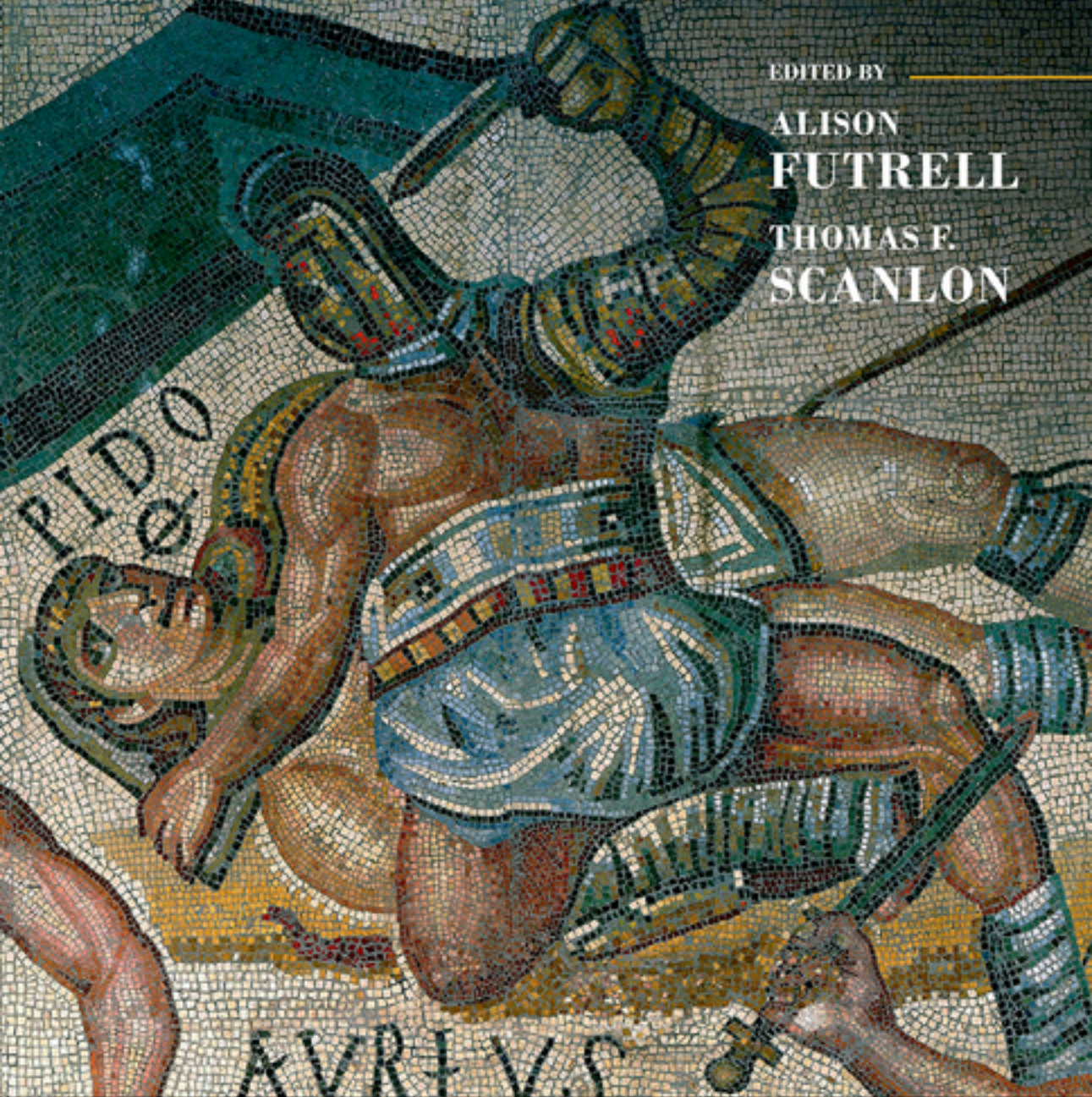




EDITED BY

ALISON
FUTRELL

THOMAS F.
SCANLON

≡ The Oxford Handbook of
SPORT & SPECTACLE
IN THE ANCIENT
WORLD

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

**SPORT AND
SPECTACLE IN THE
ANCIENT WORLD**

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THE ANCIENT
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Edited by

ALISON FUTRELL

and

THOMAS F. SCANLON

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In memoriam
Wolfgang Decker and Garrett G. Fagan
collegis doctissimis

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JOURNAL TITLES AND ABBREVIATIONS

JOURNAL titles have routinely been abbreviated following the standards of *L'Année Philologique*. The abbreviations for the names of ancient authors and their works and for standard reference works are in general accordance with those found in the Oxford Classical Dictionary, available online at: <https://classics.oxfordre.com/staticfiles/images/ORECLA/OCD.ABBREVIATIONS.pdf>.

A&R	<i>Atene e Roma: rassegna trimestrale dell'Associazione Italiana di Cultura classica</i>
AAA	<i>Archaiologika Analekta ex Athenon/Athens Annals of Archaeology</i>
AAP	<i>Atti dell'Accademia Pontaniana</i>
AArchHung	<i>Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
ABSA	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
ABull	<i>The Art Bulletin: A quarterly published by the College Art Association of America</i>
ABV	<i>Attic Black-figure Vase Painters</i> . J. D. Beazley, ed. Oxford. 1956
ARV ²	<i>Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters</i> . 2nd edn. J. D. Beazley, ed. Oxford. 1963
AC	<i>L'Antiquité classique</i>
AClass	<i>Acta classica: Proceedings of the Classical Association of South Africa</i>
AE	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i> . Paris. 1888–
AEA	<i>Archivo Español de Arqueología</i>
AEph (AEphem)	<i>Archaiologike ephemeris</i>
AH	<i>Ancient History</i>
AHB	<i>The Ancient History Bulletin</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJN	<i>American Journal of Numismatics</i>
AJPh (AJP)	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AK	<i>Antike Kunst</i> , hrsg. von der Vereinigung der Freunde antiker Kunst
AM	see MDAI(A)
AncW	<i>The Ancient World</i>
AntAfr	<i>Antiquités africaines</i>
ArchClass	<i>Archeologia classica: rivista della Scuola naz. di Archeologia</i> , pubbl. a cura degli Ist. Di Archeologia e Storia dell'arte greca e romana e di Etruscologia e antichità italiane dell' Università. di Roma
AS	<i>Anatolian Studies: Journal of the British Inst. of Archaeology at Ankara</i>
BA	<i>Bollettino d'arte del Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali</i>
BASP	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>

BEFAR	<i>Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Écoles and Athènes et de Rome</i>
BIAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i>
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London</i>
BMC	<i>British Museum Catalogue</i>
ByzF	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen: internationale Zeitschrift für Byzantinistik</i>
ByzZ (BZ)	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
CB	<i>The Classical Bulletin</i>
CEG	<i>Carmina epigraphica Graeca saeculorum VIII-V a. Chr. n.</i> Vol. 1. P. A. Hansen, ed. Berlin and New York. 1983; <i>Carmina epigraphica graeca saeculi IV a. Chr. n.</i> Vol. 2. P. A. Hansen, ed. Berlin and New York. 1989
CID	<i>Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes. Tome I: Lois sacrées et règlements religieux.</i> C. Rougemont, ed. Paris. 1977
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.</i> Berlin. 1863–
CJ	<i>The Classical Journal</i>
ClAnt (CA; Clas. Ant.)	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
CMS	<i>Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel.</i> I. Pini and W. Müller, eds. Berlin. 1960–2009
CPh (CP)	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CPJ	<i>Corpus papyrorum Judaicarum.</i> A. Tcherikover, A. Fuks., M. Stern, eds. Cambridge, MA. 1895–1978
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
CSCA	<i>California Studies in Classical Antiquity</i> (continued as <i>Classical Antiquity</i> [ClAnt])
CVA	<i>Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum.</i> 1925–
CW	<i>The Classical World</i>
Dar.–Sag.	C. Daremberg and E. Saglio, <i>Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines d'après les textes et les monuments.</i> 1877–1919
DHA	<i>Dialogues d'histoire ancienne</i>
DK	<i>Fragmente der Vorsokratiker.</i> 6th edn. H. Diels and W. Kranz, eds. 1952
DNP	<i>Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike.</i> H. Cancik and H. Schneider, eds. Stuttgart. 1996–
EA	<i>Epigraphica Anatolica: Zeitschrift für Epigraphik und historische Geographie Anatoliens</i>
EAOR	P. Sabbatini Tumolesi, et al. <i>Epigrafia anfiteatrale dell'Occidente Romano,</i> Rome. 1989–2009
EMC	<i>Échos du monde classique (Classical Views)</i>
EuGeSta	<i>Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity</i>
FD	<i>Fouilles de Delphes, III. Épigraphie.</i> Paris. 1929
FGrH	<i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker.</i> F. Jacoby, ed. Berlin. 1923–
Ge&R	<i>Greece and Rome</i>

GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
HSPh (HSCP; HSCPh)	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
ICos	<i>Iscrizioni di Cos</i> . Mario Serge, ed. Rome. 1993
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> . 1873–
IGBulg	<i>Inscriptiones graecae in Bulgaria repertae</i> , ed. Georgi Mihailov. 5 vols. Sofia 1958–1970, 1997. Vol. 1. <i>Inscriptiones orae Ponti Euxini</i> . 1970 ²
IGR (IGRR)	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes</i> . René Cagnat et al., eds. 3 vols. Paris. 1901–1927
I.Histria	<i>Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris Graecae et Latinae I. Inscriptiones Histriae et viciniae</i> . M. Pippidi, ed. Bucarest. 1983
IJHS	<i>International Journal of the History of Sport</i>
IK	<i>Inscripfen griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien</i> . 1972–
IMagnesia	<i>Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander</i> . O. Kern, ed. Berlin. 1900
IvO	<i>Die Inschriften von Olympia</i> . W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold, eds. Berlin. 1896
IPerg. (I.Pergamon)	<i>Die Inschriften von Pergamon</i> . 2 vols. Max Fränkel, ed. Berlin. 1890–1895
I. Priene	<i>Inschriften von Priene</i> . F. F. Hiller von Gaetringen et al., eds. Berlin. 1906
JAH	<i>Journal of Ancient History</i>
JDAI (JdI)	<i>Jahrbuch des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JHSex	<i>Journal of the History of Sexuality</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNG	<i>Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte</i>
JÖAI (ÖAI)	<i>Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Instituts</i>
JÖByz	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JPR	<i>Journal of Prehistoric Religion</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRMES	<i>Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSAH	<i>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</i>
JSH	<i>Journal of Sports History</i>
KN	Knossos Linear B tablet prefix
LCM	<i>Liverpool Classical Monthly</i>
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> . Zurich. 1981–
LP	Lobel, Edgar and Denys Page. <i>Poetarum Lesbiorum fragmenta</i> . Oxford. 1955
LSJ	Liddell and Scott, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9th edn., rev. H. Stuart Jones, ed. 1925–1940; Suppl. by E. A. Barber and others. Oxford. 1968
LTUR	M. Steinby, ed. <i>Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae</i> . Rome. 1993–2000

MAAL	<i>Monumenti Antichi della Reale Accademia dei Lincei</i> . 1890–1966
MAL (MemLinc)	<i>Memorie della Classe di Scienze morali e storiche dell'Accademia dei Lincei</i>
MDAI(A)	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts (Athen. Abt.)</i>
MDAI(R)	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts (Röm. Abt.)</i>
MedArch	<i>Mediterranean Archaeology: Australian and New Zealand Journal for the Archaeology of the Mediterranean World</i>
MEFRA	<i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome, Antiquité</i>
MGR	<i>Miscellanea greca e romana: studi pubblicati dall'Ist. Italiano per la storia antica</i>
MH	<i>Museum Helveticum: revue suisse pour l'étude de l'Antiquité classique</i>
Milet 6.1	<i>Milet 6.1. Inschriften von Milet 1</i> . A. Rehm and P. Herrmann, eds. Berlin. 1997
MycPictVP	<i>Mycenaean Pictorial Vase Painting</i> . E. T. Vermeule and V. Karageorghis. Cambridge. 1982
NC	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i>
NECJ	<i>New England Classical Journal</i>
NMA	National Museum, Athens
OGI (OGIS)	<i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> . 2 vols. Wilhelm Dittenberger, ed. Leipzig. 1903–1905
P&P	<i>Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies</i>
PAAH	<i>Praktika tes en Athenais Archaïologikes Etaireias</i>
Page, PMG	<i>Poetae Melici Graeci</i> . D. Page, ed. Oxford. 1962
PBSR	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
PCPhS (PCPS)	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
PGM	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i> , vol. 1. 1973. K. Preisendanz, ed. Rev. edn A. Henrichs. Stuttgart. Trans. H. D. Betz. <i>The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation: Including the Demotic Spells</i> . Chicago. 1986
PLondon	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> . H. I. Bell, ed. London. 1910
PM	<i>The Palace of Minos at Knossos</i> . 4 vols. A. Evans. London. 1921–1935
PMG	See Page, PMG
RA (Rev. Arch.)	<i>Revue archéologique</i>
RAAN	<i>Rendiconti dell'Accademia di archeologia, lettere e belle arti di Napoli</i>
RAL	<i>Rendiconti della Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche dell'Accademia dei Lincei</i>
RE	<i>Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, and W. Kroll, eds. Stuttgart. 1893–1983
REA	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
RFIC	<i>Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica</i>
RhM	<i>Rheinisches Museum</i>
RIDA	<i>Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité</i>
RPh	<i>Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes</i>
RO	P. J. Rhodes and R. Osborne, <i>Greek Historical Inscriptions, 404–323 BC</i> . Oxford. 2003; rev. 2007

<i>RSP (RStPomp)</i>	<i>Rivista di studi pompeiani</i>
<i>RWKIL</i>	<i>Repertorium der westkilikischen Inschriften nach den Scheden der Kleinasiatische Kommission der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaft.</i> S. Hagel and K. Tomaschitz, eds. Vienna. 1998
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum.</i> 1923–
<i>SIG</i>	See <i>Syll.</i>
<i>Syll.</i>	<i>Sylloge inscriptionum Graecarum.</i> W. Dittenberger, ed. Leipzig. 1883–
<i>Syll.</i> ³	<i>Sylloge inscriptionum Graecarum.</i> Third edition. W. Dittenberger, ed. Leipzig. 1915–1924
<i>SIMA</i>	<i>Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology</i>
<i>SMSR</i>	<i>Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni</i>
<i>T&MByz</i>	<i>Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de Recherches d’hist. et civil. Byzantines</i>
<i>TAM III</i>	<i>Tituli Asiae Minoris, III. Tituli Pisidiae linguis Graeca et Latina conscripti, 1. Tituli Termessi et agri Termessensis.</i> Rudolf Heberdey, ed. Vienna. 1941
<i>TAPhA (TAPA)</i>	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW AND APPROACHES

THOMAS F. SCANLON

OVERVIEW

THE last few decades have seen the analysis of sport and spectacle in Greece and Rome grow from small corners of specialized or ancillary Greek and Roman studies to a vital area of broad new exploration. This handbook aims to present progressive current thought in the field and indicate directions for future work. The aim in juxtaposing Greek and Roman games is to clarify areas of convergence, to shed light on similarities and differences in the two cultures, and also to suggest parallels in other cultures, including our own. This work therefore aims to facilitate research and provoke thinking in particular aspects of Greek sport and Roman spectacle, including the following:

- fifty articles explore Greek sport and Roman spectacle, and, to a lesser extent, Bronze age precedents, Etruscan agonistic phenomena, and related issues of modern identity formation through sport and spectacle;
- the work puts an emphasis on guiding the reader to serious engagement with topical and chronological aspects of Greek and Roman contest cultures: this aspect should make the work useful not only to specialists in Classics, Ancient History, and Classical Archaeology, but also to non-specialists as well as scholars in related academic fields, and to thoughtful non-academic aficionados such as modern sport historians and scholars and students of religion, anthropology, gender studies, sexuality, violence, economics, sociology, media and cultural studies, and the modern Olympics.

This book is not intended as an encyclopaedia of the status quo, as this kind of resource is well represented elsewhere in general books. Rather it is a research tool that might provide inspiration as well as information, one which explores and exemplifies the different ways in which evidence can be used, emphasizes the breadth and potential of studies in ancient contests and spectacles, and encourages informed dialogue between disciplines.

The volume as a whole affords prominent scholars the opportunity to put their own studies in perspective, or to extend their work into sport-related studies, so as to generate new insights and encourage cross-fertilization of subfields. Importantly, the work will seek to

encourage greater interdisciplinary approaches to the field. The selection of major headings indicates our plan for a hybrid approach, combining historical perspectives, contest forms, contest-related texts, civic and social aspects, and the use and meaning of the individual body. Greek and Roman topics are, however, interwoven under each heading to stimulate (and simulate) contest-like tensions and complementarities, juxtaposing, for example, violence in Greek athletics and in Roman gladiatorial events, Greek and Roman chariot events, architectural frameworks for contests and games in the two cultures, and contrasting views of religion, bodily regimens, and judicial classification related to both cultures.

The focus of the collection is to an extent on the social contexts of games, namely the evolution of sport and spectacle diachronically and geographically across cultural and political boundaries, and how games are adapted to multiple contexts and multiple purposes, reinforcing, for example, social hierarchies, performing shared values, and playing out deep cultural tensions. In addition to a dialogue between the two major cultures regarding how they defined and appropriated habits of identity construction through public contests, the work pays some attention to other directing forces in the ancient Mediterranean (e.g. Bronze Age Egypt and the Near East; Etruria; and early Christianity). The volume also aims to address themes in common with and of importance to antiquity and modern society, such as issues of class, gender, health, and the popular culture of the modern Olympics and of gladiators. Sport and spectacle are to be represented, in part at least, as media of social discourse or negotiation, as well as performances validated by the cachet of constructed tradition and elite values. Just as athletes, performers, presenters, and audiences engaged in the real historical games in each stadium, arena, or circus, the phenomenon represents a kind of ‘*meta-agon*’ by which the contests themselves provided structure and form for a range of regional, local, and personal contestations, venturing into political, social, commercial, and artistic realms.

SOME MODERN AND ANCIENT NAMES AND VALUES OF SPORT AND SPECTACLE

The study of sport and spectacle in the ancient Mediterranean has offered a flood of new studies in the last five decades, and it is our aim here to assemble the most recent perspectives on the very different Greek and Roman manifestations of these pastimes. Let us begin by looking back from the present and by interrogating the term ‘sport’, which is conventionally, and perhaps mistakenly, applied to Greek athletic contests and gymnasium culture. Mistakenly because modern connotations of ‘sport’ conjure up notions of global commercial enterprises as well as private and local ventures propped up by industrial interests. By one estimate these are worth US\$145 billion in 2015 for event gate revenue (<http://statista.com/statistics/194122/sporting-event-gate-revenue-worldwide-by-region-since-2004/>), but possibly US\$1.5 trillion for all sport-associated revenues (of which about \$500 billion is in the US; <http://www.plunkettresearch.com/statistics/sports-industry/>). To put that in perspective, the estimated world total of military expenses in 2015 was US\$1.56 trillion, or approximately the same as that the income for sport worldwide (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures). ‘Sport’ today includes most visibly the highly

lucrative professional sports circuits such as world soccer, tennis and golf, American football, baseball and basketball, motor-racing, horse-racing, and the Olympic Games. Then there are the secondary leagues feeding the professional organizations, and the collegiate, amateur, and smaller local leagues with their own revenues and expenses. And neither least nor last there is the health and fitness industry for private individuals that does not usually, strictly speaking, include competitive sports, but is connected with it in the public imagination of tennis, golf, swimming, handball, squash, and other pastimes. Dare we include the massive industry of video-gaming, or 'eSports', played or watched by an estimated 205 million people in 2015 (http://espn.go.com/espn/story/_/id/13059210/esports-massive-industry-growing/)? Note that the above financial statistics relate to revenue, not expenditure, the figures for which are more difficult to track, but it has been noted that local governments in France today spend about US\$15 billion per year on sports, while in Germany it is US\$8 billion, and in the US in 2010, the Division 1 collegiate teams spent \$6.2 billion on athletics (two thirds of which came from television rights and ticket sales) (Christesen 2012: 5). In sum, the massive amounts spent on sport in modern cultures raise questions of how this is justified in light of other crucial civic needs. There is some compelling social pressure among developed countries to offer a substantial menu of sports to their peoples without their objections to the expense, indeed likely in response to their ongoing need for the second half of the cliché 'bread and circuses'.

The formal dictionary and informal social meanings of the term 'sport' are fluid, highly dependent on context, and much debated by scholars of sport. We will draw a line excluding eSports, favouring here a more traditional definition of sport that includes 'serious physical training, competition for prizes and the goal of victory' (Kyle 2015: 7).

The totality of global practices of sport today cannot be simply summarized in its regional and traditional differences, of course. Suffice it to say that the modern manifestations do include the category 'spectacle', which is separately named as a term in our title to address Roman public displays, some of a contest nature such as gladiatorial bouts and chariot races by teams, and some more purely performances, such as hunts in the arena, executions by animals, and sea-battle events. The spectacular element of modern professional sport is self-evident, but the fact that it is included in our notion of 'sport' points back to a basic difference in ancient and modern notions carried by our different terms.

With those cautions of anachronistic ideas in mind, we can locate the Greek notion closest to our 'sport' in their word closest to the idea, *agōn* (pl. *agōnes*), 'contest', 'struggle', from which we have the word 'agony' in view of the suffering considered essential to successful competition. The ancient Greeks would not have understood the modern slogan popularized by ABC's *Wide World of Sports* in which the high points of sport were said to be 'the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat'. The Greeks would have preferred 'the agony of victory and the humiliation of defeat'. The Greek *agōnes* included what we call track and field events, combat sports (boxing, wrestling, and a combination of both called pancration), and equestrian events (chariot and horse racing). Nagy (this volume, Chapter 22) also reminds us that *agōn* is derived from the root *ag-* of the verb *agō* as it is used in the compound formation *sun-agō*, which means 'bring together, assemble, gather', so that an *agōn* is a 'bringing together' of people; and the occasion of such a 'bringing together' is a 'competition'. Beyond the *agōn* and closely associated with it was the gymnasium and the regimes of physical education, sometimes highly institutionalized in the youth corps (ephebate), but in the Classical period and earlier entirely left to individuals and mostly to the wealthy and elite of each city

state. Gymnasium is derived from Greek *gymnasion*, meaning simply ‘the place where you perform naked’, ‘naked’ in Greek being *gymnos*. Greek physical education and their contest system differ in many ways socially and practically from our supposed equivalents.

Nagy reminds us of further cultural connotations, namely

the meanings of the ancient Greek words *āthlos* (epic *aethlos*) ‘ordeal, contest’, *āthlon* (epic *aethlon*) ‘prize won in the course of participating in an *āthlos*’, and *āthlētēs* ‘athlete, one who participates in an *āthlos*’. To restate the concept of athletics in ancient Greek terms: an *āthlos* was the ritual ‘ordeal’ or ‘contest’ of an athlete engaging in athletic contests that were taking place in the historical present, but it was also the mythological ‘ordeal’ or ‘contest’ of a hero engaging in life-and-death contests that took place once upon a time in the heroic past; moreover, the ritual ‘ordeals’ or ‘contests’ of the historical present were viewed as *re-enactments* of the mythical ‘ordeals’ or ‘contests’ of the heroic past.

The athlete in one sense then, during the occasion of the *agōn*-gathering, re-enacts in a quasi-ritual the feats of the Homeric hero. The ritual ordeal of athletics mimics that of warfare, such that the *agōn* term is applied to both: for example, the expression *arēios agōn*, ‘the *agōn* of Ares’, as used by Herodotus (9.33.3) refers to the ritual experience of combat in war, and *āthlos* (epic *aethlos*) refers to the experience of warriors (Hdt. 1.67.1) as well as athletes (Hdt. 5.22.2).

Though Roman gladiators also overlap with warriors in appearance and in other senses, the Roman contest does not assimilate the gladiators so readily to the realm of epic heroes since they were almost always from the ranks of non-citizens, and their status was even legally and socially marked by infamy. Now, to observe Roman terminology, ‘spectacle’, Latin *spectaculum* (an ‘event to view’; pl. *spectacula*), is generally taken as a more appropriate term than ‘sport’ for the regular festivals or special celebrations of the Romans that included gladiator contests (*munera*), chariot races (*ludi circenses*), animal hunts (*venationes*), execution by animals (*damnatio ad bestias*), naval battles (*naumachiae*), and dramatic performances (*ludi scaenici*). We include drama as spectacle though it does not fit our focus on (mostly) unscripted physical competitions with uncertain outcomes. Most modern commentators avoid the term ‘sport’ for these spectacles since the participants were generally not voluntary, and, except for the chariot races, they placed human life at risk more deliberately than do ancient Greek *agōnes* or modern contests.

Yet in the ancient Mediterranean, the audiences both in the East and in the West mutually enjoyed Greek *agōnes* and Roman *spectacula*. Circus races and gladiatorial battles took place all over the East and athletic performances were regularly held in the West, especially in Italy (Remijsen 2015: 27–17). Across the Mediterranean, alongside Roman chariot races, the most popular were generally the most violent events: the gladiator matches and Greek combat sports including boxing, wrestling, and pancration. For a gladiatorial ‘fight’ and ‘fighting’ (properly in Greek *machē* and *machesthai*) the Greek terms for boxing (*pugmē* and *pukteuein*) were regularly used in inscriptions in the eastern empire (Robert 1940), a usage that points to the popular equation of gladiatorial bouts to combat sports.

The attraction to violence raises the question posed by Poliakoff (this volume, Chapter 17): ‘At what point does the contest cross the line from a competitive activity bound by its own special rules and conventions, abstracted from the criteria that govern success or failure in everyday life, to an activity that more closely resembles acts of violence that are typically regarded as criminal behaviour?’ Brutal as they were, Greek combat sports seem mild

next to the Roman gladiatorial events. Modern concerns about the deleterious effects on the brain from concussions in US football (Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)) and from boxing evidence have heightened collective concerns of tolerable sanctioned violence, and the need to respect the well-being of others, current apprehensions that were far from those of Greek boxers and pancratiasts. One observation that certainly arises from comparative analysis of world sport is that the definition of what it can rightly include, and the legal and social restrictions on what it is allowed to include, are not universal, but rather defined and determined again and again over time by groups, societies, and states.

It is not straightforward to gauge the importance of ancient sport and spectacle in comparison with that of their modern counterparts. 'Following the money', as we did above, is difficult given the absence of verifiable records for Greek and Roman expenditures on these pastimes for all or part of the centuries covered in this volume. But there have been 'snapshot' estimates of funding allocated to ancient events, which give a sense of general funding priorities. For Athens, it seems, in the Classical period (c.450–c.350 BCE), the annual expenditure was about 100 talents for state sponsored festivals (including athletics in the Panathenaia and drama in the City Dionysia, accounting for thirty-five per cent of this total); the expenditure on armed forces for the 370s and 360s was about 500 talents per year (Pritchard 2012). One talent equals the salary for about eight to nine man-years of skilled labour. The economy of Greek festivals relied generally on 'festival liturgies' levied on the wealthy citizens of each polis in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, not on direct government spending or taxes imposed on all citizens. So, assuming some parity with the situation at Athens, the economic outlay for festivals in cities across Greece was a hugely significant amount of money for each polis. Festival expenditure was bigger than any other regular civic expense except the military, and at Athens it was roughly twenty per cent of the costs for the military.

Roman games (*ludi*) occupied about two and a half months of the Roman calendar in the first century BCE, and rose to almost six months annually by the mid-fourth century CE (Veyne 1990: 399). The spectacles were financed by the state and the magistrates who ran them, without admission charges to spectators (Dunkle 2013: 382). During the empire it was the job especially of the priests of the imperial cult to provide these costly events, and one good index of the costs is a decree of the Senate from 177 CE in which the prices of gladiators were reduced to make the games less burdensome to the magistrates (Carter 2014: 229–266). The annual cost of gladiators prior to 177 CE was anywhere from 60 to 120 million sesterces (based on Carter 2014: 232), which was reduced to roughly 40 to 90 million after the reforms. If we estimate a median cost of 90 million sesterces empire-wide for annual gladiatorial games before 177, and 65 million just after that date, we can compare that with the total annual military costs, estimated to be about 670 million sesterces in about 150 CE (Duncan-Jones 1994: 45). In short, the annual cost gladiators in the mid to late second century CE empire amounted to between ten and thirteen per cent of the cost of the military. Note that the gladiator costs are only a portion of the total annual costs for Roman spectacles, which would be much higher if we included the costs of circus events, beast hunts, and so on. Arguably, then, the cost of spectacles could have been about twenty per cent of that for the military, roughly the same as Athens' outlay for festivals compared with its military in the early fourth century BCE.

Each culture, modern global, and ancient Greek and Roman, has or had its own peculiar names and terms for pastimes which the populace participates in or delights in watching.

The events across time can be distilled in definition as public, physical, competitive, and prize-awarding contests. Greek athletes, Roman gladiators, ancient charioteers of Greece and Rome, and modern athletes of the most popular modern sports all have much in common, which suggests universal impulses over time. Contestants' aspirations to fame and the audience's adulation or devaluation of them resonate then as they do now.

Another crucial, virtually universal aspect of sport and spectacle is the massive audience appetite for these entertainment vehicles. People crave watching sport and spectacle, mostly across history in person, and today more and more over the public media of television and the Internet. The main question is why? Why is there such an enduring desire to watch these contests, such that the wealthy who can afford to sponsor them do so at such great expense? Regarding the viewers, theorists see spectatorship as therapy, either as vicarious participation through one's favourite team or player, or as a sharing in the expression of victory, machismo, or personal or team achievement to validate elevated status. In sum, the spectators, ancient or modern, delight in escaping their quotidian realities and for a time experiencing something better, feeling part of success, or being comforted by the similarity of their own setbacks to those of the loser. To this extent the experience is close to that of watching drama on stage, or, for us today, watching narratives on film, on the television, or on the Internet. Today the other part of the equation of this popular vehicle is that the sponsors do make money from revenues of all sorts. In antiquity, when revenues for benefactors were not so much of an issue, the motivation for the elite to fund contests was twofold: social obligation/pressure ('it's your turn'), and political capital (purchasing favour and popularity within the ideal of civic generosity) (for the greater complexity of this situation: Migeotte 2014; Duncan-Jones 1982; Zuiderhoek 2009). In essence the ancient motivation was simple—to gain or maintain social status. Which is essentially not much different from the modern situation with wealth from the revenue largely defining status.

As we have observed, Greek, Roman, and modern global sports also have in common the mega-investment in sport and spectacle in relation to the military expenditures of each culture. That reality across societies is a stunning confirmation of the relatively very high importance of sport and spectacle as a social element of great consequence. The comparison with the military budget in each culture illustrates a consistent, real outlay of high significance: directly or indirectly, sport and spectacle competed with the financing for efforts to defend one's own people or to acquire more land and power. There are few other pan-social undertakings that can compare with military expenditures for a given culture across history. In most cultures, civic organizations usually provide for infrastructure needs like roads, water and sewer systems, public buildings, and sometimes food (grain) and shelter. We have selected military outlay as a baseline of comparison mainly because there are ways to calculate it for ancient cultures. It may well be that civic funding for infrastructure needs was greater than for sport and spectacle, but outlay for entertainment, even in festivals, was not strictly so essential as these other needs. The comparison points up the powerful priority of games in Greece and Rome, and in the modern global economy.

We should note that this sport-and-spectacle ratio to the military has not been true of all or even most cultures in world history since the Greeks and Romans, but it is markedly true in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for states in Europe and North and South America. In antiquity, the enormous outlay was also possibly the case for the Egyptian and the Near Eastern cultures, and for the Mesoamericans, though here the lack of accounts involves more speculation based on archaeological remains. Events of sport and spectacle have

since the mid-twentieth century saturated virtually every nation in the world: for the 196 nations in the world in 2016, there are actually 206 National Olympic Committees (<http://www.olympic.org>); 69 nations participated in the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki, and 204 at the London Olympics in 2012. The International Federation of Association Football, FIFA, founded in 1904, had 209 national association members in 2016; in 2011 their 35 administrators received total compensation of US\$30 million.

A common, essential quality seems to unite us in the general yearning to put on public performances of sports contests, yet we cannot say if this is human nature or culture, DNA or social formation. The similarities across time and between Greeks and Roman contemporaries are in sharp contrast to the many different societal and personal values, class, economies, and political systems which each form of sport and spectacle reflects. For example, who may compete is telling: citizens among Greek athletes, prisoners and criminals among Roman gladiators, and ever-changing character race and gender lines among modern sportspersons admitted to different events. In the last seventy years, non-whites broke into US major league baseball in 1946, and women first boxed in the Olympics in London in 2012, while golf, tennis, yachting, horse-racing, and others remain sports almost entirely for the wealthy. The public-contest-with-prize format is a simple equation, but the interesting realities lie beneath it and invest it with meaning. The particular meanings for each culture are part of the aim of this study.

SOURCES

It may seem to be a startling gap between ancient and current cultures that, despite a shared mania for sport and spectacle, the Greeks and Romans left very few narrative accounts of actual contests that might echo our obsessive coverage of dramatic and cliff-hanging events in sports pages, magazines, online blogs, and non-fiction accounts like Roger Kahn's *The Boys of Summer*, Dan Jenkins's *Semi-Tough*, Norman Mailer's *The Fight*, and Franklin Foer's *How Football Explains the World*. Among the thousands of gladiatorial matches over the Roman era, the only close accounts of a contest are the few in Martial's *Liber Spectaculorum* ('Book of Spectacles'). Pausanias and other Greek writers offer a few asides that amplify descriptions of famous contests, such as that of Creugas and Damoxenus. But if a reader today is seeking for an account of a historic contest, they are not to be found in Pindar's *Odes* which simply allude to the event and the victory. The same ancient silence, and current loquacity, holds true for any extended discussion of rules, bureaucratic structures, and details of technique and training, an exception being Philostratus' *Gymnastics*.

What explains our logorrhea and antiquity's virtual silence on actual contests is a more difficult, cross-cultural and historical question. A short part of the answer is that a few works that correspond to our sport-and-spectacle narratives have been lost. Another reply is that ancient poetry filled the appetite for vicarious experience of a chariot race or wrestling match. But the best explanation is that Greeks and Romans for the most part did not see the point in close accounts of events that were not crucial to civic welfare, like wars and political coups.

And so we who delve into ancient contests are forced to be detectives that dig into scraps of evidence that does exist, and filter out from it the most telling factoids that can be pieced

together to tell the bigger story. Many great works of Greek and Latin literature, and numerous less well known ones, provide information about the historical realities of ancient sport and spectacle, though these all require exegesis that appreciates the aim and context of the text, as well as (to the extent possible) an account of authorial biases. In this volume, Nagy (Chapter 22), Kurke (Chapter 23), and Chew (Chapter 24) undertake such studies of Homer, Homeric Hymns, Pindar, Bacchylides, Euripides, Ovid, Martial, and Tertullian. Greek and Roman inscriptions provide valuable insights from different perspectives that reflect the establishment of rules for contests and training (see Papakonstantinou in Chapter 45) and a record of victories by individuals (e.g. the Spartan Cynisca and by Greek athletes from the seventh century BCE onward); see Nagy, Kurke, van Nijf (Chapter 36), Poliakoff (Chapter 17), Shear (Chapter 8), Weiler (Chapter 40), Cartledge (Chapter 28, on the Spartan Damonon inscription) and others this volume.

SCOPE AND STRUCTURE

This handbook addresses competitive events over a broad period of time, seeking patterns of behaviour in a range of contexts rather than attempting complete chronological coverage. As noted above and evident in the table of contents, this work breaks down to some extent the traditional separation between the Greek and Roman worlds and between Greco-Roman antiquity and its immediate precedents. Contributors consider the development of contests and spectacles as venues of connection and as opportunities for the negotiation of status and the exchange of value, largely understood. While the political realm—the functioning of games and performance as displays of regal or imperial authority—figures strongly in these patterns, we are also interested in how, for example, early Panhellenic sanctuaries were shaped in response to economic stakeholders, and how groups and individuals in the later Roman empire forged links through their shared interest in the circus events, links that could cut across other social and political distinctions.

The section after this introduction, *Development in Historical Perspective* (II), primarily considers the larger structures within which sports and spectacles were organized and deployed, highlighting key phases and key systems. Narrowing our focus to the *Forms of Contests* (III), we hope to lay out the basic parameters of the events as well as underlying social and cultural assumptions that shape the physical actions. The next section focuses on *Texts, Contexts, and Contests* (IV), drawing together the scant written evidence for pre-Classical agonistic performances and considering the rise of celebratory literary genres, themselves competitive expressions of the range of meanings held by the games. Other textual forms demonstrate how individuals marshalled the power of the competitions, Ovid for seduction, Tertullian for proselytization, and many others calling upon the gods of the arena to curse rivals and performers and advantage themselves.

The *Civic Contexts* section (V) scrutinizes the phenomenon through a series of narrowing lenses. From discussing the regional catchment of games in the Greek world and the administration of spectacle in the Roman provinces, the focus turns to localized case studies of how games functioned in specific urban environments: how spectacle structures engaged performers, spectators, and sponsors in social and cultural discourse, crafting connections paralleled and expanded upon in public and private material representations.

These networks of social connection within the city and within the professional infrastructure of ancient sport provided opportunities for self-definition, for self-expression; the religious frameworks added yet another dimension for understanding the human experience of the games. The focus tightens to the personal level in the next section, *Body and Individual* (VI), as we examine how agonism worked with and upon the physical human. For some this involved the conceptual balancing of bodily extremes, from athletes as physical ideals to the perceived dangers of the gladiatorial lifestyle. Risk is likewise entailed in sexual definition and testing against the athletic body, in the sexualized allure of the performer that cut across the usual parameters of intimate contact.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING

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CHAPTER 2

THEORIES OF GREEK AND ROMAN SPORT

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INTRODUCTION

It is appropriate to begin an essay on theory with a definition of the term itself, which can take on a bewildering array of meanings. For the purposes of this essay a theory can be defined as a generalization that holds true with a specified level of certainty under specified circumstances. Perhaps the most obvious example of a theory is Marxism, a generalization about patterns of economic, social, and political development whose early adherents tended to believe always held true under all circumstances. Other theories are less ambitious: Thucydides, for example, articulated what would here be called a theory, about the effects of war on society, which he argued held true in the circumstances of the Peloponnesian War. Although confident that his theory would be valid in the future as well, Thucydides was reasonably cautious about the range of circumstances under which it would apply and the level of certainty that it conferred. As he put it, ‘as different circumstances arise, the general rules will admit of some variety’ (3.82).¹

Theory has not played a central role in the study of Greek and Roman sport, though it has been applied with increasing frequency and considerable success in recent explorations of the relevant literary sources. For example, N. Nicholson has made fruitful use of New Historicism in his studies of Pindar’s epinician odes, and J. König has offered insightful, theoretically informed readings of Roman-era Greek and Latin writings on sport (Nicholson 2005; Nicholson 2007; König 2005).

The paucity of theory in scholarly work on Greek and Roman sport is somewhat surprising given that in the past three decades scholars working in a variety of fields, most notably sociology and religious studies, have generated an array of theories that facilitate the study of sport in general and the relationship between sport and society in particular. These theories have been regularly used to good effect in explorations of the sport of recent centuries. It is impossible within the bounds of this essay to go through all of the reasons why they have not been applied with equal frequency to comparable material from ancient Greece and Rome, but three considerations merit brief mention.

First, scholars specializing in the study of Greek and Roman sport have typically been trained as humanists rather than social scientists. Although there is enormous variation among individual scholars, it is probably safe to say that humanists typically focus on 'the meanings of the complexity of lived experience' and have an idiographic orientation in that 'God is in the details'. Social scientists, on the other hand, 'aim to cut through the messy details that make up real life' and have a nomothetic orientation in that they seek 'to find underlying general structures and principles' (Morris 2002: 8; on idiographic and nomothetic approaches, see Windelband 1894). That is not, of course, to say that humanists are uninterested in theoretical approaches; but they tend to see theory as a means to the end of understanding the material they study, whereas many social scientists see the generation of theories as an important goal of their work. Social scientists thus tend to be more thoroughly trained in and amenable to the use of theory than humanists. The study of the sport of recent centuries has been pursued by both humanists and social scientists, and sports sociology has become a recognized sub-field with a highly theoretical orientation. Sports sociologists have, however, evinced virtually no interest in ancient Greek and Roman sport. That area of enquiry remains largely the preserve of humanists, most especially scholars trained as ancient historians, who as a group are considerably less enthusiastic than sports sociologists about the use of theory.²

A second factor is that historians of all kinds have been particularly wary of theory in part because it rejects or minimizes the importance of contingency and the free will of historical actors. A dyed-in-the-wool Marxist, for example, would dismiss out of hand the idea of 'historical accidents' or the ability of individual humans to alter the course of history in any fundamental fashion. Even in its less extreme forms, theory typically postulates predictable patterns in human behaviour, which in turn implies the operation of forces capable of overriding individual actions and desires. However, historians as a group—again allowing for a wide range of difference—tend to see contingency and the free will of individuals as important if not determinative factors in shaping events of all kinds.

Finally, much theory employs exceedingly dense language that can verge on the impenetrable to those not deeply versed in the relevant scholarly literature. This preference for what might be called technical language, sometimes dismissively labelled jargon, can be justified on the grounds that it makes possible more precise treatment of complex issues. However, it is probably also true that theories expressed in such a fashion can do more to obfuscate than to clarify (Morley 2004: 26–30). Indeed, in at least some cases dexterity in the use of the relevant technical language becomes an important, if implicit, truth claim, while more substantive issues, such as the closeness of fit between theory and evidence, are given short shrift.

All of these considerations are valid, but what they suggest is not that theory has nothing to offer the study of Greek and Roman sport but that it is crucial that the right kinds of theories be used, that they be expressed in appropriate language, and that the dialectic between theory and evidence be kept in the foreground at all times. Under those conditions, theory can be an invaluable 'source for new ideas and new ways of reading the ancient evidence, and thus ... a means of developing a richer understanding of the past' (Morley 2004: 6).

The remainder of this essay is devoted to concise presentations of five different kinds of theory that have been productively applied to the study of sport: functionalism, conflict theory, the 'discipline' theory of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu's work on corporeal discipline and on the relationship between sport and social inequality, and ritual theory. This is

by no means a comprehensive survey of theories that have been used in the study of sport—a task that could occupy a volume of its own. (For a broad if not quite exhaustive survey of theories used in the study of sport, see Coakley and Dunning 2000: 8–137.) The five theories discussed here were chosen because they have strong potential usefulness in the study of Greek and Roman sport. So, for instance, no mention is made of the considerable collection of feminist theory on sport, solely because the extent of female participation in ancient sport was limited, and the relevant evidence even more so. It is worth bearing in mind throughout that serious academic study of sport is a relatively recent phenomenon: neither historians nor sociologists devoted sustained attention to sport until the 1970s. Partly as a result, sports history and sports sociology remain highly dynamic fields in which methodological change continues apace.

FUNCTIONALISM

Functionalism, like theory, is a term that can take on a wide range of meanings. At the most basic level functionalism is an analytical approach that presumes 1) that norms, social practices, and institutions shape (but do not necessarily determine) individual behaviour by means of socialization and the promotion of consensus and 2) that those norms, practices, and institutions foster the well-being of individuals (individualistic functionalism) or the stability of entire social systems (societal functionalism). Societal functionalism is based on the further assumption 3) that many if not all of the constituent parts of a society contribute to the maintenance of a system of interlocking norms, practices, and institutions that is relatively stable over time. Functionalist analyses virtually always focus on the effects of social systems on individuals, rather than the reverse.

There are in practice two ‘flavours’ of societal functionalism, strong and weak. Strong functionalism takes societies to be nearly perfectly integrated systems in which a) all the constituent parts came into existence to ensure societal stability and persist for the same reason, and b) conflict is minimized by consistent success in the socialization of individuals and in the creation of consensus.³ This type of functionalism, which is most closely associated with the work of Talcott Parsons in the middle of the twentieth century, has long been discredited, primarily because it could not account for change and largely ignored intra-societal conflict and individual agency. Weak functionalism assumes x) that while norms, practices, and institutions do contribute to the socialization of individuals and the creation of consensus and hence underpin societal stability, they do so in a distinctly untidy fashion and can simultaneously generate potentially destabilizing tensions; y) that some degree of intra-societal conflict is inevitable; and z) that, as a result of x) and y), societies are imperfectly integrated systems that change over time.⁴ Due to lingering negative associations with strong functionalism, few scholars studying sport overtly use the term functionalism to describe their work, but weak functionalism continues to be influential in fact if not in name.

The application of individualistic functionalism to sport has typically been driven less by a thorough grounding in theory than by an intuition that participation in sport is the source of a deep-seated sense of personal fulfilment. Among the more famous works that adopt this perspective is Michael Novak’s *The Joy of Sports*, a lyrical ode to sport as a spiritually uplifting activity (Novak 1988).

More overtly theoretical functionalist studies of sport understand it as a means by which individuals are socialized and reach consensus with each other. From a functionalist perspective, children who are members of a soccer team from an early age are socialized into adopting certain values, such as the importance of willingly engaging in competitive behaviour and accepting the outcome of competition, and are presented with opportunities to build social bonds that help make it possible for the members of a team to achieve consensus. Functionalist analyses typically see sport as a positive activity that contributes to the well-being of both individuals and societies. For example, H. Marsh and S. Kleitman studied the results of participation in high-school athletics in the United States and concluded that it had almost uniformly positive effects, including higher grades and improved eventual educational attainment, probably because athletic participation 'fosters identification with the school and school-related values' (Marsh and Kleitman 2003: 206).⁵

Functionalist studies of sport are frequently criticized on the grounds that they overstate the positive effects of sport, ignore the fact that sport creates not only harmony but also conflict, and underestimate the extent to which the interests of individuals and groups within a society diverge and the ability of privileged groups within a society to use sport for their own ends.

CONFLICT THEORY

Conflict theory is based on the assumptions 1) that societies are inevitably riven by conflict due to the unequal distribution of power and resources and 2) that societies are held together by means of coercive mechanisms deployed by elites acting in their own best interests. Applications of conflict theory to sport presume that it is a means by which elites impose their will on the disadvantaged members of a society. The earliest studies applying conflict theory to sport made use of a somewhat heavy-handed Marxism. For example, P. Hoch, in *Rip off the Big Game* (1972), 'argued that sport was an inherently conservative institution that not only diverted the attention of the masses from their systematic oppression, but also peddled values and ideals that supported the status quo and led blue-collar workers to conspire in their own exploitation' (Sugden and Tomlinson 2000: 314). Critics pointed out that this approach portrayed working-class athletes as passive, pliable consumers of the values and ideologies encoded in sport.

More recent applications of conflict theory to the study of sport have used a more subtle approach that is based on Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Gramsci (1891–1937) sought to understand why the oppressed working classes of Europe did not revolt. He proposed that elites maintained their dominance primarily by controlling civil society and its institutions such as schools and mass media. This enabled them to propagate ideologies that served their interests so that the disadvantaged members of a society came to accept ideas and practices that perpetuated their subordination. Those ideas and practices were more important than the actual or threatened use of force in winning control. However, Gramsci also argued that subordinate groups were always capable of effective resistance to attempts to dominate them, and that, as a result, elites needed to engage in negotiation and accommodation in order to hold onto power. Gramsci gave the name hegemony to the complex, ongoing process by means of which elites established and maintained dominance.⁶

Among the most influential applications of Gramscian hegemony theory to the study of sport is J. Hargreaves's *Sport, Power, and Culture*. Hargreaves sought to show that the bourgeoisie of nineteenth-century Britain achieved hegemony in part because participation in sport simultaneously unified the bourgeoisie (by successfully inculcating a shared set of values that served their collective interests) and fragmented the working class (by presenting and to a limited extent imposing those same values and, more importantly, by fostering divisions along the lines of income, gender, geography, etc.: Hargreaves 1986).⁷ Hegemony theory has recently been applied to ancient Greek sport by T. K. Hubbard in a relatively brief article in which he argues that expansion of participation in athletics in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE was 'a continuation of elite hegemony by appropriation of the commercial and artisanal classes' (Hubbard 2008: 379).

Studies of sport based on conflict theory are frequently criticized on the grounds that they fail to recognize that sport can empower individuals and groups, underestimate the importance of socialization and consensus, do not offer clear means of separating occasions when sport serves as a control mechanism and when it becomes a site of resistance, and undervalue the importance of societal divisions that cross-cut economic and power relations, such as gender, ethnicity, and age.

THE 'DISCIPLINE' THEORY OF MICHEL FOUCAULT

Conflict theory presumes that a privileged group in society seeks to coerce one or more less privileged groups, whereas Michel Foucault, while acknowledging the existence of significant differentials in power and influence among individuals and groups, argued that all of the members of a society are subject to forms of coercion. He also argued that coercion frequently takes the form of the inculcation of a habit of docility accompanied by a constant, subtle pressure to adhere to social norms. Foucault called that type of coercion 'discipline' and labelled its operation as the 'micro-physics of power'. He described individuals who have been taught discipline as 'the obedient subject, the individual subjected to habits, rules, orders, an authority that is continually exercised around him and upon him, and which he must allow to function automatically in him' (Foucault 1977 [1975]: 128–129. For a concise introduction to Foucault's work, see Downing 2008.). From Foucault's perspective, the constrictions of discipline are something from which no one can hope to escape.

Foucault made the case that discipline was instilled and reinforced by placing individuals in specific kinds of environments in which they were subject to what he called hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and examination. Foucault's work was grounded in studies of psychiatric hospitals and prisons, but perhaps the best example of a disciplinary environment is a school. The activities of students are observed and supervised by their teachers, who in turn are observed and supervised by one or more school administrators, who typically themselves are subject to observation and supervision. Teachers exercise normalizing judgement, which is to say that they constantly compare the students' behaviour to norms and point out deviations large and small. The students are subject to examinations that test their knowledge of and conformity to norms and that are the basis for appropriate rewards and punishments. Individuals placed in such a system from an early age and for an extended period tend to develop into compliant adults who are 'well-behaved' in

the sense that they typically do what they are expected to do, without the application of any overt forms of coercion (Foucault 1977 [1975]: 135–230).⁸

It has become close to an article of faith among sports sociologists that organized sports almost invariably and inevitably constitute a disciplinary environment. Athletes are observed by their coaches, who in many cases have assistants and who are themselves subject to observation by other coaches, athletes on other teams, and the families of the athletes. Coaches are expected to exercise normalizing judgement on the athletes for whom they are responsible, and to supervise examinations that take the form of athletic competitions. Athletes thus become disciplined individuals. A nice illustration of the resulting behaviour can be found in Peyton Manning, one of the most famous players in American professional football. When asked how he felt about being removed from a game against his will, he said, 'Until any player in here is the head coach, you follow orders and you follow them with all of your heart. That's what we've done as players. We follow orders.'⁹

The number of studies applying Foucault's work to the study of sport is large and continues to grow rapidly. To give but one example, an article by N. Barker-Ruchti and R. Tinning, with the title 'Foucault in Leotards: Corporeal Discipline in Women's Artistic Gymnastics', focuses on an elite gymnastics school in Australia. The authors describe the environment at the school as one that involves 'an extensive and elaborate process of corporeal discipline' and argue that it 'prevented the gymnasts ... from developing independence and self-determination', making them instead into 'docile athletes' (Barker-Ruchti and Tinning 2010: 299, 243).¹⁰

Most of the same complaints levelled against conflict theory are also relevant to Foucault's work, as it has been employed in the study of sport.

PIERRE BOURDIEU ON CORPOREAL DISCIPLINE AND ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPORT AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Pierre Bourdieu worked along the same lines as Foucault, but broke new ground by paying heed to the specifically physical dimensions of discipline and by offering a highly nuanced theory of the relationship between sport and social inequality. (Foucault, it is true, placed a great deal of emphasis on the body, but in fact tended to see discipline as something that was imposed on the body through the intermediary of the mind, and for the most part took the body as a passive entity that received but did not initiate actions. See the discussion in Lash 1991 and McNay 1999.)

Bourdieu believed that discipline could be inculcated by means of bodily training and that the disciplined body as a corporeal entity could in and of itself shape individual behaviour. Unlike Foucault, who evinced no direct interest in the subject, Bourdieu wrote at some length on sport. He made the case that:

If most organizations—the Church, the army, political parties, industrial firms, etc.—put such a great emphasis on bodily disciplines, it is because obedience consists in large part in belief, and belief is what the body ... concedes even when the mind ... says no ... It is perhaps by

considering what is most specific in sport, that is, the . . . manipulation of the body, and the fact that sport—as all disciplines in all total or totalitarian institutions, such as convents, prisons, asylums, political parties, etc.—is a way of obtaining from the body a form of consent that the mind could refuse, that one will best manage to understand the use that most authoritarian regimes make of sports. Bodily discipline is the instrument par excellence of all forms of ‘domestication’ (Bourdieu 1988a: 161).¹¹

Hence, what Foucault believed took place through the medium of the mind in prisons and classrooms, Bourdieu believed frequently took place through the medium of the body on the playing field.

The effects of participation in sport, in Bourdieu’s opinion, extended beyond the imposition of discipline to the inculcation of dispositions that contributed to the perpetuation of social inequality. There are three related concepts that require explanation. First, Bourdieu argued that individual behaviour is shaped by *habitus*, which might be thought of as learned, deeply ingrained inclinations that predispose individuals to act in certain ways in certain situations, without determining their course of action in any given instance. Second, he sought to show that the ability of individuals to achieve their goals in any given social setting was proportionate to the capital at their disposal and that capital could come in a variety of different forms, particularly economic (wealth), social (e.g. social connections) and cultural (e.g. a university degree). Third, he made the case that societies consist of collections of ‘fields’, or semi-autonomous spheres of social action (e.g. business and academia).

These concepts taken together provide an explanation for how societies function. Starting literally from birth and continuing throughout their lives, individuals develop *habitus* that reflect their life experiences. Although each individual’s *habitus* is unique, those from the same class fraction (i.e. those who experience similar socio-economic conditions) tend to develop similar sets of dispositions. Individuals inherit and accumulate capital of different kinds, which they then deploy to achieve social standing. The kind of capital that is useful varies from field to field, so that, for instance, economic capital is highly valued in the field of business, while cultural capital is highly valued in academia. Social inequalities tend to be self-perpetuating because individuals develop *habitus* that are suited to the socio-economic conditions in which they were born, and those *habitus* shape aspirations, provide certain forms of capital, and prepare individuals to acquire particular forms of capital and to act competently in some fields rather than others.

In this schema sport plays an important role because it is a powerful means of inculcating *habitus* and offers individuals the opportunity to accumulate capital. Members of different class fractions play different sports, and in doing so learn different *habitus* and accumulate different forms of capital that are useful in different fields. So, for instance, tennis and basketball players tend to come from different class fractions, and the experience of playing these sports helps form individuals with *habitus* and competences suitable for the kinds of fields in which members of their class fraction are normally active.

Bourdieu emphasized that the repercussions of involvement in sport are easily underestimated because corporeal training has far-reaching effects that are resistant to conscious examination:

If all societies and, significantly, all the ‘totalitarian institutions’ in Goffman’s phrase, that seek to produce a new man through a process of ‘deculturation’ and ‘reculturation’ set such store on the seemingly most insignificant details of *dress*, *bearing*, physical and verbal *manners*, the

reason is that, treating the body as a memory, they entrust to it in abbreviated and practical, i.e. mnemonic, form the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture. The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious, than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as 'stand up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand.'... The whole trick of pedagogic reason lies precisely in the way it extorts the essential while seeming to demand the insignificant (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]: 94–95).

As a result, 'the body is in the social world but the social world is also in the body' (Bourdieu 1990: 190).

Bourdieu himself wrote quite a bit about sport, and his ideas have been used extensively by sports sociologists (Bourdieu 1978; Bourdieu 1988a; Bourdieu 1988b: 173–195). Perhaps the best known relevant work is that of Loïc Wacquant, one of Bourdieu's students, who intensively studied a boxing gym in Chicago and how involvement with the gym shaped the lives of the individuals who trained there (Wacquant 2004).¹²

Bourdieu's work has been criticized on a number of different grounds, among the most notable of which is that the criteria for identifying distinct class fractions, forms of capital and fields are so vague that an almost infinite number of types and subtypes of each can potentially be identified. That, in turn, vastly complicates any analysis conducted along the lines suggested by Bourdieu and might be understood as vitiating the results of such analyses. In addition, some scholars have argued that Bourdieu's ideas leave little room for individual agency.¹³

RITUAL THEORY

Another perspective on sport is opened up when it is seen as a form of ritualized activity, which can be understood as an iterated practice that involves performance and that is distinguished from more ordinary behaviour as a different and special way of acting.¹⁴ Sport can easily become a ritualized activity because it is inherently performative and is frequently set apart from everyday life. Johan Huizinga, in his famous *Homo Ludens*, characterized sport as a form of play and defined play as a 'free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life' (Huizinga 1950 [1938]: 13). If other considerations, such as the provision of special playing fields and uniforms (or, in ancient Greece, nudity) are taken into account, the identification of sport as at least a potentially ritualized activity becomes almost an inevitability.

What ritualized activities do and how they do it are questions that continue to be debated. For our purposes it is sufficient to adopt a relatively simple approach and consider ritualized activities as having two distinct dimensions, communication and practice, and serving as both *models of* and *models for* society.¹⁵

With respect to their communicative dimension, ritualized activities are 'flexible forms of symbolic activity that reaffirm cultural values and a sense of order' (Bell 2005: 7849). The

element of practice in ritualized activities has to do with the fact that they are by definition performative and hence involve both saying and doing. As models of society, ritualized activities have the capacity to present idealized and simplified visions of how society and relations between individuals could or should be. (This is a close paraphrase taken from the excellent discussion of ritual found at Kowalzig 2007: 34.) The fact that ritualized activities are by definition set apart from everyday life is particularly significant, as they are for this reason immune to many of the mundane necessities of existence that otherwise can generate a divergence between the normative and normal. As a result, ritualized activities frequently, perhaps typically, reflect social norms with a degree of faithfulness that is otherwise difficult to achieve. They also serve as models for society in that participants in them enact norms and hence reproduce idealized forms of behaviour that they are expected to manifest in some form in their daily lives. Ritualized activities thus inculcate habits of thought and behavioural dispositions that shape the actions of individuals in all settings and can serve as models for activity outside the ritualized sphere.

The element of practice in ritualized activities extends beyond performance to the creation of what C. Bell has called the ‘ritualized body’. Bell, who built directly upon Bourdieu’s ideas, argued that regular participation in ritualized activities *physically* inculcates the thought and behavioural patterns underlying and underpinning such activities and that ‘as bodies ... absorb the logic of spaces and temporal events, they then project these structural schemes, reproducing liturgical arrangements out of their own “sense” of the fitness of things’ (Bell 2005: 7853; for a full discussion, see Bell 1992: 94–117).

Ritual theory has been employed with some regularity in the study of modern sport, for instance in J. MacAloon’s work on the content of and reasons for the popularity of the present-day Olympic Games (MacAloon 1984). It has in recent years also been applied with increasing frequency to Greek and Roman material, to explore topics such as choral dance (Kowalzig 2007) and Roman spectacle (though not sport) (Bell 2004).

The scholars who in recent decades have generated and used ritual theory have engaged in continuing, frequently polemical discussion of its promise and limitations. There remains sharp disagreement with respect to what is and is not a ritualized activity, the effects of participation in ritualized activities, and how to account for those effects. These disagreements, which are played out in a very extensive and unusually dense body of writing, can present challenges to anyone wishing to apply ritual theory.¹⁶

CONCLUSION

Greek and Roman sport show every sign of offering particularly fertile ground for the judicious use of theory. Scholarship on ancient Greek and Roman sport has been largely empirical, inductive, and idiographic. The results have been impressive, but not entirely without shortcomings. Perhaps the most significant issue is that it is difficult to trace the complex relationship between sport and society solely on the basis of empiricist treatments of archaeological and literary evidence. Not only is that evidence lacunose, it is also incomplete in the sense that emic perspectives, i.e. those coming only from within the culture being studied, are inherently limited due to inevitable difficulties in tracing patterns that developed over long periods and in uncovering processes such as socialization that operated largely outside

the realm of conscious thought. As Foucault put it, 'people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does'.¹⁷

Although it is impossible in the bounds of this essay to demonstrate in detail the potentialities of theory for the study of Greek and Roman sport, it is possible to suggest a few applications. Conflict theory could be used to explore the development of sport in Greece during the archaic period, a time when elites and non-elites engaged in a prolonged struggle for political and social predominance, a struggle in which sport played a more than minor role. Bourdieu's work on the relationship between sport and social inequality might suggest new and interesting explanations for athletic nudity, in which nudity is understood as a means of creating important, corporeally based social distinctions. Foucault's discipline theory and Bourdieu's work on the effects of corporeal training could be used to explicate the confused and long-debated relationship between athletic and military activity in ancient Greece (see e.g. Poliakoff 1987: 94–103; Reed 1998; Spivey 2004: 1–29).

The growing prevalence of the use of theory in the study of classical literature, and the close, ongoing connection between scholars specializing in classical literature and in ancient history, suggest that change is imminent, and that the study of Greek and Roman sport will in the future give due consideration to theory. The results promise to be of great interest.

NOTES

1. For a good introduction to theory in the specific context of the study of the ancient world, see Morley 2004, particularly 1–32, on which this paragraph draws heavily. See also Morris 2002 and Shaw 1982. On Marx and Marxism, see Rigby 1997. On Thucydides, see Hornblower 1991–6, 1: 61, 481–482 and Luce 1997: 60–98.
2. 'Within the discipline of ancient history, grown to a stunted maturity under the paternalistic aegis of classical philology, approaches to history that stress the techniques and methodologies of the social sciences (e.g. primacy of theory, model building, conceptual sophistication, quantification) rather than those of the mainstream tradition (e.g. linguistic categorization, literary source criticism, citation of authority) must expect to meet with more than a slight suspicion of illegitimacy' (Shaw 1982: 17).
3. In some cases functionalist analyses make no claims about the reasons for the origins of norms, practices, and institutions and make claims only about the reasons for their persistence. Socialization entails inculcating social norms from such an early age and so regularly that individuals accept those norms as a given and thus generally adhere to them; consensus entails individual members of a group coming to a broad, conscious agreement about the norms with which they will voluntarily comply.
4. Weak functionalism has its roots in the work of Robert Merton (Merton 1957). The extent to which societies can be understood as well-organized systems has been the subject of vigorous debate among sociologists. A good discussion can be found in Ritzer 2008: 186–222. For a concise treatment of strong functionalism and its flaws, see Holmwood 2005. For an excellent overview of functionalist approaches to the study of sport, see Coakley and Pike 2009: 35–41 and Loy and Booth 2000, with the caveat that Loy and Booth show a particular interest in strong functionalism. For incisive discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of functionalism as a methodology for social analysis, see Barnes 1995: 37–60; Kincaid 1996: 101–138; and Mouzelis 1995: 127–147.

5. Although functionalism has not been overtly applied to the study of Greek or Roman sport, it has been regularly, if implicitly, employed in the study of Greek choral dance, which has been repeatedly characterized as a powerful means of socialization. See, for instance, Clark 1996: 1177. For a functionalist reading of sport in ancient Sparta, see Christesen 2012.
6. On Gramsci's life and work, see Jones 2006. On conflict theory and its use in the study of sport, see Coakley and Pike 2009: 41–49; Rigauer 2000; and Sugden and Tomlinson 2000.
7. Another noteworthy work on sport in which hegemony theory is employed to good effect is Gruneau 1999.
8. Foucault also emphasized the significance of fine-grained control over how the activities of individuals are spatially and temporally organized and of placing individuals in an environment in which surveillance is always possible and which thus induces self-policing (what he called panopticism).
9. <https://www.espn.com/nfl/recap?gameId=291227011>.
10. A thoroughgoing exploration of the application of Foucault's ideas to the study of sport can be found in Markula and Pringle 2006.
11. For a concise and lucid introduction to Bourdieu's work, see Wacquant 1998.
12. On the use of Bourdieu's ideas in the study of sport, see Clement 1995.
13. Good discussions that both appreciate the merits of Bourdieu's work while also explicating its flaws can be found in Brubaker 1985 and Mouzelis 1995: 100–126.
14. On defining and demarcating ritualized activities, see Bell 1992: 37–168 and *passim*.
15. A good, brief introduction to ritual theory can be found in Bell 2005. For a longer, more detailed overview, see Bell 1997. The view of rituals as models of and for society is elucidated in Geertz 1973: 87–125.
16. A 'carefully selected' bibliography of essential scholarly work on ritual theory covering the years from 1966 to 2005 lists no fewer than 620 items (Kreinath et al. 2007).
17. Cited as a personal communication in Dreyfus et al. 1983: 187. This parallels the differentiation Merton made between manifest and latent functions, on which see Merton 1996: 87–95.

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PART II

DEVELOPMENT
IN HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE

SECTION 1

.....

PRE-GREEK
MEDITERRANEAN

.....

CHAPTER 3

SPORT IN ANCIENT EGYPT AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

WOLFGANG DECKER

INTRODUCTION

THE sources for sport in the early high cultures of the Nile Valley and Mesopotamia go back almost 5,000 years, and owing to their great age give expectations of some evidence about the origin of sport, a topic which is difficult to investigate. For a long time research into sport in both cultures was overshadowed by the preoccupation with sport in classical antiquity; but sport in Ancient Egypt, particularly, has come out of the shadows in recent decades through the scholarly study of its written and iconographic records (Decker 1987; Decker 1992).

The central figure in Egyptian sport history is the pharaoh, whose sportsmanship exceeds his physical strength and is essentially embodied in the dogma of kingship. However, the Pharaoh as *victor perpetuus* was forbidden from taking part in sporting contests where the outcome was uncertain, yet he expresses his athletic superiority by means of impressive demonstrations of mighty achievements in archery, with copper discs as targets, supreme command of chariot-driving, and the high art of horse-training. At the jubilee, a symbolic re-enactment of his accession, the king takes renewed possession of his rule through a ritual run, which says a lot about the origin of sport. The historical reality of the feast is mirrored in the preserved track in the pyramid precinct of Djoser (Third Dynasty).

Many features of sport among the common people are modelled on the person of the king (sports festivals, foot-races); the victorious nature of the king is transferred to the Egyptian athletes who in the mortuary temple of Ramses III (Twentieth Dynasty) gain the upper hand against their foreign opponents in combat sports.

Outside the ideological canon, there are attested historic influences on the history of sport in Egypt, for example the blossoming of royal sport in the Eighteenth Dynasty, after the end of foreign rule by the Hyksos. The arsenal of 'sports equipment' such as chariots, bows, and hunting weapons from the intact grave of Tutankhamen shows what was expected from a king of this period (McLeod 1970).

In the Ancient Near East, too, where a systematic study of sources, particularly cuneiform texts, for the history of sport is yet to be undertaken, the special status of the king in the field of sport is characteristic, as is shown in hymns of the Sumerian ruler Shulgi (c.2000 BCE) for instance. This supreme athlete was permitted to take part in contests; his achievements, such as running more than 320 km in one single day (Hymn A), come close to being miracles. The art of seal-making has its own particular character in the early second millennium BCE in the Ancient Near East: it uses the motif of the 'athlete-warrior' who appears in combat sports (wrestling, boxing, armed combat; cf. *hoplomachia* in Mycenaean culture and the *Iliad*).

For the history of sport, rich sources may be found in the various versions of the Gilgamesh epic, which originated in ancient Babylonian times. A famous example is the wrestling match between the eponymous hero and his friend Enkidu, during which the walls trembled and the gateposts were smashed. In more recent research into the Ancient Near East, Gilgamesh is also seen as a keen player of stickball, evidence of a team sport in the Ancient Near East as early as the third millennium BCE. A later version of the epic indicates sport as part of funeral rites, and the work also gives evidence of swimming and diving.

There is a detailed training plan for chariot horses, covering a period of 184 days, in the text of the horse-trainer Kikkuli, which survives in the Hittite language and contains instructions for various racing disciplines, feeding, and hygienic measures. Training in stamina and technique seem to be compiled in the world's oldest training manual. Furthermore, the Indo-European Hittites seem in a certain way to prefigure the *agōn* in Homer. Recently, evidence of bull-leaping has been found in this civilization; it was also practised in other cultures of the Ancient Near East (and Crete).

A late ancient Eastern culture flourished in Persia and was admired by the Greeks; it might be the model for the present-day institution of the *surkahne* ('house of strength'), which *mutatis mutandis* may be compared to the Greek gymnasium.

After the deciphering of cuneiform script (1802) and Egyptian hieroglyphs (1822), the study of sport in Ancient Egypt and the Ancient Near East was not undertaken for a long time. For decades it was overshadowed by the interest in sport in Greek antiquity, especially after the founding of the modern Olympic Games (1896). Only in the last generation have we seen the beginnings of systematic attempts to shed light on Ancient Egyptian sport (Decker 1975; Decker and Herb 1994). Only recently has sport in the Ancient Near East been given an entry in the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (Rollinger 2011), the foremost publication in this field.

SPORT IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Ancient Egyptian sports culture has a few unique characteristics which distinguish it clearly from other sports cultures of the ancient world, and indeed give it a special role in the universal history of sport. It offers numerous iconographic sources (Decker and Herb 1994) and written ones (these being relatively less numerous) (Decker 1975) for a phenomenon for which there is no attested general term used by the Egyptians. An important partial term

which appears in this context is the word *šḥmḥ-ib*, ‘amusement’ (literally: ‘make the heart forget’; Cannuyer 2002), present semantically in the late Latin root of the contemporary term *sport* which is understood internationally. Nearly 2,000 instances from iconographic sources alone have been listed in a relevant handbook (Decker and Herb 1994). This wealth of sources, though varying in density, extends over a continuous period of three millennia, where the oldest examples go back to the beginnings of written Egyptian history at the end of the fourth millennium BCE.

The Sporting Kings

The Egyptian cosmos was centred on the figure of the pharaoh. According to the Egyptian conception of history, he was the very guarantor of life. As the protector of the country he disarmed its enemies, who were condemned to powerlessness and defeat. This role assumed a priori an existence distinguished by power and strength, which were essential conditions of his rule. This is precisely where his sporting character originates (Decker 1971; Decker 2006: 6–11). These characteristics of the king also affect the way he appears as an athlete. Admittedly he does not fight for material prizes; his prize is the validation of his kingship, which he often proves before witnesses with his achievements as a runner, archer, or charioteer and horse-trainer. As *victor perpetuus* he cannot take part in sporting contests whose outcome is not certain. The only explicit exception is Amenophis II (1428–1397 BCE), who could be designated the ‘athlete on the royal throne’ on the basis of the plethora of reports (Der Manuelian 1987: 191–213; Decker 2006: 42–27) (Fig. 3.1). The pharaoh reaches the highest level of achievement in sport disciplines, yet there was a taboo on his participation in competitions with other contestants, as the mere theoretical possibility of defeat was not consistent with the dogma of kingship.

The Foot Race at the Jubilee

It is only natural that the physical superiority which is constantly stressed in royal inscriptions was also required, and particularly so, of the ageing ruler. In order to demonstrate the physical powers he retained, which were essential to exercising his rule, the king ideally celebrated the so-called *Sed* festival or jubilee thirty years after his accession, and every three years thereafter (Hornung and Staehelin 1974; and 2006). The main feature was a run with which he proved his continuing qualification to be king. There is evidence for the festival in all thirty-one dynasties, and in the Ptolemaic and Roman era as well (Decker and Herb 1994: Chapter A). A unique track for this ritual survives in the funeral precinct of Djoser (2690–2670 BCE) in Sakkara (Friedmann 1995). Even if it is only a replica, a stage for the dead king to celebrate his jubilees for all eternity, we may conclude that races of this kind were run around posts 55 metres (c.100 Egyptian ells) apart. The king’s ritual run (of unknown length) took place on tracks of this kind. He celebrated it without opponents. In a magical fashion the pharaoh gathered new powers, symbolically took renewed possession of his territory, and requalified himself for his office by this running ritual (Wiedemann 1975). There are indications that this race goes back to earliest times, when the most able hunter qualified himself to be chief of his tribe.

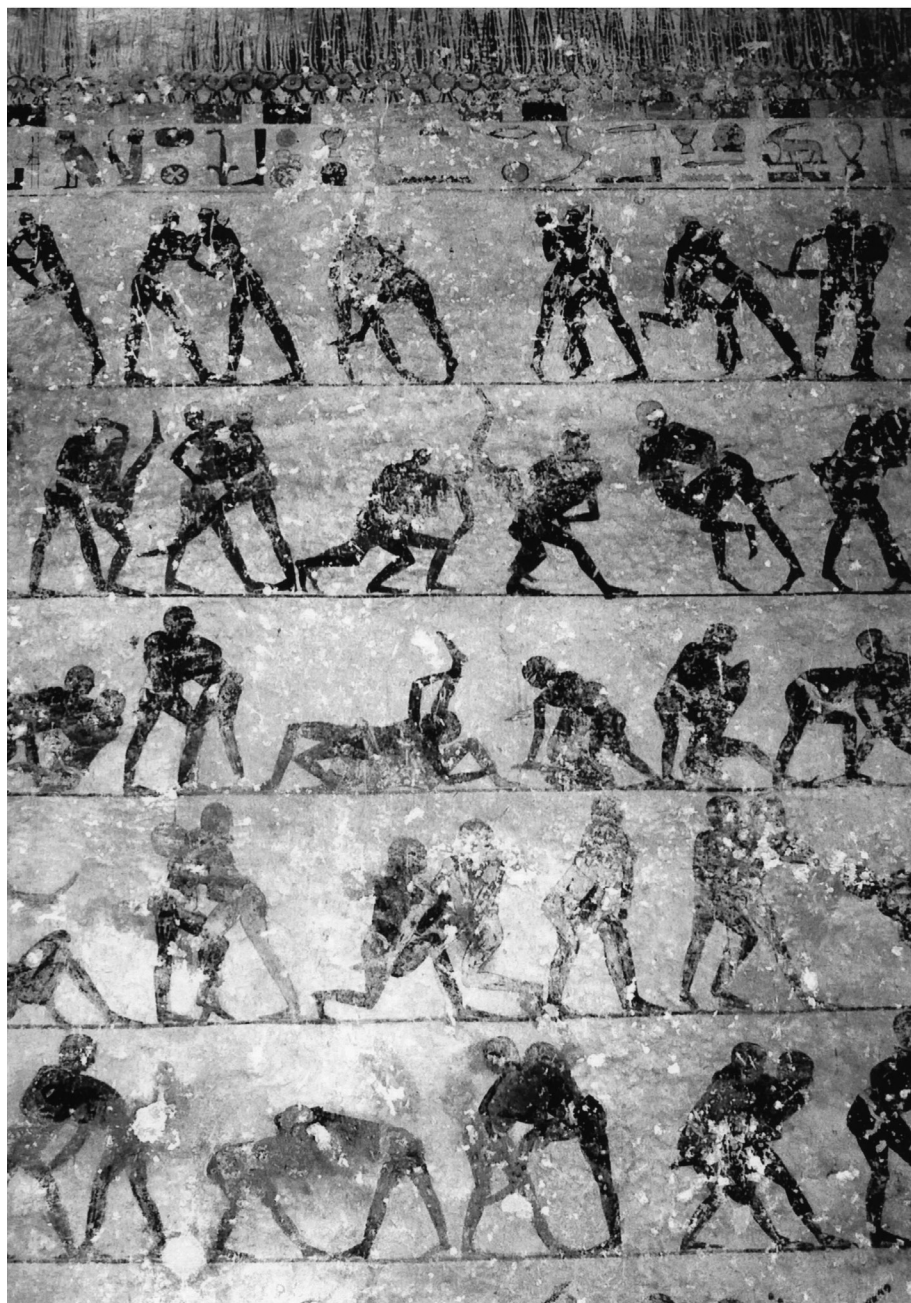


FIGURE 3.1. Pairs of wrestlers, Beni Hasan, tomb 15, east wall (cf. P.E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan II*, London 1894, Pl. V), about 2000 BCE. Photo: Wolfgang Decker.

Pharaoh and Sport in the New Kingdom

The New Kingdom (1550–1070 BCE) is the real era of sporting kings. At the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty, after wars of liberation, the first foreign hegemony over Egypt by the Hyksos came to an end, but the trauma had a long-lasting effect. In the official texts the kings now emphasized in traditional manner their achievements in war and in hunting, and latterly in sport as well. It is noteworthy that the sporting character of the king can be handed down over three generations, as is the case of Thutmose III (1479–1425 BCE), Amenophis II (1328–1197 BCE), and Thutmose IV (1397–1388 BCE) (Hayes 1973).

Archery with Copper Targets

The special sport of the kings was now shooting at copper targets with a bow and arrow, where the achievements of predecessors were outdone, and the notion of records (Decker 1990) makes its first appearance in the history of sport. The thickness of the target and the penetration of the arrow were the objective measures. The use of copper targets derives from the ingots traded in every Mediterranean seaport (along with tin) for the production of bronze. Numerous originals have been discovered in wrecks of the Bronze Age in the depths of the Mediterranean by underwater archaeology (Yalçın et al. 2005). In other words, the copper discs that the kings of the New Kingdom allegedly penetrated with their arrows really existed, though it was of course impossible to penetrate them with arrows (Decker and Klauk 1974). Even the highly elastic composite bow made of wood, animal tendons, and horn did not produce sufficient force, leaving aside the fact that the arrows were inadequate. Only the ideal king was capable of this superhuman achievement.

The motif was so effective that it was taken up in Greek literature; there it appears in the *Odyssey*. On his return home after being thought missing in Troy, the warrior Odysseus engages in a contest with the suitors. Here too the aim was to shoot through metal objects (handle-holes in axes which resemble Egyptian copper ingots) (Burkert 1973; Decker 1977).

Charioteering and Horse-Training

The New Kingdom saw the introduction of the composite bow, which enabled huge improvements in archery; there was also the technical innovation of the light chariot with two spoked wheels, drawn by two horses, which the Hyksos also brought to Egypt (Hofmann 1989; Herold 1999). This chariot became a status symbol and was very popular at the royal court. This was firstly because of its use as a new instrument of war, though the significance of this is often overestimated, but also because of the breeding of fine horses whose skill and condition were crucial for the survival of the chariot warrior. From this high regard for horses arose the art of training horses, appropriate for the king, and attributed in great measure to Amenophis II (1428–1397 BCE) on a sphinx stele (Decker 1975 no. 17; Klug 2002: 223–234). A pharaoh as late as Ramses III (1183/1182–1152/1151 BCE) is depicted in his mortuary temple in Medinet Habu, selecting from his stable a pair of horses which ‘he had trained with his own hand’ (Decker and Herb 1994: I 99) (Fig. 3.2).

Even if the Egyptians were thoroughly conscious of experiencing speeds unknown until then, on the sphinx stele of Thutmose IV (1397–1388 BCE) we read: ‘His horses were faster than the wind’ (Decker 1975 no. 21; Klug 2002: 298). No sources have yet been found for charioteering. In respect to the pharaoh, we must assume the taboo against contests applied.



FIGURE 3.2. Archery 'Stela' of Amenophis II (1428–1397 BCE), Luxor Museum J.129. Photo: Wolfgang Decker.

I Upper text:

The perfect god, great in strength, who acts with his two hands in the presence of his army, the mighty bowman who shoots to hit and whose arrows do not go astray. When he shoots at a target of copper, he splits it as (one splits) papyrus, without (even) considering (using) any wooden one ... on account of his strength. Strong of arm, whose equal has never existed; Mentu, when he appears in the chariot.

II Lower text:

The great target of foreign copper at which His Majesty shot (is), of three fingers in thickness. The one great of strength pierced it with many arrows; he caused three palms' (thickness) to come forth at the back of this target; one who shot to hit every time he aimed, the hero, lord of strength. His Majesty did this pleasure before the entire land. (Translation by P. Der Manuelian, *Studies in the Reign of Amenophis II*, Hildesheim 1987: 204–205.)

With the preservation of eight original chariots from the Eighteenth Dynasty, six of them from the tomb of Tutankhamen (1333–1323 BCE), ancient Egypt provides us with an inestimable corpus for the study of the technology of chariot-building, which will have an important place in the history of charioteering that is yet to be written (Littauer and Crouwel 1985).

Sport for the Pharaoh

The sport practised by individuals was also often in the service of the king, though it was not subject to the taboo against competition. This applied particularly when it occurred as part of the programme of festivals (Decker 2000). An example of this occurs as early as the

middle of the third millennium BCE. Only a few years ago there were discovered on the ramp to the mortuary temple of Sahure (2496–2483 BCE) near Abusir, reliefs which commemorate the completion ceremony of his pyramid, as is shown by the hauling of the *pyramidion*, the pinnacle stone of the building, by a team of workmen. As part of this celebration, sporting contests were held with participation by those who had been engaged in the building of the burial place. The sports were wrestling (freestyle, in the presence of a referee), stick-fencing, and target-shooting with bow and arrow; a fourth component, a rowing contest, is also possible (El Awady 2009; Decker and Förster 2011).

The next example of a sporting festival is more recent, by nearly 1,200 years. It is the third jubilee of Amenophis III (1388–1351/50 BCE), which was set in the tomb of Cheriuf, who was responsible for organizing it. At the ceremony marking the erection of the *Djed*-pillar there were contests in stick-fencing (with papyrus stalks) and fist-fights (with bare fists). The inscriptions name the king as the dedicatee of the sports, 'Fights for Amenophis III', while the contestants, above all the boxers, are conspicuous for their elegant movements (Touny and Wenig 1969: table 14; Decker and Herb 1994: M 2, N 1).

From the time of his successor, Amenophis IV (1352/1–1334 BCE), comes the tomb of Merire II in Amarna, on the east wall of which the foreign peoples pay tribute to the enthroned royal couple and present typical products of their countries. The tribute given by the Nubians includes the performance of dances and pairs of men, Nubian athletes, in combat (wrestling, stick-fencing, boxing[?]) (Touny and Wenig 1969: ill. 6; Decker and Herb 1994: L 2, M 3, N 2) (Fig. 3.3).

The presence of Tutankhamen (1333–1323 BCE), whose intact tomb offers a treasure-trove of relics of the history of sport (Decker 1980), gave resplendence and an official festive character to a rowing regatta on the Nile; to prepare for it, the participating soldiers had to submit to training. Tutankhamen expresses his delight that the 'squad of youngsters' achieving their victory here are in good form. The inscription on a ceremonial staff of the king is the oldest evidence of a rowing regatta in all of sport history (Decker and Kurth 1999).

There is a particularly expressive quality in the depiction of a sporting contest between Egyptians and foreigners (Libyans, Asians, and Nubians) which is situated in the mortuary temple of Ramses III (1182/1181–1153/1152 BCE) in Medinet Habu below the window of appearances of the palace, hence in a prominent position (Touny and Wenig 1969: tables 6–11, 16–18; Decker and Herb 1994: L 34, M 9). The meeting, held before spectators, has an international character which comes about through the contests fought with Egypt's neighbours, but does not in any way prefigure the spirit of the modern Olympic Games—it aims to demonstrate Egypt's superiority; the athletes dominate their foreign opponents in sporting contests just as the pharaoh, shown nearby, defeats his enemies. The presence of foreigners among the spectators, appearing to emphasize the international atmosphere, is seen in a different light when this ideological perspective is considered: they are witnesses to the superiority of Egypt and their own feebleness, represented by the sporting defeat of their countrymen in wrestling, which is uniquely documented in the ancient valley of the Nile by the tombs of Beni Hasan from the Middle Kingdom (Wilsdorf 1939), and in stick-fencing. A referee is there to signal that in these (one-sided) contests everything is played according to the rules. The intention of dedicating the contests to the pharaoh also emerges from the speeches of the athletes which allude to the presence of the king (Wilson 1931).

International contacts are also responsible for the surprising find of a wall fresco in a palace of the early Eighteenth Dynasty in the eastern delta (Avaris). It is decorated with the



FIGURE 3.3. Wrestlers, an Egyptian and a Libyan, Medinet Habu, mortuary temple of Ramses III (1183/1182–1152/1151 BCE), first court, south, under window of appearance. Photo: Wolfgang Decker.

bull-jumping motif. The style and technique remove all doubt that it was created by Minoan artists who probably executed the theme, exotic in Egypt, by commission of the king of Knossos as a gift for his Egyptian colleague (Bietak et al. 2007).

The last example, from the sixth year of the reign of Taharka (690–664 BCE), also establishes a close connection of a sporting event with the pharaoh, when the account on the so-called running stele ends with the statement that the runners had performed for His Majesty. Previously it had been mentioned that a group of (probably 250) soldiers had undergone running training in a kind of training camp. At the end of the training process, a race of over 100 km is held, which is interrupted by a break halfway at the turning-point. The time of four hours needed for half the way for the best runners makes us conclude that the time for the whole race was close to the best times in distance running towards the end of the nineteenth century. Both the mention of the running times and the awarding of prizes (of an archaic nature, like a common banquet) are elements which are unique in the sport history of Egypt and are extremely rare for this period anywhere (Altenmüller and Moussa 1981; Decker 1984).

The examples of sporting festivals presented above, which almost always lack evidence of ongoing performance, may be seen as precursors of Greek *agônes*, as they are sometimes also encountered in other pre-Greek sporting cultures (Decker 2004).

Once the iconographic and written sources have been assembled and the secondary literature explored (Decker 1978; Decker and Förster 2002a; 2002b), a history of sport in Ancient Egypt is highly to be desired. An encyclopaedia could meanwhile present the individual phenomena in a way that is also easily understood by scholars in related areas.

SPORT IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Mesopotamia

Situated in southern Mesopotamia, the ‘land between the rivers’ (Euphrates and Tigris), Sumer gives a plethora of evidence for the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur at the end of the third millennium BCE, which R. Rollinger uses as the basis for a major collection of materials relating to sport in the Ancient Near East. The rich source material, literary and archival (and to a lesser extent iconographic), has numerous examples of the key concepts *lirum/lirûm* (‘wrestling’) and *gešbá* (‘running’) (Rollinger 1994: 8–46; diverging completely: Vermaak 1994; cf. Rollinger 1994: 35 n.150). The texts from this context suggest that sports events had a firm place in the programme of festivals. Thus in the myth ‘The Marriage of the god Mardu’ the divine personification of the Mardu nomads appears at the town of Ninab, where he woos the daughter of the city god of Kazallu. The civilized lady is, however, warned about the rough manners of the nomad god Mardu, who during a festival honouring the god Numušda runs rampage among the young men and kills many of them in wrestling contests. The site of the contests, whose participants have apparently attended a kind of ‘training camp’, is a place (*kisal mah* = ‘great court’) in the temple itself (Rollinger 1994: 18–22).

Interestingly, economic documents from the Ur-III period provide us with a series of references to sporting events as part of monthly festivals, where there is mention of gifts of clothing, bullocks, lambs, beer flour, and emmer grain for wrestlers and athletes, which

are to be used to sustain them. The place where the contestants reside is called a 'wrestlers' house' (*è-gešbá*), while the place of the contests seems to have been the temple court (*kisal*) (Rollinger 1994: 28–30).

Among the prizes awarded to the wrestlers is a silver ring worth 10 shekels, which is presented to Šulgigalz, son of the musician Alla, by the grand vizier. He is the first athlete identified by name in the Ancient Near East and seems to come from a high social stratum (Rollinger 1994: 30–31).

The sporting contests are held in honour of various divinities, of whom the god Nabû was associated particularly with sprinting (Weidner 1952–1953). At a ritual that was performed in the temple of Ishtar in Mari, where wrestlers, jugglers, and acrobats took part (Blocher 1992), the king was present personally (Rollinger 1994: 32).

The Sumerian royal hymns treat the king as an outstanding athlete, which applies particularly to Shulgi (2030–1983 BCE) (Vermaak 1993), who in Hymn C presents himself as mighty and bursting with strength, with nobody being his equal. (Translation of Hymn C in Vermaak 1993: 16; and Rollinger 1994: 44.) Unlike the Egyptian king, the peerless ruler is permitted by royal dogma to take part in the sporting contest in the 'great court' of the temple, the traditional site for sports in Sumer. His opponents are 'the heroes of the land of Sumer', 'the swift men of Sumer', and also 'the mighty and strong, (all of them) selected from foreign lands'. Did royal participation in the contest, conceivable according to this text, actually take place? This is another question that arises if one compares the text discussed with Hymn A, in which Shulgi boasts of having run from Nippur to Ur and back in one day (320 km altogether) and, moreover, into a thunderstorm on the second stretch (Vermaak 1993: 11–13; sceptically Rollinger 1994: 45–61; uncritically Anderson Lamont 1995). Hymn V also alludes to this race (Frayne 1983) and furthermore mentions a statue of Shulgi as a runner which was erected in Ekur, a custom in which he is followed by Ischmedagan (Rollinger 1994: 51). Depictions of wrestlers on cylindrical seals, votive tablets, and cult steles are found in Mesopotamia for the early dynastic era (c.3000–c.2440) (Eder 1994: 93–97), where the wrestling scenes are associated with a banquet and music, and may thus immediately be recognized as a part of the cultic symposium. Wrestlers and pugilists are also found on cylindrical seals of the Ancient Near East (c.1950–177 BCE); here the figure of the 'athlete warrior' regularly appears as a type (Eder 1994).

The Gilgamesh Epic

In the widely disseminated ancient Babylonian Gilgamesh epic, which in Ancient Near East culture plays a role comparable with the Homeric epics in the Greek world, the hero meets Enkidu in Uruk, a wrestling match immediately ensues, and it obviously ends with Gilgamesh's victory. One may imagine that the opponents grab each other's loincloths, as already worn by the two wrestler figures in the early dynastic wrestling group from the Nintu temple in Tutub/Hafaġi (Crowther 2007: 17, fig. 2.2). Wrestling may be understood as part of hospitality ceremonies. The walls trembled and the doorposts were smashed in the violent encounter of the two heroes (Rollinger 1994: 16–18).

In the Nineveh version (from the library of the Assyrian king Assurbanipal, 668–627 BCE) there is surprisingly a scene of stickball (*pukku* = ball, *mikkû* = bat), which, owing to the Sumerian precursor of this version, may be assumed to be a sport practised in Mesopotamia

as early as the second half of the third millennium BCE. It is a remarkable fact that this ball game, in which Gilgamesh naturally plays a dominant role, may be shown to belong to this early period. The hero tyrannizes the whole city of Uruk with his unbridled urge to play, and triumphs over the opposing team composed of orphaned sons, after a game lasting all day. The captain of the victorious team, in this case Gilgamesh, is carried piggyback (in a modern-looking fashion of informally honouring the victor). Women bring food and drink on to the playing field for the players (Rollinger 2006).

It is worth noting the fact that in the short Sumerian epic 'The Death of Gilgamesh' there is a passage in which sporting contests are mentioned in connection with funeral ceremonies, where a semi-circular grandstand holds the spectators (Rollinger 1994: 36–40). Disconnected from the direct context of funeral rituals, but with a hint at their origin through the mention of the month of *Abu*, contests of this kind were still known in Seleucid times, as a late cuneiform source attests (Rollinger 1994: 39, with n. 171).

Finally, the Gilgamesh epic also attests to the skill of diving and swimming, which occasionally appears in other Ancient Near Eastern sources (Rollinger 2000).

Hittites

At the beginning of the second millennium BCE the Hittites appear in Anatolia and gradually develop into the great power that could even defy mighty Egypt in the battle of Kadesh (fifth year of Ramses II = 1286 BCE), as is attested by the subsequent peace treaty which was based on notions of equality (Edel 1997). Its mere existence corrects the version, widespread in Egypt, in which the pharaoh is victorious in battle and the opposing commander nearly drowns in the Orontes river. They were the only Indo-Europeans to use cuneiform, as this form of writing was found among their neighbours on all sides in the Ancient Near East. For reasons not yet clear, their power declined around 1200 BCE, around the same time as the movements of the 'Sea Peoples' in the eastern Aegean. In their capital city Hattusha (150 km east of Ankara) a state archive of more than 30,000 clay tablets was discovered, which have been readable since 1915 when F. Hrozny rediscovered their language, yet it has been researched only to a small extent for what it says about sport.

The gem of Hittite sport culture (Haas 2001) is a handbook transmitted under the name of 'Kikkuli, horse-trainer from the land of Mitanni', which was written as early as the fifteenth century BCE and is preserved in a copy from the thirteenth century BCE on four clay tablets. The horse-training text is preserved without gaps for a period of 184 consecutive days, before it breaks off (presumably shortly before it ends) (Kammenhuber 1961). Despite very precise daily entries concerning various running distances and gaits, varying doses of feed and drink as well as ways of caring such as dry rubbing, salves, and plunging in water, together with the housing of the animals (mostly in a stable), the precise purpose of the training cannot be determined, as its aim is never mentioned *expressis verbis*. We must however assume that the chariot horses were not trained for chariot-races (as claimed by Potratz 1938) but for military use (which theoretically would not exclude use in racing as a spin-off activity). This is supported by the season (autumn and winter) which could have been chosen to prepare for the war season which began in spring, but also by the beginning of training at varying times of day and night, which would correspond to unforeseeable irregularity of military

necessity. While Kammerhuber (1961) advocates stamina and fitness training as the main object, Starke (1995) has supported technique training, which is mainly directed at the ability of a pair of horses to perform rapid changes in direction and about-turns. The most recent editors of the tract (Raulwing and Meyer 2004) once more tend to Kammerhuber's idea, though this implies a distance of 150 km of trotting and 21 km of galloping a day, where their conversion of Hittite measures of length are clearly far too high. The Kikkuli text, which is not unique in its genre in the Ancient Near East (Ebeling 1951; Marzahn 2007), has a unique position in the history of sport: it is the oldest training handbook in world history which has as a general aim the improvement in performance, of whatever kind (in this case animal performance).

The collection of passages relevant to various sporting disciplines of the Hittite written tradition has been consolidated by J. Puhvel (1988) into the thesis that here we have palpable precursors of the world of Homeric sport. Alongside the astonishing variety of named sports (running, archery (Haas 1989), armed combat, boxing, wrestling, stone-heaving, and horse-racing; Hutter-Braunsar 2012), the connection of contests with festivals (Haas 1989; Carter 1988; Decker 2004: 18–21), and the awarding of prizes may also have led him to this conclusion. In a race of the king's bodyguards at the spring festival the victor holds the halter (Hutter-Braunsar 2008: 27–28, with n. 25; as opposed to Ehelolf 1925, who is thinking of the office of the royal bridle-holder), while the victor in another contest held on the occasion of the KILAM festival and the second place getter are both given a garment. According to an earlier version, the victor's prize is a mina of silver and two loaves from the hand of the king (Hutter-Braunsar 2008: 26–27). A ritual between men from Hatti armed with bronze weapons and men from Maša who are equipped only with canes is evidence of a kind of team combat among the Hittites, though the outcome was predetermined (Ehelolf 1925; Lesky 1926; Hutter-Braunsar 2008: 31–32).

A depiction of bull-leaping, which is attested not only in Minoan Crete but in many cultures of the Ancient World (Decker 2003), has been recently found in territory where Hittite culture was established (Sipahi 2000; 2001). The iconographic context suggests that the acrobatic leap over the bull took place with musical accompaniment and in the presence of women.

It is worth mentioning that sport also appears as a motif in Hittite literature. In a fragment from an epic, the (Hurrite) king Gupazanzah defeats sixty kings and seventy heroes in archery at a banquet after a hunt in Akkad (Haas 1989: 38–39).

Persia

We have no direct sources for ancient Iranian sport, but we are informed about ancient Persian sport culture indirectly by Greek authors and later Persian literature, which is in the continuity of older traditions, as is the *Shahname* (Book of Kings). The founder of the Persian empire, Cyrus the Great (559–529 BCE), was designated as the ideal of a king by his Greek admirer Xenophon in the mirror for princes, *Cyropaedia*, as the ideal of a king. Herodotus's statement (1.136) that the Persians 'instruct boys from fifteen to twenty years of age ... [in] riding and archery and telling the truth' has become a classic notion in our conception of Iranian education. The image of the *pahlawan* ('hero') is cultivated particularly in the epic

poem *Shahnameh* by Ferdowsi (939–1020 CE). His sporting prowess is prominent amongst his knightly skills, and it is particularly developed in Rustam (Knauth 1976).

There is already mention in the *Cyropaedia* of a horse-race that Cyrus holds (Xenophon, *Cyr.* 8.3.24–36), a custom which is also reported by Xerxes I (486–465 BCE), whose horses by far outdo those of the Greeks in speed (Hdt., 8.196). The art of riding is also the foundation of polo (in literature also played by young girls at court) (Knauth 1976: 44–48). Polo posts even today adorn the central *Meidan Shah* ('Royal Square') in Isfahan. It is the 'favourite and national sport of Iranian nobles' (Knauth 1976: 44), and not infrequently a participating king suffered mortal injuries in this game. It is also likely that charioteering was practised in ancient Iran (Knauth 1976: 53). Archery also has a dominant position among Persian disciplines. There is an instructive report of the Sassanid king Shapur I (241–272 CE) near Persepolis who boasts a shot that may have broken a record for distance (Knauth 1976: 56), as King Argishti of Urartu did almost 1,000 years earlier when he shot an arrow a distance of 476 metres (Haas 1989: 40). In the epic, shields and armour are penetrated by arrows, which recalls the magisterial shot by Odysseus through the 12 axes (Hom. *Od.* 21.404ff.) and ultimately the skills of the Egyptian kings of the New Kingdom (Knauth 1976: 57). Wrestling, too, is among the preferred disciplines; it is developed as a motif in literature, including wrestling on horseback (Knauth 1976: 63–65). The king was excluded from this immediate, man-to-man test of strength.

It cannot be historically established when the institution of the *surchane* ('house of strength') appeared. Even today it is a characteristic of Persian physical culture (*mutatis mutandis* similar to the Greek *gymnasion*) (Rochard 2000; Yaldai 2005). Yet there can be no doubt that it goes back to ancient pre-Islamic models, if one compares them with pictures from the Ancient Near East, in which sportsmen are accompanied by instruments (Eder 1994: 7) similar to those that still provide background music for exercises in the houses of strength in Persia.

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