

Book Reviews

Raschke, Wendy J., ed. *The Archaeology of the Olympics: The Olympics and Other Festivals in Antiquity*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1988. Pp. xiii, 298. Photos, index, glossary. \$42.40 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

The Archaeology of the Olympics is a collection of papers given at an international symposium held in April 1984, "an academic precursor to the Olympic games held in Los Angeles," as the editor, Wendy Raschke writes in the preface (p. xiii). The book by no means restricts itself to ancient Olympia—in fact only two of the book's six sections deal with Olympic matters per se, with some of the strongest contributions focusing on other aspects of ancient athletics. The reader will not find comprehensive treatment of ancient Olympia or ancient sport, and one might ask, e.g., why Hittite precursors are included but not Egyptian, or the games of Larissa but not a general study of isolympic games. But on the whole, even if the papers lack the consistency of theme and interconnections that Raschke labors to give them in her introduction and conclusion, the volume is a very welcome contribution to sport history, social history, and archaeology, and it merits careful reading. This brief review cannot address all of the papers in detail, but will focus on a handful of important topics and issues that surface in the collection.

Jan Puhvel's "Hittite Athletics as Prefigurations of Ancient Greek Games" is very useful, because it gives the reader access to Hittite agonistic texts, quite hard to find elsewhere. It is unfortunate that he did not contribute a longer, wider ranging article. Several Babylonian texts tell of sports festivals at annual religious events [see Åke Sjöberg, *Expedition 27.2* (1985): 8-91]: these invite comparison with the Hittite evidence Puhvel now makes available. Puhvel observes the possible etymological connection between Hittite *tarpa* and Greek *terpomai*, "to take pleasure in." He also suggests that we see signs in Greek and Hittite evidence of "an Indo-European speaking aristocratic warrior culture" (p. 30). This is surely provocative, but there are problems to be considered. In a usage strikingly parallel to *terpomai*, the Egyptians—not an Indo-European people—used expressions like *shmh ib* "To enjoy oneself" in lieu of any specific word for sport [cf. W. Decker, *Sport und Spiel im Alten Ägypten* (Munich 1987): 9-101]. Moreover, as W. Burkert and W. Decker have pointed out, there are some strong connections between New Kingdom archery feats and Odysseus' trial of the bow (W. Burkert, *Grazer Beiträge* 1 (1973): 69-78; W. Decker [above] 42-54). In contrast to these Egyptian parallels, Puhvel's comparisons of Hittite fragments with *Iliad* 23 are often tendentious. Nevertheless, the access he has given to the sports of an important pre-Greek civilization is very useful indeed.

One cannot say quite the same about Colin Renfrew's article on Minoan-Mycenaean origins of the Panhellenic festivals. Renfrew is apparently unaware of important Mycenaean monuments that substantially affect his theories, like the Tanagra Larnax, which shows bull leaping and armed dueling. So also the Tiryns amphora, arguably the earliest attestation of a chariot race [see K. Kilian, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung* 95 (1980): 21-31]. The article is diffuse and elementary, with a long retelling of part of *Iliad* 23 and very general remarks on Mycenaean religion. Renfrew gives a name to the competition and emulation manifested in the panhellenic festivals, "peer-polity interaction," but does not attempt to discover why these festivals developed, as, e.g., the classicist-ethnographer Karl Meuli had done.

Section II deals with the image and reality of Olympia. A. E. Raubitschek gives a very good collection of sources concerning the image that the Panhellenic festivals had as promoters of peace, but the tiny scope of the *ekecherie*, the Sacred Truce, so different from modern romanticizations of it, finds no mention. (The editor, Raschke, appropriately cites in her epilogue the seminal study of Manfred Laemmer, "Der Sogennante Olympische Friede in der griechischen Antike," *Stadion* 8-9 [1982-83]). Raubitschek's article needs to be read in the light of Stella Miller's useful study of Nemea, which gives a candid history of the "savagery at Nemea," in violation of even the limited scope of the *ekecherie*. Raschke contributes a well-documented paper on the political ramifications of Olympic sculpture to this section. The Greeks had a strong aversion to honoring generals with public monuments: the Spartans erased Pausanias's name from the Plataean monument, Miltiades's name is deliberately not included on the Stoa Poikile mural of the battle of Marathon, and so on (Aeschines, *Ktesiphon* 183-86; Thuc. 1.132, and M. Detienne, "La Phalange," in ed. Vernant, *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* [Paris 1968], 127-28). Raschke adds to this important topic some documents from the world of Greek sculpture, looking at such issues as the right to erect a portrait statue and the significance of the location of monuments at Olympia. Her discussion of the incorporation of athletic figures in the pedimental sculptures of deities must necessarily be subjective, with some parallels more convincing than others. Raschke has some very perceptive remarks on the possible political significance of Theseus in art at Olympia. Also included is a short version of the first part of D. C. Young's profound book, *The Olympic Myth of Amateur Greek Athletics*. I have reviewed the book at some length in *The American Journal of Philology* 110 (1989); let it suffice to say here that this well-written essay is a sobering reminder of what Richard Weaver wrote, "Ideas have consequences." In the case of "amateurism," the consequences have been pernicious, and Young has done good service in combatting them.

Part III is one of the strongest sections of the book, featuring a long essay by the late and distinguished excavator of Olympia, Alfred Mallowitz. He demonstrates on the convincing authority of strata layers that the Pelopeion is not the earliest cult site in its area. Relating myth to archaeological monument, he

argues convincingly for the priority of the Zeus cult at Olympia. Mallowitz also argues strenuously on the basis of the nearly 200 wells excavated at Olympia that the athletic competition began in 704 not 776 BCE. He observes (p. 98) that the earliest wells could date from the turn of the 8th C., but the wells, some 100 meters from the stadium are clearly later than the earliest cult sites. Hugh Lee properly asks in the following essay if there are not better explanations for the extreme paucity of archaeological evidence for the earliest years of the festival. Maintaining the strong possibility, *pace* Mallowitz, that 776 BCE is the correct date for the first games, Lee adduces the regional nature of the earliest days of the Olympics, as demonstrated by the homelands of the victors, and gives parallels for the early cultic significance of the stade race elsewhere.

Joseph Fontenrose's article on Apollo and the Delphic Games gives a general overview of practices at Delphi, not necessarily athletic practices. Much of what he writes is readily available elsewhere: E. R. Dodds, for example, gives a much better account of the oracle in *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Fontenrose (p. 126) mentions the three age classes at Delphi, but does not explore the intriguing designation "Pythian boys" found on some inscriptions (cf. T. Klee, *Zur Geschichte der gymnischen Agonen an Griechischen Festen* [Leipzig, Berlin, 1918], 43-51). For an article with this title, lack of discussion of the legends of Apollo as an athlete is disappointing. Kostas Gallis's paper, by contrast is an exciting study, for it offers the student of sport and social history a wealth of detail on a site not at all well documented elsewhere, especially in English.

Part V illustrates again the wide difference in quality among the papers. Very welcome indeed is Stephen Glass's well documented article on the Greek gymnasium. Schemes for distinguishing palaestra and gymnasium are abundant and usually misleading. Glass is careful not to go beyond the evidence and points to architectural differences as the key differentiation, rather than the nature of the users. Jane Renfrew contributes a study of foods at the festival to this section: the paper has a few interesting anecdotes, but the treatment of the subject is highly superficial: it is eminently suited to be an undergraduate lecture, but not a published article. Renfrew discusses the diets of athletes, yet makes no reference to Jüthner's extensive commentary on Philostratus; nor are Galen's works ever cited.

Showing the thoroughness characteristic of his work on ancient sport, Thomas Scanlon approaches the topic of maidens' games from both visual and literary evidence. His observations on the role of nudity in womens' athletics are quite good, drawing on both parallel cultic phenomena in Greek initiation rites and the peculiar nature of the Spartan *agoge*. A major section of Scanlon's study discusses 26 bronze figures of naked girls of Laconian provenience or arguably Laconian style. This is a fascinating, albeit at times speculative, study.

The collection ends with Daniel Harmon's observations on the religious significance of Roman games. There are some provocative ideas here, but one misses certain substantive points, such as the emperor's exploitation of the *pulvinar* in the circus and the techniques of propaganda frequently deployed in

that setting. The imaginative theories of W. Burkert concerning Pelops may explain the religious dynamics of the Olympics, but it requires much tighter arguments than one finds here to make a cogent comparison with Roman imperial cult.

There are, to be sure, a few disappointing papers here, but for both teaching and research, there is much in this book to recommend it.

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