

Greece National Day Special

Celebrating 120 years of close relations

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Greece and Japan are countries with the sea close to their hearts as peninsula and island nations. Both share a bond of understanding, linked by their millennia-long seafaring traditions.

Therefore, it came as no surprise that after World War II, Greek ship owners turned to Japan to reconstitute their fleets. This mutually beneficial cooperation lasts to this day.

In Ancient Greece, exercising evolved into a method of self-development for the body and mind. This led to athleticism and the athletic spirit coming to encapsulate the essence of the Olympic Games. In this same vein, “*dō*,” directly translated as “the way” and tied to self-development through action, also echoes the ancient and modern Olympic spirit.

In preparing for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo, we all look back on these two old traditions to obtain inspiration to develop new ideas and further promote a global spirit across humanity. The intermingling of our traditions and mentalities is the crucible of realizing the upcoming Summer Games — a competi-

tion whose spirit is expected to result in the achievement of even greater heights.

Back in June 1899, nobody knew what the signing of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation between the distant and proud nations would yield. Now, as we reflect on 120 years of official relations, besides the parallel economic and social development of both countries, there were instances where the international activity of one country influenced the other. Among these events was when Japan was a signatory of the Sevres and Lausanne treaties that shaped modern Greece. Today, we look forward to laws based on international order as well as open and secure sea routes.

Throughout these 120 years of parallel and sometimes common livelihood, one feature that can characterize both nations is resilience — *nintai* in Japanese, *antohi* in Greek, in my opinion. Both nations went through rough times and overcame impossible odds.

Today, my country is coming out of a major economic crisis stronger and eager to regain lost ground. To do this, we look to our longtime friends in the same way Japanese shipbuilders were looking to Greek ship owners back in the '50s. New frontiers ripe for new discoveries through innovation cover space, artificial intelligence, clean and renewable energy, robotics and any others that the inventive spirit and cooperation between our peoples will seek out.

Furthermore, both countries bear a longstanding tradition of hospitality — *omotenashi* in Japanese, *filoxenia* in Greek — extending an invitation for enhancing people-to-people contacts. This is not limited to tourism, but entails exchanges between students and scientists as well, through cultural interactions and the blending of knowledge.

This, of course, seems like a utilitarian perspective, but there is much more to it. As an old Greek saying goes, “One learns through loving and loves through learning.” So, let us learn more of and from each other, and come to respect each other as Lafcadio Hearn did — a notable Greek figure who flourished as a teacher and spent the rest of his life in Japan appreciating, respecting and explaining the culture to others.

In order to mark 120 years of our astonishing relations, we already have held highly symbolic events and are planning more. Culture is simultaneously a link between people of different backgrounds that also serves as a connection between a nation and its history; this strong bond with our history and drawing inspiration from it is a shared characteristic between our nations. As the first kanji in Greece’s Japanese name reads “*ki*” (which is a part of ‘*kibō*,’ meaning hope), let us allow the illustrious ancestry of both countries to lead the way to our modern understanding and hope for a brighter future.



The architectural remains found in the Acropolis of Athens reflect the classical civilization’s power, wealth and innovation in the arts during the fifth century B.C. EMBASSY OF GREECE



Located in the southern part of the Aegean Sea, Santorini is an island formed from many years of volcanic activity. What remains today is a submerged volcano and caldera lined with beautiful villages. WWW.SANTORINI.GR

Congratulations to the People of Greece on the 120th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations

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Their Independence Day and
the 120th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations

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Their Independence Day and the
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