

The outset...

For the last thirty years I have been collecting archaeological skeletal material excavated from various places in Greece and, being an orthodontist, I have focused on the **craniofacial complex** of our ancestors. The study of this archaeological material, dating from about 1900 to 300 B.C., investigates and registers the facial features of ancient Greeks, so that they can be compared with those of modern Greeks.

Moreover, the comparison is made with the facial features of ancient statues in order to ascertain whether ancient art depicts reality or presents an idealized form of it. The first relevant paper was my Master's Degree from the University of Bergen in Norway, with the theme "Craniofacial Morphology of ancient Greeks", where I concluded that, in fact, there are no differences observed between modern and ancient Greeks' facial features, in a span of 4000 years.

The progress...

My research work continued with the study of archaeological skeletal material from the excavation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ephorate of Antiquities in the area of Kerameikos, in cooperation with archaeologist Efi Baziotopoulou-Valavani, orthodontist Philippos Synodinos and genetist-dentist-biologist Christos Yiapitzakis, with the aim to try to detect the pathogenic factor that was responsible for the **Plague of Athens** and the death of 50,000 Athenians. Following the protocol of Professors Raoult and Drancourt of the University of Marseilles we reached the conclusion that the microbial factor that caused the Plague of Athens was **typhoid fever**.

The continuation...

A child's skull found in excellent condition in the mass grave of Kerameikos drew my attention,

as it bore its lower jaw and also all its permanent and some of its primary teeth. Thus, the process of the **facial reconstruction** of this 5<sup>th</sup> B.C. century child started. In collaboration with George Panagiaris, Manolis Tsilivakos, Panagiotis Toulas, Aristomenis Antoniadis, Manolis Maravelakis and Oscar Nilsson, we managed in two years' time to complete the reconstruction of the face of **Myrtis**, the unfortunate girl who died in the Plague of Athens, 430-726 B.C.

The exhibition...

The next step was the presentation of Myrtis to the general public, on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2010, in the New Acropolis Museum, and after that in a

### **travelling exhibition**

titled "Myrtis: Face to Face with the Past". The team that undertook the museological organization of the exhibition was composed of Haris Haïtas, Natasa Kalou, Popi Georgopoulou, Nectaria Theodoropoulou, Mina Karagianni, Eleftheria Kentrou and Athina Rigatou. The exhibition was first displayed, with a huge success, in the Goulandri Natural History Museum, from 15

<sup>th</sup>

April to 15

<sup>th</sup>

June 2010. After that it embarks on a 2-3 year journey to a number of museums in Greece and abroad, before it lands up to the permanent exhibition of a museum in Athens.

The future...

Research work with archaeological skeletal material from Kerameikos and other excavations is resumed. With the help of the Rector of the University of Athens –also the former rectors George Babinotis and Christos Kittas– as well as with the unreserved support of Michalis Dermitzakis, a **Paleopathology Laboratory** has been established in the University of Athens, and I hope that soon we will be able to announce the projects that are already in progress...