

Alexander the Great and Sport History: A Commentary on Scholarship*

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Alexander the Great's unprecedented accomplishments over the brief span of his life marked him as one of the most famous secular figures in history. Over the centuries, myths explaining his deeds were shaped: there are today eighty versions of the Alexander legend in twenty-four languages.¹ Was Alexander the champion of Hellenic culture and a visionary who issued a proclamation of world brotherhood? As C. B. Welles has said, probably not:

Alexander was a dazzling phenomenon, terrifying perhaps rather than attractive. His achievement was to conquer the Persian empire and many of the tribesmen within or on its borders. The world was changed, and he could never be forgotten, and it is, perhaps, wrong to seek his influence in lesser matters. He was his own greatest accomplishment.²

It is unnecessary to credit Alexander with achievements that he did not make or even intend to make. In this light, what follows is a reexamination of the literary sources-ancient and modern-which discuss Alexander and the topic of "sport."³ Sport historians must be more precise about the nature of how and why Alexander the Great used sport, never losing sight of the fact that Alexander probably never had a systematic philosophy about athletes, sport or athletics.⁴

* An earlier version of this paper was read at the annual meeting of the North American society for Sport History, May 1987, Columbus, Ohio. The author would like to thank Eugene N. Borza and the anonymous reviewers for their detailed comments toward revising the essay. I use the terms "sport" and "athletics" interchangeably throughout the paper, and as John Loy informally defined them on May 4, 1988: "sport is a social, structured, goal-oriented, contest based, ludic physical activity."

1. Carol G. Thomas, *The Earliest Civilizations: Ancient Greece and the Near East 300-200 B.C.* (Lanham, MD, 1982), 178.

2. C. B. Welles, "Alexander's Historical Achievement," *GR* 12 (1965): 228.

3. T. S. Brown, "Alexander and Greek Athletics in Fact and Fiction," in *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory, Studies Presented to Fritz Schachermeyr*, ed. K. H. Kinzl (Berlin, 1977), 76-88, is very good; the present work attempts to go beyond his analysis and to present alternatives to the views of E.N. Gardiner, H.A. Harris and John Mouratidis. Although I am critical of earlier conclusions about Alexander and sport, I have benefited from the scholarship of my predecessors.

4. According to Plut. *Alex.* 8, Alexander did have an interest in the art of healing and was in the habit of tending his friends when they were sick and prescribing for them various cures of treatment or diet. Alexander is also reported (Plut. *Alex.* 4), to have indulged in "pleasures of the senses only with great moderation." and that his skin was "fresh and sweet-smelling, and that his breath and the whole of his body gave off a peculiar fragrance which permeated the clothes he wore."

ALEXANDER AND THE MYTH OF WORLD BROTHERHOOD

Fifty-five years ago, Sir William W. Tarn delivered the Raleigh Lecture on History before the British Academy on the topic "Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind."⁵ In the lecture, Tarn created an Alexander "dreaming of the brotherhood of man or the unity of mankind." Later, in his renowned study of Alexander the Great, Tarn wrote of Alexander's unity dream: "It is now as I see it, certain."⁶ Tarn's work contributed the most widely accepted portrait of Alexander the Great, with his romantic Alexander seen as an heroic force working for the good of the world. One of the most frequently cited, yet inaccurate portrayals of Tarn's Alexander, is that of Alexander's dream to spread order and culture among the Greeks and barbarians.⁷ Alexander did initiate social policies through a variety of acts that may be thought to have been aimed toward fostering a sense of community: he had encouraged mixed marriages, sought to create a mixed army, and had given some political offices to Persians. But there is no evidence of any larger design or conception of unity in Alexander's thought and action, nor did Alexander link sport to a "brotherhood" ideal.

In 1958, Ernst Badian, an historian of Alexander, commented on Tarn's theory:

Alexander the dreamer has haunted the pages of scholarship, and even source-books and general histories of philosophy and of ideas have begun to succumb to the spell. Perhaps a quarter of a century is long enough for the life span of a phantom: It is clearly threatening to pass into our tradition as a thing of flesh and blood.⁸

Tarn's inaccurate analysis of Alexander and world brotherhood was based on *Arrian's Anabasis*, written about the middle of the second century A.D.⁹ The Greek author says that at the banquet at Opus, Alexander publicly "prayed for other good things and for homonoia and a commonality of rule for Macedonians and Persians."¹⁰ The text speaks of "Macedonians and Persians" ruling together, but Tarn translated the phrase as "all men," stating that Alexander prayed for world brotherhood and that all peoples present at the banquet shared kraters of wine. Arrian contradicts this. He tells us that Alexander was seated at the banquet only among Macedonians, with Persians farther away. Alexander and the "ones around him," *the Macedonians*, drank from the same bowl.

The twentieth-century interpretation of the brotherhood of mankind as an

5. W. W. Tarn, "Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 29 (1933): 123-127, 145-148.

6. Ernst Badian, "A Critical Appraisal of the Tarn Thesis," in *Critical Issues in History. The Ancient World*, Thomas W. Africa, ed. (New York, 1967), 52.

7. For the concept of Alexander as great unifier, see Eugene N. Bona, "No Evidence for the Dream," in *The Impact of Alexander the Great*, Eugene N. Borza, ed. (Hinsdale, 1976), 86-91; E. Badian, "Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind," *Historia* 1 (1958): 425-444; W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1948), 116; Tarn, "Alexander," 123-27, 145-48; John Mouratidis, "Alexander the Great and the Promotion of Greek Games in the East," *Canadian Journal of the History of Sport* 13 (May 1982): 61-73; A. B. Bosworth, "Alexander and the Iranians," *JHS* 100 (1980): 1-21.

8. Badian, "Critical Appraisal," 52.

9. The *Anabasis* survives in complete form and is the most reliable account we possess of Alexander's life.

10. Arr. *Anab.* 7.11.8-9; Plut. *De. Alex. Fort.* 1.6; Straba 1.4.9.

Alexandrian goal was a distortion of the evidence. In regard to Arrian's "banquet at Opus" passage, historian E. A. Fredricksmeyer asserted that "it is scarcely conceivable that Alexander would have come forth with the revolutionary ideas of universal concord and brotherhood when he had difficulty making his Macedonians willingly accept the Persians as equals."¹¹ To claim further then, that the numerous organized games and contests which Alexander promoted in the cities he founded was a conscious method to fuse the world into a brotherhood is inappropriate. The base of evidence for such a plan is lacking.

By the time of Alexander's birth in the mid-fourth century B.C., it was customary for the Greek calendar to be full of sporting events, competitions and festivals. The frequent citations by writers in antiquity describing Alexander's games simply show scholars that by the late fourth century B.C., contests remained a common and suitable method of mass celebration and recreation; it was nothing new for a leader to dedicate games to the gods at the conclusion of battle or upon the founding of cities, as Alexander did.¹² Alexander, a Macedonian, easily borrowed the games and contests of the Greeks, such as the torch race,¹³ foremost because they were a suitable means of recreation, celebration and supervision for the large numbers involved in war, and because he could afford to finance large festivals.¹⁴

Philosophical ideals concerning world citizenship and universal religion, whether created through sport or other means, grew afterwards from Alexander's legacy. Yet, in reviving the glorious Alexander, John Mouratidis noted, "Philip and his son Alexander put an end to civil wars and divisions among the Greeks," and "Alexander perceived the idea of the brotherhood of man."¹⁵ Mouratidis inferred that Alexander promoted games in the East to unite the world, and stated that the Macedonians had a long history of interest in the Olympic Games "because these festivals stood for national unity, something the Macedonians tried hard to achieve."¹⁶ Actually, the Macedonians achieved an efficient and long-lived national unity, which culminated with Alexander's accomplishments.¹⁷ Mouratidis also implied that the gymnasium was the central institution in Alexander's new settlements of the spread of Greek identity. "City and gymnasium building were features of the Hellenistic period that followed Alexander's conquests, not part of the conquest itself. Archaeology has shown that many of the new cities established by Alexander existed in name

11. E. A. Fredricksmeyer, *The Religion of Alexander the Great*, (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1958). 344.

12. Fredricksmeyer, *Religion of Alexander*, offers detailed description and analysis of the games Alexander was said to have founded or organized.

13. Arr. *Anab.* 2.24.6; 2.48; 3.16.9.

14. See Michael Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence and Culture* (New Haven, 1987), 99-100. Greek generals had misgivings about using athletics or agonistic festivals within a military context. The fourth-century generals Epaminondas and Philopoimen were interested in running, wrestling and weaponry exercises, but would probably not have sponsored torch races or musical agons as Alexander did.

15. Mouratidis, "Alexander and Promotion," 62. 66.

16. Mouratidis, "Alexander and Promotion," 64.

17. Dem. 1.21-2; Just. 11.3.2; 8.2.1: N.G.L. Hammond and G.T. Griffith, *History of Macedon 550-336 B.C.*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1979), 294.

18. Mouratidis, "Alexander and Promotion," 67.

only, or were military outposts, not cities.¹⁹ Resettled Macedonians or troops occupied the military colonies for varying amounts of time, but many of these posts did not have gymnasiums, athletic clubs or festivals. The colonies had an essentially military character and their civilizing influence could only have been a very slight one. In the post-Alexander Hellenistic world, mixed-population gymnasia likely urged the transformation of civilization to a Hellenic *oikoumene* in which foreigners and natives mingled together.²⁰ But during and shortly after Alexander, the gymnasium was a medium of acculturation only for those who were already “acceptable” Greeks.

Distinguishing features of the Hellenistic world after Alexander were festivals which honored divinized leaders, such as Alexander and the Ptolemies.²¹ In 332, Alexander visited the shrine of Amon in Libya and was told by the oracle that he was the son of Zeus. Although he then required that every Greek city should enroll him among its gods, Alexander’s deification during his lifetime never became official.²² The belief in Alexander’s divine nature did not flourish until it developed into a formal cult marked by the celebration of the Alexandria festival in Egypt by Ptolemy I after he took the crown in 305. The later Alexander cults of agonistic festivals established in Asia Minor may have been rooted in Alexander’s original campaigns, but no evidence exists as to whether they were in response to Alexander’s proclaimed divinity of 332.²³

ALEXANDER AND ATHLETICS

Until recently, scholars depicted the rise and fall of the classical ideal in sports as a move from amateurism in the fifth and sixth century B.C. to a degraded professionalism in the fourth century. David Young and others however, have demonstrated that early twentieth-century scholars’ investigations of athletics in the ancient world were influenced by Victorian values and a prevailing sense of elite English amateurism.²⁴ The ancient Greeks never had a word which meant professional, and moreover, they did not distinguish between amateur or other athletes in their competitions.

An account circulated in modern histories of sport asserts that Alexander had a personal contempt for professional athletics. The account is based on one of

19. Donald W. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley, 1978), 36, 54,85, 99-113. F. W. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism* (New York, 1972), 61, states that “the foundation of a city-state as the Greeks understood the term was a far more complex process than building a fort and calling it Alexandria. It meant the creation of political institutions and the physical setting in which they could function, a citizen roll, a city council, market inspectors, a gymnasium, temples, courts and a constitution. Alexander’s pace generally outstripped the possibility of such foundations and the bulk of his prospective citizens was composed of Macedonia” soldiers.”

20. IG 2² 1365, 1366, 1368, 1249-1364; SIG 1095-1120.

21. SIG³ i 390, 3%; C. C. Edgar, “A Note on the Ptolemaicia.” *Mélanges G. Maspero* (Cairo, 1934-37), 53-56.

22. Ernst Badian, “The Deification of Alexander the Great,” in *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson*, Harry Dell, ed. (Thessaloniki, 1981), 71.

23. Athen. 6.251.B; Diog. Laert. 6.63; Hypereides *Contra Dem.* 31; Dinarch. *Contra Dem.* 94.

24. David C. Young, *The Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics* (Chicago, 1986); idem., “Professionalism in Archaic and Classical Greek Athletics.” *The Ancient World* 7 (1983): 45.

the fullest existing narratives concerning Alexander's sporting preference, and comes from Plutarch's description of the earliest years of Alexander's reign:

The pleasures of the body had little hold upon him, and he indulged in them with great moderation, while his ambition kept his spirit serious and lofty in advance of his years. For it was neither every kind of fame nor fame from every source that he courted, as Philip did, who took care to have the victories of his chariots engraved upon his coins. But Alexander's attitude is made clear by his reply to some of his friends, when they asked him whether he would be willing to compete at Olympia, since he was a fine runner. "Yes," he answered, "if I have kings to run against me." He seems in fact to have disapproved of the whole race of trained athletes. At any rate although he founded a great many contests of other kinds, including not only the tragic drama and performances on the flute and lyre, but also the reciting of poetry, fighting with the quarter-staff and various forms of hunting, yet he never offered prizes either for boxing or for the pancration.²⁵

Based on two sentences in the above passage by Plutarch ("He [Alexander] seems in fact to have disapproved of the whole race of trained athletes. . . he never offered prizes either for boxing or the pancration."),²⁶ Gardiner commented on Alexander's personal dislike of professional athletes, emphasizing that Alexander disapproved of professionalism in athletics, but forwarded the amateur sporting ideal.²⁷ Whether modern scholars call them amateurs or professionals, Alexander had several athletes at his court, including boxers and pancratiasts. Athletes were sometimes part of Alexander's court and a few attended his symposiums, assuming roles as entertainers.²⁸

Dioxippus of Athens was one such athlete, described by Diodorus as "an athlete who won a crown in the foremost games," and by Curtius as "a celebrated boxer of extraordinary greatness." Alexander carried in his train a large number of Greeks, including actors, philosophers, musicians, dancers and athletes, and these were called on to perform from time to time for the entertainment of the court. In addition to Dioxippus, we learn from Athenaeus that Alexander employed a professional *sphairisfes*, ball player, Aristonicus of Carystus.²⁹ According to an Athenian decree dated to the fourth century and studied by classicist Sterling Dow, Aristonicus was awarded praise, a crown, citizenship, a place in the Prytaneum and a seat in the front row at all Athenian plays and athletic events. Dow believes that Aristonicus was not honored by the Athenians because of his connection to Alexander; if the Athenians were attempting to gain favor with Alexander, it seems that they would honor persons more important than Alexander's ball player. Dow concludes that Aristonicus' honors from Athens were awarded to him when he was settled and well-known

25. Plot. *Alex.* 4.2-6.

26. Plut. *Alex.* 4.6.

27. E. N. Cardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* (London, 1910), 154-156; idem., *Athletics of the Ancient World* [AAW] (Oxford, 1930), 45. Cf. Young, "Professionalism," 45.

28. Plot. *Alex.* 34.3; Curt. 9.7.12-15; Diod. 17.100.1-2; 17.100.4; Brown, "Alexander and Athletics," 80, 88; H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford, 1956), 205-206; John Maxwell O'Brien, "Alexander and Dionysus: The Invisible Enemy," *Annals of Scholarship* 1 (Fall 1980): 101; Waldemar Heckel "Fifty-two Anonymae in the History of Alexander," *Historia* 36 (1987): 114-119.

29. Ath. *Deip* 1.19a; Curt. 9.7.15-25; Diod. 17.100.1-101.4; Harold A. Harris, *Sport in Greece and Rome* (Ithaca, 1972), 84, 89; Plut. *Alex.* 39; 73.

in Athens and that he served Athens in more ways than by being a resident famous athlete.³⁰

Plutarch also relates a story about Alexander and another *sphairistes* named Serapion who was never given any gifts from Alexander because “he never asked for anything.” Plutarch explains that one day, while Alexander played a type of catch with Serapion and some others:

. . . whenever the ball came to Serapion, he made a point of throwing it to the others, until the king said, “Aren’t you going to throw it to me?” “No” retorted Serapion, “You never ask for it!” Whereupon the king burst out laughing and loaded him with presents.³¹

According to H. A. Harris, Alexander first turned to ball play because “Alexander had been a fine runner but he gave up athletics because other competitors allowed him to win.” In Plutarch, when Alexander’s friends ask him whether he would be willing to compete at Olympia as a runner, he replied that he would if the other contestants were kings.³² Using this remark by Plutarch, Harris argued that Alexander turned to ball play as a consequence of other competitors allowing him to win races. Concluding that ball games received a great following as a result of Alexander’s enthusiasm for them, Harris discussed the stimulus to ball games as a portion of Alexander’s career that “completely changed the face of the ancient world.”³³ There is no evidence, however, that ball games spread or that *sphairisteria*, ball courts, were an outgrowth of Alexander’s ball playing. *Sphairisteria* and ball playing had existed before Alexander’s time in all parts of the world.³⁴

Alexander is also said to have admired Phayllus of Croton, an exceptional athlete who is reputed to have jumped fifty-five feet, thrown the discus ninety-five feet and won the pentathlon and the stade race in the Pythian games a century before Alexander. After winning the battle at Gaugamela, Alexander sent some booty to Croton, Phayllus’ city, “in honor of the spirit and valor shown by their athlete Phayllus.”³⁵ There are several examples from antiquity in which athletes such as Phayllus are said to have been honored or worshipped for their performances at important games, but closer examination of the ancient texts shows that the honors were prompted for other reasons: fear of a curse; because the athlete was wronged by his countrymen; in obedience to an oracle; and because of the athlete’s exceptional beauty. If the remainder of Plutarch’s account is read, it is discovered that instead of entering the Olympic Games, Phayllus had fitted out a ship at his own expense and fought with the Athenians and others against the Persians at Salamis. Phayllus’ hometown was rewarded

30. Sterling Dow, “The Athenian Honors for Aristonikos of Karystos, Alexander’s Sphaeresres,” *HSCP* 67 (1963): 77-92.

31. Plut. *Alex.* 39.

32. Harris, *Sport*, 83-84; Gardiner. *AAW*, 230.

33. *Ibid.*

34. E.g., Horn. *Od.* 8.370-376, 6.99-109; L. E. Roller, “Funeral Games for Historical Persons . . .” *Stadion* 7 (1981): 5; Erika Simon, *Festivals of Attica: An Archaeological Commentary* (Madison, 1983), 40; Kendall Blanchard and Alyce Cheska, *The Anthropology of Sport* (S. Hadley, Mass., 1985). 15.

35. Plut. *Alex.* 34.3

by Alexander not only for its resident's athletic accomplishments, but also for Phayllus' charity and courage in the Persian Wars.³⁶ Similarly, during the destruction of Thebes by Alexander, the house of Pindar of the early fifth century was spared.

Alexander's partiality to Pindar's house may have resulted from Pindar's praise of athletes in his commissioned poems. However, alternative explanations for the partiality to Pindar have been proposed. One theory is that Alexander's reverence for Pindar sprang from his admiration for a great poet: since Alexander kept a copy of the *Iliad* close by, he might also have kept Pindar's victory songs near. Another idea suggests that Alexander's fondness for Pindar's house and relatives is attributed to a "non-athletic" poem Pindar had written in praise of Alexander's ancestor, Alexander I.³⁷ It has also been expressed that in addition to Pindar's household, others were selectively spared by Alexander during the destruction of Thebes because they supported Macedonia.³⁸

Alexander died in 323 B.C. Since his death was not expected, there were no specific plans for the succession, and a violent power struggle occurred in the following years among his probable successors.³⁹ In his last hours, Alexander was asked "To whom do you leave the kingdom?" He replied "To the strongest," and commented that all of his leading friends should stage a vast contest in honor of his funeral.⁴⁰ Sport historians are interested in Alexander's reported last words because they mention funeral games. However, since it is possible that the brief reference made to the funeral games was a literary metaphor of the ancient authors, or even of Alexander himself, whether Alexander's last words were about actual funeral games will never be known. The ancient description of the funeral games sponsored by Alexander for his best friend Hephaestion and for the Indian Kalanos, and also the description of Alexander's own funeral games, document for modern scholarship two things. First, the elaborate splendor of, and the expenses undertaken for, the production of the games (all reported to be the most outstanding known up to that time), document the amount of wealth Alexander had at his disposal for such affairs; the spectacular funeral games were a means of conspicuous consumption. Second, the staging of the funeral games seem to have been the conscious imitation of the Homeric tradition of lavish funerary rites. Our newest data about the evasive Macedonian

36. Paus. 6.6.10: 7.17.13; 3.15.7; Hdt. 5.47; 8.47; George E. Mylonas, "Athletic Honors in the Fifth Century," *CJ* 39 (Oct.-June 1943-44): 285-287; Plut. *Alex.* 34.3; A. Havrette, "Phayllos de Crotonne," *Revue des études grecques* 12 (1899): 9-19, discusses the career of Phayllus from inscriptional evidence found at Delphi and Athens.

37. Only a fragment of Pindar's eulogy to Alexander I has survived in Solinus 9.13.

38. Plut. *Alex.* 11-15; Arr. 1.1.11; Died. 17.8.2-15.5; Justin 11.2.7; 4.12; Thuc. 4.68.5; Frank J. Nisetich, *Pin&r's Victory Songs*, foreword by Hugh Lloyd Jones, (Baltimore, 1980), 7, 14; Brown, "Alexander and Athletics," 77.

39. Alexander's only male survivor in direct connection with the royal house of Macedon was Arrhidaeus, a son of Philip. Roxanne, Alexander's queen, was pregnant and bore a son, but he was assassinated as a teenager.

40. Arr. *Anab.* 7.26.3; 70.15; Diod. 17.117.4-5; Curt. 10.5.5. Plutarch and Justin do not report the last words of Alexander

culture reinforces the conclusion that the emulation of Homeric society remained strong for the Macedonians.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

A. B. Bosworth, a modern historian of Alexander, has given sport historians something to think about:

The modern scholar has the advantage of hindsight. He can see the ultimate result of the movement of population into Asia which Alexander initiated and the political consequences of his conquests. It is therefore easy to see Alexander as the champion of Hellenism, however remote such an intention may have been from his mind.⁴²

Alexander's conquests did cause profound changes in the world after him. But Alexander never planned to form a world brotherhood through ball playing or by posting gymnasiums and agonistic festivals wherever he ventured. We have no evidence that Alexander either expressed an opinion about athletics, much less despised athletes, as has been claimed by Gardiner. We do know that athletes were part of Alexander's court, but there is insufficient information to speculate just how Alexander felt about sport. Our evidence concerning Alexander the Great and sport is hardly to be construed as either a demonstration of Alexander's panhellenic policy in general or specifically his attitude toward athletics.

The actual precedents set by Alexander regarding sport were few: contests for large numbers organized on a frequent schedule, and agonistic festivals initiated at his discretion, rather than traditionally or on an oracle's or god's order. Plutarch tells us that Alexander admired stick-fighting, which suggests that the king desired contests which proximated battle actions.⁴³ Indeed, naval and equestrian competitions engaged in by Alexander's troops were used as practice exercises and for keeping up the men's interests.⁴⁴ Likewise, Alexander's reported respect for his horse Bucephalus, (Plut. *Alex.* 6; 8), and interest in equestrianism stemmed directly from Alexander's livelihood as a military king. Alexander's survival in battle in part depended on his horse's capabilities and it is only natural that the great warrior Alexander demonstrated an interest in horses.

Alexander continued the nuances associated with sport which his ancestors had borrowed from the Greeks: symbolism of sport on coins; use of sporting events for propaganda purposes; and Macedonian Olympic games at Dion.⁴⁵ As

41. Lynn E. Roller, *Funeral Games* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1977), 10; Charles Edson, "Early Macedonia," in *Philip of Macedon*, M. B. Hatzopoulos and L. D. Loukopoulos, eds. (Athens, 1980), 11.

42. A. B. Bosworth, "Alexander the Great and the Decline of Macedonia," *JHS* 56 (1986): 12.

43. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports*, 64, 100.

44. Plut. *Alex.* 4; Arr. *Anab.* 7.23.5; 5.4.

45. S. Perlman, "The Coins of Philip II and Alexander the Great and their Panhellenic Propaganda," *Numismatic Chronicle* 1 (1965): 57-67; Barclay V. Head, "The Coinage of Alexander the Great, B.C. 336-323," in *The Coins of Alexander the Great*, A. N. Oikonomides, ed. (Chicago, 1981), xvii; Diod. 17.109.1; 18.8.2-7; Arr. *Anab.* 1.11.1; 1.16.4.

had previous Macedonian kings, Alexander hunted in his free time, and according to Plutarch (*Alex.* 23), practiced archery as he mounted and dismounted from a moving chariot while hunting foxes or birds. Silver and gold coinage with the head of young Heracles in lion's skin headdress, with Zeus or a bow in case and club on the reverse symbolizing hunting, were struck by Alexander.⁴⁶ Friezes, sculptures and mosaics said to exist in antiquity portrayed Alexander at a lion hunt, and celebrated his bravery and status: hunting was the occupation of kings and nobles.⁴⁷

In sum, long-established cultural practices and historical circumstances-in addition to or apart from Alexander's control-played a part in formulating the meanings and values which were attached to athletes and sport during Alexander the Great's reign. Since our information surrounding Alexander and athletics is scanty, conflicting proposals for the meaning of the evidence are bound to arise. But this is all the more reason that in any study of Alexander the Great, the literary and other sources and evidence should be carefully considered.

46. E. T. Newell, *Alexander Hoards*, II: *Demanhur, 1905 American Numismatic Society. Numismatic Notes and Monographs* 19 (New York, 1923), 26-64; M. Thompson and A. R. Bellinger "Greek Coins in the Yale Collection, IV: A Hoard of Alexander Drachms." *YCS* 14 (1955): 3-45.

47. E. N. Bona, "The Royal Macedonian Tombs and the Paraphernalia of Alexander the Great," *Phoenix* 41 (1987): 105-121; *Plut. Alex.* 40.4.