

**Olympia and Macedonia:  
Games, Gymnasia, and Politics**

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Rather than undertaking a simple historical survey, I propose to approach this topic from the political and social aspects of sports. From this perspective, we should consider more generally the phenomenon of sports and society. Let us then begin with some general comments about the nature of sports as I see it so that we may place the Greek and Macedonian historical experience within that framework. Like the modern Olympics and modern sports generally, ancient Greek athletics are an accurate mirror of society. While the play ethos may be characteristically human and universal, the organization of play into public contests with rules, umpires, and spectators implies that great social importance has been invested in these contests. One way of classifying sport in any culture is according to its social functions, how sport affects its participants, its audience, and the public beyond. Generally speaking, sport has two great functions, to edify and to delight. By edification I mean, the instilling of serious cultural values, either implicitly or explicitly, what Greeks

called paideia; the Germans call it Ausbildung. Thus when a child is first introduced to the sports of a culture, he or she learns not merely rules but values and an ethos of behavior which dictates what can and cannot be done. And when individuals of any age participate in or watch sporting events, they are endorsing the values communicated by that activity. And sport delights when it gives pleasure to participants or spectators, either directly or indirectly. An athlete, said Pindar, is one who "delights in the toil and the cost". Audiences, we might add, delight in the drama of the event in various complex ways. There has arisen in recent decades an obvious third great function of sport, namely the attainment and maintenance of physical well being. But I do not highlight this function in this discussion of ancient sport since it was not a major motivation for the existence of sport in pre-industrialized societies.

Sports in all cultures then serve at least to delight and edify, and we may further characterize cultures according to their emphasis on one of these two functions. In purely economic terms, modern western cultures have built sports into an enormously prosperous field of enterprise, and this, I would argue, betrays an emphasis on the entertainment aspect of sport. Edification is also part of the modern phenomenon, but clearly a secondary concern. In this way, the moderns are more like the Romans than the ancient Greeks. The Romans also spent enormous sums of money to produce incredibly elaborate chariot races, beast games, and gladiatorial spectacles. The Roman contestants were almost all paid professionals, and the effect was to keep the people happy but without political voice under the domination of the emperors.

The Greeks, on the other hand, had an exceptionally strong interest in the edifying function of athletic contests. In every ancient Greek city worthy of the name, contests, agônes, and the gymnasium instilled their citizens with positive values. The participants were, with few exceptions, male Hellenic citizens. Athletes seeking to participate in a local or a Panhellenic festival might come from any Greek city, but they had to be Greek. Financially, athletes could and did effectively become professional in our sense of the term, yet the gymnasium and stadium doors were always open to amateurs and newcomers, so long as they were Hellenes and males. This emphasis on ethnically restricted participation and the fact that gymnasia were widely available for training and socialization of sportsmen clearly indicates the educative and socializing character of Greek sports. Both athletes, audience, and habitués of the gymnasium ensured that sports were an integral part of the culture of each Greek polis. This may sound like an obvious truism, but when we contrast Greek athletics with those of the Romans and of modern nations, we see that the Greek enterprise was uniquely politicized: in outlook it was democratic towards its own people, chauvinistic towards others. How this came to be is beyond the present topic, but it is important to keep this characterization of Greek athletics in mind as we turn to Macedonia.

The ancient region of Macedonia affords many examples of sports as serious paideía. Since Macedonia was on the margins of the Greek world, it was supremely important for its kings to assert their "Greekness" by taking part in athletic festivals. In the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., Macedonian royalty sought to establish their Hellenic roots by being admitted as competitors to the most Greek of festivals the

Olympics at Olympia. Alexander I, King of Macedonia from c. 495-450 and ancestor of Alexander (III) the Great, as a youth sought to enter the stadion or 200 meter footrace of the Olympics, possibly in the late 500's. His entry was challenged by other contestants "on the grounds that this was no contest for foreigners, but for Greeks only."<sup>1</sup> Alexander then proved to the judges that he was of Argive ancestry, was therefore admitted as a Greek, and "ran a dead heat with the winner" of the race, though he seems to have lost in a runoff.<sup>2</sup> It is remarkable that this royal prince chose to compete personally in a footrace, rather than in one of the equestrian events which were more usually, as the saying goes, "the sport of kings". A century later, King Archelaus, son of Perdikkas, (c. 413-399) won victories in the four-horse chariot both at Olympia and at the Pythian Games at Delphi.<sup>3</sup> Archelaus generally sought to hellenize Macedonia by bringing to his court Greek poets, philosophers, and artists, notably Euripides. Archelaus's campaign for cultural rapprochement with other Greeks culminated in the founding of a parallel Olympic festival, called the Olympia, at the city of Dion. The festival lasted for nine days and was dedicated to Zeus and the nine Muses, appropriately for its location at the foot of Mount Olympus where Zeus held sway and not far from the Pierian birthplace of his nine daughters. Each of the days of the festival was named after a different one of the Muses.

It was the first such of many "spin-off" Olympic festivals during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The practice became so widespread that the term "Isolympic" was used to designate an entire class of games which, like Archelaus' Olympics, were modelled more or less on the program and ceremonies of the original Olympics of the Peloponnese. Eventually two more Olympics were founded in Macedonian

cities, at Aegae (Vodena, now Édessa) and at Thessaloniki.<sup>4</sup> Archelaus' games had dramatic competitions as well, and Alexander the Great later used those games as a final splendid celebration for the Greek leaders just prior to their setting off on the expedition to conquer Asia.<sup>5</sup>

In short, Archelaus was in the forefront of manipulating athletic festivals to make political capital. Philip II and his son Alexander (III) the Great learned the lesson well and knew that control of the two greatest festivals in particular, the Olympics at Olympia and the Pythian Games at Delphi, was crucial to uniting Greek leaders and people under their sphere of power. Another earlier Greek leader, Jason of Pherae, had tried to set himself up as president of the Pythian Games in 370 and then lead a united Greek expedition against Persia. He celebrated the festival at Delphi with splendor, and pooled many animal sacrifices from local cities in Thessaly, but his plans were cut short by his assassination. After the end of the so-called "Sacred War" in 346, Philip II emerged as protector and saviour of Delphi, and hence was declared President of the Pythian Games that year. Athens and Sparta refused to send their usual delegates to the games, in protest of his accrual of new power, but Athens, under recommendation of the orator Demosthenes, eventually recognized Philip's leadership.<sup>6</sup> The power play of the Macedonian king had paid off at Delphi. He was elected to head the powerful Amphictionic Board, the most influential league in Greece at that time.

King Philip II had earlier enjoyed a victory in a horse race at Olympia in 356, and two more victories in the next two Olympiads, in the four-horse chariot in 352 and in the two-horse in 348.<sup>7</sup> A silver tetradrachma coin of Philip probably commemorates his horse race victory. The custom of

commemorating his victory on a coin was learned by the monarch from the tyrants of Sicily who had done so before him. Philip first heard of his horse victory on an auspicious day, Plutarch tells us, shortly after he had captured Potidaea, and on the same day that he was told of a victory by Parmenio over the Illyrians and of the birth of his son, Alexander. The seers declared to his delight that the son whose birth coincided with the three victories would himself always be victorious. Philip also minted a coin to commemorate his two-horse victory in 348. In 338 Philip defeated the Athenians and the Thebans at Chaeronea, before his rise to presidency of the Delphic Games in 336. A new "Greek League" was ratified of all member states under Philip's leadership, and governed by a "Council of the Greeks". The Council significantly was to meet at the four centers of the major Panhellenic games, namely Olympia, Delphi, Nemea, and Isthmia.<sup>8</sup> In fact an inscription has been preserved which specifies:

The meetings of the Council will take place wherever the chairmen and the king, or the general designated by the king, announce, until the war is over; when peace has come, the meetings will take place wherever the athletic crown games are taking place.<sup>9</sup>

There is an even greater reminder in stone of the centrality of Philip's devotion to Panhellenic festivals and sanctuaries, a building honoring his family, namely the Philippeion, which was begun by Philip in the sanctuary at Olympia after the battle of Chaeronea. It was also a reminder of Greece's presumed devotion to its new ruler. The structure was completed only after Philip's assassination, under the reign of his son Alexander.<sup>10</sup> It was placed in the northwest of the

sanctuary, apart from all other structures built by other city-states, and conspicuously near the temples of Hera and Zeus, as well as the hero shrine of the legendary founder, Pelops. It was the first structure at Olympia to take its name from its mortal benefactor, and it was the first nominally secular building to be enclosed in the sanctuary. Indeed the sanctuary walls were established to accommodate it. Five chryselephantine statues were contained inside the Philippeion, with Alexander's own image in the middle flanked by his parents and grandparents. The family members were not just honored, they took on the iconography previously reserved almost exclusively for deities in their temples. Even the circular form of the building, called a tholos, was normally reserved for divine temples. The first more or less freely appointed leader of all the Greeks was thus enshrined at the center of Panhellenism. Numerous other renovations also took place at Olympia around the time of Philip: his benefaction may have provided funding for the construction of the so-called "Echo Stoa", an 80 meter long hall at the west end of the horse-race course.<sup>11</sup> Philip may have also been moved to vow such an embellishment of Zeus' sanctuary in thanksgiving for his victory in the 3 equestrian events.

Philip was assassinated in the act of celebrating at Aegae in Macedonia the wedding of his daughter Cleopatra to Alexander of Epiros. The Games which took place at Aegae to honor the marriage were named the Olympics, echoing Archelaus' Olympic games at Dion a century earlier.<sup>12</sup> Athletics were accompanied by dramatic and musical competitions. Twelve statues of the Olympian gods were featured in the festival procession to the theater, and a statue of Philip himself followed behind the gods, Philip again assuming a quasi-divine image.



Alexander the Great was too occupied in pursuing other conquests to compete at the Olympics, though he did take a real interest in sports and recognized its political value. Alexander was athletic but not fond of participating personally in festival contests. He did not even imitate his father and other royals by entering horses in the Olympics or elsewhere. Plutarch best tells the well known story of his aversion to the stadium:

...the pleasures of the body had little hold upon him and he indulged in them with great moderation, while his ambition kept his spirit serious and lofty in advance of his years. For it was neither every kind of fame nor fame from every source that he courted, as Philip did, ...who took care to have the victories of his chariots at Olympia engraved upon his coins; no, when those about him inquired whether he would be willing to contend in the footrace at the Olympic Games, since he was swift of foot, "yes," said he, "if I could have kings as my contestants." And in general too Alexander seems to have been averse to the whole race of athletes; at any rate though he instituted very many contests not only for tragic poets and players on the flute and kithara, but also for rhapsodists, as well as for hunting of every sort and stick-fighting, he took no interest in offering prizes either for boxing or for the pancration (an all-in combat sport).<sup>13</sup>

But we should not take the disclaimer too seriously. We know that Alexander held athletic contests everywhere along the route of his famous conquests, and that he exploited the value of the established games as powerful venues for conveying a message to the greatest numbers from all over the Greek world. Like his father, Alexander recognized the

political value of the Greek national pastimes.

The proclamation of all Greek states to join Alexander in an expedition against Persia was made at a meeting of the Greek League during the Isthmian Games. After an early campaign in which he had obtained the allegiance of most states, Alexander held the Olympics as a thanksgiving to Zeus at Dion, a custom established by Archelaus, and then he celebrated the Olympic Games at Aegae in Macedonia, games also held for the Muses.<sup>14</sup>

He clearly respected the fame which the original Olympics could bestow on an individual. During his Asian expedition, when he took a prisoner at the battle of Issos, a certain Dionysodoros of Thebes, he set him free after he learned that he had been an Olympic victor. Alexander indulged his own soldiers in their passion for athletics along the route of the campaign. Athenaeus tells us that two of his men:

Perdikkas and Krateros were such lovers of athletics that they brought along with them on the march a stadion's length [about 200 meters] of goatskins beneath the shade of which-- once they had grabbed a place in the encampment -- they exercised. They also brought many wagonloads of the kind of dust used in the palaestra.<sup>15</sup>

It seems here that the two men effectively brought along a portable set-up for a covered stadium, and it must be that many of their comrades competed and watched the moveable athletic festival. The practice, if Athenaeus can be believed, amounted to the first importation of western athletics into the farther reaches of Asia. As soon as the army entered India native craftsmen began production of the strigils and oil-flasks

which were the essential equipment of Greek athletes.<sup>16</sup> On another occasion, after a great party for friends, two of Alexander's drunken companions, a Macedonian warrior and an Athenian former athlete, agreed to an all-out duel.<sup>17</sup> The Athenian was winning when the match was halted, and Alexander held it against the man. He was made to undergo public shame by a conspiracy against him, and finally the man committed suicide. The ancient commentator blames the athlete for his foolishness in ever getting into the duel and for committing suicide in the aftermath. In any case, the incident illustrates how deadly serious such contests could be and how high public honor was valued. It also shows the intense rivalry brewing beneath the surface between Macedonians and other Greeks under Alexander. But non-Macedonian athletes were not always the king's enemies. When Alexander was seeking a ruler for the rebellious Peloponnesian city of Pellene, he selected its native son Chairon who had been a wrestling champion at four Olympic Games (356-344), and at two Isthmian Games.<sup>18</sup> It was a dubious distinction for a man later reviled by his fellow citizens for taking on this unwanted tyranny, but it does illustrate the real power of Olympic fame.

Olympia in the Peloponnese itself served as the forum for Alexander publicizing his military exploits, though he is not known to have ever set foot there himself. During his campaigns in Asia, he sent reports back to read publicly at the Olympic festival. He sent his general Nikanor of Stagira there in 324 to proclaim to the audience at the games the texts of two royal mandates asking all Greek states to recall their exiles, and bidding them to acknowledge Alexander as a god. The herald spoke the proclamations in the presence of 20,000 exiles mustered specially for the occasion.<sup>19</sup> Philonides, Alexander's courier and road surveyor, however, did have a

monument set up to him at Olympia.<sup>20</sup> It has been suggested that the bronze tablet set up on one side of Philonides' monument was a map of Asia on which visitors could trace the course of the journeys of Alexander and his assistant.<sup>21</sup>

Arrian reports two remarkable sets of games held by Alexander towards the end of his victorious campaign against the Persians in 324:

At Ecbatana, Alexander offered sacrifice, as it was custom to do to celebrate a happy occasion. He also held a festival with literary and athletic contests, and drank deep with his closest friends. About this time Hephaestion [Alexander's closest friend, prized commander and first subordinate] fell sick. On the seventh day of his illness it so happened that there was a big crowd in the stadium to watch the boy's races, which were then taking place. During the races a message was brought to Alexander that Hephaestion's condition was serious; he hurried away, but his friend was dead before he could reach him.<sup>22</sup>

We learn from this not only that Alexander held such formal games to mark a splendid victory, but that he did attend them while on the campaign. When celebration turns to grief, however, Alexander indulged in deep mourning, culminating in funeral games held in Hephaestion's honor, with contests in literature and athletics. As Arrian tells us:

...the festival was more splendid than ever before both in numbers of competitors and in the money spent on it. In all 3,000 men competed in various events -- and these men took part soon afterwards in the Games at Alexan-

der's own funeral.<sup>23</sup>

Funeral games for distinguished heroes were of course a custom harkening back to the legendary games given by Achilles for Patroclus in the Trojan war, and Alexander was clearly aware of the resonance.

After Alexander's death the Greek world was again convulsed by power struggles among his successors. Elis, patron city of the Olympics, at first revolted against Macedonia, but later took a more cautiously neutral position. The Olympic sanctuary became the repository for victory dedications and statues of kings on both sides of the struggle. A statue of Aratus of Sikyon, enemy of Macedonia, is there as is one of the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy Philadelphus, another opponent of Macedonian rule. Pyrrhus of Epirus had a statue at Olympia, he who had twice been named ruler of Macedonia. A statue group from the late third century B.C. was set up by Antigonos Doson who is depicted crowing at once both Alexander's nominal successor, Philip Arridaeus, and his opponent Antigonos.

Alexander's conquests opened up the Eastern Mediterranean for the spread of athletic festivals for centuries thereafter. Greek sports became the 'export model' for Hellenism of that age. Everywhere in Asia gymnasia were built and stadia appeared. Athletic festivals on the ancient models were established by cities large and small, and thereby bolstered the claims of remote places of being in step with the dominant culture of the Greek mainland. In many ways Alexander's conquests raised formerly marginal sites to more central status. Alexandria itself became a stronghold of Hellenic ideals and a major site for games. Likewise Pergamon, Byzantion, and Antioch were prominent in the production of

athletes, some of whom were even Olympic victors, while great athletes from the former "superpowers", Athens and Sparta, were rare.

The century during and after Alexander's reign sees more victories by Macedonians at Olympia, though the kings no longer are found in the lists. In the 328 B.C. Olympiad, while Alexander was conquering Bactria, the Macedonian man Kliton was victor in the 200-meter or stade race, but we know nothing further about him.<sup>24</sup> A certain Damasios of Amphipolis won the stade race in the 320 Games.<sup>25</sup> In the successive Olympiads of 292 and 288 B.C. a certain Macedonian named Antigonos, also otherwise unknown, won the prestigious stade race both times.<sup>26</sup> And the nobly named Seleucos of Macedonia, also otherwise anonymous, won the same race in the 268 Olympics. It was in these same Olympics that the notorious femme fatale Belistiche won her first victory in the four-horse chariot race for colts.<sup>27</sup> Though some ancient literary sources say that she is either from Argos or a 'barbarian,' Pausanias' claim that she is from Macedonia is supported by a papyrological source.<sup>28</sup> The papyrus and a reference in Athenaeus agree that she was also renowned as the hetaira or courtesan of Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt.<sup>29</sup> Whether she rose to royal consort after or before her Olympic victory is unknown. We may speculate that Philadelphus financed her venture into chariot-racing. It was axiomatically the sport of kings because of the huge costs involved. It was also the only sport in which women could and did directly participate in the original Olympics. All events were originally restricted to men, but beginning with a Spartan princess, Kyniska, in the early 4th century, a loophole was found whereby a well funded female could raise horses and sponsor a chariot at the Games.<sup>30</sup> The sponsor of a chariot did

not normally drive nor did he or she even have to be present for the contest, so the Olympic laws and customs restricting women's participation did not apply in equestrian events. Perhaps Belistiche was so delighted with her first victory that she was moved to enter a second time. In any case, we know that she did win in the very next Olympics, in 264 B.C., but this time in another event, the two-horse chariot race for colts, on the occasion of the event first being offered at the Olympics. The introduction of this event and a later horse-race for colts in 256 B.C. may indicate the influence of the horse-breeding regions of Macedonia in this period. In any case, a statue of Belistiche was set up at Olympia and some say she even became a goddess! She certainly was much bolder and more powerful than most women of her era. Other females, normally of royal lineage, won in the Olympics after Belistiche as well, perhaps inspired by her pioneering efforts.<sup>31</sup>

After the third century B.C. Olympic victors from Macedonia are scarce, though this too is likely a reflection of the shifting of power and finance in the era in which Rome dominated the Games.<sup>32</sup> In 196 B.C. Flamininus proclaimed Greece's liberation from Macedonia, and he made the announcement on the occasion of the Isthmian games. Greece was only nominally liberated. In reality it was unified artificially and enslaved under a new tyrant, Rome.

Finally, the political dimension of ancient sports is reflected in a remarkable inscription on a large marble stele found in Verroia (Berea), Macedonia and dating to the second century B.C., sometime prior to the 167 B.C.<sup>33</sup> It documents in great detail the laws pertaining to the local gymnasium, including rules for the management, membership, prohibition against certain people from entering the gymnasium, holding

of a local athletic festival sponsored by the gymnasium, selection of judges, and regulation of revenues. What it tells us, among other things, is that games also played a very important role in the upbringing of the youth of Greek cities, and even after the heyday of political gamesmanship in Macedonia, the somewhat isolated city of Verroia staunchly maintained order in its gymnasium.

The inscription was set up to give the citizens guidelines for the running of the gymnasium. Like most laws, it is filled with stock phrases and jargon, but its very existence also implies that all citizens were entitled to know exactly how a public institution was managed. It is a pledge of accountability. The law explicitly says in its opening that with its publication, "the younger men will show respect and be obedient to their leader and their fees will not be wasted by those legally elected as gymnasium managers since they will govern and be supervised according to the rules." The gymnasium manager, or gymnasiarch, is to be between 30 and 60 years of age, and each must swear to an oath to Heracles and Hermes that he will abide by gymnasiarchal law, not pilfer funds, nor allow others to do so. Further laws distinguish between young adults, generally anywhere from 20 to the age of 30, and boys, in teens or younger, regarding how they are to conduct themselves in the gymnasium. The gymnasiarch has a great deal of power to assess heavy financial fines, and even to flog those who disobey. The older youths are prohibited from annoying or teasing the younger boys, on penalty of fines and punishments.

A very interesting list of those prohibited from disrobing in the gymnasium is given, including slaves, freedmen, sons of freedmen, the "handicapped" (ἀπᾶλαιστρος, literally "non-



palaistra-person"), homosexual prostitutes (ἡταιρευκῶς), salesmen, drunkards or madmen.<sup>34</sup> If the gymnasiarch knowingly allows any such people to exercise, he will be fined 1,000 drachmas or roughly US\$22,000. Note that the law does not prohibit homosexuals as such, since homosexuality and more precisely male pederasty was widely accepted in Greek culture of this period and particularly as part of the gymnasium.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the law goes on, no one may talk back to the gymnasiarch, or he will be fined 50 drachmas (about \$1,100), and it will cost the guilty party 100 drachmas (about \$2,200) for striking the gymnasiarch.

An entire section is devoted to the regulation of a major festival to Hermes, the Hermaia: the selection of judges, the crowning of victors, and the provision of expenses are all spelled out. It even specifies who is to perform ritual sacrifices and who is to pay for it. The major contest in Verroia at this festival were the torch-races or lampadedromiai, one for the boys and one for the young men. Gymnasium regulars could pay up to \$44 each to help with the festival expenses which included purchasing the armor apparently worn in the torch-race. Special judges were selected for the torch race and the long-distance race, judges different from those for the other, less prestigious contests.

So as to limit graft among the gymnasium managers, the total revenues from his term of office had to be written on a board displayed in the gymnasium. City auditors were to look at his books on a quarterly basis, and anyone who wants to may call the gymnasiarch into account after the audit. All surplus revenue is to be handed over to the new gymnasiarch when the previous one leaves office.

Incidentally, one important source of revenue apparently came from what we would consider a most unsavory source, the selling of a substance called gloios. Gloios was a natural by-product of every gymnasium, namely the mixture of sweat, oil, and dirt scrapped off the body after exercise by means of an instrument called the strigil or stlengis. Pliny tells us that gloios was used medicinally as an ointment for inflammations of the vulva and anus, for condyloma, for muscle pains, sprains, and inflamed joints.<sup>36</sup> We can only hypothesize why this ointment might have been prized, but it is most likely because the sweat of healthy athletes, the direct product of their sacrifice of energy, was presumed to contain the source of that energy.<sup>37</sup> Special contracts were issued for selling the gloios of the gymnasium, and the vendor who held such a contract was required to provide a "palaistra security guard" (παλαιστροφύλαξ) to watch the precious salve on the gymnasium premises.

So gymnasia were a form of business expected to run more or less on self-sufficient capital. The economic aspects of the Gymnasium Law of Verroia are a prominent part of it. The motivation is not to make a profit, but to reassure the community that it is being run honestly. One can only imagine that there were real controversies and accusations of corrupt gymnasiarchs which led to the writing of these laws and the setting up of this inscription. But there are also fascinating rules laid down simply to ensure the respectful behavior of athletes and other habitués of the gymnasium toward the gymnasiarch or his appointed manager. All in all, the law underscores the points made earlier in this survey, that athletic activities were deeply ingrained into Greek social fabric, and fair and honorable behavior was enforced most strictly by very real monetary and physical punishments. The

inscription is a unique window into the importance of sports in the everyday life of ancient Macedonia, and, indeed, of Greece more widely. While the concern with legalisms and financial honesty strike a chord familiar to modern society, there are also fundamental differences in the spirit in which Greek sports was something of serious political, communal, and moral concern.

A survey of the relation of Macedonia to athletics and to the Olympics in particular reveals clearly the radical engagement of Greeks in athletic culture. Certainly more than the Romans, more than our own culture, and more than most cultures in recorded human history, the Greeks forged a program of public contests and training for contests in the gymnasia in which citizens were expected to be publicly engaged. The stakes of power and public reputation were so high that most rulers and groups of city patriarchs sought to control or manipulate the athletic machine. Since Macedonia and the consolidations of power by Philip II and Alexander the Great reached their acme so late in the history of Hellenic greatness, the patterns for exploitation of athletic organizations had been well formed. It remained only for those mighty Macedonian leaders to use sports for its maximum political potential. This was done not so much by direct participation by the élite, though Philip did that well, as it was done by use of the meetings of the Panhellenic athletic festivals, particularly the Olympics, as vehicles for conveying the enormity of the ruler's own political prestige. Inscriptions were set up, announcements made, and meetings of the Hellenic leaders or their representatives took place. In the pre-industrial age, there are no real parallels in which sporting events were regularly also the venue for serious political maneuvering.

The establishment of gymnasia is simply another example of radical engagement of the citizenry in the athletic institutions. The regulations of Verroia are simply a reflection of regulations at other cities. Though it is the only such detailed document in existence, parallels with practices elsewhere are evident from reference in literary sources of other cities and periods. At Athens, Sparta, and elsewhere, rules were very similar in kind for youths' participation in city gymnasia.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, it is because of this serious engagement in athletics that the powerful élite could and did exploit those institutions, festivals and gymnasia, as political tools. Whereas Roman leaders used games contested mainly by slaves or condemned criminals to entertain and effectively mute the voice of the citizen masses, the Greeks in power took care to consult, to persuade the assembled crowds, and to disclose to the fellow citizenry the fairness and justice of their plans. Thus the stele set up in Verroia was more than a bureaucratic document, it was a sign of the real obligation to communicate honestly in the context of the Greek city state, an obligation made more pressing by the active role of citizenry in sports.

We perhaps run the risk here of overstating the contrast between Greek, Roman and modern societies in their differing politicization of sports. Some Roman citizens, even noblemen and women, did in fact take part voluntarily in gladiatorial games, and certainly some lessons for edification could be derived from witnessing the struggles for life in the amphitheater. Yet Roman spectacles and games were primarily grotesque performances for mass entertainment, not arenas for exhibiting the communal valor of one's civic equals.<sup>39</sup> The athletics of the ancient Greeks did of course have, *inter alia*, the very important function of entertaining the spectators, but viewers were constantly reminded by the

participation of fellow citizens as athletes of their own responsibility to remain actively engaged in communal affairs. And modern sports too have an edifying function whereby spectators can learn the importance of fair play, of teamwork, and of staying healthy. But economically the most visible presence of contemporary sports is in the field of entertainment, where seasonal contests of collegiate, professional, and Olympic athletes is dominated by concerns of successful marketing of these phenomena. Far more eligible voters in the U.S. watch the Superbowl each year than take part in the annual electoral processes. The ancient Greeks were passionately involved in both sports and politics, and to a great extent that tradition has survived in modern Greek culture.

Some may here argue that the real similarity between modern western sports and ancient Greek athletics is that big business controls modern sports in a way similar to that in which Alexander and other rulers manipulated athletics to sway public favor. Yet the major difference is that in ancient Greece athletics were so intrinsically connected with each polis from such an early period that almost all examples of politicians or powerful citizens exerting economic influence over ancient athletics are reactions to the pre-existing popularity of these phenomena at the grass-roots level. The modern (and the Roman) examples of businessmen or an empowered élite manipulating sporting contests are, by contrast, mostly instances of these powerful people magnifying relatively isolated games into much more popular phenomena than they were originally. The best example of this modern process is the Olympic movement itself, which began as a small phenomenon a century ago, undertaken to uphold ideals of upper-class amateurism and to promote European nationalism, and has grown into a major international com-

mercial venture.<sup>40</sup> The ancient Olympics, on the other hand, began as a religious festival for all the Greeks, and, though various cities and powers used it effectively as a political forum on many occasions, it always retained an essentially religious character and an identity independent of would-be "hijackers" of the festival.<sup>41</sup>

If we keep in mind these cautions against oversimplification, we may still conclude that modern Western sports could learn much from the ancient Greek system, and even a partial return to the purer, more participatory spirit of Greek athletics, would be a great advance. Sports, particularly in the hands of modern media, have once again become a more Roman style tool for the silencing of public opinion, rather than the fostering of it. Alas we cannot return to that ancient Greek ethos of participation, but perhaps we can at least re-institute aspects of its political and moral engagement.<sup>42</sup> There is no simple corrective to the modern situation, but an awareness of the true contribution of ancient Greece to a more productive use of sports in society is perhaps a start in the right direction.

## Footnotes

1. Herodotus 5.22
2. W.W. How and J. Wells, A Commentary on Herodotus, vol.II (Oxford, 1912) 8.
3. I. Rutgers, Sextus Julius Africanus, Olympionicarum Fasti (Chicago, 1980, repr. of 1862) 141, citing Solinus 14
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7. Plutarch, Alexander 3.8; L. Moretti, Olympionikai, i vincitori negli antichi agoni olimpici (Rome, 1957) 123, no. 434.
8. N.G.L. Hammond, A History of Greece to 322 B.C. (Oxford, 1986<sup>3</sup>) 572.
9. Inscriptiones Graecae IV<sup>2</sup>.1.68.70-73; translated by S.G. Miller, Arete: Greek Sports from Ancient Sources (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991)
10. A. Mallwitz, Olympia und Seine Bauten (Athens, 1981) 128.
11. Mallwitz (above, note 10) 98.
12. E.N. Gardiner, Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals (London, 1910) 154; E. Badian, "The Death of Philip II", Phoenix 17 (1963) 244-50.
13. Plutarch, Alexander 4.4-6 (B. Perrin, translator, in Plutarch's Lives, vol VII, Loeb Classical Library [London and New York, 1919]).

14. Arrian, The Campaigns of Alexander 1.11.
15. Athenaeus, Deipnosophistoi 12.539C (translated by S.G. Miller [above, note 9] 151).
16. Strabo 15.1.67. See H.A. Harris, Greek Athletes and Athletics (London, 1964) 41.
17. Diodorus Siculus, Bibliotheca Historia 17. 100-101 (for a translation, see Miller [above, note 9] 111-113).
18. Pausanias 7.27.7.
19. Diodorus Siculus, Bibliotheca Historia 17.109, 18.8.
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21. Gardiner (above, note 12) 155.
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23. Arrian 7.15 (translator, Aubrey de Séincourt).
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25. Rutgers (above, note 3) 68; Moretti (above,note 7) 128 no. 473.
26. Rutgers (above, note 3) 69; Moretti (above, note 7) 134-35.



27. Moretti (above, note 7) 136-137, no. 549.
28. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 2028; Pausanias 5.8.11.
29. Athenaeus, Deipnosophistoi 13.576F; cf. 596E, arguing her Argive origins.
30. Moretti (above, note 7) 114-15, no. 373.
31. For women chariot victors at other Greek festivals, see G. Arrigoni, "Donne e sport nel mondo greco: Religione e società," in G. Arrigoni, ed.; Le donne in Grecia (Rome, 1985) 108 (Eleutheria at Larisa); 108-109 (Amphiaraiia at Oropus). See also the report of Athenaeus concerning races in chariots driven by Spartan maidens at the annual Spartan festival of Hyakinthia: Athen. 4.139F; cp. Xen. Ages. 8.7; Plut. Ages. 19.5; IG 4.586 and 587.
32. Krause (above, note 4) 792-3 mentions the Olympic victor Aurelios of Macedonia, though his victory may have been in the Dion Olympics; and Lampros of Philippi who won in the four-horse chariot in an unknown Olympics.
33. Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum 27 (1977) 66-72, no. 261 [edited Greek text]; translation in English by Miller (used here in text) (above, note 9) 126-38. For an interpretation on select portions, see L. Moretti, "Sulla legge ginnasiarca di Berea", Rivista Italiana di Filologia Classica 110 (1982) 45-63; for full commentary, see Philippe Gauthier and M.B. Hatzopoulos, La loi gymnasiarchique de Berea, Series: Μελετήματα (Κέντρον Ελληνικής και Ρωμαϊκής Αρχαιότητος Εθνικόν Ίδρυμα Ερευνών) vol. 16 (Athens: Centre de recherches de l'antiquité grecque et romaine; Paris: Diffusion de Boccard,

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34. For discussion of these categories of persons excluded and the controversies over what the unusual terms exactly mean in this context, see Gauthier and Hatzopoulos (above, note 33) 78-85.

35. E. Cantarella, Bisexuality in the Ancient World, C. Ó Cuilleanáin, trans. (New Haven, 1992) 28-36; D.G. Kyle, Athletics in Ancient Athens (Leiden, 1987) 65.

36. Pliny, Natural Histories 28.50-52.

37. See the hypothesis of David Sansone, Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988) 61-63 and 104-107 regarding the ritual sacrifice of energy by athletes and the importance of sweat in this process.

38. K. Adshead, "SEG XXVII 261 and the History of the  euthyna ", 1-6 in Studies Presented to Sterling Dow on His Eightieth Birthday, K.J. Rigsby, ed., Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies Supplement X (Durham, North Carolina, 1984), discusses Athenian parallels.

39. See Paul Plass, The Game of death in Ancient Rome (Madison, Wisconsin, 1995), and Carlin A. Barton, The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster (Princeton, 1993), and Keith Hopkins, Death and Renewal (Cambridge, U.K., 1983).

40. David Young, The Olympic Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics (Chicago, 1984).

41. See, e.g., the account in M.I. Finley and H.W. Pleket, The Olympic Games: The First Thousand Years (New York, 1976).

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