

# ETYMOLOGY

*Olympiads, Olympics, all these terms are derived from the word Olympia but we use each in a precise sense. A German journalist, Mr. Adolf METZNER, has researched into the way these words have come from "Olympia" and we are publishing here the result of his work.*

As soon as you say Olympiad, some would immediately have a condescending smile. The correct term, they say, is really Olympic Games. But we should remember that the ancient Greeks had several words to describe the Games in Olympia.

*Olympia* is the plural and should be completed by the word *hiéra* (sacrifice). *Olympia*, therefore, means sacrifice in Olympia in honour of the Olympian Zeus. *Olympia Agein*, i.e. to celebrate the Olympic Games, should not be confused with *Olympia*, feminine singular of the district of Elis, where the Games were held. In classic times, they used the words *Olympikos* or *Olympiakos Agon*, which correspond to our term Olympic Games. They also spoke about *Olympias*, which is *Olympiados* in the genitive and *Olympiáda* in the accusative.

Our term Olympiad is, therefore, derived from the accusative of this word, which, in Greek, has several meanings, since it defines the Games in Olympia (already in the classical age), a victory in the Olympic Games and the period of four years between the Games. From an historical point of view, the term Olympiad was not heard until after the "*Timaeus Historicus*", which appeared in the 3rd Century, B.C., i.e. the post classical Greek age. We can, therefore, like the Greeks, talk quite naturally about an Olympiad instead of Olympic Games.

*We have also continued the research into these words and our conclusions differ somewhat from those of Mr. Adolf METZNER.*

From the PROIAS "Dictionary of the Greek Language", which is an authority on this matter τὰ Ὀλύμπια ("Tá Olympia"), plural neutral noun, translated by "the Olympias", name given to the Panhellenic Games, which were held in Olympia. This word must not be confused in any way with ἡ Ὀλυμπιάς ("i Olympiás"), which describes the four year period between the two "Olympias". The nominative plural οἱ Ὀλυμπιάδες ("Olympiádes"), gives Olympiads, which we use in the same sense today.

As you see, it is a question of two different words, with two different meanings and two precise modes of use, which cannot be used one for the other. 