

## 4.1. Various / Accounts of the Hellenic Games

The games date from the beginning of the Archaic period, in the 8th century BCE, and are one of the elements of emerging Hellenic culture that mark the end of the Greek Dark Age.

Pind. 9. Source: Pindar. *The Extant Odes of Pindar*. Trans. Ernest Myers. London: Macmillan and Co, 1874.

Thuc. 1.6. Source: Thucydides. *Thucydides*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. Oxford: Clarendon, 1900.

Xen. *Hell.* . Source: Xenophon. *The Works of Xenophon*. Trans. H. G. Dakyns, Macmillan and Co., 1897.

Strabo *Geog.* Source: Strabo. *The Geography of Strabo*. Trans. Hans Claude Hamilton and William Falconer. Bohn's classical library, v. 74-76. London: H.G. Bohn, 1854.

Paus. 1.316, 318. Source: Pausanias. *Pausanias' Description of Greece*. Translated into English, with Notes and Index, by A.R. Shilleto. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1886.

### Pindar: *Olympian Odes*, c. 470 BCE

No. 9) Fit speech may I find for my journey in the Muses' car; and let me therewith have daring and powers of ample scope. To back the prowess of a friend I came, when Lampromachos won his Isthmian crown, when on the same day both he and his brother overcame. And afterwards at the gates of Corinth two triumphs again befell Epharmostos and more in the valleys of Nemea. At Argos he triumphed over men, as over boys at Athens. And I might tell how at Marathon he stole from among the beardless and confronted the full-grown for the prize of silver vessels, how without a fall he threw his men with swift and coming shock, and how loud the shouting pealed when round the ring he ran, in the beauty of his youth and fair form and fresh from fairest deeds.

No. 10) Ample is the glory stored for Olympian winners; thereof my shepherd tongue is fain to keep some part in fold. But only by the help of Zeus is wisdom kept ever blooming in the soul. Son of Arcestratos, Agesidamos, know certainly that for your boxing I will lay a glory of sweet strains upon your crown of golden olive and will have in remembrance the race of the Locrians in the west.

No. 11) Who then won to their lot the new-appointed crown by hands or feet or chariot, setting before them the prize of glory in the games, and winning it by their act? In the foot-race down the straight course of the stadion was Likymnios' son Oionos first, from Nodea had he led his host: in the wrestling was Tegea glorified by Echemos: Doryklos won the prize of boxing, a dweller in the city of Tiryns, and with the four-horse chariot, Samos of Mantinea, Halirrhotos' son: with the javelin Phrastor hit the mark: in distance Enikeus beyond all others hurled the stone with a circling sweep, and all the warrior company thundered a great applause. Then on the evening the lovely shining of the fair-faced moon beamed forth, and all the precinct sounded with songs of festal glee, after the manner which is to this day for triumph.

No. 13) Also two parsley-wreaths shadowed his head before the people at the games of Isthmus, nor does Nemea tell a different tale. And of his father Thessalos' lightning feet is recorded by the streams of Alpheos, and at Pytho he has renown for the single and for the double stadion gained both in a single

day, and in the same month at rocky Pan-Athenaios a day of swiftness crowned his hair for three illustrious deeds, and the Hellotia seven times, and at the games of Poseidon between seas longer hymns followed his father Ptoiodoros with Terpsias and Eritimos. And how often you were first at Delphi or in the Pastures of the Lion, though with full many do I match your crowd of honors, yet can I no more surely tell than the tale of pebbles on the sea-shore.

### Thucydides: *Peloponnesian War*, c. 404 BCE

The Lacedaemonians were the first who in their athletic exercises stripped naked and rubbed themselves over with oil. But this was not the ancient custom; athletes formerly, even when they were contending at Olympia, wore loin-cloths, a practice which lasted until quite lately, and still prevails among Barbarians, especially those of Asia, where the combatants at boxing and wrestling matches wear loin-cloths.

It was at this time, after the purification, that the Athenians first celebrated the quinquennial festival of the Delian games. There had been, however, even in very early times, a great assembly of the Ionians and the neighboring islanders held at Delos; for they used to come to the feast with their wives and children, as the Ionians now do to the Ephesian festivals, and gymnastic and musical contests were held, and the different cities took up bands of dancers.

### Xenophon: *Hellenica*, c. 370 BCE

If one should win a victory thanks to the swiftness of his feet or when competing in the pentathlon there in the sanctuary of Zeus by the streams of Pisa at Olympia, or if one should gain the prize in wrestling or painful boxing, or in that fearful contest people call all-in-fighting, to his fellow citizens he would be thought more glorious to look on than ever, and he would gain from his polis the right to meals at public expense and a gift which would be his personal treasure. And if his victory were won with horses, he would also gain all these things, even though he is not as worthy as I. For our wisdom is better than the strength of men or horses. For even if there were a good boxer among the citizens or one skilled in the pentathlon or wrestling, or, indeed, even if there were a great sprinter, which holds the front rank among the athletic achievements of men, the polis would still not be better governed because of this. A polis would gain little joy if someone should win in competition by the banks of the Pisa, for that victory would not fill its storehouses.

### Strabo: *Geographia*, c. 20 CE

There was anciently a contest held at Delphi, of players on the cithara, who executed a paean in honor of the god. It was instituted by the Delphians. But after the Crisaean war the amphictyons, in the time of Eurylochus, established contests for horses and gymnastic sports, in which the victor was crowned. These were called Pythian games, in addition to the musical contests.

### Pausanias: *Description of Greece*, c. 175 CE

From the time the Olympian games were revived continuously, prizes were first instituted for running, and Coroebus of Elis was the victor....And in the 14th Olympiad afterwards the double course was introduced, when Hypenus, a native of Pisa, won the wild olive crown, and Acanthus the second. And in the 18th Olympiad they introduced the pentathlon and wrestling....And in the 23rd Olympiad they ordained prizes for boxing....And in the 25th Olympiad they had a race of full-grown horses....And in the 28th Olympiad they introduced the pancratium and the riding race. The horse of Crannonian Crauxidas got in first, and the competitors for the pancratium were beaten by the Syracusan Lygdamus, who has his sepulcher at the stone quarries of Syracuse....And the contest of the boys was not a revival of ancient usage, but the people of Elis instituted it because the idea pleased them. So prizes were instituted for running and wrestling among boys in the 37th Olympiad. And in the 41st Olympiad afterwards they invited boxing boys....And the race in heavy armor was tried in the 65th Olympiad as an exercise for war, I think....The order of the games in our day is to sacrifice victims to the god and then to contend in the pentathlon and horse-race, according to the program established in the 77th Olympiad, for before this horses and men contended on the same day. And at that period the pancratiasts did not appear till night, for they could not compete sooner, so much time being taken up by the horse-races and pentathlon....A crown of wild olive was given to the victor at Olympia, and laurel at Delphi. And at the Isthmian Games pine leaves, at the Nemean Games parsley, as we know from the cases of Palaemon and Archemorus. But most games have a crown of palm as the prize, and the palm is put into the right hand of the victor.

As you go from Scillus along the road to Olympia, before you cross the Alpheius, there is a mountain with high, precipitous cliffs. It is called Mount Typaeum. It is a law of Elis to cast down it any women who are caught present at the Olympic games, or even on the other side of the Alpheius, on the days prohibited to women. However, they say that no woman has been caught, except Callipateira only....She, being a widow, disguised herself exactly like a gymnastic trainer, and brought her son to compete at Olympia. Peisirodus, for so her son was called, was victorious, and Callipateira, as she was jumping over the enclosure in which they keep the trainers shut up, bared her person. So her

sex was discovered, but they let her go unpunished out of respect for her father, her brothers and her son, all of whom had been victorious at Olympia. But a law was passed that for the future trainers should strip before entering the arena.

Every fourth year there is woven for Hera a robe by the Sixteen Women [*at Elis*], and the same also hold games called Heraea. The games consist of foot-races for maidens. These are not all of the same age. The first to run are the youngest; after them come the next in age, and the last to run are the oldest of the maidens. They run in the following way: their hair hangs down, a tunic reaches to a little above the knee, and they bare the right shoulder as far as the breast. These too have the Olympic stadium reserved for their games, but the course of the stadium is shortened for them by about one-sixth of its length. To the winning maidens they give crowns of olive and a portion of the cow sacrificed to Hera. They may also dedicate statues with their names inscribed upon them. The games of the maidens too are traced back to ancient times; they say that, out of gratitude to Hera for her marriage with Pelops, Hippodameia assembled the Sixteen Women, and with them inaugurated the Heraea. The Sixteen Women also arrange two choral dances.

Milo of Croton won six victories for wrestling at Olympia, one of them among the boys; at the Pythian he won six among the men and one among the boys. He came to Olympia to wrestle for the seventh time, but did not succeed in mastering Timasitheus, a fellow-citizen who was also a young man, and who refused, moreover, to come to close quarters with him. It is further stated that Milo carried his own statue into the Altis. His feats with the pomegranate and the quoit are also remembered by tradition. He would grasp a pomegranate so firmly that nobody could wrest it from him by force, and yet he did not damage it by pressure. He would stand upon a greased quoit, and make fools of those who charged him and tried to push him from the quoit. He used to perform also the following exhibition feats. He would tie a cord round his forehead as though it were a ribbon or a crown. Holding his breath and filling with blood the veins on his head, he would break the cord by the strength of these veins. It is said that he would let down by his side his right arm from the shoulder to the elbow, and stretch out straight the arm below the elbow, turning the thumb upwards, while the other fingers lay in a row. In this position, then, the little finger was lowest, but nobody could bend it back by pressure.