

# Was the Truce of Ancient Greek Festival Sacred?

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The ancient Greeks found honor in military strength and prowess, thus city-states were in continuous struggle to dominate one another. Most probably, the Greeks owe their political independence and national existence to their athletic military. However, the wars dramatically divided the Greek city states. Iphetus of Elis sought a method to eliminate the internal conflicts and unite the Greek city states. He realized that re-establishment of the Olympic Games as part of his reforms to unite the city states required a regional truce. Through advisement and approval with other leaders, the established truce would rival city states to peacefully compete against one another. Therefore, the Olympic games would afford athletes the opportunity to compete for personal as well as city state honor and dignity.

Supposedly the sacred truce, proclaimed by heralds, would ensure safe travel for athletes, trainers, pilgrims and spectators to, during and after the Olympic festival. However, was the Olympic truce sacred? Did the truce protect individuals traveling to, during and from the festival? Did the terms of the truce protect Elis, travelers and the Olympic sanctuary? And finally, were the terms of the truce observed throughout the history of the ancient Olympic Games?

The purpose of this paper was to discuss the various controversies concerning the ancient Olympic Games sacred truce. The paper examined the purpose, development and decline of the truce and specifically addressed the truce in relation to: 1) Elis, 2) Greek politics, 3) Elusinean mystery religions, and 4) violations that lead to the Olympic Festival's decline.