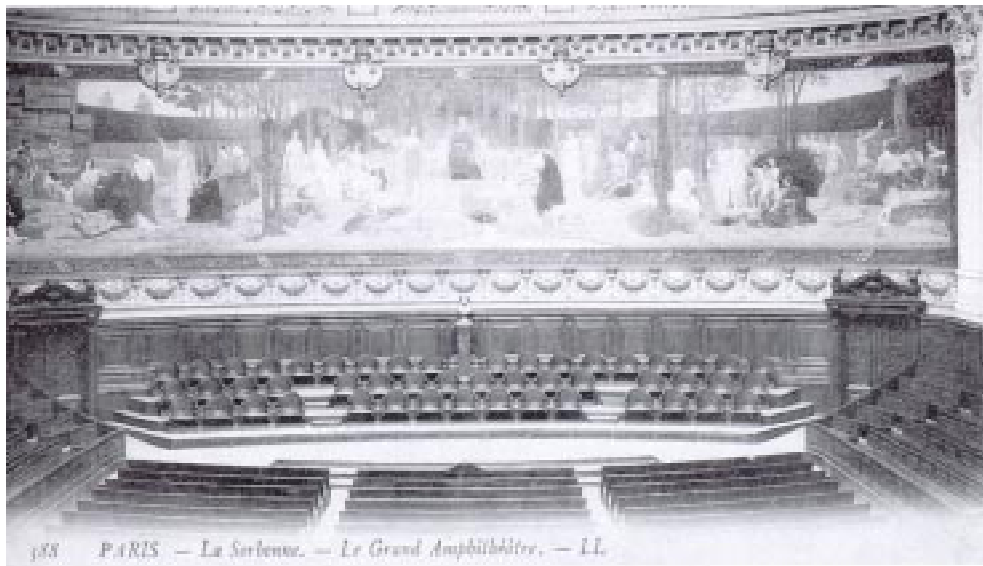


---

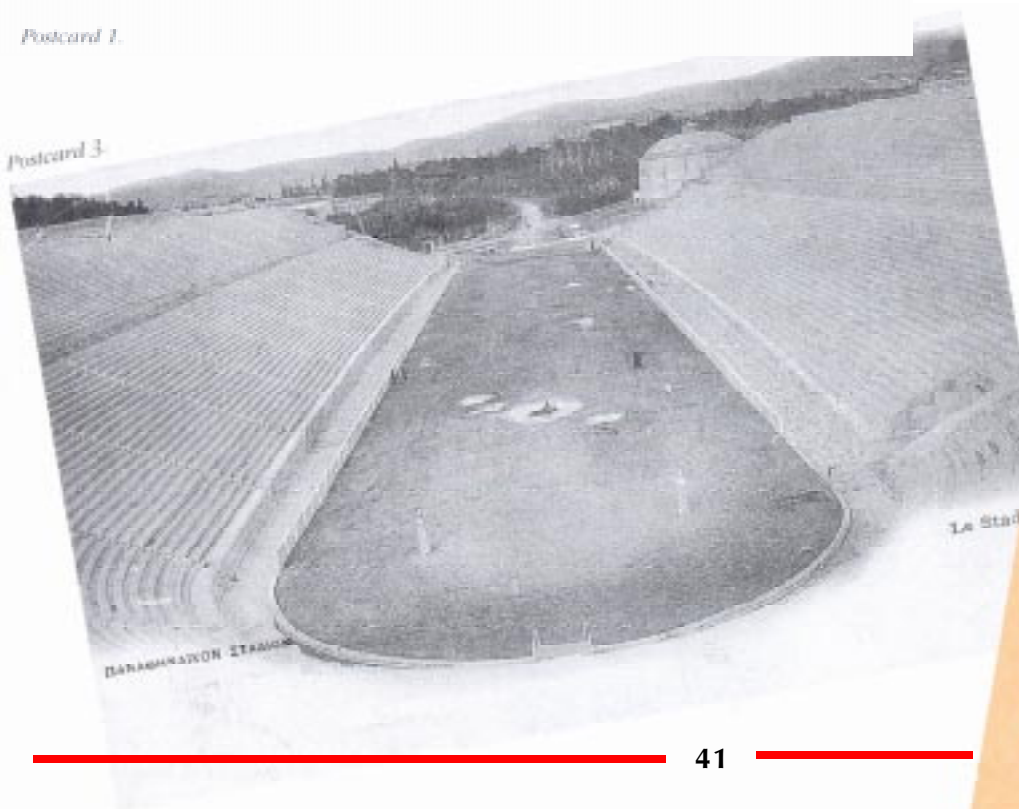
# The postcard of the first Olympic Games



Postcard 1.



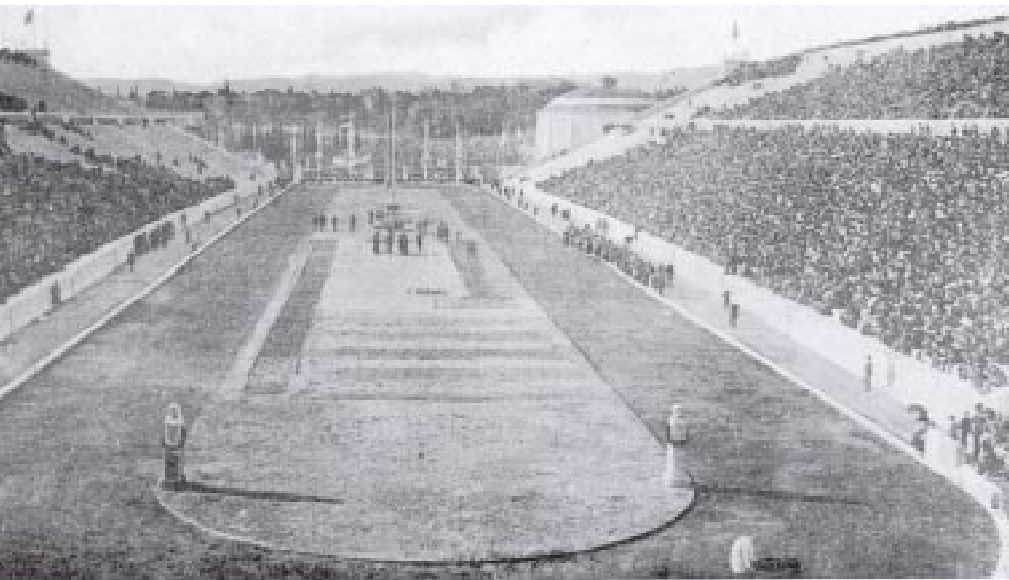
Like cinema, the picture postcard celebrates its hundredth birthday at almost the same time as the modern Olympic Games. Although the postcard was actually invented in 1869 in Austria, it was not until twenty years later that it first appeared with a picture. The first illustrated cards were printed for the 1889 World Fair in Paris; they featured the Eiffel Tower, which had been built for the occasion. It was during this Fair that Coubertin, who was only 26 years old at the time, organized an international congress for the promotion of physical exercise. This was one of the first steps he took towards reviving the Games, a goal he achieved in the amphi-



Postcard 3.

Postcard 2.





Le Stade. AGHNAI. Έλλάδα.

Postcard 4.

theatre of the Sorbonne on 23 June 1894 (card 1).

Photographic cards appeared around 1891. They were already commonly used throughout Europe, including Greece, when the first Olympic Games were taking place in Athens in April 1896. Some

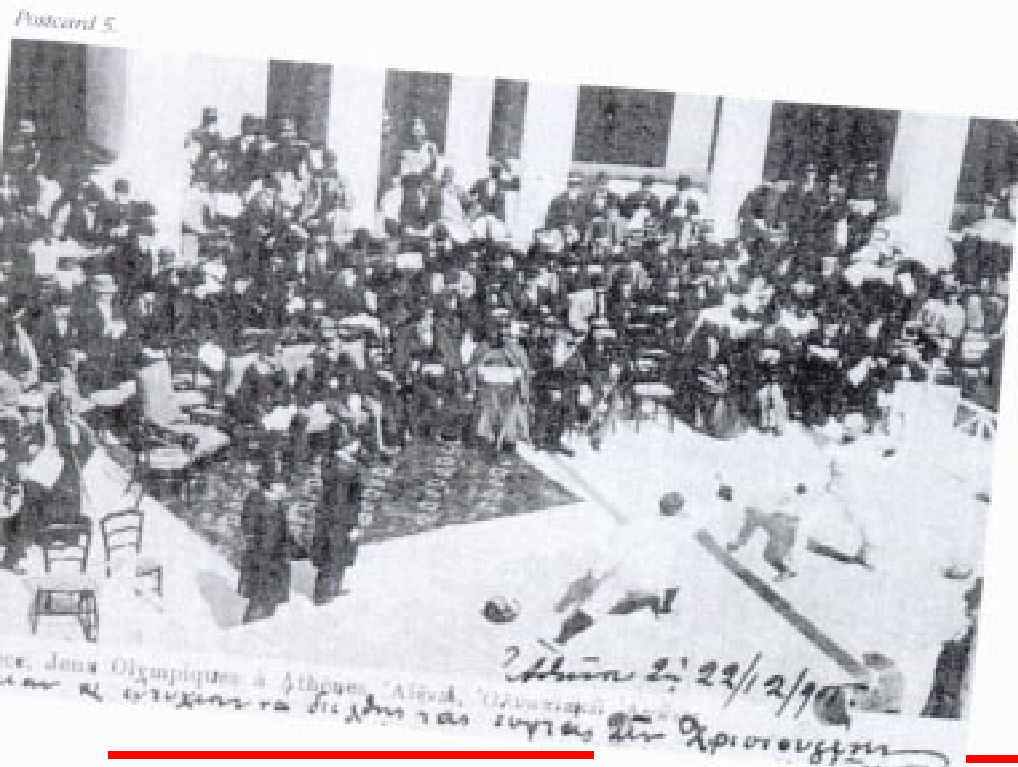
early examples with a small snapshot still exist, such as card 2, which shows the crowded stadium during the opening ceremony. But gradually, the photograph image filled the entire card. Card 3 shows the white marble stadium, which had been restored as a generous gift

from George Averof, and to the right, the round “Zappion” stadium where the fencing events took place. Card 4 shows the start of the opening ceremony.

Most cards published around the time show the “Panathinaikon” stadium. These are easily distinguished from similar cards published for the Games in 1906 since a portico of Corinthian columns was built at the stadium entrance during the interim. Some very rare cards from 1896 depict the sports events, notably athletics and fencing (card 5), or athletes such as Alfred Hajos of Hungary, winner of the 100m freestyle swimming event (card 6).

The first quarter of the twentieth century was the golden age of the postcard. After their debut in Athens, postcards have illustrated all the Games of the Olympiad and Olympic Winter Games. They even contributed to the financing of the 1912 Games in Stockholm and the 1928 Games in Amsterdam. Today, the postcard is back in fashion again, and is one of the most popular souvenirs licensed for sale by organizing committees.

Jean-Loup Chappelet



Postcard 5.



Postcard 6.