

---

# Some Basic Aspects of Panhellenic Games and Festivals in the Late-Archaic and Classical Period

Algunos aspectos básicos de los juegos y festivales panhelénicos en la época arcaica reciente y clásica

THOMAS HEINE NIELSEN

University of Copenhagen

*heine@hum.ku.dk*

DOI: 10.48232/eclas.164.02

Recibido: 29/09/2023 — Aceptado: 23/10/2023

**Abstract.**— This essay deals with the meaning of the term “panhellenic” in its use in a sporting context, considering why the term is reserved in modern scholarship to designate the four great sporting festivals of ancient Greece (the Olympic, Pythian, Isthmian and Nemean Games). It is an inescapable conclusion that the basic characteristics of the Panhellenic athletic festivals (their inclusion as spectacles into religious festivals, their acceptance of all comers, the events program, the complex competitions announcement system) are not exclusive to these four festivals but shared with numerous other festivals. So, the Panhellenic festivals were simply the most conspicuous examples of a rather common Greek institution, the athletic festival. The crowds that attended the Games, and the ambitions and motivations of the athletes when participating, are also considered.

**Keywords.**— Panhellenic Games; archaic and classical Greece; spectators; athletes

**Resumen.**— El presente artículo se ocupa del sentido del término «panhelénico» en su uso en contextos deportivos, discutiéndose específicamente por qué los estudiosos modernos reservan el término para designar los cuatro grandes festivales deportivos de la antigua Grecia (Juegos Olímpicos, Píticos, Ístmicos y Nemeos). No hay duda de que las características esenciales de los festivales deportivos panhelénicos (su inclusión como espectáculo en festivales religiosos, el hecho de que pudieran participar griegos de cualquier procedencia, el programa de pruebas, el complejo sistema de anuncio de las competiciones) no son exclusivas de esos cuatro grandes juegos, sino compartidas con otros muchos festivales. Los Juegos Panhelénicos eran simplemente los más sobresalientes ejemplos de una institución griega común, el festival deportivo. Se estudian también aspectos relativos a las multitudes que se congregaban para asistir a los juegos y las ambiciones y objetivos de los atletas para participar.

**Palabras clave.**— Juegos Panhelénicos; Grecia arcaica y clásica; espectadores; atletas

## 1. The Term “Panhellenic”

The term “Panhellenic” is a coinage of modern scholarship, which uses it and related terms in at least three different senses.<sup>1</sup> It is used (1) to describe cultural phenomena that are of more than merely epichoric significance and are found across (most of) the ancient Greek world, e.g. to distinguish myths of wider circulation from myths of purely local circulation; (2) to single out a particular group of sanctuaries —those at Olympia, at Delphi, at Nemea and on the Isthmos of Corinth— which attracted worshippers and athletes from, practically speaking, all of the Greek world; and (3) to refer to an ancient ideological position which held that the Greeks ought to unite across city-state boundaries under the dual hegemony of Athens and Sparta in order to wage a war of revenge and enrichment on the effeminate Persian barbarians. The first two senses are of fundamental significance in the present context, whereas the third sense is of rather less significance: accordingly, it will not be further pursued here.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Athletics as a Panhellenic Phenomenon

By the late-archaic and classical period, athletics was a genuinely Panhellenic cultural phenomenon. Athletics features prominently in preserved epic poetry of the archaic period,<sup>3</sup> texts that were almost certainly composed with a very broad audience in mind. Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* give pride of place to descriptions of athletic games, the *Iliad* in book 23 with the majestic description of the funeral games for Patroklos (257–897),<sup>4</sup> and the *Odyssey* in book 8 with the description of the impromptu games staged to relieve the anonymous stranger of his sorrows (96–255). Hesiod refers briefly to competitive athletics at *Theog.* 435–439 without mentioning specific events, but the Pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield* refers to boxing and wrestling at 302 and to an equestrian race at 305–311. Finally, the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* at 149 refers to boxing. In archaic elegy, too, there are reference to athletics, most memorably in Xenophanes 2 (West), but also in Tyrtaios 12 (West). Xenophanes more

<sup>1</sup> In Greek poetic texts of the archaic and classical periods occurs the noun Πανέλληνες in the sense of “all the Greeks”, but there is no corresponding adjective until the Imperial period (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1077.14); see further below.

<sup>2</sup> On ideological Panhellenism, see Flower 2000; Mitchell 2007; Roy 2013: 113.

<sup>3</sup> On athletics in epic poetry, see Willis 1941.

<sup>4</sup> At *Il.* 23.630–640 old Nestor in a speech refers to funeral games for King Amarynkeus at Elis; the events referred to are boxing, wrestling, throwing the spear, a footrace and an equestrian race.

or less reproduces the program at the classical Olympics, but otherwise the events mentioned are as set out in table 1.

TABLE 1: Events Attested in Archaic Poetry

Event	<i>Iliad</i> 23	<i>Odyssey</i> 8	<i>Hymn Apoll.</i>	<i>Shield</i>	Tyrtaios 12
Footrace	×	×			×
Wrestling	×	×		×	×
Boxing	×	×	×	×	
Long jump		×			
Iron throw	×				
<i>Diskos</i>		×			
Spear	×				
Bow	×				
First blood	×				
Horse race	×			×	

Footraces, wrestling and boxing stand out in this evidence, and these are in fact the core events of ancient Greek athletics in all periods. But archaic evidence also documents events which did not exist in the classical period. It may perhaps be doubted that there ever were armed duels to first blood or bow shots for live pigeon: they seem not impossible improvisations by the Iliadic poet. The unusual iron throwing of the *Iliad* resembles *diskos* throwing, of course, and may perhaps be a consciously archaizing depiction of this event, which is featured as an individual event in the *Odyssey*. In the classical period, however, *diskos* throwing was not an individual event but formed a part of the *pentathlon*. The same holds true for long jumping and spear throwing: these were practiced in the classical period, but as parts of the *pentathlon*, not as individual events.

That long jump and *diskos* throwing as individual events is not simply poetic invention but a reflection of archaic reality seems to be confirmed by two pieces of sixth-century epigraphical evidence. From Eleusis comes an inscribed jumping weight (*halter*) dating to ca. 580–570 BCE and inscribed *χαλόμενος νίκησεν Ἐπαίνετος*.<sup>5</sup> This dedication presumably commemorates a victory in long jumping as an individual event:<sup>6</sup> dedi-

<sup>5</sup> IG I<sup>3</sup> 988; Moretti (1953) no. 1; see also Ebert (1972) 31 (“Epainetos was victorious in the long jump” (translation by author)).

<sup>6</sup> Moretti (1953) 3; Ebert (1972) 31.

cations of jumping weights commemorating victories in the *pentathlon* often make clear that they do so.<sup>7</sup> And this, it should be noted, is at a time when the *pentathlon* is in fact known to have existed, since it is attested by a victory dedication made at the Corinthian Isthmos more or less at the same time as Epainetos made his dedication at Eleusis.<sup>8</sup> From, probably, Kephallenia comes a bronze *diskos* of the mid-sixth century inscribed with two hexameters: <sup>9</sup> Ἐχσοῖδα μ' ἀνέθεκε Διφρὸς Ὀρόρου μεγάλιοι | χάλ-  
κεον ἠοῖ νίκασε Κεφαλλᾶνας μεγαθύμος.<sup>10</sup> Again, it seems a reasonable assumption that this dedication of a *diskos* used for the winning throw was made to commemorate a victory in *diskos* throwing staged as an individual event and not as part of the *pentathlon*. So, both *diskos* throwing and the long jump were, at least sometimes, staged as individual events in the late-archaic period, whereas there is no sign of them as individual events in the classical period. In the course of the sixth century, then, the number of events was reduced as long jumping, spear throwing and *diskos* throwing ceased to exist as individual events and were staged only as parts of the *pentathlon*. The sixth century, then, saw a reduction of competitive events to the benefit of the *pentathlon*.

Accordingly, by the fifth century competitive Greek athletics comprised essentially of the events mentioned in Xenophanes' elegy, which may in fact not impossibly date to the fifth century.<sup>11</sup> Xenophanes 2.1–10 (West) mentions the following events at Olympia: footraces (ταχυτήτι ποδῶν, 1); *pentathlon* (πενταθλεύων, 2); wrestling (παλαίων, 3); boxing (πυκτοσύνην, 4); *pankration* (παγκράτιον, 5); and equestrian events (ἵπποισιν, 10). This covers perfectly the Olympic program as reconstructed for the fifth century by Lee (2001: 24).<sup>12</sup> The Olympic footraces were the *stadion*, the *diaulos*, the *dolichos* and the race in armour, *hoplites*. The *stadion* covered the distance of a *stadion*, which was 600 feet; since the length of a foot varied from place to place, the distance of a *stadion* race varied accordingly: At Olympia it was ca. 192m long and at Delphi ca. 178m.<sup>13</sup> The *diaulos* was a double *stadion*, i.e. it was a dash from one end

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Ebert (1972) no. 1; SEG 11.1227 (= *Neue IvO* 21).

<sup>8</sup> Ebert (1972) no. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Moretti (1953) no. 6; Cook (1987) 60; *IG* IX.1 649; *CEG* 1.391.

<sup>10</sup> "Exoidas dedicated me to the sons of mighty Zeus, (the) bronze with which he overcame the great-hearted Kephallenians" (translation by Cook (1987) 60).

<sup>11</sup> Bowra 1938: 258 assumed a date before 520 BCE for the elegy, but, as pointed out by Markovich 1978: 23, his argument: that the hoplite race instituted in 520 is not mentioned by the poet, is weak since it may be subsumed in ταχυτήτι ποδῶν as are the *stadion*, the *diaulos* and the *dolichos*.

<sup>12</sup> On the individual events, see Miller 2004: 31–86; Romano 2021; Poliakoff 2021; Nicholson 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Miller 2004: 33.

of the stadium to the other and back again; accordingly, it was ca. 384m at Olympia and ca. 356m at Delphi. The curious hoplite race covered the same distance as the *diaulos*. Finally, there was the long-distance race, the *dolichos* (the “long” race) the distance of which is unknown: it was probably in the range of 7.5 to 9 km (Miller 2004: 32).

From the late-sixth century, the Olympic program in some form or other was the norm at athletic festivals including the three other “Panhellenic” festivals.<sup>14</sup> When variations do occur, they are minor or even trivial. Thus, it was standard at Greek athletic festivals to divide competitors into age-classes, and at Olympia contestants were subdivided simply into *andres* (men) and *paides* (boys, up till ca. 17; Miller 2004: 14); at e.g. Nemea and Isthmia, however, there was an intermediate age-class called *ageneioi* (“beardless”, i.e. youngsters in their late teens; Miller 2004: 14), but the basic idea is the same: competitors must be divided into age-classes. And, at e.g. Nemea the footracers contested an event called the *hippios* which was a footrace of some 800 m,<sup>15</sup> that is, it was a double *diaulos* just as the *diaulos* itself was a double *stadion*, and it could easily be staged in the same stadium as the *stadion* and the *diaulos*. The competitive programs of the Panhellenic athletic festivals, then, comprised simply of a few footraces, three combat sports, *pentathlon* (consisting of *diskos*, spear, long jump, *stadion* and wrestling), and a few equestrian races, most conspicuously the four-horse chariot (*tethrippon*).

This very limited selection of events was characteristic not only of the four Panhellenic athletic festivals (on which see section 3), but also of the numerous minor festivals to be found all over the Greek world already in the late-archaic and classical period. In a study published in 2018 (Nielsen 2018) I identified some 155 athletic festivals, in addition to the famous four, which existed in this period, and not a single of these featured other events than those discussed above.<sup>16</sup> The Olympic program, Olympia being of immense prestige and fame, was presumably the model

<sup>14</sup> Neumann-Hartmann (2007). —At the three other Panhellenic festivals there was, in addition to the *agon gymnikos* and the *agon hippikos*, also an *agon mousikos*, which was never added to the Olympics; other festivals, such as the Athenian *Dionysia*, staged only musical events to the exclusion of athletics; the festival of Apollo on Delos, on the other hand, combined music and athletics, and so a great deal of variation is found in this respect. Such variation must be explained as depending on the decisions of the organizing city-states and their reasoning is mostly unknown to us. It may be, however, that Elis presented the Olympics as the most athletic of athletic festivals and thus avoided musical events to maintain a puristic athletic profile for the festival (see also Miller 2004: 84); at least, “Olympia’s exclusive concentration on sports ... was uncommon” (Finley & Pleket 1976: 19).

<sup>15</sup> Golden (1998) 37; Miller (2004) 32; Romano (2021) 214.

<sup>16</sup> At Olbia there may just possibly have been a contest in bow shooting, but the evidence is far from conclusive (Nielsen 2018: 75). —When local peculiarities are occasionally found, such as the equestrian

which was adapted throughout the Greek world, to the extent that this program came to constitute the *agon gymnikos (kai hippikos)* which was a truly Panhellenic cultural phenomenon characterizing the Greek world as such.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. The Four Big Panhellenic Festivals

Modern scholarship singles out four sanctuaries and their festivals as the “Panhellenic” venues par excellence, those at Olympia, at Delphi, at Nemea and on the Isthmos of Corinth. This use is presumably based on two considerations. The first is that even if ancient Greek of the classical period did not possess an adjective corresponding to “Panhellenic” a few passages of Pindar and Bacchylides do in fact come close to calling these sanctuaries and their contests “Panhellenic”. At *Isthm.* 4.28–29 Pindar states of the ancestors of the honorand, Melissos of Thebes, that they did not “withhold their curved chariot” from the common festivals “but gladly laid out expenditure on horses, in competition with| all the Hellenes”.<sup>18</sup>

οὐδὲ παναγυρίων ξυνᾶν ἀπειῖχον  
καμπύ λον δίφρον, Πανελλάνεσσι δ’ ἐριζόμενοι δαπάνη χαῖρον  
ἵππων.

“Common festivals” are παναγυρίων ξυνᾶν in Greek; the expression is reminiscent of Herodotos 8.144.2: θεῶν ἰδρύματα κοινά, “common sanctuaries of the gods”, a phrase that is traditionally interpreted to refer to exactly the four Panhellenic sanctuaries.<sup>19</sup> The παναγυρίων ξυνᾶν of Pindar, too, are taken by commentators to be a reference to the four Panhellenic sanctuaries.<sup>20</sup> At these common festivals the competitors were “all the Hellenes” (*Panhellanesi*), and “common festivals with the participation of all Greeks” is almost a definition of the modern concept of Panhellenic festivals. Moreover, at Bacchylides 13.198 occurs the expression ἐν Πανελλάνων ἀέθλοις, “at the contests of all Hellenes” (*Panhellanon*), presumably likewise a reference to the four big festivals.<sup>21</sup> In both passages, the *Pan-*

*apobates* at the Athenian *Panatheniaia*, entrance is restricted to citizens to the exclusion of foreign entrants (Shear 2021: 191), i.e. such events were not Panhellenic.

<sup>17</sup> Nielsen 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Translations from Verity 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Nielsen 2007: 9.

<sup>20</sup> Bury 1892: 68 (“only the four great παναγύριες are meant”); Willcock 1995: 78 (“the four great national festivals”).

<sup>21</sup> See Jebb 1905 *ad loc.*

element of the compound *Panhellenes* (the source of the modern adjective) seems rather emphatic, and this leads to the second point. At 2.160.3, Herodotos states that “any Greek who wanted” (τῶν ἄλλων Ἑλλήνων ... τῷ βουλομένῳ) was free to enter the Olympics, and the same must have been the case at the three other Panhellenic festivals. This appears clearly from the victor lists compiled for the Panhellenic athletic festivals by modern scholars: down to ca. 300 BCE, Olympic victors hail from 94 different *poleis*; Pythian victors from at least 51; Nemean victors from at least 40; and Isthmian victors from at least 37 (Nielsen 2014: 91).<sup>22</sup> These four athletic festivals, then, did actually attract entrants from practically speaking all of the Greek world, and the appellation “Panhellenic” is meant to emphasize this enormous catchment area of the four festivals, a use of the term related to the first use discussed above.

The crucially important characteristic of the four Panhellenic athletic festivals, then, is their openness, i.e. the fact that all comers were allowed to enter the competitions, that is “any Greek who wanted”. This characteristic, however, they shared with numerous other athletic festivals throughout the Greek world. The Panhellenic festivals have, unfortunately, dominated modern research into ancient Greek athletics to the extent that it is often forgotten or passed over in silence how surprisingly many other festivals are actually on record. In the earlier archaic period, funerals of socially and politically pre-eminent men seem to have been the major venue for formally arranged athletic competitions and are presented as such in epic,<sup>23</sup> but this changed profoundly during the sixth century. At this time, the Greek *poleis* began in increasing numbers to incorporate *agones gymnikoi* into the program of spectacles at their religious festivals,<sup>24</sup> and at the end of the sixth century there were already numerous other festivals in existence than the fab four. As already indicated, in Nielsen 2018, I identified 155 other festivals that certainly or probably had athletic competitions on their programs of spectacles. These were found on Sicily, in Magna Graecia, Akarnania, Phokis, Boiotia, the Megarid, at Corinth and Sikyon, in Achaia, Arkadia, Messenia, Lakedaimon, the Argolid, on Aigina, in Attika, on Euboia, in Thessaly, on the islands of the Aegean, in Chalkidike, in Thrace, on the coasts of the Black Sea, in the Troad, in

<sup>22</sup> *Olympionikai* have been compiled by Moretti 1957; *Pythionikai* by Strasser 2001; *Nemeonikai* by Kostourou 2008; and *Isthmionikai* by Farrington 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Nielsen 2018: 15–22.

<sup>24</sup> Nielsen 2018: 25 n. 84.

Ionia, in Caria, on Crete, Rhodos and at Kyrene.<sup>25</sup> Athletic festivals, in fact, were a Panhellenic phenomenon by the late-archaic and classical period.

Of these 155 festivals, more than 50 are known, with varying degrees of certainty and probability, to have accepted foreign entrants.<sup>26</sup> To illustrate this, I summarize here the most illuminating examples:

- I. At the *Amphiareia* at Oropos foreign entrants came at least from: (1) Andros, (2) Argos, (3) Athens, (4) Elis, (5) Kolophon, (6) Kyrene, (7) Larisa, (8) Pharsalos, (9) Phleious, (10) Sikyon, (11) Sinope, and (12) Thebes.
- II. At the *Herakleia* at Thebes foreign entrants came at least from: (1) Aigina, (2) Athens, (3) Corinth, (4) Ialysos, (5) Opous, (6) Syracuse, and (7) Troizen.
- III. At the *Alkathoia* at Megara foreign entrants came at least from: (1) Aigina, (2) Corinth, (3) Hermion, (4) Ialysos, and (5) Kyrene.
- IV. At the *Pythia* at Sikyon foreign entrants came at least from: (1) Aitna, (2) Argos, (3) Athens, (4) Corinth, (5) Rhodos, (6) Sparta, and (7) Thebes.
- V. At the *Theoxenia* at Pellene in Achaia foreign entrants came at least from: (1) Argos, (2) Athens, (3) Corinth, (4) Ialysos, and (5) Opous.
- VI. At the *Lykaia* in Parrhasia in Arkadia foreign entrants came at least from: (1) Argos, (2) Athens, (3) Corinth, (4) Elis, (5) Hermion, (6) Ialysos, (7) Opous, (8) Rhodos, (9) Sparta, and (10) Syracuse.
- VII. At the *Hekatomboia* at Argos foreign entrants came at least from: (1) Athens, (2) Corinth, (3) Ialysos, (4) Opous, (5) Sinope, and (6) Thasos.
- VIII. At the *Panathenaia* at Athens foreign entrants came at least from: (1) Aigina, (2) Akragas, (3) Amphanai, (4) Amphipolis, (5) Argos, (6) Asea, (7) Corinth, (8) Erythrai, (9) Herakleia, (10) Ialysos, (11) Iasos, (12) Kyrene, (13) Larisa, (14) Naukratis, (15) Opous, (16) Oropos, (17) Pantika-paion, (18) Paphos, (19) Pharsalos, (20) Poteidaia, (21) Rhodos, (22) Samos, (23) Sikyon, (24) Sparta, (25) Syracuse, (26) Taras, (27) Tauchaira, (28) Thebes, (29) Troizen, and (30) Zakyntos.

Apart perhaps from the case of the Athenian *Panathenaia* numbers here are not as impressive as those for the big four. But numbers here may be somewhat deceptive, and it should be envisaged that other festivals may

<sup>25</sup> For details, see Nielsen 2018: 111–167.

<sup>26</sup> For details, see Nielsen 2014: 91–123.

have resembled the *Panathenaia* in terms of foreign entrants but simply failed to produce the evidence that demonstrates this. The remarkable catchment areas attested for the *Amphiareia* at Oropos and the *Lykaia* in Arkadia are, for instance, due merely to the fortuitous survival of a few inscribed victor catalogues.<sup>27</sup> The great majority of the attested festivals has failed to yield such chance finds. But it is an inescapable conclusion that the basic characteristics of the Panhellenic athletic festivals — their inclusion as spectacles into religious festivals and their acceptance of all comers — are not exclusive to these four festivals but shared with numerous other festivals.

The characteristic that justify the term “Panhellenic” in reference to the four well-known and famous athletic festivals is, then, not exclusive to them. So, how *do* these four festivals stand out? They stand out in terms of their immense prestige, which outshone that of all other athletic festivals. The Olympics, of course, was the most prestigious athletic festival of all, but the prestige of the three others likewise dwarfed that of all other festivals. The organizers of the four big festivals seem to have emphasized this prestige by awarding only crowns of leaves as prizes for victors,<sup>28</sup> and, accordingly, fourth-century evidence refers to them as *agones stephanitai*.<sup>29</sup> In the Hellenistic period, the paramount prestige of the four Panhellenic sanctuaries was linguistically acknowledged by the introduction of the term *periodos* (“circuit”) to single them out from all the other festivals in existence.<sup>30</sup> This pre-eminence of the big four festivals was, however, an informal fact already by the end of the sixth century<sup>31</sup> and is quite visible in the classical period. Thus, though a few epinician odes celebrate victories won elsewhere,<sup>32</sup> the overwhelming majority of known odes celebrate victories achieved at the big four festivals.<sup>33</sup> This attests to a preference for stylish celebration of Panhellenic victories in contradistinction to other victories among epinician commissioners, who surely belonged to a very select and influential circle of upper-strata, internationally well-connected

<sup>27</sup> IG VII 414 = I. Oropos 520 in the case of the *Amphiareia* and IG v.2 549–50 in the case of the *Lykaia*.

<sup>28</sup> Otherwise, material prizes were standard at Greek athletic festivals, see Kyle 1996 and Papakonstantinou 2002. —Greek athletes, accordingly, were not “amateurs” on any definition of this weasel word. In fact, the word “amateur” does not have an equivalent in ancient Greek at all. The Greek word *athletes*, whence our “athlete” ultimately derives, means, simply, “one who competes for a prize”, prize being *athlon* in Greek.

<sup>29</sup> Remijsen 2011: 99 with n. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Remijsen 2015: 28–29.

<sup>31</sup> Funke 2005; Nielsen 2018: 13.

<sup>32</sup> Nielsen 2018: 174–176.

<sup>33</sup> *Olympia*: Pind. *Ol.* 1–13, *Bacchyl.* 3, 5–7; ; *Pythia*: Pind. *Pyth.* 1, 3–11, *Bacchyl.* 4, 11; *Nemea*: Pind. *Nem.* 1–9, *Bacchyl.* 9, 12–13; *Isthmia*: Pind. *Isthm.* 1–9, fr. 2.3, *Bacchyl.* 1–2, 10.

and politically and economically powerful families, including as they do the Alkmaionid Megakles of Athens, a king of Kyrene, the great Sicilian tyrants, their families and entourages, as well as such figures as Diagoras of Ialysos in Rhodos whose influential family (the *Diagoreioi*) has been well sketched by Hornblower.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, epigrams accompanying monuments celebrating athletic victors often give a brief victory catalogue singling out Panhellenic victories to the exclusion of other victories. Thus, a monument of the first half of the fifth century celebrating the footracer Dandis of Argos<sup>35</sup> states that he won Ὀλυμπία δίζ, ἐν δὲ Πυθῶνι τρία, | δύω δ' ἐν Ἴσθμῳ, πεντεκαίδεκα ἐν Νεμέα,<sup>36</sup> and then adds τὰς δ' ἄλλας νίκας οὐκ εὐμαρές ἐστ' ἀριθμῆσαι.<sup>37</sup> Clearly, Panhellenic victories were in a league of their own. The valuation of Panhellenic victories by classical *poleis*—or at least by Athens—is clear from a fifth-century decree, the so-called Prytaneion Decree (*IG I<sup>3</sup> 131*). This is a decree of the second half of the fifth century demonstrating that Athenian athletic and equestrian victors at the four famous Panhellenic festivals were honoured with, among other things, *sitesis* (free dining at public expense) in the *prytaneion*.<sup>38</sup> A *prytaneion* was the physical expression of the existence of a *polis*, and on its hearth burned the eternal flame symbolizing the life of the *polis*. The *prytaneion*, accordingly, must have been Athens' ceremonial building par excellence, and free dining here must have been the greatest honour the city had to bestow: it was, it appears from the decree, granted to the descendants of the Tyrannicides, the founding heroes of the democracy and objects of state cult. Victors in the Panhellenic festivals, then, received the greatest honour Athens had to give.

Exactly how the Panhellenic festivals rose to this undisputed preeminence of prestige is unclear. But it may be that they did so because these festivals were the ones which the great athletes valued in particular. In the sixth century, during which the Panhellenic festivals attained this prestige, Greek athletes were undoubtedly recruited from members of the leisured elites such as e.g. the Alkmaionidai of Athens, and the competitive preferences of such high aristocracy, as it were, would surely confer considerable prestige on their festivals of choice. The calendrical positions

<sup>34</sup> Hornblower 2004: 134–143; on epinician prosopography, see also Neumann-Hartmann 2008.

<sup>35</sup> *Anth. Pal.* 13.14 = Ebert 1972: no. 15; Sider 2020: no. 26. The nature of the monument on which this epigram originally stood is uncertain.

<sup>36</sup> "... twice at Olympia, thrice at Pytho, twice at the Isthmus, fifteen times at Nemea" (translation from Sider 2020).

<sup>37</sup> "His other victories are not easy to count" (translation from Sider 2020).

<sup>38</sup> *IG I<sup>3</sup> 131.11–15*; see Kyle 1993: 145–47; Pritchard 2013: 85.

of the Panhellenic festivals may also have contributed, since they enabled athletes to compete in all of them without having to prioritize among them. The *Olympia* and the *Pythia* were penteteric festivals whereas the *Isthmia* and the *Nemea* were triteteric, allowing for this schedule within a four-year period, an Olympiad, taking the 75<sup>th</sup> Olympiad as an example (after Golden 1998: 11) in table 2.

TABLE 2: The 75<sup>th</sup> Olympiad

Olympiad-year	Modern year	Festival
75.1	480	<i>Ta Olympia</i>
75.2	479	<i>Ta Nemea</i>
75.2	478	<i>Ta Isthmia</i>
75.3	478	<i>Ta Pythia</i>
75.4	477	<i>Ta Nemea</i>
75.4	476	<i>Ta Isthmia</i>
76.1	476	<i>Ta Olympia</i>

The festivals were, then, or came to be, scheduled in relation to each other. In the first year of an Olympiad the Olympics were celebrated at Olympia in July/August; the second year saw celebrations of the festivals both at Nemea (August/September) and, later in the year, at the Isthmos, in April/May or June/July, whereas the third year, like the first, was devoted to a single festival, the *Pythia* at Delphi, in July/August; the fourth and final year of an Olympiad copied the second year and saw celebrations of festivals at both Nemea and at the Isthmos. After these six celebrations, a new Olympiad began, with a new celebration of the Olympics —and the four big festivals unrolled in this regular rhythm throughout the classical period and beyond.

This section may usefully be concluded with a remark on the foundation dates of the four Panhellenic festivals. The traditional foundation date of the Olympics is 776 BCE, but the studies of Christesen have demonstrated conclusively that this date is mere ancient reconstruction,<sup>39</sup> and the current scholarly consensus is rather that the Olympics took off ca. 700 BCE or perhaps even as late as 600 BCE.<sup>40</sup> The traditional foundation date for the Pythian Games is 586 BCE; for the Isthmian Games 580 BCE; and for the Nemean Games 573 BCE. These dates may not be accurate

<sup>39</sup> Christesen 2007, or more briefly Christesen 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Nielsen 2018: 18 n. 43.

to the year and may treat as events what was rather processes, and so the important point here must be that all traditional dates are sixth-century dates. Sixth-century dates seem acceptable since, as already pointed out, the sixth century was the era when the foundation of athletic festivals by *poleis* gained momentum.<sup>41</sup> The three younger festivals of the fab four, then, came into being at time when numerous other athletic festivals were founded or reorganized throughout the Greek world.

#### 4. *Epangelia, ekecheiria and theorodokia*

The organizers of Panhellenic festivals announced the celebrations of their festivals by sending delegations of their own citizens on tours of the Greek world to make announcements (*epangelia*) in, presumably, most or even all *poleis*. Such envoys were styled *theoroi* (or *spondophoroi*).<sup>42</sup> These messengers announced the celebration of an upcoming festival and proclaimed the attendant “sacred truce” (*ekecheiria*) which protected the site of the festival during the festivities.<sup>43</sup> To carry out their duties, the messengers needed assistance from local citizens and the festival organizers accordingly appointed members of the local elites to the prestigious office of *theorodokos* (“receiver of *theoroi*”).<sup>44</sup> This system seems to have been in place by the fifth century, though announcements must certainly have been made somehow before that date. In the classical period, *epangelia*, *ekecheiria* and *theorodokoi* are parts of a single system and presuppose one another; accordingly, attestation of one of the parts should be indicative that the whole procedure (in some form or other) was in place. For the Olympics, *epangelia* is attested at Sicilian Akragas for the earlier fifth century by Pind. *Isthm.* 2.23–24; *theorodokia* is attested for the mid-fifth century by Neue *IvO* 32; and the sacred truce is attested for 460–450 BCE by SEG 43.630.7.<sup>45</sup> For the *Pythia*, *theorodokia* may be attested for the later fifth century, if Syll.<sup>3</sup> 90 is a catalogue of *theorodokoi*, but attestation for the fourth century is certain;<sup>46</sup> and *epangelia* and *ekecheiria* is attested for ca. 380 BCE.<sup>47</sup> For the *Isthmia*, *epangelia* and *ekecheiria* is attested for 412 BCE by Thucydides (8.9.1 [*Isthmiadai spondai*]; 10.1 [*epangelia*]). For

<sup>41</sup> Nielsen 2018: 25 n. 84.

<sup>42</sup> Perlman 2000: 15 n. 11.

<sup>43</sup> On such truces, see Theotikou 2013.

<sup>44</sup> On this institution, see Perlman 2000.

<sup>45</sup> On the Olympic truce, see Lämmer 2010.

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. Syll.<sup>3</sup> 189 (ca. 360 BCE); *FD* III 1.396 (347 BCE).

<sup>47</sup> See *CID* IV 1.44–48 with Rutherford 2013: 91–91.

the *Nemea*, an *ekecheiria* is probably attested for the fifth century by Pind. *Nem.* 3.79,<sup>48</sup> and *theorodokoi* are attested for the fourth century.<sup>49</sup>

The purpose of this system of announcement must have been, apart from the practical reasons of publicizing the enactment of a festival and receiving pledges from the various city-states that the sacred truce would be respected, to attract athletes, public delegations and spectators from other *poleis* thus maintaining the international repute and fame of the festival on which its prestige was founded, and it thus seems designed specifically for Panhellenic festivals. However, other festivals are known to have been served by the very same system. Thus, to consider merely festivals on the Peloponnese, home to three of the four Panhellenic festivals, sacred truces were proclaimed by (at least) the *poleis* of Makiston,<sup>50</sup> Mantinea,<sup>51</sup> and Phleious;<sup>52</sup> and the appointment of *theorodokoi* in foreign *poleis* is attested for Argos,<sup>53</sup> Epidauros,<sup>54</sup> and the minuscule *polis* of Lousoi in Arkadia.<sup>55</sup> In this respect, too, the great Panhellenic sanctuaries are simply outstanding examples of what was actually a rather common phenomenon.

## 5. The Crowds at the Games

How large the crowds which assembled to attend Panhellenic festivals were, is beyond recovery. The only suggestion is provided by the estimated seating capacities of the excavated stadiums at Olympia and Nemea. For the mid-fourth century stadium at Olympia, this capacity is ca. 45000;<sup>56</sup> the capacity of the slightly later stadium at Nemea has been estimated at 30000.<sup>57</sup> This is substantial turnouts by any ancient standard. The visitors hailed, it seems, from all parts of the Greek world, to the extent that they could be discursively construed as “the Greeks” as such, as is clear from an anecdote told by Herodotos (8.26) in the aftermath of the battle of Thermopylai. It relates how some Arkadians went to see the Persians to apply for service as mercenaries. The Persians, Herodotos goes on, led the

<sup>48</sup> See Rutherford 2013: 91 and Theotikou 2013: 199.

<sup>49</sup> Perlman 2000: 99–155.

<sup>50</sup> Strabo 8.3.13, on which see Nielsen 2013: 233–234.

<sup>51</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.2.

<sup>52</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.16.

<sup>53</sup> Perlman 2000: 99–155.

<sup>54</sup> Perlman 2000: 67–97.

<sup>55</sup> Perlman 2000: 158–160.

<sup>56</sup> Nielsen 2007: 55–56.

<sup>57</sup> Miller *et al.* 2004: 203.

Arkadians into the presence of the Great King and inquired of them “what the Greeks were doing” (περὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων τὰ ποιεοίεν). This remarkable question is, evidently, a literary device designed to allow the answer to it—which was that the Greek were celebrating the Olympic festival and would be watching an athletic and an equestrian contest (Ὀλύμπια ἄγουσι καὶ θεωροῦσιν ἀγῶνα γυμνικὸν καὶ ἵππικόν). Here the crowd present at Olympia is taken to constitute the Greeks as such, a rather remarkable phenomenon. Another example is found in Bacchyl. 9.30 where the spectators who witnessed the victory of the honorand, Automedes of Phleious, at Nemea are described as Ἑλλάνων ... ἀπ[ε]ίρονα κύκλον, “the endless sea of Greeks” in McDevitt’s translation;<sup>58</sup> here the spectators at Nemea are described as Greeks.

Such Panhellenic crowds will have consisted of tradesmen and shopkeepers, of ordinary spectators, of poets and artist, and of intellectuals.<sup>59</sup> Of particular significance, however, must have been the public theoretic delegations sent by *poleis*. For the classical period, these delegations are poorly documented, and the following is simply a sketch; it centers on Olympia, but what is said should be broadly valid for the three other Panhellenic festivals.<sup>60</sup> City-states who accepted Elis’ invitation often, and presumably regularly, sent public delegations (whose members were styled *theoroi*) to Olympia to participate in the rituals and watch the games on behalf of the city and to represent it formally before the rest of the Greek world. It seems reasonable with Rutherford (2013: 55) to assume that every enactment of the Olympics attracted such delegations “from hundreds of cities”. Thus, Thucydides (5.50.2) seems to imply that he thought of the Olympics of 420 BCE as being attended by all the Greeks, i.e. presumably by *theoroi* from every *polis*—except Sparta and Lepreon. In 420 BCE, a serious conflict had broken out between Sparta and Elis over the minor *polis* of Lepreon, which Elis regarded as its rightful possession, but which attempted to break free. Sparta had, in Elis’ opinion, violated the sacred truce by sending hoplites to Lepreon to support the city against Elis. Accordingly, Elis excluded Sparta from the festival, and the Spartans sacrificed to Zeus at home. “The other Greeks”, Thucydides says, “attended the festival [ἐθεώρουσαν], except the *Lepreatai*.” The silent implication here seems to be that “the other Greeks” were *all other Greeks*— which may not be accurate to the letter but is a good indication of the high number

<sup>58</sup> McDevitt 2009: 51.

<sup>59</sup> See Kokolakis 1992.

<sup>60</sup> The basic study on theoretic delegations is Rutherford 2013.

of theoric delegations attending the festival. This being so, the festival provided an ideal opportunity for interstate negotiations, though this again is not very well covered by classical evidence. However, we do know from Thucydides (3.8–9) that after the festival of 428 BCE envoys from Mytilene on Lesbos negotiated with Sparta and its allies at Olympia, and it seems a reasonable assumption that these allies consisted of the theoric delegations from the member states of the Peloponnesian League. We also happen to know that the leader of the Athenian delegation to Olympia in 324 BCE was none other than Demosthenes.<sup>61</sup> This was not by chance. Demosthenes had offered himself as the leader of the Athenian delegation, and his objective was a meeting with Nikanor, the emissary of Alexander “the Great”. His purpose was clearly talks over the Athenian cleruchy at Samos,<sup>62</sup> which Athens stood to lose as a consequence of Alexander’s Exiles’ Decree which was read aloud to the attending masses at Olympia during the festival.<sup>63</sup> Themistokles and Kimon, too, are known to have headed Athenian theoric delegations to Olympia and the composition of such delegations was clearly a matter of concern to Athens, and presumably all other *poleis*.<sup>64</sup>

## 6. The Athletes at the Games

The atmosphere at Panhellenic games must, then, have been quite politicized on account of the presence of numerous official city-state delegations. Formally, however, the athletes entered the competitions on their own. Greek athletics did not, as modern sport has done, develop “national” teams and uniforms, and Greek athletes did not, as modern athletes do, enter the great games as official representatives of their states, but as private individuals —though, as will be shown below (section 8), athletes were in fact informally perceived as representatives of their city-states. Though Greek culture did know team-competitions (and ball games), there were no competitions in these events at the great festivals, as we have seen. On the contrary, Greek athletic events were extremely individual and “every event pitted man against man, one on one”, in Miller’s words.<sup>65</sup> (The only exception to this were the equestrian races where tradition permitted city-

<sup>61</sup> Din, *Contra Dem.* 81–82.

<sup>62</sup> On Samos as an Athenian cleruchy, see Shipley 1987: 155–168.

<sup>63</sup> On the Exiles’ Decree, see Bosworth 1988: 220–228.

<sup>64</sup> Rutherford 2013: 162–165; see also Pl. *Leg.* 950e.

<sup>65</sup> Miller 2004: 19.

states to enter public teams and racehorses; Argive horses were victorious, for instance, in both 480 and 476 BCE.<sup>66</sup>) This cultural preference for individual competitions is presumably best interpreted as determined by the function that athletic competitions fulfilled in Greek social life, which was, briefly put, the pursuit of personal honour and glory (see below).

Athletes, then, were not *polis* representatives and the *poleis* were not involved in selecting which athletes competed at (e.g.) Olympia.<sup>67</sup> In order to be allowed to compete, an athlete had to appear in person at the town of Elis thirty days before the opening of the festival.<sup>68</sup> During the month they resided at Elis, they had to train under official Eleian supervision.<sup>69</sup> The Eleian authorities obviously wanted to satisfy themselves that the athletes were capable of spectacular performances:<sup>70</sup> the competitions were, after all, staged in honour of Zeus Olympios who would hardly have enjoyed to watch ancient equivalents of, say, Eddie the Eagle;<sup>71</sup> and, perhaps just as importantly, poor spectacles were potentially a threat to the prestige of the games. The month of training at Elis is empirically attested only for the Roman imperial period,<sup>72</sup> but it, or another procedure similar to it, presumably existed already by the classical period<sup>73</sup> in order to permit the Eleians to control the abilities of the athletes, and other big festivals, such as the three others of the *periodos*, may have controlled the athletic competences of would-be entrants as well.

Since athletes represented primarily themselves, their ambitions and hopes were presumably likewise primarily personal. Obviously, throughout the late-archaic and classical period hundreds of athletes entered the Panhellenic competitions, and they may well have had as many motivations and ambitions as they were individuals, and these motivations will surely have been mixed. Moreover, evidence which could illuminate individual ambitions and motivations is practically non-existent: no diaries or memoirs of and no interviews with ancient Greek athletes exist. What can be observed is the general cultural attitude to athletic victory and the uses to which athletes put their victories. And this evidence strongly suggests that the ambition and motivation which spurred on Greek athletes was

<sup>66</sup> Nielsen (forthcoming).

<sup>67</sup> Crowther 1996: 38.

<sup>68</sup> Competitors in equestrian events were presumably exempted from this rule (Crowther 1991: 165).

<sup>69</sup> Paus. 6.23.2.

<sup>70</sup> Crowther 1996: 42–43.

<sup>71</sup> See also Crowther 1996: 43.

<sup>72</sup> Crowther 1991: 162.

<sup>73</sup> Crowther 1991: 162.

personal fame and glory:<sup>74</sup> “Winning for the sake of individual honor was the supreme goal”, as Scanlon says.<sup>75</sup> The nature of Greek agonistic events was, as we have seen, well suited to such motivations since, to repeat Miller’s excellent phrasing, “Every event pitted man against man, one on one”.<sup>76</sup> Such events were almost *designed* to glorify individuals by settling definitively who was the best and “excelled above the others”.<sup>77</sup>

This is not to deny that there may have been other motivations, among them material gain. Match fixing for financial gain is attested,<sup>78</sup> and some festivals actually set out valuable prizes.<sup>79</sup> At the four great Panhellenic festivals, however, the prize was simply a crown of leaves. But, since city-states came to identify with “their” athletes (see below), they often rewarded their Panhellenic victors with social privileges and financial rewards.<sup>80</sup> This (informal) identification between an athlete and his *polis* opened a new source of material gain, since athletes would sometimes accept to transfer their allegiance for payment, as e.g. Sotades of Crete did in 374 BCE when he took payment and transferred to Ephesos (Paus. 6.18.6). Even so, it does seem that personal fame and glory was the overriding motivation of Greek athletes, in particular for athletes hailing from the uppermost social and economic classes.

## 7. Commemorating Victory

Victory clearly produced great glory (*kleos*) for the victor, but victory is a transient phenomenon if its memory is not kept alive, and Greek athletes kept it alive by celebrating it, sometimes rather lavishly. Such celebration was a concern primarily for the athlete himself and his family, and in the late-archaic and classical period, it took two main forms: the epinician ode and commemorative sculpture. The heyday of epinician odes was ca. 550–450 BCE when major poets such as Simonides and Pindar took commissions to produce great choral odes celebrating agonistic victors.<sup>81</sup> Choral song is otherwise characteristic of celebrations of gods and heroes, and so this mode of victory celebrations was quite demonstrative.

<sup>74</sup> Scanlon 2002: 10, 17–18.

<sup>75</sup> Scanlon 2002: 203.

<sup>76</sup> Miller 2004: 19.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Hom. *Il.* 6.208 and 11.784.

<sup>78</sup> See e.g. Paus. 5.21.2–7.

<sup>79</sup> Nielsen (forthcoming).

<sup>80</sup> Nielsen 2007: 95; Nielsen (forthcoming).

<sup>81</sup> On epinician odes, see e.g. Carne-Ross 1985 and Richardson 1992.

A perhaps surprising characteristic of epinician odes is the fact that, even though these odes celebrate athletic victory, there is hardly any mention at all of the actual feat and performance of the victor, and this is in marked contrast to epic poetry, which delights in the events themselves.<sup>82</sup> The business of an epinician poem is rather to create a commemorative verbal monument to victory, which will enhance and perpetuate its attendant *kleos*.<sup>83</sup>

Victor statues likewise appears around the middle of the sixth century or perhaps a little earlier,<sup>84</sup> and continued to be produced throughout the classical period and beyond. Such statues stood primarily, it seems, at Olympia and Delphi, but also elsewhere.<sup>85</sup> Victory statues were not portraits in the modern sense of naturalistic or veristic depictions of the honorands.<sup>86</sup> Rather, they depicted the victors as if they were gods or mythological heroes,<sup>87</sup> and thus they assimilated the victors to gods or heroes in an even more ostensive way than did the formal characteristics of choral lyric odes. Athletic victor portraits were not visually distinguished from depictions of gods or heroes.<sup>88</sup> Sculptural style, then, elided the otherwise crucial difference between gods, heroes and mortal men, the implicit claim being, it must be supposed, that in this case the difference was less essential than otherwise. The reason was, of course, that these were *not* ordinary men, but Panhellenic victors; such statues, then, were heavily ideologically charged. One of the purposes of such statues, in fact, was to depict the glorious victor as a superior being —“larger than life”, as Keesling puts it—<sup>89</sup>, thus enhancing his *kleos*.

## 8. Sharing the Prestige of Victory with the *Polis*

By the mid-sixth century, the *polis*, as we have seen, constituted itself as the primary organizer of athletic competitions; at the same time, *poleis* began laying out *gymnasia* for public use.<sup>90</sup> The *polis*, then, established itself as the basic framework in which athletics was practiced. If we add to this the

<sup>82</sup> Rutherford 2005: 176.

<sup>83</sup> Richardson 1992: 239, 241.

<sup>84</sup> Nielsen 2018: 177.

<sup>85</sup> On victor statues, see Smith 2007 and Keesling 2017: 28–32, 83–91.

<sup>86</sup> Keesling 2017: 6–8.

<sup>87</sup> Keesling 2017: 13–14, 29.

<sup>88</sup> Keesling 2017: 58.

<sup>89</sup> Keesling 2017: 12.

<sup>90</sup> Mann 1998: 7.

rewards and privileges that *poleis* began bestowing on “their” Panhellenic victors and the fact that by the classical period it had become a defining feature of a man’s identity in which *polis* he was a *polites*, it is perhaps no wonder that athletes and *poleis* came to be identified with each other to the extent that athletes were seen as *de facto* representatives of their *poleis*. Athletic victors reciprocally returned the honours paid to them by their *polis* by sharing the glory of victory with the *polis*. This sharing was expressed by the metaphor of *the athlete crowning his city-state*, which is quite common in the classical period,<sup>91</sup> and we may conclude this account of classical Panhellenic athletics by looking briefly at a single example from an epinician ode, Pindar’s *Ninth Pythian Ode*, celebrating the footracer Telesikrates of Kyrene (1–4):

Ἐθέλω χαλκᾶσπιδα Πυθιονίκαν  
 σὺν βαθυζώνοισιν ἀγγέλλων  
 Τελεσικράτη Χαρίτεσσι γεγωνεῖν  
 ὄλβιον ἄνδρα διωξίππου στεφάνωμα Κυράνας<sup>92</sup>

This is an epinician reworking of the heraldic proclamation by which Panhellenic victors were proclaimed at the festivals.<sup>93</sup> Epinician style is often rather obscure, which seems to have been part of its attraction.<sup>94</sup> By *χαλκᾶσπιδα* (“the bronze shield race”) the poet refers to the race in armour; in prose it is simply called *ὄπλίτης*, but the poet here employs a graphic poetic expression. The *Χαρίτεσσι* (“Graces”) are the three Charites, divine personifications of charm, gracefulness and beauty. They are traditionally the companions of Aphrodite, but Pindar probably introduces them here because later passages in the poem have a light and humorous erotic undercurrent. Obscure, too, is the phrase *ἄνδρα διωξίππου στεφάνωμα Κυράνας*, literally “the man who is a crown of horse-guiding Kyrene”. *Κυράνας* here gives the information which the city-ethnic (*Κυραναιῖος*) would have given in the heraldic proclamation, i.e. Telesikrates’ citizenship. But the name here is, in fact, not the name of his city, which cannot be said to guide horses; rather, it refers to the city’s eponymous heroine, who is the subject of the ode’s first mythological narrative. In saying that Telesikrates

<sup>91</sup> Nielsen 2018: 210 n. 234; Nielsen (forthcoming).

<sup>92</sup> “I proclaim, with the help of the deep-girdled Graces,| a victory of Telesikrates in the bronze shield race at Pytho;| I wish to shout aloud his good fortune,| and how he has crowned horse-driving Cyrene” (translation from Verity 2007).

<sup>93</sup> On the heraldic proclamation, see Wolicki 2002.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas 2012: 224.

is the “crown” of the mythological heroine, the poet states, in epinician manner, that some of the prestige of the athlete’s victory in fact falls to his *polis*, i.e. it is the metaphor of the *athlete crowning his city-state* in epinician garb. That this metaphor is found even in epinician poetry—a genre designed to magnify victors—is a fine demonstration that athletes did come to identify with their *poleis* in spite of the fact that they were not *official* representatives of their states.

## 9. Recapitulation

By the late-archaic period, athletics was a Panhellenic cultural phenomenon found all over the Greek world, incorporated as spectacles into the religious festivals of most *poleis*. The events contested at official competitions were everywhere virtually the same and, in fact, those of the program at Olympia with only slight and insignificant variations between festivals. Among the numerous athletic festivals which came into existence during the sixth century, three, those at Delphi, Nemea and on the Isthmos, had by the end of that century come to stand out alongside the Olympics as the most prestigious of all, though their fundamental characteristic: the acceptance of all comers, was one that they shared with most other festivals. The four Panhellenic festivals were announced to the rest of the Greek world by their organizers by way of *epangelia* with associated *ekecheiria* and *theorodokia* but this, again, was a system employed by many other city-states organizing athletic festivals. The Panhellenic festivals were simply the most conspicuous examples of a rather common Greek institution, the athletic festival.

The crowds that assembled for the celebrations of Panhellenic festivals were probably in the range of 30,000–45,000 and included numerous public delegations sent by other city-states. The atmosphere was thus rather politicized, but the athletes entered the competitions entirely on their own and independently of any city-state involvement. Accordingly, their motivations and ambitions were personal and consisted in the quest for the glory produced by victory. Victory was celebrated by poetry and sculpture to enhance that glory and perpetuate it. By the classical period, athletes were, however, perceived as informal but *de facto* representatives of their city-states and so some of the glory produced by victory fell to the *polis* of the victor—who was said to “crown his city-state”.

## References

- BOSWORTH, A.B. (1988) *Conquest and Empire. The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BOWRA, C.M. (1938) "Xenophanes and the Olympic Games". *AJPh* 59: 257–279.
- BURY, J.B. (1892) *The Isthmian Odes of Pindar*. London: Macmillan (reprinted by Hakkert, Amsterdam 1965).
- CARNE-ROSS, D.S. (1985) *Pindar*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- CHRISTESEN, P. (2007) *Olympic Victor Lists and Ancient Greek History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CHRISTESEN, P. (2010) "Whence 776? The Origin of the Date for the First Olympiad". In Z. Papakonstantinou (ed.) *Sport in the Cultures of the Ancient World*. London & New York: Routledge, 13–34.
- COOK, B.F. (1987) *Greek Inscriptions*. London: British Museum Press.
- CROWTHER, N.B. (1991) "The Olympic Training Period". *Nikephoros* 4: 161–166
- CROWTHER, N.B. (1996) "Athlete and State: Qualifying for the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece". *Journal of Sport History* 23: 34–43.
- EBERT, J. (1972) *Griechische Epigramme auf Sieger an gymnischen und hippischen Agonen*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- FARRINGTON, A. (2012) *Isthmionikai. A Catalogue of Isthmian Victors*. Hildesheim: Weidmann.
- FINLEY, M.I. & PLEKET, H.W. (1976) *The Olympic Games: The First Thousand years*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- FLOWER, M. (2000) "From Simonides to Isocrates: The Fifth-Century Origins of Fourth-Century Panhellenism". *Classical Antiquity* 19: 65–101.
- FUNKE, P. (2005) "Die Nabel der Welt. Überlegungen zur Kanonisierung der 'panhellenischen' Heiligtümer". In T. Schmitt et al. (eds.) *Gegenwärtigen Antike – antike Gegenwart*. Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 1–16.
- GOLDEN, M. (1998) *Sport and Society in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HORNBLOWER, S. (2004) *Thucydides and Pindar. Historical Narrative in the World of Epinikian Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- JEBB, R.C. (1905) *Bacchylides. The Poems and Fragments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- KEESLING, C.M. (2017) *Early Greek Portraiture. Monuments and Histories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- KOKOLAKIS, M. (1992) "Intellectual Activity on the Fringes of the Games". In W. Coulson & H. Kyrieleis (eds.) *Proceedings of an International Symposium on the Olympic Games*. Athens: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, 153–158.
- KOSTOUBOU, G.P. (2008) Νεμέων ἄθλων δῦγγησις. Β. "Νεμεᾶται". 286 Νεμεοῦνικες τῆς Ἀρχαιότητος. Nemea: Personal Press.
- KYLE, D.G. (1993) *Athletics in Ancient Athens<sup>2</sup>*. Leiden: Brill.
- KYLE, D.G. (1996) "Gifts and Glory: Panathenaic and Other Greek Athletic Prizes".

- In J. Neils (ed.) *Worshipping Athena. Panathenaia and Parthenon*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 106–136.
- LÄMMER, M. (2010) “The So-called Olympic Peace in Ancient Greece”. In J. König (ed.) *Greek Athletics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 36–60.
- LEE, H.M. (2001) *The Program and Schedule of the Ancient Olympic Games*. Hildesheim: Weidmann.
- MANN, C. (1998) “Krieg, Sport und Adelskultur. Zur Entstehung des griechischen Gymnasions”. *Klio* 80: 7–21.
- MARKOVICH, M. (1978) “Xenophanes on Drinking Parties and Olympic Games”. *ICS* 3: 1–26.
- MCDEVITT, A. (2009) *Bacchylides. The Victory Poems*. London: Bloomsbury.
- MILLER, S.G. (2004) *Ancient Greek Athletics*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- MILLER, S.G. et al. (2004) *Nemea. A Guide to the Site and Museum*. Athens: Ministry of Culture.
- MITCHELL, L. (2007) *Panhellenism and the Barbarian in Archaic and Classical Greece*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales.
- MORETTI, L. (1953) *Iscrizioni agonistiche Greche*. Rome: Angelo Signorelli Editore.
- MORETTI, L. (1957) *Olympionikai, i vincitori negli antichi agoni olimpici*. Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei.
- NEUMANN-HARTMANN, A. (2007) “Das Wettkampfprogramm der panhellenischen Spiele im 5. Jh. v. Chr.”. *Nikephoros* 20: 113–151.
- NEUMANN-HARTMANN, A. (2008) “Prosopographie zu den Epinikien von Pindar und Bacchylides”. *Nikephoros* 21: 81–131.
- NICHOLSON, N. (2021) “Greek Hippiic Contests”. In A. Futrell & T.F. Scanlon (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 242–253.
- NIELSEN, T.H. (2007) *Olympia and the Classical Hellenic City-State Culture*. Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters.
- NIELSEN, T.H. (2013) “Can ‘Federal Sanctuaries’ Be Identified in Triphylia and Arkadia?”. In F. Punke & M. Haake (eds.) *Greek Federal States and Their Sanctuaries. Identity and Integration*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 227–244.
- NIELSEN, T.H. (2014) [2019] “Foreign Entrants at Minor Athletic Festivals in Late-Archaic and Classical Greece”. *Nikephoros* 27: 91–158.
- NIELSEN, T.H. (2018) *Two Studies in the History of Ancient Greek Athletics*. Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters.
- NIELSEN, T.H. (2023) “A Note on the Number of Events in Classical Greek Athletics”. *Nikephoros* 29: 215–223.
- NIELSEN, T.H. (forthcoming) “On the Pursuit of Athletic Glory by the *Poleis* of Late-archaic and Classical Greece”. To appear in the proceedings of the 2022 Mannheim conference “Money and Honor in Greek Athletics”, edited by C. Mann et al.

- PAPAKONSTANTINOU, Z. (2002) "Prizes in Early Greek Sport". *Nikephoros* 15: 51–67.
- PERLMAN, P. (2000) *City and Sanctuary in Ancient Greece. The Theorodokia in the Peloponnese*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- POLLIAKOFF, M.B. (2021) "Greek Combat Sport and the Borders of Athletics, Violence, and Civilization". In A. Futrell & T.F. Scanlon (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 221–231.
- PRITCHARD, D.M. (2013) *Sport, Democracy and War in Classical Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- RACE, W.H. (1997) *Pindar. Nemean Odes. Isthmian Odes. Fragments*. Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press.
- REMIJSEN, S. (2011) "The So-Called 'Crown-Games': Terminology and Historical Context of the Ancient Categories for *Agones*". *ZPE* 177: 97–109.
- REMIJSEN, S. (2015) *The End of Greek Athletics in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- RICHARDSON, N.J. (1992) "Panhellenic Cults and Panhellenic Poets". *CAH* v<sup>2</sup>: 223–244.
- ROMANO, D.G. (2021) "Greek Footraces and Field Events". In A. Futrell & T.F. Scanlon (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 209–220.
- ROY, J. (2013) "Olympia, Identity and Integration: Elis, Eleia, and Hellas". In F. Punke & M. Haake (eds.) *Greek Federal States and Their Sanctuaries. Identity and Integration*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 107–121.
- RUTHERFORD, R. (2005) *Classical Literature. A Concise History*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- RUTHERFORD, I. (2013) *State Pilgrims and Sacred Observers in Ancient Greece. A Study of Theōriā and Theōroi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SCANLON, T.F. (2002) *Eros and Greek Athletics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SHEAR, J.L. (2021) *Serving Athena. The Festival of the Panathenaia and the Construction of Athenian Identities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SHIPLEY, G. (1987) *A History of Samos 800–188 BC*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- SIDER, D. (2020) *Simonides. Epigrams & Elegies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SMITH, R.R.R. (2007) "Pindar, Athletes, and the Early Greek Statue Habit". In S. Hornblower & C. Morgan (eds.) *Pindar's Poetry, Patrons, and Festivals. From Archaic Greece to the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 83–139.
- STRASSER, J.-Y. (2001) *Πυθιονίκαί. Recherches sur les vainqueurs aux Pythia de Delphes. Tome 1*. Paris: L'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.
- THEOTIKOU, M. (2013) *Die Ekecheiria zwischen Religion und Politik. Der sog. "Gottesfriede" als Instrument in den zwischenstaatlichen Beziehungen der griechischen Welt*. Berlin: Lit Verlag.
- THOMAS, R. (2012) "Pindar's 'Difficulty' and the Performance of Epinician Poetry.

- Some Suggestions from Ethnography”. In P. Agócs *et al.* (eds.) *Reading the Victory Ode*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 224–245.
- VERITY, A. (2007) *Pindar. The Complete Odes. A New Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WILLCOCK, M.M. (1995) *Pindar. Victory Odes. Olympians 2, 7 and 11, Nemean 4, Isthmians 3, 4 and 7*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WILLIS, W.H. (1941) “Athletic Contests in the Epic”. *TAPA* 72: 392–417.
- WOLICKI, A. (2002) “The Heralds and the Games in Archaic and Classical Greece”. *Nikephoros* 15: 69–97.