

Boycotts, Bribes and Fines

The Ancient Olympic Games

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The modern Olympic Games are now one of the most widely publicized events in the world. In 1984, it was estimated that between two and three billion people from all corners of the globe had watched on television at least a part of the 23rd Olympic Games held in Los Angeles; hundreds of thousands more watched firsthand the various events as they took place in many areas of southern California.

Quadrennially we are reminded that the modern Games are based in large measure on the concept of the ancient Olympic Games: an athletic festival held once every four years in late summer where athletes from different parts of the world came together to compete for the honor of victory. During the 1984 Olympics, we heard over and over again from announcers, critics, commen-

tators and even athletes that they regretted the Games were so commercial, so nationalistic, so political. Their assumption was that the ancient Olympic Games were different, that ancient Greek athletes were pure in mind and body, that they trained and competed for no

other reason than the love of physical exercise, fair competition and to honor their gods. The commentators asked, Where have we of the modern day gone wrong? What is it about our society that has produced an athletic festival that has so corrupted the ancient ideals? Is there hope for the modern Olympic Games?

Comparatively speaking, we are



1 Zeus. Obverse of silver tetradrachm, minted by Philip II of Macedonia ca. 350 B.C. to commemorate his victory in the horse race at Olympia. (Reverse of same coin is Fig. 15.) University Museum #29-126-58.

not in as desperate a situation as one might think. In fact we are, with surprising accuracy, recreating in the modern day the climate and circumstances surrounding the ancient Olympic Games where politics, nationalism, commercialism and athletics were intimately related.

Origins and Early History of the Olympic Games

The ancient Olympic Games were primarily a part of a religious festival in honor of Zeus, the father of the Greek pantheon (see Glossary) of gods and goddesses (Fig. 1). The festival and the games were held in Olympia (Fig. 2), a rural sanctuary site in the western Peloponnesos. The sanctuary was named in antiquity after Mt. Olympos, the highest mountain (2.9 km.) in mainland Greece, on the border between Macedonia and Thessaly. In Greek mythology, Mt. Olympos was the home of the greatest of the Greek gods and goddesses; Zeus was often called Olympian Zeus.

The Greeks that came to the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia shared the same religious beliefs, they spoke the same language, and the athletes were all male citizens of the city-states from every corner of the Greek world. They came from as far away as Iberia in the

west and the Black Sea in the east. According to the Olympic Register, a document attributed to Hippias of Elis in the late 5th century B.C., the ancient Olympic Games began in the year 776 B.C. when Koroibos, a cook from the nearby city of Elis, won the *stadion* race, a

foot race 600 feet long. According to some literary traditions, this was the only athletic event of the games for the first 13 Olympic festivals or until 724 B.C. Contrary evidence, both literary and archaeological, suggests that the games may have existed at Olympia much earlier than this date, perhaps as early as the 10th or 9th century B.C. A series of bronze tripods have been found at Olympia, some of which may date to the 9th century B.C. (Fig. 5), and it has been suggested that these tripods may in fact be prizes for some of the early events at Olympia.

From 776 B.C., the Games were held in Olympia every four years for almost 12 centuries apparently without interruption but not without certain difficulties. Additional athletic events were gradually added until, by the 5th century B.C., the religious festival consisted of a five-day program. The athletic events included three foot races, *stadion*, *dioulos* and *dolichos*, as well as the *pentathlon*, *pugne*, *pale*, *pankration*, and the *hoplitodromos* (see Glossary). Separate events for boys were initiated in the 7th century B.C. and included the *stadion*,

pale, and *pugne*. The boys' pentathlon was introduced in 628 B.C. but was immediately discontinued. Equestrian events, held in the *hippodromos*, were an important part of the athletic program of the ancient Olympic Games and by the 5th century B.C. included the *tethrippon* and the *keles*. Additional events, both equestrian and for humans, were added throughout the course of the history of the Olympic Games.

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Athletes as Prizewinners

Whereas one of the important sources of the current controversy surrounding the modern Olympic Games is the question of amateurism (and professionalism) of athletes, this was not a concern of the Greeks since ancient athletes regu-

larly received prizes worth substantial amounts of money. In fact, the word *athlete* is an ancient Greek word that means “one who competes for a prize” and was related to two other Greek words, *athlos* meaning “contest” and *athlon* meaning “prize.”

Our first glimpse of organized Greek athletics is in the 23rd book of Homer's *Iliad*, where Achilles organizes funeral games for his friend Patroklos who was killed during the Trojan War. In each of the eight events contested on the plain of Troy (see Fig. 4), material prizes are offered to each competitor, including tripods, cauldrons, valuable metal, oxen, and women. Most modern scholars now believe that the *Iliad* was written close to the year 700 B.C. and that much of the description of the story has more to do with the 8th century B.C. than it does with the late 13th century, the commonly accepted date of the Trojan War.

During the 8th, 7th, and 6th centuries B.C., all over the Greek world, dozens of athletic events were established as parts of religious festivals honoring heroes, gods, or even victorious battles. At most of



2 Map of mainland Greece, southern Italy, Sicily, western Asia Minor (after L. Drees, Olympia: Gods, Artists and Athletes).



3 Air photograph of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia. (Photo courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athen.)

the athletic festival sites, material awards were routinely given as prizes, e.g., bronze tripods at Lykaion, shields at Argos, woolen cloaks at Pellene, amphoras filled with olive oil at Athens. However, at the most prestigious of all of the athletic festivals of ancient Greece, the Pan-Hellenic Festivals, the only prizes given were wreaths of leaves, olive at Olympia, laurel at Delphi, pine at Isthmia, and parsley at Nemea. We hear from Phlegon, a Roman author of the 2nd century A.D., that it was in 752 B.C., on the advice of the Oracle at Delphi, that the wreath of olive leaves was instituted as the prize for victors at Olympia.

Athletes who won at any of these Pan-Hellenic games could be assured of great wealth when they re-

turned home. According to the Roman author Plutarch (*Solon* 23), an Olympic victor who was a citizen of Athens could expect to receive in the year 600 B.C. a cash award of 500 *drachmai*, a literal fortune. An Isthmian victor would receive 100 *drachmai*. From an Athenian inscription of the 5th century B.C. (IG I² 77), we learn that Athenian Olympic victors received a free meal in the City Hall every day for the rest of their lives, a kind of early pension plan. Later, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, pensions for athletes became more formalized and could actually be bought and sold. This evidence suggests that there were no amateur athletes in ancient Greece, but there were no professional athletes either, for there was no distinction between

the two categories, all were simply athletes. The concept of "amateur athletics," formulated in the 19th century A.D., would have been very foreign to the ancient Greeks since the winning of a valuable or prestigious prize was an important part of being an athlete.

Eligibility Requirements at Olympia

From an inscription set up at Olympia, concerning the foundation of the Augustan Games at Naples in the year A.D. 2, we have a good idea of some of the eligibility requirements at Olympia as well. The Augustan Games were classified as *isolympic*, which meant "equal to the Olympic Games"; therefore, the rules set up



4 Chariot race of the funeral games of Patroklos, Twenty-third Book of the Iliad. Detail from the François Vase, ca. 570 B.C. (Photo courtesy of Museo Archeologico, Florence.)

for Naples may have been the existing regulations at Olympia as well.

Each of the athletes must be registered according to his official name, either in his father's name or in some other way established by law; if not let him be fined by the supervisors

drachmai; if he does not pay the fine, let him be flogged. If anyone arrives later than the appointed time let him announce to the supervisor the reason for his tardiness. Valid excuses are illness, shipwreck or pirates. Let anyone who wishes inform against him . . . and if he is convicted, let him be barred from the contest by the supervisors.

Olympia Inscription 56

It is interesting to note that the same inscription also mentions the fact that athletes were to receive a daily subsidy, presumably for training purposes, of one *drachma* per day beginning 30 days before the festival which was increased to three *drachmai* per day 15 days before the festival. This may have been true at Olympia as well where athletes underwent 30 days of mandatory training in nearby Elis.

Pausanias, a 2nd century A.D.

"there existed fierce rivalries between the competing Greek city-states"



5 Bronze tripod from Olympia, possibly 9th century B.C. H. ca. 0.65 m. (Photo courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athen.)

Greek traveler, gives us more specific information about the oath that was sworn by athletes, coaches, trainers and the athletes' brothers and fathers who had accompanied them. Pausanias (5. 24, 9) tells us that the oath was sworn in the *bouleuterion* at Olympia, the official administrative center of the sanctuary (Fig. 6). Athletes and their retinue stood before a bronze image of Zeus, known as "Zeus the Oath Giver," who stood holding a thunderbolt in each hand. The athletes swore in the presence of Zeus and on strips of freshly cut boars' flesh that they would compete fairly in the contests, that they would not cheat or bribe or take a bribe, and that they had strictly followed training regulations for 10 consecutive months.

The *bouleuterion* is located in the shadow of the Temple of Zeus, the largest religious monument of the Sanctuary of Zeus. The temple was known for its rich sculptural decoration and particularly for its pedimental sculpture on the east and west ends. Because of its location above the entrance to the building,



6 British Museum model of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia. Temple of Zeus, with *bouleuterion*, in foreground; workshop of Pheidias to the left of the Temple of Zeus, gymnasium and palaistra beyond, Temple of Hera to right. The *Philippeion* is directly behind the Temple of Zeus. (Photo courtesy of The British Museum.)

the east pediment (Fig. 7) would have been seen by every visitor to the sanctuary who wished to walk inside the temple to view the colossal gold and ivory cult statue of Zeus, made by Pheidias in the 5th century B.C., one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Fig. 8).

Mythological Origin of The Olympic Games

The scene on the east pediment depicted what was perhaps the best known of the myths that accounted for the origin of the Olympic Games in antiquity. The myth had to do with Oinomaos, a rich king living in the area of Olympia, his daughter Hippodameia, and Pelops, a young man from either Lydia or Phrygia. According to Pindar (*Olympian* 1), Pelops came to the region of Elis as a suitor for the hand of Hippodameia. The king challenged each of her suitors to a chariot race and had killed all thirteen of those that he had defeated. Pelops was fully aware of the situation when he came to compete against King Oinomaos and, as a precaution, Pelops bribed Myrtilos, the charioteer of Oinomaos, who removed the bronze lynch pin from the king's chariot and replaced it with one made of wax. Oinomaos

who drove the chariot himself was killed during the race. Pelops founded the Olympic Games to commemorate his victory over King Oinomaos and his marriage with Hippodameia. The scene depicted in the east pediment is the moment before the chariot race, when Zeus as arbiter stands between Pelops on the left and Oinomaos on the right. This is not perhaps the idealistic story of the origin of the Olympic Games that one might expect, but one should remember that, to the Greeks, gods and heroes had many mortal characteristics, including their shortcomings.

Pelops was honored in the Sanctuary of Zeus at a shrine that was established between the Temple of Zeus and the Temple of Hera (Fig. 9). In addition, the area of southern Greece where Olympia is located was named in antiquity Peloponnesos, meaning "Pelops's island" (Fig. 2), which it continues to be called in the present day.

The Political Importance of The Olympic Games

The celebration of the Olympic Games in antiquity was one of the occasions when

citizens of Greek city-states would assemble together. As a result of their having come together at Olympia the ancient Greeks often discussed important political issues, celebrated common military victories and even formed political and military alliances. But the Olympic Games were not only a forum in which to discuss political events; they were also the cause of political conflict.

Glossary of Ancient Greek Words

- altis*—grove
- athlete*—one who competes for a prize
- athlon*—prize
- athlos*—contest
- bouleuterion*—council house
- diaulos*—a foot race equal to two lengths of the stadion
- dolichos*—a distance race varying from place to place, generally 12 to 24 lengths of the stadion (ca. 1½–3 miles)
- drachma*—standard of Greek currency, meaning literally "a handful of spits"
- dromos*—running place or racecourse
- gymnasion*—place of naked people
- halteres*—jumping weights
- hellanodikai*—Greek judges
- himantes*—boxing gloves
- hippodromos*—racecourse for horses
- hoplite*—armed soldier
- hoplitodromos*—race in armor
- isolympic*—equal to the Olympic Games
- keles*—horse race
- Nike*—Victory; goddess of victory
- palaistra*—place of wrestling
- pale*—wrestling
- pankration*—an athletic event combining aspects of wrestling and boxing
- pantheon*—all the gods
- Peloponnesos*—Pelops's island
- pentathlon*—five contests (discus, javelin, long jump, wrestling, and foot race)
- peplos*—woman's dress
- periodonikes*—circuit victor
- Pherenikos*—bringer of victory
- Philippeion*—Philip's building
- pugme*—boxing
- stadion*—linear distance equal to 600 feet; a foot race 600 feet long; place of athletic contests, literally "the standing place"
- synoris*—two-horse chariot
- tethrippon*—four-horse chariot
- tyrannos*—absolute ruler
- zanes*—statues of Zeus



7 East facade of the Temple of Zeus; detail of the east pediment depicting the scene before the race between Pelops and Oinomaos. (Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athen.)

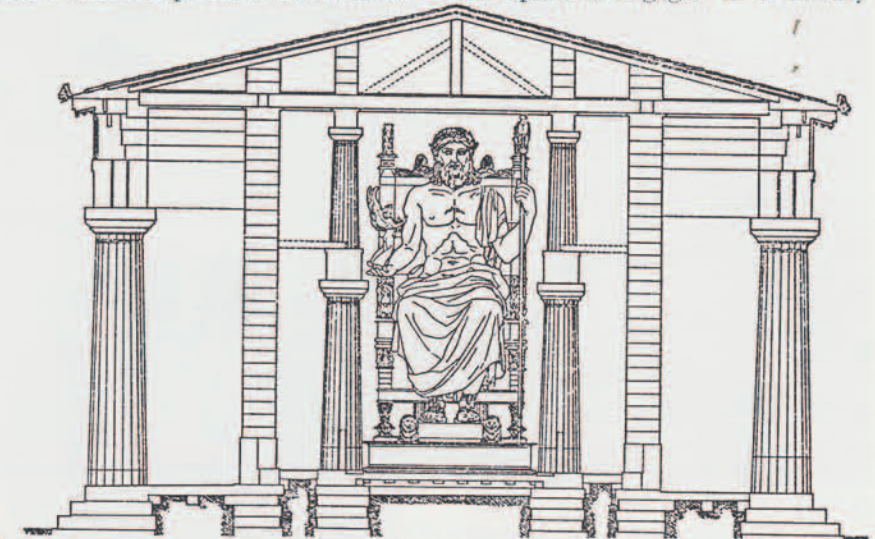
As early as the 7th century B.C. we hear of dissension over the control of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia between the city of Elis (30 miles to the north) and the small neighboring town of Pisa. Control of the Sanctuary and games brought with it prestige, as well as possible economic advantages and most importantly political influence. According to Pausanias (6, 22, 2) probably in the year 668 B.C. Pheidon, a powerful *tyrannos* (tyrant) of Argos, was asked by the town of Pisa to help capture the Sanctuary of Zeus from the city-state of Elis. Pheidon, with his army of well-trained *hoplites* (armed soldiers), marched across the Peloponnesos and helped secure the Sanctuary for the town of Pisa. Herodotos (6, 127) tells us that Pheidon himself presided over the conduct of the games. But Pisa's period of control of the Sanctuary was brief, for by 664 B.C., Elis had regained control.

The Olympic Truce instituted by the city-state of Elis was designed to protect against military incursions of this kind. Every four years, in preparation for the approaching games, special heralds from Elis were sent

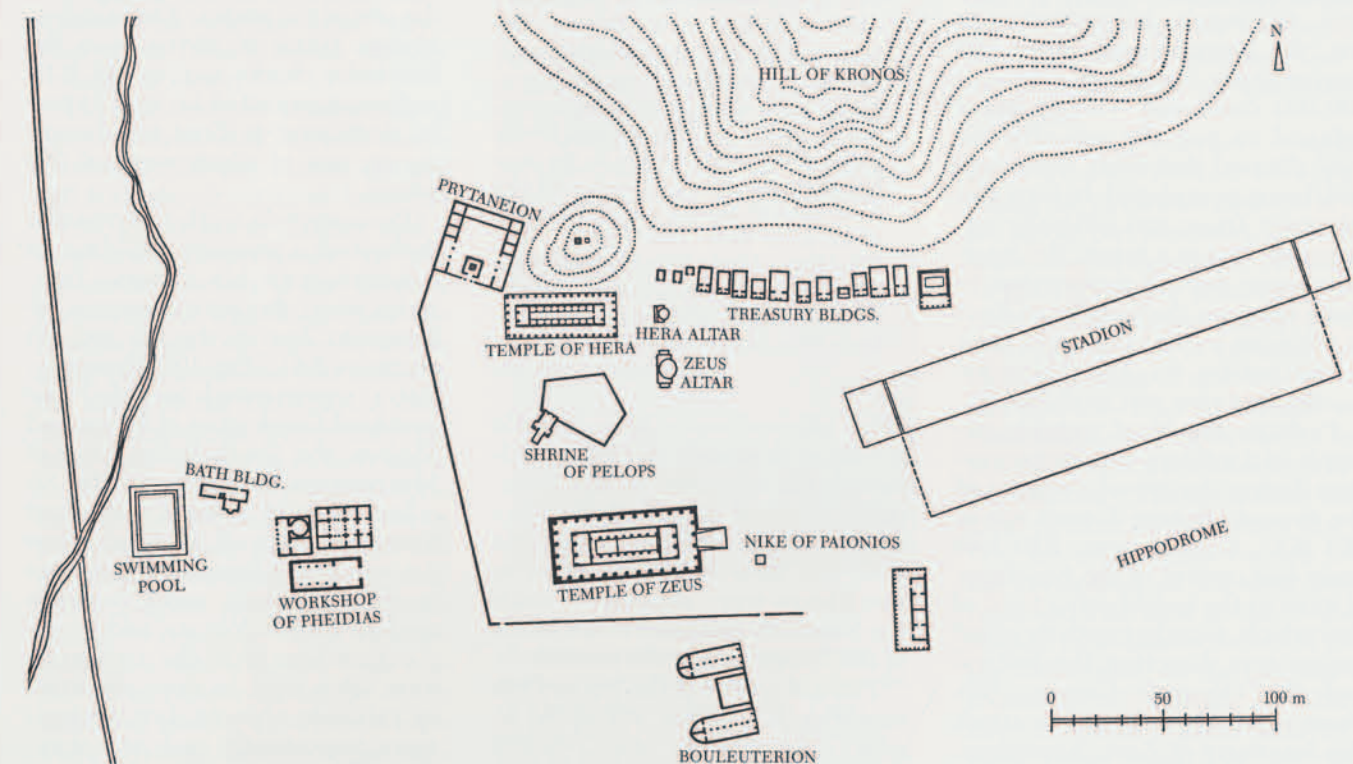
out to all corners of the Greek world, with news of the approaching Olympic festival and games. Part of the announcement included the declaration of the Olympic Truce which originally was one month in duration but which was probably extended to three months by the 5th century B.C. and which was established specifically to protect athletes, visitors, spectators and official

embassies coming to the festival from becoming involved in local conflicts.

Any violation of the Olympic Truce was punishable by a substantial fine to Olympian Zeus. The 5th century historian Thucydides, in his account of the Peloponnesian War (5, 49–50), gives us details of such an instance. In the year 420 B.C. the Spartans engaged in a military



8 Cult statue of Zeus, section of Temple of Zeus (after H. V. Herrman, Olympia, Heiligtum und Wettkampfstätte, fig. 74).



9 Plan of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia in the 5th century B.C. after construction of the Temple of Zeus (after H. V. Herrmann, Olympia, Heiligtum und Wettkampfstätte, fig. 111).



10 British Museum model of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, Treasury Terrace. Two groups of six zanes are visible below the terrace. (Photo courtesy of The British Museum.)

maneuver in the territory of Elis during the truce, using 1000 hoplites. As a result, and according to law, the Spartans were fined 200 drachmai per hoplite or a total of 200,000 drachmai. The Spartans refused to pay the penalty for they claimed that their maneuver had been completed before the Olympic Truce was officially announced. But as a result, the Spartans were denied permission to make religious dedications to Zeus at Olympia in 420 B.C. and their participation in the Olympic Games that year was prohibited.

Perhaps the most notable example of a military incident occurring during the actual program of the ancient Olympic Games was in 364 B.C. In that year, Elis had again lost control of the Sanctuary of Zeus to the neighboring town of Pisa which, together with its allied forces, was directing the festival and the Olympic Games. Elis chose precisely this time to attack the Sanctuary of Zeus. Xenophon, a contemporary 4th century historian, gives us a firsthand account of the situation:

The horse race had been completed, as well as the events of the pentathlon which were held in the dromos. The finalists of the pentathlon who had qualified for the wrestling event were competing in the space between the dromos and the altar. . . . The attacking Eleans pursued the allied enemy to the area between the bouleuterion and the Sanctuary of Hestia and the theater which joins these buildings. . . . The allied forces fought from the roofs of the porticos, the bouleuterion and the Temple of Zeus while the Eleans defended themselves from ground level.

Hellenica (7, 4, 29–31)

What followed was a day-long battle involving thousands of soldiers. Although the city-state of Elis eventually regained control of the sanctuary, the Olympic Games of 364 B.C. lost their legitimacy as far as the Eleans were concerned since the Sanctuary had been in the hands of the Pisans during the festival.

Political tyrants of the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. often attempted to achieve influence by more peaceful means, i.e., through participation in the athletic and equestrian contests of the Olympic Games. In addition,

they often dedicated conspicuously lavish offerings to Olympian Zeus at the site of the games. For example, Myron, tyrant of Sikyon, won the four-horse chariot race in 648 B.C. and commemorated his own victory by dedicating to Zeus two bronze chests, one of which weighed 500 talents.

Pausanias tells us that Myron also dedicated a treasury building to commemorate his victory. Treasuries were the most generous offerings to Zeus in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. (Fig. 10). Those city-states represented included the mainland Greek cities of Sikyon and Megara, the South Italian cities of Meapontum and Sybaris, the Sicilian cities of Selinus, Gela and Syracuse, as well as Epidamnus (in modern Albania), Byzantium (modern Istanbul), and Cyrene (in modern Libya). We are told by ancient authors that the treasuries were often used to store important or valuable objects, but perhaps more importantly each city-state, through their treasury building, maintained a physical presence within the sanctuary.

Nationalism and Commercialism

We owe a great wealth of information about specific athletes, athletic events, and the history of the ancient Olympic Games to Pausanias, who visited Olympia in the course of his travels in Greece and wrote a kind of guidebook for tourists of his day. From the descriptions of Pausanias (as well as from other sources), we learn that there existed fierce rivalries between the competing Greek city-states. As a result, certain political leaders had an interest in attempting to buy superior athletes from other city-states.

Pausanias tells us a good deal about the rich and influential city-state of Syracuse in Sicily. Sicily was ruled for centuries by the family of Deinomenes, tyrants who took a special interest in athletics and especially in the equestrian events of the great Pan-Hellenic festivals. We know, for instance that the tyrant Hiero of Syracuse won the horse races at the Pythian Games at Delphi in 486 B.C. and 482 B.C.; he also won the horse race at Olympia in 476 B.C. On all three occasions he rode the same horse, Pherenikos, which means literally "bringer of victory."

The nationalistic tendencies of the city-states may be well documented by the fact that in 484 and 480 B.C. the city-state of Argos entered a four-horse chariot and a racehorse, respectively, in the equestrian contests of the Olympic Games. It is significant that the racehorse was not entered in the name of an individual but rather in the name of the city-state, a clear case of nationalism. Incidentally, the entry from Argos won in both cases.

The successive tyrants of Syracuse of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. were clearly interested in celebrating the victories won by their athletes. Poets were often commissioned to celebrate these victories with odes, and sculptors were employed to render an image of the victorious athlete. In addition coins were struck to commemorate equestrian victories (Figs. 11, 12). Pindar, the famous 5th century B.C. Greek poet, wrote an ode to com-



11 Tethrippon, four-horse chariot; obverse of silver tetradrachm from Syracuse, 5th century B.C. Winged Nike crowns victorious chariot. University Museum #29-126-39.



12 Tethrippon, four-horse chariot; obverse of silver dekadrachm of Syracuse, by the artist Euainetos, early 4th century B.C. Winged Nike flies above to crown the victorious chariot team. Below are shield, greaves, cuirass, and helmet. University Museum #29-126-41.



13 Stone statue base from Olympia showing footprints of bronze victor statue. Inscription reads, "Aristion son of Theophilus of Epidaurus, Polykleitos made (the statue)." Pausanias tells us that Aristion won the boxing at Olympia in 452 B.C. (Photo courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athen.)

memorate the victory of Hiero (mentioned above) in the horse race at Olympia in 476 B.C. It begins this way:

Water is preeminent and gold, like a fire
burning in the night, outshines
all possessions that magnify men's
pride.
But if, my soul, you yearn
to celebrate great games,
look no further
for another star
shining through the deserted ether
brighter than the sun, or for a
contest,
mightier than Olympia
where the song
has taken its coronal
design of glory, plaited
in the minds of poets
as they come, calling on Zeus' name
to the rich radiant hall of Hiero.

Olympian 1

(translated by Frank J. Nisetich)

Odes such as this one were commonly commissioned by an athlete, an athlete's family or a rich political leader to commemorate an athletic or equestrian victory. In the case of Hiero, the athlete and the rich political leader were the same person! It is known that Pindar lived at the court of Hiero, presumably in great luxury, while he was writing the ode. This would have been one of the principal ways in which poets were paid.

In a similar manner, sculptors were commissioned to create statues of victorious athletes to be set up in the Sanctuary or in the home town of the athlete. According to Pliny (*Natural History* 34, 9), most of the statues set up in the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia were idealistic images of athletes. We are told that only if an athlete had won three Olympic victories could a realistic likeness of the athlete appear in the Sanctuary. Pausanias describes a great number of the statues that he saw, his information coming from the inscriptions on the stone statue bases and from local guides. Archaeological excavations conducted since the 19th century by the German Archaeological Institute in Athens have revealed a great number of these statue bases (Fig. 13). Only fragments of the many bronze statues that stood on these bases survive.

Pausanias gives us detailed information about many of the statues that he sees in the *altis*, the sacred precinct of the Sanctuary of Zeus. It will become apparent that the Syracusans had a variety of interests in the Olympic Games, and not always honorable ones.

The statue of Astylos of Kroton is the work of Pythagoras. The athlete won three successive victories (488, 484, 480 B.C.) at Olympia in the stadion race and in the diaulos. But because on the later occasions he proclaimed himself to be a Syracusan, in order to please Hiero, son of Deinomenes, the people of Kroton for this condemned his house to be a prison and pulled down his statue set up by the Temple of Lacinian Hera.

(6, 13, 1)

By the statue of Thrasybulus stands Timosthenes of Elis, winner of the stadion race for boys, and Antipater of Miletus, son of Kleinopater, winner of the boys boxing (388 B.C.). Men of Syracuse who were bringing a sacrifice from Dionysios to Olympia tried to bribe the father of Antipater to have his son proclaimed as a Syracusan. But Antipater thinking little of the tyrants' gifts proclaimed himself a Milesian and wrote upon his statue that he was of Milesian descent and the first Ionian to dedicate his statue at Olympia.

(6, 2, 4)

Dikon, the son of Kallibrotos, won five foot races at Delphi, three at Isthmia, four at Nemea and one at Olympia in the race for boys besides two in the men's race. Statues of him have been set up in Olympia equal in number to the races he won. When he was a boy he was proclaimed a native of Caulonia, as in fact he was. But afterwards he was bribed to proclaim himself a Syracusan.

(6, 3, 5)

Some statues set up in the sacred *altis* of Olympia were not to celebrate the victory of an athlete in the Olympic Games. Some were political or military dedications, commemorating, for example, the victory of the Greeks over the Persians or of one Greek city-state over another. One example of the latter is the famous *Nike* by the sculptor Paionios, a winged victory image set up at Olympia to celebrate the military victory during the Peloponnesian War of the Messenians and their allies over the Spartans in about 420 B.C. This statue was set



14 British Museum model of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, hippodrome in the foreground and stadium in the background. (Photo courtesy of The British Museum.)

on a 30-foot-tall triangular pedestal adjacent to the Temple of Zeus (Fig. 6).

There were also statues set up in the *Altis* to commemorate athletes who had been caught cheating or bribing at the Olympic Games. These monuments were set up on the roadway leading from the heart of the *altis* to the vault that leads to the stadium, not coincidentally the very path that athletes walked to enter the place of athletic competition (Figs. 10, 14). One of the athletes who is commemorated here was the cause of a boycott of the Olympic Games by the city of Athens in 332 B.C. According to Pausanias (5, 21, 3), Kallippus of Athens, a competitor in the pentathlon in that year, was caught while attempting to "fix" the match by bribing his opponents. The Olympic officials fined him very severely, although we don't know the exact amount. The patron city of the athlete, Athens, was embarrassed by the charges and refused to pay the substantial fine. The charges were so important to the Athenians that they commissioned the well-known orator Hyperides to persuade the Eleans to dismiss their charges. In addition, Athens announced that they would boycott the Olympic Games unless officials at Olympia dropped their charges against Kal-

lippus. The Olympic officials refused to do so. Only as a result of a decision by the Oracle at Delphi, the ultimate arbiter of disputes, was the situation resolved. The Oracle sided with the officials at Olympia and told the Athenians that they would receive no further oracular advice until they paid their fine to Olympia. The Athenians had no choice and paid the fine which was then used to erect the six bronze statues of Zeus. Pausanias mentions that there were inscriptions included on the stone bases of the six statues that told the story of the offence, the individuals involved, as well as a moral to would-be offenders.

President Jimmy Carter was not the first politician to sanction alternate games for a nation boycotting the Olympic Games. (The Liberty Bell Track and Field Classic, the alternate games sponsored by the United States before the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games, were held in Franklin Field, University of Pennsylvania, July 16–17, 1980.) There were examples of ancient alternate games as well. For instance, according to the Roman author Athenaeus (522), there were games established by Sybaris or possibly Kroton (see map, Fig. 2), both south Italian cities famous for their athletes, in the 5th century B.C.

These ancient alternate games were held regularly once every four years at the same time of year as the Olympic Games. Rich prizes were offered to the victors, and the intention of course was to attract prominent athletes away from Olympia. Unfortunately historians do not know the exact cause of the rivalry between the south Italian city and Olympia.

Tyrants, Emperors, and Kings at Olympia

Political leaders often sought some immediate association with Olympia and the Olympic Games. In the 7th, 6th and 5th centuries B.C., tyrants would often come and personally compete in equestrian events at Olympia. Mention has already been made of Myron of Sikyon and Hiero of Syracuse. In the 4th century B.C. we hear of another famous political and military leader, Philip II of Macedonia, who won three equestrian victories at Olympia in 356, 352 and 348 B.C. in the two-horse chariot race and in the horse race (Figs. 15, 16). Although Philip is credited with the victories at Olympia, he in fact was not even in the Sanctuary of Zeus when the events were contested. Instead, he sent a team from Macedonia to represent himself, a fairly common practice. Philip's son, Alexander the Great, never competed at Olympia although he was reputed to have said that he would only compete in the Olympic Games if he could compete against kings. Philip II was very proud of his associations with Olympia and as a result he commissioned a lavish building in the heart of the *altis*, between the Temple of Zeus, the Temple of Hera, and the shrine of Pelops (Fig. 6). The building was round in shape and surrounded by Ionic columns. Inside this *Philippeion*, gold and ivory statues were set up, not in honor of gods or heroes, but in the likenesses of Philip II and his family and to honor this Macedonian dynasty.

The Roman Emperor Nero went to great lengths to become associated with the Olympic Games in the 1st century A.D. (Fig. 17). Nero arranged for all four of the Pan-Hel-



15 Horse and rider; reverse of silver tetradrachm minted by Philip II of Macedonia, ca. 350 B.C. (Obverse of same coin is Fig. 1.) The inscription on this coin and that shown in Fig. 16 are the same: $\phi\iota\lambda\iota\pi\pi\omicron\upsilon$, "of Philip," referring to his equestrian victories at Olympia. University Museum #29-126-58.



16 Synoris, two-horse chariot; gold stater (reverse) minted by Philip II, ca. 350 B.C. University Museum #29-126-59.



17 Roman Emperor Nero; obverse of bronze sestertius, A.D. 54-68. University Museum #29-126-925.

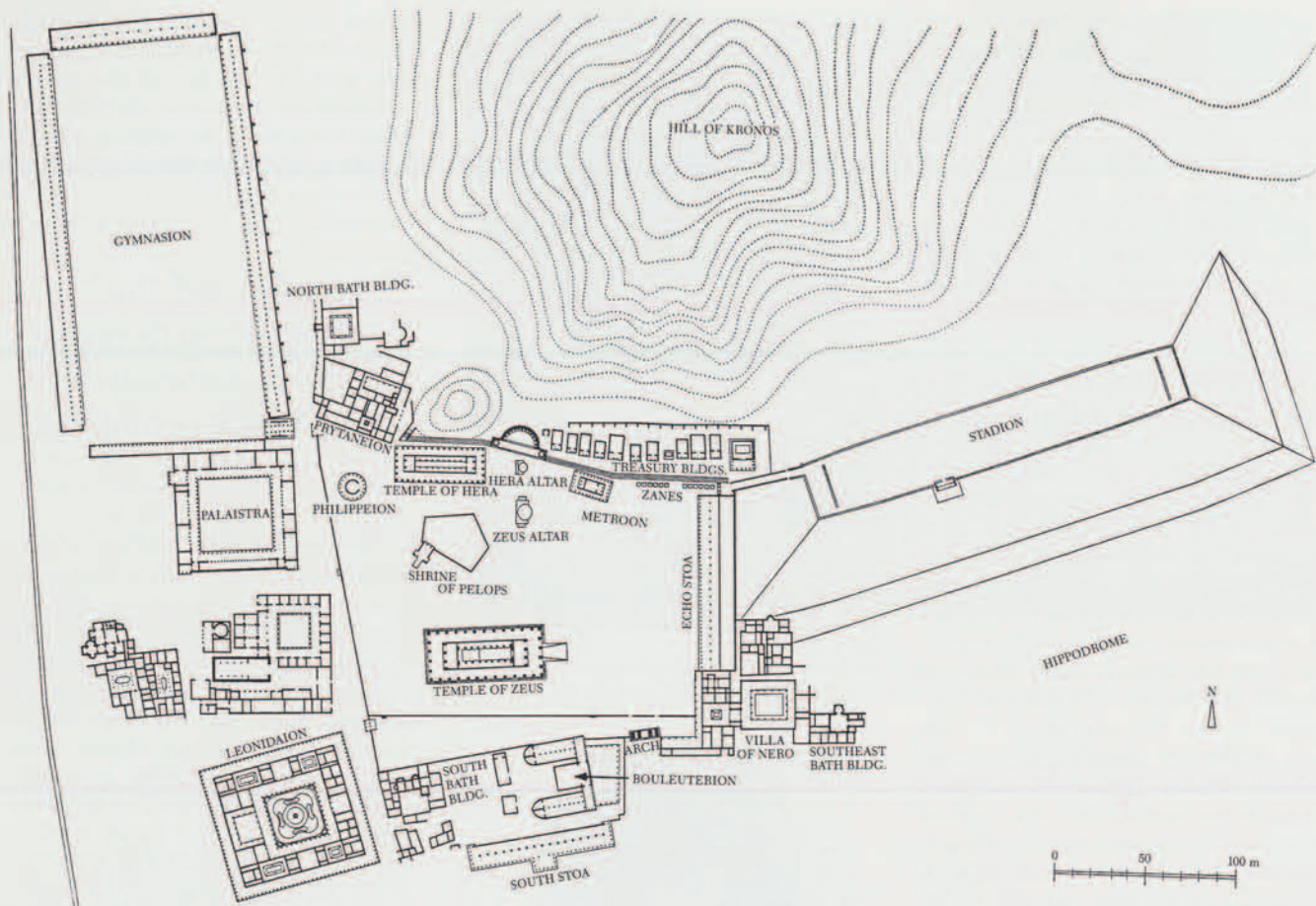
lenic Games to be held in a single year, A.D. 67, so that he could compete and win in each of the games and become thereby a *periodonikes* (circuit victor). According to the Roman author Dio Cassius (62, 14),

"Nero bribed the . . . [judges] with one million sesterces to allow him to compete"

Nero bribed the *hellanodikai* (judges) with one million sesterces to allow him to compete in this extraordinary Olympic Games. He competed and won at Olympia in the regularly scheduled events of heralds, foals and the four-horse chariots. He added three new events, contests in the lyre and tragedy, as well as a ten-horse chariot race. In the latter event, Nero fell off the chariot and had to be set back up; although he never finished the race he was awarded the victor's wreath. The Eleans had gone to extremes in preparation for Nero's visit, including the construction of a lavish villa in the southeast corner of the sanctuary of Zeus and a monumental arch adjoining it (Fig. 18).

The Hera Festival

A relatively obscure aspect of the athletic contests held at Olympia was a separate festival in honor of Hera that included foot races for unmarried girls. Little is known about this festival other than what Pausanias tells us (5, 16, 2–6). He mentions the festival in connection with his description of the Temple of Hera in the Sanctuary of Zeus. He says that the festival, and the accompanying athletic contests, was organized and supervised by a committee of 16 women from the cities of Elis and that it was held as a part of the quadrennial weaving and presentation of a new *peplos* for the cult image of Hera inside the temple. Unmarried girls competed in three age groups in a



18 Plan of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia in the Roman period, 1st to 3rd century A.D. (after H. V. Herrmann, *Olympia, Heiligtum und Wettkampfstätte*, fig. 129).



19 Bronze statuette of a girl runner, probably from Sparta, ca. 500 B.C. H. 11.4 cm. (British Museum bronzes 208; photo courtesy of The British Museum.)

foot race that was a single length of the racecourse, approximately five-sixths the length of the men's dromos, but held in the same stadium used for the men's and boys' contests. Pausanias mentions that girl victors in the foot race could dedicate images (probably paintings) in the altis to commemorate their victories, and they could take part in the sacrifice of the cows in honor of Hera. Pausanias gives us a description of a girl's attire for the Hera games of the 2nd century A.D. The girls wore their hair free down their back and a tunic hanging almost as low as the knees covering only the left shoulder and breast. The costume that Pausanias describes may have been the traditional costume at Olympia and possibly elsewhere for centuries (Fig. 19). Unmarried girls had a number of advantages at Olympia. They not only had their own athletic contests of the Hera festival in which to participate, but they were also allowed



20 Theodosius I; obverse of gold solidus, A.D. 393–395. (Photo courtesy Thames and Hudson, J. P. C. Kent, *Roman Coins*.)

to watch the men's and boys' contests of the festival of Zeus. Married women, on the other hand, were not allowed to participate in the athletic contests of the Hera festival and were barred on penalty of death from the Sanctuary of Zeus on the days of the athletic competition for boys and men. We don't know how ancient the Hera festival and games are, although their foundation myth is associated with Hippodameia, Pelops's bride. Nor do we know whether or not the women allowed the men to watch the girls' contests!

Conclusions

The Ancient Olympic Games continued, apparently without interruption, for almost 1200 years. In 393 A.D. the Roman Emperor Theodosius I (Fig. 20) banned all pagan festivals. In his espousal of Christianity, he sought to eliminate the most publically attractive, and thereby competitive component of pagan religion, athletic festivals such as at Olympia. Later, Theodosius II called for the destruction of all pagan temples.

It should be apparent that the ancient Olympic Games were not the hallowed celebration of amateur athletics that we are so often led to believe. Despite their foundation as a religious celebration the ancient Olympic Games were, in many ways, very much like the modern Olympic Games; they were intrinsically political, nationalistic, and commercial. The modern Games present even greater challenges: athletes, coaches, managers and spectators come from over 150 nations, speaking different languages, with different cultural values, worshipping different gods, and believing in different political ideologies. Should there be any surprise that these games are political? An improvement that we could easily make would be to drop the "amateur" regulation from the games, call all of the competitors "athletes" and let them openly receive the prize money that many already take when they return home. This would be more realistic with respect to the modern situation and totally in keeping with the traditions and ideals of the ancient Olympic Games.

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