and longevity for the Imperial family and to convey the profound respect and admiration that Greeks hold for His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito and the people of Japan.

In the global economic crisis of today, every Greek looks back to our past glories and finds reasons for hope. Our long history reminds us of our resilience in the face of hardship. We are inspired not only by the splendor of our antiquity, by our myths and heroes such as Hercules, Achilles, and Alexander the Great, and the uniqueness of the Byzantine Empire that lasted 11 centuries, but also by the achievements of modern Greece, which has staunchly defended its freedom, resisted invasions, and organized the splendid 2004 Olympic Games, exactly 40 years after the celebrated 1964 Olympics in Tokyo. It was the eponymous philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, together with the scientific and political genius of Democritus, Hippocrates, Solon and Thucydides, among others, whose decisive contributions shaped our modern Western civilization. And it was those that migrated to Western Europe after the fall of Constantinople that made possible the Renaissance movement on the old continent.

In the East, Japanese civilization and culture have left a distinct mark on world history with

an unprecedented uniqueness and grace that touches our soul every time we encounter a Japanese haiku or a samurai blade. A great number of intellectuals, including Lafcadio Hearn, or Yukumo Koizumi, have praised Japanese traditions and people to an extent that is difficult to surpass. Hearn's first name, Lafcadio, was inspired by the name of the Greek island of Lefkada, in the Ionian Sea, where he was born to a Greek mother and an Irish father. After wandering Ireland and the U.S., Lafcadio finally settled in the Land of the Rising Sun, where he married a Japanese woman and was blessed with a family. His descendants, with their Greek, Japanese and Irish roots, often visit Greece and the beautiful island of Lefkada, from whence their now eminent namesake derives. In his poems, we witness not only his ability to capture and put into words the magnificence and perfection of everything Japanese, but also his revelation of parallels between two ancient civilizations, whose spirits share a common and uniting essence, irrespective of geographical distance.

Geography has certainly played a great role in the commonalities among Greece and Japan. Both are seafaring nations and extremely mountainous. From the beginning of time, we have struggled with and successfully harnessed the forces of nature, a never-ending task that has instilled in us the bravery and fortitude necessary to confront any difficulty, and taught us to always remain alert.



Variety: Activities such as cycling and trekking in the mountains of Epirus in Western Greece and the extensive archaeological sites such as the Terrace of the Lions in Delos Island are among the country's popular tourist attractions. EMBASSY OF GREECE

Our modern times allow our peoples to forge strong ties in new ways, such as through the traditional shipbuilding of Greek ships in Japanese shipyards. The spirit of mutual respect among our people, shipbuilders, and shipowners, who share the same profound values, love for country, nature, honor, and bravery, is manifest. The rules of Bushido can also be found in the teachings of Chilon of Sparta. Greek drama finds its equal in noh theater; the similarities are astonishing when we consider the role of the chorus and the profoundness of approach to the mystery of human nature.

Greco-Japanese diplomatic relations have enjoyed more than

a century of harmonious and mutually beneficial contact. This springs partly from shared aims. The emphasis we put on culture is by no means unintentional. The cultural symbols of Greece and Japan are immediately recognizable and among the most renowned and celebrated on the planet. Though at first glance very different, Greece and Japan, with their great and ancient civilizations, are profoundly alike. It

is no wonder that our two countries have overcome linguistic and geographical barriers to cooperate and play a leading role in ecumenical affairs.

Japanese that visit Greece discover, in every corner, common architectural, artistic, and even political brilliances that stem from our glorious past. At the foot of the Parthenon, the Japanese guest will see the new Acropolis Museum, displaying the harmo-

nious coexistence of past and present, a peaceful balance that both Greece and Japan have successfully managed to achieve.

Greece is bursting with wonderful and varied places to see and experience. While Northern Greece differs considerably from the South, each and every island also maintains its own distinct character and cuisine. One can discover monasteries built harmoniously into the rocky peaks

of Meteora, Cycladic white houses that majestically marry the blues of the sea and sky, and Olympia, a city that since ancient times has bestowed a feeling of spectacle and grandeur upon all that behold it. Today, as Greeks

commemorate the foundation of our modern Greek nation, I invite all to personally experience the Olympic spirit that is omnipresent in the matchless hospitality of the Greeks, who warmly welcome every visitor.



Congratulations

to the People of Greece
on Their Independence Day

Japan-Greece Society

40th Anniversary in Japan

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