GREEK IDENTITY AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Part II
Elements of Greek “Dual Identity”

• Religion
• Christianity (EU) with Greek Elements (GR)
• Language
• Greek is the basis of many European languages (roots/suffixes etc.)
• Culture
• Greek culture is one of the three pillars of European culture, the other two being Roman culture and Christianity
• Geography
• Greece is located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia
In 2004, the Olympics returned to Athens for the first time after 1896.

Instrumental elements of the selection of Athens for the games were the historical significance of Greece and the pivotal role that Greece and the city of Athens had played in the Olympic movement.
Ancient Greek Elements in the Ceremony for the Lighting of the Flame
The Mascots of the Games

- As mascots the Greek recreated two ancient daidala (dolls), objects which were used both for religious purposes as well as toys.
- The names of the mascots were Athena=Goddess of Wisdom and Phoebos (Apollo)=God of Light and Music
Not Just Games

• According to Alexander Kitroeff “through the Olympic Games Greeks both affirmed their roles as stewards of the movement’s ancient legacy and pursued international acclaim that they were a progressive, modern culture by devoting considerable time and energy to competing in and hosting the games.

• For the Greek government and people the Olympic Games of 2004 were viewed as a second rebirth of the Olympic spirit and ideals that their ancestors had created.
Not Just Games

- According to Theodora Mantzaris-Kindel, image and identity manager for the 2004 Olympics, "One of the challenges for us was to develop a visual identity for the 2004 Olympic Games that would emphasize not only the unique historical relationship that Greece has with the Olympics but also the modern side of the country and its capacity for excellence in all fields, including design."

- Again, in the above statement, one can see evidence of the dual identity of Greece, a fusion between its ancient legacy and that of a modern European country.
Not Just Games

- According to the International Herald Tribune, “inspired by the history and the landscape, the symbols for the Athens 2004 Games are Greek: the emblem, for instance, comes naturally in the form of an olive wreath, the ultimate Olympic prize in ancient times. Also known as kotinos, the wreath represents the four values of the 2004 Games: heritage, participation, celebration and human scale.”
Not Just Games

- "All of these visual elements are inspired by the past," Mantzaris-Kindel said, "but the renderings of the designs are contemporary. Fluid forms, uneven shapes, vivid colors are combined to create a unique identity, easily recognizable as Greek but also modern."

- One side of the medals features two elements of the Olympics of the past: the goddess Nike of Paeonios, personifying victory in the stadium and in war, and the Panathinaikon Stadium, where the Games were revived in 1896.