from ATHENS *to* BEIJING

WEST MEETS EAST IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

EDITED BY SUSAN BROWNELL

Edited by Susan Brownell

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West Meets East in the Olympic Games

Volume I: Sport, the Body, and Humanism in Ancient Greece and China

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From Athens to Beijing

West Meets East in the Olympic Games

In memory of Captain Vassilis Constantakopoulos

The Series

Toward the goal of consolidating existing relevant scholarship, pushing forward new insights, and creating a global scholarly network, a series of three conferences was organized in 2007-2008 through a Greece-China-US collaboration among Susan Brownell and Michael Cosmopoulos of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Ren Hai of the Beijing Sport University, and Christina Koulouri of the University of the Peloponnese. One goal of these conferences was to seek to develop a new vision of the Olympic Games as a history of the interconnection of the world through sport—as opposed to a history of the domination of the world by Western civilization through sport. Putting theory into practice, we tried to bring together a core group of scholars from Greece and China, and then add scholars from the US and the rest of Europe and East Asia, with the aim of including the viewpoints of scholars actually living and working in the countries whose traditions we were examining, so that this did not end up being yet one more European- and North American-dominated endeavor. All told, these three conferences brought together thirty-eight scholars from twelve countries and territories: Greece, the US, Belgium, Germany, France, the UK, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Brazil. They helped to build an international academic network and establish a new paradigm in "comparative Olympic studies."

The conferences that composed *From Athens to Beijing* took place in three "Olympic cities" that had been the sites of "first" Olympic Games on three continents. The initial one took place in North America's first Olympic city, St. Louis, site of the 1904 Olympic Games, and was held at the University of Missouri-St. Louis on April 14, 2007, with the sub-theme, "Sport, the Body, and Humanism in Ancient Greece and China." The second took place in China's first Olympic city (and Asia's third summer Olympic city), Beijing, site of the 2008 games, and was held at the Beijing Sport University on August

20, 2007, with the sub-theme, "Multiculturalism in the Olympic Movement." The third conference convened in Athens, site of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 as well as of the 2004 games. The participants then traveled to ancient Nemea, site of one of the four ancient Pan-Hellenic Games, for a tour of the grounds and a lunch organized by Stephen Miller, and subsequently continued on to the International Olympic Academy, whose honorary dean, Konstantinos Georgiadis, had facilitated arrangements there. This final conference, held within walking distance of the stadium in Ancient Olympia where the Olympic Games first began some 2,800 years ago, was held on May 24-25, 2008, and had the sub-theme, "The Past in the Present of the Olympic Games."

The original three conferences quickly linked up with a fourth one, adding London to the itinerary that spanned "from Athens to Beijing." Vivienne Lo, one of the scholars at the St. Louis conference, was inspired to organize her own conference in London, the site of the 2012 Olympic Games (as well of the 1908 Olympic Games that followed the St. Louis games, and the 1948 games that followed the Second World War). The conference on March 27-29, 2008, resulted in the volume edited by Lo, *Perfect bodies: Sports, medicine and immortality* (The British Museum Research Publication 188, 2012), which contains a contribution by Lo and Brownell and a chapter by Raphals that is an expansion of the one in this volume.

In addition, Susan Brownell and William Kelly of Yale University organized two workshops on "The Olympics in East Asia: Nationalism, Regionalism, and Globalism on the Center Stage of World Sports," which included some participants from *From Athens to Beijing*. The first was sponsored by the Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities and was held at Hong Kong University, March 15-16, 2008; the second was sponsored by the Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University and took place there on October 5-7, 2008. The resulting volume, co-edited by Kelly and Brownell and published by the Council on East Asian Studies of Yale University, is entitled *The Olympics in East Asia: Nationalism, Regionalism, and Globalism on the Center Stage of World Sports*. The works by Patrick Lau and Leo Hsu are included there rather than in the *From Athens to Beijing* volumes.

In the context of the tremendous amount of global attention and scholarly activity generated by the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, *From Athens to Beijing* set off a ripple effect. After first meeting Donnie Pei at the Beijing conference, Susan Brownell continued to collaborate with him throughout the 2007-2008 academic year (which she spent at Beijing Sport University), supporting his effort to introduce the ancient Greek philosophy of all-around,

balanced education into Chinese schools as a way of correcting the overemphasis on written tests. Through the "Olympic education" programs held nationwide in association with the Beijing Olympics, this fundamental concept reached as many as 400 million students in China. Patrick Lau, a participant in the Beijing conference and Yale workshops, invited Brownell and Leo Hsu to be the guest speakers at the first anniversary celebration of the founding of Hong Kong Baptist University's Centre for Olympic Studies in spring 2008. Dong Jinxia, a participant in the Yale workshops, organized a panel on "Olympic Spirit and World Harmony" at the Beijing Forum in fall 2008 that included Brownell, Lau, and Konstantinos Georgiadis. Georgiadis, in turn, invited Brownell, Ren, Dong, and Valavanis to lecture at the Young Participants' Session of the International Olympic Academy in summer 2009, and invited Mark Golden in 2010. Dong also received a Chinese government fellowship to spend the 2009-2010 academic year as a visiting scholar at Yale University. Other friendships and collaborations facilitated by the conferences are ongoing. In sum, the impetus of *From Athens to Beijing* created new partnerships based in Greece, China, and the US; indeed, it set into motion a global network that continues to exert influence worldwide.

From Athens to Beijing's three conferences and resulting volumes were made possible through the generosity of Costamare Shipping Co. and the late Captain Vassilis Constantakopoulos, to whom we would like to express our gratitude. Additional funding and organizational support for the three conferences were provided by the Hellenic Government-Karakas Family Foundation Professorship in Greek Studies of the Center for International Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Hellenic Olympic Committee for allowing us to hold the final conference in the beautiful setting of the International Olympic Academy and for subsidizing the forty students from the University of the Peloponnese who also attended.

S.B.

Introduction

Sport, the Body, and Humanism in Ancient Greece and China

Susan Brownell

Although the Olympic Games and the philosophy of "Olympism"[1] have largely developed out of the Western humanistic tradition, there has not been a systematic and critical analysis until now of their Western characteristics—of what is unique and what is shared with non-Western cultures. With Athens and Beijing hosting consecutive Olympic Games in 2004 and 2008, it became apparent that there was a great need for this kind of analysis because the ancient histories of Western and Eastern civilization and sports are still called upon to give meaning to the world we live in today. Athens, with its official slogan, "Welcome Home," reminded the world that it was the birthplace of both the ancient and modern Olympic Games. Beijing, on the other hand, with its slogan, "One World, One Dream," emphasized the recent historical transformation of a globe divided along an East-West axis into a unified world. By offering up bodily images of cultural difference—such as naked athletes versus robed sages, or marble stadiums for honoring the gods with human heroics versus tiered temples for unifying heaven, humankind, and Earth—the Olympics and sport provided an entry-point for understanding why and how the world had previously been divided. Just as importantly for the role of the past in the present, the Olympics also erected a concrete platform for both Greece and China to mark their modern emergence as nations worthy of respect, and provided a powerful symbol of momentum toward global unity and world peace. Increasingly in this world, East Asia in general and China in particular are the last great counterweights to the economic, social, and cultural forms generated in the West. From this position, Chinese thinkers have declared with increasing conviction that world peace and prosperity depend on achieving

1 "Olympism" refers to the official philosophy of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), while "Olympic movement" refers to the global structure of sport organizations over which it claims jurisdiction. Both are defined in the IOC's *Olympic Charter*.

more balanced global political, economic, and cultural structures.

Achieving a balance of East and West in the Olympic movement would be one small contribution toward a more diverse global culture. But is there room for multiculturalism in the movement, or are the Olympics a form of Western cultural imperialism? From the present perspective, this raises questions about the relationship between Olympic sports and non-Western or traditional sports and physical exercise. How are we to understand the "sportization" of Eastern sports such as judo, taekwondo, and *wushu* to fit the Western model, with the goal of inclusion in the Olympics? Is the growth of Olympic sports in China resulting in the decline of traditional forms of exercise? What can Eastern concepts of sport, the body, and health contribute toward the health and well-being of the rest of the world? In the rhetoric surrounding the 2004 and 2008 games, the palpable presence of the past in the present raised even more fundamental questions, including, do the concepts of "East" and "West" themselves hold up to analysis?

The issues raised by these two Olympics provided an opportunity for a systematic comparative analysis of Greek and Chinese athletic traditions from ancient times to today. The chapters in *From Athens to Beijing*, presented in two volumes—*Sport, the Body, and Humanism in Ancient Greece and China* and *East and West, Past and Present in the Modern Olympic Games*—provide many answers that force the reader to think against the grain of conventional knowledge. The series recognizes that this comparison is only meaningful from the perspective of the present, in which people seek to explain behaviors observed today by reference to the ancient past. Thus, this series seeks to link scholarship on ancient histories with an understanding of how these histories are used in the present. A positivist search for a line of demarcation between a fixed and unchanging East versus West is doomed to failure, but, since the concept of "East versus West" itself has a huge impact on how large areas of the world's population view each other, the search for this line of demarcation should itself be analyzed as a construct of contemporary society. The two volumes in this series attempt to overcome this conundrum by linking scholarship on the past with scholarship on the present.

Until recently, the kind of analysis engaged in here was hindered by the fact that scholarship in all major European languages on Greek sports in the Homeric, classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods is plentiful, while scholarship on ancient Chinese sports in the roughly contemporary states (Zhou, Warring States, Han) in any language is sparse, and in Western languages even more so.[2] The scholarship on the Olympics and sports is largely

2 Susan Brownell, "The View from Greece: Questioning Eurocentrism in the History of the

dominated by the powerful Western countries, although China is becoming increasingly influential. Furthermore, until recently, the scholarship on the ancient Olympic Games was biased and inaccurate, as it resulted from the highly politicized use of the ancient games to symbolize the quintessence of "Western civilization" and all that the term entailed: "progress," "democracy," "liberty," and so on.[3]

"Sport," "China," and "Greece": The problem with the terms of comparison

The challenge for this comparative endeavor is that the starting-points for the inquiry are themselves problematic, since all of the categories are recent inventions anachronistically applied to times in which they did not exist: this includes the labels of "sport," "China," and "Greece." "Sport" itself, as conventionally understood, is a modern English invention—and who better to make that point than Oswyn Murray, great-grandson of James "Dictionary" Murray, the editor of the first *Oxford English Dictionary*? As Murray observes, in trying to say something about sport, we are not only comparing ancient Greece and China with each other, but also comparing both of them to our current society (Chapter Two). Sport is perhaps an inappropriate label for most of the non-competitive forms of exercise in ancient China discussed in this book; we have chosen to understand the word broadly and use it as a takeoff point for discussing the forms of bodily exercise that China did have.

But are we even justified in trying to compare ancient "China" and "Greece"? Another important point, made by Nathan Sivin (Chapter One), is that "ancient China" and "ancient Greece" themselves are topics of questionable comparability, since they are modern concepts imposed on the past to describe very different social forms existing on vastly disparate territories. In what is now China, by the late third century, there was a single centralized state that controlled a land mass greater than Europe while the Greek world consisted of large and small towns scattered across Greece, southern Italy, and parts of the coastal eastern Mediterranean.

Sport spectacles and political structure

Nevertheless, it is precisely this difference between polities that provides one

Olympic Games," *Journal of Sport History*, 32:2, summer 2005, 203-216.

3 Susan Brownell, *Beijing's Games: What the Olympics Mean to China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), pp. 19-48.

of the most important general insights about the social role of sport. Panos Valavanis reminds us that the ancient Olympic Games, in fact, did not assume a single form (Chapter Nine). With a past of 1,200 years, they are one of the longest-lived institutions in human history. Their political role changed between the age of emerging city-states and that of empires. In the beginning, they served the display of status of the first aristocratic clans; then, they supported interstate rivalry and the interests of kings; in the end, they facilitated the supervision and control of vast empires.

Sivin observes that athletic competition filled a void in the classical Greek world that did not exist in the Chinese world, where the immense power of the Chinese center meant that the imperial palace was the venue for physical and other competition. However, the main expression of competition there was debate among the courtiers. The Greek games took place at sites that were recognized by the various city-states as holy, and sport was thus a facet of the religion shared by the populace and its elites; Chinese records leave us no reason to believe that sport was important as a component of the state or popular religion, although it did play some role in imperial court ritual, as has been described by Mark Edward Lewis.[4] This may reflect Sivin's observation that, at least based on what we can conclude from the records their historians left behind, Greek elites were "attuned to disagreement and competition" while the Chinese "favored the theme of harmony."

The way in which the sport forms of scattered small states may vary in comparison with centralized empires is also evident in the examples of Egyptians, Sumerians, Hittites, and ancient Romans. Thomas Scanlon finds that the aristocratic elites in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Near East patronized sport in order to accumulate political capital, which required close control of communal festivals, including sports, to ensure that the events functioned to reaffirm their right to rule (Chapter Six). Although Greek tyrants also sought to affirm their status through chariot racing, they accumulated their political capital very differently. Nonetheless, in an earlier era, the difference between Greece and these cultures, and China, might not have been so great as it became in the classical period. Scanlon notes that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* describe two apparently contradictory attitudes to sport: first, that it is a heroic and noble pursuit; second, that it ought to be open to all free-born men to win personal glory on the basis of natural ability.

The social climbing possible in Greek games due to the unpredictable nature of victory in real, non-ritualized contests was rare among Egyptians,

4 See the discussion of cosmic kickball in the Han dynasty in Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

Sumerians, and Hittites. This may explain why, although all were fond of sports, sports did not occupy as central a cultural role among the latter as they did in Greece. Scanlon concludes that this "shows not a failure of imagination, but most likely a choice." Greek smaller-scale patronage, social mobility, more liberal legal systems, and the enhanced status of the individual enabled sporting contests to flourish.

Valavanis reminds us that Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, utilized participation in the Olympic Games as part of his policy of expansion in the south, and was crowned champion three times in three different equestrian events at three successive Olympiads from 356 to 348 BCE. His son, Alexander, took 3,000 athletes on his campaign, and he organized games and constructed sports grounds in the lands he conquered as his main channel for disseminating Greek culture.

Donald Kyle argues (in Chapter Eleven) against the stereotype promoted by nineteenth-century classicists and physical educators in service of nation-building, which portrayed a purported decline of the Olympic Games under the Roman occupation. Instead, recent scholarship shows that the Roman empire preserved the longevity of the Olympic Games. Valavanis echoes this point, stating that, when Roman citizenship was granted to all inhabitants of the empire in the year 212 CE, it strengthened the political role of athletic games as a cohesive force since it meant that all the great athletes of the Mediterranean acquired the right to compete at Olympia and in the other pan-Hellenic games. After this time, victors included not only Greeks and Romans, but also Spaniards, Africans, Galatians, and Armenians.

Pulling Kyle and Valavanis together, Heather Reid notes in her afterword that one way of interpreting the finding that the Olympics peaked as a public event and spectacle after the classical period is to consider that the Macedonian empire infused Near Eastern cultural elements into the games. This raises the possibility that, at their height, the games were not, in fact, a strict expression of the individualistic, meritocratic foundation from which they had emerged, but, rather, a fusion of this ethic with the aristocratic ethic that, in its more extreme form, is considered more characteristic of Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Near East, and China. Perhaps this was a different iteration of the "mixed ethos" that Scanlon considers characteristic of early Greece before the emergence of the Olympics. These observations lead to the conclusion that it was not so much the cultural uniqueness of Greece that was the crucial factor in the emergence and continuity of the Olympic Games; rather, it was the delicate balancing act that Greece managed to maintain based on its position as a cultural crossroads between Eastern and

Western cultural trends, between peoples in Europe and those in Asia and North Africa. Of course, there is a certain cultural uniqueness to be found in that balancing act itself.

This may provide a thought-provoking example for our times, in which the era of fragmented and competitive nation-states that gave birth to the Olympic "revival" at the turn of the nineteenth century has been replaced by an era of increasing global integration. The example of the Beijing games seems to indicate that the modern Olympics are growing in scale and grandeur as a result. While we might be tempted to paint the role of sport in ancient and modern empire-building with a wide brush, we must be careful to recognize a key difference: unlike sport spectacles in the Near Eastern and Mesopotamian empires, the Olympic Games were never organized under the sponsorship of a single powerful individual, but were always under the aegis of the polis of Elis, even under Roman occupation. The same principle applies to the modern Olympic Games, and was an intentional imitation of the ancient Greek model by their founder, Pierre de Coubertin. In 1927, he wrote:

> At the bottom of the crucible in which the fate of future society is prepared, there is a sort of latent eliminatory conflict between the principle of the Roman state and that of the Greek city. In vain, futurist pride strives to create something new. We are doomed to reconstructing on one of these two foundations. Appearances seem to favor the Roman state. As for me, I believe in the Greek city.[5]

Born into the French aristocracy, Coubertin held popular democracy and the nation-state in low regard, and he valued the influence of cities more highly than that of nations. Therefore, he insisted that Olympic Games should be awarded to cities, not nations. In view of what he described as the "eliminatory" potential between the empire and city-state, perhaps the delicate balancing act of our times is not so different from that of ancient times: it involves achieving large-scale unity while, at the same time, maintaining diversity through competition below its overarching cover.

Cultivation of the body, self, and health

One of the significant findings of this volume is that, as Scanlon observes, the Chinese seemed to have had more in common with the Greeks on a per-

5 In a wireless text sent from Olympia on the occasion of the inauguration of the Coubertin Stele. Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, Chapter 23 [1927], reprinted in *Olympism: Selected Writings* (Lausanne: IOC, 2000), p. 512.

sonal, spiritual, or philosophical level than they did at the political level. This seems counter-intuitive because popular practices for the cultivation of the body, self, and health were grounded in fundamental cultural paradigms such as the medical tradition and concepts of citizenship and virtue. One might expect, therefore, that they would reflect "cultural difference" more strongly than other forms. However, both Chinese and Greeks shared an interest in cultivation of the body, praised moderation and denounced excess, and highly valued virtue—although, in the Chinese world, these principles were anchored in the naturalism of Daoism in contrast to the Greek human-centered, God-respecting ideals.

Ren Hai argues in Chapter Three that a fundamentally different conception of humankind's relation with nature is evident in the Daoist tradition of animal-imitation exercises: the Daoist tradition emphasized integration with the natural world while the Greek tradition emphasized struggle with it. Vivienne Lo observes in Chapter Five that, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, animals represented passions of which humans should be ashamed, while in the Chinese tradition—in which animal imagery as a technique for training the body dates to the late Warring States and Han—beasts had a more positive valence since they could symbolize the refinement of base instincts through measure and control. She finds that the Chinese techniques that direct attention to the sensual body rather than alienating themselves from it "present a lively challenge to post-Cartesian constructions of mind and body." The chapters by Ren and Lo combine to demonstrate that Western mind-body dualism is linked to an opposition of humans to nature, while the Chinese mind-body synthesis is linked to a harmony between the two.

Ren feels that the more positive valence of nature in the Chinese tradition reflects the concentration of the Greek elite in the urban enclaves of the *polis*, but we must take into consideration that China contained some of the world's most populous cities from early times, with the ancient capital of Chang'an (today's Xi'an) surpassing Near Eastern cities as the most populous city on the planet in 195 BCE with a population of 400,000, according to one set of calculations.[6] If a widespread Chinese cultural tradition valued harmony with nature, then it was perhaps not because its advocates actually lived in harmony with nature, but rather the opposite—having experienced urbanization on a larger scale than populations in Europe, the Chinese recognized its maladies long before Western cultures did.

6 Tertius Chandler, *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987). Chandler's foundational effort has generated a great deal of debate and is presented only as a suggestive point here.

Military prowess, heroism, and virtue

One contribution of this collection is to counter the common misperception that sports are directly related to military training. An examination of the rich repertoire of sports that we believe existed in the ancient Greek city-states and roughly contemporaneous Chinese dynasties shows that the sports that served as major forms of public entertainment and/or occupied important cultural positions had little connection with the skills of warfare. Murray points out that "no one ever threw a discus in anger," and that the most useful military skills, such as stone-throwing or short-sword stabbing, were not contested as sports. In some cases, as Mark Edward Lewis states, sports preserved the use of archaic weapons no longer used in war (Chapter Ten); as Vivienne Lo and Lesley Dean-Jones (Chapter Four) point out, there was a recognition in both Greece and China that bodily regimens and sports that were good for the health and entertaining to the populace were not good for producing soldiers, who needed other regimens and training methods. This leads to the conclusion that sport is something substantially different from war.

Lewis argues that Greece and China socialized the skills of combat by turning them into modes of competition for honor and self-justification (despite the veneer of civil dominance in China). It may be possible that if one looks at forms of bodily training more narrowly related to military training, ancient China and Greece look much more similar than they do if one looks at the forms with broader cultural salience. Yet even in sport forms derived from combat skills such as swordsmanship, Lewis finds that Greek sports focused on physical prowess and the spectacle of the naked, muscled body, while the Chinese paid less attention to the muscular valor of the warrior and subordinated their martial arts to the commander's cunning and the cosmic morality of the benevolent sage-king.

Mu-chou Poo says that the first-century CE *History of Han* contains the earliest appearance of the *ying-xiong*, a man of excellent physical strength, a war hero (Chapter Eight). Chinese heroes thus appeared on the scene many centuries after the heroes of the Homeric epics, but they proliferated in the disorder that followed the fall of the Han dynasty. Since heroism is one of the central cultural paradigms of the Greek games—one foundation myth attributes the establishment of the Olympic Games to Heracles, one of the most popular heroes—the absence of a paradigm of heroism in China might be considered indicative of an important cultural difference. Greek heroes were demigods worshiped at various locations after their death, while Chinese heroes tended to be secular, historical figures. However, even if the Chi-

nese cult of heroism came upon the scene considerably later, once it did appear, differences with the ancient Greek cults were not always clear. One of the most famous Chinese heroes, the historical figure Guan Yu (160-219 CE) of the Three Kingdoms period, is even today widely worshiped as a protective deity. On the other hand, Guan Yu was not associated with competitive games, nor was there a Chinese equivalent of the Greek heroic ethos of competition, "always to be best and to surpass others."

As Lisa Raphals observes in Chapter Seven, Greek excellence was encouraged by the perceived approbation, or even active participation, of a divine audience. In the Chinese records, we find court contests in archery and charioteering, but competition may not have been their primary purpose: Confucius praises not so much the skill of the archer as the character of the "gentleman," or *junzi*, whose excellence, unlike that of the hero, was expressed in noncompetitive behavior. In archery, Raphals finds a sport that is discussed in both Greek and Chinese sources, thus providing a more focused point of comparison than many of the practices discussed in this book. However, she finds as much difference between Homer and Plato, or between Sunzi and Confucius, as she finds between the Greek and Chinese sources. What is shared in common is the use of metaphors that compare sport to wisdom or moral excellence.

Raphals summarizes the differences between Greek and Chinese sport by noting that Greek sport was centralized, democratic, competitive, external, and aesthetic (in some contexts, erotic). Chinese sport was local, hierarchical, noncompetitive, internal, and, in some contexts, imitative of the whole body movements of animals. She asks whether Greek philosophical views and Chinese metaphysics leave us "foundering in a glen of incommensurables"? Her answer is "no" because both Chinese and Greek practices are based on notions of virtue and self-cultivation, although there may be very different institutional contexts for their expression.

Heather Reid applies this insight to the contemporary Olympic Games, arguing that "virtue ethics" may be a more suitable common ground for a quadrennial gathering of the world's peoples than are the rules-based ethics that human rights advocates urged the IOC to adhere to in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics. She states, "The common ethical denominator in virtue ethics, like athletics, is simply our humanity."

What are we to make of all of this?

This volume shows that comparing ancient Chinese and Greek sport is no

easy task. The picture is complex and it is not easy to extract general patterns. Sometimes there seems to be as much difference within the Chinese and Greek sources as between them. Throughout all of the chapters in this volume, there are two patterns that frequently recur. One is the religious associations of Greek sports, which assumed an audience of observing gods, contrasted with the secular nature of Chinese sport and exercise forms and their lack of a divine audience. The other is that the differences between Greek and Chinese sporting practices are greater when the sport forms in question serve political functions but that the differences shrink when they serve the pursuit of individual health and virtue. As Thomas Scanlon observes, sports were chameleon-like when they were used as a tool of politics. Why this should be so is perhaps not hard to hypothesize: political differences divide us, but our shared biology and humanity unite us.

Chapter One

Reflections on Comparing Greek and Chinese Sports

Nathan Sivin

The purpose of this essay is to ponder some basic differences between the cultures of China and Greece that were bound to shape every aspect of activity and thought. This seems to me a desirable complement to picking and choosing *comparanda* from among the elements of sport. If we pay attention not only to athletics but to the values and dispositions that the competitors shared with the people around them, our comparisons are likely to be less superficial. Let me, then, review some of the most fundamental differences and consider their consequences for the topic of this book.

In order to avoid the fallacy of comparing discrepant periods over 2,500 years, I will restrict this survey to a single space of time centered on the fifth century BCE to 200 CE, concentrating on the classical and Hellenistic periods in the Greek world and on the end of the Warring States and Han period in China. There is no theoretical reason that this span of years should be comparable in the two civilizations, but it happens that, roughly speaking, analogous transitions left commensurable literatures. Here are some differences—and similarities—that seem to me significant.

The scale of the two worlds

The scale of the Chinese and Greek worlds was so different that in many respects they are not comparable. The latter, scattered across Greece, southern Italy, and parts of the eastern Mediterranean near the coast, was an accumulation of large and small towns, some independent, some bound by colonial ties to others. By Chinese standards, the sum of their population was negligible. Citizens identified themselves with their city-states. They declared themselves Greeks mainly in contrast to others they considered barbarians. The great variety of political systems, changing with time, tended to discourage initiatives toward unity. What ties there were gradually weakened. In the

Hellenistic period, the Greek world became part of a much larger empire that failed to establish a strong common culture before the Romans ended it.

China began this period as hundreds of large and small kingdoms. By the late third century BCE, as strong states gobbled up weaker ones, the outcome was a single, centrally governed empire able to enforce its writ over a land mass larger than Europe. Except in some kingdoms enfeoffed by the dynastic founder that were soon abolished, local administrations were simply agencies of the imperial government. A priority of the state was building a common elite culture.

Given the difference in scale at the two ends of Eurasia, it is not surprising that the uses of athletic competition differed greatly. For the Greeks, as other chapters in this book will make clear, the Olympic Games were an inspired move to encourage cooperation and a feeling of shared interest among diverse states with diverse interests. But the ability of such an institution to hold that world together was inherently limited.

China was hardly uniform, as we would expect of an immense landmass in which, below the thin stratum of the literate, landowning, officeholding elite, a variety of local cultures persisted despite the political uniformity imposed by the center. Nevertheless, the dispensation of power became in principle unitary by 200 BCE, and the state wiped out the exceptions over the century after that. There was no need for athletic competition to fill a void of the Greek kind. Given the immense power of the Chinese center, the obvious venue for physical and other competition was the palace, as part of imperial ritual and entertainment that commoners could only imagine.

Who made the records?

The records of the past were left by people who like ourselves were always laden with assumptions, values, interests, and prejudices. Despite the power of bureaucracy to standardize and rationalize, not even documents issued in the name of church or state could be objective. That is why historians critically scrutinize the context of and motivations behind every piece of written evidence. With that in mind, we would do well to compare who left Chinese and Greek records.

In China, between about 400 and 250 BCE, the few among the literate who sought to support themselves with their knowledge tended to become the unofficial advisors of local rulers, usually supported by private patronage. They consulted on such matters as military training, statecraft, fomenting weakness in rivals, deception, and assassination. The few among these

advisors whom historians today classify as philosophers were less frequently kept on to consult on ethics than to reveal the secrets of gaining and keeping power. In the second half of the third century, as a single political center became inevitable, intellectuals devoted themselves to planning and promoting the right kind of empire, and inventing various ideologies of cosmos, body, and state that I relate to medicine below. Scholars varied considerably in their analyses and proposals, but converged in supporting the centralized state. Over about a century, they defined orthodoxies that combined elements of older philosophies and gave them new, statist meanings. Careless writers frequently describe these ideologies as Confucian, Legalist, etc. They were, rather, innovative and promiscuous, drawing freely on every prevalent trend of thought. Despite the stereotyped Confucian label, they contradicted the teachings of Confucius and his chief successors in many crucial respects.[1] They provided the mental structures that became central to elite education and accommodated change over the 2,200 years that imperial China survived.[2]

The intellectual world was far from uniform. A gradual weakening of the hard-won central authority led to a downward spiral in which large numbers of the officeholding class avoided serving in an increasingly chaotic, mismanaged, corrupt government, retiring instead to what in many cases became vast private estates where they pursued their own interests. Now, the educated who avoided or were locked out of office and needed to support themselves tended to go into scholarship and teaching. The government tried to regulate even this by registering—for a consideration—"authentic" lineages of teaching. Certification by this "lineage model" (*jiafa* 家法) system gave prestige to disciples whose teachers were well connected and excellent incomes to teachers who could accumulate thousands of disciples on whom they need not expend much effort.

Partly as a consequence, we can find conflicting judgments on practically any issue from those either ensconced in this system or lacking the family connections or money to benefit from it. Thus, the famous Wang Chong 王充 (27-97 CE), who spent his career as a frustrated rank-and-file teacher, debunked wholesale what the more successful accepted as common sense (the label "skeptic" often applied to him ignores his acceptance of many contemporary political pieties). He and a few contrarians like him make it easy for modern scholars to locate exceptions to any right-minded consensus. But

1 For details, see G. E. R. Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early China and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 47-48.
2 Lloyd and Sivin, 27-42.

the legitimate scope of generalizations and refutations becomes clear only when they are evaluated in their setting, a step that many philologists tend to skip.

In the Greek world, lacking private sources of patronage and public employment for intellectuals, those who left records of their time tended in the early phase to support themselves as individual teachers. Beginning in the time of Plato, many organized themselves in schools, which made livelihoods less chancy. The traditions of a school's founder did not necessarily dominate in a culture that valued disagreement. Geoffrey Lloyd has spoken of Hellenistic schools as "alliances for offensive and defensive argument."[3]

Sites of physical competition

Physical competition found innumerable sites in Greece, but the Olympics and other interstate games took place, as Panos Valavanis has put it, at religious and other diplomatic centers. They were quintessentially public.

We know a great deal less than we should about how widespread physical games and sports were in China before 400 CE. Because those who recorded the minutiae of culture were at first centered in local courts and then strove for posts in the imperial civil service, most of our data are about the competitions located in palaces, the opposite of public places. The strenuous contests—kickball and forms of wrestling, among others—entered the consciousness of the elite when they were used in military training. Literary accounts give credit to the Yellow Emperor for the invention of these forms of competition. This was part of a general pattern of ascribing the invention of all arts to legendary rulers of archaic times; one could not, after all, imagine unwashed, untutored peasants and artisans creating such fundamental aspects of civilization.

Mark Lewis has also noted the role of certain kinds of physical competition in state ritual, and has cited sources that mention the fondness of one or more emperors for kickball. The problem is that we know practically nothing about the popular observances in which these contests originated, and which authors ignored or mentioned only in passing. We are equally ignorant about the elevated forms of these contests in what Lewis calls "ritualized pageants that demonstrated the cosmic power of the emperor."[4] Such sports were not part of the recorded ritual canon.

3 Lloyd and Sivin, 56, on the "lineage model" system; 111, on Greek schools.

4 Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), Chapter 4.

From the fourth century on, a culture of public display did come to play a prominent part in the growth of governmental authority. It included rituals designed to be witnessed by as many as possible, the wide distribution of valuable tokens, and the open exhibition of monumental texts. But here, too, physical competition played no part resembling its role in the Greek games.[5]

There were two notable exceptions to this obscurity. One was archery, a remnant of what early in the first millennium had been part of every aristocrat's education. By the beginning of our period, it was so highly ritualized that it was no longer physically competitive or even particularly demanding. Its purpose, as Lisa Raphals puts it, was to display character through noncompetitive behavior (see Chapter Seven, pp. 110-119). Brawn and manual dexterity were no longer important; accuracy had become "a by-product of virtue." The ritual classics give minute accounts of its performance at the level of state and district.[6]

The main serious form of competition among courtiers was debate. It is obvious from detailed accounts that this was most often concerned with policy, hardly remarkable given its venue. Oddly enough, most extant records of debate on philosophical issues were also situated in courts. For reasons unknown (perhaps the limited appreciation of noble auditors for complex reasoning), most such verbal confrontations conclude with thinkers accusing their opponents of heterodoxy and recommending that their views be prohibited.[7]

Relations of humans to gods

One sees again and again in Greece that, despite the familiar social relationships between the gods, and their all too human emotions, people could never forget the absolute gap between their own limitations and the gods' physical perfection and immortality. Gods can father humans, but their offspring do not quite belong to either group.

Chinese, too, thought of gods as eternal and anthropomorphic, organized

5 Michael Nylan, "Toward an Archeology of Writing: Text, Ritual, and the Culture of Public Display in the Classical Period (475 C.E.–220 C.E.)," in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, edited by Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 3-49.

6 The most substantial accounts are in *Yili* [*Rites and Ceremonies*] (final form, late third century BCE?), Chapters 5 and 7, and *Liji* [*Book of Rites*] (final form, ca. 100 CE?), Chapter 43. For translations, see, for the former, Séraphin Couvreur, translator and editor, *Cérémonial: Texte chinois et traduction* (Hsien hsien: Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1916), Chapters 7 and 43; and, for the latter, James Legge, *The sacred books of China: The texts of Confucianism*, Part III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1885), Book 43.

7 For examples, see Lloyd and Sivin, 61-68.

in a social order analogous to and often in contact with that of humans. But their notions of divinity were in other ways strikingly different. We are only now beginning to understand popular religion, which scholars in and out of China have until recently ignored in favor of hoary clichés about Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. The popular gods that everyone (not only commoners) worshiped made up a bureaucracy parallel to that of the empire. In fact, the two developed simultaneously and interactively.[8] Before about 500 BCE, rulers had special access to the heavenly powers because their ancestors were part of the divine order. In the period that interests us, the centrality of the ruler came to rest, not on his ancestral line, but on himself as the link between the heavenly and social orders.[9] Ritual offerings to ancestors came to be general among the well-born.

For the rest of the population, a priest[10] of the popular religion, knowledgeable about the celestial bureaucracy, could find and refer the cause of disease or ill fortune to the proper jurisdiction, and ritually implore the help of its divine members—rather like a fellow villager who had connections in the local government office and could use them on behalf of neighbors. As the pursuit of immortality became an important theme in popular belief, its attainment came to mean not merely escape from death but induction into the divine civil service. This is still a scantily explored topic, but it obviously has important implications for the interface between the human and divine worlds.[11]

It also has implications for physical competition. The Greek gods were interested, and often involved, in the Olympics. Thus, the games took place at sites that the city-states agreed were holy. Among the Chinese, physical competition was not a facet of popular religion. What served that purpose was drama, of a kind that varied from place to place, performed for the gods. This was true for later times; whether it also held for early imperial history

8 I mean bureaucracy in the technical sense: an organization based on official positions, not individuals, that maintained its overall structure regardless of who was assigned to what bureau at a given time. This ideal of civil service gradually took form in the Han period although, as I noted above, actual status was still largely determined by the family connections of its incumbents.

9 Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and political culture in early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Chapter 3.

10 Or master, a translation closer to the usual Chinese term, *fashi* 法師. The state of research on the topic is so primitive that there is no consensus on basic nomenclature. What some specialists call popular religion others call the common religion, or local religion.

11 Stephan Feuchtwang, *Imperial metaphor: Popular religion in China* (London: Routledge, 1992), revised edition entitled *Popular religion in China: The imperial metaphor* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2001); and, for the Han and earlier, Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

remains to be determined.[12]

The components of the body

One human body is much like another in anatomy, physiology, and metabolism. To ethnologists, it at first seemed that all cultures envision living bodies in more or less the same way, but that turned out to be more a matter of the observers' own assumptions than of how their subjects reasoned.

There was no way before modern times to directly inspect the interior of the living human body. Early healers formed various notions of its workings by combining what they perceived on the body's exterior, what they could see inside cadavers (if they looked), and what patients said about their somatic processes. Before the nineteenth century, therapists' notions everywhere were inevitably fantasies, affected by the cosmologies and values of which they necessarily partook. These, in turn, some anthropologists argue, reflect social patterns.[13]

Greek bodies were part of the experiential world, about which philosophers and physicians could never agree among themselves, so even in explicitly medical writings we find a great many incompatible accounts of them. Chinese medical authors differed in details, but were more consistent when they discussed the body's overall workings.

Theories of the body tend to combine accounts of its physical composition and dynamic processes, but the proportions of the two vary greatly between cultures. Post-Hippocratic Greek authors devoted most of their attention to the body's contents, structures, and substances. For Galen, knowledge of anatomy is the surest guide to understanding the functions of the parts. Conversely, the Chinese medical classics devote remarkably little attention to describing what fills the body, solid, liquid, or imponderable. All its contents are simply various physical states of *qi,* the universal substance that embodies form, vitality, and the capacity for change. What the canons construct in remarkable detail is a congeries of vital, metabolic, and circulatory processes that in health correspond harmoniously to those that animate the cosmos—and the state. Their concern, in other words, is dynamics, with structures unimportant by comparison.[14]

12 This is a greatly neglected topic. The most recent scholarship is Derk Bodde, *Festivals in classical China: New Year and other annual observances during the Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.-A.D. 220* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

13 See, especially, Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

14 On the contents of the body, see Nathan Sivin, *Traditional Medicine in Contemporary China:*

Greek physicians explained that the internal organs and other structures worked together to process air and food into the internal substances that sustain life—for Plato, under the kingship of the heart.[15] For Chinese, the internal organs were not places to concoct food into substances that the body could use, but systems of functions patterned on a governmental bureaucracy, literally "in charge of" metabolic and other vital processes. They were not processors, but supervisors; the processes themselves were spontaneous. The organs were not components of a processing plant, therefore, but the locations of bureaus.

Ideals of the body

We have already seen that, from the mid-third century BCE on, a succession of Chinese intellectuals served the new Han empire and its short-lived predecessor—even before they came into existence—by building a unitary vision of heaven, earth, state, and body in harmonious resonance. Thus, the new emperor deserved his dominion not because his army won a series of wars, but because his new regime alone was uniquely responsive to the cosmic order. By analogy, a sound political order could offer health to its subjects. In the doctrinal classics of medicine that appeared from the first century BCE on, it was a ruler—the legendary Yellow Emperor—and his ministers who revealed the secrets of somatic normality and therapy. These classics, which were enormously influential, grounded health in diet, physical and mental cultivation, moral conduct, proper social relations, and, as a last resort, therapy. A thousand years before the Chinese government began to undertake public-health campaigns, this approach linked health and a proper mode of life to political convention.

Well before the beginning of philosophy in China, identity was largely a matter of relations with others. People tended to think of themselves as the center of a network of mutual obligations, those toward others and those of others toward oneself. As society evolved and changed, there was no shortage of people motivated to compete and to excel individually,[16] but, among

A Partial Translation of Revised Outline of Chinese Medicine (1972) with an Introductory Study on Change in Present-Day and Early Medicine (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Center for Chinese Studies, 1987), Chapter IV; and on the visceral systems of function as a bureaucracy, the same source, 131-133, and Lloyd and Sivin, 218-219.

15 On the Greeks, see G. E. R. Lloyd, *Adversaries and authorities: Investigations into ancient Greek and Chinese science* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 190-201; on China, Lloyd and Sivin, 219-221.

16 This became especially prominent with the appearance in the seventh century CE of the imperial examination system for recruiting officials, a competition that rewarded the ability

public values, those of harmony tended to predominate. Political culture in China depended as much as elsewhere on infighting, often fierce and Pyrrhic, but classical historians did not present this as desirable. In a culture that ostentatiously valued harmony, it is hardly surprising that people thought of concord, not competition, as the norm. That circumstance hardly encouraged competitive sport as a focus of popular enthusiasm.

In the Greek world of the time, ἀρετή, personal excellence, was the ideal. It was a bold step on Plato's part to shift the emphasis away from valor and other commonly esteemed manly qualities toward moral virtue, but his new philosophical definition did not move public acclaim away from athletes toward ethicists. Endless argument seemed to be the hallmark of Greek public and intellectual life. Even those who cooperated tended to differ ostentatiously over details. In this sense, athletic competition between city-states embodied widespread values that favored contention.

Conclusion

I have compared several aspects of general culture—given the sources, largely of elite culture— that affect sports. They have led to these conclusions:

- A severe limitation on any comparison, important to keep in mind, is that China and Greece are practically incommensurable in size and population.
- The disunity and political diversity of the Greek world encouraged the Olympic Games as public ritual. In China, there was no such motivation for the state—which made such decisions—to sponsor public display of physical competition.
- Greeks were, so to speak, attuned to disagreement and competition. Those who left records in China focused at first on local courts and later on the empire, and favored the theme of harmony. They had little interest in the popular origins of sport or anything else, regularly crediting legendary rulers with the arts of civilization.
- Palace debate played a role in China similar in a few respects to argument in the Athenian Assembly (Ἐκκλησία), but in others closer to that of Greek sport.

to memorize and write in various literary forms. In the period of this essay, appointment depended primarily at first on birth and enough literacy to read and write documents. Toward the end of the period, the government began to require some training in a classic. The standard reference is Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) .

- There were fundamental differences in the relations of humans to gods. Religious settings for the Olympics were natural in view of Greek values, but in Chinese palace entertainment there were no religious overtones to physical competition.
- Living bodies reflect social norms. Greek medical writers emphasized the body's structures and contents; those of China, the dynamic processes that sustain life. Greek organs processed ingested food and air; those of China were bureaus responsible for supervising, not operating, spontaneous vital processes.

Greek ideals of the athlete's body emphasized individual physical excellence, and maintained competitiveness as the norm. Chinese ideals, like China's cosmology, favored harmony as a normative value. From ca. 250 CE on, somatic ideals were closely tied to the ideology of the centralized state. These did not include athleticism or individual competition.

These are merely examples that shed additional light on the circumstances of competitive sports in Greece and China. They do not support Western clichés about Occidental activism vs. Oriental passivity, or about Greece having launched full-blown modern European ideals. A general purview of culture and society can yield many more useful examples.

Chapter Two

The Olympic Games and the Cult of Sport in Ancient Greece

Oswyn Murray

I want to make a number of basic points about the nature of sport and therefore about what it is that we are trying to compare when (as in this volume) we seek to trace a phenomenon across cultures. My first point is that, in this case, we are considering three separate cultures, not simply comparing the Western tradition with the Chinese. For there is a huge gap between modern Western sport and its alleged predecessor in the ancient Greek world, as my essay seeks to show.

My second point concerns the strangeness of sport. In making our comparisons, it is important to distinguish, on the one hand, forms of physical exercise and play from the concept of organized sport. It seems that, whereas play activities exist in all societies both human and animal, the organized pursuit of sport is a rare phenomenon. Whenever I am in doubt about an idea, I consult the "family bible"—my grandfather's copy of the *Oxford English Dictionary* that he received *gratis* as one of the eleven children of the original editor. In the fascicule published in July 1916, the *OED* defined "sport" as "participation in games or exercises, esp. those of an athletic character or pursued in the open air"; and the entry shows that, even in the Anglo-Saxon world—allegedly the origin of the modern cult of sport—the word used in this sense as an abstract noun cannot be found before 1863. Sport, defined as "a series of athletic contests engaged in or held at one time and forming a spectacle or social event," is used earlier only in descriptions of the ancient Olympic Games, which shows indeed how important the Greek model was for the development of modern organized sports. Similarly, when James Murray came to define "athlete" in the first volume of the *OED* (1888), he did so with direct reference to the ancient world: "a competitor in the physical exercises—such as running, leaping, boxing, wrestling—that formed part of the public games in ancient Greece and Rome"; and one of his quotations notes that the word is missing from Samuel Johnson's dictionary of 1755.

Thus, it seems that, apart from the Greeks and ourselves, very few societies have valued or even considered appropriate the organized competitive pursuit of useless physical activity for its own sake, or as a form of self-display. Moreover, the modern habit of engaging in team activity was unknown even to the Greeks, and therefore even more unusual than single competitive sport: with the possible exception of mock battles and displays of horsemanship, the ritual contest, in which two or more groups of people seek to achieve a metaphysical victory over arbitrarily defined opponents according to rules invented for the purpose, is largely a modern Western invention.

Thus, when the Duke of Wellington, in old age,[1] made his famous remark, "The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton," the mention of Eton shows that he was thinking of his officers, not his men, whom he regarded as "the mere scum of the earth." It seems that he was referring to a form of disorganized early rugby invented by the boys and popular in a number of boarding schools: the rules of rugby itself were codified on the basis of a similar game popular at Rugby School, under its famous headmaster in the 1830s, Thomas Arnold, proponent of "muscular Christianity," who encouraged organized games as a substitute for bullying and other undesirable youth activities. A comparative study of the first codifications of the rules of most modern sports would, I think, show that few "official" sports existed before the 1860s; and (perhaps significantly) those that do have earlier origins, such as golf, cricket, and dueling, are often not recognized as modern Olympic sports.

Many societies have indeed found sport and games a deeply puzzling concept even when they are introduced by outsiders. Sport seems foreign to traditional Islam, except for aristocratic sports on horseback. Since we are discussing the celebration of the Olympic Games in China, perhaps I can relate a family anecdote told to me by my great-uncle, who died aged ninety-five on May 7, 1981.[2] Jowett Murray was born in 1886, the youngest son of Sir James Murray, editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and godson of Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol and the man who had actually introduced the idea of sport into British universities—it is claimed that when Benjamin Jowett launched an appeal to buy a sports ground for his college (the first in Oxford), Lord Lansdowne said that he thought sport a waste of time for the young. Jowett replied with the classic phrase, "I asked for your money, not your opinion," and the Lord duly contributed. After a brilliant career

1 It is not clear when the remark was made: it is first recorded in Sir William Fraser, *Words on Wellington* (1889), 138.

2 There is no *Dictionary of National Biography* article on Jowett Murray, but an excellent obituary by his son, the Rev. Robert Murray S.J., can be found in *The Times* for May 8, 1981.

and a triple first-class degree at university, my great-uncle went out to China in 1909 to become a lay missionary: he taught at Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College, where he had the sons of the revolutionary premier Yuan Shikai and two princes of the imperial family as pupils. He spent his working life in China in various universities until the Japanese invasion, and came back to England only after his release from internment in 1945; he was largely responsible for the best translation of the Bible into Chinese, published in Hong Kong in 1970. In his early years as an educator, he told me that he had attempted to introduce his Chinese pupils to football. This was not a success: they wore long mandarin robes that tended to impede their movements and hide the ball; they were inclined always to pass the ball deferentially to the most prestigious individual on the pitch; and they considered the idea of competition, or indeed physical exertion, to be beneath them and incompatible with the decorum required of a truly educated elite.

What is it that made the Greeks invent sport? In origin, their sports probably have nothing whatever to do with military training; certainly none of the sports they pursued had any serious military use. Even javelin-throwing was unusual in war since javelins were used as much for stabbing as for throwing, and the armored race was invented late and performed in specially designed half-armor, as well as being militarily useful only in defeat. No one ever threw a discus in anger, and running and wrestling were unsuitable to the mass military formations of heavily armed citizen militia, which constituted the main type of fighting. There were no athletic contests in archery or stone-throwing, or even in short-sword-stabbing or fencing, skills that might conceivably have been useful—just as today there is no competition in grenade-lobbing or Molotov-cocktail-throwing, and the shooting is not done with real Kalashnikovs or machine guns. Games seem indeed to have begun as displays of useless skill in a competitive context, perhaps as entertainment at funerals; though why there should have been such activities particularly at funerals is only to be explained by referring to the funeral games that Achilles held for Patroclus in the *Iliad*. Chronologically, it is at least possible that the earliest Olympic Games were the models for Homer's description, rather than vice versa. Young aristocrats displayed their speed or strength in public in order to win glory for themselves, and not for any useful end.

For sport was the physical expression of the competitive or agonistic spirit that was perhaps the central feature of Greek aristocratic life: ever since the establishment of the importance of the *agôn* for Greek culture by Jacob Burckhardt and Friedrich Nietzsche in the 1870s in Basel, this has been recognized as a fundamental aspect of the Greek mentality. Everything was a

competition, and winning was crucial to the aristocrat's self-esteem and to his prestige within the community: the virtues of cooperation and community spirit evolved only later in the democratic age, and never completely replaced the virtues of aristocracy. This competitive ethos had its uses in war and in politics; but it had little to do with economic life or the emergence of capitalism since the acquisition of wealth was despised and regarded as a means of disrupting the privileges of an aristocratic elite. Rather, the spirit of competition expressed itself in all forms of activity, both serious and ludic. The full consequences of this for Western civilization were brought out long ago in two classic works, Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) and Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1938), and are well recognized in anthropology today.

The ancient Greeks were sports-mad. Their recorded history begins from 776 BCE, the traditional date of the first Olympic Games, as determined by the fourth-century scholar Hippias of Elis, who produced a list of victors in the 200-meter footrace, and, so, established the chronology of all Greek history according to a continuous four-year cycle.[3] For the young Greek aristocratic male, life alternated between his days at the *gymnasion* or *palaestra* in training for boxing or wrestling and other sports, and his evenings at the *symposion*, drinking with the lads. Originally a way of life for aristocrats, who liked to call themselves the *kaloikagathoi*, the beautiful and the best, it later developed into the badge of being Greek. In the cities of the Hellenistic period, only Greeks could follow a *gymnasion* education: that was what defined one as a citizen. The Greeks and the modern world are perhaps the only major civilizations to have placed such values at the center of their cultural experience.

But there are important differences between us and them. The first is the complete absence of team spirit: the only Greek activity known to me that can be defined as a team sport is sex.[4] Otherwise, every Greek preferred to be on top—always on top and the best at everything, as Homer says. There was no sporting instinct toward the loser: the poet of Greek sport, Pindar, expresses the ethos well, singing in his seventies at the victory celebration for the winner of the boys' wrestling in 446 BCE:

3 Some skeptics have needlessly doubted the validity of Hippias' list, alleging that early victors were invented, or that the games were not originally held every four years. There is plenty of evidence to show that the dates that result from his list for early Greek history are indeed accurate.

4 The evidence of vase-painting suggests that this sport, carried on with slave girls at the *symposion*, had few rules.

And now four times you came down with bodies beneath you,
(you meant them harm),
to whom the Pythian feast has given
no glad home-coming like yours.
They, when they meet their mothers,
have no sweet laughter around them moving delight.
In back streets out of their enemies' way,
they cower; disaster has bitten them.
But who, in his tenderest years,
finds some lovely new thing,
his hope is high, and he flies
on the wings of his manhood; better than riches are his thoughts….
Man's life is a day. What is he?
What is he not? A shadow in a dream
is man: but when God sends a brightness,
shining life is on earth
and life is sweet as honey.
(*Pythian* 8.81-97, translated by C. M. Bowra)

The glory of winning makes the victor almost equal to the gods. Sport expresses the ultimate aim of life as a contest, and the ideal of agonal man. So my third point is that Greek sport was essentially aristocratic: the idea of sport as democratic is a modern invention, based on the increasing importance of professional training in skill and the demands of an entertainment industry focused on the interests of the spectator rather than the sportsman.

Another and more superficially obvious difference is nudity. No modern enthusiast for the Greek ideal has yet suggested total nudity in rugby or any other sport, not even wrestling or running. The fact is that nudity is extremely uncomfortable for the male athlete: the ancient equivalent of the jockstrap, known as infibulation, involved tying up the genitals to keep them out of the way. Allegedly, it all came about because Orsippus of Megara (who was later president of his city) lost his briefs in the race of 720 BCE and won. Some modern scholars have suggested that the practice of nudity reflects the democratic nature of sport: the opposite is true. Nudity mercilessly reveals the perfect muscles of the trained athletic aristocrat in distinction to the useful biceps and bandy legs of the peasant, or the color and shape of the non-Greek foreigner.

To this, there was one inevitable corollary: women were completely ex-

cluded from participating in or viewing sport.[5] The story is told that one sporting mother from Rhodes at the Olympic Games of 404 BCE, whose father and brother had been Olympic victors, dressed as a trainer in order to see her son boxing in the boys' event. So excited was she by his victory that she leaped up and revealed her sex. The judges let her off the death penalty out of respect for the sporting traditions of her family, but decreed that all trainers should in future appear naked as well.

Another less obvious difficulty emerged in the Hellenistic period, when many Jews found themselves living in Greek cities and sought to enter the *gymnasion* organization. Orthodox Jews described the Greeks with a word that means "the naked ones"; because of the practice of circumcision, it was not possible for Jews to avoid detection in the *gymnasion* despite various attempts at reverse operations. The consequence was trouble on both sides as Orthodox and Hellenized Jews clashed, and both met with varying hostility from the Greek community. The most famous dispute involved King Antiochus Epiphanes, who tried to establish a Greek city with its *gymnasion* at Jerusalem; this led to the great Maccabean revolt and the foundation of an independent Jewish state in the 160s BCE (though compromise was always being sought, and King Herod of Judea even presided over the Olympic Games of 12 BCE).

The Olympic Games were, of course, a religious occasion and involved religious rituals, like every other activity in Greek culture. It is clear that some sort of festival was held at Olympia before any games, and games were initially only a small part of the festival. In the early years, they involved running contests; the pentathlon and wrestling were added in 708, boxing in 688, chariot racing in 680; the full program of five days did not start until 520 BCE. Why games came to be associated with the cult is unclear; one story claims that they had begun as funeral games for the hero Pelops, but this seems a later invention. Modern anthropologists have sometimes alleged an origin in fertility rites. But the origins had little influence on the development of the games: few people ever went to Olympia for worship outside the games. Indeed, a circuit of inter-city games was established in the 580s BCE, organized so that the star athletes could appear at one or more competitions each year, with the Olympic alternating with the Pythian games on a four-year cycle, and the Nemean and Isthmian games every two years.

In considering the religious meaning of these contests, it is important

5 I leave aside the training of Spartan women in athletics, and the various contests for young girls at religious festivals like the *Arkteia* at Brauron: these were only open to locals, and often seem to be ritual activities rather than sporting events.

not to underestimate the spirit of competition between priests and shrines. Greek religion was itself a competitive activity: every cult sought to differentiate itself from the others, and provide bigger and better entertainment for worshipers. The prestige and wealth of a cult (especially of those that aimed to appeal to more than the local community) depended on the number of worshipers it could attract, and sport was big business for the local community long before the advent of the modern mega-Olympic contests.

Many sports were dangerous. The *pankration* (all-in wrestling) was the most dangerous, followed by boxing and wrestling. One *pankratiast* called Arrhachion, seeking his third Olympic victory in 464 BCE, was caught in the finals in a scissors hold by his opponent, so he broke his adversary's toe: the man gave in as Arrhachion died from strangulation—but the latter was proclaimed posthumous victor (Pausanias 8.4.1-5). Boxing took place without gloves, just leather thongs bound round the hands. In 492 BCE, Cleomedes of Astypalaea killed his opponent by a foul and was disqualified: he lost his sanity and pulled down the roof of the school in his native town, killing sixty children (Pausanias 6.9.6). Another time, there was a draw in boxing: as neither contestant could knock the other out, a penalty round was agreed upon. The first blow was to the head, the second with fingers bent to the body: it ruptured the stomach wall of one of the boxers, who died from his entrails being torn out. It is small wonder that one athlete boasted that when he stripped for action, all opponents withdrew; another was known as Mr. Fingertips for his habit of breaking his opponents' fingers. Plato refers to the habitués of the *gymnasion* as "the men with cauliflower ears," and the damage suffered by such professional athletes can be gauged from the famous Hellenistic statue of the boxer found on the Quirinal at Rome in 1885.

Chariot racing was the chief sport of kings and the very wealthy, who trained their horses but employed professional charioteers. It was part of the accusation of undemocratic behavior against Alcibiades of Athens in 416 BCE that he had entered seven chariots and won first, second, and fourth places. Chariot racing was like high-speed bumper-cars with twelve laps at 180-degree turns: at the Pythian Games of 462 BCE, there were forty-one entries on the starting-line, but only one chariot finished, to receive a victory ode from Pindar.

The Olympic truce is a modern dream: in the ancient world, only competitors got safe passes. Nor were the ancient games as amateur as modern champions of amateurism such as Avery Brundage have claimed. The concept of amateurism is, of course, a modern idea, but it is certainly true that ancient games began as an aristocratic pastime. Homer has someone say of

Odysseus, "You look like a sailor, trading from port to port with thought for nothing but cargoes and loads and profits: you are no athlete" (*Odyssey* 8.97ff). The prizes were symbolic, wreaths of sacred olive, laurel, pine, or wild celery, although cities habitually honored their victors with celebrations, statues, and free dinners for life, and elected them to posts of authority in the city. Milo of Croton, for instance, was his city's general in the war of 510 BCE; he had been their leading athlete for twenty-four years, winning in all four major festivals, including five successive Olympiads, and gaining thirty victor's crowns.

The cult of sport was often attacked by moralists; the philosopher Xenophanes of Colophon said:

> For even if a champion boxer arose among the people, or one great in the pentathlon, or in wrestling or even in fleetness of foot, such as is honored among all tests of strength of men in the Games by the Pisatan banks, this does not enrich the storehouse of the city. (F 2)

Like today, spectators endured high prices and extreme discomfort. There is a story of the owner who threatened his disobedient slave with the punishment of attending the Olympic Games. When Heracles visited Olympia, he was so plagued by flies that he instituted a sacrifice to Zeus the Flykiller (Apomyios), which continued to be practiced into the second century CE, according to Pausanias. Olympia is certainly still the hottest site in Greece, and it must have been a hell equivalent to a modern rock festival, as people camped out without sanitation in a mosquito-infested swamp. As the philosopher Epictetus said (1.6.23):

> There are unpleasant and difficult things in life. But don't they happen at Olympia? Don't you suffer from the heat? Aren't you cramped for space? Don't you bathe badly? Don't you get soaked whenever it rains? Don't you get your fill of noise and shouting and other annoyances? But I suspect that you compare all this to the value of the show, and put up with it.

So there are both similarities and differences between ancient Greek and modern sport. Ancient sport was aristocratic, not democratic; it was based on competition, not team spirit; nudity was used to exclude non-Greeks and the lower classes, rather than as a symbol of equality. On the other hand, ancient sport was not particularly related to religion: it was rather, like modern sport, itself a religion. Like modern sport also, it was never truly amateur; it was often manipulated in the interests of commercialism, and attracting the maximum number of spectators was always a major aspect of the games.

As both competitors and organizers have always wanted the biggest crowd possible, both ancient Greek and modern sport ultimately became a form of entertainment for those who wish to avoid exercise and vicariously enjoy the pleasures of a "couch potato"—watching others exert themselves in display of their athletic skills.

Chapter Three

Animal Imitation: A Comparison of Chinese and Greek Sports in Ancient Times

Ren Hai

In earlier times, it seemed to be common for people all over the world to learn from the wildlife surrounding them. For example, people stripped animals of their fur to make their clothing, and imitated the sound and movements of various beasts in hunting. This learning process occurred not only in people's subsistence activities but also in certain cultural activities. For instance, there is significant evidence indicating that the origin of dancing can be traced back to the imitation of animals. In prehistoric times, people might not have been conscious that they were learning from and imitating animals because the process itself was linked to an instinctive sense of survival. This primitive imitation of wildlife existed in the early ages of both China and Greece. As Democritus stated: "In the weightiest matters we must go to school to the animals, and learn spinning and weaving from the spider, building from the swallow, singing from the birds, from the swan and the nightingale, imitating their art."[1] But a fact worth noting is that, as ancient civilizations developed in both China and Greece, this imitation of animals met different fates. This can be seen by examining physical exercise in the two ancient cultures. This chapter will focus on the influence of Daoist philosophy on sport and exercise.

Social and cultural contexts of Chinese and Greek exercises

In China, imitation developed into conscious study, and multiplied into many forms of physical exercises, such as *Daoyin* and *wushu*. It would be a long list if we wrote down all the names of animals mentioned in Chinese

1 Democritus, *The Fragments* 154a, cited in *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, edited by C. M. Bakewell (New York: Gordian Press, 1973), 62.

sports. This feature of ancient Chinese sport has been noticed by modern sport historians, such as Wu Zhichao and Shen Shou, who state, "Keeping fit by imitating animals' movements is a specific character of the physical exercise of ancient China."[2] One of the most ancient records of physical exercise that exists is the Mawangdui manuscripts dating to the third- to second-century BCE, which illustrate a large number of exercises that imitate animals (discussed in more detail by Vivienne Lo in Chapter Five). While different kinds of sports were practiced throughout Chinese history, exercises inspired by animal movements played a central role in Chinese culture during the more than 2,000-year-long historical evolution of sport. But in ancient Greek sport, we find hardly anything of the kind. What explains the difference? A comparison of social contexts reveals several factors that seem germane.

First, China was a society in which agriculture was the dominant means of subsistence. The great majority of its population was attached to the land by a strongly self-sufficient pattern of production. The farm life of most Chinese, which so closely linked humans and nature, provided them with excellent opportunities to observe wildlife and was also connected to a physical environment in which various species flourished. The great attention given to non-human creatures can be traced back to early ages in China. In the first poetry collection, *Shi Jing* (*Book of Odes*), there are 105 species of animals mentioned. Of these, thirty-five are birds, thirty are mammals, twenty-five are insects, and fifteen are marine species.[3] The close relationship between humans and wildlife is also reflected in early medicine. In *Shan Hai Jing* (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*), a work written in pre-Qin times (before 221 BCE), sixty-two species of animals and forty-three plants are listed as edible for medicinal purposes.

It is also true that agriculture was the main means of subsistence in ancient Greece, as indicated in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. However, with the rapid development of commodity production after the seventh century BCE, which resulted from various factors such as colonization and the development of commercial trade and manufacture, the ancient Greeks developed more complicated and frequent social relations. Even agricultural production became market-oriented. Consequently, free citizens developed a strong focus on social life. They lived in *poleis* (city-states) or their surrounding areas, which would seem to have created some distance from the fauna of the

2 Wu Zhichao and Shen Shou, "The Origin of Ancient Dao Yin," *Reference Materials of Physical Education*, 2:1980, 53.

3 Zhen Shenli, "The 'Animal's World' in *Shi Jing* (Book of Songs)," *People's Daily*, June 5, 1986.

countryside. In addition, unlike the pattern of China's inland civilization, the Greeks' was a maritime civilization. The sea was so vital to the Greeks that their attention to nature became more marine-oriented, which also had certain effects on the issue in question.

Secondly, the historical record in China tends to contain more physical activities of a non-competitive nature, which were apt to be recreational and for purposes of self-enjoyment. As the focus of these exercises was on internal bodily functions, imitating animal movements suited this orientation. Relaxation, the physical benefits of health, and the convenience of a practice related to animal behaviors had practical value. It is also worth noting that the imitation of animals contained an inherent element of humor, still evident today in *wushu* forms, such as that which imitates the Monkey King. This might be different from the seriousness with which the Greeks regarded their contests. However, stories such as the one about Orsippus of Megara losing his briefs, related by Oswyn Murray in the previous chapter, and amusing vase-paintings of nude runners that look almost like caricatures may indicate that humor was not absent from Greek contests, either.

Greek sports were oriented toward competition. They had to pay much more attention to physical strength and endurance because these two factors were decisive in physical contests. Knowledge of exercise physiology tells us that muscular strength and endurance can be significantly improved with properly planned weight-resistance exercise programs. Greek physical exercises mainly took the form of building muscular strength and endurance by using resistance that had to be overcome, either in the form of objects such as the discus or javelin, or in the form of struggling against another human body, such as wrestling and the *pankration*. The use of jumping weights and punching bags was common. Moreover, the muscular beauty that was highly valued by ancient Greeks also required similar physical exercise to build up the body in perfect proportion. Obviously, these goals could not be realized by merely imitating animal movements. In a circular way, Greeks sought to develop their muscles because they found well-developed muscles attractive, and they found well-developed muscles attractive because they had the opportunity to observe them due to the nature of their training, and because they trained and competed in the nude. The Chinese were not very interested in muscles and never developed a tradition of nude art.[4]

Thirdly, Chinese exercises were tremendously diverse in terms of movement: to name them in an explicit way would lead to difficult and clumsy

4 Shigehisa Kuriyama, *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 111-151.

phraseology. But describing them with reference to the behavior of animals with which everyone was familiar was indeed effective. It could not only give a vivid picture of how a movement was performed, but also impart a certain mood to the specific movement. For example, "bear jolting and bird stretching" represent the imitation of a bear stretching and a bird twisting, while, at the same time, indicating the stability of the former and mobility of the latter. Shigehisa Kuriyama and Nathan Sivin and Geoffrey Lloyd have contrasted this preference for vagueness in words with the precision found in ancient Greek thought, considering it to be a fundamental cultural difference.[5] Greek sport was quite narrow in terms of its events. As Oswyn Murray noted in the previous chapter, the Olympic Games originally included only running, and added the pentathlon, wrestling, boxing, and chariot racing over time. The athletic events and their related exercises did not involve complicated movements, and terms such as discus or javelin already described the event quite clearly, so that every Greek knew exactly what it meant.

Unity of humans and nature in the Chinese philosophy of *qi*

Although the aforementioned reasons may partially explain the difference in terms of animal imitation in ancient sport, they have not fully illuminated the matter. Whether or not a sport possessed characteristics of animal imitation was not merely a question of the sport itself; it was also a philosophical question involving the place of human beings in the natural world, how people evaluated themselves in comparison with the rest of nature, and the relationship between human and non-human beings. It is the philosophical difference between the two ancient cultures that was the fundamental factor.

It is true that both ancient Greek and Chinese philosophies regarded human beings as part of nature, formed by certain basic materials such as earth, fire (Empedocles), or atoms (Democritus) in Greece; and *Dao* or *qi* (Laozi and Zhuangzi) in China. These theories provided a basis for observing and learning from creatures other than human beings. However, Chinese philosophies emphasized the harmonious aspect of the dialectical relationship between humanity and nature, and an important principle was to adapt humans themselves to natural law. This view provided the human species with a foundation for a unique direction in imitating wildlife.

Of the main Chinese philosophical schools, the doctrine of Daoism played the greatest role in providing ancient Chinese physical exercise with

5 Kuriyama; Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early China and Greece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

a fundamental orientation to imitating wildlife. Daoism encouraged people to despise social life and return to nature, creating an imperative to observe nature, including animal behavior. Respect for nature provided the potential for human beings to learn from animals. The most important concept was that of *qi*. Daoism views everything in the world as a form of *qi*. *Qi* exists in all things. In the Daoist notion, there is nothing without *qi*. *Qi* is not only in heaven, Earth, the sun, and moon, but also in insects, blighted grains, tiles and bricks, even in waste.[6] Accordingly, *qi* is a medium through which all things are connected:

> It links the universe together and makes the sky luminous. It is most substantial and full of sap; most tenuous and fine: so delicate is it that it penetrates every pore and crevice.
>
> It gives height to the mountain and depth to the abyss. It fashioned beasts to walk and birds to fly.[7]

Because all things are made of *qi*, any change in the world is a kind of change of *qi*. Consequently, human beings are not regarded as occupying a superior position in the universe. *Zhuangzi* expresses the idea by an analogy in which the sea god says to the boastful river god:

> I compare my own bodily form with [the greatness of] heaven and earth, and [remember that] I have received my breath from the Yin and Yang. Between heaven and earth I am but as a small stone or a small tree on a great hill. So long as I see myself to be thus small, how should I make much of myself? I estimate all within the four seas, compared with the space between heaven and the earth, to be not so large as that occupied by a pile of stones in a large marsh! I estimate our Middle States, compared with the space between the four seas, to be smaller than a single little grain of rice in a great granary! When we would set forth the number of things [in existence], we speak of them as myriads; and man is only one of them.[8]

Similarly, a human being is but one creature in the world. They who live in the nine territories are like a grain in a large granary. Moreover, man is also in a constant cycle of change linked with other living creatures. In a story in *Zhuangzi*, Zili comes to visit his friend, Zilai, who is very sick and

6 Zhuang zi [Chuang Tzu], *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu,* translated by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 7:22 [Zhi Bai You].
7 Huai Nan Zi, *Tao, the Great Luminant: Essays from Huai Nan Tzu*, translated by E. Morgan (New York: Paragon Books, 1969) 1 [Yuan Tao Xun].
8 *Zhuangzi* [*Master Zhuang*] 6:17 [Qiu Shui].

is going to die. Zili says to his friend: "How wonderful Nature is! Will He make you the liver of a rat, or the arm of an insect?"[9] Zhuangzi even tried to describe the biological cycle:

> The seeds of things have mysterious workings. In the water they become Break Vine, on the edges of the water they become Frog's Robe. If they sprout on the slopes they become Hill Slippers. If Hill Slippers get rich soil, they turn into Crow's Feet. The roots of Crow's Feet turn into maggots and their leaves turn into butterflies. Before long the butterflies are transformed and turn into insects that live under the stove; they look like snakes and their name is *zhu tuo*. After a thousand days, the *zhu tuo* insects become birds called Dried Leftover Bones. The saliva of the Dried Leftover Bones becomes *si mi* bugs and the *si mi* bugs become Vinegar Eaters. *Yi lou* bugs are born from Vinegar Eaters, and *huang shuang* bugs from *jiu you* bugs. *Jiu you* bugs are born from *mou rui* bugs and *mou rui* bugs are born from Rot Grubs and Rot Grubs are born from Sheep's Groom. Sheep's Groom couples with bamboo that has not sprouted for a long while and produces Green Peace plants. Green Peace plants produce leopards and leopards produce horses and horses produce men. Men in time return again to the mysterious workings.[10]

Although this biological link described by Zhuangzi seems quite strange to us, the philosophical idea is evident: the position of human beings in the universe is equal to that of non-human beings, including various animals. They are all part of nature. As the work states elsewhere:

> The ten thousand things all come from the same seed, and with their different forms they give place to one another. Beginning and end are part of a single ring and no one can comprehend its principle. This is called Heaven the Equalizer, which is the same as the Heavenly Equality.[11]

In the Daoist view, there is nothing greater than nature. Nature is perfect and the beginning and end of all lives. There is no discrimination among all the living forms because they are all in a temporary form of *qi* and in a constantly changing process, and connected through biological links. This idea of naturalism established a basis for people to observe animal behavior with great enthusiasm in order to learn from it anything useful. A well-known case in *Zhuangzi* reflects this idea.

9 *Zhuangzi* 3:4 [Da Zong Shi].
10 *Zhuangzi* 6:18 [Zhi Yue], 195-196.
11 *Zhuangzi* 9:27 [Yu Yan].

> Formerly, I, Zhuang Zhou, dreamt that I was a butterfly, a butterfly flying about, feeling that it was enjoying itself. I did not know that it was Zhou. Suddenly I awoke, and was myself again, the veritable Zhou. I did not know whether it had formerly been Zhou dreaming that he was a butterfly, or it was now a butterfly dreaming that it was Zhou. But between Zhou and a butterfly there must be a difference. This is a case of what is called the Transformation of Things.[12]

Greek conflict between humans and nature

The Greek view regarding the place of human beings in the natural world was quite different from Daoism and displayed a strong humanism. It is true that early Greek natural philosophies conceived of a unity of man and nature by suggesting all things are formed with certain basic elements such as water or fire. However, many Greek philosophers emphasized the conflictual aspect of the dialectical nature of unity. Perhaps this was because unfavorable physical surroundings made conflict between humans and nature so serious and apparent. In their struggle with nature, humans treated it as an opponent more than a partner. Humans had to be more active than the rest of nature in order to survive. This basic point seemed, to a certain degree, to keep Greeks apart from nature and put them in a position of conflict with the rest of the natural world.

In classical times, especially after the Persian War, the Greek world entered its so-called Golden Age. The victory over a mighty enemy, a flourishing economy, and the solidification of political democracy tremendously enforced the confidence of the Greeks. This was embodied in their philosophical views about humankind, in their political speeches, and in all forms of their arts. The superiority of humankind was greatly praised. "Man is a universe in little [microcosm],"[13] stated Democritus. This philosophical idea supplied an entirely new starting-point for Greek humanism. It differed from previous natural philosophy, in which humankind was not treated differently from the rest of nature. Now, human beings, the unique creatures of the world, were highlighted and became the focus of all theories and arts. Consequently, those disciplines closely relating to humanity—education, politics, medicine, psychology—grew rapidly. The superiority of humans could be identified everywhere.

12 *Zhuangzi* 1:2 [Qi Wu Lun].

13 Democritus, Fragment 34, cited in *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy*, edited by George F. McLean and Patrick J. Aspell (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1970), 66.

Pericles maintained that, "Men come first, the rest is the fruit of their labour."[14] In *Antigone*, Sophocles exclaims, "Numberless are the world's wonders, but none more wonderful than man."[15] Socrates had a similar view:

> What soul is more apt than man's to make provision against hunger and thirst, cold and heat, to relieve sickness and promote health, to acquire knowledge by toil, and to remember accurately all that is heard, seen, or learned? For is it not obvious to you that, in comparison with the other animals, men live like gods, by nature peerless both in body and in soul?[16]

The superiority of man reached its peak in the Sophists: "Of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not."[17] To imitate the behavior of inferior animals seemed incompatible with the humanism of Greek philosophy.

Naturalism and humanism in Chinese and Greek sports

Daoism's naturalism and Greek philosophy's humanism were also related to the difference of sports in the two ancient cultural traditions. The highest goal of Daoism is to return to nature. All things of nature are highly valued and paid great respect. According to Daoism, the best way for people is to live a life in complete harmony with nature: "There is the great Mass [of nature]; I find the support of my body on it; my life has spent its toil on it; my old age seeks ease on it; at death I find rest in it."[18] In the ideal Daoist world, all living creatures live in a mixture of harmony:

> In the age of perfect virtue men walked along with slow and grave steps, and with their looks steadily directed forwards. At that time, on the hills there were no foot-paths, nor excavated passages; on the lakes there were no boats nor dams; all creatures lived in companies; and the place of their settlement was made close to one another. Birds and beasts multiplied to flocks and herds; the grass and trees grew luxuriant and long. In this condition the birds and beasts might be led about without feeling the constraint;

14 Pericles' funeral oration, in Thucydides 1.143, *The Peloponnesian War,* translated by Rex Warner (New York: Penguin Books, 1954).
15 *Antigone*, Ode I, translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), 25.
16 Xenophon, *Memorabilia* I.iv.13-14, translated by E. C. Marchant (London: William Heinemann, 1938), 61.
17 Cited in McLean and Aspell, 82.
18 *Zhuangzi* 3:6 [Da Zong Shi].

> the nest of the magpie might be climbed to, and peeped into. Yes, in the age of perfect virtue, men lived in common with birds and beasts, and were on terms of equality with all creatures, as forming one family; how could they know among themselves the distinctions of superior men and small men? Equally without knowledge, they did not leave [the path of] their natural virtue; equally free from desires, they were in the state of pure simplicity. In that state of pure simplicity, the nature of the people was what it ought to be.[19]

The ideal status of a human being was the pure, natural one. Any artificial modification was regarded as a violation of nature. This required humankind to integrate with nature, encouraged it to return to the wild, natural world, living by natural law and within a natural rhythm, by abandoning the luxuries of society. Nature in Daoism was the dominant force in the universe. It made all things happen and develop according to certain laws, unconsciously and spontaneously. As Zhuangzi states:

> O my Master! my Master! He gives to all things their blended qualities, and does not count it any righteousness; His favours reach to all generations, and He does not count it any benevolence; He is more ancient than the highest antiquity, and does not count Himself old; He overspreads heaven and supports the earth; He carves and fashions all bodily forms, and does not consider it any act of skill. This is He in whom I find my enjoyment.[20]

Nature was limitless and an area of complete freedom. Daoists tried to prove the superiority of nature over artifice by a metaphor:

> Horses' hooves are made for treading frost and snow, their coats for keeping out wind and cold. To munch grass, drink from the stream, lift up their feet and gallop—this is the true nature of horses. Though they might possess great terraces and fine halls, they would have no use for them.[21]

Zhuangzi persuaded people not to violate the natural way with artificial efforts:

> Oxen and horses have four feet; that is what I call their Heavenly [constitution]. When horses' heads are haltered, and the noses of oxen are pierced, that is what I call [the doing of] Man. Hence it is said, "Do not by the Human [doing] extinguish the Heavenly [constitution]; do not for your [Hu-

19 *Zhuangzi* 4:9 [Ma Ti].
20 *Zhuangzi* 3:6 [Da Zhong Shi].
21 *Zhuangzi* . 4:9 [Ma Ti].

man] purpose extinguish the appointment [of Heaven]."[22]

The best way, therefore, is to follow nature. As Laozi said, "Men follow the way of earth, earth follows the way of heaven, heaven follows the way of *Dao*, and *Dao* follows the way of nature."[23] Wild animals are part of nature and live in a pure, natural way without any artificial changes by will: "Horses, when living in the open country, eat the grass, and drink water; when pleased, they intertwine their necks and rub one another; when enraged, they turn back to back and kick one another; this is all that they know to do."[24] Animals integrated themselves into the natural world well, which gave Daoists great inspiration and clues toward achieving their highest goal: returning to nature. The pure, natural status of wildlife and the harmonious relationship between wild animals and the physical environment inevitably attracted the attention of Daoists. So, many metaphors about wildlife are used to explain the philosophical ideas in their works.

Daoist and Neo-Daoist *wuwei* (not-doing) and exercise

However, early Daoism, associated with Laozi and Zhuangzi, did not introduce the imitation of animals' movements into Chinese sport, simply because of their passive attitude toward social life and overemphasis on quietness.

> Vacancy, stillness, placidity, tastelessness, quietude, silence, and non-action are the root of all things.
>
> Wuwei [not to interfere with the natural course of action] was accompanied by the feeling of satisfaction. Where there is that feeling of satisfaction, anxieties and troubles find no place; and the years of life are many.[25]

Physical movement was contradictory with the idea of *wuwei* in early Daoism. This lack was complemented by Neo-Daoism, which developed in the Qin and early Han dynasties. Neo-Daoism reexamined the concept of *wuwei* and took a more positive attitude to it, which led to a breakthrough, mainly expressed in two philosophical works, *Lü Shi Chun Qiu* (*Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*) and *Huai Nan Zi* (*Masters of Huainan*), where the more active attitude was adopted:

> Moving water is not putrid and the door axe is not decayed because of their

22 *Zhuangzi* 6:17 [Qiu Shui].
23 *Laozi* [*Lao Tzu*] 25.
24 *Zhuangzi* 4:9 [Ma Ti].
25 *Zhuangzi* 5:13 [Tian Dao].

> movement. The same is true of the human body and the *qi*.[26]

Although they gave the mind a primary role, they did not deny the physical functions of body movements:

> The human body has its 160 sections, nine viscera and eleven internal organs. When muscle and skin combine tightly, blood vessels are not blocked, muscles and bones are strengthened, mental mode is peaceful, the *qi* is circulating and the diseases cannot occur.[27]

Huai Nan Zi also criticizes the passivity of early Daoism.

> Some may maintain that the person who acts in the spirit of *Wuwei* is one who is in serenity, without speaking, and in meditation, without acting: he will not come when called on nor be driven by force. And this demeanor is, it is assumed, the phenomenal appearance of one getting the Cosmic Spirit. Such an interpretation of *Wuwei* I cannot admit.[28]

In Neo-Daoism, the principle of "following the heaven and earth" should be actively expressed, instead of being passively accepted, as in previous times.

> The configuration of the earth causes water to flow eastward; nevertheless man must open channels for it in order to lead the water to run in streams [not lie over the land]. Cereals sprout in spring; but it is necessary to add human labour, in order to induce it to grow and mature. If everything were left to nature, then birth and growth were waited for without human labour, then there would be no accruing merits to Kun and Yu, and the knowledge of Hou Ji could not be put to use. What is meant, therefore, in my view, by *Wuwei*, is that no selfish idea or personal will can enter and interfere with natural justice: no personal lust or desire may twist and wrench the true course of action. Reason and right must guide in action, in order to exercise power according to the intrinsic properties of things. This is a natural exercise of force, and, by so doing, there will be no room for any subtle art or craftiness.[29]

Neo-Daoism took a more positive attitude toward the principle of "learning from nature." It was no longer satisfactory to merely passively follow nature: goals needed to be achieved more actively. This idea applied to keeping

26 *Lü Shi Chun Qiu* 3:2 [Jin Shu].
27 *Zhuangzi* 20:5 [Da Yu].
28 *Huai Nan Zi* [*Masters of Huainan*] 19 [Xou Wu Xun], 220.
29 *Huai Nan Zi*, 224.

fit as well, by confirming the necessity of physical movement. And the imitation of animal movement reflected the new interpretation of the principle of "learning from nature."

In the Neo-Daoist view, energetic wild animals, such as bears, deer, and birds, were filled with life. They were healthy and had great freedom. All their behavior was spontaneous and inherent in nature, without any artificial aspect. So, their physical movements were purely natural. And because of the pure naturalness of their movements, animals lived harmoniously with nature; therefore, animals' behavior gave Neo-Daoists great inspiration to look for the ideal type of physical movement to correspond to the principle of Daoism. Consequently, physical exercises consisting of the imitation of wild animals rapidly developed starting in the early Han period. Because the animal imitation of traditional Chinese sport was based on the principles of Daoism, it is not surprising to see that most early evidence for it was mainly found in spheres with deep roots in Daoist culture, such as the *Daoyin* movements painted on silk in the Han tomb of Mawangdui and the *Play of the Five Animals* of Hua Tuo (a famous Han dynasty physician who lived around 200 CE).

Such thoughts as "following nature" and *wuwei* cannot be found in Greek philosophy. The idea of returning to nature by discarding secular life also seemed to be entirely alien to the Greeks, as mentioned in the previous chapters. Although Greek society was not politically egalitarian, free male citizens enjoyed equal rights, especially in Athens during the Periclean Age. Each citizen played an active role in the military, politics, the economy, culture, and every aspect of social life. Social conditions provided Greeks with great opportunities for individual development. Success depended mainly upon one's own efforts. As Pericles stated: "When it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses."[30]

And, so, all Greek citizens participated in social affairs and competed with one another in order to realize their goals, because life gave them a chance to reach them. Abandoning social life, secular property, and fame, and isolating themselves from the rest of society to return to nature, were highly contradictory to their ideals. Thus, the fundamental reason for following nature—the animal imitation of ancient Chinese sport—was entirely absent in the ancient Greek world.

30 Thucydides 2.37.

Summary

This chapter focused on the effect of Daoist philosophy on exercise forms, so one would expect Daoist influence to be strongest among those social groups that subscribed to Daoist beliefs. Educated elites, represented by poets such as Li Bai and Li Yu, who did exercises as early as a thousand years ago, might have more systematically studied Daoist thought, and there is continuity over time in this tradition. However, no matter which social class a person belonged to, he or she needed to keep *yin* and *yang* in balance, and the best way to do so was the natural way. There were specific exercises for specific social classes. Lower-class people trained to earn a living, becoming acrobats and bodyguards, for example. The purpose was to gain strength and master skills for an occupation. For the upper class, the training had the goal of living happily and achieving a clear mind. Military training was also an important type of physical exercise in China, but methods were different from those of Greece. In China, even soldiers had to do both internal (meditational training involving *qi*) and external (muscular) training. In Greece, so far as we know, soldiers engaged only in external training.

Animal imitation in traditional Chinese sport resulted from many factors: the way of life of the majority of the population, the non-competitive nature of sport with its emphasis on self-enjoyment, the diversity of physical exercise, and, fundamentally, the naturalism of Daoism. The reasons for the absence of this feature in ancient Greek sport included not only the absence of these factors, but also the presence of a strong humanism in Greek philosophy, which precluded the appropriate basis for such a development.

Chapter Four

Too Much of a Good Thing: The Health of Olympic Athletes in Ancient Greece[1]

Lesley Dean-Jones

In the ancient world, every town and city that considered itself Greek made *gymnasia* and *palaestrae* available to its citizens; physical exercise was thought to be essential both for the good life of the individual and for maintaining an effective citizen army, which was, in the fifth century BCE, the fighting force on which all Greek cities depended. However, not everybody made equal use of the facilities. Similarly, professional athletic trainers were available from a very early period, but were not necessarily engaged by everybody who exercised in the *gymnasia*.[2] Remarks in a number of works suggest that the male citizen population could be categorized into three groups: those who hardly exercised at all, those who exercised regularly for their health (probably the largest group), and those who exercised for competition. Aeschines' remark that those who exercise are recognizable from their muscular development (εὐεξία) even by those who don't visit the *gymnasion*[3] implies that exercisers and non-exercisers were meaningful categories in ancient Greece, and the Hippocratic author of *Prorrhetic* II contrasts those who exercise with those who remain at home.[4] He says that other doctors claim to be able to detect small departures from normal regimen, both in athletes (τοὺς ἀθλητάς) and in those who are exercising for their

1 Most discussions on ancient athletic training and the medical principles behind it depend on authors of the first and second century CE such as Philostratus, Lucian, and Galen. In this paper, I restrict myself to authors of the classical period, the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. There are obvious continuities in theory between the two periods, but I hope to show that cultural attitudes in the earlier period, which differed from those of the later, helped shape these theories.

2 The term "gymnasia" should be taken to include *palaestrae* throughout this paper.

3 Aeschines, *Against Timarchus* 189.

4 *Prorrhetic* II 4. The author adds a third category of "all others," but it is difficult to understand what the content of this category would be.

health (τοὺς τῶν νούσων εἵνεκα γυμναζομένους), showing that the category "exercisers" can be further subdivided.[5] It seems likely that trainers were concerned primarily with athletes, those in training for competition, rather than with the recreational exerciser.

We might expect that elite athletes who underwent rigorous training in preparation for competition at both the local and pan-Hellenic level were thought to be the healthiest individuals and finest soldiers. But, in the classical period, the peak of physical fitness was thought to be a very treacherous state of health. *Aphorisms* I 3 declares:

> In those who exercise a perfect condition that is at its highest peak is dangerous [αἱ ἐπ'ἄκρον εὐεξίαι σφαλεραί]. Such conditions cannot remain the same or be at rest and, change for the better being impossible, the only possible change is for the worse. For this reason it is an advantage to reduce the fine condition quickly, in order that the body may make a fresh beginning of growth.[6]

The idea that there was very little separating great strength from disease is given poetic expression in a chorus from the *Agamemnon*, produced in 463 BCE:

> Yet it is true: the high strength [τᾶς πολλᾶς ὑγιείας]
> of men knows no content with limitation.
> Sickness (νόσος) chambered beside it [ὁμότοιχος]
> beats at the wall between.[7]

The Greek maxim, μηδὲν ἄγαν, "nothing to excess," reverberates throughout Greek literature, but it is surprising to modern readers to see it applied even to health. Far from being at the opposite pole from sickness, abundant health was seen by the ancient Greeks as "sharing a wall" (ὁμότοιχος) with disease. We can agree it is hard to remain in peak condition, but why should it be considered dangerous to try? To understand this, we need to consider the Greek conceptions of health and disease, and how the regimen followed by athletes was thought to affect their bodies.

5 *Prorrhetic* II 1. The term ἀθληταί is used on only one other occasion in the Hippocratic Corpus, as is the adjectival form ἀθλητικὴ. In both cases, it clearly refers to those who exercise beyond the norm (see below pp. 61 and 65). This leads me to believe that the phrase τῶν νούσων, "on account of illness," here means "for the sake of warding off illness," that is, "for health's sake."

6 *Aphorisms* I 3, translated by W. H. S. Jones, 1931, 99.

7 Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* ll.1001-1003, translated by Richmond Lattimore, 1953, 66. I will return to the conclusion of this stanza later in the paper.

The earliest surviving medical theory, that of Alcmaeon of Croton (ca. 500 BCE), held that health resulted when the powers of the body were in a state of balance (ἰσονομία). These powers included such factors as moisture and dryness, heat and cold, sweetness and bitterness. If any one element began to preponderate, sickness resulted. The preponderance could come about through an excess or deficiency of nourishment or exertion (κόπος).[8] The idea that health resulted from a balance of bodily constituents that were increased or depleted by nourishment and exertion was the basis of almost all rational medicine for the rest of Greco-Roman antiquity, although there were a variety of theories on what the constituents themselves were.[9] *On Ancient Medicine*, probably written about 430 BCE, argues that, unlike animals, humans did not originally know instinctively what was needed for them to retain a constitutional balance and tried to subsist on the same uncooked foods as other animals, but that these foods were too "strong" for them. In the early periods of human history, the author claims, the majority of mankind was ill or sickly until trial and error by individuals (the earliest doctors) found the foods most suited to the human constitution and the most advantageous ways to prepare them. The knowledge of what foods in general a human should eat to remain healthy is now an everyday affair and has become the province of cooks. However, a doctor's expertise is needed both to oversee the diet of individuals who fall ill and can no longer digest ordinary food and to advise on the types of food from the range offered by cooks that are most beneficial for different human body types and environmental conditions.

Regimen in Health (probably a work of the last quarter of the fifth century BCE) tailors its advice to laymen (ἰδιώτας) according to their individual constitutions (fleshy and soft, lean and sinewy, etc.) and time of year. In winter, the aim generally is to stop the body from becoming too moist and cold so individuals are advised to eat as much as possible (specifically, bread, roasted meats, and a few vegetables)[10] and drink as little as possible (preferably very lightly diluted wine). In summer, individuals should drink diluted wine as copiously as possible and eat barley cake, raw or boiled vegetables,

8 See G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, M. Schofield, *The Presocratic philosophers: A critical history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 260.

9 The four humors of blood, bile, phlegm, and black bile were one of several options at the end of the fifth century BCE but did not become canonical until they were adopted by Galen in the second century CE.

10 Though meat did not normally constitute a large part of an ordinary person's diet if they were not in training; see Waldo E. Sweet, *Sport and Recreation in Ancient Greece: A Sourcebook with Translations* (New York: Oxford University Press [USA], 1987), 200.

and boiled meat in lesser amounts. They should also wear oiled cloaks, presumably to prevent their garments from absorbing precious moisture from the body. Spring and autumn are, respectively, periods of gradual increase or decrease.

Regarding exercise, the author of *Regimen in Health* directs his advice only to those laymen who wish to change their physique, counseling stout people who wish to become thin to exercise while fasting and to eat highly seasoned food. Thin people who wish to gain weight should adopt the opposite regimen.[11]

In the treatise's final chapter, the author proceeds to give advice on exercise to "τοὺς γυμναζομένους." Jones translates this as "athletes in training," in contrast to the laymen addressed in the earlier part of the treatise, but the advice in this chapter seems to be aimed at two distinct groups, those who exercise for the purposes of general health and those aspiring to local or pan-Hellenic competition. The initial advice on exercise for τοὺς γυμναζομένους is again determined by the seasons of the year, e.g., running and wrestling in winter, but only wrestling in summer, and very little of that, walking being the preferred exercise. If intake of food has been curtailed, as advised in the dietary part of the treatise, this should be sufficient exertion to keep the body's constituents in balance. But this kind of regimen does not stack up to the sort of training undertaken by competitive athletes who would be gearing up for the pan-Hellenic festivals in the early summer. The role played by a doctor in training elite athletes is suggested by the rest of the chapter. This is dedicated to therapeutic measures to be taken to counter the deleterious consequences of rigorous exercise such as excessive fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting, swollen hypochondria, and stomach aches. For example:

> Such as are attacked by diarrhea when training, whose stools consist of undigested food, should reduce their training by at least one-third and their food by one-half. For it is plain that their bowels cannot generate the heat necessary to digest the quantity of their food. The food of such should be well-baked bread crumbled into wine, and their drink should be as undiluted and as little as possible, and they ought not to walk after food. At this time they should take only one meal each day, a practice which will give the bowels the greatest heat, and enable them to deal with whatever enters them. This kind of diarrhea attacks mostly persons of close flesh, when a man of such constitution is compelled to eat meat [ἀναγκάζηται κρεηφαγεῖν], for the

11 There is further advice on soft and hard beds, baths, clothing, etc., as well as emetics and enemas—their composition and the frequency with which they should be used.

> veins when closely contracted cannot take in the food that enters.

The advice to reduce training by at least one-third has no meaning unless the training is structured to a greater extent than is suggested by the previous advice to "walk in the summer." The reference to the compulsion to eat meat also indicates that the situation is unlikely to arise in an individual undertaking exercise for purely prophylactic purposes. Ordinary exercise was meant simply to ensure that any excess of nourishment was used up. Meat was not normally a large part of the ancient Greek diet.[12] To consume large amounts of food, especially meat, merely increases the need to exercise and would be an expensive zero sum game for normal levels of health. This sort of diarrhea, then, is likely to afflict an individual training at the competitive level. The doctor's advice could help such an individual moderate his regimen to restore his health, but it seems likely that the need for such advice could signal the end of an athletic career. On the Greek model of physiology, anyone who had to limit his intake of nourishment drastically would not be able to build up the resources needed to fuel the exertion expended at an elite level. Calibrating the minutiae of such a regimen for the exceptional individual who could compete at these levels was not part of a doctor's expertise.[13]

The type of nourishment and exertion needed to develop the body's physical potential beyond the bounds of ordinary health was left to gymnastics trainers. Their methods were in many ways a continuation of the prophylactic advice given by the Hippocratic doctors. The author of *On Ancient Medicine* states this explicitly:

> Even at the present day those who study gymnastics and athletic exercises [οἱ τῶν γυμνασίων τε καὶ ἀσκησίων ἐπιμελόμενοι] are constantly making some fresh discovery by investigating on the same method [as doctors in the earlier period] what food and what drink are best assimilated and make a man grow stronger.[14]

Places in Man,[15] however, describes gymnastics not as the continuation but as the opposite of medicine: "Gymnastics and medicine are by nature op-

12 See previous note.

13 The doctor would be needed, of course, to treat athletes for injuries incurred in the *gymnasion* such as broken noses, dislocated shoulders, and internal wounds, e.g., *Diseases* I 15 and 21, 131 and 153. *Epidemics* I 1 remarks that, in an epidemic of mumps, it was particularly the young men who frequented the *gymnasia* and *palaestrae* who suffered.

14 *Ancient Medicine* 4, translated by W. H. S. Jones, 1923, 21.

15 A recent study suggests that this could be one of the earliest Hippocratic treatises, perhaps as early as the first half of the fifth century BCE. See E. M. Craik, Hippocrates: *Places In Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 25-29.

posites for gymnastics is not intended to bring about any changes, whereas medicine must, since the healthy person is not benefited by changes from his present state, but the ill one is."[16] The apparent contradiction between the two statements arises because, whereas *Places in Man* contrasts medicine to recreational exercise, which simply maintains health, *On Ancient Medicine* comments on the activity of trainers who deal with elite athletes and whose aim is to change the state of the body, as doctors try to do for those who are ill. *Places in Man*'s remark that a healthy person does not benefit from a change in his condition implies that increasing the "health" of an already healthy person is not necessarily all to the good.

It is not clear that trainers played much of a role in the exercise routine of adults who were not training at a competitive level, but they do seem to have had a much higher profile in their dealing with young males, and this may be precisely because they were engaged in bringing about changes as they guided the physical development of boys through youth to adulthood. Their aim was not simply to maintain health or to produce a prize-winning athlete, but to develop a body that could fulfill its duty as a citizen-soldier. One vase from the fifth century BCE can be read as showing the beginning and results of the trainer's efforts.[17]

The Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus supposedly instituted the custom whereby girls exercised as much as boys in order to be able to fulfill their civic duty as mothers, and there is ample evidence that girls and young women in other Greek *poleis* also took part in exercise. The Heraia, races for three different

16 *Places in Man* 35, translated by Potter, 1995, 77. Note, however, that when giving advice on exercise to laymen, the author of *Regimen in Health* frames it specifically in terms of changing body shape (above p. 52). There may have been a closer association between trainers and some doctors. The city of Croton in southern Italy won twelve of twenty-seven *stadion* races at Olympia between 588 and 488 BCE, once taking the top seven places. See Mark Golden, *Sport and society in ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 143. Croton was also well known as a center of medical learning and training. As we have seen, the earliest known medical theorist, Alcmaeon, came from Croton. At the end of the sixth century BCE, there was also a certain Democedes who left Croton for personal reasons and began practicing in Aegina. He was so successful that, the following year, the state paid him one talent. From there, he was hired away by Athens for the huge sum of 100 minas and in turn Polycrates lured him to Samos with the even larger sum of two talents. Such munificence seems more explicable if it was expected to redound to the state's credit with pan-Hellenic victors rather than as an altruistic concern with the level of health of the general populace. When Democedes is taken captive by Darius, the situation in which he reveals his medical training is a sporting injury (Darius getting down from his horse after hunting); on his eventual return to Croton, he marries the daughter of the wrestler Milo (Herodotus 3.131-7).

17 Olga Tzachou-Alexandri, *Mind and body: Athletic contests in ancient Greece* (Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 1989), 171, plate 57. Reverse of three young men in *himatia* is unpublished.

age groups of girls and young women, took place every four years at Olympia, and girls of all ages took part in races in Athens at the annual Brauronia festival in honor of Artemis.[18] In *Epidemics*, we hear of a young twenty-year-old *parthenos* (virgin) who was injured while playing vigorously with her friends, and the author of *Diseases of Women* recommends exercise for a woman trying to conceive. The Hippocratic author of *Airs, Waters, Places* comments on the difficulty Scythian women have in conceiving, attributing it to their sedentary lifestyle, and contrasts it with the ease with which their own active slave girls conceive.[19] A completely sedentary lifestyle, therefore, was not considered any healthier for a woman than for a man, but, as far as we can tell, married women did not take part in athletics in ancient Greece.[20]

This is because, unlike men, women had to have an excess of fluid in their bodies to fulfill their civic duty. Without it, a woman would be unable to provide nourishment to the fetus should she become pregnant. Menstruation evacuated the excess to prevent the woman falling ill if she did not become pregnant, thus performing the prophylactic role exercise did for men. Extreme exertion would draw on this nourishment, so women continued to exercise after marriage but in moderation. At the end of his advice on nutrition to laymen but before advising those who exercise, the author of *Regimen in Health* has one sentence of advice to women, which makes no specific mention of exercise: "Women should use a regimen of a rather dry character, for food that is dry is more adapted to the softness of their flesh, and less diluted drinks are better for the womb and for pregnancy." Exertion that would have balanced her intake of food might have made a woman herself healthier, but she would then be unfit to fulfill her duty as a citizen.

Just as, once grown, the average Greek citizen understood the basics of human diet and needed only a few pointers from the Hippocratics regarding individual constitution and weather to remain healthy, so the Hippocratic authors needed to give only the most general advice on exercise to adult males in good health who had grown up under a trainer. We have less advice about exercise than about nutrition from the Hippocratic Corpus because, whereas patients usually (though not always) continue to need some sort of sustenance when they fall ill, this is very often a time they take to their beds.

18 Stephen Miller, *Arete: Greek Sports from Ancient Sources*, third edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 150-9.

19 *Epidemics* V 50, *Diseases of Wom*en I 11, *Airs, Waters, Places,* 21. See Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's bodies in classical Greek science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 116 and 247.

20 In the Roman period, too, though Seia Spes may be an exception; see Golden, *Sport and society*, 128.

Recommending arduous running drills or strenuous wrestling bouts to patients feeling too ill to continue with their normal daily round is simply not practicable. There is, however, a treatise written for people who are about to become sick that gives detailed advice on diet and exercise that can only be followed while they are still healthy. This treatise is *Regimen*, and the author claims to be able to diagnose an illness before it manifests itself in bodily symptoms by means of the patient's dreams. Because of this discovery, his ἐξευρήμα, his advice is targeted at more specific conditions than *Regimen in Health*, so the prescribed exercises are correspondingly more specific and the aim of each is explained. We can see that exercise is thought not simply to balance the body's fluids, but to dissolve, constitute, and harden flesh. His advice gives us an insight into what trainers were trying to achieve in the classical period, and what it was about peak conditioning that seemed so threatening to the ancient Greek psyche. We should always keep in mind that, whereas *Regimen* is recommending exercises to correct an incipient pathological condition in the body, trainers wished to alter the body of a healthy man so that he would perform the exercise better.

Regimen's author says that simple walking benefits the body by causing the flesh to heat up and draw to itself the moisture from the food that has just been eaten. Most of the purest part of this is consumed by the body's innate heat, and the residual fluids are purged by increased respiration and perspiration. The nourishment drawn into the flesh that is not used stays there and does not return to the belly but fills the body out (πληροῦται).[21]

When the body needs to be made lean, the author continues, the best exercise is the *trochos*. This type of running is contrasted with the *diaulos* and long runs, and is described as causing the most panting (ὀξυτάτῳ τῷ πνεύματι).[22] It should therefore be identified as sprinting. I assume the author used the term *trochos* rather than *stadion*, the word used to refer to the sprint in athletic sources, because if an individual was not training for a specific distance event, these short, fast sprints could be of any distance and were run round the *palaestra* rather than in the stadium.[23] The effect of sprinting short distances was to reduce the body and contract the flesh without dissolving it. For these concentrated bursts of speed, the innate heat needed only to draw the moisture out of the flesh, which it did by rapid respiration.

21 *Regimen II* 62, translated by W. H. S. Jones.

22 *Regimen II* 63, 354-355. Jones translates *trochos* as "running in a circle," but it is hard to see how the shape of the track would affect the physiological results of the exercise.

23 A stade was 600 Greek feet, but because there was no standardized Greek foot, there is no standardized length for a *stadion*. It could vary from 177.5 to 210 feet; Sweet, *Sport and Recreation*, 27.

It did not need the prolonged expenditure of nourishment that required dissolving the flesh itself.[24] A trainer preparing a runner for the *stadion* would need to devise a regimen that would ensure the body stored sufficient fluid in the flesh, but his task would be made difficult by the fact that the more a runner ran sprints, the more compact his flesh would become and the less easily hold fluids, resulting in the diarrhea documented in the final chapter of *Regimen in Health* (see p. 52).

The author of *Regimen* refers to long runs as *kamptos kai makros*, bent and long, rather than by the technical term for a long race in athletic competitions, *dolichos*. Although the *dolichos* was even less standardized than the *stadion* (between one and three miles), there is obviously still greater latitude in the term *makros*. Somebody undertaking a long run for therapy is not concerned to cover any specific distance associated with competitive racing. Unlike sprinting, long runs cannot be financed simply by moisture drawn from flesh. To provide the nourishment it needs for continuous exertion, the body heats the flesh to the point where it dissolves and becomes fluid itself. One would therefore expect a long-distance runner to have less flesh on his body than a sprinter. Surprisingly, though, the author of *Regimen* says that these sorts of runs cause the body to become slower and stockier (βραδύτερά τε καὶ παχύτερα) than do sprints.[25] In the *Symposium*, Xenophon has Socrates say that it is only the legs of long-distance runners, *dolichodromoi*, that thicken up (παχύνονται), while their shoulders become thin (λεπτύνονται).[26] But again, if we take the remarks as applying to two different categories of exercise, there is no contradiction. As the flesh of the body dissolves, it is drawn to the part of the body that needs it most. If the run ends before all this nourishment is expended, it reconstitutes (συνίστασθαι) itself in the place to which it has been drawn, which, for competitive long-distance runners, would be the legs, where it would be ready to be drawn upon for the next race. *Regimen* advises recreational exercisers to walk after exercise to prevent the flesh from reconstituting. But in non-competitive runners who do not take this precaution, the flesh will reconstitute itself around the arms as much as the legs. The author remarks that, in those unused to running, swinging the arms (παρασείσματα) causes problems (ἀσύμφορα), warming the body, thinning the skin, and emptying the flesh of moisture.[27] Jones translates ἀσύμφορα as "sprains," but the details of the problem seem rather to refer to the chafing of

24 Depictions of sprinters, e.g., Tzachou-Alexandri, *Mind and body*, 244-245, show a lithe torso with well-developed chest and thighs.

25 There are depictions of long distance runners at Tzachou-Alexandri, 249.

26 Xenophon, *Symposium* 2.17.

27 *Regimen* II 64.

the underside of the arm that can result if an overweight individual begins an exercise regimen with a long period of continuous to and fro motion of the arms. Increased exercise causes the arms to "thicken up" by becoming more muscular, and, if the individual is not exercising at a competitive level, in which legs require much more fuel than arms, the arms will not seem out of proportion to the rest of the body—which is why *Regimen* notes an overall stockiness rather than thinning of the shoulders as Socrates does. Long runs, says the author of *Regimen*, are good for those who eat a lot, have excess flesh, and are older (πρεσβύτερος).[28] Once again, we see running prescribed for certain types of bodies, not as advice on how to build up the body to perform such runs. A trainer would have to know what specific foods a long-distance runner should eat: he cannot simply feed him anything and everything. The flesh of a long-distance runner does not become as compact as that of a sprinter, so diarrhea might be less of a concern, but food that is too easily passed by stool will not stick on the body and other types of food can cause constipation.

Between the sprint and long-distance run, the author mentions the *diaulos*. This is a technical term used to refer to a double *stadion*—there and back again, basically an extended sprint. It is unclear why the author uses the name for an athletic distance here when he avoids it in discussing sprinting and long-distance runs. It may be that there is no other way to readily identify what for the Greeks would have been a middle-distance run. Like the *trochos*, this run needs to call immediately on the body's fluids; as with the *makros*, however, fluids in and of themselves are insufficient to fuel the exercise, so the body has to dissolve some flesh.[29] Whether this would be the hardest or easiest run for which to formulate a regimen is hard to say. It would not have to deal with the extremes of fluids of the *trochos* or the flesh-building foods of the *makros*, so it might be a more balanced regimen; then again, it would have to calibrate both types of food, which might work against each another.

If the main aim of running is to dissolve flesh, the author says that one way to speed up the process is to run wrapped in a cloak, as this heats the body up more quickly. But he adds that long runs without a cloak are preferable, and achieve the desired effect, because a cloak keeps the body from being cleansed by the pure air (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ εἰλικρινές) that falls upon it and constrains it to do all its exercise in the same atmosphere. This seems to be a

28 *Regimen* II 66.

29 Because the *diaulos* was a sprint, it is difficult to distinguish differences in body type between *stadion* and *diaulos* runners on vases. One runner who is shown in typical sprinting form is labeled *diaulos*, Tzachou-Alexandri, *Mind and body*, 247.

medical rationalization for Greek athletic nudity.

Regimen also prescribes wrestling to ward off oncoming disease. The particular benefit of wrestling is that it causes the flesh to harden but the veins that feed it to grow. This is one place in which the author does suggest developing the body for a specific exercise rather than matching exercises with preexisting body types. To help the veins grow, he suggests holding one's breath to force open the passages and "thin" the skin so that moisture can then be easily expelled. This brings to mind the anecdote of the wrestler Milo, who proved his strength by holding his breath until he snapped the bands encircling his head.[30] However, further comments on wrestling show that the author is still not addressing his advice to competitive athletes. He views wrestling in oil and dust as alternatives, with wrestling in dust the colder of the two; wrestling in oil is to be avoided in the summer because it melts the flesh too much.[31] All competitive wrestling used oil, even if it was sometimes deliberately overlaid with dust. Oiling may have been viewed as advantageous precisely because it helped to melt the flesh quickly to provide the nourishment needed by the athlete.[32]

Although the author occasionally advises sparring (ἀνακινήματα) and using a punchball (κωρυκομαχίη), he does not suggest boxing, *pankration*, discus, javelin, long jump, or any equine pursuits as therapeutic exercise. Regarding sparring, *Regimen* says that it is the exercise that heats the flesh least, which may mean it was not thought to provide enough exertion for most therapeutic purposes. The author adds that sparring stimulates the body and soul and empties the body of breath (πνεῦμα).[33] *Pneuma* is an essential component of life: to drain it from the body while at the same time stimulating body and soul could perhaps produce a dangerous physical state best overseen by a trainer. There are probably two reasons boxing is not recommended for recreation. As represented on vases, the body type of the typical boxer seems rather larger than the Greek ideal.[34] A vase contrasting the

30 Pausanius 6.14.7.

31 *Regimen* II 65, 357-358.

32 Celsus 3.19.2 says that olive oil closes the pores of the skin and prevents perspiration, which Sansone thinks could cause dangerous over-heating. See David Sansone, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 101. Remarks in Philostratus (*Gymnastics* 50) and Lucian (*Anacharsis* 1-3) could imply that wrestling in the dust meant ground-wrestling. Upright wrestling was thought to be the lighter exercise, but if that is what is meant by wrestling in oil in *Regimen*, it is strange that the lighter exercise is recommended in the winter when the aim is to heat the body.

33 *Regimen* II 64.

34 E.g., Tzachou-Alexandri, *Mind and body*, 283-284, and Sweet, *Sport and Recreation*, 64, plate 17, and 69, plate 21.

bodies of a young runner, a young boxer, and two young pentathletes implies that boxing and a stocky body type were thought to go hand in hand from an early age.[35] Maintaining such a physique without allowing the excess material to upset the body's balance would require extreme vigilance, and such dangers may be illustrated in portrayals of slightly older boxers in which the material seems to have drifted south.[36] This may be why doctors do not recommend boxing or the *pankration* as recreational exercises for prophylaxis. The second reason boxing and *pankration* would not have been popular with doctors is that they were more likely than other exercises to result in injury and permanent scarring.[37]

The lack of reference in *Regimen* to the other three events that make up the pentathlon besides wrestling and running—discus, javelin, and long jump—is perhaps explained by the fact that these pursuits relied more heavily on technique than effort. At the elite level, technique is important in running and wrestling also, but not so much if winning is incidental or irrelevant to the exercise.[38] It isn't clear that riding was ever a great pastime for most male citizens in Greece;[39] in fact, continued horse-riding was seen as responsible for varicose veins in the legs of the Scythians.[40] It is, then, not surprising that *Regimen* does not number it among its recommended exercises.

Regimen's advice on nutrition is concerned with the heating, cooling, drying, and moistening properties of various foods and methods of preparation, as well as with a food's ability to be passed by stool.[41] Barley, for example,

35 Nigel Spivey, *The ancient Olympics: A history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 61. Although Tzachou-Alexandri suggests that when not taken to excess (i.e., competitive levels?), young boxers need not become overly heavy. See *Mind and body*, 285.

36 Tzachou-Alexandri, *Mind and body*, 139 and 167. In the first century CE, the author Philostratus remarks that a pot belly was seen as advantageous in boxing because it made it hard for an opponent to reach the head (and would also, therefore, one would think, make it hard to reach an opponent); see *Gymnastics* 34, in Michael B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence, and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 143-148. It seems unlikely he garnered this piece of misinformation from boxers or trainers themselves and it is perhaps to be accounted for as his explanation of these vases.

37 See above, n. 13. Dislocated shoulders were an occupational hazard for wrestlers.

38 Nigel James Nicholson remarks that running was seen as a more innate talent than the combat sports in ancient Greece; see *Athletics and aristocracy in archaic and classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21. Aristotle says that *gymnastai* work with the condition of the body and the *paidotribai* with its actions. Doctors may have seen the role of the *gymnastes*, but not the *paidotribes*, as a continuation of their role.

39 Though n.b. Xenophon, *On Horsemanship*. In competition, jockeys and charioteers seem to have been slaves or professionals.

40 *Airs, Waters, Places* 22.

41 *Regimen* makes only a passing remark to sexual intercourse (II 58), though this was also believed to play a role in the body's economy of fluids. There are some anecdotes in which

is cooler, drier, and more of a laxative than wheat. Both beef and cheese are strong and binding. Other meats are deemed lighter than beef. We are told by both Pausanias and Diogenes Laertius that athletes in the earliest times did not eat meat. Pausanias says that Dromeus of Stymphalios changed from a diet of cheese to meat, while Diogenes Laertius refers to a trainer named Pythagoras who introduced meat into a diet that had previously consisted of dry figs, moist cheese, and wheat.[42] Both stories are extremely suspect. The name Dromeus means "runner" and Pythagoras, of course, is the name of the philosopher who forbade his followers to eat meat. The stories could, however, mark a point at which the diet of athletes began to diverge sharply from that of non-athletes, for whom meat of any sort was a comparative rarity in the diet.

Although *Regimen in Health* advises eating "as much as possible" (ἐσθίειν ὡς πλεῖστα) in winter,[43] no Hippocratic advises force-feeding or eating for the purpose of exercise. But exerting oneself more than normally without adequate nourishment could have unforeseen consequences. In the *Epidemics*, one individual made himself a eunuch by too much hunting and running.[44] It would seem that the runner had depleted his supplies of seminal fluid because there was not enough fluid in his body to support the unaccustomed exertion. The fact that his activity also involved hunting suggests that he was not under the care of a trainer and that this was a recreational activity for which an insufficiency of nourishment was not usually a problem. Athletes, however, had to eat a huge amount. *Aphorisms* I 15 remarks that, whereas most people need more food in the winter, athletes (οἱ ἀθληταί) constantly need more food because of the heat they generate.[45] As we have seen (pp. 52-53), some individuals were deemed unsuitable for extreme exercise because their bodies could not process the amount of food needed. It was also important that the large quantity of food provide the right sort of nourishment. If an individual is suffering from abnormal pain after his accustomed exercises, *Regimen* advises that he be washed in warm water, drink "soft" wine, eat a *wide variety* of food followed by more wine, rest, vomiting,

athletes are described as abstaining from sex but not enough to suggest this was a widespread practice, e.g., Plato, *Laws* 8.839e-40a; Aelian, *Varia Historia* 10.2; and Plutarch, *Moralia* 710d. See Golden, *Sport and Society,* 75, and Sweet, *Sport and Recreation*, 115.

42Pausanius 6.7.10; Diogenes Laertius 8.12.

43 *Regimen in Health* 1.

44 *Epidemics* 7.122.

45 This is the only other use of the term ἀθληταί in the Hippocratic Corpus other than that in *Prorrhetic* II; see above p. 50. At a later period, it was believed that athletes were recognizable at Athens by their bodies simply because they ate so much; Athenaeus 10.412d ff., in Golden, *Sport and Society*, 157-158.

a stroll, and then sleeping on a soft bed. Such treatment, we are told, would moisten without excess a body that had been dried by excess.[46] The wide variety of food provides the body with all the different fluids that have been drained from it, while vomiting after a period ensures that the body doesn't absorb any excess.

While military service must have been the most grueling regimen undertaken by most ordinary Greek citizens, a soldier on campaign would not have the opportunity to redress unaccustomed exercise with the pampering treatment suggested by *Regimen*. From a military point of view, athletes are often treated with contempt. In Euripides' *Autolycus*, produced in ca. 420 BCE, a character is made to say:

> What man has ever defended the city of his fathers by winning a crown for wrestling well or running fast or throwing a diskos far or planting an uppercut on the jaw of an opponent? Do men drive the enemy out of their fatherland by waging war with diskoi in their hands or by throwing punches through the line of shields? No one is so silly as to do this when he is standing before the steel of the enemy.[47]

The implication, obviously, is not just that athletics is different from war, but that the skills required for warfare are so different from the skills inculcated in the *gymnasion* that the latter do not even function well as preparation for the former. A soldier's body could not be totally untrained, for such bodies suffer the pain of fatigue after the slightest exercise,[48] but the ancient soldier had to be infinitely adaptable to periods of rest and activity, eating and fasting, sleep and wakefulness.[49] The carefully calibrated training regimen for specific events did not foster this adaptability. For this reason, the strength of highly trained athletes was not viewed as a reserve to be called upon to help withstand adverse conditions. The ancient concept of health as a bodily economy, which in the case of an athlete in peak condition was extremely finely balanced, meant that the slightest change—even, say, an inopportune

46 *Regimen* II 66.

47 Euripides, *Autolycus*, fragment 282, translated by Stephen Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics*, 198.

48 *Regimen* II 66,

49 *Airs, Waters, Places* cites as an explanation for the Greek supremacy in warfare the variety of weather in Greece compared to that of Asia that, from the author's point of view, was either always warm or always cold. In the Funeral Oration, Pericles boasts that Athens does not need to train its citizens in fighting like the Spartans do (Thucydides 2.41.1). He is here arguing for *physis* over *nomos*, but a doctor or trainer may have commented that the lack of specialized training may have been *why* Athenians were better soldiers.

period of forced rest—threatened the athlete's body with illness.[50]

This may be why one vase seems to contrast pairs of overweight wrestlers and boxers on one side with pairs of muscular *hoplites* in combat on the other.[51] The latter were the bodies that the state really wished to inculcate in its citizens. Socrates' disquisition in Xenophon's *Symposium* on the virtues of dancing over running and boxing alone makes the same point. For the ordinary citizen, the best exercise did not focus on any one part of the body at the expense of another.[52] The bodies of the pentathletes compared to those of the runner and the boxer on the vase referred to in n. 34 appear to enshrine this body type, and Aristotle declares that pentathletes are the most beautiful athletes because they are constructed for both strength and speed.[53] When sculpted ideal athletes are shown taking part in an identifiable athletic event, it is always the pentathlon, the discus, or the javelin-throw. The event for which the *diadoumenos* won his fillet and after which the *apoxyomenos* is scraping off could be anything, but they have the same body type as the pentathletes, with a torso neither as lean as that of a runner nor as stocky as that of a boxer/wrestler. Because pentathletes take part in events that both build the body up and reduce it, their body type is the aesthetic ideal—but insofar as it requires constant vigilance to maintain, it is still not that of the best citizen-soldier.[54]

The peak condition of an athlete cannot be maintained for long. *Aphorisms* declares that:

> In a restricted regimen the patient makes mistakes, and thereby suffers more; for everything that occurs is more serious than with a slightly more liberal regimen. For this reason in health too an established regimen that is rigidly restricted is dangerous, because mistakes are more hardly borne.[55]

Regimen in Health says that this is especially the case in those of close flesh (the type likely to suffer from diarrhea). The author continues:

50 The same folk idea is behind the urban legend that the extreme physical fitness of Bruce Lee caused him to die from taking an aspirin.

51 Tzachou-Alexandri, *Mind And Body*, 282.

52 From the late sixth century BCE, competitions for aesthetically pleasing bodies, the so-called *euandria*, were held at the Panathenaia, including categories for older men; Spivey, *Ancient Olympics*, 64-67.

53 *Rhetoric* 1.5, 1361b.

54 Even here, though, training too early can detract from the proper development of the body. Aristotle notes that few individuals won in both boys' and men's categories of the pentathlon; *Politics* 1337-1339.

55 *Aphorisms* I 5, translated by W. H. S. Jones, 1931, 101.

> This kind of constitution is apt sharply to turn in either direction, to the good or to the bad, and in bodies of such a sort a good condition is at its best only for a while. Physiques of a less firm flesh and inclined to be hairy are more capable of forcible feeding and of [withstanding] fatigue, and their good condition is of longer duration.[56]

Longer but still limited duration. Hairiness can indicate that these bodies have a greater level of innate heat (because it forces nutriment to percolate through the skin), and this plus their more accommodating flesh means that they can process nourishment more effectively, although they cannot remain at their peak indefinitely. In principle, it should be possible for an athlete with this exceptional metabolism to maintain a peak condition if he and his trainer gear his regimen to his underlying body type and prevailing weather conditions, selecting the right foods, preparing them correctly, expending just the right amount of exertion after eating, resting the right amount of time before eating again. In practice, however, men are fallible and mistakes are made, and the introduction of some slight excess of the dry, say, or a little more dissolution of flesh than normal, inconsequential to a normal, healthy man who is not so finely tuned, can bring the athlete crashing from his pinnacle. If human error could be excluded, there would be no reason an athlete could not balance on the pinnacle of health forever, but, as in every other sphere of human endeavor, error cannot be excluded, so once its usefulness has passed, an athlete must voluntarily descend from his exalted position of health and follow a less finely tuned regimen. In modern training, it is recognized that peaking too early is problematic because that level of performance cannot be maintained.[57] In modern thinking, though, while a change in an athlete's regimen after running the last race or playing the last game might result in loss of fitness, it will not cause illness. In the ancient world, on the other hand, it was dangerous both to stay in peak condition and to revert too suddenly to a layperson's regimen. It is not that reaching the summit of health is to be ill any more than reaching the summit of wealth is to be poor. In itself, the achievement is worthy of admiration, but as *Nutriment* 34 states:

> The condition of an athlete [διάθεσις ἀθλητικὴ] is not natural. A healthy

56 *Regimen in Health* 7, translated by W. H. S. Jones, 1931, 55.

57 I have been told by Emil Iankov that in the 1970s, when he was training for Olympic weightlifting, his trainers would start focusing on the day and time of his lifts months ahead of the event.

state is superior in all.[58]

Insofar as it surpasses the natural state of humans, the body of a competitive athlete is not truly healthy, and, unless the blessed individual takes steps to mitigate his good fortune, disaster will follow. We cannot get too close to the gods. The entire stanza from the *Agamemnon* from which I quoted the first three lines at the beginning of this essay reads:

Yet it is true: the high strength of men
knows no content with limitation. Sickness
chambered beside it beats at the wall between.
Man's fate that sets a true
course yet may strike upon
the blind and sudden reefs of disaster.
But if before such time, fear
throw overboard some precious thing
of the cargo, with deliberate cast,
not all the house, laboring
with weight of ruin, shall go down,
nor sink the hull deep within the sea.[59]

The change in metaphor from health and disease to casting precious cargo overboard from a ship would not be as jarring to the ancient ear as it is to ours. If an athlete at the peak of his condition wished to compete another day, he had deliberately to let go some of his precious and hard-won health.

58 διάθεσις ἀθλητικὴ οὐ φύσει· ἕξις ὑγιεινὴ κρείσσων ἐν πάσιν, translated by W. H. S. Jones, 1931, 355. This is the only use of the adjective ἀθλητικὴ in the Hippocratic Corpus; see above p. 50.
59 Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* ll.1004-1012, translated by Richmond Lattimore, 1953, 66.

Chapter Five

Training the Senses by Animating the Body in Ancient China[1]

Vivienne Lo

With the impact of medical anthropology on historical methodologies during the course of the 1990s came new trends in histories of the body that asked fundamental questions such as which body and, perhaps more important, whose body were we talking about. One stream of analysis flowing out of the field of anthropology looked for expressions of the sensory experience of health and illness, for how the body's agency itself participated in the formation of cultural meanings. Some early Chinese sources examined in this chapter clearly portray and convey aesthetic knowledge, in which aesthetic refers to its earlier meaning of "things perceptible to the senses."[2] This chapter argues that a culture of bodily based self-cultivation laid the groundwork for the development of enduring concepts that have structured classical Chinese medical theory. My argument is based on an analysis of records of exercise regimen, sexual cultivation, and breath meditation that attempt to describe own-body experience rather than the illness of another. It is those concepts and techniques that codify and instruct the body's *sensual* nature—through the medium of *qi* 氣, the all-pervasive force that powers the universe—that are the main themes of this

1 My apologies to those who rightly think they have read a semblance of this chapter before. In its earliest incarnation, it was written and researched in the late Nineties when I was a fellow of the history department of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for a conference on charts and illustrations convened at the Collège de France. I am very grateful for the generous research grant provided by the Wellcome Trust during that time. My thanks are also due to the countless scholars who gave me invaluable help and advice. In the preparation of this paper, I am particularly indebted to Donald Harper, Roel Sterckx, and John Moffet. My long article, "Imagining Practice: Sense and Sensuality in Early Chinese Medical Illustration," is in Francesca Bray, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, and Georges Métailié, editors, *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 383-l423.

2 I use the term "aesthetic" in contrast to "anaesthetic" in its earlier meaning of "things perceptible to the senses," rather than the "criticism of taste."

chapter. In particular, I will explore the relation between the sensory nature of body representation and the use of animal imagery to instruct and train the senses of noble bodies—their pain, pleasures, and passions—in early Chinese exercise and physical therapy. I will conclude with some brief observations about how the mostly positive imagination of animals in this early Chinese tradition differed from the negative images of beasts and beastliness in the early Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus, this chapter adds further detail to the general framework laid out in Chapter Three, in which Ren Hai argues for the importance of animal imagery and a sense of connection with nature in early Chinese exercises, both of which are largely absent in some strands of Western tradition (he discusses the ancient Greek tradition, while I discuss the early Judeo-Christian one).

Embodying animals

The use of animal imagery as a technique for training the body first appears systematically in the late Warring States and Han literature concerned with the healing arts. In this literature, references to animals function as a kind of shorthand to convey sensory information about the body, whether as a technique aimed at strengthening and prolonging life or as an expression of pathology. Over time, the language became rather formalized as it was repeated and modified differently in both Daoist and medieval medical literature, but the lyrical flights of the imagination inspired by animals survived to the nineteenth century, most vividly in popular medical manuscript traditions.

In his seminal work, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China*, Roel Sterckx emphasizes the "absence of a strict separation between a realm of the divine and an immanent world of natural creatures" in ancient China.[3] He cites early references to exorcistic and ritual dances with animal skins that mirrored symbolically the potential for transformation in the animal world. Building on his insight, I show in this chapter how this peculiar ability of Chinese animals to transcend their species in spontaneous, and often cyclical, transformations provided a source for communicating knowledge about the potential for affecting physiological and pathological change in the human body.

Notably, in ancient Chinese literature, birds, dragons, and caterpillars are often chosen for their ability to transform themselves. Birds and dragons

3 Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 165-204.

in particular can move through the realms of heaven and earth, and caterpillars slough off their skins and can reinvent themselves in flying form. This makes them perfect icons for the human potential for healing the body, longevity, and even immortality. Animals like the tiger and bear are earthbound, characterized by strength and solidity. All this can be seen in the Mawangdui *Daoyin tu*.

Forty-four vivid images of healthy bodies in pursuit of health and long life can be found on the well-known Mawangdui silk chart styled the *Daoyin tu,* the "guiding and pulling chart" 導引圖 (see page 87),[4] which depicts a form of medical gymnastics designed to rejuvenate aging and stiffening bodies and to transform pain and discomfort. Some of the figures in the chart are upright; some are bending, with arms and legs stretched and contorted in different postures. They are dynamic images—some intense and concentrated, others more casual and relaxed—designed to evoke movement. Donald Harper's translations of the titles of the *Daoyin tu* animal forms are: The Crane, Dragon Ascending, Monkey Bawling to Pull Internal Hotness, Gibbon Bawling, Gibbon Shouting, Bear Ramble, and Merlin.[5]

4 The title was given by the modern editors. See the introductory article, "Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu," by Tang Lan, editor, *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu Daoyin tu* (*The silk book guiding and pulling chart from the Han tomb at Mawangdui*) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1979), 1-10. A photographic reproduction and transcription of the extant captions on the *Daoyin tu* can be found in Mawangdui Hanmu boshu, Zhengli Xiaozu, editor, *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* (*Silk books from a Han tomb at Mawangdui*), Volume 4 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1980), 49-52. Explanatory notes are provided in Ma Jixing, *Mawangdui guyishu kaoshi* (*An examination and explanation of the ancient medical books from Mawangdui*) (Hunan: Hunan kexue jishu, 1992), 849-866. See also Li Xueqin, "Yinshu yu Daoyin tu" ("*Yin shu* and *Daoyin tu*"), *Wenhua tiandi,* 1991.2: 7-9. I translate the verb *yin* 引 as "pull" in order to best encompass the range of activities implied by the term. Most of the exercises describe pulling and stretching along the many planes of the body. In translating *yin* as "pull," I follow Catherine Despeux, "Gymnastics: The Ancient Tradition," in Livia Kohn and Sakade Yoshinobu, editors, *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1989), 225-261. On the one hand, *yin* refers to "pulling" the body in various kinds of physical movements. *Yin* followed by an ailment name refers to "pulling" the ailment, presumably "pulling" (some part of the body) to "pull" or "remove" the ailment, i.e., to treat it. In American English, "pull" carries the sense of "eliminate, remove," which is appropriate in this context. *Yin* is often translated as "stretch," a limited rendering given the wide range of interventions described throughout the text. Most of the pulling exercises in the book do involve stretching, often through the specified ailment, but we also find rhythmic squeezing and contracting of muscles, bending of the area of the body pulled, and emergency treatments for obstructions of the throat or dislocation of the jaw. Massage is sometimes applied to pull the afflicted area. A number of exercises are designed to pull ailments that are whole-body, or do not have a specific site in the body, and tend to involve breath control. The number of repetitions is remarkable, up to 1,000 and, in one example, 4,000 in a day.

5 Donald J. Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts*

The recently discovered *Yin shu* 引書, or "Pulling Book," from Zhangjiashan describes similar animal forms, and helps us to translate the visual images in *Daoyin tu* into practice. *Yin shu* tells us that *Daoyin* was far more than a form of physical therapy for bodily disorders. It was a fully fledged annual health regimen that regulated exercise, personal hygiene, sleep, diet, sexual behavior, and personal grooming according to the changing features of the four seasons. At least seven of the captions to the *Daoyin* images and a dozen of the exercises in *Yin shu* allude to animal movements.[6] Moreover, *Yin shu*, *Daoyin tu*, and *Daoyin* culture in general draw constantly on animal imagery. The names of birds and beasts serve to evoke a shared understanding of a given posture.

As with the different witnesses to common texts excavated from the Warring States and Han periods, we should not assume one unified tradition of *Daoyin*. Variations between the nature of an exercise described in *Yin shu* and the movement in the *Daoyin tu* figure that bears the same or similar title serve to illustrate the diverse traditions of *Daoyin* in the Western Han period. Moreover, we should be cautious about imposing our modern interpretation upon the images. We cannot assume that we have grasped the full implications of what it meant in ancient China to move like a bear, monkey, crane, or dragon.

Performing the dragon

For both *Daoyin tu* and *Yin shu,* an ascending dragon signifies metamorphosis. As Sterckx notes, the term *longbian* 龍變, "to transform like a dragon," was used as an epithet for transcendent virtue and sagehood.[7] In *Guanzi*, the dragon is described as a *shen*, or "spirit," with the power to change its size rapidly and range freely between earth and heaven. The dragon winging its way between domains is compared with the sage changing his habitat, and thereby exposing the parochial character of the "local person."

Yin shu describes a posture called "Dragon Ascending," which suggests the dragon's proud demeanor and full, out-thrust chest: "Dragon Ascending: Bend the front knee, extending at the back. Interlock the two hands, hold the knee and look up."[8] This does not appear to match the image captioned

(London: Kegan Paul International, 1998), 310-316.

6 Michael A. Williams, "Divine Image—Prison of Flesh: Perceptions of the Body in Ancient Gnosticism," in Michel Feher *et al*., editors, *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Volume 1 (New York: Zone, 1989), 128-147.

7 Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon*, 179.

8 The animal forms are all described in Zhangjiashan Hanjian zhengli zu, "Zhangjiashan Hanjian Yinshu shiwen" ("An interpretation of the text of the Han bamboo strip Pulling Book from

"Dragon Ascending" in *Daoyin tu*, which shows a standing figure with arms upraised. However, it is clear in each case that the expression "Dragon Ascending" is associated with an expansive upward motion, so it may be more profitable to seek similarities in the imagination of the dragon rather than in the detail of the exercise.

Performing the birds

Yin shu records a large number of bird forms, although their titles do not tally precisely with the captions in *Daoyin tu*. The wings of birds and dragons, which allow them to move between earth and heaven, are also vehicles for metamorphosis over space and time. Birds figure largely in practices intended to achieve rejuvenation and physical longevity because they represent the passage through that liminal place where the transformation between light and darkness occurs, and distance is obliterated.

The exercise called "Wild Duck Bathing" in *Daoyin tu* imitates the quick movements of a duck shaking its wet feathers: "Wild Duck Bathing. Interlock the hands behind the back and shake the head." It is undoubtedly useful for alleviating tension in the neck muscles. "The Owl (Shivers?)" evokes an easily recognizable image of the bird, its head sunk down in its neck feathers, darting glances all around: "The Owl (Shivers?). Interlock hands behind the back, shrink the neck and shake the head."

Performing the bear

Yin shu mentions the Bear Ramble as being good for the back muscles; the image in *Daoyin tu* suggests a square ambling walk that might well ease the back. However, for the intended audience of the *Daoyin tu,* the bear perhaps signifies more than lumbar strength.

Animal imagery and the sexual arts

While sex may not be sport in an Olympic sense, it still involves many of sport's virtues and vanities: physical strength and endurance, training and perfecting the body, and entertainment and performance. The animal imagery of *Daoyin* is echoed in the textual tradition of sexual cultivation, with the movements of animals serving as analogues for coital rhythms and positions. The following postures are listed under the heading *shishi* 十勢, "ten postures," in *Tianxia zhi dao tan* 天下至道談 (*The ultimate way under Heaven*),

Zhangjiashan"), *Wenwu* 10 (1990): 82-83 (hereafter *Yinshu shiwen*).

and *shijie* 十節, "ten regulations," in *He yin yang* 合陰陽 (*Conjoining* yin *and* yang), two texts on the sexual arts from Mawangdui:

> One states: Tiger roaming. Two states: Cicada clinging. Three states: Inchworm. Four states: Waterdeer butting. Five states: Locust splayed. Six states: Gibbon squat. Seven states: Toad. Eight states: Hare bolting hither and thither. Nine states: Dragonfly. Ten states: Fish gobbling.[9]

Some of these animal postures are explained in later literature. However, *He yin yang* itself gives no further information, meaning that the postures would have had to be learned from an adept acquainted with the movements and their codification. In sharp contrast, the codes and movements of *Daoyin* are made explicit in *Daoyin tu* and *Yin shu*. This presumably rendered them more accessible to a general audience, without the need for an expert intermediary. Here is the entry from *Yin shu* for the *Daoyin* exercise named the Inchworm: "Extend the lower leg curling the toe thirty times. This is called the Inchworm."[10] *Tianxia zhi dao tan* and *He yin yang* provide no instructions for the Inchworm as a sexual posture although it can be easily supposed that curling and stretching movements would lend themselves to sexual activity.

Animal exercises thus form part of a tradition of bodily cultivation aimed at preserving health and promoting fitness and vitality, but they could also be prescribed as a treatment for ill health, often in sequences involving multiple repetitions. One such prescription, recorded in *Yinshu shiwen*, includes Tiger Looks Back, Wild Duck Bathing, Bear Ramble, Looking Yang, Follow to the Side, and Back Step, interspersed with periods of rest in various different positions. Unfortunately for us today, it is not clear exactly what symptoms this prescription was intended to treat.[11]

Transformation and animal imagery

To understand the animal imagery of *Yin shu* and *Daoyin* more fully, we need to examine it within the wider context of early Chinese ideas about the role of transformation and change in shaping the universe. The various philosophical schools of the Warring States and Han periods share a common belief in a fundamental principle of transformation that governs the generation and development of all things. This underlying principle can be

9 *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* 4 ("He Yin Yang"), 165.
10 *Yinshu shiwen*, 82.
11 *Yinshu shiwen*, 84.

detected in the natural world's processes of motion and change. The observation and codification of these processes lie at the heart of the first calendars, and help to define and regulate the social behavior of civilized human beings. Numerous animal spirits have a place in the calendar, starting with the creatures of the four quadrants of the heavens and the constellations associated with them: the Blue-Green Dragon, the Vermilion Bird, the White Tiger, and the Black Warrior (a turtle or tortoise), together with the *Gouchen* 勾陳 (Angular Arranger), who belongs to the center.[12] Animals are endowed with various attributes of the *yin* and *yang* cycles of time and space, acquiring universal resonance in the process of transformation. Moreover, animals are not constrained within the bounds of a single form or species: for example, there are particular times in the year when hawks change into pigeons and mice into quails. Shape shifting is not the prerogative of creatures such as amphibians, which undergo an observable metamorphosis, but extends to many other animals, some of which are endowed with demonic powers of transformation.

By way of illustration, in the following quotation from *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Mr. Lü's spring and autumn annals*, ca. 239 BCE), we can see how, in ritual theory, phases of the year are, in part, marked by the metamorphoses of species, here the mole into the quail.[13]

> The correlates of [the third month of spring] are the days *jia* and *yi*, the Sovereign Taihao, his assisting spirit Goumang, creatures that are scaly, the musical note *jue*, the pitch-standard named Maid Purity, the number eight, tastes that are sour, smells that are rank, and the offering at the door. At sacrifice, the spleen is given the pre-eminent position.
>
> The Paulownia trees begin to bloom, the mole is transformed into a quail, rainbows begin to appear and the duckweed starts to grow.[14]

12 See John Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought* (Albany: SUNY, 1993), 81. *Gouchen* are six stars close to the five stars of *Beiji* 北極, the North Pole asterism located in Ursa Minor.

13 Lü Buwei, edited by Chen Qiyou, *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* (Critical edition of *Mr. Lü's spring and autumn annals*) (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1984), 13, 677; and on *Huainanzi*, Liu Wendian , editor, *Huainanzi honglie jijie* (*The masters of Huainan: Explanation of the greatness and the luminosity*) (Taipei: Wenshizhe, 1992), 11.18a. See also Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early China and Greece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 32-33; Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume II, *History of scientific thought*, with the research assistance of Wang Ling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 261-265; and Michael Loewe, *The men who governed China in Han times* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 466-68.

14 Lü Buwei, *Lüshi chunqiu,* 14.2, translation adapted from John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, *The Annals of Lü Buwei*: *A Complete Translation and Study* (Stanford: Stanford University

In early Chinese thought, the human body resonated with the influences of the heavenly bodies. It was embraced by, and embraced within itself, the constellations, stars and planets, and the spirits animating them. The concept of spirit entities dwelling in the internal organs is found in *Taiping jing* 太平经 (*Canon of heavenly peace*), portions of which probably date to the latter part of the Han Dynasty.[15] Apparently, much the same idea developed in the meditational traditions of Daoism, from the fifth century CE at the latest, although possibly far earlier. Luminous deities animating both the "outer body" and "inner body" are described in *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 *(Canon of the Yellow Court),* a corpus of two scriptures that was used as a meditation manual by the Shangqing 上清 (*Supreme Purity*) sect of Daoism and later became integral to *xiu zhen* 修真, "cultivating perfection," practice.[16] The physical appearance of some of these spirit entities is depicted as animals living in the organs in the illustrations to the *Yun ji qi qian* (Song dynasty) editions of the *Huangting* canon. Cosmological theory, theories common to classical medicine, and the concept of the body as a bureaucratic system administered by in-dwelling deities all flow together into the transcendence practices of the Daoist adept who meditates on the animals as a way of refining his or her body.

The hemerological text, *Hama jing* (the *Toad canon*), includes a passage of seasonal prohibitions that relates particular days to the spirits/constellations of the internal organs according to the calendrical system of the ten Heavenly Stems and twelve Earthly Branches (the *ganzhi* 干支 cycle). Here, the animals are equated to the inner organs and serve as part of an instruction on when and where it is appropriate to make medical interventions to avoid harming the inner spirits:

> When the liver is [corresponds to] the Blue-Green Dragon, the spirit is at *dingmao*. When the heart is the Vermilion Bird, the spirit is at *gengwu*. When the spleen is the *Gouchen*, the spirit is in the center. When the lung is the White Tiger, then the spirit is at *guiyou*. When the kidney is the Black Warrior constellation, the spirit is at *jiazi*. [17]

It is hard to know exactly what to make of this passage. In broad terms, it

Press, 2000), 95.

15 See Wang Ming, editor, *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校 (*Annotated Book of Great Peace*) (second edition, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 14, 22, and 27.

16 See the introduction to Kristofer Marinus Schipper *et al*., *Concordance du Tao-Tsang: Titres des ouvrages* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1975).

17 *Huangdi hama jing* (*Yellow Emperor's Toad Canon*), facsimile edition (Beijing: Zhongyi guji chubanshe, 1984), 43-44.

seems clear that the inner space of the body is a homology of the heavens, and that the spirit processes around it, taking up residence in different places at different points in the sixty-day cycle. What is not clear is whether it resides in the named viscus at the times indicated or in some other distal location determined by the cycle. The terms used here as epithets for the five viscera all denote star formations identified with the creatures of the four directions, as seen in the astronomical records and theoretical texts of the Han period. The twenty-eight *xiu* 宿 (lodges) of the heavens are divided into four sectors of seven, each associated with one of the four creatures. Black Warrior in the extract refers to the tortoise with its armor-like shell. The tortoise, which is represented together with the three other animals in Han art, evidently owed its celestial status to the use of its shell in oracle bone-divination. With the fifth direction—*Gouchen* with its six stars—the directions and quadrants of the heavens are brought within the correlative system of fivefold correspondences orchestrated by the five agents (wood, fire, earth, metal, water), here expressed in the five viscera.

Pathology

Animals lent their sounds, shapes, and textures to convey knowledge, not just about transcendental transformations of the body, but also pathological transformations. Here is a second-century BCE differentiation of bowel disease: "As for when there is an edematous swelling of the abdomen, making sounds like a frog's croak, this is *fat masses obstructing the bowel*."[18]

Where the frog's croak succinctly warns of lipid lumps rather than gas, or blood blocking the bowel, it is early evidence of a tradition that animates rather serious pathology. Animals structure the imagination of the body, whether they represent lesions on the surface of the skin or convulsions of the whole body. The list of ailments runs from head to toe, after which we find the following whole-body symptoms: "...If the body at times falls down and froths at the mouth with the sound of a sheep baa-ing…and unable to breathe, this is *fright*; if it arches backwards, this is *infant convulsions*."

The baaing of the sheep in convulsion that the following illness categories from the *Mawang-dui wushier bingfang* are also so named for the noises emitted during the convulsions:

> To make a Person Ailing from the Horse not Have Spasms
> To make a Person Ailing from the [] not Have Spasms

18 *Yin shu* (author's unpublished translation).

To make a Person Ailing from the Sheep not Have Spasms
To make a Person Ailing from the Snake not Have Spasms.

Maijing 脈經 (*Canon of the pulse*, third century CE) gives us the pulses that herald death, the animals telling us about imminent failure of the inner organs. Bian Que states that when you examine the pulse, it is a sign of death if the *qi* is like the gathering of a flock of birds, a chariot with but one horse, the pecking of a sparrow, a swimming shrimp, or a hovering fish.[19] Here, the imagination of animals structures the physician's sensory perception of acute illness through his finger tips.

Pedagogy: The role of imagination in teaching and practice

The use of animal imagery to train and condition the body is a device repeated in the arts of the bedchamber, in techniques aimed at increasing *qi*, harmonizing *yin* and *yang*, and engendering a brightness of the spirit. Here are the lyrical instructions, easily imagined: tiger roving, the cicada clinging, the inchworm and the river deer butting, the toad, the gibbon grabbing, the rabbit bolting, the dragonfly, and the fish gobbling.

Descriptions of the body in early *Daoyin* are not given "as it meets the eye," but reveal the inscription on its surface with a particular order—and one that sets out to control this surface by the natural environment. We have seen imagination liberate the body from the boundaries of visual constraint while still embracing a view of its external form. At the same time, imagination forms a bridge between the interior and exterior worlds.

To walk like a bear, rise like a dragon, pace like a wolf, or translate the movement of the looper caterpillar to the thrusting of the penis or the clinging of a cicada to an embrace demands an ability to embody that movement through a familiar assumption of martial-arts instruction. If each movement is not to be disassembled into isolated actions, we must feel its attitude conveyed in the whole gesture. In any case, how does a dragon rise? *Yin shu* gives us instructions, blow by blow. Surely, now as then, knowledge of how a dragon moves owes more to the power of collective imagination than to the study of dragons or this basic description.

Where modern *taijiquan* manuals provide diagrams, photographs, or even videos, *Yin shu* may have had charts like *Daoyin tu* to provide one more dimension to help the student. Without visual aids, it is often impossible to understand how to interpret a textual account regarding the body. The

19 Wang Shuhe 王淑和 (second to third century), *Maijing juan* 5.3, (Taipei: Xinya chubanshe, 1968), 88.

power of the images as a mnemonic device is that they simultaneously convey whole-body movement, its posturing, gestures, attitudes, and mood. Yet more powerful is the combination of image and caption, such as in *Yin shu*, as the brief line contextualizes the image and gives it greater depth.

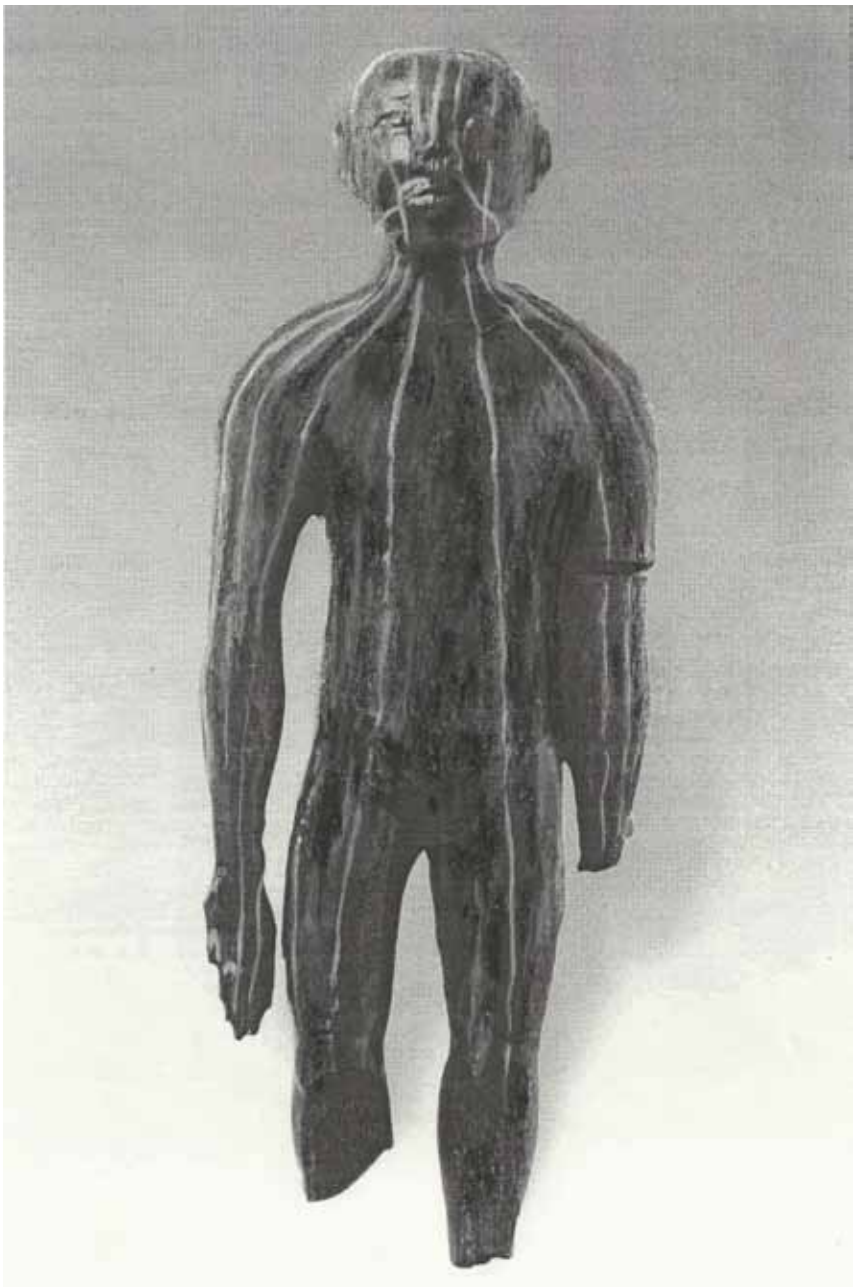
Self-cultivation and the classical medical body

Breath cultivation, sexual cultivation, and *Daoyin* exercise were the combined context within which ideas of *qi* first evolved to express the sensory body: emotions, pain, heat, pleasure, and passion. In order to appreciate the importance of these descriptions of the physiology of strength, vigor, and longevity, we should remember that in contemporary manuscript accounts of the *mai* 脈 ("vessels" or "channels"), such as the ones buried with both second-century BCE *Daoyin tu* and *Zhangjiashan* medical texts, despite those lines around the body that suggest the acupuncture channels of classical medicine, we do not see *qi* flowing and circulating around the body. In particular, the earliest evidence for the development of a physiology of inner body *qi*[20] in *Daoyin* and breath meditation is found a century or more before reliable evidence for a systematic medicalized movement of *qi* circulating through the body's channels.

I have discussed this point at length elsewhere in relation to a lacquered wooden figurine buried around 118 BCE in a tomb at Shuangbaoshan, Sichuan province, and discovered by archaeologists in 1983 (see page 78).[21]

20 *Qi* (popularly rendered ch'i) is a complex and changing concept that defies simple lineal histories. In the mid-Warring States, references to *qi* tend to refer to atmospheric and environmental conditions, especially to moist vapors—clouds and mists—and, by analogy, to formless, clustering qualities that can be discerned with careful observation, such as smoke, ghosts, or the vibrant, martial aura of an army. By the mid-fourth century, *qi* often indicates the fundamental stuff in nature that both promotes and indicates vitality in the phenomenal world. It may enter the body in various ways—through the orifices and skin—but its movement within the body is not formalized. Some historians translate *qi* as "vapor," and, in doing so, underline the amorphous, watery qualities of steam and mist that are formative influences both in the early period and as an enduring feature of the concept. As *qi* begins to be applied to the phenomena of the inner body, the ideas, although never totally distinct from the early versions, go through significant transformations. Rather than replacing the old meanings, the range of meanings grows incrementally—a process that is continuous to the present day. I have not translated the term, and shall refrain from doing so, because of the substantive changes that take place as *qi* itself begins to figure in the inner body.

21 I have discussed the figurine in detail in He Zhiguo and Vivienne Lo, "The Channels: A Preliminary Examination of a Lacquered Figurine from the Western Han Period," *Early China* 21 (1996): 81-123. For the first description of the figurine's discovery, see also He Zhiguo, "Woguo zuizao de renti jingmai qidiao" ("A lacquer carving with China's earliest body tracts and channels"), *Zhongguo wenwubao* 15 (April 17, 1994): 4. A detailed discussion of the figurine can be



Lacquer figurine showing acupuncture lines from the Han Dynasty tomb in Shuangbaoshan. Adapted from figure M2:743 from Sichuan Provincial Cultural Relics Research Institute and Mianyang Museum (eds.), Mianyang Shuangbaoshan Hanmu *[*Han Dynasty Tomb in Shuangbaoshan, Mianyang*], Beijing, Cultural Relics Press, 2006.*

Fifty other lacquerware objects contained in this tomb are all typical of elite burials along the course of the Yangtze River and its hinterland in the last two centuries BCE, showing that the owner was a person of high social status. However, the figurine is seemingly unique to this burial. Standing 28.1 centimeters tall, it is carved with attention to anatomical faithfulness, and, unusually, it is naked. Painted on its black-lacquered body are ten red lines: nine of them extending from the ends of the limbs to the head, and one running up the middle of the back and over the head to the nose. It was wrapped in layers of red cloth and deposited in the outer compartment of the coffin. This figurine is crucial to our understanding of the relationship between the embodiment and representation of animal dispositions in early Chinese theory and practice. It stands, conceptually and temporally, between ideas of circulating *qi* with movement and breath and a formal medical theory of circulation.

Studies of the Shuangbaoshan figurine generally draw parallels between the lines on its body and descriptions of the pathways of the *mai* in four texts discovered in tombs of the second century BCE in Hunan and Hubei provinces. Together with these texts, it is often cited as evidence of the theory and practice of acupuncture in early China.[22] *Mai* during this period also functions as a technical term for pathologies such as hemorrhoids that are characterized by blood or vessels issuing from the rectum.[23] Five types of therapy were indicated for the *mai* in the Han period, including drug treatment, lancing with needles made of stone, bloodletting, and cautery.[24]

Nonetheless, we should guard against equating the systems and traditions of the *mai* with modern biomedical concepts of the circulation of the blood. Even in relatively late medical texts, *qi*, in-dwelling spirits, and the *mai* themselves are said to circulate around the body, taking up residence in various parts of it, and entering and exiting via the arteries and joints.[25]

found in He Zhiguo, "Xi Han renti jingmai qidiao kao" ("An examination into a Western Han lacquered figurine with the channels"), *Daziran tansuo* 1995.3: 116-120.

22 He and Lo, "The Channels," 93-105.

23 Jiangling Zhangjiashan Hanjian zhengli xiaozu, "Jiangling Zhangjiashan Hanjian *Maishu* shiwen" ("Transcript of the Jiangling Zhangjiashan Han bamboo slip Channel Book *Maishu* shiwen"), *Wenwu* 1987.7: 73-74 (hereafter *Maishu shiwen*), 72; *Mawangdui Hanmu Boshu* 4 ("Wu shi er bing fang"), 53.

24 Dean Epler, Jr., "Blood-Letting in Early Chinese Medicine and its Relation to the Origin of Acupuncture," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 54 (1980): 337-367; *Maishu shiwen*, 74; and Sima Qian, *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962), 105, 2804, and 2806.

25 Vivienne Lo, "Spirit of Stone: Technical Considerations in the Treatment of the Jade Body," *Bulletin of SOAS*, 65.1 (2002): 99-127.

Moreover, the noticeably vertical pattern of the channels in both the figurine and early tomb texts, in comparison with the channels of later acupuncture, suggests an architecture of the human body structured not by a network of blood vessels, but by the definition of the muscles and, in the texts, the pathways of pain.[26]

The figurine from Shuangbaoshan demonstrates familiarity with the superficial paths of the veins and arteries on the back of the arm and hand; and it maps locations on the wrist, neck, temple, and elbow where pulsation can readily be detected.[27] With that in mind, it is tempting to identify it as a visual aid for medical practitioners, an *aide-memoire* or teaching tool to guide treatment, examination, or diagnostic theory. However, in marked contrast to the system of *jingluo* 經絡 ("channels and collaterals") that is so central to the theory and practice of acupuncture, the figurine shows little or no evidence of conduits leading to the internal organs.

In short, the excavated texts and Shuangbaoshan figurine taken together do not manifest a single, simple concept of *mai*, either as a structure—whether a formalization of the muscular body, the arteries and veins, or the pulse—or as a circulatory tract for the movement of *mai*, *qi*, *shen* 神 ("spirit"), or *jing* 精 ("essence").[28] The inconsistencies with classical theory and between

26 See, for example, the following quotation from *Maishu shiwen*, 74: "So bone pain is as if being hacked at, muscle pain is as if being bound, blood pain is as if saturated, channels pain is as if flowing, flesh pain is as if floating and when the *qi* is agitated there is chaos." A theory, once advanced by Bridgman, is that the *mai* were not based upon a knowledge of blood vessels, but on routes of pain as it is transmitted around the body. See Robert F. Bridgman, "Les fonctions physiologiques chez l'homme dans la Chine antique," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 3.1 (1981): 3-30, 10. During the centuries spanning the turn of the last millennium BCE and the first millennium CE in China, the widespread medical theorizing about the physiology of the body—in particular, that leading up to the formation of ideas about the circulation of *qi*—could have taken in all of these ideas, even if they were not all assimilated to the concept of the *mai* itself at a specific time or text. *Lingshu* 7 (13 "Jingjin") describes a map of the body that is similar to the *jingmai* of acupuncture theory, but which is also more focused on a somatography of the body defined by its muscular definition.

27 The Zhangjiashan *Yin shu* ends in the earliest account of pulse qualities in pulse-taking. This penultimate statement provides a clue to the practice. The channels that have pulses located along their route can be assessed by the quality of that pulse; those that don't have to be assessed by the symptoms along the whole course of the channel. Chunyu Yi, the Western Han physician active around 154 BCE, whose professional life was set out in a biography by Sima Qian, records case histories that are roughly contemporary with *Mai shu*. His pulse diagnosis is also concerned with detecting pulses.

28 *Jing* is a term that is frequently found in medicine and self-cultivation in a triad with *shen*, "spirit," and *qi* (see above). In sexual cultivation, *jing* may refer directly to semen. At other times, and when in combination with *qi,* it seems to refer to the finest quality of *qi*, which is the universal vitality out of which things condense and into which they dissolve. In Warring States literature such as the *Guanzi, Zhuangzi*, and *Zuo zhuan*, *shen* often designates spirits

text and artifact suggest that these early sources are better understood as a reflection of different theoretical constructions of the body. Putting aside the search for corroboration of textual detail, the lines on the body tell us something of their own story. What is particularly striking is the way the lines meet and cluster at the sensory organs: ten of them terminate at the eyes, three of them converge on the nose and four on the mouth, while six encircle the ears, and fourteen lead to the fingers and hands. It seems clear that they represent their creator's ideas about sight, smell, taste, hearing, and touch. In other words, they are part of a structure that mediates and sets boundaries between the internal world and the world outside.

Significantly, there are no markings on the inner surfaces of the legs corresponding to the leg's *yin* channels. According to textual tradition, *yin* weakness relates to deadly pathologies of the internal organs, but those pathways to decay are conspicuous here by their absence. Is the figurine a paradigm of physiological perfection, or maybe a diagram of the motion of *qi* in breath meditation, so vividly described in the early literature of breath cultivation?[29] Should we approach it not as a model of sickness, but rather as a sensory map of the human body? In any case, I would argue that it was in these contexts of inner cultivation, in which *Daoyin* and sexual cultivation spoke of transformations in the inner body and circulating *qi,* that physiological ideas first formed.

Transformation and the sage

The sage—whether ruler, noble, or physician—can achieve mastery through aligning his own behavior with the patterns of the universe that reveal themselves, here through mimicking the movement of animals. *Zhuangzi* 20 uses animal imagery to recommend shaking off earthly responsibilities to move freely with the rhythms of the universe:

> …without praises, without curses,
> now a dragon, now a snake,

and divine entities that dwell outside the human body. Elsewhere, *shenming* comes to mean characteristics of divine beings that allow them a spirit-like wisdom, a sharpness and clarity of perception, rather than mechanical, analytical intelligence. In Warring States and early imperial self-cultivation, the *shen* began to refer to the spirit in-dwelling in the human body, conceived as an individual entity. The term continued to convey the qualities of a mysterious and radiant intelligence as represented in its earlier meaning.

29 *Maishu shiwen*, 73-74. There is also an edition of this text among the Mawangdui medical texts that has been assigned the title, "Yinyang sihou"; see *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* 4 ("Yinyang sihou"), 21.

> you transform together with the times.
> And never consent to be one thing alone.[30]

The state of sagehood is attained through study and practice. Sagehood, like social class, expresses itself in specific behaviors and forms of cultivation. With appropriate discipline, properly attuned to the seasonal cycles and rhythms of nature, an ordinary person might remodel oneself as a sage or noble. According to *Yin shu*, the way in which a person becomes ill and a person's skill in cultivating health are also markers of social class. The common people are at the mercy of factors beyond their control, such as the weather or the hardships of labor, whereas the nobility—the *guiren* 貴人—fall ill when they fail to harmonize their passions and joys, so that *yin qi* or *yang qi* grows overabundant. They can restore harmony and health by regulating the internal thermostatic environment of their bodies by means of breath exercises:

> If they [the nobility] are joyful then the Yang *qi* is in excess. If they are angry then the Yin *qi* is in excess. On account of this, if those that follow the Way are joyful then they quickly exhale [warm breath], and if they become angry they increasingly puff out [moist breath], in order to harmonize it.[31]

Here, *Yin shu* simultaneously records the phenomena of emotion and expresses its role in the embodiment of social relations. Harmonization is represented by the graph *he* 和, "to bring together." Joy and anger come together, not necessarily in an act of suppression, but in a conscious resolution or easing of extreme emotion experienced simultaneously in the sensory body as conditions of heat or cold.

A number of scholars interpret the terms *xu* 呴 and *chui* 吹 as contrasting methods of exhalation. *Xu* 呴 refers to a slow exhalation of hot, vaporous breath through an open mouth. In contrast, *chui* 吹 is thought to refer to exhaling cold breath. Both methods of harmonizing emotion, *xu* 呴 and *chui* 吹, involve focusing on the mode of exhalation. This is the therapeutic event in which all the *Daoyin* practitioners engage.[32] One of the *Daoyin*

30 Translation from Angus Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The inner chapters* (London: Mandala, 1989), 121.

31 *Yinshu shiwen*, 86.

32 Ma Jixing and Gao Dalun consider *xu* 呴 a slow exhalation of hot vaporous breath through an open mouth. In contrast, *chui* 吹 is understood to refer to exhaling cold breath. The source of this interpretation is Ma Jixing, *Mawangdui guyishu kaoshi* (*An examination and explanation of the ancient medical books from Mawangdui*) (Hunan: Hunan kexue jishu, 1992), 826, n. 17. Ma quotes the Heshang gong commentary to the statement in *Laozi*, 29, "some *xu* 呴, some *chui* 吹," which states: "*Xu* is warm, *chui* is cold. Where there is that which warms there

tu illustrations, "Monkey Bawling to Pull Internal Hotness," is immediately related to a physical disorder: the plight of the noble who, by virtue of his class, as we have seen, is committed to remedying unresolved emotional and thermostatic excess.

Interestingly, the *Zhuangzi* also criticizes people that "nurture the body" (*yangxing* 養形) for long life through "huffing and puffing" because they fall short of the more lofty transcendental ideal of the true *Dao* 道 "Way"[33]:

> To huff and puff, exhale and inhale, blow out the old and draw in the new, do the "bear-hang" and the "bird-stretch," interested only in long life—such are the tastes of the practitioners of "guide-and-pull" exercises, the nurturers of the body, Grandfather Peng's ripe-old-agers.

In comparison to the aspirations of the sage, the aims of *Yin shu* are mundane: to treat pain mostly, but also some other symptoms, and to provide a daily and seasonal regimen for protecting the body against the vicissitudes of weather.

The sensual body

Consciously directing on, and concentrating through the medium of, the

is certainly that which cools." He also gives some evidence that *xu* is a slow exhalation and *chui* is faster. Quoting *Zhuangzi* 6, Ma also interprets a distinction between *xu* 呴, the out-breath that carries a lot of moisture, and *chui* 吹, which, he extrapolates, is drier: "…assist xu 呴 with moistness, assist moistening with spittle." Ma also distinguishes differences in the shape of the lips and mouth during the different types of breath control. All the relevant references to the particular qualities of breathing given by Ma Jixing, including the Heshang gong commentary, derive from at least 400 years later than the *Yin shu* and may reflect a reworking of the technique and terminology of breath cultivation. There is sufficient evidence in the *Yin shu* to provide a specific interpretation that differs somewhat from Ma's analysis. The information is summarized in Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature*, Manuscript IIA2, n. 5. The main statement is, "If it is dry then *hu* 呼 frequently and lie down frequently. If it is damp then *chu* 吹. Do not lie down, make the Yin substantial. If it is hot then concentrate on *xu* 呴. When it is cold then work the body." See *Yinshu shiwen*, 86. *Chui* 吹 is also used to remedy an excess of *yin*, which manifests as anger, whereas *xu* 呴 counteracts the condition of excess *yang* engendered by joy. The information implies that *chui* 吹 is an exhalation of moist breath that resolves a *yin*, possibly cold condition, while *xu* 呴 is an exhalation of hot breath that resolves a *yang* condition. *Hu* 呼 remedies dry conditions and is therefore an exhalation of dry breath. The quality of the out-breath is controlled by the depth of breathing. Breath from the bottom of the lungs is hot and moist; from the mouth, it is cold and dry.

33 Elsewhere, the *Zhuangzi* condones breath techniques to support the flight of the Peng, a huge bird that metamorphoses out of the fish Kun and traverses the celestial realm in a way that symbolizes the spontaneous cosmogenic process, an early vision of *yin* though *yang*, and the independent flight of the sage.

sensual body is a central feature of *Daoyin*. *Yin shu* sometimes refers to this voluntary focus as placing *yi* 意, "intention," on an activity or body part. In a discussion of the Mohist Canons, Angus Graham defines *yi* as "forming an image of the object of attention." Though y*i* potentially involves concentrated attention, it can also become distracted.[34] The procedure for resolving distracted *yi* entails breathing exercises to reduce dryness and heat, and massaging and cooling the forehead.

Thus, the term y*i* can refer to placing or concentrating attention on particular body parts and activities. In light of Graham's comments, one can appreciate that the act of concentrating *qi* also includes the formation of an image at the location threatened by illness. Used as a therapeutic technique, it involves a complex sequence of interactions that take place within and have an effect on the internal environment of the body. First of all, the site of the sickness or discomfort must be established; then, the practitioner must focus attention on that site, thereby presumably achieving a heightened awareness of that region of one's body; then, after a designated period of manipulation of breath, a series of therapeutic events proceeds spontaneously, while the practitioner may achieve the imagination of comfort by the deliberate projection of *qi*. One such example of the therapeutic application of *yi* is a technique in *Yin shu* for illness of the bowels that requires the patient to place "intention on the lesser abdomen and concentrate on puffing out [moist breath]. Stop after one hundred times."[35]

Many of the exercises in *Yin shu* reflect the process described above, with the implicit assumption that *qi* will resume flowing naturally after a suitable period of therapeutic exercise, without the need for any further intervention. *Yi* sets in motion the practitioner's latent ability to alter the internal environment of his or her own body, and thus stave off, to a certain extent, the ineluctable process of decline. The excerpt below describes the outcome of a practice that incorporates breath techniques and the sexual arts:

> Be careful, do not drink wine and eat the five flavors; put the *qi* in order with intent and the eye will be bright, the ear keen, the skin will gleam, the one hundred *mai* will be full and the Yin will rise again. From this, you will be able to stand for a long time, go a long way, and live for [ever].[36]

34 *Yinshu shiwen*, 83.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* 4, 47-148. I have accepted the rearrangement of the *Shiwen* slips proposed by Harper and Qiu Xigui. Taking the *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* as the starting-point, the slips would then be ordered 51, 41, 40. See Qiu Xigui, *Gu wenzi lunji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 535, and Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature*, Manuscript V1.A.14.

Yin shu and *Daoyin tu* together form a practical guide to the art of *Daoyin*, offering practitioners the prospect of improving their health and curing sickness, while simultaneously ratifying their membership of a privileged social group. *Daoyin* unites measured movement and the re-orientation of the senses—the cultivation of intent—in the service of psycho-physiological cultivation and social refinement.

In *Yin shu*, we see the beginnings of a dialectic between health-preservation practices and practices aimed at curing illness, which would evolve and change balance in the centuries to come. By invoking animal imagery, the animal forms in *Daoyin* engage all the self-cultivator's senses—not merely the sense of vision—in the imagination of mood and movement. Insofar as self-cultivation is the individual, solitary pursuit of physiological perfection, the records tend naturally to imagine an animated and lyrical body generated through performance, rather than a passive object on which realities are constructed. In contrast, the body as object of professional medical observation became increasingly silenced and circumscribed within its visible physical confines, and within other boundaries susceptible to a doctor's control.

Conclusions

A close reading of the figurine from Shuangbaoshan, even in the absence of supporting text, yields important information about the ways in which the body was perceived and imagined in early China, and the value attached to preserving and developing sensory acuity, in life and beyond the grave. The form and patterning of the figurine bespeak an ordering and training of the sensual body that links it with self-cultivation practice as it is known from images and texts from other burials of the Western Han period in the old Chu kingdom. The most engaging and lively of these images are the *Daoyin tu* figures. At first sight, *Daoyin tu* is a charming series of vignettes of men and women engaged in exercise routines, bending and stretching their bodies. But this chart implies far more than first meets the eye, which is what gives it its enduring fascination. The more recently excavated *Yin shu* has yielded fresh insights into the process by which the images of *Daoyin tu* were translated into practice. A *Daoyin* practitioner was able to do much more than simply strengthen his physical body: he could transform and reinvent himself, transcending the boundaries of species, class, *yin*, and *yang*, with the solid strength of the bear, or the power and grace of the dragon.

Every figure in *Daoyin tu* is vividly individual in physique, expression, dress, and deportment. They are unique examples of the nobility, the *guiren*,

intent on harmonizing the *yin qi* and *yang qi* of their bodies, and achieving balance in their movements, emotions, and mood, as well as in their internal thermostatic environment. The figures affirm their social status and the freedom that comes from mastering the physiological factors that afford longevity. They appear free from the domination of ghosts and spirits, but they are still a far cry from the objectified, silenced bodies that characterize later medicalized images of the human figure. Across the centuries, they challenge our post-Cartesian notions of body and mind.

Yangsheng (life cultivation) was non-competitive and elite. It contrasted with other kinds of military games that were competitive, such as *jiaodi* ("horn butting"/wrestling). Ultimately, in the Ming period, martial arts such as Shaolin *kungfu* incorporated formal, internal bodily training of *qi* and the animal techniques to enhance combat skills and public performances. This was different from the external training characteristic of the West.

Contrast between early Chinese and Judeo-Christian traditions

The ancient Chinese emphasis on change and transformation contrasted with the Judeo-Christian tradition, in which the boundary between humans and animals was a sacred part of the Creation, and any transgression of the hierarchy was a threat to religious order. As Sterckx notes,[37] Warring States and Han texts posit a general contingency and continuum between the human realm and the animal world so that moral and physical categories are conflated. In the early Judeo-Christian worldview, on the other hand, such a conflation of the physical and the moral was unimaginable. When Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-ca. 215 CE) said, "the human body became like the beasts" when it began to practice sexual intercourse, he represented a worldview in which beasts and beastliness referred to passions that provoked shame. Writing in the liberal environment of second- to third-century Alexandria, St. Clement saw the true Gnostic as the perfect Christian—someone who could know perfection through faith—and he contrasted that search for knowledge with the vileness of pagan rites, with their polytheistic and animistic practices.

Early Chinese appropriated the animal world to create ideals of the human potential for perfection. As in the West, images of animals and animal behavior also represented the carnal, but with a more positive valence: they transformed and refined base emotion through their use as a measure and control of bodily passion and pathology. While Christian Gnostics saw a spark of heaven in man's upright stance, which *distinguished* him from

37 Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon*, 165-204.

the beasts, the worldview that underlay *Daoyin* and sexual-cultivation techniques saw heaven *manifested in* the beasts—their strength, vitality, durability, prolonged youth, and greater calm and control. In the last text of *Yin shu*, we have six animals cited in a regimen designed to tone and strengthen the body. This passage amounts to a great celebration of the body and of its relationship with the natural animal environment. Where the animal movements represent a celebration of the body and its health, the body is not just a passive object upon which we inscribe images. Like the frog, it leaps through text, asserting its sentience and vitality. At the same time, the animals also speak of darker transformations as they signal the body's descent into decay and death.

Recreation of Daoyin tu *in a chart for leading and guiding people in exercise. Silk manuscript from Mawangdui Tomb 3 (sealed in 168 BCE) in the former kingdom of Changsha. Courtesy of Wellcome Images and Vivienne Lo.*

Chapter Six

Contesting Authority in Ancient Myth and Sport

Thomas F. Scanlon

Sport is, of course, a culturally relative but universally present phenomenon, in local species difficult to define but in genus easy to recognize. While the modern term "sport" gives a false sense of the fixed categorization of certain kinds of activity, it also forestalls the better understanding of those activities free of anachronistic prejudice. The concept shifts within each culture, often represented by one or several words comparable with our term for sport: in Greece, there are *agônes* and *aethla* ("contests"); in Rome, there are *ludi* and *munera* ("games," "shows"); the Sumerians had *lirùm* ("athletics"); and Egyptians had the term *swtwt* ("sport"). Our boundaries must therefore be flexible from culture to culture, and sensitive to each culture's own definitions so as to understand the diverse phenomena in their context. Don Kyle cuts the knot with one useful definition of sport as "public, physical activities, especially those with competitive elements, pursued for victory and demonstration of excellence."[1]

The sport of any society, ancient or modern, has always had political dimensions, the more significantly so the larger and more public the contests were. Sport can in many senses be a vehicle of social power, authority, or influence, most notably because those in positions of power, wealth, or influence can display or augment their authority by sponsoring the contests; victors in the contests can gain public prestige to be used to improve their status, socially or politically; and spectators at contests can be swayed to give or maintain allegiance to the sponsor or competitor. We might add that these three dimensions of social influence in sport are reciprocal. In an existing hierarchy of social authority, those in explicitly higher positions of power, the rulers, rely upon the cooperation of those subject to explicit authority. And the competitors, being in some sense between rulers and ruled, can reinforce the authority of either or both sides, or may indeed emerge

1 Donald Kyle, *Sport and spectacle in the ancient world* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 10.

with greater social authority themselves. Few would dispute that these are the major social dimensions of power in sport, and it is not the intent here to illustrate them at any length (itself a massive task of documentation). Rather, I hope to sketch how the ancient Egyptians, Sumerians, Hittites, and Greeks used sport sponsorship and victory in generically different ways that characterized their different political contexts. We will observe how these ancient cultures all used sport to further the authority of individuals, especially through the appropriation of traditional myths connected with a sport.

Among Egyptian pharaohs, the rulers of the Sumerians and Hittites, and Roman emperors, sport was used more strictly either as ritual or spectacle. Their sporting events were often within festival contexts, while the patron rulers themselves were often divine or operating with divine favor. For the Olympics of ancient Greece, sponsorship was also highly political, of course, but the phenomenon differed significantly, since the festival was in principle organized by a single *polis*, not the individual rulers. The struggle between Elis and Pisa to sponsor the Olympics during the first two centuries of the games underlines the seriousness of the stakes, the high prestige afforded to the patron *polis*. As to contestants as power-seekers, the Near Eastern and Egyptian rulers themselves sometimes competed, if only in name and ritually. But among the Greeks, at stake was the acquisition of social and sometimes political status through victory in real, non-ritualized contests. Sicilian and mainland Greek tyrants sought to publicize their fame through chariot victories, while, more rarely in archaic and classical Greece, individual citizens like Cylon and Alcibiades sought political ascendancy through victory in the games.[2] So, for the other ancient cultures, social climbing through sport was virtually unheard of, while, for Greeks, the path to power through victory in games seemed generally slippery and insecure. Among the cultures of the early ancient Mediterranean, sport was productive as a platform for displaying existing power, either by sponsors of the contests or by elite competitors in them, but it was less useful as a platform for political ascendancy for ordinary citizens. The audience inside and even residents outside the arena certainly played a crucial, often ignored role, normally by validating the institutions of sport and the structures of society that support it. Political institutions changed in each culture over the centuries, but there was a remarkable continuity within each in the forms and occasions of sport. Patrons of sport changed, yet the sponsor of the day exploited the continuity of sport to shore up or ensure the extension of his power among the spectators.

2 Kyle, *op. cit.*, 152 and 170-174.

Egyptian and Near Eastern Sport

Ancient Egyptian civilization spanned three millennia, from about 2950 BCE to 30 BCE, namely from the archaic period to the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, and the later period, after which it fell under Roman rule. It is a cliché, although essentially accurate, that, for Egyptians, the pharaoh was synonymous with order, prosperity, and power. His welfare was, as with many ancient kingships, synonymous with that of the state, and it would be unthinkable to allow him to suffer defeat in a sporting competition. The king must have no rivals.

Not surprisingly, then, the power of the pharaoh was demonstrated for three millennia in the public performance of a run performed solo during the jubilee celebration. Known also as the Festival of Sed, the Festival of Renewal, and the Ritual of Renewal—in Egyptian, *hb-sd*—the celebration took place on the thirtieth anniversary of the ruler's reign and effected his regeneration and renewal despite the advancement of years. The deities, accouterments, and contextual inscriptions for the festival vary with different rulers. The run itself, oriented exactly on a north-south axis in its one extant track at the site of Saqqara (ca. 2640-2475 BCE), is perhaps more a symbolic striding of the length of the north-south-oriented Land of the Nile, and the two sets of semicircular turning posts may symbolize the hemispheres of the earth.[3]

Several inscriptions and relief sculptures depict the running king in an event that is properly a ritual, not sport, since it was a bald demonstration of physical strength. The iconography bears out this interpretation in consideration of the position of the legs and of the supposed racetrack. The great stride of the ruler emphasizes the quantity of space covered rather than speed, a kind of "power walk" analogous to that of the Hindu deity Vishnu, who is called the "wide-strider."[4] By his stride, often shown in Indian art, Vishnu is said to have measured out and secured for the Indic gods a habitable universe, as the pharaoh did for the Egyptians. The royal run is not a *bona fide* contest, but a political appropriation of sport.

Allegedly incredible displays of strength and skill in archery were other ways by which the pharaoh demonstrated his natural superiority to the

3 Wolfgang Decker, *Sports and Games of Ancient Egypt*, translated by Allen Guttmann (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 24-34.

4 On ritual vs. sport, see Decker, *Sports and Games*, and Wolfgang Decker and Michael Herb, *Bildatlas zum Sport im Alten Ägypten: Corpus der bildlichen Quellen zu Leibesübungen, Spiel, Jagd, Tanz und verwandten Themen*, Volume 1, Text (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), who are careful to label the Jubilee Run as a cult event (*Kultlauf*) rather than sport. On Vishnu, see Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 57, who comments that the god's name may even plausibly be derived from the root word meaning "wide."

people. These were also depicted in public monuments with hieroglyphic inscriptions and relief depictions of the ruler shooting through copper plates several inches thick. Once again, the images of strength were exploited to reinforce pharaonic omnipotence.

Such were the sporting rituals and myths of the pharaohs in the realm of the otherwise truly competitive contests of the non-elite. While only a single inscription attests to a footrace, and that as part of military training, the most prominent and popular pastime was wrestling, a distant second in the records being stick-fighting, first appearing in the eighteenth dynasty, with boxing rarely evident. Images of Egyptian wrestlers span 2,000 years, from the early third millennium until the late second millennium BCE. In images in the tomb of Ptahhotep from Saqqara in the fifth dynasty, the competitors are notably naked, as much later in Greece but contrasting with Sumerian and later Egyptian practice.[5] The preponderance of Egyptian wrestling scenes appear in the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2134-1650 BCE), including a series of ten small statuettes of wrestler pairs from different sites. But the most famous images of this period are the wrestling scenes painted in four rock-cut tombs in the vicinity of the village of Beni Hasan, containing images of almost 400 pairs of wrestlers (see illustration at end of chapter). In Grave 15, the largest example, the pairs are distinguished by light- and dark-brown coloration of each pair to clarify the holds sketched. Notably, the depiction of entire matches or victories is not the object; rather, it is the presentation of a vast repertory of holds, as if to leave it for the deceased to decide the outcomes in mix-and-match fashion.[6] The juxtaposition of wrestling with military scenes in two tombs suggests that wrestling was either part of a soldier's training or one of the favorite camp pastimes.

There is no mention of the names of any of the non-elite competing before the pharaoh. The competitors were probably soldiers in general, but, possibly, in some scenes with some dead competitors and some of mixed ethnicity, they may have come from among captives or professional performers.

5 On Egyptian early wrestling scenes, Decker, *Sports and Games*, 71; on Ptahhotep scenes, Decker and Herb, *Bildatlas*, Volumes 1 and 2, L 4.

6 On Middle Kingdom statuettes, Decker and Herb, *Bildatlas*, L 5 to L 13 and L 33; on Beni Hasan wrestling scenes, Decker, *Sports and Games*, 75-77, and Decker and Herb, *Bildatlas*, Volume 1, L 14 (grave 29), L 21 (grave 2), L 18 (grave 15), and L 19 (grave 17); on ground wrestling, Michael B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence, and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 25-27 and 31-32, and figures 7 and 15; and on wrestling inscriptions, Decker, *Sports and Games*, 76.

Sumerians

Sumerian civilization extended from its first emperor, Sargon of Agade, early in the twenty-fourth century BCE (2371-2316), and lasted as a significant power until the end of the Third Dynasty of Ur at the end of the twenty-third century BCE (2212-2004). A Third Dynasty king, Shulgi, boasted of his own athletic skills, including wrestling, and may have actually promoted the writing of epics about Gilgamesh in part to underline his divine, ancestral ties.[7] Gilgamesh's legend includes a famous scene in which Enkidu, the "man of nature" sent by the gods to curb Gilgamesh's tyranny, stands in the path of the hero and wrestles him. The high culture of Sumer's Third Dynasty was the most important period of Sumerian sport, and arguably the historical genesis for the civic importance of sport. At this time, wrestling, boxing, and the footrace are first evidenced in the contexts of formal public occasions.[8] Shulgi was the second ruler of the Neo-Sumerian empire of the Ur-III period (2112-2004) and a self-proclaimed successful sportsman.[9] Most famously, Shulgi claims to have run from Nippur to Ur and back in one day. The "King of the Road" boasts of his cross-country achievements in an extensive hymn: "I stretched my legs, crossing along the roads of the land." By implication, his course is coextensive with his kingdom, and mention of the roads underlines the order and prosperity of the realm. Significantly, the run is not a race, but part of the leading procession of the festival celebrations, much like the Egyptian pharaoh's run at Saqqara. Hence, Shulgi's achievement is a ritual and symbolic act asserting his primacy. In one text, Shulgi boasts of his skills:

> I am the strongman of wrestling and running. I am the shepherd; with my long fingers, I allow strength to radiate in the great hall [*kisal-mah*], as at the walled city—who there would dare to oppose me?…I am a person with whom no one can compete. I, the hero—let them invoke my name faithfully![10]

7 Maureen Gallery Kovacs, translator with introduction, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), xxiii.

8 Robert Rollinger, "Aspekte des Sport im alten Sumer: Sportliche Betätigung und Herrschaftsideologie im Wechselspiel," *Nikephoros* 7 (1994), 7-64; see also Horst Ueberhorst, "Leibesübungen in den Hochkulturen Mesopotamiens," in *idem*, editor, *Geschichte der Leibesübungen*, Volume 1 (Berlin: Bartels & Wernitz Verlag, 1972), 161-177; and Donald F. Meikle, *Recreational and Physical Activities of the Sumerian and Hittite Civilizations* (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1971), 66-70, on Sumerian boxing and wrestling.

9 P. S. Vermaak, "Šulgi as sportsman in the Sumerian self-laudatory royal hymns," in *Nikephoros* 6 (1993), 7-21.

10 SC 130-143; Vermaak, *op. cit*., and Rollinger, *op. cit*., translations adapted.

Gilgamesh and Shulgi therefore illustrate how the royal hierarchy of Sumerian civilization is validated and upheld by the use of sport. The publicly recited text of the culture's major heroic epic ennobles wrestling as a royal sport. Shulgi's promotion of the epic and his special adoption of sporting skills shrewdly tie him to the hero through athletic prowess. But this instance of a kingly sportsman is, so far as we know, the only one in ancient Sumeria, and we must assume that only here were sports promoted as the validation for rule.

Tablets with festival records mention contests in religious contexts, in specific buildings, with valuable provisions allocated, and in fixed, annual celebrations. These must have occurred regularly and were apparently funded by the king or the elite of Ur society. The archival accounts name a vizier who oversaw prizes or at least some valuable compensation for competition given to victorious athletes. The honor suggests that individual citizen-victors were at times honored:

> A silver ring of ten shekels value was obtained as a present by Shulgigalzu, son of the musician Alla, because he had fought in wrestling. Ir-Nanna, the vizier, was the commissioner. Approved by Ludingirra, in Uruk.[11]
>
> The wrestlers, [person x] and [person y], son of Ninkununa, have obtained [an object] as a present for their beating and fighting in wrestling. Ir-Nanna, the vizier, was commissioner.[12]

The organization by a commissioner indicates the special local importance of the prizegiving. Shulgigazu's name, the only one recorded for an athlete in Sumerian texts, and the two other names now lost indicate that public praise was paid to the individuals, who were likely voluntary citizens of talent. The gifts, and the mention of the wrestler's and his father's names, suggest that individuals at least occasionally enjoyed personal honor by winning or participating in major competitions. Yet these are the only named victors known at present from the Sumerian texts, so it would be an overstatement to say that the custom of honoring athletes was as widespread in Third Dynasty Sumer as in classical Greece.

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11 M. Çig *et al.*, editors, *Die Purzis-Dagan-Texte der Istanbuler Archäologischen Museen* I (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1954), no. 456, after Robert Rollinger, German translator; and Rollinger, *op. cit.*, 30.

12 M. Sigrist, *Neo-Sumerian Account Texts in the Horn Archaeological Museum*, Andrews University Cuneiform Texts II (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988), no. 388, after Robert Rollinger, German translator; and Rollinger, 31. See also Clarence Elwood Keiser, *Neo-Sumerian Account Texts from Drehem*, Volume 3, Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

The presence of music at some contests and at festivals that included athletic contests evoke the lively atmosphere of a grand communal celebration reminiscent of the later ancient Mediterranean world and universal festivals generally. In many organizational and formal aspects, Sumerian sport anticipates archaic and classical Greek civic athletics by almost a millennium and a half.[13] The people of Sumer clearly enjoyed contests generally. Sumerian culture restricted the word for "contest" (*a-da-min*) to oratorical debates and to the contests of sport, rather than economic competition.[14] The semantic connection of oratory and athletics through the *agôn* is another hint that the Sumerian world is closer to the Greek than generally thought.

The Sumerians delighted in public spectacles of sport, and the rulers and elite patrons clearly understood the political and religious capital to be made out of incorporating these events into civic life. But the Sumerian absence of so central a cultural role for sport as evidenced in sixth century BCE Greece shows not a failure of imagination, but most likely a choice. As in pre-archaic Greece, rule by an aristocratic elite required closer control over communal festivals at which this elite demonstrated its right to rule by boasts of real or claimed physical prowess in sport. The games were attached to hereditary status, evidenced by a centuries-long tradition of annual games for Gilgamesh and other ancestors, possibly beginning in the time of King Shulgi during the Third Dynasty of Ur in the twenty-first century BCE. The athletic career of King Shulgi marks a new threshold of the political use of sport in the Near East; it is echoed in the propaganda of Shulgi's later imitator, Ishme-Dagan, ruler in the mid-twentieth century BCE. Later political figures patronized sports festivals to a greater or lesser extent, but, with King Shulgi, sport was a social element that had to be taken into political account.

Hittites

The Hittite peoples in Asia Minor conducted trade and cultural contact with Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt between 1800 to 1200 BCE. During these six centuries, the government was centralized around a series of monarchs. From about 1650 BCE on, their capital was at Hattusas, near the modern Boğazkale in central Turkey. From the fifteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries BCE, they

13 Poliakoff, *Combat Sports*, 18: "Mesopotamia did have regular occasions for sport, and at some festivals even food subsidies were granted to athletes, but as best we can tell the number of these events were small and their scope limited." Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 27: "The evidence shows state-supported performances associated with festivals but not necessarily athletic prize festivals."

14 Rollinger, *op. cit*., 54-56.

had particular conflicts with the neighboring Hurrians, and may have come into contact with Mycenaean Greeks, whom they refer to as the Ahhijawa ("Achaeans"?). The Hittites and Egyptians stood as the two dominant powers of the Near East during the thirteenth century. Hittite hegemony collapsed about 1200 BCE with the invasion of a mysterious "Sea Peoples," which opened the way for Assyrian domination of the region.

During the Hittites' height of power, their trade and cultural contact with Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt make it likely that they observed the ritual or athletic contests among those peoples. This may have led both to adoption of similar contests and the desire to differentiate their sports from those of others.[15] The Hittite texts from the second millennium BCE, as Jaan Puhvel has observed, document virtually all of the athletic contests described in Homer: footraces, archery, armed combat, weight-throwing, boxing, and wrestling.[16]

The contests of these people were mostly or entirely held in the contexts of ritual devotion, and they were at least occasionally overseen by the king or nobles. Victors were given prizes and could be elevated to quasi-noble status, while losers were publicly humiliated. The contests themselves had political resonance, since victors represented the prosperity of the state versus the defeat of enemy opponents in sport. A couple of examples help to illustrate.

A footrace described as the "earliest mention of an *agon* in cuneiform literature" is staged before the Hittite king during a spring ritual called the Antahsum-festival in Hattusas.[17] The king's bodyguards are the runners, and the victor is given a traditionally honorific title, "he of the ass-bridle." The king watches the event from the platform of his royal chariot. Before and after the contest, the king performs libations on a cultic stone (*baitylos*). Most significantly, the contest is placed in the context of a regularly recurring religious festival of a kind not mentioned in the Homeric texts but first evident in Greek culture with the Olympics. The non-material prize of a purely honorific title for the victor also prefigures the Olympic practice of the *Olympionikês* title and an olive-leaf crown signaling quasi-elite status.

15 For a comparative overview, see Meikle, *Recreational and Physical Activities*.

16 Jaan Puhvel, "Hittite Athletics as Prefigurations of Ancient Greek Games," in Wendy J. Raschke, editor, *The Archaeology of the Olympics: The Olympics and Other Festivals in Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988 [2002]), 26-31.

17 *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*, X, 18, partly translated and discussed by Jaan Puhvel, 27. See also Hans Ehelolf, *Wettlauf und szenisches Spiel im hethitischen Ritual* (Berlin: Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1925), 267-272; and Albin Lesky, "Ein ritueller Scheinkampf bei den Hethitern," in Walther Kraus, editor, *Gesammelte Schriften: Aufsätze und Reden zu antiker und deutscher Dichtung und Kultur* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1966), 310-317.

Also, the presence of the king as a "VIP" spectator and the designation of his bodyguards as the sole contestants have a resonance in the games described by Homer, in which only the elite competed under the oversight of a prominent noble.

An account of a wrestling contest gives tantalizing clues that, for this match at least, the contestants were designated as "ours" and "the enemy's," while the spectators seemed to be the troops on both sides:

> Ours and the enemy's man prostrate themselves to the deity three times, and then they proceed to wrestle. When our man topples [his opponent], they applaud, he [the opponent] prostrates himself to the deity, and our man squats. But afterwards likewise get into fisticuffs. And afterward they go to *tarpa* [the pleasurable part].[18]

The scene is closely narrated as a specific, historical match, begun and ended by religious devotion and animal sacrifice to the god. The match is in effect a duel, as if to honor a single victor between the armies. And yet it seems amicable, apparently with a festival meal at the end, much as most agonistic Greek festivals.

This sketch requires a caution: specially written texts are our most crucial source and no doubt reflect an elite bias. We cannot know to what extent the rank and file practiced sports, but we can reasonably speculate that athletic contests were popular at all levels. Only with the wide and common practice of wrestling, the footrace, and other competitions can the unusual displays of the best talent before the king and at annual festivals have had broad cultural appeal. The Hittites, we can surmise, likely practiced such sports in local villages and in less formal settings among the citizenry. It is against this background of sport in daily life that the special royal contests should be seen.

Another Hittite ritual combat had its closest model in the stick-fighting first seen in the fourteenth-century Egyptian relief carving in a tomb at El Amarna; the presence of the pharaoh at this event is a noteworthy parallel to the Hittite spring festival. The Hittite practice of throwing a weight has no evident parallels in other Near Eastern and Egyptian cultures. There is a possible, though hypothetical, Greek connection whereby Hittite throwing of heavy weights came to mainland Greece via Cyprus. [19]

18 Puhvel, "Hittite Athletics," 29-30, translated from *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*, XXIII, 55 I, 2-27.

19 For discus-throwing origins in copper smelting, see Wolfgang Decker, "Zum Ursprung des Diskuswerfens," *Stadion* 2 (1976), 196-212.

Like Egyptians and Sumerians, the Hittites practiced sport in political and religious contexts. The spring-ritual footrace described above was performed by the royal bodyguards while the king watched. Charles Carter observed that athletic contests were relatively rare in festival texts, and hence did not have the prominence or regular position that we find in Greek agonistic festivals.[20] While Hittites apparently did not adapt contests to festivals as regularly as Greeks had by their archaic period, the Hittite precursor of joining the two phenomena is an important development in a culture that was at its height during the Mycenaean era and in contact with its Greek neighbors. Whether the Hittite custom simply points to possible parallel practices in early Greece, or served as a model for later Greek practice, cannot be determined. It is at least clear that a festival with games was not purely a Greek invention.

Despite the Hittites' presumed contact with Mycenaean Greeks, and their greater proximity to Hellenic culture in time and location, the social context of Hittite sport still seems very foreign to that which emerged in archaic Greece. In relation to the later Homeric contests, the religious rituals tied to Hittite contests recall more closely the Egyptian and Mesopotamian practices than the secular competitions described in Homer.

Greeks

The present, very selective look at Greek sport, myth, and authority must be put into the broader context of the earliest Olympic history and of the political aspect of the games, as discussed in the contributions to this volume by Donald Kyle and Panos Valavanis. Here, our concern will turn to two complementary questions, namely, how prominent legends—that is, the contests in Homer and Pelops' founding of the Olympics—and the historical practice of athletic nudity partly shaped the Greek relation of sport to political authority. Like our other sketches of early Mediterranean sport, the Greek examples illustrate the social structure of the culture more widely. In sum, the organizers of the Greek games also used the events for political capital, and the tools of this appropriation were, among other things, the legends of heroic athletes and the historically remarkable practice of nudity.

There was ample opportunity for the heroic ethos of the epics to be transmitted to the Olympic festival and sport more generally as it evolved in eighth-century Greece. Indeed, both phenomena may well have fed one

20 Charles Carter, "Athletic Contests in Hittite Religious Festivals," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 47 (January 1988), 185-187.

another in promoting a shared Hellenic or in some sense pan-Hellenic spirit. The athletic revolution culminating in the founding of the Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian and Panathenaic festivals in the first half of the sixth century was, in my view, greatly fostered by the broader dissemination of heroic legend on vases and in public rhapsodic performances, as these were later fixed at the Panathenaia. I have argued this at length elsewhere, but cite here only the main piece of evidence that one *Iliad* passage (11.689-702) probably alludes to the Olympics by its mention of Elis and of a four-horse racing chariot, found only here in Homer's texts. We cannot know whether the allusion dates back to the eighth-century origins of Homer and the Olympics, or was stitched into the epic at a later date (by the early sixth century BCE, I would argue). In short, Homer's text shows awareness of the nascent festival to Zeus (*pace* Don Kyle's assertion to the contrary in this volume), and thereby subtly alludes to its prehistory without glaring anachronism.[21] The immediate importance for us is that Homeric legend serves as a link between the growing mania for sport and a long existing fervor for heroic legend. Myth uses sport and vice versa. Athletes aspired to the heroic status of the epic warriors, and indeed glory attached itself to the victors. But much less rarely did victors rise to a political status that they did not already have.

In *Iliad* 23, we can observe distinctions between the prestige of the game host as opposed to that of the victors. In the context of what seem to be politically neutral funeral games, Achilles famously exercises patronage over Agamemnon and others. Victors are often determined by the sponsor's view of the seniority, status, and honor of contestants, and often contrary to any strict "victory" of the actual winners. At the end of the chariot race, Achilles awards a special prize to Nestor (*Iliad* 23.618-623). To the wrestlers Odysseus and Ajax, Achilles says, "do not wear yourselves out and get hurt" (735), thus stopping the wrestling before a decisive victory so as to divide the prizes equally. After the footrace, Achilles gives Antilochus an extra prize for complimenting the host for his legendary swiftness (795-796). Finally, Achilles gives Agamemnon the prize for javelin-throwing simply out of respect for his being "greatest in strength among spear throwers" (891). The bestowing of gifts, particularly the final compliment paid to Achilles' mighty antagonist from the opening of the epic, presents the Greek heroic model for the use of sport sponsorship as a gesture of political patronage.[22]

21 Thomas Scanlon, "Homer, The Olympics, and the Heroic Ethos," in Maria A. Kaïla *et al*., editors, *The Olympic Games in antiquity: "Bring forth rain and bear fruit"* (Athens: Atrapos, 2004), 61-91.

22 For studies of the *Iliad* passage, see Kenneth Kitchell, "'But the Mare I Will Not Give Up': The Games in *Iliad* 23," *The Classical Bulletin* 74 (1998), 159-171; William C. Scott, "The Eti-

In *Odyssey* 8, at the games on Phaeacia, readers learn a lesson antithetical to that of *Iliad* 23, namely that conventional status and appearance cannot be trusted. Laodamas asks the stranger, Odysseus, to compete in the impromptu games with the famous injunction, "There is no greater glory for a man as long as he lives than that he achieves by his hands and his feet."[23] When Odysseus demurs, Euryalos retorts:

> No, stranger, I would not say you are like a man skilled in any contests of the many sorts that exist among me, but are like someone who is used to a ship with many oarlocks…an overseer of cargoes and of gain got by greed. You do not resemble an athlete. (οὐδ' ἀθλητῆρι ἔοικας)" (159-164).

Odysseus seethes in response:

> You have spoken not well, stranger; you are like a fool, and so the gods do not grant delightful gifts to all men, in shape or in mind or in speaking… you are striking in looks, and not even a god could make you otherwise. But you are of futile mind (νόον δ' ἀποφώλιός ἐσσι). You have aroused the spirit inside my own breast, as you spoke unbecomingly. I am not unskilled in contests, as you have said, but I think I was among the first so long as I relied on my vigor and my hands….But even though I have felt many ills, I will try the contests. For your speech gnaws my heart. What you say urges me on. (165-185)

The hero proceeds to hurl the weight farther than all, and challenges anyone to try him in boxing, wrestling, or archery. The episode points up the hazards of judging by appearance, and the importance of achievement, not status alone, in winning glory through the contests. Laodamas recognizes Odysseus' native abilities when he invites him to compete, and he underscores the need for actual merit to attain glory in sport. Euryalos ignores Laodomas' assessment and rebukes Odysseus for his merchant-sailor appearance. Odysseus answers not by revealing a noble lineage, but by discoursing on native abilities given to men whatever their lineage, and on the noble Euryalos' own mental inferiority. Unlike *Iliad* 23, where prizes are bestowed to honor age, seniority, status, or the host's personal affection, the games of *Odyssey* 8 underscore the need to honor merit for its own sake.[24]

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quette of Games in *Iliad* 23," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 38 (1997), 213-27; and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 56-65.

23 All of the *Odyssey* passages quoted here are from the English translation of Albert Cook, *Homer: The Odyssey* (New York: Norton, 1967).

24 For close studies of this passage, see Matthew Dickie, "Phaeacian Athletes," *Papers of the*

The two epic scenes therefore describe two apparently contradictory attitudes to sport in early Greece: the *noblesse oblige* of the *Iliad* and the merit-based views of the *Odyssey*. This is not to suggest simplistically that there is an evolution of values or a change in the poet's views on the use of sport in the time between the composition of each epic. More plausibly, the two views outline a fundamentally schizophrenic and typically Greek view of athletics: first, that it is a noble pursuit in origin that has a heroic cachet for later athletes and, second, that it ought to be open to all free-born men to win personal glory on the basis of natural ability. If, for argument's sake, these sections of the epics reflect a fundamentally synchronous eighth-century BCE view of sport, then the mixed ethos of nobility-cum-meritocracy may have been alive in that era. At a time of the emergence of the *polis* system, a mixed ethos could plausibly have been widely enough accepted in the eighth century to be endorsed in the epic tradition.[25] In fact, recent studies have reformulated the notion of the Greek elite in this period, arguing that there was not an unchanging aristocracy challenged by the people, but that different elites constantly renegotiated their position and status collectively.[26] In other words, the "mixed ethos" that I mention may have reflected a social structure more fluid than previously assumed. Another eighth-century phenomenon crucial to framing the Homeric passages is the birth or rebirth of the Olympics, traditionally dated from 776 BCE onward, in which there was an openness—in principle, if not in practice—to competitors of any status. The social and cultural ferment of the eighth century is reflected particularly in the Odyssean games' depiction of a greater ethos of individual merit, and a bestowal of honor that elevates the individual according to his divinely favored merit.

The Homeric texts suggest that the *kudos* of the victor and the system of athletic meritocracy were, for the Greeks, logical extensions of their warrior culture. Certainly, it is the elite leader who presides over games in both Homeric epics, but the showcasing of the individual in *Odyssey* 8 parallels the *kudos* won by victors in later Greek festivals. As Leslie Kurke has shown, the

Liverpool Latin Seminar 4 (1983), 237-276, and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 65-68.

25 The nascent system allows for a transition from the *basileus* chieftain system to broader aristocracy (*kaloikagathoi*) and more isonomic oligarchies in the archaic and classical periods. In Homer, both leaders and the people at large can be either bad or good, *kakos* or *esthlos* (*Iliad* 2.365-366); Nestor advises Agamemnon on how to discover which warriors among both leaders and people (*hegemones* and *laoi*) are base and noble (*kakoi* and *esthloi*). See Jonathan M. Hall, *A history of the archaic Greek world ca. 1200-479* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

26 Alain Duplouy, *Le prestige des élites: Recherches sur les modes de reconnaissance sociale en Grèce entre les X^e^ et V^e^ siècles avant J.-C.* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2006). I thank François de Polignac for drawing my attention to this important study.

individual athlete enjoys an almost talismanic elevation of status by token of the *kudos* won through his victory.[27] We might go further in suggesting that, alongside the economy of *kudos*, in which a victor rose above other citizens, there was a *kudos* of economy, in which the powerful and wealthy patron of the contests enhanced and displayed his authority through the festival.

We turn briefly now to one other prominent myth of Olympic origins: the legendary chariot race between Pelops and Oenomaus, in which the foreign challenger, Pelops, defeats Oenomaus, king of Elis, and wins his daughter, Hippodameia. In the race, Oenomaus dies when thrown from his chariot, usually attributed to sabotage by the king's charioteer, whom Pelops had bribed. There are so many variants of the story that one cannot say which was most popular or influential in the classical period and later: that of Pindar's *Olympian* 1; those of Sophocles' or Euripides' plays, each entitled *Oenomaus*; that of the famous east pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia; or those of numerous other versions in literature and the visual arts.[28] For our purposes, it is not crucial to reduce the myth to an ur-legend or archetype, but mainly to emphasize how it relates to our paradigm of patrons and competitors using sport to gain positions of power. The king is cruel in putting to death all prior suitors for his daughter when they lose, and displaying their severed heads as a deterrent to others. And Pelops himself is unscrupulous in resorting to bribery and murder to win the girl and the rulership.

While one may dismiss many variants as arbitrary retellings of the drama, the sculptural group at Olympia wins out as the most influential by its prominent location, seen for 800 years by contestants, spectators, sanctuary visitors, and the Elean patrons of the games. The pedimental portrait puts all the characters before us just prior to the race, and alludes to the greater cosmic forces by including a seer and putting Zeus himself squarely in the center. The viewer confronts Olympian power as the source of all worldly authority, but also recalls the moral ambiguity of human motivation in the scene. The scene at Olympia, and virtually all other versions, suggests that to the victor can go fame, fortune, wealth, and marital felicity, but it also warns

27 See Leslie Kurke's "The Economy of *Kudos*," in Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke, editors, *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press [USA], 1993), 131-163, and her *The Traffic in Praise: Pindar and the Poetics of Social Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 149-153.

28 For important general studies of the Pelops myth, see Léon Lacroix, "La légende de Pélops et son iconographie," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 100 (1976), 327-341; John Davidson, "Olympia and the chariot-race of Pelops," 101-122, in David J. Phillips and David Pritchard, editors, *Sport and festival in the ancient Greek world* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2003); and Gordon Howie, "Pindar's account of Pelops' contest with Oenomaus (with a translation of Olympian 1)," *Nikephoros* 4 (1991), 55-120.

that mortals are flawed by nature, and risks of suffering, death, and ruin abound. It is simply not a literal reminiscence of revered legend, but a fitting, generalized admonition from Elean organizers for the elite, for the socially aspiring competitor, and for the audience at large. The pediment does not need to depict or allude explicitly to the king's vicious murder of the suitors, nor to the devious plotting of the challenger. All viewers would have been aware of the core myth, and taken heed here to decide better at their own critical junctures. It is a cliché to assert that a figure of arrogant power must be overthrown, but a more subtle lesson to imply that the reformer himself should avoid malicious duplicity in achieving his aims.

In the pedimental version of the Pelops myth, we find a visual narrative dominating the scene at the very site of human competition, just as Maya depictions in their ball courts showed the myth of cosmic origins with the contest. We will note the Chinese parallel, to be described shortly, of kickball having both warrior and cosmic-ritual significance. For all these cultures, the mythic contests of the past are invoked as validations of the political hierarchy of the status quo.

Perhaps the most striking Greek political statement is the naked athlete, standing for egalitarianism and individual autonomy through sport. Nudity may have even fostered democracy, some argue, but at least we can say that the absence of clothing was a *de facto* social leveler in the *gymnasion* and stadium. The Spartans, according to Thucydides, initiated the custom, being the ones

> who first adopted a simple mode of dress in the present style and in general their wealthier men began to live in a style very nearly on a par (*isodaitoi*) with most people. They were the first both to strip naked, and undressing publicly, to anoint themselves with oil while exercising.[29]

The Spartan custom of going γυμνός, "naked," soon became general practice and lent its name to the *gymnasion*, and to their word for track and field and combat events, γυμνικοὶ ἀγῶνες. Egalitarian nudity accompanied and complemented the phenomenon of pederasty, resulting in systems of mentoring and social networking among citizens of various classes. So the eclectic Roman-era author Athenaeus recalls that *gymnasia* and wrestling schools themselves were seen as threatening to tyrants since they were hotbeds of pederastic bonding that could give rise to coup attempts:

29 *Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1.6.4-5, translation adapted from Steven Lattimore.

> Because of such love-relationships, then, the tyrants, to whom these friendships are inimical, used to forbid pederastic relations entirely, extirpating them everywhere. Some even set fire to and demolished palaestras, regarding them as counter-fortifications against their own citadels. Polycrates of Samos did this. (13.602d)[30]

On Samos, the Freedom Festival (Eleutheria) for Eros was founded as a popular reaction to Polycrates' stern measures.[31] Another famous example of tyrannical repression of *gymnasia* is that of Aristodemus of Cymae (died 524), who, seeking to discourage a "noble and manly spirit," closed all *gymnasia* and forced all youths reared in the city to dress and wear long hair in the fashion of girls.[32]

While tyrants at times took exception to the naked ways of track, field, and combat events, they relished the equestrian events. These were traditionally the domain of the very wealthy and powerful, and conveyed very different, elitist, self-promoting political messages.[33] But tyrants were exceptional in the Greek experience, and the more isonomic forms of rule, democracy and oligarchy, relied upon "the notions of justice, concord, friendship, and equality…[ideals] essential to the preservation of the political order...."[34] For much of the Greek archaic and classical periods, then, track and field and combat sports were linked with notions of naked competition and political meritocracy, and hence inimical to monarchical rule. As G. W. F. Hegel once said of classical Greek sport: "Sport [*Wettkämpfe*] presents the higher seriousness: for in it Nature is wrought into Spirit…in this exercise of physical powers, man shows his freedom, viz. that he has transformed his body into an organ of Spirit."[35]

30 Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, edited by Georg Kaibel (Leipzig: Teubner, 1890), Volume 3.
31 Silvana Fasce, *Eros: La figura e il culto* (Genoa: Università di Genova, Facoltà di lettere, Istituo di filologia classica e medievale, 1977), 66-70, proposes the ties with Polycrates' fall. On Polycrates' fall and the rise of a "freedom" cult, see James F. McGlew, *Tyranny and Political Culture in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 124-30.
32 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 7.9.3-4, and William Armstrong Percy III, *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 166.
33 Nigel James Nicholson, *Aristocracy and athletics in archaic and classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
34 W. K. C. Guthrie, *A history of Greek philosophy, Volume III: The fifth-century Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 149-150.
35 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 1956), 243, and John M. Hoberman, *Sport and Political Ideology* (Austin: University of Texas, 1984), 12.

China

As the essays in this collection show, sport in pre-modern China must have embraced a much wider sphere than the definition suggested at the outset involving public, physical activities, particularly competitive ones, aiming at victory and personal glorification. Our earlier definition suits the Greeks better than the other cultures surveyed so far. In pre-modern China, as the present studies evidence, sport was, very generally speaking, an ensemble of dynamic activities whose ideal was harmony with nature and the cosmos at large (although conflict often lay beneath the surface), rather than the antagonism, struggle, and establishment of personal excellence (*aretê*) that characterized the Greek enterprise. Examples of Chinese notions of harmony through sport can be found in non-competitive archery, in *taijiquan*, and in the Daoist imitation of animal movements discussed by Ren Hai. That some Chinese sports may have evolved from military training, notably the martial arts, does not deny the point of this distinction, since the "harmonious" physical activities are the ones that seem to have been most broadly practiced among the populace at large.

Competitive displays that more closely resemble the Greek variety of sport were largely relegated in ancient China to public entertainment or festival performances organized by rulers to demonstrate their authority. Here, I rely on Mark Lewis's astute survey of violence in early China, notably his discussion of public contest displays in the Warring States, Qin, and Han periods (seventh to third centuries BCE).[36] Competitive displays are attested by disparate historical records, some favored by particular emperors or regions, but none, so far as we know, that were universally staged and endured in China for centuries, and none that were adopted by the populace with the wild enthusiasm exhibited for Greek athletic festivals or Roman spectacles. Kickball is one interesting case, as it was "performed in stadia built at all the Han palace complexes…originally a mock battle and a form of military training, but it came to be regarded as a re-enactment of the alternation of *yin* and *yang* that underlay the lunar cycle."[37] Kickball may have been an invention of the Warring States period (fifth to third centuries BCE), but it has been legendarily ascribed to the Yellow Emperor's victory over an enemy, whose stomach was stuffed and made into a football for the soldiers to use in a contest. As this emperor's victory was considered "an archetypical event marking the introduction of warfare into human society," the sport has a

36 Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990), especially 137-163.
37 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 146.

marked, ritual, and military significance in Chinese culture.

The legend of the sport's origin is strikingly reminiscent of the Mesoamerican myth of the origin of humankind from a primordial struggle that gave rise to the custom of Maya ball games.[38] In a primordial ball game, a mortal hero, Xbalanque, overpowers his underworld opponents and avenges his predecessors. Thus, he triumphs over the Lords of Death and establishes the cosmic relationship between eternally dead gods and regenerative human beings. To this ball court, those human beings "of the light born, the light engendered" would return, the Lords of the Maya. The ball game was the pivot of the cycle of creation. The victorious brother retrieved his father, the Lord of Maize, from the Underworld, and, from the corn, human beings were shaped and created: all agricultural abundance subsequently flows from this event.[39]

Like Chinese kickball, the Maya phenomenon was meant to carry cosmic significance, and to validate the established social order with the hierarchy of the ruling elite. For both cultures, the ball courts and games were represented as "ritual symbolization of imperial sovereignty," as Prof. Lewis says in the Chinese case.[40] The Maya ball courts had the creation myth depicted on the walls of the playing structure. One Chinese text, "Inscription for a Kickball Stadium," makes the foundational nature evident: "A round ball and square walls; it imitates the [Heavenly] simulacra with a yin and a yang. Imitating the moon[s] they rush against one another; the two sixes facing one another." The cosmic connection links military-training ritual with the image for governing the state and becomes a "fundamental element in the ritual theater of the Han imperium."[41]

We could further extend the comparison of contest as public display of power by comparing the Roman spectacles of the imperial period. These were mostly sponsored by the emperor or governing magistrates, staged in *stadia* where the tiers of seats mirrored the Roman class system, and the violent entertainments illustrated ambiguously both the beneficence and the terrible fates that the ruler holds in front of his subjects. Chinese Han rulers also staged hunts and beast games, much like the beast games of their Near

38 For Maya ballgames and myth, see David Freidel, Linda Schele, and Joy Parker, *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path* (New York: William Morrow, 1993), 308-310, and Mary Ellen Miller and Karl A. Taube, *The gods and symbols of ancient Mexico and the Maya: An illustrated dictionary of Mesoamerican religion* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 42-44.

39 Freidel *et al*., *op. cit*., 308.

40 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 149.

41 *Ibid*., quoting the inscription from a commentary on a text from about 90-130 CE.

Eastern, Greek, and Roman counterparts, although the Han restricted viewing and participation mainly to the elite.[42] For both ancient Mediterranean and Chinese cultures, the hunts were a demonstration of the ruler's ability to subsume the powers of nature.

Finally, a Chinese contest of wrestling known as "matching strength" (*jue li*), or "horn butting," was staged by the third century BCE as part of the entertainment at occasional festivals or banquets that also included tripod lifting, acrobatics, dancers and people imitating beasts or natural forces, and conjurers. The wrestling in particular had military origins, and its "horn butting" manifestation, in which men wearing horns wrestled one another, took the sport into the realm of feigned animal combat (see Chapter Three on the importance of human-animal assimilation in Chinese culture). The hunt, along with wrestling and indeed other entertainment forms, validated the omnipotence of the emperor in both human and natural realms.[43]

In sum, with regard to sport as political capital, we find the Chinese constructions of sport as less like the Greek, and to some degree more like those of early Near Eastern and Egyptian cultures in occasional employment of contests by relatively anonymous participants mainly to aggrandize the status of the powerful sponsor. But in their political uses, Chinese public contests were even more similar to the spectacles of later imperial Rome and, in the instance of ball games, very like the Mesoamerican phenomenon. Agonistic sport in China most often took the form of displays sponsored by the imperial elite: they had military associations, and their social importance lay in their fundamental validation of the ruler. The absence of independent provincial or city governments after about 250 BCE in China meant that the ruler's power was intensely magnified. Games that magnified or heroized the individual victor in sport are rare or nonexistent since they would have been contrary to the structure and philosophy of the Chinese state. On a personal, spiritual, or philosophical level, the Chinese seemed to have more in common with the Greeks, namely self-cultivation of the body, concern for the balance of health, and high valuation of virtue, albeit differently conceived in the complex naturalism of Daoism in contrast to Greek human-centered, yet god-respecting ideals (see Chapter Nine). So the Greeks, like the Chinese, took exercise in various forms and praised the healthy citizen. But here, the discussion turns more to upbringing, personal formation, and communal lifestyle than to public political contexts.

42 *Ibid*., 150-157. Also, see Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 34-37, on royal hunts in the ancient Near East; 241-242, on hunts by Alexander the Great; and 323-327, on Roman imperial beast games.

43 *Ibid*., 157-160.

Conclusions

The Chinese construction of sport seems, in contrast to all the other cultures we have surveyed, to have been by far the most "contest-averse." It is revealing that, during the periods under examination, the Chinese never, to my knowledge, held races, whether footraces, chariot races, horse races, boat races, or swimming races. Egypt has evidence of some footraces for soldiers, and a ritual one for the pharaoh, but no known chariot or horse races. The Egyptians also had competitive wrestling and stick-fighting. Sumerians apparently had footraces as early as the third millennium BCE, culminating in the feats of King Shulgi.[44] They also widely practiced wrestling, belt wrestling, and boxing. The Hittite king, we saw, sponsored a ritual race for his bodyguards, and, like the Greeks, this was placed in the context of a regular religious festival. The sheer variety and type of other competitive sports among the Hittites cover virtually all those found in Homer, but for chariot racing and javelin-throwing. And so the Hittite menu and social context of games most nearly approach those of the Greeks. It is therefore easy to see how the Greek games could have evolved at least in part from these Near Eastern and Hittite, pre-Greek sporting cultures of the early Mediterranean. The Greeks embraced the broadest program of agonistic events and, from the start, highlighted the glory that comes to individual competitors from athletic victory. The Near Eastern and Hittite cultures, so far as we know, avoided giving significant public honor to individual contestants, apart from the ruler himself. Occasionally, an individual, notably a soldier, might win and be cheered, but documents are always careful to emphasize the beneficence and patronage of the royal or elite host. Greece had an elite stratum, to be sure, but no "mega-ruler" with pan-Hellenic supremacy (leaving aside the anomaly of Alexander). Within the system of smaller city-states in the archaic period, honor could easily shift from one leader to another. So, an athletic victory was more tolerable in local and inter-city contests, with no major king to squelch the potential rival. And such a contest victory by a rising leader was much more of a tempting prize—it might afford just the visibility to edge out a political rival.

What we see in common across Chinese and Mediterranean cultures is the fact that sport was a tool of politics and, as such, chameleon-like. Each individual in authority capitalizes on the opportunity to patronize through

44 Jerrold S. Cooper, translator, *The Curse of Agade* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 55, for the allusion to footraces in the third millennium poem. Ripon College, Clark Collection Tablet EC.74.1, ll. 33-36, mentions runners: http://www.ripon.edu/clark_collection/cuneiform.html.

sport, though the political capital worked much differently in Greece from all the other cultures. Greek smaller-scale patronage, social mobility, and more liberal legal systems permitted contests to flourish and become a regular and regulated part of the cycle of civic life. The enhanced status of the individual among Greeks directly reflected and supported their egalitarian political system.

As one scholar says generally of sport and ideology in the modern age:

> Every ideology of historical significance presupposes an official anthropology or…ideological self-consciousness, which is held to be authoritative…. The interpretation of the body and its potential for athleticism by a political ideology is rooted in basic assumptions about the essence of human beings: what constitutes their permanent and ephemeral traits, how they can be changed, the origins and consequences of their relations with others, the sources of their deepest satisfactions.[45]

The sport culture under any totalitarian regime will closely mirror the dominant ideology. This is the case with art and all public expressions of individuality that are made to conform to the espoused aims of the state system. Into this scheme fit Maoist China, Nazi Germany, communist East Germany, the former USSR, Mussolini's Italy, and many other states. If we understand ideology in a broad sense, including explicit ideas and ideals, as well as implicit assumptions and customs, then, perhaps, we can see that ancient cultures, too, presented both explicit and deeper implicit assumptions that appealed to citizens and inspired or required them to act in certain ways.

45 Hoberman, *Sport and Ideology*.

Detail of wrestlers from the wall mural in Beni Hasan tomb 15, Egyptian Middle Kingdom period (21st to 19th centuries BCE).

Chapter Seven

Comparative Reflections on Embodied Virtue: Performance and Competition in China and Greece

Lisa Raphals

There is an apparent incommensurability between Greek and Chinese sport.[1] Greek sport was centralized, democratic, competitive, external, and aesthetic (in some contexts, erotic). Chinese sport was local, hierarchical, noncompetitive, internal, and in some contexts imitative of the whole body movements of animals.[2] Needless to say, very different social structures and institutions underlie these differences. Both are linked to ritual and sacrifice, but in different ways. Although a definition of sport as the sacrifice of energy may apply to Chinese sport, it is not clear that it had the same purchase in China as in Greece.

In Greece, the connection between athletic contests, competition, and sacrifice (including the sacrifice of animals, libations, and feasts) is much older than the establishment of the Olympic Games in 776 BCE.[3] For example, the Homeric poems devote the better part of a book of the *Iliad* to the funeral games for Patroclus, and describe at length the ad hoc games held

1 Chinese words are transliterated in the Pinyin system except in the case of the name of an author who does not use it and in the case of terms that are best known in an alternative version, for example, Confucius. Most Greek terms are transliterated according to the third edition of the Oxford Classical Dictionary. In both cases, exceptions are made for terms that are better known otherwise. Unless otherwise indicated, references to the Chinese Thirteen Classics are to the *Shisanjing zhushu* (*Notes and Commentaries on the Thirteen Classics*) edition of Ruan Yuan (Taipei: Yiwen jushu, 1980); other early Chinese primary texts are cited from the *Sibu beiyao* (SBBY) editions; Chinese dynastic histories are from the Zhonghua shuju series (Beijing, 1959-); and concordance citations are from the Harvard-Yenching concordance series. Unless otherwise indicated, Greek texts are from Loeb Classical Library editions. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

2 For the history of Chinese sport, see Ren Hai, *A Comparative Analysis of Ancient Greek and Chinese Sport* (doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, 1988).

3 For an overview of the history of the relation between religion and Greek sport, see Thomas F. Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics* (Oxford University Press, 2002), especially Chapter 1.

in honor of Odysseus at the court of King Alcinous.[4] The heroic ethos of competition became a part of such games: "always to be best and to surpass others."[5] Such excellence was encouraged by the perceived approbation, or even active participation, of a divine audience.

Although the earliest mention of an athletic festival explicitly performed in a god's honor is a seventh-century BCE reference in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, according to at least some legends, funeral games of the kind described in *Iliad* 23 were the basis for the four great pan-Hellenic festivals (at the shrines of Zeus at Olympia, Apollo at Delphi, Poseidon at the Isthmus of Corinth, and Zeus at Nemea).[6] The pan-Hellenic festivals combined cult and athletic competition, and the latter became increasingly elaborate over time. The first thirteen Olympiads (776-728 BCE) consisted of a single footrace of 200 meters. They were expanded to include footraces, boxing, wrestling, the pentathlon, and equestrian competitions. In the sixth century BCE, other pan-Hellenic shrines at Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea imitated the Olympian Games by incorporating sacred games into their own festivals. Male athletes from the entire Mediterranean participated.

Chinese athletic performances included court contests in archery and charioteering, but competition may not have been their primary purpose. The Confucian *Analects* or *Lunyu* refer to ritual archery contests of the nobility, but Confucius praises less the skill of archery than the character of the "gentleman," or *junzi*, expressed in noncompetitive behavior:

> Kongzi said: The *junzi* has nothing over which he contends. If [there is a situation where they are unavoidable,] this is archery, is it not? But he behaves with ritual courtesy [to competitors] and ascends; he descends, and drinks [the penalty cup, or causes it to be drunk]. In his contentions, he remains a *junzi*.[7]

This view of archery as an expression of the *junzi*'s character belies the fact that bow and arrow were also military weapons with a long history of use in combat. At the private level, highly embodied self-cultivation practices included gymnastics, longevity practices, and the ancestors of today's martial arts (as well as cooking and medicine). In these practices, mind and body are a continuum. How do they square with conventional accounts of a Greek

4 For the funeral games, see *Iliad* 23.256-897. For the games for Odysseus, see *Odyssey* 8.97-384. There is also a spontaneous boxing match between Odysseus and the beggar Iros (*Odyssey* 18.66-897).

5. αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων, *Iliad* 6.208.

6 *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, l. 146-150; see Scanlon, 28.

7 孔子曰:「君子無所爭。必也射乎! 揖讓而升,下而飲。其爭也君子。」 *Analects* 3.7.

philosophical dichotomy that separates mind from body? Or have we already found ourselves floundering in a glen of incommensurables?

Virtue and self-cultivation

I argue that the answer to that question is no. For different reasons, and in very different contexts, both Chinese and Greek sport were based on notions of virtue and self-cultivation. (I use these terms beyond the trivial point that athletic excellence, like any other, requires great effort and cultivates, at the very least, the physical self.) There are very different institutional contexts for the expression of virtue and self-cultivation in Chinese and Greek athletic performances, as there are for the relevant epistemologies and metaphysics. Further, viewing sport as an aspect of physical, mental, and spiritual self-cultivation adds to the three basic approaches taken by theorists of the origin of sport: the Marxist, ethological, and religio-ritual. Orthodox Marxists derive sport from the processes of labor and production; ethologists consider it a manifestation of instinctive behavior. Others have theorized that all sport is based on ritual, sacrifice, and religion.[8] All three have their problems. The Marxist definition does not account for the pursuit of health or longevity. The ethological view is better suited to play (with its biological or evolutionary functions) than to sport. The religio-ritualist approach has suffered from methodological problems, but the prevalence of religious and ritual aspects of sport have been widely noted. For example, David Sansone has defined sport as "the ritual sacrifice of physical energy."[9]

Greek sport is based on notions of virtue and self-cultivation in several senses. The first derives from its ancient connections with sacrifice to the gods, in which the athlete is a willing sacrificial offering. As in other contexts, the sacrificial victim must be the best of its kind. An athlete achieves that eminence through successful competition. A second sense derives from the wholehearted effort and concentration of the athlete. As Hermann Fränkel has observed of Pindar and his contemporaries, they considered human virtue or *aretê* to be a unitary "whole." In this context, athletic victory is less specialized technical expertise than a demonstration of the virtue of the athlete, expressed as wholehearted effort, the sacrifice of time and money, the willingness to risk defeat and disgrace, and the discipline of athletic training itself.[10] A third notion of virtue derives from Greek ideals of health and well-

8 For a detailed discussion, see David Sansone, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 15-28.

9 Sansone, *Greek Athletics*, 37.

10 Hermann Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, translated by Moses Hadas and James

being as a balance between two entirely separate modes of excellence: of the mind and of the body.

Chinese sport is also based on notions of virtue and self-cultivation, but in very different senses. Aristocratic competitions in archery, charioteering, and the like were judged not by victory but by quality of performance, and were linked to broadly "Confucian" notions of virtue. Techniques that first appear in the Warring States, but were extensively developed during later periods, might appear to be athletic activities, but were highly embodied techniques for self-cultivation. Examples include gymnastics or martial arts (*wushu* 武術), medical and other longevity practices, quasi-Daoist self-cultivation techniques, and martial arts.

The example of archery

The example of archery highlights both Chinese and Greek attitudes toward physical "self-cultivation" as an embodiment of virtue. It could be objected that, in the Greek case, archery was restricted to the aristocratic competitions of the Homeric poems, and was an object of considerable ambivalence in later thinking. Although it was not an element in Olympic competition, archery, as well as archery contests and archery metaphors, appears in both Greek and Chinese sources. In very different institutional contexts, archery was described as a skilled performance, a means of victory in battle (or the ritual hunt), and a metaphor for various aspects of virtue.

In the archery contest at the funeral games for Patroclus, the prize was offered for hitting a pigeon tied to the mast of a ship. Alcinous' games do not feature archery, but the *Odyssey* leaves no doubt as to this skill's importance. Odysseus wins his homecoming (*nostos*, the *Odyssey*'s epic theme) through an archery contest. His archery defeats the suitors for the hand of his wife Penelope, and helps secure his status as the hero of the *Odyssey*.[11]

But archery is problematic for several reasons. First, there is a "dark side" to the virtues of archery in its connection with *mêtis*, or "cunning intelligence" (discussed below). But Greek ambivalence about archery does not reduce to Greek ambivalence about *mêtis*. After the shift toward *hoplite* warfare in the fifth century, the *hoplite* phalanx eclipsed the prestige of older modes of combat. This ambivalence is dramatized in Euripides' *Heracles*, in a debate on the merits of archery and *hoplite* warfare (ll. 151-204). The tyrant

Willis (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975), 487-488.

11 For these aspects of the *Odyssey*, see Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

Lycus disparages the hero Heracles as a coward who prefers the bow to the spear, and:

> who never took the shield in his hands or came near the spear, but bearing a bow, the weapon of a coward, was always poised for flight. The bow is no proof for a man of high soul, who remains in his ranks steadfast against swift wounds ploughed by the spear's furrow. (*Heracles*, ll. 159-165)

The noble general Amphitryon defends Heracles and attacks Lycus for maligning "the wise invention" of bow and arrow (l. 190). He counters that a *hoplite* is a slave to his weapons; that his life depends on the courage of his comrades; and that a spear provides one inflexible means of defense. By contrast, the archer's lone weapon can let fly countless arrows and offers other means of self-defense: the protection of distance and the opportunity to strike from under cover without exposure to a foe. "This is the far wisest course in battle: to harm the enemy and keep safe oneself, independent of chance" (ll. 190-205). While the rhetoric of the play thus favors Heracles and Amphitryon, Euripides nonetheless portrays archery as an inferior mode of fighting.

Archery appears indirectly in Chinese ritual and historical texts through ritual hunts. The emperor and his officials personally shot game and sacrificed the meat at imperial tombs.[12] But archery as a manifestation of the virtue of the athlete first appears in the *Analects*. In addition to suggesting a moral component to its practice, Confucius also remarks that going through the leather (hitting the target) is not the important point in archery because people's strength is not equal.[13]

A chapter of the *Liji,* the "Zhongyong" or "Unwavering Pivot," a text that became one of the *Four Books* of Confucianism, also ascribes to Confucius the view that archery revealed moral superiority:

> The Master said, "In archery we have something like [the way of] the superior man. When the archer misses the centre of the target, he turns round and seeks for the cause of his failure in himself."[14]

The *Liji* also contains a chapter devoted to archery, which describes the con-

12These sacrifices are described in the *Zuozhuan* (*The commentary of Zuo*) and systematized in the *Zhouli* (*Rites of Zhou*). See Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 145-151.

13 *Analects* 3.16; cf. *Analects* 3.7, discussed above.

14 子曰射有似乎君子失諸正鵠反求諸其身. *Liji* (*Book of Rites*) 31, "Zhong yong," ("Way of the Mean"), 884, translated by James Legge, volume 2, book 28, 307.

duct and meaning of ceremonial archery contests. This text explicitly links archery style to character:

> The archers, in advancing, retiring, and all their movements, were required to observe the rules. With minds correct, and straight carriage of the body, they were to hold their bows and arrows skillfully and firmly; and when they did so, they might be expected to hit the mark. In this way [from their archery] their characters could be seen.[15]

This text makes an explicit link between archery and benevolence:

> Archery suggests to us the way of benevolence. [The archer] seeks to be correct in himself, and then discharges his arrow. If it miss the mark, he is not angry with the one who has surpassed himself, but turns round and seeks [for the cause of failure] in himself.[16]

But is there a problem in the idealized picture presented by these explicitly Confucian texts? Do we really believe the archer was not trying to win? Are there other ways of using archery to describe virtue?

The metaphor of the skilled archer

Another approach to this question comes from the use of archery as a metaphor for virtue, or rather for a considerable range of virtues. The archer's behavior becomes a significant metaphor in both Chinese and Greek rhetoric, in a range of analogies. Metaphors from archery typically illustrate some aspect of technical or moral excellence in a particular domain of expertise or moral distinction.

Consider, for example, Plato's use of archery metaphors in various dialogues. In the *Laws*, he compares archery to a good law that aims solely at its proper target and hits nothing else. Similarly, he likens the accuracy of a good archer to judges and lawgivers who accurately mete out punishment in correct amount.[17] A very different use is provided by the descriptions of *hamartia* in epistemological dialogues such as the *Theaetetus*. Here, *hamartia* is a metaphor from archery. Plato compares the origin of false opinion to

15 故射者，進退周還必中禮內志正外體直然後持弓矢審固持弓矢審固然後可以言中此可以觀德行矣. *Liji* 46, "She yi," 1014-1015, translated by James Legge, volume 2, book 43, 446.
16 射者仁之道也。 射求正諸己， 己正而後發。發而不中則不怨勝己者，反求諸己而已矣. *Liji* 46, "She yi," 1020, translated by James Legge, volume 2, book 43, 452.
17 See Plato, *Laws* 705E and *Laws* 934B, respectively.

the bad archer who misses the mark because he lacks accurate perception.[18]

This usage has counterparts in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles. In the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, Cassandra uses the archer hitting the mark as a metaphor for accurate prophecy. Sophocles uses arrows as metaphors for the false divination of greedy prophets, and for grief to come accurately foretold. In the *Antigone*, Creon accuses Teiresias of shooting prophetic "arrows" at him, like archers at their mark. Teiresias responds "archer-like in anger" to this provocation by launching "arrows for [his] heart," which "fly true," and from which Creon cannot run.[19]

But returning to the range of his metaphors on the subject, Plato also associates archery with love and desire, described as resourceful and predatory. In the *Symposium*, he describes Apollo's invention of archery, medicine, and divination under the guidance of Desire and Love. Love is the son of Poverty (*pênia*) and Plenty (*poros*). Like his mother, he is always poor, but, like his father, he is always scheming for what is good. He is a famous hunter, wise, always weaving stratagems, and a master of juggling, witchcraft, and artful speech.[20] In these metaphors, Plato uses archery to illustrate a variety of virtues, with little apparent interest in the qualities of archery itself. By contrast, a range of Chinese narratives focus on moral aspects of (and problems with) the details of the practice of archery. These texts praise archers for a range of virtues, and not necessarily the ones ascribed to the Confucian *junzi*.

One is the conspicuously value-neutral virtue of concentration and accuracy, particularly associated with the legendary Archer Yi.[21] On the one hand, he is portrayed as a savior of humankind, for using his skill to shoot down the suns that threaten the world.[22] Other stories also praise his archery skills in moral terms. Some compare his archery to the work of a skilled craftsman or a good ruler. The *Guanzi* compares his archery to the craftsman's intuitive grasp of axe and adze to cut along a mark. He hits the mark by careful adjustment of his bow and arrows, and by accurate judgment of

18 Plato, *Theaetetus* 193E.

19 See Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1195, and Sophocles, *Antigone* 1033 and 1085, respectively.

20 Plato, *Symposium,* 197A and 203CD.

21 Archer Yi 羿 is also described as Houyi 后羿, Yiyi 夷羿, or Pingyi 平羿.

22 Accounts of Yi saving the world by shooting the ten suns appear at *Shanhaijing jiaozhu* (*The Classic of Mountains and Seas: Collected Commentaries*) (SBBY), 18:7b, and *Huainanzi* (*Huainan Annals*) (Xin bian zhuzi jicheng, 1974), 8:118-119 and 13:233. Accounts of his misdeeds appear in the *Zuozhuan* (Xiang 4) and "Tianwen" section of the *Chuci* (*Elegies of Chu*) (Sibu congkan), 3:15b. Archer Yi and Peng Meng are described as the best archers in the world in the *Huainanzi* (17:292) and Xunzi (*Xunzi yinde* [*Concordance to Xunzi*]), Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1986, 8/80 and 11/69).

the height of his target.[23]

Mencius selects a different set of skills when he compares the skilled archer to a master carpenter. In this analogy, his students imitate his "natural" drawing of the bow as a master carpenter's students imitate his "natural" use of compasses and square. Here, the archer's virtue is naturalness (*ziran*). Ever practical, Xunzi compares Archer Yi's expertise at training archers to an enlightened official who is expert in "training" men.[24]

Other archery comparisons in Mencius are more morally focused. He also compares archery to benevolence. According to one injunction, the archer should check his stance before shooting. As in the *Analects* and *Liji,* if he misses the mark, he should seek the cause of the error within himself, rather than begrudge the victor.[25]

In a more complex analogy, Mencius compares wisdom to skill and sagacity to strength. Strength/sagacity brings the arrow to the target, but skill/wisdom hits it:

> Wisdom may be likened to skill and sagacity to strength. Coming from being shot from over a hundred paces away, [an arrow's] reaching [the target] is a matter of your strength, but [its] hitting the center is not a matter of your strength.[26]

But there is a problem with this passage, as Mark Csikszentmihalyi observes, because wisdom, rather than the prime virtue of sagacity, makes it possible to hit the target, with the very un-Confucian implication that wisdom is more important than sagacity. Commentators have tried to argue that success required both the innate quality of sagacity and the learnable quality of wisdom. But particularly in the light of discussions of the transforming effects of a sage in recently excavated texts such as the *Wuxing*, the above passage at Mencius 5B1 could be reinterpreted to mean: "hitting the center is not a matter of *your strength* [emphasis added]: but rather a matter of the strength of the transformative influence of a sage." Understood this way, Mencius, too, uses archery as a metaphor for the pervasive morality of the Confucian sage.

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23 The *Guanzi* (*Master Guan*) (1:5a and 20:5, SBBY) also compares Archer Yi hitting the mark to the government of an enlightened ruler. Here, the analogy is that each is a master of his respective way.

24 See Mencius 6A20 and Xunzi 11/69-70.

25 Mencius 2A7.

26 智譬則巧也聖譬則力也由射於百步之外也其至爾力也其中非爾力也. Mencius 5B1. translation modified from Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 183-184.

But moralizing analogies of this kind are not unique to explicitly Confucian texts. A similar idea appears in a passage from the *Huainanzi:*

> Now the means by which an arrow can penetrate the rigidity of a distant target is the extension of strength, but the reason that it can split a hair is human minds. What rewards good and punishes evil is governance and edicts. The means by which these may be applied is essential sincerity. Therefore, even if one's strength is great one cannot hit the target alone, and although edicts are clear they cannot be applied alone. It is necessary to put the Way into effect using what essence and *qi* has bestowed.[27]

These Chinese narratives share a detailed comparison of the skill of the archer with a range of virtues. The metaphorical accounts of archery are more sophisticated than the broad moralizing treatment of the *Analects*, in that they focus on different aspects of the archer's skill, for different rhetorical purposes.

The ethics of instruction

Other Chinese narratives use archery to illustrate a very different virtue: the moral responsibility of a teacher. I am unaware of a Greek counterpart to these. The issue in these stories is the master archer's choice of a student to whom to teach his skills. Unlike the archery metaphors, these stories vary considerably in the fates of the archers.

Mencius recounts the tale of how Archer Yi's student Peng Meng learned everything his master could teach, and then killed him. The interesting point here is that Mencius considers Yi partially to blame for his own end.[28] Mencius specifically contrasts Yi's lack of responsibility with the choices of other archers who are more careful in their selection of students. Mencius's counterexample is Zizhuo Ruzi of Zheng. Pursued by an archer from Wei, debilitated by illness, and unable to hold a bow, he anticipates death until he learns that the Wei archer is his own student's student. He then reasons that his student, an upright man, would only instruct an upright man. (The implication is, of course, that Zizhuo himself is an upright man.) The pursuer resolves the conflict between his obligations to his teacher's teacher and to

27夫矢之所以射遠貫牢者，弩力也；其所以中的剖微者，人心也；賞善罰暴者，政令也；其所以能行者，精誠也。故弩雖强，不能獨中；令雖明，不能獨獨行；必自精氣所所以與之施道. *Huainanzi jiaoshi* (*Critical edition of the Masters of Huainan*) 20.2045, translated by Mark Csikszentmihalyi, 2004, 189-190.

28 Mencius 4B24. Here, he follows the *Analects* (14.5), in which Confucius contrasts Archer Yi's violent death with the agricultural successes of Yu and Hou Ji.

his own state of Wei by shooting arrows harmlessly in the air.[29]

These stories use the example of archery to demonstrate two kinds of error in acquiring a skill. One kind of problem occurs when a skill is not gained completely. The other is the full acquisition of a trivial skill because of a wrongheaded focus on "small knowledge." This theme occurs throughout the *Zhuangzi*, which uses Archer Yi as an example of "trivial" skill. He can hit the smallest target, but cannot avoid praise. (By contrast, the sage is skilled in affairs of Heaven rather than in human affairs.) Archer Yi can hit a sparrow but is "caged" by Tang.[30] Another *Zhuangzi* narrative, the story of the archer Lie Yukou, presents a case of incomplete skill. Lie can stand still as a statue and shoot rapidly, but when invited to do the same thing on a mountain ledge, he loses all equanimity.[31]

Other political persuasions use archery as an example of the dire consequences of misdirected or incomplete skill. One *Guanzi* passage compares government without understanding standards for measurement or patterns of behavior to turning one's back on the target and being confident of hitting the mark.[32] Another analogizes skill in archery to military training and preparation:

> Having archers who cannot hit the target is the same thing as having no arrows. Their hitting the target but not piercing it is the same thing as having no arrowheads. Being a general over untrained men is the same thing as having no armor. Using short weapons against long-distance arrows is the same thing as sitting down to wait for death.[33]

29 Mencius 4B24. A somewhat different account of an astute teacher appears in the *Liezi* story of the master Gan Ying, his student Fei Wei, and Fei Wei's student, Ji Chang. When Fei Wei tried to kill Gan Ying, he caught the arrow in his teeth. When Ji Chang tried to kill Fei Wei, their arrows met in mid-air. Fei Wei blocked Ji Chang's last arrow with a thorn, whereupon both wept, threw down their bows, became as father and son, and vowed to instruct no one else. See *Liezi* (*Master Lie*) (Xin bian zhuzi jicheng edition), 5:61-62. Another *Liezi* narrative (5:58-59) describes balancing give and pull as the ultimate principle in dealing with the world, exemplified by the skill of a fisherman at equalizing the push and pull on his line, based on the model of archery.

30 *Zhuangzi* (Master Zhuang), (*Zhuangzi jishi* (*Collected Explanations of the Master Zhuang*), edited by Guo Qingfan (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1961), 23:813-814.

31 *Zhuangzi* 21:724.. Similarly, the story in the *Lienüzhuan* (*Lives of Virtuous Women*) (story 6.3) of the wife of the bowmaker of Jin correlates the Duke of Jin's ineptness in archery to his deficiency in moral judgment (in condemning her husband for making a bow the duke cannot shoot). She remedies both with an argument that combines instruction in ethics and instruction in archery. For a detailed analysis, see Lisa Raphals, "Arguments by Women in Early Chinese Texts," *Nan Nü* 3.2 (2001): 157-195.

32 *Guanzi* 2:2b.

33 *Guanzi* 10:9a.

In these examples, for the ruler to act without essential political knowledge is like performing archery without the requisite skills or matériel and unrealistically expecting a satisfactory outcome. Elsewhere in the *Guanzi*, archery is a distraction from proper rule since archery and hunting can cause rulers to neglect the empire.[34]

Finally, archery is also recommended in the very different context of household management. Eastern Han handbooks of household management recommend the practice of archery as an immediate deterrent to thieves. One example is a monthly guide for daily activities, which gives some indication of the practical activities of the farming estates of mid-level Eastern Han officials, ca. 25-220 CE.[35] Its instructions for the second month include practicing archery in accordance with the *yang* forces in order to prepare for the unexpected movements of bandits.[36] Similarly, the instructions for the ninth month include: "Repair the five weapons, and practice fighting and archery, in order to be ready for the [people who become] bandits due to cold and poverty."[37]

In summary, the example of archery demonstrates how one kind of ritual, practical, and athletic skill was linked to moral excellence, in quite different social and institutional contexts, in early China and Greece. Yet, again in quite different ways, ethics may incorporate notions of strategy, deception, and cunning in both Greek and Chinese athletics.

Virtue and deception

I conclude with a look at what we might call the "dark side" of the virtues of archery. In their seminal study of "practical and cunning intelligence," Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant argued for the importance of *mêtis*, or "cunning intelligence," in many spheres of Greek culture and society.[38] Indi-

34 Thus, "Queries" ("Wen") asks how many young people take the lead in working the fields and how many lead others away to hunt with bow and arrow (*Guanzi* 9:13a). In "Admonitions" ("Jie"), Guan Zhong admonishes Duke Huan for shooting arrows, neglecting the empire, and oppressing the people (*Guanzi* 10:3a-b). Positive views of archery stress its ceremonial aspects in archery competitions at banquets; e.g., *Shi jing* (*Book of Poetry*), Mao version, 220, and *Lunyu* (*Analects*) 3.7.

35 Cui Shi 崔寔 (c. +110-170), *Simin yueling jiaozhu* (*Monthly Instructions for the Four Classes of People*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965).

36 *Simin yueling jiaozhu*, 19-20, translated by Patricia Ebrey, "Estate and Family Management in the Later Han as Seen in the Monthly Instructions for the Four Classes of People," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17(2) (1974), 181.

37 缮五兵，习战射弛竹木弓弧以备寒冻穷厄之寇. *Simin yueling jiaozhu*, 65, translated by Patricia Ebrey, "Estate and Family Management," 190.

38 Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Soci-*

viduals within Greek society who relied on *mêtis* included the hunter, fisherman, *rhetor*, *strategus*, and athlete. Nestor advises his son, Antilochus, to use *mêtis* in the chariot race in *Iliad* 23 because Antilochus is disadvantaged by slow horses that will mar his chances of victory:

> The horses of these men are faster, but they themselves do not
> understand this art any more than you.
> But come my dear son, fill up your spirit with every kind of *mêtis*
> so that the prize may not elude you.
> The woodman does more by *mêtis* than by force;
> by *mêtis* the helmsman holds his swift ship on course,
> though torn by winds, over the wine-dark sea,
> and so by *mêtis* one charioteer can outpace another.[39]

Nestor proceeds to instruct his son on how to make a tight turn at the post (potentially cutting off another driver). He describes the turning-post, a dead stump six feet tall, at the fork of the road, with two white stones, one on each side. He tells Antilochus to hug the stump, lean left, rein in the left-hand horse, grazing the post with his wheel but avoiding the stone. If Antilochus can use this strategy to round the stone first, then he has a clear shot, even with slower horses. But when the moment comes, Antilochus swerves in front of Menelaus himself. He wins the race but Menelaus contests it. Antilochus, however, placates Menelaus, whose anger softens, but who warns him against playing tricks on his elders.

This sort of behavior would be inimical to the archer-*junzi* of the *Analects*, but it does have its Chinese counterpart in the ethics of strategy and martiality.[40] The ability to understand, and thereby deceive, an opponent is at the heart of the martial strategy of the *Sunzi* and other military strategy manuals.[41] A detailed consideration is beyond the scope of the present discussion, but I would suggest that such "deceptive" strategies reappear in later

ety, translated by Janet Lloyd (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1978). They describe *mêtis* as a way of knowing, with complex but coherent mental attitudes and characteristic intellectual behavior, which were typically applied to shifting, ambiguous situations not amenable to rigorous logic or calculation.

39 *Iliad* 23.311-318.

40 I discuss this point at length in *Knowing Words: Wisdom and Cunning in the Classical Traditions of China and Greece* (Cornell University Press, 1992), in which I argue that, as in Greece, metic intelligence tacitly informed many aspects of early Chinese society, including both personal and social morality, military strategy, and statecraft.

41 For detailed discussion of strategy manuals or *bingfa* 兵法, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), and Lisa Raphals, *Knowing Words*.

manuals for *taijiquan*. For example, Pushing Hands employs strategies that use stillness to defeat motion and softness to defeat hardness. In the Pushing Hands version of using stillness to defeat motion, the goal is to detect an opponent's intention in time to counteract it without in turn signaling one's own intentions. Similarly, in using softness to defeat hardness, the goal is to divert an opponent's attack by turning his own force against him. These principles are familiar from the *Daodejing*, and also from other Warring States texts excavated from tombs.[42]

So, to conclude, the "deceptions" of the *Sunzi* general or the wily Odysseus are a far cry from the "virtues" advocated by Confucius or Plato. But all are models of sagacity, very differently understood. Interestingly, each case has its counterpart in sport, and in the use of metaphors that compare sport to wisdom or moral excellence. These accounts show very different moralities of competition, and complex relations between virtue, victory, performance, and entertainment.

42 The development of Pushing Hands (*tuishou* 推手) is ascribed to the semi-mythical Daoist priest Zhang Sanfeng or to Chen Wangting (1600-1680), the founder of Chen style *taijiquan* 太極拳.

Chapter Eight

The Cultural Construction of the Hero (*Ying-xiong*) in Chinese History

Mu-chou Poo

The popular Chinese movie, *Hero*, tells the story of an assassin who was brave enough to attempt to kill the First Emperor of Qin. The hero was portrayed as an excellent swordsman, extremely intelligent, and, most of all, having a sense of righteousness and a strong determination to pursue this moral action until death. The Chinese title of the movie is *Ying-xiong*, which is a commonly accepted equivalent of the English term "hero."[1] It is such a common term in modern Chinese usage that often people do not have second thoughts about its meaning. A general consensus is that a *ying-xiong*/hero is a person who can demonstrate extraordinary physical and mental power, and can use such power to perform beneficial or worthy deeds for others. It is useful to note that a hero is often a hero of *something*, which he/she excels in doing. Thus, there are heroic firefighters, boxers, car racers, and, not least of all, war heroes. They excel in what they *set out* to do, which

1 David Keightley, in a perceptive essay, suggests that the term *junzi* (noble man) might be a Chinese equivalent to hero. Different from the Greek hero, who was basically an action-oriented martial hero, the Chinese hero should be understood as inventor of culture, dynasty founder, sage, patriarch, plebeian, or recluse, all on the basis of merit. This distinction is very useful to us for understanding the difference between Greek and Chinese culture. However, the term *junzi* seems too broad in meaning, and one wonders if it can be used effectively as a term for "Chinese hero." As we shall see below, the term *ying-xiong* became prevalent in the late Han dynasty; has since been in use in Chinese literature over the centuries to the present day; and has been commonly identified with the English (or Greek) hero. So whether Chinese culture could produce a "Greek/Western-style hero" is a more complicated matter. The present essay is only a preliminary exploration of this subject. See David Keightley, "Clean Hand and Shining Helmets," in Tobin Siebers, editor, *Religion and the Authority of the Past* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 13-51. This is probably the only essay in English in the recent scholarship that discusses the idea of the hero in ancient China within a comparative perspective. While the view presented in this essay may be valid on its own terms, it seems that the term *junzi* is not entirely a suitable equivalent for hero.

means that, given another task, they might not excel as heroes. However, a society may consider someone a hero not necessarily because of what he has done to help others, but because of what he has done for himself. A person who climbs Mount Everest is likely to be called a hero by his countrymen, although this act in itself does not benefit anyone else directly. It is a worthwhile deed nonetheless—a deed that demonstrates some commonly accepted values such as courage, perseverance, intelligence, and physical strength. By demonstrating such values, the hero upholds an example that, if emulated by others, may be beneficial to society as a whole. However, a local guide who climbed Everest is unlikely to be called a hero in his own society, since this is considered a normal or ordinary task. Thus, what is considered a heroic act is conditioned by the value system by which the action is measured. Achilles, the iconic Greek hero, was known for his bravery, skill on the battlefield, and sense of honor—never mind his ruthlessness toward a defeated enemy, or his narrow insistence on personal honor and grievance at the cost of numerous lives of fellow Greeks. His status as a hero was immortalized by his success in war, not least because of his courage in facing his own tragic death. Thus, a hero is measured by some outstanding qualities prized by society, although he may well fall short if measured by other criteria. Given another time, another place, another society, a hero may represent a different social value. A hero, then, is a cultural construction. As culture changes, so does the idea of the hero. This much is clear. A case can therefore be made that, by analyzing the changing idea of the hero in a society, we can also gain a sense of changing social values. As cross-cultural comparisons can best be done by examining some key concepts of each culture, the value systems the concepts entail, and how these concepts are incorporated into the respective cultural and political discourses, a comparison of the idea of the hero in different societies can provide us the chance to understand better the characteristics of each society's value system. But, first, we should ask some basic questions: What is the original meaning of *ying-xiong*? Is a *ying-xiong* the equivalent of a hero? And, if so, at what period in time? And, if not, what are the differences, and what can these differences tell us about the cultures that produced each of these concepts?

The meaning of ying-xiong 英雄/hero

The term *ying-xiong* is composed of two characters, *ying* and *xiong*. The original meaning of *ying* is a new sprout of plants, or flower bud: thus, *ying* symbolizes what is young, fresh, vivacious, outstanding, and the best of the

crop. *Xiong* is the term for male characteristics, thus symbolizing physical strength and energetic leadership. The two words can stand on their own or be used in various combinations with other words with similar meanings. It is a common perception that *ying-xiong* describes a certain human quality that combines youthful spirit and mature valor, even physical strength. It therefore also becomes a noun that designates a person who possesses such a quality. The earliest appearance of *ying-xiong*, as far as our present evidence shows, is found in the *History of Han*, composed in the first century CE. In an essay about the destiny of rulers, the scholar Ban Biao (班彪, 3-54), the father of the historian Ban Gu (班固, 32-92), argues that the success of a ruler is determined by divine commandment and various supporters, including extraordinary people who are regarded as *ying-xiong*. He then warns against the perilous way of those in the past who had tried to compete for sovereign power. A wise person should know one's proper place and resist temptations that could lead to disaster:

> A *ying-xiong* should indeed have the revelation and be fearful as if there is a coming disaster, should stay aloof and be far-sighted, be deeply perceptive, retain the propriety of Li Ling and Yan Ying, and abstain from the covetousness of Han Xin and Lu Bu, reject the blind suggestion of fighting for power, realize that the political regime has an unaltered divine commandment, and refrain from coveting that which is not properly yours.[2]

The *ying-xiong* described in Ban Biao's essay seems to be merely a military leader or simply a capable person, without any specific emphasis on physical prowess. As Ban's own position is that of a pro-Han dynasty conservative, he warns that those *ying-xiong* who are prone to act independently and seek personal success should adhere to the teaching of history, wisely stay modest, and not become overly ambitious or aspire to become a king or an emperor—that is, compete with the heirs to the Han throne.

That the concept of *ying-xiong* can refer to neither a person with physical prowess nor a military leader is demonstrated by another example. The philosopher Wang Chong (王充, 27-97), a contemporary of Ban Gu, once made the following comment on some literati: "Although their positions are not as high as the ministers', they are indeed knowledgeable scholars, and *ying-xiong* of literary elegance."[3] Thus, it is clear that, at the same time that

2 *Hanshu* (*Book of Han*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971) 100:4212: 英雄誠知覺寤，畏若禍戒，超然遠覽，淵然深識，收陵、嬰之明分，絕信、布之覬覦，距逐鹿之瞽說，審神器之有授，毋貪不可幾。

3 Huang Hui, *Lunheng jiaoshi* (*Critical Edition of the Balanced Discourses*) (Beijing: Zhonghua

ying-xiong is used to designate an able military leader, it can also equally be employed in its original meaning to refer to excellence in an abstract way, without specifying what the quality of that excellence might be. One may perhaps paraphrase the last line as "the best of literary talents."

It was not until the chaotic period following the end of the Han empire that *ying-xiong* became prevalent in all sorts of texts, literary or historical, and mostly referred to those ambitious persons who set out to pursue political power. Thus, the term appears often in the context of political and military struggles that have less to do with personal physical prowess and more with political and military talent. A famous sentence in the *History of the Three Kingdoms* reads: "The world under heaven is in chaos, thus rise *ying-xiong* altogether."[4] Here, the term refers to those ambitious military leaders who tried to grasp power for themselves. The founder of the Wei dynasty, Cao Cao (曹操, 155-220), a shrewd political strategist and able military leader, was once referred to as "a villain in time of peace; a *ying-xiong* in time of chaos"[5] and known as "one who devises unprecedented strategy and is able to take control of the *ying-xiong* and return chaos to peace."[6] Cao Cao's self-image is shown in a conversation with his potential rival, Liu Bei (劉備 161-223): "There are only two *ying-xiong* under heaven: you, sir, and yours truly."[7] The fact that the notion of *ying-xiong* was developed and widely used during the chaotic period after the downfall of the Han empire has been attributed to the social and political environment of the time. As the Confucian sagehood, an ideal propagated throughout the previous period, became merely an ideal that no one could reach, and as the existing social and political order kept crumbling, there is plenty of evidence that people—or at least many who left their voices in the historical sources—longed for those men of action who could end chaos and restore peace.[8]

The idea of *ying-xiong* as a man of excellent physical strength, a war hero, so to speak, also gained popularity in this time of troubles, as a poem by Zhang Hua (張華, 232-300), entitled "The Brave Gentleman" (*Zhuangshi* 壯士), describes.

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shuju, 1990), 1173: 位雖不至公卿，誠能知之囊橐，文雅之英雄也.

4 *Sanguozhi Weishu* (*Records of the Three Kingdoms, Book of Wei*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), 14:426.

5 *Houhanshu* (*Book of the Later Han*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), 68:2234.

6 *Sanguozhi Weishu*, 12:384.

7 *Sanguozhi Shushu* (*Records of the Three Kingdoms, Book of Shu*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), 875.

8 Liu Zhiwei, *Ying-xiong wenhua yu Weijin wenxue* (*The Culture of the Hero and the Literature of the Wei and Jin Dynasties*) (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 2004), 29-35.

The Brave one carries passion and vision;
How can he stay in a limpid void?
He rides on the horse from Ferghana,
And handles the strong bow.
His long sword sweeps across the wide fields,
His high helmet touches the sky.
He exhales and there forms white cloud,
He shouts and there comes clear wind.
The sound thunders and disturbs the world,
The valiant power shines throughout the barbarian lands.
He washes his armor at the great ocean,
And rides across the great desert.
He alone strides in the felicitous world,
A *ying-xiong* recognized all over the four seas.[9]

This image of a physical *ying-xiong* remains the dominant one in later eras, especially among the common people, although scholars may prefer to use the term *ying-xiong* in a wider sense. It is most remarkable that the first treatise on *ying-xiong*, written during the Wei dynasty by the famous scholar Liu Shao (劉劭, third century CE), emphasizes the complementary nature of *ying* and *xiong*:

> That which is pure and elegant among the plants is called *ying*; that which is exceptional among the beasts is called *xiong*. Therefore, those persons who excelled in literary and military talents are named after these. Thus, those who have intelligence and brilliant mind are called *ying*; those who have exceptional courage and strength are called *xiong*.[10]

Thus, a person needs both intelligence and courage to be successful, whether as a general or minister. The increase or decrease of the traits of *ying* and *xiong* in a person makes him more of a man of action or strategy. A *ying-xiong*, in Liu Shao's view, is never a person with merely physical strength. This is understandable given that the intellectual atmosphere of Liu Shao's time was one of intense debate of personality types based on human nature, education, and family background. Besides *ying-xiong*, Liu Shao also discussed other types of personalities, such as the sage and the perfect

9 Lu Qinli, *Xian Qin Han Weijin Nanbeichao shi* (*Poetry of the pre-Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern dynasties*) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983), 613.
10 Liu Shao, *Renwu zhi* (*An essay on human abilities*) (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), II: 6. This work contains the first essay on the hero/*ying-xiong* in Chinese literature, and is very important for understanding the original meaning of the term *ying-xiong*.

gentleman. It is obvious that, in his view, *ying-xiong* represents outward talents of action, but not the type of sophisticated cultivation of personal virtue and wisdom, since there can be no doubt that sagehood is still the utmost achievement to which anyone can aspire as a human being. Having the ability to understand the true way of the cosmos and to ameliorate all evil, a sage is morally superior to a *ying-xiong*, whose achievement is limited to the political or military sphere.

A contemporary of Liu Shao and another famous scholar, Wang Can (王粲, 177-217 CE), also wrote a *Biographies of Ying-xiong*.[11] The work has been lost and is only preserved in the form of scattered quotes in the commentaries to the various histories of the Three Kingdoms period. Judging from what is extant, however, one can see that the representatives of *ying-xiong* in this collection include not only famous military leaders of the period, but also officials who demonstrated in one way or another upright character, and dared to advance criticism against those who held power. Even the infamous usurper Dong Zhuo (董卓, d. 192), known for his cruelty and wanton behavior, is also listed. What is considered a *ying-xiong* in Wang Can's view, therefore, can be anyone who has demonstrated some unusual talents, whether they comply with the prevailing social ethos or not. Perhaps there is a certain sense of sarcasm in Wang Can's representations: what people usually consider as infamous villainy can equally be recognized as heroism, and vice versa.

The idea of *ying-xiong* is constantly mentioned in later literature, and often with reference to the Three Kingdoms period, when it was becoming a common notion. In the Tang dynasty, for example, a famous scholar named Wang Bo (王勃, 649-675) wrote a treatise entitled *On the Three Kingdoms* in which the military leaders of that time are referred to as "those *ying-xiong* who displayed their bravery in the battlefields and deployed their cunning talents in strategy."[12] Another scholar, Li Guan (李觀, 766-794), gave his judgment on the achievement of Emperor Wu, the great ruler of the Han empire.

> I read the book by the Grand Historian and learned how Emperor Wu ruled the country. Though he was not a sovereign who pursued benevolence and

11 Wang Can, *Ying-xiong jichao* (*Notes on Heroes*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991); also see Yu Shaochu, editor, *Jian-an qizi ji* (*Collected Works of the Seven Masters of Jian-an*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989).

12 Wang Bo, "San Guo lun," in *Quan Tang Wen* (*Complete Literature of the Tang Dynasty*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 1857.

practiced justice, he nevertheless was a *ying-xiong*.[13]

It is clear that the author did not connect the character of a *ying-xiong* with the ideal moral qualities of benevolence and justice. Thus, on the scale of moral values, *ying-xiong* does not occupy the highest position. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that it is a positive evaluation of human character.

Again, a different understanding of *ying-xiong* was expressed in another work, entitled *Biographies of Ying-xiong*, by the Tang author Yong Tao (雍陶, 805-?).[14] Here, Yong Tao lists four famous officials as his *ying-xiong*. None of them, interestingly, is mentioned because of his physical prowess or military talents. The first one, Guo Ziyi (郭子儀, 697-781), is noted for his extraordinary courage in visiting his political rival, Yu Chao'en (魚朝恩, 722-770), who is suspected of having plotted against him. Guo, believing that Yu means no harm, goes with a few servants without fear of his life, and wins the heart of Yu for his courage and generosity. The second official, Yu Di (于頔, d. 818), is described as a person who is very generous in giving away his fortune whenever someone asks for it, and who will even give away his concubines if someone shows interest and cannot afford to obtain one for himself. His outstanding character is summarized as being that of someone who cares more about doing the right thing (to support a worthy person) than guarding his fortune. The situation of the third official, Zhang Yue (張說, 667-731), is also similar. The only story about Zhang is that he is a generous person who gives away his maid to a young guest who has an affair with her. This young guest later saves Zhang's career by volunteering to serve as a lobbyist at the court to save Zhang when the latter is framed by his political opponents. The fourth story concerns Pei Du (裴度, 765-839), a famous prime minister of the Tang court. In this final tale, a mid-ranking officer is robbed of his appointment documents on his way to his new post while his fiancée is forcibly taken away and, coincidentally, presented to Pei Du. When Pei Du finds out about this story, he not only restores the officer's documents, but also sends his fiancée together with him to his new posting. The group image of *ying-xiong* in this work, then, is of men of tremendous generosity and trustworthiness, who care more about helping people than preserving their own wealth—in a word, philanthropists, one could say.

The Song dynasty Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200) often uses the term *ying-xiong* to denote one who is capable of a grand overview of how things ought to be done, and is therefore not bothered or bogged

13 Li Guan, "Diao Hanwudi wen" ("Eulogy for Emperor Wu of Han"), in *Quan Tang Wen*, 5436-2.

14 Tao Yong, *Ying-xiong zhuan* (*Legends of Heroes*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991).

down by trivial matters:

> People who do things [correctly] mostly place the general guideline as first priority, while other minor details can be pursued when necessary. This is the way of the *ying-xiong*.[15]

Here, *ying-xiong* is used to describe a person with grand vision who dares to ignore conventional wisdom. Such use of the term is obviously limited to the circle of high intellectuals. But in literary texts, the more common notion of *ying-xiong* was often used for obvious literary purposes, to eulogize a dramatic personality or a tragic hero.

A favorite *ying-xiong* in popular literature is Xiang Yu (項羽, 232-202 BCE), a member of the Chu royal house who competed with Liu Bang (劉邦, 256-195 BCE), the founder of the Han dynasty. Due to errant calculations and personal pride, he was defeated and finally committed suicide. Although the grand historian Sima Qian (司馬遷, 145 or 135 BCE-?), who wrote Xiang Yu's biography, did not approve of his ambition and lack of wisdom,[16] and did not call him a *ying-xiong*, Xiang Yu was nevertheless remembered in later generations as a tragic hero who, with all of his noble family background and charismatic personality, could have made it to the top. His life, especially his love story with his concubine Yu Ji (虞姬, d. 202 BCE), though fictional, was told and retold in popular literature until today. A poet of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) wrote about Xiang Yu in full admiration:

> The chariot speeds like flying dragon and roaring tiger,
> Holding great power and slashing the central plain;
> Taking pride as a *ying-xiong* like Xiang Yu,
> And asking the concubine to emulate Yu Ji.[17]

The late Ming dynasty scholar Gu Yenwu (顧炎武, 1613-1682 CE) once wrote about Gao Jianli (高漸離, third century BCE)—a musician who, after his friend, the famous assassin Jing Ke (荊軻), failed in his attempt to assassinate the First Emperor, took it upon himself to try, again unsuccessfully—as one who "although degraded as a mere musician, was originally a *ying-xiong* with brave heart."[18] This image of a *ying-xiong* as a resolutely gallant fighter

15 Yan Yuan, *Zhuzi yulei ping* (*Commentary on Zhu Xi's Categorized Talks*) (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1997), 290.

16 Sima Qian, *Shiji* (*Book of History*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), 7:338-339.

17 Lu Changchu, "Jingong ci" ("Palace Lyrics of the Jin Dynasty"), in Ke Jiusi et al., *Liao Jin Yuan Gongci* (*Palace Lyrics of the Liao, Jin, and Yuan Dynasties*) (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1988), 60.

18 Gu Yanwu, *Tinglin shiji* (*Collected poetry of Tinglin, Volume 1*) (Shanghai: Shanghai

with a sense of righteousness was common in many of the vernacular novels from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, notably *Journey to the West* (*Xi Youji* 西遊記), *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳), *Stories of the Young Heroes and Heroines* (*Ernü yingxiong zhuan* 兒女英雄傳), and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San Guo Yanyi* 三國演義). It is this image of the *ying-xiong*, and not the kind of *ying-xiong* represented by Cao Cao, the political strategist and military leader, that has been imprinted on the popular imagination in Chinese society until today.

The modern use of the *ying-xiong* and hero

The modern meaning of "hero," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "A man distinguished by extraordinary valour and martial achievements; one who does brave or noble deeds; an illustrious warrior." As extension of this definition, another paragraph describes a hero as: "A man who exhibits extraordinary bravery, firmness, fortitude, or greatness of soul, in any course of action, or in connexion with any pursuit, work, or enterprise; a man admired and venerated for his achievements and noble qualities." Notwithstanding the ideological background of the *OED* itself, such definitions may seem close enough to the modern Chinese notion of *ying-xiong* described above to warrant a comfortable equation between the two terms. However, when tracing the original meaning of hero back to ancient Greece, we see a strong religious dimension in antiquity that is not found in the modern use of the term. In Homer, "hero" has a basic meaning of "noble gentleman," though most "gentlemen" are warrior-kings or soldiers. Outside of Homer and in later literature, the term hero could refer to demigods, mythical or historical characters, men or women, who were worshiped at various locations after their death. Sometimes they were believed to have gained immortality because of their great deeds. Physical strength was certainly part of the characteristics of such a hero, but not necessarily so. Tragic death, moreover, seems to be a fate often connected with heroes, which bespeaks an ambivalent sentiment toward the whole notion of heroism.[19]

Now, the *ying-xiong* in Chinese history was, from the beginning, always a historical figure, such as Xiang Yu and Cao Cao, and was only very exceptionally worshiped by the people for his virtue. The famous general Guan Yu (關羽, 160-219) of the Three Kingdoms period is an example. His cult

shudian, 1989) I: 23.

19 Lewis R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), *passim*; Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 174-210.

is still alive in present-day China, and he is worshiped as a protective deity, perhaps due to his loyal character.[20] As a historical figure, he did not accomplish much militarily. Although enjoying some success in battle, he was defeated and killed during the conflict between the kingdoms of Shu and Wu. Thus, he was not very much esteemed by historians and critics. He was first bestowed with divine status and received cult offerings probably during the Tang dynasty in the mid-seventh century, when legends of his divine power began to circulate.[21] His image as a warrior hero was gradually formed with the spread of legends and vernacular literature during the Song and Yuan dynasties. He then received official title and formal recognition as a god during the Yuan dynasty. Unlike some Greek heroes, therefore, Guan Yu was not a divine figure to begin with, and he was not even referred to as a *ying-xiong* until a few hundred years after his death, and then only in popular literature. The reason he was worshiped by the people was basically because certain legends about his divine and magical powers began to circulate, not because of any "heroic actions." In other words, his image as a hero in popular literature such as the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* came about as the result of the spread of his cult. In the *Romance*, of course, he was not a god but a hero.

What can be stated in principle, then, is that the *ying-xiong* is primarily a secular figure, with few religious associations. His worthiness comes mainly from personal qualities such as cunning intelligence, sharp insight, an upright personality, a strong will, extraordinary valor, and physical prowess. It is worth noticing that, in the long history of Chinese culture, the term *ying-xiong* carried multiple meanings, since anyone with various combinations of the aforementioned qualities could be, but was not necessarily, labeled a *ying-xiong*. Its original meaning as primarily denoting a person of extraordinary intelligence, will, and leadership was never forgotten in later generations, no matter how dim the memory. A more common notion of *ying-xiong* as a person with daring spirit and extraordinary physical power, with less emphasis on intellectual brilliance or moral integrity, survives into the modern era.

In the modern West, the religious dimension of the hero cannot be said to have persisted in the popular imagination either, although thinkers and writers have, since the nineteenth century, tried to transform this religious

20 See Yan Qingyang, *Guangong quanzhuan* (*Biography of Guan Gong*) (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 2002).

21 Yan Qingyang, *Guangong quanzhuan*, 247-252. As sources on his apotheosis are few and fragmented, there are different opinions on this point. But there is no doubt that his cult began to appear first at the place where he met his death hundreds of years afterward. See also Zheng Tuyou, *Guangong xinyang* (*Guan Gong Beliefs*) (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1995), 84-88.

aspect of the hero into a kind of noble human quality that can qualify as an object of worship or great admiration. Thomas Carlyle might have started it all. His heroes included many different types of men: the prophet Muhammed; Shakespeare and Dante; Martin Luther and John Knox; Samuel Johnson, Rousseau, and Robert Burns; and Cromwell and Napoleon.[22] For Carlyle, these were all "great men." He believed that great men did great deeds that exemplified the noblest human qualities and, thus, were worth our admiration and emulation. We see, therefore, the beginning of a trend in which the notion of hero is expanded or created anew to suit the vision and need of the proponent. Carlyle needed great men to serve as role models and rally the spirits of his contemporaries. Hegel, on the other hand, believed that the hero represented his idea of *Zeitgeist*. Freud and Jung employed the notion of the hero to symbolize the primordial human psychological need and the mythical archetype of human culture. Romain Rolland, sensing the danger and disaster of what great men could cause, defined his hero as someone who served the people: a Sun Yat-sen, Lenin, or Gandhi, if he were a political leader; or a Beethoven or Tolstoy, if he were an artist. In a word, he propagated a cultural hero with noble and deep commitment to his social obligations.[23]

All these modern Western notions of the hero came into China, one wave after another after the nineteenth century, as part of the country's *rite de passage* into the modern world. Without extensive investigation, however, it is difficult to determine just when the Western idea of hero was first identified with the term *ying-xiong*. Suffice it to say that Chinese authors began to use the term *ying-xiong* very much the way their Western counterparts did from the early twentieth century onward: they inherited certain parts of the traditional meaning of *ying-xiong*, and expanded and transformed it into something close to the Western notion of "cultural hero" or "psychological archetype." An early twentieth-century work on ancient Chinese mythology borrowed the idea of the "mythology of the hero" and created the Chinese term *ying-xiong shenhua* (英雄神話).[24] The story of Hou-yi (后羿), who shot down nine suns in the sky when there were ten and saved the world from being scorched, for example, was invariably referred to as a *ying-xiong*/hero in modern Chinese studies of ancient mythology, although he was never referred to as a *ying-xiong* in traditional sources. Another famous character,

22 Thomas Carlyle, *On heroes and hero-worship* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1911).
23 Romain Rolland, "Preface to the Chinese Translation" of *Tolstoy*, in Fu Lei, translator, *Fuyi zhuanji wuzhong* (*Five Biographies Translated by Fu*) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1983).
24 Xuan Zhu [pen name Mao Dun], *Zhongguo shenhua yanjiu* (*Studies in Chinese Mythology*) (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1929).

the Great King Yu (禹), who was known to have saved the world from the Deluge by introducing hydraulic engineering, and who is still commemorated by the Chinese government as a national hero, was also never referred to as a *ying-xiong* in early texts. His status as *ying-xiong*, therefore, is a modern cultural construction that satisfies contemporary intellectual and sociopolitical needs.

A public debate carried out in China during the Thirties and Forties centered on the subject of "hero worship," and whether it could become a dangerous rationale for exponents of fascism.[25] There was similar concern in the West, particularly during and after the Second World War, as the consequences of fascist regimes became obvious. Sidney Hook's book, *The Hero in History*, expressed exactly such a concern.[26] Thus, we see here two notions, *ying-xiong* and hero, which were not entirely compatible originally, converge in their modern incarnations.

However, this cautionary and even ambiguous attitude toward the possible connection between the praise of heroism and the rise of totalitarianism seems to have receded to the background. Many contemporary scholars in China who work in various fields such as history, mythology, literature, and anthropology still employ Western approaches to the study of the hero in their examinations of Chinese history and society, and their use of *ying-xiong* is largely devoid of its original meaning and contexts.[27] With very few exceptions,[28] it becomes practically identical in meaning with the modern English term, hero. Thus, ancient Chinese mythology becomes more and more like Greek mythology, and Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, which also contains the faces of Chinese "heroes"—namely Fu Xi (伏犧), the inventor of fishing and hunting; Shen Nong (神農), the inventor of agriculture; and Huang Di (黃帝), the Yellow Emperor who invented

25 For reference, see Liu Zhiwei, *Ying-xiong wenhua yu Wei Jin wenxue*, 12-15.

26 Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1943). This is a modern assessment of the idea of the hero in Western history, useful as a comparison to the Chinese idea of *ying-xiong.*

27 Xiao Bing, *Zhongguo wenhua de Jingying: Taiyang yingxiong shenhua de bijiao* (*The Quintessence of Chinese Culture: A Comparison of Legends of Sun Heroes*) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1989); Ye Shuxian, *Yingxiong yu taiyang: Zhongguo shanggu shishi de yuanxing chonggou* (*The Hero and the Sun: Reconstructing the Archetypes of Ancient Chinese Epics*) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe, 1991); Chen Jianxian, *Shenqi yu yingxiong: Zhongguo gudai shenhua de muti*(*Gods and Deities: Motifs in Ancient Chinese Mythology*) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1994); Sun Shaoxian, *Yingxiong zhisi yu meiren chimu* (*The Death of the Hero and the Aging Beauty*) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2000); He Xin, *Aiqing yu ying-xiong* (*Love and Heroes*) (Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, 2002).

28 Liu Zhiwei, *Ying-xiong wenhua yu Weijin wenxue*, is a rare example.

practically everything else[29]—becomes one of the most often cited books in modern Chinese studies of mythology. The image of the hero in these studies is more often celebrated as a positive, useful, and admirable one that bears a kind of "cultural spirit," rather than as an ambivalent and troubling one that betrays some dark corner of the cultural consciousness. That is to say, these Chinese authors happily raise one hero/*ying-xiong* after another in order to celebrate the "fact" that ancient China possessed personalities who exhibited some admirable qualities—and thus clearly deserve the status of hero/*ying-xiong*—which, by further inference, means that because Chinese culture possessed such heroes, it should be no less proud than its Western counterparts.

It is often said, however, that a democratic society is a society without heroes. This is only true to a certain degree. Given the experience of several tragic wars in the twentieth century, heroes that embody nationalism and militarism are vigilantly monitored by liberal intellectuals. Yet, outside liberal circles, the more nationalistic, physical, and personable heroes and *ying-xiong* are still well and alive. Since the search for excellence in all walks of life is still a predominant social value, the creation of heroes of all sorts can be expected to continue so long as everyone who strives to attain excellence fails to fulfill his/her wish and thus needs a psychological outlet. It is doubtful, therefore, if the ambivalent feeling toward heroism in society, East and West, can be resolved any time soon. For the time being, movie stars and athletes serve as heroes and heroines of our daily existence. Whether Romain Rolland would have agreed that these are genuine cultural heroes who will not become fascist demagogues, however, is again debatable. The real problem of heroism, apparently, is not the heroes themselves, but the human psyche that created them.

29 Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 316-18.

Chapter Nine

Politics and Diplomacy in Ancient Athletics and the Olympic Games: General Remarks on a Brief Historical Survey[1]

Panos Valavanis

Athletic contests in ancient Greece were not an independent activity but were held in the context of major religious festivals as part of the worship of a deity.[2] These festivals saw the largest gatherings of people for peaceful purposes relative to any other event in the ancient world. Judging by the capacity of the late classical stadium at Olympia, up to 40,000 people could assemble there every four years, almost double the capacity of the earlier stadium built in the late sixth century.[3] Apart from those who dwelt in the area, for whom access was easy, the other spectators were usually the ruling classes of the cities of metropolitan Greece and their Mediterranean colonies, who sought to attend the major sanctuaries not only to watch the games, but also to engage in politics at a personal or state level. The four pan-Hellenic sanctuaries, with their successive games, virtually filled on each occasion with the political and military leadership of all the Greek city-states, creating ideal circumstances for political and diplomatic activity. During the games, Olympia in particular was the most important diplomatic center in the entire Mediterranean.[4]

1 I would like to express my thanks to Professors Susan Brownell and Michael Cosmopoulos for their kind invitation and warm hospitality, as well as to all of my colleagues for fruitful conversations.

2 Regarding the religious nature of the games, see my *Games and Sanctuaries in Ancient Greece: Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, Nemea, Athens* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2004) and Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and spectacle in the ancient world* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 80, 83, and 157.

3 David Gilman Romano, *Athletics and Mathematics in Archaic Corinth: The Origins of the Greek* Stadion (Philadelphia: Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society [206], 1993), 22, and Nigel B. Crowther, *Athletika: Studies on the Olympic Games and Greek athletics,* Nikephoros Beihefte Band 11 (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 2004), 20.

4 Regarding the use of the games for political purposes generally, see Donald Kyle, *Athletics in Ancient Athens* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 155-168; John K. Davies, *Wealth and the Power of Wealth*

As shown by recent research, which has interpreted the dedication of huge bronze tripod vessels, some of them three meters high, within the framework of a display of status on the part of the aristocratic clans of early Greece, this role is already evident during the earlier stages of the sanctuary and games in the geometric period (ninth to eighth century BCE).[5] After the establishment of the Greek city-states, and especially during the archaic period (seventh to sixth century BCE), internal and interstate rivalry grew significantly and athletics, especially the Olympic Games, were used in this context in many ways.[6] Let us examine some of them.

Emerging as an Olympic victor was a powerful means of exercising political influence in the Greek city-state. Thus, many Olympic victors took advantage of the personal acclaim that accompanied their victories and used it to pursue political ambitions. A characteristic example is the case of the Athenian Cylon, who, exploiting his victory in the 35th Olympiad (640 BCE), attempted to make himself tyrant of Athens but failed because of the fierce opposition of his political rivals.[7]

A century later, many members of the Alcmaeonid family, who had been banished from Athens, were victors in the games at Delphi and Olympia.[8] These successes served as powerful political weapons against the tyrants, initially in favor of the return of the Alcmaeonids to the city and subsequently

in Classical Athens (New York: Arno Press, 1981), 31-36; Stephen G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 216-225; and Richard T. Neer, "Delphi, Olympia and the art of politics," in H. A. Shapiro, editor, *The Cambridge companion to archaic Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 225-264.

5 Nowadays, some researchers accept that games were held prior to 776 BCE. Regarding the hypothesis that the commencement of the games is identified with the commencement of worship, see my "Thoughts on the historical origins of the Olympic Games and the cult of Pelops in Olympia," in *Nikephoros* 19 (2006), 137-152. For the dedication of tripods in the early sanctuaries and its role, see Catherine Morgan, *Athletes and oracles: The transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the eighth century BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 27-105, and, for the dedication of miniature chariots, Frank Jünger, *Gespann und Herrschaft: Form und Intention grossformatiger Gespanndenkmäler im griechischen Kulturraum von der archaischen bis in die hellenistische Zeit* [*Chariot teams and rule: The form and intention of large-scale chariot team monuments in the Greek culture area from archaic to Hellenistic times*] (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2006).

6 Mark Golden, *Greek Sport and Social Status* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 7-9.

7 Regarding this issue, as well as the relationship between tyrants and the games, see Kyle, *Athletics*, and his *Sport and spectacle*, 83, 157, and 171.

8 The political career of the Alcmaeonids began with the victory of Alcmaeon in the chariot race at the Olympic Games of 592 (Herodotus 6.125), while Miltiades III was victor at the Olympic Games of 560 or 548. See Kyle, *Athletics*, 196 (A5) and 208 (A46), and Nigel James Nicholson, *Aristocracy and athletics in archaic and classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 28. For the victories of the Alcmaeonids at the Panathenaia, see Kyle, *Athletics*, *op. cit.*

for their efforts to seize power. Another example is the Philaid Cimon, who, having been banished by Peisistratus, was twice victorious in the chariot race at Olympia, in 532 BCE and 528 BCE (Herodotus 6.103-4).[9] On the second occasion, however, he dedicated his victory to the tyrant of Athens in return for permission to return from exile. After resettling in Athens, Cimon took part in the next Olympiad (524 BCE), where he was again crowned victor. However, he won such glory that he caused the sons of Peisistratus to become envious and they had him killed.[10] This particular case illustrates the multiple political roles of Cimon's victories as they were used by him, by Peisistratus, and by his sons: the exiled Cimon took advantage of his victory to secure his return to Athens; Peisistratus showed the Athenians that even the leaders of rival clans sought to enter into agreements with him; but Cimon's murderers, realizing the political power of his victory, took steps to eliminate him.[11]

One of the most characteristic examples of exploiting athletic victories, especially in chariot racing, for publicity value was that of the arrogant Athenian general Alcibiades:[12] indeed, it has recently been suggested that even his choice of the specific festivals in which he took part was no chance occurrence. In 421, when he was about thirty and therefore eligible for Athens's most important elective office, that of the *strategus* (general), he took part for the first time in the four-horse chariot race at the Pythian Games.[13] He won, and the next year, 420/419 BCE, he was elected *strategus* for the first time.

9 For Athenians who took part in the games while in exile, see E. R. OKell, "Orestes the contender: Chariot racing and politics in fifth century Athens and Sophocles' 'Electra,'" in Sinclair Bell and Glenys Davies, *Games and festivals in classical antiquity: Proceedings of the conference held in Edinburgh, 10-12 July 2000* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), 37.

10 Kyle, *Athletics*, 158 and 204 (A34); Michael Stahl, *Aristokraten und Tyrannen im archaischen Athen: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung, zur Sozialstruktur und zur Entstehung des Staates* [*Aristocrats and tyrants in archaic Athens: Studies on the tradition, social structure, and emergence of the state*] (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1987), 116-120; Christian Mann, *Athlet und Polis im archaischen und frühklassischen Griechenland* [*Athlete and city-state in archaic and early classical Greece*] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2001) 82-85; and OKell, "Orestes," 34 and 37.

11 See also Jünger, *Gespann und Herrschaft*, 192-202. Also of interest is the fact that Cimon's three successive victories came after three consecutive victories of the Spartan Euagoras (548, 544, and 540 BCE), although we cannot be certain that, in such an early period, there was the same tension in the relations between the two city-states that later developed, which would mean, moreover, that the victories could also have been used in the context of external state rivalry.

12 Mark Golden, *Sport and society in ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 169-175; Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 172-173 and 192-193; and Zinon Papakonstantinou, "Alcibiades in Olympia: Olympic Ideology, Sport and Social Conflict in Classical Athens," in *Journal of Sport History*, 30 (2003), 173-182; and Golden, *Greek Sport*, 9-12.

13 Golden, *Sport and society*, 334, and OKell, "Orestes," 36.

The choice of Delphi rather than Olympia has been the subject of discussion and has been attributed to the time factor. Essentially, the venue at Delphi, the most prestigious after Olympia, was closer to Athens, so less time was lost in travel. Additionally, there was no need for the one-month attendance prior to the festival, as was the case in Elis,[14] although only the charioteers and trainers of the horses used in the race were under this obligation, not the owners (Alcibiades, in this case). I believe that the choice of Delphi instead of Olympia can indeed be attributed to the time factor, but in a different respect: knowing Alcibiades' character, we may assume that he was in such a hurry to gain political prominence that he did not have the patience to wait another year for the Olympic Games, preferring instead to take part in the games that would be held at a time closer to his candidacy. This illustrates just how important such victories could be for a person's political career.

Two years later, in 418 BCE, he was victorious in the Panathenaic Games, as suggested by the possession of more than eighty-two Panathenaic amphoras in 414, year of the confiscation of his property by the Athenian state. This victory in his own city would surely have given him even greater publicity and political power.[15] Finally, a year before executing his plan for the Sicilian expedition, he decided to take part in the Olympic Games of 416 BCE in a way that nobody had done before: as head of the official delegation of his city (*theoria*), the size and, above all, wealth of which was a very effective propaganda vehicle for community identity and interstate rivalry.[16] This Athenian delegation was one of the most magnificent and impressive ever. As for Alcibiades, he was so determined to win that he entered seven *tethrippa* in the chariot race. Moreover, some of the chariots and horses were not his own but had been purchased or rented from fellow Athenians (e.g., Teisias) or the Argives.[17] In the end, Alcibiades did win, his teams coming in first, second, and fourth, thus breaking Spartan domination of the event.[18]

This Olympiad was a complete triumph for the Athenian playboy poli-

14 OKell, "Orestes," 36.

15 If we accept that the two paintings dedicated by Alcibiades to the *Pinakotheke* of the Propylaea reflect reality, he had also, most probably, been victorious at the Nemean Games since, in addition to being crowned at the Olympic and Pythian Games in the first painting, the second depicts him in the arms of Nemea, the personification of the games (Pausanias 1.22.7).

16 Morgan, *Athletes and Oracles*, 191-234, and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 80.

17 See Golden, *Greek Sport*, 6-7.

18 For the list of Spartan victors in the chariot race, see Jünger, *Gespann und Herrschaft*, 82-103. A similar phenomenon was seen in the sixth century BCE with Cimon's victories following a series of Spartan victories. For the list of Athenian victors in the chariot race, see OKell, "Orestes," 34.

tician, as Mark Golden has characterized him.[19] Accordingly, he celebrated his victory with great splendor and a display of personal and state extravagance, receiving valuable gifts from friends and allies (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 2.2, 12.1; Pseudo-Andocides 4.29-30; Isocrates 16, 34; and Athenaeus 1.3e).[20] In doing so, the cunning politician simultaneously "struck" several targets: at a domestic political level, by impressing his fellow citizens, he gained recognition and acceptance from Athenians and allies, while relegating his political opponents to the sidelines; at a foreign policy level, he impressed all the Greeks, advertising not only his own name but also that of his native city; and by choosing this particular athletic event and breaking Sparta's domination of the chariot race, he scored a great propaganda victory, with knock-on effects, against the adversary—and he did so, moreover, in the midst of the Peloponnesian War.[21] A few months later, in the summer of 415, he used the political support gained through his victories to further his views in favor of the great expedition against Syracuse, convincing his compatriots to approve it and appoint him commander-in-chief.[22] As Donald Kyle points out, "Conspicuous display and victories at Olympia and influence over the sanctuary were parapolitical devices in foreign relations. Perhaps internal status rivalry and external state rivalries were mutually reinforcing."[23]

There were also cases, however, in which a resplendent official delegation achieved exactly the opposite of what was intended. When Themistocles attended the Olympic Games in 476 BCE in order to compete with the aristocrat Cimon,[24] his main political opponent, the Athenian statesman stayed in an impressive tent and hosted sumptuous banquets.[25] But this behavior

19 Golden, *Greek Sport*, 6.

20 For his tendency to conduct himself as a king, see Christian Mann, *Athlet und Polis*, 112. There is no doubt that Alcibiades was one of the most unfortunate figures in history. For the most arrogant and autocratic ancient Greek had the misfortune to be born in Athens at a time when democracy had reached its zenith!

21 In contrast, his political opponent Nicias had undertaken the sponsorship of drama competitions; see Plato, *Gorgias* 472a, and Plutarch, *Nicias* 3.2-3.

22 Jünger, *Gespann und Herrschaft*, 203-212, and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 193. The fact that the Athenians entrusted the overall command to him shows that Alcibiades' arguments convinced them at the time, while also indicating the importance attached to athletic victories by the ancients.

23 Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 192.

24 The great *strategus*, famous for his victory at the Battle of the Eurymedon, nephew of the prominent Athenian of the same name mentioned on p. 139.

25 The luxury of the tents that accommodated the leaders of the various city-states was a means of displaying prestige, wealth, and power. For a possible type of ancient tent based on Eastern models, see Thanos Papathanasopoulos [Θάνος Παπαθανασόπουλος], *To Τρόπαιον* [*The Trophy*] (Athena: Hermes, 2003), figures 31-33.

gave rise to criticism, for, while such displays could be forgiven in the case of Cimon, who was young and an aristocrat, they in no way befitted a man who, although the victor of Salamis, simply lacked his rival's aristocratic credentials and thus appeared to be flaunting a social position he simply did not have (Plutarch, *Themistocles* 5). Moreover, again at Olympia, Themistocles ordered the destruction of the fabulous tent of Hieron, tyrant of Syracuse, and urged that his horses not be allowed to take part in the games. His actions were politically motivated and evidently due to the fact that the tyrant's brother, Gelon, had in effect refused to help the Greeks face the Persian invasion by setting a condition for his aid that he be placed in overall command (Herodotus 7.158 and Plutarch, *Themistocles* 25).

In 388, another tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius I, seeking to promote himself and increase his fame among all the Greeks, sent a magnificent delegation to Olympia, with emissaries who stayed in luxurious tents (Dionysius Halicarnassus, *De Lysia* 29; Diodorus Siculus 14.109.2-3).[26] And since he had a passion for poetry, he also sent *rhapsodes* to give public recitals of his poems, in order to win glory as a poet. At first, this extravagant presence aroused the curiosity and admiration of the spectators. But as soon as the *rhapsodes* began to read Dionysius' very bad poetry, the audience began to laugh and mock him. Then, the Athenian orator Lysias, a strong supporter of democracy who had come to deliver his Olympian oration, urged the crowd not to accept the emissaries of a tyranny, whereupon many of the spectators attacked and destroyed the tents and drove the Syracusans from Olympia. Naturally, Lysias' initiative was not triggered by his poetic sensibility, but was politically motivated. For, on the one hand, the orator was an implacable opponent of tyranny and, on the other, Dionysius was an ally of Sparta at the time. Thus, Lysias' action was simultaneously a political move against the enemies of his city.

Another revealing episode, in which the multifaceted political role of the Olympic Games can be seen, occurred in 216 or 212 BCE during the final of the boxing competition (Polybius 27.9.3-13, Pausanias 6.15.3). One of the competitors was the famous, powerful boxer Kleitomachos of Thebes, who had dominated the event for many years. His opponent was Aristonicus, an Alexandrian or, in the eyes of the ancient Greeks, an Egyptian. He had been trained and sent by King Ptolemy IV (244-205 BCE), who calculated that, if

26 Karl Friedrich Stroheker, *Dionysios I: Gestalt und Geschichte des Tyrannen von Syrakus* [*Dionysios I: Shape and history of the tyrant of Syracuse*] (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1958), 137-139, and Crowther, *Athletika*, 19. This move on the part of Dionysius continued the enthusiastic participation of his fifth-century BCE tyrant predecessors, who had achieved many victories and made splendid votive offerings; see Jünger, *Gespann und Herrschaft*, 36-62.

his athlete beat the famous favorite, he himself would score points on the contemporary political stage. This is a typical example of political patronage in ancient athletics.[27]

When the contest began, the spectators did indeed side with the outsider, Aristonicus, and tried to encourage him with their cheering. When he managed to land two powerful punches in the face of his stronger opponent, the audience went wild. As soon as the Theban came round, however, he stopped the contest, turned to the crowd, and expressed his bewilderment at their attitude: did they think that he himself was not fighting fairly, or didn't they realize that he was fighting for the glory of Greece, while the Egyptian was fighting for the glory of a king? What did they prefer? To see an Egyptian beat a Greek and win the crown, or to hear from the herald the name of a Theban winning the boxing contest? As soon as Kleitomachos said this, the spectators' allegiance shifted so dramatically that Aristonicus was defeated, beaten more by the audience than by his stronger opponent, as noted by Polybius. Here, we can discern not only the power of the spectators, which could change the course of a contest, but also the latent identification and manifestations of "nationalism" in the stadiums and hippodromes. It is also clear that athletes, as representatives of their states, were automatically regarded as exponents of the politics and ideology of the respective regimes.

The following story is also characteristic of the fanatical claims of victory that were sometimes made.[28] When the boy Teletias emerged as victor at the Pythian Games at Delphi, the spectators from Sicyon and Cleonae, two neighboring cities, began to quarrel at the awards ceremony as to which of the two should be credited with the victory. In the end, the affair not only developed into a violent clash to "claim" the victor, but to a beating that led to Teletias' death!

The tremendous desire for victory occasionally led the athletes themselves to indulge in illegitimate practices. In 332 BCE, the Athenian pentathlete Callippus was caught bribing his opponents and punished with a large fine (Pausanias 5.21.5-7).[29] Since he himself was unable to pay it, the obligation automatically fell on his city. Because the sum was huge, the Athenians

27 Crowther, 15, and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 249. For the keen interest of the Ptolemies in athletics, see Crowther, 24-25, and Golden, *Greek Sport*, 16-23. For new names of Olympic victors gleaned from the latest study of papyrus manuscripts with the poems of Poseidippus of Pella, see Wolfgang Decker, "Neue Olympiasieger aus Ägypten" ["New Olympic victors from Egypt"], in Wolfgang Waitkus, editor, *Diener des Horus: Festschrift für Dieter Kurth zum 65. Geburtstag* [*Servant of Horus: 65th birthday Festschrift for Dieter Kurth*] (Gladbeck: PeWe Verlag, 2008), 67-81.

28 Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta*, 553a-b.

29 Crowther, 25, and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 131-132.

refused to pay and sent the celebrated orator Hypereides on a diplomatic mission to defend their decision before the council of the Eleans, the supreme supervisory body of the games. As the Eleans rejected the Athenians' arguments, however, the latter responded with a measure that resembles events at modern Olympiads: they threatened to boycott the games and not send any athletes. The dispute reached such an impasse that there could be only one solution, based on the principle of solidarity among the major sanctuaries:[30] the Eleans took recourse to Delphi, and the oracle proclaimed that it would never issue an oracular response to the Athenians until they had paid the fine. Among other things, this story illustrates both the persistent efforts of organizers to keep any corruption to a minimum, in order to safeguard the prestige associated with games of such presumptive integrity, and the political ramifications of purely athletic events, including the efforts of city-states to manipulate them for their own purposes.

The games also played an important political role in the recognition of Greekness, since, initially, only Greeks had the right to take part in them.[31] A characteristic example here involves the Macedonian royal family.[32] At the beginning of the fifth century BCE, King Alexander I, seeking to integrate his country into the Greek world, decided to take part in the Olympic Games, a decision that provides the first firm evidence regarding relations between the Macedonians and pan-Hellenic sanctuaries (Herodotus 5.22).[33] Some of his rivals, however, sought to exclude him, arguing that only Greek athletes, not barbarians, were allowed to enter. In the end, Alexander participated, after he had proved that he was Greek—specifically, a descendant of Heracles from the city of Argos. This was of great political significance since it was the first time that Macedonia was projected as part of the Greek world—and at that world's most important sanctuary.[34]

30 Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics*, 218-219.

31 Crowther, 13.

32 Winthrop L. Adams, "Other People's Games: The Olympics, Macedonia and Greek Athletics," in *Journal of Sport History*, 30 (2003), 205-217.

33 Manuela Mari, *Al di là dell'Olimpo: Macedoni e grandi santuari della grecia dall'età arcaica al primo ellenismo* [*Beyond Olympus: Macedonia and the great sanctuaries of Greece from the archaic to early Hellenistic*] (Athens: Institute of Greek and Roman Antiquity, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2002), 31-36 and 45-46. Crowther, 13, n. 13, argues that Alexander may have been invited by the Elean officials in order to add prestige to the games.

34 Some years later, at the Olympic Games of 408 BCE, another member of the royal Macedonian family, Archelaus, son of Perdiccas, won in the *tethrippon* event; see L. Moretti, *Olympionikai, i vincitori negli antichi agoni Olimpici* [*Olympionikai, victors in the ancient Olympic Games*], (Rome: Accademia Nazionale Lincei, 1957), no 349, and Jünger, *Gespann und Herrschaft*, 114.

While some historians challenge the veracity of this story,[35] the recent discovery of at least two Panathenaic amphoras of the early fifth century in the cemetery of Aiani, in the territory of ancient Elimeia (Upper Macedonia), proves that such vases were greatly esteemed by the Macedonians of the time, even if they were not awarded to a native.[36] It also means that there must have been corresponding interest and esteem for the games of the Greek city-states, particularly among the members of the royal court. Evidence that some members of the Macedonian dynasty may have taken part in the Panathenaic and other Greek games from as early as the fifth century BCE was provided by the discovery in the royal cemetery at Vergina of a Panathenaic amphora, dating to 425-420 BCE, featuring the representation of a boys' (*ephebes*') race.[37] From the so-called "tomb of Philip II" comes a bronze tripod bearing the inscription, "I am from the contests of Argive Hera." It dates to around 430-420 BCE and was awarded as a prize at the games of Argos. It is plausible to assume that a member of the Macedonian royal family had won in these games and that, after three generations, his prize was placed in the king's tomb as an important family heirloom. It is interesting to note as well that although the games held in Argos at the time were not pan-Hellenic in nature, the Macedonian kings still wished to take part since, as we saw, the fact that they traced their origins back to Argos served as a powerful weapon for asserting their "Greekness." Moreover, the significance of the prize is further evidenced by the fact that it had been kept for more than three generations and was finally placed in the grave of a great king.[38] Finally, another royal grave at Vergina, the tomb with the throne, which predates the "tomb of Philip II," has yielded the fragments of at least two Panathenaic amphoras dating to the archonship of Lyciscus (344/343), when, according to historical sources, a Macedonian delegation had visited Athens.[39] Of particular importance in regard to the role of these vessels is the

35 Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 232, with n. 2.

36 Eurydike Kephalidou, "New Panathenaic Prize-Amphoras from Aiani in Upper Macedonia," and Michalis Tiverios, "Panathenäen und Makedonen: Panathenäische Preisamphoren aus dem nordgriechischen Raum," especially p. 48, in Martin Bentz and Norbert Eschbach, editors, *Panathenaïka: Symposion zu den Panathenaïschen Preisamphoren* [*Panathenaika: Symposium on the Panathenaic prize amphoras*], (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001).

37 Michalis Tiverios [Μιχάλης Τιβέριος], *Μακεδόνες και Παναθήναια* [*Macedonians and Panathenaia*] (Athens: National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation, 2000), 43 and 48, with n. 119.

38 For the Macedonians who participated in pan-Hellenic games in the fourth century BCE and up to the time of Philip, see Mari, *Al di là dell'Olimpo*, 49.

39 Manolis Andronikos [Μανόλης Ανδρόνικος], "Ζωγραφική στην αρχαία Μακεδονία" ["Painting in ancient Macedonia"], Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς [The Archaeological Newspaper] (1987), 379, and Michalis Tiverios [Μιχάλης Τιβέριος], "Παναθηναϊκοί αμφορείς από την

fact that they were found outside the tomb, burned, and appear to have been placed in the funeral pyre.[40]

The Macedonian king who used the games as a political tool more skillfully than any other, however, was Philip II.[41] Seeking, as part of his expansionist policy, to become involved in the political affairs of Greek polities to the south, he chose participation in the Olympic Games as his means. He was crowned champion in three different equestrian events at three successive Olympiads, from 356 to 348 BCE, and immortalized his victories on gold and silver coins that circulated widely.[42]

The same political policy of exploiting athletics and games was pursued by his son, Alexander the Great, with certain differences.[43] Philip's involvement in the sanctuaries of Delphi and Olympia was an attempt to secure recognition of the leading role of the Macedonians in the whole of Greece.[44] Alexander, on the other hand, turned to the games of Athens, the cradle of civilization, to secure acknowledgment of the leading Macedonian role in the campaign of "civilized" Greeks against the "barbarians." The dispatch of 300 Persian shields to the Acropolis after Alexander's first victory at the Battle of the Granicus in 334 BCE thus had clear political symbolism and was probably proclaimed with great pomp and ceremony at the Panathenaia of the same year. In order to confirm the relations between Macedonians and Athens, Alexander also used various Athenian symbols on his coins, such as statues of Athena or Nike, adopted from Panathenaic iconography.[45]

In all the lands he conquered, Alexander established athletic contests, using them as the main vehicle for disseminating Greek culture. He took

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Πέλλα" ["Panathenaic amphorae from Pella"], Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς [The Archaeological Newspaper] (1991), 41-42, with note 118.

40 Andronikos, *op. cit*., believed that the tomb belonged to a woman; indeed, he attributed it to Eurydice, mother of Philip II. However, the presence of the Panathenaic amphoras in the pyre does not support this assumption. Regarding the possible relationship between Panathenaic amphoras and women, see Panos Valavanis, "Mortals Facing the Goddess," in Olga Palagia and John Howard Oakley, editors, *Athenian potters and painters* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009).

41 Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 234, points out that, "Philip used Olympic equestrian competitions as a display of wealth, power and Greekness."

42 David Gilman Romano, "Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great, and the Ancient Olympic Games," in Elin C. Danien, editor, *The World of Philip and Alexander: A Symposium on Greek Life and Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 63-79, and Mari, 80-82. For a possible dedication by Philip of a bronze chariot, made by the famous Athenian sculptor Euphranor, see Jünger, *Gespann und Herrschaft*, 116-119.

43 Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 235-242.

44 Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics*, 223-225.

45 Tiverios, *Μακεδόνες και Παναθήναια*, 54-55. About Alexander's relations with Delphi and Olympia, see Mari, 231-244.

3,000 athletes on his campaign and organized games with valuable prizes in many places, and as a point of contact among and a means of unifying all peoples.[46] *Gymnasia*, too, were a means of transmitting Greek culture to the East, and at the same time helped the Greeks preserve their identity.[47] The Hellenistic *gymnasion* at Aï Khanoum in present-day Afghanistan, in which papyrus scrolls were found with texts of the great tragedians, was undoubtedly the result of Alexander's actions.[48]

The Romans looked upon athletic contests, with the exception of chariot races, as an inferior activity.[49] Several emperors supported the games, however, realizing that one of the best ways to control the various peoples in their vast empire was to preserve and develop existing institutions of a cohesive character.[50] On various pretexts, therefore, a variety of new games of the Greek type were founded in many regions of the empire and also in Rome itself.[51] Nonetheless, the number of games of the Greek type in the West

46 Truesdell S. Brown, "Alexander and Greek athletics, in fact and fiction," in Konrad H. Kinzl, editor, *Greece and the eastern Mediterranean in ancient history and prehistory: Studies presented to Fritz Schachermeyr on the occasion of his eightieth birthday* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 238-239.

47 For the role of *gymnasia* as symbols of Greek education and culture, see Philippe Gauthier, "Notes sur le rôle du gymnase dans les cités hellénistiques" ["Notes on the role of gymnastics in Hellenistic cities"], in Michael Wörrle and Paul Zanker, *Stadtbild und Bürgerbild im Hellenismus: Kolloquium Muenchen, 24. bis 26. Juni 1993* [*Cityscape and the image of the citizen in Hellenism: Munich colloquium, June 24-26, 1993*] (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1995), 1-10, and Wolfgang Decker, *Sport in der griechischen Antike: Vom minoischen Wettkampf bis zu den Olympischen Spielen* [*Sport in Greek antiquity: From Minoan contests to the Olympic Games*] (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1995), 169-177.

48 The destruction of this monument in the continuous wars of recent years in Afghanistan constitutes yet another tragic loss of an enormously important testament to the role and results of Alexander's policy in the East. For the *gymnasion* of Aï Khanoum, see Serge Veuve, *Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum VI. Le gymnase: Architecture, céramique, sculpture* [*Excavations of Ai Khanum VI, the gymnasium: Architecture, ceramics, sculpture*] (Paris, Éditions Klinksieck, 1987).

49 For the attitude of modern research toward Greek games and Roman spectacles, see Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 18-20. For the changes in athletic ideals in the Hellenistic and Roman period, see Onoufrios Pavlogiannis [Ονούφριος Παυλογιάννης], *Η εξέλιξη των γυμναστικών και αθλητικών ιδεών στα ελληνιστικά και αυτοκρατορικά χρόνια* [*The evolution of gymnastic and athletic ideals during Hellenistic and imperial years*], doctoral dissertation (Corfu: Ionian University, 2000).

50 S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and power: The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 101-132. Regarding the participation of the first Roman nobles in the Olympic Games, see Crowther, 14-15. For the status of Olympia in the Roman period, see Thomas Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press [USA], 2002), 40-63, and Crowther, 7-8.

51 A. J. S. Spawforth, "Agonistic festivals in Roman Greece," in Susan Walker and Averil Cameron, editors, *The Greek renaissance in the Roman empire: Papers from the tenth British Museum classical colloquium* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 1989),

continued to be very small. This was not only because Romans preferred bloody spectacles and exciting chariot races, but also because those emperors who founded Greek games in Rome were often accused by the Senate and their political rivals of attempting to dilute centuries-old Roman values with Greek elements.[52] Still, emperors founded games in the eastern part of the empire, from which they derived many political benefits.[53] The games not only increased the emperors' popularity, as they fulfilled citizens' needs for spectacles and entertainment, but the festivals themselves were placed at the service of the imperial cult, which was itself a strong cohesive element in a vast empire with dozens of old and new cults.[54]

Moreover, the year 212 CE saw an event of great significance for the games and their political role as a cohesive force: the granting of Roman citizenship to all inhabitants of the empire. This facilitated the participation of all the great athletes of the Mediterranean at Olympia and in the other pan-Hellenic games. After this time, the victors included not only Greeks and Romans, but also Spaniards, North Africans, Galatians, and Armenians. Hereafter, the Olympic Games were invested with a new, very important value: ecumenism.[55] They also saw the rise of the political influence of the athletes: now organized in professional associations (guilds), the athletes exercised great influence on athletic affairs through their direct relations with the emperor.[56]

193-197.

52 For the form and role of games of the Greek type during the Roman period, see Jason König, *Athletics and literature in the Roman empire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005); Zahra Newby, *Greek Athletics in the Roman World: Victory and Virtue* (New York, Oxford University Press [USA], 2005); and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 274-276 and 329-333. Regarding the attitude of Romans toward Greek athletic competitions, see Crowther, 375-422; Pavlogiannis, *Εξέλιξη*, 208-218; and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 274-276.

53 M. Wörrle, *Stadt und Fest im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien: Studien zu einer agonistischen Stiftung aus Oinoanda* [*City and festival in imperial Asia Minor: Studies on an agonistic donation from Oinoanda*] (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1988); Evangelos Albanidis [Ευάγγελος Αλμπανίδης], *Άθληση στη Θράκη κατά τους ελληνιστικούς και ρωμαϊκούς χρόνους* [*Athletics in Thrace during the Hellenistic and Roman periods*], doctoral dissertation (Thessaloniki: Democritus University of Thrace, 1995); Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 337-338; and Evangelos Albanidis and Sotirios Giatsis, "Athletic games in Thrace during the imperial era," *Nikephoros* 20:1 (2007), 177-197.

54 Daniel P. Harmon, "The Religious Significance of Games in the Roman Age," in Wendy J. Raschke, *The Archaeology of the Olympics: The Olympics and Other Festivals in Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 236-255, and Stephen Mitchell, "Festivals, games and civic life in Roman Asia Minor," in the *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990), 183-193.

55 Scanlon, *Eros,* 41, and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 333-335.

56 H. W. Pleket, "Some aspects on the history of the athletic guilds," in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 10 (1973), 197-227, and Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 335-337.

Guilds proved to be important vehicles of imperial propaganda and an effective means of keeping the emperor's popularity high.[57]

Summing up, we have seen that the Olympic Games had a distinctly political character throughout their long history of about 1,200 years. Their political role was expressed in many forms that changed with the dramatic events that occurred during this long period, from the age of emerging city-states to that of empires. Initially, they served as the means to display the status of the first aristocratic clans and to strengthen community identity. Subsequently, they were used as weapons in interstate rivalry and to promote the interests of kings. Finally, they were used to help oversee and control the multicultural populations of vast empires. And so they continue.

57 Onoufrios Pavlogiannis and Evangelos Albanidis, "Τα Άκτια της Νικόπολης" ["The Aktion of Nicopolis"] in Konstantinos L. Zachos [Κωνσταντίνος Λ. Ζάχος], editor, *Νικόπολις Β': Πρακτικά του δευτέρου διεθνούς συμποσίου για τη Νικόπολη* [*Nicopolis II: Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on Nicopolis*] (Preveza: Aktia Nicopolis Foundation, 2007), 57-76, especially 63.

Chapter Ten

Swordsmanship and the Socialization of Violence in Early China

Mark Edward Lewis

One of the most notable features of competitive athletics is the origin of many of their most popular forms in combat, or, in the case of several modern sports, their subsequent emulation of combat (most notably in the case of American football, but potentially with any physical competition). This is well known in the case of ancient Greece. Apart from what Michael Poliakoff calls the "combat sports" (wrestling, *pankration*, stick-fighting, and boxing), there is a clear combat background to chariot racing, javelin-throwing, the discus, and even some forms of running (such as the *hoplitodromos*). It is even clearer in the case of Rome, where combat came to define the competitions of the arena.[1] Sharing a rhetoric of masculinity and mastery, victory and defeat, honor and shame, the activities of combat and those of athletics were inevitably linked together as two modes of an encompassing struggle for superiority. As Poliakoff has noted, in certain myths and rituals, victory in athletic competitions was the means of gaining kingship (or, as in the myth of Atalanta, of gaining the hand of an unattainable bride).[2] Certain scholars have even made the contrast between the violence of ancient athletics and the moderation (or "stylization") of that violence in modern competitions a feature of more general models of the

1 Michael B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence, and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). For illustrations of the *hoplitodromos*, see Stephen G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 33, 35, 36, and 40. On the roles of Roman combat sports, see Alison Futrell, *Blood in the Arena: The Spectacle of Roman Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); Paul Plass, *The Game of Death in Ancient Rome: Arena Sport and Political Suicide* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Carlin A. Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Thomas Wiedemann, *Emperors and gladiators* (London: Routledge, 1992).

2 Joseph Roisman, *The Rhetoric of Manhood: Masculinity in the Attic Orators* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), Chapters 3, 5, and 6. On tales of achieving kingship or political power through wrestling, see Poliakoff, 134-140.

evolution of civilization.[3] Despite the veneer of civil dominance in China, the same socialization of the skills of combat as modes of competition for honor and self-justification figured there from early times. Although marginalized in certain discourses, the later forms of these combat skills (known by the telling name of "martial arts," or *wushu*) remained major elements of both imperial Chinese social life and cultural imagination.

In this paper, I will examine the scattered evidence from the late Warring States and the Han dynasty on the existence of competitions in the use of the sword, and show how the theories of swordsmanship, as well as stories of early heroes who wielded them, provided a model in which the violence of the swordsman/assassin was assimilated into the social order, at least in part in the form of organized competition. The evidence will include theoretical accounts of the nature of swordsmanship, depictions of the use of the sword in Han tomb art (as well as the celebrated fourth-century BCE battle scene on the decoration band of a bronze vessel), stories of the casting and "physiognomizing" of swords, a few discussions of the actual competitions with the sword, and early mythicizing accounts of assassins and bravoes who wielded weapons in the service of rulers. Ultimately, this account will provide a prehistory to the figure of the *xia*, or "knight-errant," in later politics and literature, a figure that in many ways is the closest Chinese equivalent to the Western notion of the "hero."

The emergence of the sword as a major weapon of warfare was a key element in the rise of the mass infantry army and in the consequent development of the Warring State as a new form of polity. The sword was the classic "short" weapon that, in combination with the lance and bow, formed the standard set of multi-range weapons used in the squad of five men that constituted the basic tactical unit.[4] This principle of combining weapons with diverse ranges is articulated in the major early military texts, and also depicted in a fourth-century BCE vessel with the siege and water-combat scenes on its décor band. It is noteworthy that these major weapons all soon emerged as elements in sanctioned ritual competitions (archery) or as elements in semi-licit tests of martial skill that at least occasionally were also

3 See, for example, Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Sport et civilisation: La violence maîtrisée* (Paris, Fayard, 1994), originally published as *Quest for excitement: Sport and leisure in the civilizing process* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986). This chapter focuses on the theme of masculinity, combat, and sport touched on in the previous note.

4 Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990), Chapter 2. On the major technological innovations that underlay the rise of the infantry, including the sword, see 271, note 27. On the combination of weapons as a tactical principle, see 97-98 and 107-108.

drawn into competitions staged by rulers.

It is also significant that, as in the Greek case, whereas actual combat demanded the total subordination of the individual fighter to the formation (as in Tyrtaeus' poems calling on *hoplites* to hold the line), competitions demanded a mode of individual action that was not only forbidden in warfare, but would generally have been illegal in the civilian world. Thus, one of the major questions about combat sports is how or why individual fighting, which was condemned in the actual combat from which the sports and their weapons originated, was celebrated as the highest form of achievement. In the Greek case, which I will not discuss here, it was clearly linked to the mythic image of the hero as individual combatant in the epic and related literature, which underlay the transformation of the athletic competitor into mythic hero in the victory odes of Pindar. The Chinese case will be discussed below. However, before examining the evidence of swords as weapons cultivated in arts of competition, I will first briefly consider the evidence for their use in combat.

The earliest army swords recovered in archaeological excavations were made of bronze. Because the metal was easily broken, the swords were quite short, usually about thirty to fifty centimeters. For the same reason, they tended to be thick and, hence, heavy, usually about three to five kilograms. They had fairly small handles, with a large guard where the handle joined the blade. They had a pointed tip and highly curved cutting edges, which meant they were used largely for a straight, forward thrust or a short, sideways chop. Given how short they were, it seems that they could only be used when combatants were virtually grappling hand to hand. The aforementioned combat scene seems to depict these two basic motions and also the reliance

Bronze swords from the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770-221 BCE), with the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BCE) represented by the sword at bottom. Excavated in Wanping, Wujiang. Collection of the Wushu Museum, Shanghai Sport Institute.

on close physical grappling. Slashing with such swords remained impossible. The long iron swords capable of swinging and slashing only developed in the late Warring States period, so that the lance and the *ji* (a shortened halberd combining spear-point and hook) remained the infantry weapons of choice throughout the pre-imperial period.[5] These characteristics are also indicated in a passage in the late Warring States philosophical text, *Master Mo*:

> Because of savage beasts who harmed domestic animals, or violent men who harmed the people, the ancient sages taught the people to go about with weapons. They said, "Carry swords. If you thrust, then it penetrates, but if you strike then it breaks. If you strike with the side [of the blade] then it does not break. This is the benefit of the sword."[6]

The same features of the early sword are also indicated in its use as a metaphor for military formations in the text, *Sun Bin's Military Methods*, discovered in the Han tomb at Yinqueshan:

> Deployment in the Awl Formation should be like a sword. If the tip is not sharp, it will not penetrate; if the edge [of the blade] is not thin, it will not cut; if the foundation [the metal substance of the sword, elsewhere used to refer to reserve troops] is not thick, you cannot deploy the formation.[7]

In these early passages, the sword is characterized by brittleness, and it serves as the image of density—with a sharp point for stabbing and a sharpened edge for chopping at close quarters—but it is not yet a dueling weapon.

In Warring States archaeological excavations, notably those in the south such as some Chu tombs in Hunan, Chinese excavators have found the earliest iron swords. This early appearance in the south, and perhaps a southern origin, is not a surprise. According to the received historical record, it was the states in the southeast that first introduced mass infantry armies armed with spears and swords, and relied on such armies as the basis of their rise to political prominence. The region also seems to have been the site of the earliest iron casting, although this remains hotly disputed and, like such ar-

5 For English accounts of early Chinese swords, see Ralph Sawyer, translator, *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), 4, 8-10, 13, 202, and 371-372; and Ralph Sawyer, translator, *Sun Pin: Military Methods* (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 27, 46, and 67.

6 *Mozi jiangu* [*Annotation on Mozi*] in *Xin bian zhu zi ji cheng* [*Newly Edited Complete Collection of All the Masters*]. (Taipei: Shijie, 1974), Volume 6, 103.

7 Sawyer, *Sun Pin*, 162. A related image, in which the sword as invented by the Yellow Emperor is described as the intellectual model for military formations, is on 119.

guments, is liable to be transformed by the next tomb opened.[8] Indeed, the link of fine swords to Yue in the southeast was taken as axiomatic in the Han, to the point where they were treated as the highest "natural" products of the region, in the same way that jade was the finest product of the western mountains or pearls the supreme product of the rivers.[9] Unfortunately, given iron's tendency to rust, these swords are very badly preserved, while several contemporary bronze swords (such as that attributed to King Goujian) are among the most beautiful examples of the weapon ever made in China.

The iron swords are distinguished by several features. First, they are much longer, ranging from one to one and a half meters. However, given their greater flexibility, even such long swords do not easily break, unlike the earlier bronze examples. The blades of these iron swords were also both straighter and sharper, allowing for swinging and slashing. At the meeting-point of the blade and handle, there was a metal piece to protect the hand. Finally, the blades were much thinner and lighter, so they could be maneuvered with less expenditure of energy. Consequently, combatants using such swords could fight at a greater distance, thrust or slash, and engage in more complicated maneuvers involving parrying, whirling, and so on.

However, it is important to note that as swords grew longer, they also gradually ceased to be combat weapons. While they could still be used to fight, they were probably of little use for combat in which large masses of men in formation crashed against opponents who were similarly arrayed in ranks. Many scholars believe that they soon became largely ceremonial, and they do figure as insignia of rank, as in the figure of the commander of the terracotta army, in some Han tomb carvings, and in depictions of commanders from later periods. More importantly, as cavalry emerged as a key arm of warfare under the Western Han, the shorter, single-edged dagger (*dao*, a weapon that possibly originated among the Xiongnu barbarians to the north) became the preferred blade weapon. Thus, by the time of the empire's formation, and even more so in the Eastern Han, the sword was an increasingly archaic weapon used largely as a sign of office, a magical instrument (see below), or in dueling or individual combat. Its archaism may indeed have facilitated its conversion into an implement of sport, since it could mark a heroism that had the patina of antiquity, even as it became clearly

8 Don Wagner, *Iron and steel in ancient China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), Chapter 3, argued for an origin in the southeastern state of Wu, but this remains contested, with many critics positing an origin in the northwest.

9 *Xin xu jiao shi* [*Collated Explanations to the New Preface*](Beijing: Zhonghua, 2001), Chapter 1, 122-126: "Swords are produced in Yue, pearls in the Jiang or Han rivers, and jade in Mt. Kun [Kunlun, the *axis mundi* located in the far west]."

detached from the carnage—and the submersion of the individual fighter in a formation—that characterized actual combat.

Perhaps because the rise of the sword in stylized competitions was tied to its decline in actual combat, we have no texts dating from the Warring States period that describe its use. For such material, we must wait until the Han dynasty, which provides a couple of longer passages on swordsmanship, in addition to numerous brief references to the weapon itself. The earliest discussion of swordsmanship as a skill is the chapter, "Explaining Swords," from *Master Zhuang*. This could possibly be a late Warring States/Qin (late third century BCE) text, but is much more likely to date from the early Western Han (early second century BCE). Its listing of the parts of the sword echoes in places the account of manufacturing a sword contained in the "Record of an Examination of the Crafts" (*kao gong ji*).[10] This text was added to the *Rituals of Zhou* only in the Western Han, although one cannot say for certain that it originated only at that time, and the two accounts are sufficiently different that they could have arisen independently. It is also noteworthy that the *Master Zhuang* chapter appears in the "mixed (*za*) chapters" section of the text, which is generally regarded as the latest stratum.

This chapter tells how Zhuang Zhou, the eponymous philosopher of the text, goes to persuade King Wen of Zhao of the destructive impact of his obsession with watching staged sword combats. While the story is almost certainly fictional, it can be reasonably accepted as evidence that late Warring States rulers and, perhaps even more likely, the nobility of the early Western Han staged competitions in swordsmanship as a mode of entertainment. Otherwise, an extended critique would make little sense. It is worth noting that depictions in Han tomb art show several scenes of wearing swords while juggling or engaging in acrobatics, using swords in the act of juggling, actually juggling or throwing swords, and one or two cases of combats that could be staged competitions or depictions of actual historical scenes. These clearly show the use and manipulation of swords as a form of entertainment, and hint at the possibility of dueling in the same context. There are also, as noted earlier, scenes that echo the sculpture of the commander of the terracotta army, in which high officials clasp a sword in their two hands in front of them, apparently using the holding of swords as a sign of office. In short, fencing or dueling as a form of competition seems to have emerged at the same time that the sword itself was becoming a weapon used purely as, on

10 For the relevant passage of the "Kao gong ji," see *Zhou li zhu shu* [*Notes and Commentaries on the Rites of Zhou*], in *Shi san jing zhu shu* [*Notes and Commentaries on the Thirteen Classics*], Volume 3, Chapter 40, 13a-b.

the one hand, a token of authority and, on the other hand, a demonstration of skill. These demonstrations, as will be discussed later, sometimes took place in a military context, but not in actual combat. In this sense, they were not unlike the wearing of swords and the dueling among the officer corps of early modern European armies.[11]

As for the principles and practice of swordsmanship as a mode of competition, the *Master Zhuang* chapter and two extracts from the *Chronicle of Wu and Yue* (*Wu Yue chun qiu*, second century CE) compose the core of our documentation. The first begins by describing the king's passion for displays of swordsmanship, and how he gathered 3,000 retainers to engage in the competition. The collection of thousands of retainers by leading political figures is an attested historical fact, and the presence of swordsmen and other fighters among these retainers also figures in the histories.[12] Indeed, the figure of "3,000" retainers is standard in accounts of the celebrated "Four Princes" and other leading collectors of retainers, so the author of the *Master Zhuang* chapter clearly has these men in mind as models for the actions that he attributes to the king of Zhao. According to the chapter, more than a hundred people a year were killed in the contests staged by the king. Moreover, Zhuang Zhou introduces himself to the king as someone with a sword technique that allows him to kill anyone who comes within ten paces.[13] These statements suggest some form of blood sport similar to the Roman arena, although not so widespread or so central to the political order.

The account of swordsmanship in the chapter is brief, but provides evidence on a few key points. First, after describing his invincible, man-killing prowess to the king, Zhuang Zhou describes his art of swordsmanship as follows:

> One who wields the sword shows himself to his opponent where he is actually absent [*xu*] and motivates his opponent with the lure of gain. He sets out after his opponent but arrives before him.[14]

The manipulation of an opponent by persuading him that an empty [*xu*] spot is actually full, luring him through illusory profit, and the ability to set out

11 The best treatment remains V. G. Kiernan, *The duel in European history: Honour and the reign of aristocracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
12 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 73-80 and 89-90; also, Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), 83-86.
13 *Zhuangzi ji shi* [*Collected Explanations of the Master Zhuang*], in *Xin bian zhu zi ji cheng,* Volume 3, 439-441. For a translation of the chapter, see Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 104-107.
14 *Zhuangzi ji shi*, Chapter 30, 441.

after he does but arrive first (thereby inducing the opponent to reveal intent while one's own remains hidden), are all features of the military strategy first articulated in the *Master Sun* and developed in subsequent military treatises.[15] Indeed, the final phrase about setting out later but arriving first is a direct quotation. The importance of this equation of the art of fencing with the art of commanding is also central to the discussion of swordsmanship in the *Chronicle of Wu and Yue*, so I will discuss it in detail only after considering that text.

The balance of the *Master Zhuang* chapter is an account of swordsmanship, or, rather, an account of the use of violence in the political order couched as a discussion of swordsmanship. Zhuang Zhou divides swordsmanship into three kinds: that of the Son of Heaven, that of the feudal lords, and that of the commoners. He then explains each of these to King Wen:

> The sword of the Son of Heaven takes the Yan Valley at Shicheng [in the far northeast] as its tip, Mt. Tai in Qi [Shandong] as the sides of its blade, Jin and Wei [modern Shanxi and Hebei] as the spine of its blade, and Zhou and Song [Wei River valley and just south of the Yellow River] as its pommel, and Han and Wei as its hilt. He surrounds these with the four kinds of barbarian, and places the four seasons at their center. He rings these in turn with the oceans, belts them with the fixed mountains, regulates them with the Five Phases, and judges them with punishments and rewards [as calqued onto the seasons, *xing de*]. He opens them up with yin and yang, holds them with spring and summer, and sends them off with autumn and winter. As for this sword, when you thrust it there is nothing in front of it, raise it and there is nothing above it, press it down and there is nothing beneath it, spin it and there is nothing beside it. Above it cuts through the floating clouds, and below through the cords of the earth. Use this sword once and it will correct the feudal lords, and cause the whole world to submit.

Here, the ruler's "sword" is equivalent to all the states of north China, united along a line suggesting the shape of a sword, with the state of Zhao at the center. Its manipulation is equated with the structuring of time and space, laying out the directions as a frame and then moving according to the natural patterns of the four seasons and Five Phases. This transformation of the wielding of a weapon into a cosmic model provides a physical metaphor for the cosmological patterns for the use of violence that had emerged as a philosophical theme in Chinese writings on statecraft in this period.[16]

15 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 114-125.

16 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, Chapters 4, "Cosmic Violence," and 6, "The Natural Philosophy

The next type of swordsmanship in the chapter is that of the feudal lords:

> This [sword] takes cunning and brave men [*shi*, literally "men in service"] as its tip, pure and incorruptible men as the sides of its blade, worthy and good men as the spine of its blade, loyal and sagely men as its pommel, and bold and heroic men as its hilt….[Repeats the formulas about in front, above, etc.]….Above it imitates the round Heaven to bring the sun, moon, and stars into order. Below it imitates the square earth to bring the four seasons into order. In the middle it harmonizes the people's desires to bring peace to the four directions. Use this sword once and the world will shake like a clap of thunder. None within the four bounds will fail to submit.

This "sword" differs little from the preceding one. The major difference is that it consists not of places but of people, so that, rather than constituting a "map" of the Chinese empire, it forms a chart of social virtues. The shift from nature to society is also echoed in the introduction of the "people's desires" that form the classic triad with Heaven and Earth. In treating the sword as an image of massed humans, it elaborates the aforementioned metaphor from the *Sun Bin*, in which the sword provides an image for the manipulation of military formations. In this way, the figure of the commander lies hidden beneath those of the feudal lords, perhaps being suppressed because of the negative moral taint with which this figure had been stained.[17]

The last of the three types is the swordsmanship of the common people:

> With wild hair, tufts sticking out from the temples, caps dangling down tied with coarse strings, costumes hiked up in the back, eyes bulging, and scarcely able to speak, they strike out at whatever is in front of them. Above they cut through heads and necks, below they slash through livers and lungs. In this way the swordsmanship of the common people is no different from a cockfight. In one morning they are all slain, so they are no longer of use in state service. Now your majesty is in the position of the Son of Heaven, but loves the swordsmanship of the common people. I venture to suggest that this is not worthy of you.[18]

This last level is actual fencing or dueling, and here it stands as an image of brutish violence. With their uncontrolled hair (tied hair being a prerequisite

of Violence."

17 On the triad of warrior, commander, and ruler, and the questionable character of the middle figure, see Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, Chapters 3, 5, and 6.

18 *Zhuangzi ji shi,* Chapter 30, 441-442.

of adulthood and civilization), barbaric costumes (the compound translated as "coarse" includes the standard term for Northern barbarians), wild eyes, and absence of speech, the swordsmen are reduced to the level of savages, or even animals. As discussed in *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, this figure of the warrior as an animal that is incorporated into civilization only through the transformative power of the ruler was a standard motif in the philosophical texts of this period, so the *Master Zhuang* chapter is simply another example of that idea. Nonetheless, it does add to our understanding of the period with its indication that dueling was practiced as a form of competitive entertainment. Moreover, the phrases borrowed from military texts that Zhuang Zhou uses to describe his own swordsmanship, along with the veiled reference to the commander and his formations in the account of the sword of the feudal lords, together signal the equation of the true art of the swordsman with that of the strategist. In this way, the chapter, along with the passage from the *Chronicle of Wu and Yue* discussed below, became the *locus classicus* for discussions of martial-arts skills in the texts of the later traditions. Notably, the phrase, "no different than a cockfight," became a standard description of any incompetent performance in martial arts.

The *Chronicle of Wu and Yue* is a work of romanticized history that relates the protracted conflict between Wu and Yue for dominance in the southeast, and for hegemony in China. It also includes mythic material on the origins of the two states, as well as substantial rhetorical set pieces in the manner of the *Stratagems of the Warring States* (*Zhanguo ce*). While there was a text of this title composed by Zhao Ye in the Eastern Han, it was reworked in the fourth century CE and again in the early Tang. Much of the material in the existing version derives from earlier works such as *Zuo zhuan*, *Guo yu*, *Shi ji*, and the *Yue jue shu*. It is difficult to judge to what degree it had from the beginning been such a highly derivative work, and how much of this earlier material had been added on by later editor-compilers in the sort of imaginative reconstructions that were often used to flesh out texts that had survived only as fragments. Nevertheless, I will tentatively treat the material on swordsmanship as late Han or shortly post-Han.[19]

Like the *Master Zhuang* chapter, the discussion of swordsmanship in the *Chronicle* takes the form of a parable. The king of Yue, Goujian, schemes to avenge an early defeat suffered at the hands of Wu. His celebrated adviser, Fan Li, says that he has heard of a "maiden" (*chu nü*) who has emerged from

19 See John Lagerwey, "*Wu Yüeh ch'un ch'iu*," in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographic Guide* (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), 473-476. On the Eastern Han author of the original, see *Hou Han shu* [*Book of the Later Han*], compiled by Fan Ye (398-445 CE) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965)CE, 2575.

the "southern forests" and is reputed to be skillful at combat. The king sends for this woman, who is a classic Daoist figure both in her dwelling-place in the wilds and in her role as a woman who will reveal military arts to a ruler.[20]

> On the road she encountered an old man, who called himself Master Yuan. He said to the maiden, "I have heard you are skilled with a sword. I would like for you to show me." She replied, "I would not dare to keep anything hidden. Test me." Then Master Yuan climbed up on the *linyu* bamboo. The end of the branch was dry, so it broke off and fell to the ground. The maiden immediately grabbed the broken-off end. Master Yuan tore up the root and thrust at the maiden. The maiden immediately parried, and after three parries she raised her branch and struck Master Yuan. Master Yuan then soared up into a tree and changed into a white gibbon [the man's name was homophonous with the character for "gibbon"]. The maiden then departed to have her audience with the king of Yue.
>
> The king of Yue asked, "What is the way of swordsmanship?" The maiden replied, "I was born in the deep forest, and grew up in a wilderness where no people lived. I had no way to study, and no contact with the feudal lords. I managed to get hold of the method of skillful striking, and recited it without ceasing. I did not receive it from any human, but suddenly I spontaneously possessed it." The king asked, "What is it like?" The woman said, "Its Way is subtle and changing; its meaning is hidden and deep. Its Way has a main gate and lesser doors, and also has yin and yang. Open the main gate and close the lesser doors; the yin wanes and the yang waxes. In all ways of hand-to-hand combat, the inside is full [*shi*, opposite of *xu*] of spirit energies, but on the outside you show only a vapid ease. When you look at the person, he/she resembles a beautiful woman, but try to seize him/her and he/she is like a startled tiger. Position the body to await the moment of energetic inspiration, then move with the spirits. Keep it dark, like the [hidden] sun; be quick like a leaping rabbit. Pursuing the body and chasing the shadow, brilliant like what vaguely seems [but is not]; breathing in and out, advancing and retreating with no imposed rhythm. Now horizontal, now vertical, going against, then in accord; achieving inaudibility. With this Way, one person can match a hundred, and a hundred match ten thousand. If you desire to test it, its efficacy will immediately be seen."
>
> The king of Yue was delighted, and immediately gave the woman the title of "Woman of Yue." He ordered the army's squad leaders and those with

20 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 99-103.

> great talent to master her method and teach it to the soldiers. At this time everyone praised the Way of the sword of the Woman of Yue.[21]

This passage, which is full of obscure phrases, could be the subject of a paper in its own right. It has been largely ignored by conventional scholars, but has received constant attention and considerable elaboration in the texts of the martial-arts traditions, where both the "Woman of Yue" and "Master White Gibbon" have become the eponyms of fencing styles. However, these commentaries depend on later fencing practices and principles to explain the text. They make it intelligible, but only at the cost of removing it from its own period. Here, I will focus on a few key points that seem relatively clear in the text and shed light on competitive swordsmanship in the early imperial period.

First, the title, "Woman of Yue," is noteworthy. As stated earlier, infantry armies using swords in a significant manner originated in the southeastern states of Wu and Yue. Moreover, the finest examples of archaeologically recovered swords from the period also come from that region. Also of significance, the story of the two exemplary mythic swords, Ganjiang and Moye, which also appears in the *Chronicle of Wu and Yue* and the closely related *Book of the Destruction of Yue* (*Yue jue shu*), relates how they were cast for the king of Wu.[22] Thus, the linking of this fencing tradition to Yue is significant. As noted earlier, the fact that this art of fencing is attributed to a woman derives from a Daoist tradition in which spirit women reveal the arts of combat to men. It might also be related to the emerging idea of the "woman warrior" that became so significant in later Chinese culture. Certainly, the statement that the ideal fencer will have the appearance of a "beautiful woman" points in that direction.

Second, it is important to note that whatever the date of this passage, the "Woman of Yue" as eponym for a school of fencing that was reputed to be invincible is clearly attested in the first century CE. In the chapter, "Specialization and Universal [Wisdom]," in the *Lun heng*, Wang Chong notes:

> Those who are masters of the art of the sword, or who have stratagems that will inevitably triumph in battle, are those who have studied [the Ways of] Qu Cheng [the Han general Chong Da] and the Woman of Yue. When two

21 *Wu Yue chun qiu jiao zhu* [*Collated Commentary to the Chronicle of Wu and Yue*] (Changsha: Yueli shu she, 2006), 242.

22 *Wu Yue chun qiu jiao zhu*, 58-59. For a translation of the story that situates it within a broader context, see Mark Edward Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), 114 and, more broadly, 110-116.

> opponents meet, one skillful and the other clumsy, then the one who will inevitably triumph is the skilled master. The heritage of Confucius and Master Mo are the books of the worthies and sages; they have much greater merit than the arts of Qu Cheng and the Woman of Yue. Conduct that perfects people and knowledge that benefits people are much better than stratagems that guarantee victory in battle. Thus the art of skillful swordsmanship has a reputation of guaranteeing victory, but the books of the worthies and sages have a fame that must be revered.[23]

Here Wang Chong notes the existence of a highly prestigious tradition of swordsmanship (swordswomanship?) identified with the Woman of Yue. Indeed, the framing of his argument suggests that he believes that fencing had much greater prestige than scholarship and that the Woman of Yue was thus more esteemed than Confucius or Master Mo. This testifies both to the importance of fencing in the period and to the widespread familiarity of the tradition that was discussed in the *Chronicle of Wu and Yue* (although we cannot guarantee that the story told there, and the philosophy expounded, was known to Wang Chong and his contemporaries).

The prestige of fencing suggested by Wang Chong is also indicated by the fact that leading poets and writers throughout the period, for whom we have better documentation, devoted considerable energy or time to it. The earliest case was the great Western Han poet Sima Xiangru, who studied the art of the sword in his youth and continued to aspire to a political role rather than that of a mere poet.[24] More important were the brothers Cao Zhi and Cao Pei, who were both leading poets at the end of the Han, as well as devotees of swordsmanship and other martial arts. Cao Pei, later the first emperor of the Wei dynasty (founded in 220), also wrote an account of swordsmanship in the postface to his *Classic Judgments* (*Dian lun*), which I will discuss below.

A third feature of the account of the Woman of Yue, also indicated by Wang Chong and the *Master Zhuang*, is the interchangeability—or extremely close linkage—of the art of the sword with that of generalship. "Invincible stratagems" and "invincible swordsmanship" are scarcely distinguished in Wang Chong's exposition; the links in the *Master Zhuang* chapter between the arts of the commander and that of the sword were discussed above. Before analyzing the significance of this linkage, it is interesting to note in passing that it is also a recurring theme in other texts, but usually with the sense

23 Wang Chong, *Lun heng ji jie* [*Collected Explanations of the Balanced Discourses*], annotated by Liu Pansui (Beijing: Guji, 1957), Chapter 13, 275.

24 Burton Watson, translator, *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Translated from the Shi chi of Ssu-ma Ch'ien* (New York: Columbia University, 1961), Volume 2, 297.

that the art of the sword is inferior to that of generalship. Thus, the Warring States military treatise, *Master Wei Liao*, relates the following anecdote:

> Wu Qi was about to do battle, and his advisers presented him a sword [perhaps in the manner of the commander of the terracotta army]. He said, "The commander only controls the banners and drums [to signal]. In the face of difficulties, he resolves all doubts. To command the troops and direct *their* blades, this is the role of the commander. To wield a single sword is not his role."[25]

In a similar vein, the Western Han history, *Shi ji*, recounts an anecdote in which the young Xiang Yu, later arch-rival of the Han founder, rejects the suggestion that he should study swordsmanship:

> "Swordsmanship is useful only for attacking a single enemy and is likewise not worth studying. What I want to learn is the art of attacking ten thousand enemies." With this, Xiang Liang [his uncle] began to teach his nephew the military treatises. Xiang Yu was delighted, and roughly mastered their sense.[26]

The story seems to be ironic, since Xiang Yu failed as a strategist but became the greatest individual fighter of his time. Finally, while the biography of Han Xin in the same text relates that he used to parade through the market wearing a large sword as a youth, it makes no mention of the weapon after he grows up and becomes the leading general of the Han founder.

Thus, there seem to be two discreet discourses on the relationship between swordsmanship and military command. On the one hand, the texts cited above treat the sword as the weapon of the common soldier, in which case it stands for a common, physical violence that must be transformed through the regulations of the army and the commanding mind of the general.[27] In this discourse, the sword stands for the common soldier. On the other hand, there is a distinct tradition embodied in passages from the *Master Zhuang* chapter, the account of the Woman of Yue, and a few other texts. This tradition, specifically devoted to the art of fencing, treats swordsmanship as a mental art, if not a cosmological one, in which the fencer relies not on physical strength but on a near-divine acuity and powers of transformation/deception. The rhetoric of this second tradition derives directly from the military treatises, above all the *Master Sun*, in which the commander's

25 Sawyer, *Seven Military Classics*, 257. The translation has been modified.
26 Watson, *Grand Historian*, Volume 1, 37, translation modified.
27 This is the central theme of Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, Chapter 3.

powers of perception, reversal, and transformation guarantee victory, ideally without any violent clash of arms.

This model runs throughout the account of swordsmanship by the Woman of Yue. First, the opening description—with its references to subtlety, the hidden, the changing, and the possession of *yin* and *yang*—situates the art of fencing within a cosmological framework, just as in the model of generalship in the military treatises. The play of reversal, and the inversion of the seeming and the actual—which are central to the *Master Sun*'s theory of command—also dictate the structure of the Woman of Yue's account of fencing. With an exterior that appears languid and at ease, like a beautiful woman, while the inside is charged with potent energies and alertness, the fencer remains still or unmoving while waiting for the precise moment of inspiration (literally "looking out for the *qi* energy," *hou qi*) to spring into action. Both this theme of waiting for the moment and the comparison of the subsequent movement to that of spirits also directly derive from the military treatises. The theme of inversion likewise runs through the obscure phrases that literally enjoin the fencer to "keep it dark, like the sun" (*yao zhi ru ri* 杳之若日) and to be "brilliant like what vaguely seems" [or "what is vague/murky"] (*guang ru fo fang* 光如佛仿). Similarly, the theme of transformation and mutability is elaborated in the passage beginning with the shift from horizontal to vertical and ending with the state of inaudibility, which is also borrowed from the *Master Sun*.

This assimilation of the fencer into the strategist carries several meanings. First, it separates the swordsman from the mere soldier or man of physical violence. This is not without historical significance, for, as we have noted, the sword was already in decline as a combat weapon by the beginning of the imperial period. Fencing was practiced both as a mode of entertainment and as a form of self-cultivation among the elite, but it was no longer a mode of actual combat. Second, as we have seen in art from the period and down through later imperial history, the sword had become a symbol of the commander's power, so that the link of swordsman with strategist also represented an institutional fact in the army. Third, to the extent that the art of the fencer was above all a matter of mind and spirit (in several senses), it was open equally to men and women. Here again, the gender of the Woman of Yue comes to the fore, and it also echoes the story preserved in the *Shi ji* in which Master Sun's art of generalship converts the women of the king's harem into an army. The theme of the woman warrior, in many cases the woman wielding a sword, became a major element in later Chinese fiction and myth, and—through the books of Maxine Hong Kingston, the Disney

movie, *Mulan*, as well as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and similar martial-arts movies—has become prominent in Western popular culture. Finally, as noted earlier, the art of generalship in the form of cunning and deception was a target of moral condemnation in some philosophical traditions, so this socialization of fencing through the model of the general also entailed that the art of the sword might remain morally questionable to many people. We have already seen this in the case of Wang Chong.

However, the transformation of swordsmanship into a mental art grounded in cosmological principle did not end with the assimilation of the fencer by the commander, as is demonstrated by a related discussion of fencing preserved in Liu Xiang's late Western Han anthology of anecdotes and persuasions, *Garden of Persuasions* (*Shui yuan*). This passage elaborates a model of the swordsmanship rooted in imitation of the cosmos, but adapted to a moralizing, Confucian argument. While identifying swordsmanship with military command, it ultimately adapts the skillful use of the sword to a model for the benevolent rule of sage-kings:

> As for the swordsmanship of Duke Shi of Lu, if provoked he reacted, if pressed he moved, formless and inexhaustible, changing with no fixed form, stretching and bending along with things, like a shadow or an echo [this entire passage quotes an account of the cosmic Way from the first chapter of the *Master of Huainan*], like a dragon guarding the gate, the wheel following the horse, the echo answering a noise, or the shadow resembling the form…. The Way of using troops is like this. One who is skilled in confronting an opponent crashes through his lines before the formations have begun to take shape. He bows and yields above the hall, bestowing blessings on the millions of common people. Thus when in place he does not move, and when at war he does not bloody his blades. Isn't this the warfare of Kings Tang and Wu?[28]

This passage replays the three stages of violence traced in *Sanctioned Violence*, moving from the physical combat of the warrior (in this case, the fencer or swordsman), to the mental skills of the general patterned on the spontaneous reversals of the cosmic Way, to the encompassing cosmic/moral Way of the benevolent sage-king. It thus borrows from the discourse on fencing exemplified by the chapter from the *Master Zhuang* and the account of

28 *Shui yuan jiao zheng*, [*Collated and Corrected Garden of Persuasions*] (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987), Chapter 15, 374-375. For a translation of the quoted passage from the *Master of Huainan*, see D. C. Lau and Roger Ames, translators, *Yuan Dao: Tracing the Dao to its Source* (New York: Ballantine, 1998), 115.

the Woman of Yue, but ultimately anticipates Wang Chong in seeking to encompass such skills within a broader, moral system embodied by the sages.

This rethinking of swordsmanship as a pattern for kingship also entailed the transformation of the sword into a substitute human, a microcosm, and a moral being. The first two points are demonstrated in the story preserved in the *Chronicle of Wu and Yue* of the casting of the archetypal swords Ganjiang and Moye. As described in *The Flood Myths of Early China*, this story dramatizes the fact that the two swords are literally the transformed bodies of the smith Ganjiang and his wife, who toss their hair and nails into the furnace to allow the metal to melt. At the same time, the swords are also the embodiment of the sexual union of Heaven and Earth, and of the fusion of both the essences of the Five Metals that correspond to the Five Phases (time) and of the four directions and the center (space).[29] This notion of the sword as a substitute body also figures in the later Daoist practice of "escape by means of a simulated corpse," in which the sword (or some other privileged object such as clothing) serves as a substitute corpse to be buried while the actual transformed human ascends as an immortal.[30]

The idea of the sword as potentially a moral being that can be matched with the ideal ruler is elaborated in another anecdote preserved in the *Chronicle of Wu and Yue*:

> King Zhao of Chu awoke and found that the king of Wu's sword Zhanlu was at his bedside. He did not know why this had happened, so he called Master Fenghu [Wind-lake] and asked him….Master Fenghu said, "I have heard that King Yuanchang of Wu had Master Ouye [Smithing/casting, mythical master of the equally mythical sword-caster Ganjiang] cast five swords." He showed the sword to Xue Zhu who said, "The sword Yuchang goes against all principle and is disobedient; it cannot be worn. Ministers use it to kill their rulers, and sons their fathers. Thus King Helü [of Wu] used it to kill King Liao. The second sword is named Panying, also known as Haocao. It is a lawless monster, of no benefit to people. Therefore one uses it to escort the dead. The third is named Zhanlu. It is the efflorescence of the Five Metals [see the account above of the casting of Ganjiang], the refined energy of Supreme Yang [the sun]. Remarkable energies are lodged in its spirit powers. Who-

29 Lewis, *Flood Myths*, 114-115. On the sexual union of Heaven and Earth as the origins of both the world and the human body, see Lewis, *Construction of Space*, 42-46.

30 On this practice, see Robert Ford Campany, "Living off the Books: Fifty Ways to Dodge *Ming* in Early Medieval China," in *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture*, edited by Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2005), esp. 134-136 and 138.

> ever draws it from the scabbard will have marvelous energies, and whoever wears it will be awesome. It smashes and repels enemies. But if a ruler has any schemes which go against moral principles, this sword will immediately depart. Thus it departs those who lack the Way to go to those who possess it. Now King Helü lacks the Way. He has killed his ruler and schemes to invade Chu. Thus Zhanlu has come to Chu."[31]

This vision of magical swords as microcosms that were the companions and moral doubles of the virtuous ruler also underlay the *Record of Knives and Swords from Ancient Times to the Present Day* (*Gu jin dao jian lu*) compiled in the first half of the sixth century by the Daoist master, Tao Hongjing (456-536). This work, which now survives only in fragments, listed the swords cast for great rulers from the Xia Dynasty down to the time of his own ruler, Emperor Wu of the Liang. The same Tao Hongjing also cast thirteen swords for Emperor Wu, each inscribed with auspicious formulas and the names of immortals or jade maidens.[32]

While the passages above have shown something of how swordsmanship and swords were understood, they tell us little about the actual practice or techniques of fencing in Han society. In fact, we have few data on these questions, but the aforementioned discussion of swordsmanship by Cao Pei provides some insights. Earlier in the same account, he recounts the chaos of the times and how, consequently, he began to study military matters from the age of four, learning first to shoot a bow, then to ride a horse, and, by the age of seven, to shoot from horseback. At that time, he already accompanied his father on campaigns. He then tells of his study of the sword:

> When young I studied fighting with the sword, and there were many masters. Each region [literally "direction"] had its own characteristic methods, but only those of the capital were truly excellent. In the time of Emperors Huan and Ling of the Han [146-189 CE], the "Fighting Tiger" imperial guard Wang Yue was praised throughout the capital for being outstanding in this art. The scribe from Henan, A Yan, always accompanied Yue, and so completely learned his art. I then studied it intensively with A until I was thoroughly familiar with it.[33]

31 *Wu Yue chun qiu jiao zhu*, 75.

32 A good collection of the fragments, all from Chapter 343 of the *Taiping yu lan* [*Collection for Imperial Inspection from the Taiping Reign Period, 976-984*], is published as *Gu jin dao jian lu* [*Record of Swords through History*], in *Han Wei congshu* [*Collected Texts of the Han and Wei Dynasties*](Taipei: Xinxing, 1977], Volume 2, 1644-1649. One of the swords bore the image of Chi You, the mythical inventor of weapons. See *Taiping yu lan*, Chapter 343, 9a.

33 Cao Pei, "Dian lun zi xu" ["Postface to the *Authoritative Discourses*"], in *Wei Jin quan shu*

This passage contains precious information about fencing in the Han. First, the existence of numerous regional traditions, patronized by leading members of the military and nobility, shows that fencing was widespread and prestigious. Second, it shows the existence of specialist teachers and teacher-disciple transmissions forming virtual lineages. Third, it indicates a large appreciative audience in the capital, and presumably elsewhere, which evaluated the relative skills of combatants and followed their fencing careers. Fourth, it shows that the art was cultivated among the military elite of the period. Although no longer used in actual combat, it still served as a token of martial excellence. Fifth, it shows that even the highest nobility in the realm might have devoted tremendous amounts of time and energy in seeking out fencing teachers and mastering their arts. Admittedly, this deals with a time, and social background, when military arts inevitably came to the fore, but the traditions certainly did not emerge only at that time, as is demonstrated in the passage by Wang Chong.

Cao Pei's account goes on to describe a banquet at which he engages in a mock bout with General Deng Zhan, using sugar canes as swords. This describes Deng Zhan as "skilled with his arms and hands, having mastery of the five weapons, and able with bare hands to confront the naked blades [of his opponents]." This is the earliest such reference to what would become a classic attribute of martial artists. The anecdote also describes how Cao Pei and Deng Zhan fought three bouts, each concluding when Cao Pei scored a touch. This provides information on the conduct of the matches, and also indicates that social or political ranks were not left aside when one entered "the arena." It also describes in detail a final bout:

> "I [Cao Pei] knew that he wanted to burst forward to score a hit, so I feigned making a deep advance. He resolutely sought to advance, but I suddenly peddled backward and again slashed him on the forehead. The onlookers gazed in amazement."

The passage concludes with jocular remarks on the need of the general to give up "old techniques" in order to receive "secret methods" and capture the "essential Way." This account again focuses on the role of deceit and reversal, thus making fencing a mental art closely linked to that of military command. This link is strengthened by the final reference to the revelation and transmission of the art of fencing as a form of esoteric wisdom.

One final, key point regarding the role of swordsmanship in Han China is its links to the *you xia* and to the closely related figures of the assassins.

(Jilin: Jilin Wenshi Chubanshe, 2006), Volume 1, 108.

The *you xia* were wandering fighters who in the Warring States period made up a major element of those who moved from state to state seeking service with rulers or high nobles. However, unlike the scholars who sought service through text-based expertise, the *xia* sought service through military skill.[34] While not all of these men were associated with the use of swords, it is noteworthy that if one substituted the signific for "metal" for that meaning "person" in the character *xia* (俠), the resulting character meant sword. Similarly, if one simply dropped the "person" signific, it indicated sword handle. On the basis of this graphic evidence and the nature of the men, Miyazaki Ichisada has suggested that the term originally meant "swordsman." In the late Warring States and the rebellion against Qin, such figures played a major political role, and several key followers of the Han founder conducted themselves in a manner no different from the *xia*.

Whatever the original meaning of the word had been, by Han times, it had come to refer to violent men who lived outside the legal order. The more enlightened of them lived by an ethic of avenging wrongs (which in the period was often morally sanctioned, being enjoined even in the Confucian classics), absolute faithfulness to oaths, and mutual devotion to the death. Others were effectively little more than organized criminals or gangsters. Hostile texts portray them as bandits, kidnappers, and grave robbers, but they also served as hired assassins for wealthy families and officials, that is, men who provided violent services that were essential to the elite but could not be overtly acknowledged. They even formed large associations of professional killers, who worked alternately against or in league with local officials. Finally, it is noteworthy that many of the brutal specialists in law and punishments employed by Emperor Wu to keep powerful local families in check were recruited from the ranks of the *xia* swordsmen, or sought allies among the *xia* to assist in their work. Thus, these men were leading participants in the social and political realms, but at the same time marginal figures who constituted a criminal underworld. This mixed or marginal character of the *xia* extended to the art of swordsmanship.[35]

34 There is an extensive literature on these figures. For a listing of the major works, see Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 278, note 113. There is a further elaboration in Lewis, *Construction of Space*, 161 and 164-165. The pairing of the martial *xia* and scholars was made in the late Warring States philosophical text, *Han Feizi*. See *Han Feizi jishi* [*Collected Explanations of the Master Han Fei*] (Shanghai: Renmin, 1974), 1057, 1058, 1091, and 1095 (2).

35 The *xia* and the closely related assassins each received a collective biographical chapter in the first great history of imperial China, the *Shi ji* [*Records of the Grand Historian*]. See Watson, *Grand Historian*, Volume 2, 452-461, for a translation of the chapter on *xia*. See also Burton Watson, translator, *Courtier and Commoner in Ancient China* (New York: Columbia University, 1974), 222-246, for a translation of the chapter on the *xia* from the *Han shu* [*Book*

While the links between the art of fencing in the Han dynasty and the *xia* remain implicit, and no Han texts insist that the *xia* as individuals or as a group were defined by their skill with the sword, the category of *xia* developed into a major literary type in subsequent centuries: the heroic man or woman who, as a master of the martial arts, defended the weak from criminals and corrupt officials. This transformation of the swordsman into a literary archetype had already begun in the Warring States period, as indicated in the *Shi ji* chapter on celebrated assassins. The climactic story in the chapter tells of Jing Ke, who attempted to assassinate the Qin king who later became the First Emperor. The story begins by noting that he loved to "read books and fight with the sword," already embodying the literary turn of swordsmanship. The first anecdote in the story also depicts him "discussing swordsmanship" with another man, indicating that it had already become a topic of theory and study in the late Warring States. Jing Ke is stirred to action by accounts of even earlier assassins, and stages his departure with appropriate music and song. Ultimately, he fails because he patterns his conduct at the crucial moment on an earlier hero (who provides the first story in the *Shi ji* chapter). Thus, the martial arts—above all, swordsmanship—the *xia*, and literature were already intertwined by the beginning of the imperial period.[36]

At the end of the Han, the actual *xia* and their romantic, literary version again coincided in the lives and works of people such as the aforementioned Cao Zhi, who was himself a man skilled in the martial arts but who also loved to depict heroic figures in his poems.[37] These literary *xia* become central figures in poetry, fiction, and theater, and they have become the model for the heroes of contemporary martial-arts movies and fiction. In this context, the term is often translated as "knight-errant," as in the book on the literary *xia* by James J. Y. Liu.[38] These were not only major character types in several literary genres, but served as models for emulation both by writers (such as the Tang poet Li Bo) and political figures (several of the lead-

of Han]. For a study of one of the tales of assassins, see Stephen Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995), Chapter 5. For a translation of the same tale, see Owen, *Chinese Literature*, 152-154. See also 145-152 for another tale linking leading politicians and men of violence. On *xia* and men of violence who are employed by the Han state to suppress local powers, see Watson, *Grand Historian*, Volume 2, 424, 429, 437, 440, 443, and 445; and Watson, *Courtier and Commoner*, 227, 236, 241, 243, and 245.

36 Watson, *Grand Historian*, 167-176.

37 See the discussion in Robert Joe Cutter, "Cao Zhi (192-232) and His Poetry" (doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1983), 354-375.

38 James J. Y. Liu, *The Chinese knight-errant* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

ing political actors of the tenth century, between the fall of the Tang and the establishment of the Song, are described as self-consciously patterning themselves on literary *xia*). Thus, just as the later Chinese martial-arts traditions, particularly those related to the use of the sword, can be traced back to the Han, so can the literary forms in which the exponents of such traditions became the models for a Chinese heroism not totally unlike that of the West. To return to the theme from which this paper started, I would conclude that, as a result of the close ties of early physical competitions to the arts of warfare, both the Greco-Roman and Chinese modes of competition—and the models of heroism to which they were tied—were inextricably linked to the models of the nature and role of warfare that characterized the two societies. In the Mediterranean world, most forms of athletic competition translated the skills of the *hoplite* or legionnaire, while the modes of weapons-based physical competition that emerged from the military world in China were patterned on the skills of the commander, and marked by both the questionable moral character of that military role and the "social bandit" reputation of the circles in which the martial arts were cultivated and transmitted.

Conclusion

The ancient Chinese, like the Greeks, derived forms of competition and mastery from the skills necessary for victory in battle (or from those that had been essential in earlier periods). These skills became stylized physical arts that were cultivated in master-disciple transmissions and theorized in texts. However, whereas Greek combat skills/sports focused on physical powers (stronger, faster, higher) and the spectacle of the naked, muscled body, the Chinese assimilated their martial arts not into the muscular valor of the warrior but into the commander's cunning, which was in turn based on the cosmic patterns of flux and reversal. The same emphasis on cunning, reversal, and dissimulation also facilitated the Chinese location of these martial skills in a shadowy underworld that sometimes paralleled and sometimes inverted normal society, in contrast to the public and institutional nature of physical competitions in Greece.[39] This Chinese focus on a potentially deviant "cunning wisdom," in contrast to the ideal and public body celebrated in Greek athletics, also allowed the Chinese to theorize and celebrate in lit-

39 The cultural significance of the naked body in Greek athletics—and its links to gender and the erotic—is analyzed at length in Thomas F. Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). The cultural distinctiveness of the Greek emphasis on musculature—and the later forms of this in Western culture—is discussed in Shigehisa Kuriyama, *The Expressiveness of the Body* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), Chapter 5.

erature, and to cultivate in practice, the possibilities of female mastery of the combat arts. Thus, we can see how divergent theories of the nature of combat, of the definitive skills that defined the warrior, of the crucial characteristics of the body, and of the social place of athletic competition, all came together to form a system of linked divergences between the two cultures. These divergences, in turn, expressed themselves in two distinct visions of the martial hero, both of which informed the later literary and athletic traditions of the respective cultures.

Chapter Eleven

Revisiting the Ancient Olympics: Perspectives and History

Donald G. Kyle

The memorable opening ceremonies of the 2004 Athens Olympics included a procession of floats with images and living statues evoking the glories and games of ancient Greece and attesting to the importance of the classical legacy for modern Greek identity. The ceremonies in Beijing in 2008 also used images and physical performance to evoke and connect past and present Chinese culture and sport. Such cultural spectacles have artistic license, but this volume encourages critical scholarship on ancient Greek and Chinese sport and humanism.

Sport is a universally human but culturally varied activity that is adapted to different areas and eras. Aggression is hard-wired into human nature, but the structures and institutions accommodating, sublimating, or utilizing that instinctual drive are influenced by local conditions and traditions. Also, sport is a dynamic phenomenon in a historical relationship with changing social, economic, cultural, and other dimensions of human experience. Thus, the forms of sport of any group should be recognized and respected as insights into that people's history and cultural distinctiveness.

Sport in ancient Greece or China was not changeless and static, not frozen in isolation like a statue in a museum. Arising from modest origins in a segmented land, the ancient Olympics adapted to changing participation, patronage, and politicization from an age of emerging city-states to the age of empires.[1] The games of around 700 BCE, with minimal facilities, a limited

1 Recent works on ancient sport (with abbreviations) include my *Sport and spectacle in the ancient world* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, hereafter *SSAW*); Stephen G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, *AGA*); Nigel B. Crowther, *Athletika: Studies on the Olympic Games and Greek athletics,* Nikephoros Beihefte Band 11 (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 2004, *Athletika*); Nigel B. Crowther, *Sport in Ancient Times* (Westport: Praeger, 2007, *SAT*); Panos Valavanis, *Games and Sanctuaries in Ancient Greece: Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, Nemea, Athens,* translated by David Hardy (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004); Ulrich Sinn, *Olympia: Cult, Sport and Ancient Festival,* translated by Thomas Thornton (Princeton: Markus

program without equestrian events, few rivals, and competitors mostly from nearby states, were very different from those of around 200 CE, with elaborate athletic and religious facilities, an expanded program, numerous other pan-Hellenic crown games, and competitors from a broad Mediterranean world. Ancient China was a land of patterns and variations from villages to empires, with diverse regions and cultures that ranged from sedentary farmers to nomadic warriors, with a breadth of activities relating to ritual, military training, exercise, performance, and spectator sport, from wrestling, archery, and dragon-boat racing to martial arts, an early form of soccer or kickball, and polo.[2] To avoid reductionism, however, we should clarify the historical periods in Olympia or China to which we are referring, and what the ancient sources and our modern assumptions are. We should consider contexts as well as contests.

Perspectives and representations

Scholars and the media should not view the ancient Olympics backwards through the prism of the modern Olympics. The ancient games inspired the modern Olympics, but that does not mean that the modern games are, could be, or should be an exact replication of the ancient ones. The ancient and

Wiener, 2000); Judith Swaddling, *The ancient Olympic Games*, third revised edition (London: British Museum Press); Mark Golden, *Sport and society in ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Mark Golden, *Sport in the ancient world from A to Z* (London: Routledge, 2004); Michael B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); David J. Phillips and David Pritchard, editors, *Sport and festival in the ancient Greek world* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2003, *SFAGW)*; Thomas F. Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press [USA], 2002); Maria A. Kaïla *et al*., editors, *The Olympic Games in antiquity: "Bring forth rain and bear fruit"* (Athens: Atrapos, 2004); Zahra Newby, *Athletics in the ancient world* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2006). Important new works on athletics and Rome include Jason König, *Athletics and literature in the Roman empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and Zahra Newby, *Greek athletics in the Roman world: Victory and virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Further on Olympia, see Jason König, "Olympics for the twenty-first century," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 125 (2005), 149-153, a review article of six recent works, including David C. Young, *A brief history of the Olympic Games* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), and Nigel Spivey, *The ancient Olympics: A history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Gerald P. Schaus and Stephen R. Wenn, editors, *Onward to the Olympics: Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University, 2007), includes useful articles such as Nigel B. Crowther, "The Ancient Olympic Games through the Centuries," 3-13 (= *Athletika* 1.1, 1-10), and "The Ancient Olympics and their Ideals," 69-80 (= *Athletika* 1.2, 11-22).

2 Crowther, *SAT*, 1-9, and Allen Guttmann, *Sports: The First Five Millennia* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 39-43, survey sport in ancient China. See the essays by Ren Hai, Nathan Sivin, and others in this volume.

modern Olympics share a name, a few events, a four-year cycle, a ritual procession and oath, and the idea of high-level, peaceful competition, but the ancient games were always held at Olympia and never in the winter. They had no women's events, no water sports, no ball sports, no teams, no medals, and no marathon or decathlon. As Paul Cartledge comments, the ancient Olympics "…were desperately alien to what we understand by competitive sports today."[3]

Our Olympics were not that "authentic"— true to ancient times and ideals—even in 1896, when organized at Athens by Pierre de Coubertin with invaluable help from Demetrios Vikelas and other Greeks, and only after revived Olympics had been held in Athens (and elsewhere) decades earlier (the Zappas Olympics from 1859, for example).[4] In the 1890s, systematic German excavations at Olympia had generated excitement but Coubertin's understanding of ancient Olympia was obscured by modern ideologies: amateurism (the conviction of the corruptive influence of money on sport), Hellenism (cultural reverence for ancient Greece), and elitist athleticism (the belief that sport in schools helped turn boys into good men, provided that they were sons of good gentlemen in the first place). With shooting and bicycle events, the games of 1896 had to be a "reinvented tradition," a modern adaptation of an ancient institution, but Coubertin consciously misrepresented the ancient games to validate his modern version.[5]

Publicity for the 1896 games pushed an obvious theme of "revival" but glossed issues of transfer and appropriation. The 1896 program cover bore images of Heracles, a frieze of athletes, and the olive victor's crown—all to

3 Paul Cartledge, "Olympic self-sacrifice," *History Today* (October 2000), 10-15, quote at 10. Chinese historians may confront similar problems of trying to see sport in ancient China through the lens of the modern Olympics or modern political ideology.

4 On the revival of the games, Coubertin's role, Greek contributions, and earlier Olympics, see: John J. MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); David C. Young, *The Olympic Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics* (Chicago: Ares, 1984), 57-75; David C. Young, *The Modern Olympics: A Struggle for Revival* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Konstantinos Georgiadis, *Olympic revival: The revival of the Olympic Games in modern times*, translated by R. Witt (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 2003); Ingomar Weiler, "The predecessors of the Olympic movement, and Pierre de Coubertin," *European Review* 12.3 (2004), 427-444; and Michael D. Biddiss, "The invention of the modern Olympic tradition," 125-143, in Michael D. Biddiss and Maria Wyke, editors, *The uses and abuses of antiquity* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999).

5 M. I. Finley and H. W. Pleket, *The Olympic Games: The first thousand years* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976), 4, comment: "For all his romanticism, Coubertin had a contemporary aim, and the success of his scheme depended on a realistic choice of events…appropriate to the athletic interests of his own day, not to those of a long dead civilisation. It was the Olympic 'spirit,' the Olympic ideology, as he conceived it, that was to serve his purposes, not the ancient Olympic reality."

connect 776 BCE to 1896 CE. It also depicted a girl with the owl of Athena, not Zeus, above her head, and the Acropolis, Stadium, and Temple of Olympian Zeus at Athens: all to connect ancient Olympia to ancient Athens, where the games were never held in antiquity. Similarly, the Olympic medal of 1896 conjoined Olympia and Athens. Its obverse had a head of Zeus, with his hand supporting Nike, the goddess of victory, holding an olive branch, with the caption, "Olympia," and the reverse depicting the Athenian Acropolis and Parthenon, with the caption, "International Olympic Games in Athens in 1896." Indeed, Athens's Olympic Stadium of 1896 was a reconstruction of—a superimposition on—the ancient Panathenaic Stadium originally built for non-Olympic games at Athens in the fourth century BCE. Of necessity, the modern games had to "return" to modern Athens, not ancient Olympia, but the staging of the 1896 games in Athens, the capital of the newly (if only partially) united nation-state of Greece, involved a conflation of symbols from the disunited lands of ancient Hellas, melding classical Athens with the distant site of Olympia.[6]

More rituals and symbols, such as the five rings, were added later as the modern games evolved. In fact, some modern Olympic features that seem historically authentic, such as the torch relay, are not. At Athens and elsewhere in ancient Greece, torch races transferred sacred fire from one altar to another, but there is no sound evidence of any torch race or relay at Olympia.[7] In fact, after the introduction of the Olympic flame at Amsterdam in 1928, the torch-relay ritual was invented to enhance the 1936 Berlin Olympics with allusions to antiquity.[8] More metaphor than artifact, the torch relay took root

6 MacAloon, *Symbol*, 208-210, details the idea of revival, as in the linking of 776 BCE and 1896 CE, the enthusiasm of the modern Athenians, and the fortuitous choice of April 6 (old calendar), Greek Independence Day, for the opening day of the games. On the Eurocentrism of Olympic studies, see the articles by Susan Brownell and Christina Koulouri in the Forum on "Questioning Eurocentrism in the History of the Olympic Games," *Journal of Sport History* 32(2) (2005). On the significance of the Olympics for Athens and modern Greece, see Alexander Kitroeff, *Wrestling with the Ancients: Modern Greek Identity and the Olympics* (New York: greekworks.com, 2004), and Christina Koulouri, editor, *Athens, Olympic city: 1896-1906* (Athens: International Olympic Academy, 2004). Visitors to Greece may recall that Greece's former 1,000-drachma note bore scenes of Olympia and Myron's *Discobolus*, and that the Greek two-euro coin retains Myron's statue.

7 Philostratus, *On Gymnastics* 1.5, speculates that the Olympic *stade* race began as a race to an altar, and that the victor had the honor of lighting the sacrifice, but he explicitly says that a priest held the torch at the altar and awaited the victor.

8 See Jeffrey O. Segrave and Robert K. Barney, "From ritual invention to ritual entrepreneurship: The Olympic torch relay and enveloping commercialism," *Stadion* 29 (2003), 323-340; Robert K. Barney and Anthony Th. Bijkerk, "Carl Diem's Inspiration for the Torch Relay? Jan Wils, Amsterdam 1928, and the Origin of the Olympic Flame," 253-260, in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*.

and blossomed symbolically, surpassing its not-quite ancient Olympic origin to become an inclusive, popular celebration—an improvement on 1896. Like the marathon race,[9] the torch relay remains a familiar symbol of the modern games, but we cannot rewrite ancient history to put either one back at Olympia. Yet we need not indict the modern games for inconsistencies with antiquity or for changing from the games of 1896. Our world needs symbols of peace and brotherhood, but we also deserve an accurate picture of the ancient Olympics, not an Olympics of illusion crafted to ennoble the modern games.

Why has there been confusion or misinformation about ancient Greek sport? Rooted in an elitist reception of the "classical heritage," traditional historians credited Olympia with ideals that they wanted to find: competitiveness, victory, effort, piety. Fair enough, but why add on anachronistic amateurism, internationalism, inclusive brotherhood, participation, and magnanimous sportsmanship?[10] Historians used the fragmentary evidence too casually, accepted ancient speculations, and tolerated modern cultural appropriations and ideological exploitations. Concentrating too much on the "golden age" of classical Greece (ca. 500-323 BCE), which amounts to less than two centuries of the over 1,000 years of ancient Olympic history, they argued that the early Olympics were pure and peaceful because of a special Greek Olympic spirit, at least until that spirit weakened. They cast the ancient Olympics within a tragic scenario of decline and fall. Supposedly, after an early golden age of noble, amateur sport, the Olympics fell prey to their own success: specialization, profit, and professionalism crept in dur-

9 The marathon race was invented in 1896: it has no real basis in ancient sport. Certainly, Greeks could run twenty-six miles and much further, but as messengers (*hemerodromoi*), not competitors. The great victory of the Greek Spyridon Loues in the 1896 marathon started a modern phenomenon, but the famous run of the messenger Pheidippides in Herodotus was from Athens to Sparta. Sparta did not send help in time, Olympia was not involved, and the Battle of Marathon was almost completely an Athenian rather than a pan-Hellenic victory.

10 As recent studies clarify, the main ideal in evidence at Olympia, with its first-place-only wins and monuments to triumphs in games and war, was victory. See D. C. Young, *Olympic Myth*; "It is More Important to Participate Than to Win; Who Said it First, Coubertin, Bishop Talbot, St. Paul, or Ovid?" *Olympika: International Journal of Olympic Studies*, 17-25; and "*Mens sana in corpore sano*? Body and mind in ancient Greece," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 22.1 (2005), 22-41. See also Crowther, "Olympics and their Ideals," 69-80, in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*; D. G. Kyle, "The first 100 Olympiads: A process of decline or democratization?" *Nikephoros* 10 (1997), 53-75, and "E. Norman Gardiner and the Decline of Greek Sport," 7-44, in D. G. Kyle and Gary D. Stark, coeditors, *Essays on Sport History and Sport Mythology* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1990); König, *Athletics and literature*, 30-44; and Hugh M. Lee, "Galen, Johann Heinrich Kraus, and the Olympic myth of Greek amateur athletics," *Stadion* 29 (2003), 11-20.

ing the fifth century, and the games declined sadly into something like Roman "spectacles." This romantic vision of youthful, utopian purity and lost, Edenic innocence was a cautionary tale used to provide moral warnings for the modern games.

In recent decades, however, as ongoing archaeology challenges notions of the earliest and latest Olympics, as pundits debate the role of the "classical tradition" in (post-)modern culture and education, as increasingly sophisticated sport history applies new approaches to literature and society, and as modern Olympic crises, scandals, and tragedies undermine our idealism, revisionist scholars are viewing the ancient Olympics more critically.[11] We are now reevaluating them from broader chronological, geographical, and comparative perspectives (e.g., between pan-Hellenic and local athletic sites, early and later ages, and Greek and non-Greek cultures), an approach that befits our post-colonial, global, and humanistic modern Olympics.

Revisiting Olympia requires us to confront problems of evidence and chronology. While Greek literature and drama abound with athletic images and references, few major works in the classical canon concentrate on sport.[12] The historians Herodotus and Thucydides were not that interested in sport, so scholars have cherished and trusted the fifth-century victory odes of Pindar. Competing for commissions but not a mercenary hack, Pindar sought a wide audience even when focusing on a local victor.[13] He provides important sport-historical information but his artistic efforts to praise and please victors mix mythology and genealogy with high idealism. While the contemporary evidence for the classical Olympics is limited and problematic, evidence

11 On trends in scholarship, see my "Games, Prizes and Athletes in Greek Sport: Patterns and Perspectives," *The Classical Bulletin* 74.2 (1998), 103-127, and *SSAW*, 1-22. Cf. William V. Harris, *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

12 Golden, *Sport and society*, is useful on models and approaches, 1-45, and on the limitations of our evidence, 46-73. On athletic language and terms, see David H.J. Larmour, *Stage and stadium: Drama and athletics in ancient Greece,* Nikephoros Beihefte Band 4 (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1999). On the influence of the classical canon of privileged texts (and works of art and architecture) and the need to transcend it, see W. Robert Connor, "The New Classical Humanities and the Old," *Classical Journal* 81 (1986), 337-347.

13 Mary R. Lefkowitz, "The Poet as Athlete," *Journal of Sport History* 11.2 (1984), 18-2; H. M. Lee, "Athletic Arete in Pindar," *The Ancient World* 7.1 and 2 (1983), 31-37; Ippokratis Kantzios, "Victory, fame and song in Pindar's Odes," *International Journal of History of Sport* 21.1 (2004), 109-117; and Leslie Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise: Pindar and the Poetics of Social Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Patrick O'Sullivan, "Victory statue, victory song: Pindar's agonistic poetics and its legacy," 75-100, in *SFAGW,* examines Pindar's agonistic and polemical championing of verbal (*epinikian*) over visual (sculptural) media in commemorating athletic victories. On victory odes and statues, also see Spivey, *Ancient Olympics*, 135-65; Golden, *Sport and society*, 76-88; and Miller, *AGA*, 226-40.

from the era of imperial Rome is alluringly abundant. Ironically, the most heavily used sources on early and classical athletics—Pausanias, Lucian, and Philostratus—are from the Roman empire (the Second Sophistic).[14] Scholars now caution against piecemeal, un-nuanced use of such sources, which themselves were fashioned by the authors' concerns about nostalgia, (pan-) Hellenic traditions, self-representation, or professional rivalries.[15]

Also, not long ago, we comforted ourselves with a chronology of Olympiads based on the Olympic Victor List, originally compiled by Hippias of Elis around 400 BCE and continued by Aristotle and others. We now see that Hippias' methods were not exact, that he probably had his own agenda, and that the list, which Pausanias used, is unreliable until the early sixth century BCE.[16] Such problems with literature, myths, and chronology enhance the value of archaeology and epigraphy, albeit not without controversy.

The pre-classical phenomenon

Traditional works claimed that earlier ancient societies lacked physical competitions and that the Greeks had a unique and pervasive spirit of competitiveness, or agonism, and therefore invented "sport." This, however, seems to be a matter of definition and degree, for reliefs of Mesopotamian boxers and wrestlers show that Mediterranean peoples had sport—at least some events, physical performances, and recreational games—before Greek civilization. Admittedly, our evidence, from Egyptian images of wrestlers at

14 For example, note the numbers of passages per author (six or more) included in Stephen Miller's excellent sourcebook, *Arete: Greek Sports from Ancient Sources*, third edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): Pausanias, 65; Plutarch, 18; Lucian, 14; Philostratus, 12; Plato, 10; Herodotus and Athenaeus, both nine; and Pindar, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Aristotle, all 6.

15 See König, *Athletics and literature*, on problems with imperial-era texts and their use by sport historians, and Newby, *Roman world*, on later, idealizing copies of originally classical art. On Pausanias, see, e.g., Jas Elsner, "Structuring 'Greece': Pausanias' *Periegesis* as a literary construct," in Susan Alcock *et al*., editors, *Pausanias: Travel and memory in Roman Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-20. Further on Pausanias and Philostratus, see below.

16 See Pamela-Jane Shaw, "Olympiad chronography and 'early' Spartan history," 273-309, in Stephen Hodkinson and B. Anton Powell, editors, *Sparta: New perspectives* (London: Classical Press of Wales, 1999), as well as Pamela-Jane Shaw, *Discrepancies in Olympiad dating and chronological problems of archaic Peloponnesian history* (Stuttgart: Historia Heft 166, 2003). Paul Christesen's *Olympic Victor Lists and ancient Greek history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) shows that the list is unreliable before the early sixth century, and that Hippias had no firm basis for dating the first Olympiad to 776 but rather used the Spartan king list and generational dating to associate Lycurgus with Iphitus, creating an early Spartan sanctioning of Elis's conduct of the games.

Beni Hasan to Mesopotamian reliefs, suggests state- or court-sponsored activities: strongmen and acrobats in festivals, military exercises, or staged or ritualized performances by monarchs including Shulgi and Amenhotep II. Greek exceptionalism has been challenged, but the Greeks remain distinctive, both for the degree to which they institutionalized athletics in festivals that included public, physical, intense competitions for prizes, entered by Greek citizens on a voluntary basis, as well as for their first development of purpose-built athletic facilities.[17]

Our first account of Greek (but not Olympic) athletic competition comes from the funeral games for Patroclus in Book 23 of Homer's *Iliad*. Probably reflecting the later geometric period more than the Bronze Age, Homer's games were dramatic but not flawless: there was foul play in the chariot race, excited spectators broke into arguments, and the games-master, Achilles, had to settle disputes over placements and prizes by awarding extra prizes.[18] Without nudity or wreaths, with elite competitors and rich prizes of weapons and war booty, these were funeral games, sport as surrogate combat. Known to all Greeks, Homer popularized and hallowed athletics as central to Greek identity and excellence (*aretê*), unintentionally laying groundwork for the success of the nascent Olympic Games. Significantly, however, Homer does not mention the Olympic Games even though he was composing around 725 BCE, that is, after the Olympics supposedly began in 776. Rather, *Iliad* 22.158-166, describing Achilles chasing Hector about Troy, mentions two types of games: funeral games for nobles with rich prizes and modest cultic or festival games with symbolic prizes. Perhaps the ancient Olympics arose from festival, not funeral, games, from religion and life, not war and death.

Unsure themselves and making no sharp distinction between myth and history, the Greeks explained the origins of the Olympics with myths of su-

17 On agonism, see Spivey, *Ancient Olympics*, 11-15; Poliakoff, *Combat Sports*, 134-147; and Oswyn Murray's essay in this volume. On pre-Greek sport, see Kyle, *SSAW*, 23-37; Crowther, *SAT*, 15-39; Poliakoff, *Combat Sports*, 25-27, 32-33, 68-69, and 108; Wolfgang Decker, "Verformen griechischer Agone in der Alten Welt," *Nikephoros* 17 (2004), 9-25; and Thomas F. Scanlon's essay in this volume.

18 On sport in the Late Bronze Age and in Homer, see Kyle, *SSAW*, 39-71, and Ben Brown, "Homer, funeral contests, and the origins of the Greek city," 123-162, in *SFAGW*. On performances, especially dancing and bull-leaping, in the Bronze Age Aegean and possible ties to Olympia and later sport, see Senta German, *Performance, power and the art of the Aegean Bronze Age*, British Archaeological Reports International Series 1347 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), and "Politics and the Bronze Age Origins of Olympic Practices," 15-26, in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*. Thomas Scanlon, "Homer, the Olympics, and the heroic ethos," 61-91, in Kaïla *et al*., *Olympic Games*, suggests possible indirect references to Olympia (e.g., *Iliad* 11.699-700) and properly points out that Homer's epics spread the ethos of sport. On competition and virtue in Greece and China, see Lisa Raphals's essay in this volume.

perhuman or heroic founders, including Heracles and Pelops, myths set before the Trojan War and long before 776.[19] The Olympics of 776, credited to Iphitus (with Cleisthenes and Lycurgus), were said to be a revival of earlier, discontinued games as people "remembered" the events of the old days.[20] In early Greece, as in 1896, the revival of old games was preferred to the invention of new ones.

The stories of Bronze and Dark Age (pre-776) Olympics were indeed myths, natural and comforting narrative explanations, not history. Archaeology shows that early Olympia, from about the eleventh century BCE on, was the site of a rustic Zeus cult. Cults predated contests. Worshipers consulted the oracle and left dedications, but there is no evidence of major games around 776.[21] The discovery of wells dug near the site of the stadium suggests that major games did not develop until around 700. It seems likely, then, that modest local games arose slowly at Olympia as a supplement to the early religious festival—like footraces at a church picnic—in the archaic period.

Most associate the height or golden age of the ancient Olympics with the classical period, but the essential formative stages and core features of the

19 John Davidson, "Olympia and the chariot-race of Pelops," 101-122, in *SFAGW*, surveys versions of the story of Pelops' chariot race in literature, as well as depictions on the East Pediment of the Temple of Zeus and in vase-painting. The original relationship between Pelops and Olympia remains uncertain, but Pindar and the Temple of Zeus entrenched Pelops in Olympic lore. Cf. Christoph Ulf, "Die Mythen um Olympia- politischer Gehalt und politische Intention," *Nikephoros* 10 (1997), 9-52, and Kyle, *SSAW*, 101-109.

20 Probably alluding to the Olympic Victor List, Pausanias, 5.8.5-6, claims that there was an "unbroken record or memory" of the Olympiads from the victory of Coroebus (in 776), but he admits that people had forgotten the old days of the earliest games. He adds that the Eleans introduced some events as they "remembered" them (e.g., pentathlon and wrestling at the 18th Olympiad), but they introduced others (e.g., boys' events, race in armor) simply because they wished to do so (5.8.7-9).

21 Wendy J. Raschke, editor, *The Archaeology of the Olympics: The Olympics and Other Festivals in Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), including Alfred Mallwitz, "Cult and Competition Locations at Olympia," 79-109, remains useful on the potential and problems of reading the physical evidence, as does Catherine Morgan, *Athletes and oracles: The transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the eighth century BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Helmut Kyrieleis, "The German excavations at Olympia: An introduction," 41-60, in *SFAGW*, reviews the work of the German Archaeological Institute at Olympia since 1875. Excavations since 1985 under Kyrieleis and Ulrich Sinn, concentrating on the earliest and latest phases of the site, show that there was a tumulus of the mid-third millennium in the area of the Pelopeion, but no continuity of cult from Mycenaean times. Rather, a regional cult of Zeus, from the late eleventh century on, was continued (55) "in direct association with the prehistoric tumulus…that later would become considered the tomb of Pelops." On the Pelopeion, cf. Stephen G. Miller, "The shrine of Opheltes and the earliest stadium of Nemea," 239-250, in Helmut Kyrieleis, editor, *Akten des Internationalen Symposions: Olympia 1875-2000* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2002), and Miller, *AGA*, 89-90, 124.

phenomenon took place in the seventh and sixth centuries of the Archaic Age (ca. 750-500), when a confluence of several developments and factors (the location and oracle of Olympia, colonization, social change, aristocratic status display, interstate rivalry, state athletic rewards) contributed to the growth and success of the games.[22]

When Pindar (*Olympian Ode* 1.1-7) said there was no more glorious "place of festival" than Olympia, he knew that Olympia was a pan-Hellenic interstate sanctuary. With shrines and an oracle, like Delphi, and open and common to all Greeks, Olympia was a center for cults and contests. Site plans show that the earliest, grandest constructions, such as the ash altar of Zeus and the Temple of Hera, were within the sanctuary proper, the Altis. Religion was at the center, and athletic facilities arose slowly around the periphery. With the great sacrifice to Zeus as its central act, at the midpoint of the five-day festival, the Olympic program itself shows that athletics were a supplemental development. However coincidental, the combination of festival and games was brilliant.[23] Religion hallowed and regularized the games, but the games never secularized the festival. Activities at Olympia became more spectacular over time, but Olympic sport was not a surrogate religion or a replacement for piety; it was the persistence of pagan piety that later brought opposition from Christian emperors.

Understanding Olympia also involves considering the political makeup of early Greece as a geographical area with a shared culture that included Homer, the Olympian gods, and enthusiasm for athletics. For geographical and historical reasons (e.g., the decentralization of communities in the Dark Age), the occupational pattern of archaic Greece was the *polis*.[24] Early archaic Greece was a land of emerging *poleis*: small, fiercely independent political units with some urban center, usually run by aristocracies and suspicious of monarchy, external threats, and larger political units, and constantly in competition, challenging and warring with each other. Most other Mediterranean cultures had moved beyond city-states to the level of complex imperial systems, but Greece retained the *polis* structure and remained politically disunited for centuries.

22 See Kyle, *SSAW*, 72-93, on the development of athletics in archaic Greece.

23 Valavanis, *Games and Sanctuaries*, 15, emphasizes religion as the essential context: "It is no exaggeration to claim that the entire ideological structure of ancient Greek athletics had its roots in the worship of the gods and was based on the profound religiosity of the ancients."

24 See Mogens Herman Hansen, *Polis: An introduction to the ancient Greek city-state* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), on the social and political dynamics of ancient city-state cultures (various city-states with an urban core and rural hinterland, within regional areas) as distinct from larger super-states and empires ("macro-states" that included cities politically and geographically within them).

Never a city, some thirty-six miles from town, and with no significant resident population, Olympia lay within and was run by (throughout most of its history) the decentralized, largely rural, and tribal state of Elis. The administration of the games was generally admired in antiquity,[25] but there was always some political context for hosting them: Elis and Pisa contested for early control of the sanctuary, the tyrant Pheidon of Argos is said (Herodotus 6.127.3) to have interfered at Olympia, and Greek states sought military advice and displayed trophies from wars against other Greek states at Olympia.[26] We no longer see Olympic athletics as rooted in *hoplite* infantry training, but the unsettled context of rivalry and territorial warfare increased the need for the famous but much-misunderstood Olympic sacred truce (*ekecheiria*). Not a general peace but rather just a "hands off" or right of passage for visitors to Olympia, essentially as religious pilgrims, the truce was enforced by religious authority and not by a strong centralized power.[27]

The proliferation of the *polis* format through colonization helped archaic Olympia develop from a sanctuary with little or no sport into the greatest site of Greek athletics. Colonization also increased the Greeks' sense of a shared ethnicity that included enthusiasm for sport. Treasuries (small temples) gave colonies a presence at Olympia, and the western Greeks, notably Croton, significantly expanded the scope of participation and raised the level of competition.

Dramatic political and socioeconomic changes also fostered the growth of the games. Privileged aristocrats, anxious about their status with the spread of *hoplite* warfare and more democratic constitutions, frequented *gymnasia* and used athletics and Olympia for individualistic self-display: to demonstrate their wealth and pedigrees through both equestrian and gymnastic victories and dedications. Athletic nudity, a famous but not original feature of Greek sport, came to Olympia in this context. All competitors in

25 Stephen G. Miller, "The organization and functioning of the Olympic Games," 1-40, in *SFAGW*, as in 113-128 of his *AGA*, reconstructs the preparations, organization, and operation of the Olympics of 300 BCE, by which time the operation of the festival and games was well established, but doubts remain about the date of introduction of various features such as the truce, the oath, and the month's stay at Elis.

26 See Crowther, "Ideals," 72-73, in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*, and Panos Valavanis's essay in this volume.

27 The ancient truce had limited effect and offers little ideological support for modern Olympic notions. See Manfred Lämmer's "The nature and function of the Olympic Truce in Greek antiquity," 95-106, in Uriel Simri, editor, *1974 Proceedings of the Society of the History of Physical Education and Sport in Asia and the Pacific Region* (Tel Aviv: Wingate Institute, 1975), and his "Der sogennante Olympischen Friede in der griechischen Antike," *Stadion* 8-9 (1982-3), 47-83.

the stadium had to be free Greek males, not "barbarians" (non-Greek-speakers), and all had to be nude: no sandals, uniforms, or place for endorsements. The Greeks themselves were not sure why they bared more than their souls to the crowd. They guessed, as moderns have, that nudity was pragmatic, that it made races faster or safer. Supposedly in 720 but probably later, a certain Orsippus of Megara is said to have lost his shorts, perhaps on purpose (Pausanias 1.44.1), won a race, and started a trend. Most scholars now agree that nude exercise and reviews in Sparta spread nudity to Olympia and throughout Greece. By the sixth century, gymnastic nudity, the absence of a costume, was a costume and even a uniform, a social marker of freedom, male status, and Greekness.[28] As Thucydides (1.6.5-6) and others note, nudity was a way that Greeks distinguished themselves in sport from non-Greeks, but we must admit that, like nudity, homoeroticism and ethnic chauvinism also persisted in Olympic athletics,[29] as did gender exclusivism.[30]

28 Scanlon, *Eros*, 64-97, presents nude physical education (*gymnike paideia)* as an effective form of socialization—an erotically charged relationship of mutual respect whereby a mature male set a cultural example for a teenage youth. Stephen G. Miller's "Nude Democracy," 277-296, in Pernille Flensted-Jensen *et al*., editors, *Polis and politics: Studies in ancient Greek history* (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Polis Center, 2000), suggests that nudity precluded signs of status, supported *isonomia* (a general notion of equality), and fostered the spread of democracy; but cf. Kyle, *SSAW*, 85-90. P. Christesen, "On the Meaning of *gymnazô*," in *Nikephoros* 15 (2002), 7-37, argues that "civic nudity" arose at Sparta as a costume associated with military effectiveness but that it spread to other states because it emphasized participation in the *hoplite* phalanx as well as the distinction between male citizen-soldiers and others. Similarly, in "The Transformation of Athletics in Sixth-Century Greece," 59-68, in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*, Christesen, 65, stresses the sociopolitical importance of "…civic nudity as a collective activity that embodied an inclusive socio-political vision….Being an athlete was a strong claim to socio-political privilege, and it was this that made Greece into a nation of athletes."

29 Herodotus' story (5.22) of the attempted exclusion of Alexander I of Macedon in 480 on the grounds that he was not a Greek is perhaps unreliable but nonetheless significant.

30 Pausanias (5.6.7-8) is our main source on females at Olympia. Except for one priestess of Demeter Chamyne, all women (*gynaikes*) were prohibited from attending the games. The famous story of a daughter of Diagoras of Rhodes who defied the ban and attended the games of 404 in disguise to watch her son compete is probably an unreliable tale. The suggestion that virgin girls (*parthenoi*) were allowed to watch the games also seems ill-founded. Young maidens did run races at Olympia in the festival of Hera but at another time, not as part of the Olympic festival. The special costume of the girl runners shows that they ran as a form of initiation, not as an Olympic competition. Women, however, could enter chariots and be proclaimed Olympic victors *in absentia*. Some regard Cynisca of Sparta, the first woman to win the Olympic chariot race in 396 BCE, as an ambitious, expert equestrian, but her brother, Agesilaus, king of Sparta, probably pressured her to compete, perhaps to embarrass Alcibiades of Athens, who was overly proud of his chariot wins. See Nancy Serwint, "The Iconography of the Ancient Female Runner," *American Journal of Archaeology* 97 (1993), 403-422, and Donald G. Kyle's "Fabulous Females and Ancient Olympia," 131-152, in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*, and "'The Only Woman in All Greece': Kyniska, Agesilaus, Alcibiades and Olympia," *Journal*

The ideals that Pindar immortalized later in the fifth century—effort, glory, and humility (*ponos, kleos, aidos*)—actually came from the aristocratic ethos of archaic sport, and the supposed ills of later sport, from specialization to professionalism, also existed in archaic Greece before classical times. The games may have started out as fairly casual contests won by natural ability, but, by the sixth century, competitive athletes were specialized, intensively trained by coaches, and well-rewarded.[31] The famous remark in Herodotus (8.26) that Olympic athletes competed not for material gain but for excellence is both inspiring and misleading.[32] At Olympia, individual, first-place victors received only a wreath of olive leaves from the judges and bunches of foliage and fillets (wool ribbons) from admiring spectators, but such decorations were cherished for their symbolic value. Athletes' motives were probably complex, an admixture of idealism and ambition. Athletes, however, were not immune to profit, and Greek sport included material rewards as well as symbolic honors. By the sixth century, states started rewarding their Olympic victors handsomely with processions and material gifts. Athenian Olympic victors got cash awards of 500 drachmas from the state, worth about $500,000 today. Ancient Olympians competed and accepted valuable prizes wherever they wanted, without any stigma. In the Panathenaic Games at Athens, the men's sprint victor won 120 prize amphoras full of olive oil, worth about $80,000. The Greeks simply had no concept of amateur athletics.[33] Amateurism as an ideal came to the modern games from the nineteenth century, and, for good or ill, the games have now dropped the idea.

We would like to know more than we can know about the social class

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of Sport History 30 (2003), 183-203.

31 On the preparation and social status of athletes, see H. W. Pleket: "Games, prizes, athletes, and ideology: Some aspects of the history of sport in the Greco-Roman world," *Stadion* 1 (1975), 49-89; "The participants in the ancient Olympic Games: Social background and mentality," 147-152, in William Coulson and Helmut Kyrieleis, editors, *Proceedings of an International Symposium on the Olympic Games, 5-7 September 1988* (Athens: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, 1992); and "The Olympic Games in antiquity," *European Review* 12.3 (2004), 401-414. See also Young: *Olympic Myth*, 147-170; *Brief history*, 92-101; and "First with the most: Greek athletic records and 'specialization,'" *Nikephoros* 9 (1996), 3-25; as well as my *Athletics in ancient Athens* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 102-123; "First 100 Olympiads," 64-74 (see n. 10 above); and *SSAW*, 198-216; and Golden, *Sport and society*, 141-169; Miller, *AGA*, 207-215; Kurke, *Traffic in Praise*; Christian Mann, *Athlet und Polis im archaischen und frühklassischen Griechenland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2001); and Nigel James Nicholson, *Athletics and aristocracy in archaic and classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

32 David Konstan, "Persians, Greeks and Empire," *Arethusa* 20 (1987), 59-73, at 61-62.

33 Young, *Olympic Myth*, 115-147, and Donald G. Kyle, "Gifts and Glory: Panathenaic and Other Greek Athletic Prizes," 106-136, in Jenifer Neils, editor, *Worshipping Athena: Panathenaia and Parthenon* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).

and careers of ancient Olympians. At best, we know the names of perhaps three percent of them. Some, like Milo of Croton, are famous but most are just names, so assessing the influence of rewards and prizes on Greek society or social mobility is problematic.[34] Nevertheless, there is no doubt that ancient Olympic victors became rich stars or that ancient critics such as Xenophanes condemned the adulation and rewards given to athletes, saying that they should go to thinkers and virtuous citizens. Like today, however, nothing changed.[35]

Along with other factors, the inherent and enduring appeal of athletic competition—the spectacular combination of skills, strength, strategy, and suspense—institutionally embedded in a regular festival and venue brought increased participation by talented, dedicated athletes and attracted more spectators from a wider geographical scope. The Olympic model was so successful that a "circuit" (*periodos*) of pan-Hellenic crown games arose at Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea, as well as at Olympia, in the first half of the sixth century—all this, again, before the Classical Age of Greece.[36]

Classical Olympia

Studies of Olympia and Athens hail the Classical Age (ca. 500 to 323 BCE) as a golden age of democracy, art, and success against Persia, but the main positive features of the Olympic Games were well established earlier, and later ages have exaggerated the pan-Hellenic and peaceful, apolitical influence of the games. Olympia's officials were called *Hellanodikai*, or "Greek judges," but, even in classical times, the Greek sense of pan-Hellenism was more a

34 In "First 100 Olympiads" (see n. 10 above), I suggest that elitism and the influence of family wealth persisted for centuries; families probably rose in society and then became athletic, not vice versa. Responding to recent idealistic notions about access to and social mobility via athletic participation, David Pritchard, "Athletics, education and participation in classical Athens," 293-349, in *SFAGW*, argues that the instruction, training, and resources needed for athletic participation were essentially unavailable to the poor.

35 On critics, see my *Athletics,* 124-131; Stefan Müller, *Das Volk der Athleten: Untersuchngen zur Ideologie und Kritik des Sports in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Trier: Bochumer Altertumswissenschaftliches Colloquium 21, 1995); and P. A. Bernardini, "Olympia e I giochi Olimpici: Le font letterarie tra lode e critica," *Nikephoros* 10 (1997), 179-190.

36 See Christesen, "Transformation of Athletics," on the social context of the *periodos* in the first half of the sixth century. Catherine Morgan, "The origins of Pan-Hellenism," in Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg, editors, *Greek sanctuaries: New approaches* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1993), 18-44, reviewing the evidence for pan-Hellenic athletics, cautions that the development of a pan-Hellenic circuit (*periodos*) in the sixth century led to the retrojection of notions of early pan-Hellenism onto early Olympia.

matter of cultural sharing than of political unity.[37] Indeed, an increasingly politicized classical Olympia soon became caught up in Greece's disastrous parochialism, disunity, and endemic warfare.

Certainly, the fifth-century Olympic sanctuary housed spectacular art and architecture, including the great temple and colossal statue of Zeus, but Olympia's athletic facilities remained rudimentary and peripheral, little more than a simple stadium and hippodrome. Comforts and facilities for the crowds of spectators were minimal.[38] Centuries later, spectators (Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.6.23-28) continued to complain about the heat, noise, crowds, theft, water shortage, and poor sanitation, but they still came. The Olympics were a showplace, a media event with multiple attractions and merchants hawking their wares, like our fairs and bowl games.[39] Olympia remained a great place to see and be seen. After his chariot-race win in 416, Alcibiades spread his fame as a party animal, and Themistocles, Herodotus, and others made prominent appearances.

The worship of Zeus at his great temple was central and constant at Olympia; it promoted but could not guarantee peace and unity. Greeks gathered to share their culture and love of sport, but the defiantly independent and bellicose city-states set up commemorative inscriptions from wars against other Greek states even at Olympia. Many Olympic benefactions and dedications had political overtones, and Pausanias (5.10.2) claims that the Temple of Zeus itself was financed by war booty from Elis's defeat of Pisa. Sadly, the games and the truce did not stop wars among the Greeks, but, then, neither did wars stop their games—even when they should have.

When Greece faced the enormous threat of the Persian invasion in 480, Greek resistance was hindered by disunity and indirectly by Olympia. Before and during the Battle of Thermopylae, Sparta and other Greek states were preoccupied with festivals. Herodotus (7.206.1-2) says that the Spartans only sent a small advance guard with Leonidas because they were holding the Carnea festival (as was the case in 490 when the Persians landed at Marathon), that they intended to send a full force after the festival, and that the

37 On the emergence of a Greek sense of ethnicity, see Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), and Irad Malkin, editor, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

38 See Nigel B. Crowther, "Visiting the Olympic Games in ancient Greece," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 18.4 (2001), 37-52 (= *Athletika* 1.4, 35-50); Sinn, *Olympia*, 83-90; and Wolfgang Decker, "Zur Vorbereitung und Organisation griechischer Agone," *Nikephoros* 10 (1997), 77-102.

39 Minos Kokolakis, "Intellectual activity on the fringes of the Games," 153-158, in Coulson and Kyrieleis, *Proceedings*; I. Weiler, "Olympia-jenseits der Agonistik: Kultur und Spektakel," *Nikephoros* 10 (1997), 191-213; and Kyle, *SSAW*, 127-135.

allies similarly were waiting until the Olympics were over. Herodotus later (8.144) put pan-Hellenic rhetoric about a common ethnicity and shared festivals in the mouths of Athenians (even as they were coercing Sparta to leave the Peloponnese to fight for Greece), but Greek unity was late and limited, and the coincidence of the festivals offered excuses for delays.[40]

While ethnic pride and relief after the defeat of Xerxes' invasion made the Olympics of 476 a scene of jubilation, and an Olympic arbitration court seems to have mediated disputes for a few years, any glory days of Greek or Olympic unity did not last long.[41] Elis's *synoecism* (complete unification as a *polis*), its adoption of democracy, and its close relations with Athens further politicized Olympia as the Peloponnesian War loomed.[42] Not a civil war in a divided nation but a war among city-states largely caused by the imperialism of Periclean Athens, the Peloponnesian War (431-404) showed the instability and factionalism of the *polis* system. Once again, war within Greece did not suspend the games. Hardly politically neutral, Elis allied with Athens and others against Sparta (by a treaty inscribed on a bronze column at Olympia; Thucydides 5.47.11). The beautifully restored Nike of Paionios at Olympia (depicted on the 2004 Athens Olympic medals) celebrated a military victory by Greeks (Naupactians and Messenians) over fellow Greeks (Spartans at Sphacteria) in 425. Elis offended and banned Sparta at Olympia in 420, Sparta avenged itself by invading Elis in the Elean War around 400, and, by 364, a battle between Arcadians and Eleans intruded into the very Altis itself.[43]

Olympia remained supremely prestigious but it was not a sacrosanct island of calm, nor was its program of games the standardized rule for Greek

40 Herodotus notes (8.72) that even after the Carnea and Olympics were over, many Peloponnesians did not join Sparta and others in defending the Peloponnese after the fall of Athens. Crowther, "Ideals," 72-73, in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*, observes that competitors in 480 included Greeks from Thasos and Thebes, not just from the vicinity of Olympia.

41 Sinn, *Olympia*, 54-57, and Peter Siewert, "The Olympic Rules," 113-117, in Coulson and Kyrieleis, *Proceedings*, at 115.

42 Nigel B. Crowther, "Elis and Olympia: City, sanctuary and politics," 61-73, in *SFAGW* (= *Athletika* 2.1, 53-64), shows that the actions of Elis as a state and supervisor of the games were intimately related, as in the combination of athletic and civic buildings (e.g., the Prytaneion) at both Elis and Olympia, the placement of *leges sacrae* in the Altis, and the athletic and civic roles of the *Hellanodikai*: "…the Eleans controlled the Olympic Games as if they belonged entirely to them" (61). See similar conclusions in Crowther, "Ideals," in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*; for example: "…there was no real attempt by the Eleans to foster 'international understanding,' 'brotherhood,' or 'peace' at the ancient Olympics" (76). Further on politics and diplomacy at Olympia, see Valavanis *infra*.

43 Arcadian military force allowed Pisa to conduct the games in 364 but the Eleans regained control by 363. Nigel B. Crowther, "Power and politics at the ancient Olympics: Pisa and the Games of 364 B.C.," *Stadion* 29 (2003), 1-10.

athletics. Even the various pan-Hellenic crown games had distinctive characters and aspects. For example, Olympia was unusual in lacking musical events, and Nemea seems not to have had many, if any, equestrian events. Greek athletic agonism found many different outlets, and most Greeks experienced sport in their own city-states. At Athens and even at less urbanized Sparta, earlier contests, cults, and rites of passage of clans, tribes, and subcommunities had been incorporated or "nationalized" in systems of civic athletics supported and supervised by the city-state. As some cities became larger and richer, even to the point of imperialism, their agonistic festivals, notably the Panathenaia of classical Athens, became more extravagant and spectacular, approximating earlier Near Eastern spectacles. Local programs retained local traditions and there was a remarkable diversity of sport throughout Greece, from Sparta's female nudity to Athens's torch races, from male beauty contests to military dances, chariot-dismounting events, and bull sports.[44] Civic athletics incorporated adaptations of the Olympic model (in organization, truces, events), but Olympia itself probably adopted some features (age classes, nudity, heralds and trumpets, a *hoplite* race) from local games. Civic athletics were sacred (that is, held in festivals) but also "chrematitic," meaning that they offered more than wreaths as prizes. From early roots, possibly in funeral games, materially valuable prizes helped city-states attract outside competitors as well as publicize their products and wealth. Ranging from metal objects to olive oil (Pindar, *Nemean Ode* 10.22-48), local prizes were given for more than first place, for three age classes, for tribal and team events, and sometimes for cadets (*ephebes*) and citizens only. States also continued the earlier tradition of rich state rewards for citizens victorious at the great crown games.

Did rich rewards and over-emphasis on victory lead to corruption? Those bemoaning decline at fourth-century Olympia point to stone bases near the entrance to the stadium that, starting in 388, held Zanes, or statues of Zeus, paid for by fines from athletes caught cheating, mostly by bribery (Pausanias 5.21.2-18); but earlier athletes had committed fouls and also transferred victories or competed for other states.[45] The Zanes represent not necessarily an

44 See Valavanis, *Games and Sanctuaries*, 394-397; Miller, *AGA*, 129-149, on local games; and Kyle, *Athletics*, on Athens, and *SSAW*, 150-197, on Athens and Sparta.

45 Siewert, "Olympic Rules," 115, on sixth-century inscriptions about punishing fouls in combat sports; Joachim Ebert, *Agonismata: Kleine philologische Schriften zur Literatur, Geschichte und Kultur der Antike*, M. Hillgruber *et al*., editors (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1997), 229-232, on an inscription of ca. 500 recording that state envoys (*theoroi*) could lend money to athletes to pay fines for breaking the rules. On Cimon I's transfer of a chariot victory of 532 to the tyrant Peisistratus, see Herodotus 6.103 and Kyle, *Athletics*, 111-112 and 158-159.

escalation of corruption but a clever innovation, a public, enduring form of deterrence for predictable problems. Most athletes were inspired by the ideal of victory symbolized by the wreath of wild olive leaves, and, despite modern speculations, there was no doping or performance-enhancing drugs. That modern Olympic blight cannot be put upon the Greeks.

The involvement of Eleans as both Olympic officials and competitors was always potentially awkward. We hear of problems first in the fourth century, again seen as harbingers of decline by modern alarmists. In 396 BCE, two of the three *Hellanodikai* credited the victory in the sprint race (*stadion*) to their countryman, Eupolemos of Elis, while the third chose Leon of Ambracia (Pausanias 6.3.7). When Leon appealed to the Olympic Council, the judges who gave the win to Eupolemos were fined, but his victory stood. In another incident in 372, the judges crowned a fellow judge, Troilos of Elis, who entered and won the four- and two-horse chariot races (Pausanias 6.1.4-5). After this, it was declared that no Elean could be both judge and competitor in an equestrian event. Despite such lapses, and assisted by training regulations, oaths, allotted positions, and the sacral context of the festival, the attentive judges generally sustained a high level of consistency and neutrality and earned a reputation for fairness.[46]

Ironically, the supposed onset of decline in the wake of the Peloponnesian War overlaps with a growing literary and rhetorical movement in support of pan-Hellenism, peace, and unity.[47] Gorgias, Lysias, Isocrates, and others invoked a shared ethnicity with festivals and Olympia to encourage the Greeks to stop fighting wars against each other, but the Greeks, clinging in practice and political thought to the city-state polity despite its deficiencies, resisted the transition to larger states or empires.

Post-classical Olympia

Macedonian opportunism, not idealistic rhetoric, changed the history of Olympia and Greece, and centralization and stability, albeit without au-

46 Miller, *AGA*, 19 and 232-233, suggests that "there was no subjective judging" and that Olympic winners were chosen "by obvious, objective standards," but the human element in judging competitions cannot be infallible. See Nigel B. Crowther, "'*Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodies?*' The impartiality of the Olympic judges and the case of Leon of Ambracia," *Nikephoros* 10 (1997), 149-60 (= *Athletika* 2.3, 71-82); David Gilman Romano, "Judges and Judging at the Ancient Olympic Games," 95-114, in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*.

47 Crowther, "Ideals," 69-80, in Schaus and Wenn, *Onward*; Antony E. Raubitschek, "The Panhellenic Idea and the Olympic Games," 35-37, in Raschke, *Archaeology*; and cf. Michael A. Flower, "From Simonides to Isocrates: The Fifth-Century Origins of Fourth-Century Panhellenism," *Classical Antiquity* 19 (2000), 65-101.

tonomy, came with post-classical empires and ruler cults. After becoming a multiple Olympic victor (352-348 BCE) and a patron of Delphi in order to present himself as an acceptably Greek leader, Philip of Macedon controlled Greece and inserted a ruler cult into the Olympic Altis with the Philippeion, a monument honoring his family. Macedon's dominance of Greece brought dramatic changes in the later fourth century, heralded by the appearance at Olympia, Nemea, and elsewhere of elaborate architectural stadium complexes with more obvious attention to spectators and spectacular effects. Olympia's vaulted tunnel or Krypte, now dated to the later fourth century (ca. 330 BCE), provided a dramatic entrance to the stadium for athletes and judges. Nearby, between the Stoa of Echo and the embankment of the stadium, is an area now suggested to have been a changing room (*apodyterion*) for competitors.[48]

Olympia soon entered a spectacular Hellenistic world of super-states, statecraft, and stagecraft, but the loss of freedom did not ruin the games. Alexander the Great assimilated Near Eastern models of kingship and spectacles, and he founded numerous cities that spread Greek athletic facilities and festivals over vast territories. Hellenistic cities sustained the Greek civic model of agonistic festivals; from the third century on, numerous "Iso-" (equal to) pan-Hellenic festivals were founded widely, with more to come under Rome. Associating Greek identity and status with the "gymnasium class" and *ephebic* education, Hellenistic elites used sport to reinforce their sociopolitical superiority. Seeking ties to glorious traditions to legitimize their reigns, Hellenistic kings, notably the Ptolemies of Egypt, became equestrian competitors and generous benefactors at Olympia. The *gymnasion* at Olympia, the practice area for athletes at the northwest edge of the sanctuary, became an architectural facility in the second century BCE thanks to a Hellenistic benefaction. In time, it was Rome that embellished Olympia and assisted its continued grandeur and popularity.

Scholars now challenge the old notion that Romans, who "lusted for blood" in deadly spectacles, could not appreciate the virtues of Greek athletics,[49] and that Olympia suffered oppression, neglect, and corruption

48 On the Nemean tunnel and stadium, see Stephen G. Miller, *Nemea: A guide to the site and museum* (Athens: Archaeological Receipts Fund of the Ministry of Culture, 2004), 191-208, and *Excavations at Nemea II: The Early Hellenistic Stadium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 62-139; on various complexes, see *Ibid*., 139-224.

49 H. M. Lee, "The later Greek boxing glove and the 'Roman' *caestus*," *Nikephoros* 10 (1997), 161-178, challenges the old idea that the later boxing glove, the so-called *caestus*, was studded with metal. He takes *caestus* simply as the Roman term for the later *himantes*, which had a leather flap but not spikes. As Poliakoff, *Combat Sports*, shows, Greek sport was brutal enough before Rome arrived.

under the Roman empire. After some initial cultural resistance, which was exaggerated by elitist, conservative intellectual critics, Romans accepted Greek sport, and, especially from Augustus on, athletics were successfully incorporated into an imperial system of spectacles. Mosaics and idealized copies of Greek sculpture in baths, villas, and public spaces show that athletics were prominent in Roman civic life and recreation. Augustus' harmonizing of Greek and Roman traditions included an eclectic, cosmopolitan program of public entertainments, with Greek athletics as well as Roman arena and circus spectacles. Nero and Domitian gave Rome athletic contests and a stadium, and the headquarters of the international guild of star athletes moved to Rome.[50]

Thomas Scanlon and others have rewritten the history of later Olympia and its role within the Roman empire, showing that Olympia and Greek agonistic festivals prospered in the wider Roman world. The imperial administration and the emperor cult provided institutionalization and regularity for spectacular Greek as well as Roman games in the eclectic entertainment system of Rome's ecumenical empire. Rome sanctioned numerous local festivals as well as "Iso-" games, and imperially supervised athletic pensions and guilds increased opportunities for performers' advancement. Athletic festivals multiplied in Asia Minor, and agonistic festivals remained central to Greek self-representation and civic pride. An Olympic victory remained supremely honorific, and Olympia drew competitors, spectators, and patrons from a wider Greco-Roman world. As Olympia necessarily opened admission to non-Greeks and Roman citizens, fewer victories went to athletes from the old homeland as more victors came from Asia Minor, Egypt, and North Africa.[51] To see this as decline is an elitist perspective: more ecumenical and

50 See Nigel B. Crowther's articles in "Roman attitudes to Greek athletics," 376-422, in *Athletika* 1.1-1.5; H. M. Lee, "Venues for Greek Athletics in Rome," 215-219, in Sheila K. Dickison and Judith P. Hallett, editors, *Rome and her Monuments: Essays on the City and Literature of Rome in Honor of Katherine A. Geffcken* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2000). Newby, *Roman world*, 19-140, demonstrates that athletics were crucial to Greek ethnicity and were indeed significant in the West. Later Greeks, while celebrating contemporary accomplishments, consciously asserted their Hellenic identity as worthy heirs of classical Greece by evoking ennobling links to past athletic, intellectual, and military virtues.

51 See Thomas F. Scanlon, Chapter 2, "The Ecumenical Olympics—The Games in the Roman Era," in *Eros*, 40-62, with Appendix 2.1 on 63; A. Farrington, "Olympic Victors and the Popularity of the Olympic Games in the Imperial Period," *Tyche* 12 (1997), 15-46; H. W. Pleket, "Mass-sport and local infrastructure in the Greek cities of Asia Minor," *Stadion* 24 (1998), 151-172; Onno Van Nijf, "Local heroes: Athletics, festivals, and elite self-fashioning in the Roman East," 306-334, in Simon Goldhill, editor, *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural identity, the Second Sophistic and the development of empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), with figures 1-2, and "The Roman Olympics," 187-213, in Kaïla, *Olympic Games*; and

cosmopolitan games were appropriate then—as they are now.[52]

The notion of Olympic decadence and abuse under Rome derives largely from Nero's Greek tour of 66-67 CE. Christian Western tradition, favoring the martyr Socrates above the persecutor Nero, accepted charges in hostile sources (e.g., Suetonius, *Nero* 23-25, 53; Dio Cassius 63.9.3-21.1) that Nero made a travesty of an inappropriately delayed set of Olympic Games by collecting fraudulent victories in irregular musical contests and a special ten-horse chariot race held for his benefit. Nero supposedly bribed the judges with huge amounts of money; furthermore, he always won—even when he failed to complete the chariot race. Rearranging other festivals as well, Nero collected some 1,808 victories during his tour. Despite his excesses, Nero has found some redemption lately as an earnest admirer of Greek culture. Some scholars point out that the Greeks had been sending him prizes for his lyrics, and Greek flattery about his musical talents prompted his visit. In Greece, he attempted to follow the rules, but Greeks presented him with too many honors, hailing him in Hellenistic fashion as a benefactor, arranging games and setting up wins. According to Near Eastern and Hellenistic ideologies of emperorship, Nero could not fail or be defeated.[53]

Since Olympia was a hallowed Greek center, early studies were not that interested in its supposedly decadent Roman history. Ruins in Roman brick were passed over in pursuit of good Greek stone, but archaeologists recently have concentrated on the Roman era with exciting results. After some difficulties in the later Hellenistic era, and despite some abuse by the Roman general Sulla in the context of a rebellion, Olympia in fact revived under Roman patronage. Philhellenic Roman emperors including Augustus, Nero, and Hadrian, who admired and supported Olympia's traditions and prestige, embellished the sanctuary. In 40 BCE, Agrippa helped restore the Temple of Zeus after a lightning strike, and Herod I of Judea was honored as a patron for assisting Olympia financially in 12 BCE. Like Philip of Macedon,

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Kyle, *SSAW*, 329-339.

52 Scanlon, *Eros*, 41, suggests that the Olympics became transformed as "ecumenical" games: "The metamorphosis was necessary and encountered remarkably little resistance from Elean organizers. It is a mistake to think of the resulting 'ecumenical Olympics' as a somehow debased or inferior version of the earlier festival. They were, rather, a surprisingly vigorous, new creation that survived centuries of radical political, economic, and religious changes in the Mediterranean world of Rome."

53 Recall that Alcibiades made a travesty of success in chariot racing in 416 BCE. On Nero, see Sinn, *Olympia*, 111-119; Richard C. Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 245-249; Susan E. Alcock, "Nero at Play? The Emperor's Grecian Odyssey," 98-111, in Jas Elsner and Jamie Masters, editors, *Reflections of Nero: Culture, History and Representation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

Augustus began an emperor cult at Olympia by rededicating the Metroon and setting a statue of himself within it. The emperor cult remained a feature in the sanctuary, and the Roman presence at Olympia grew. A clubhouse of the guild of victors at Olympia, with a swimming pool and courtyard, was begun by Nero and completed by the Flavians in the first century CE, and the facility stayed in use through the fourth century.

Some now regard the Roman imperial era, not the Hellenic Classical Age, as the height of Olympia's greatness. Olympia certainly experienced a renaissance in building, activity, and literary attention in the first to third centuries of the imperial era, especially in the second century. Around 150 CE, the wealthy Greek benefactor, Herodes Atticus, friend of the late Hadrian, added a Nymphaeum, an aqueduct and fountain house, which was decorated with statues of the emperor Antoninus Pius and the family of Herodes. Hadrian himself is associated with a significant renovation of the Olympic stadium and the judges' area within it.[54]

Rather than destroying Olympia, the Roman empire assisted its remarkable longevity. A bronze plaque found in 1994 in a gutter of the victors' clubhouse has revealed the names of fourteen additional Olympic victors, extending the names of known victors from 369 to 385 CE.[55] In time, however, the games faced opposition for being part of a pagan festival. Stratigraphy shows that the stadium was left open and possibly housed games in the early decades of the fifth century CE, so the contests perhaps outlived the emperor Theodosius I's ban of 393 CE on pagan cults but probably not Theodosius II's ban on the use of pagan temples in 435.

When Pausanias visited the sanctuary around 170 CE, Olympia was architecturally at its zenith, and his detailed description is the most influential source on the ancient Olympics. As noted above, traditional scholarship on ancient athletics relied heavily on literary sources (and Roman copies of sculpture) from many centuries after classical Greece. Ironically, Pausanias

54 On Roman Olympia, see Valavanis, *Games and Sanctuaries*, 136-143, and Scanlon, *Eros*, 40-63. The last of the Zanes dates to 125 CE, but it was not the last warning against misconduct at Olympia. Marble statues of the goddess Nemesis were placed on both sides of the entrance to the tunnel to the stadium, possibly in the second century: Valavanis, *Games and Sanctuaries*, 103 and 135. Intimately associated with venues for Roman spectacles, and with the power of the emperors, Nemesis symbolized social order and retributive justice; see Michael B. Hornum, *Nemesis, the Roman state, and the Games* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 49, 54, 65-66, and 89-90. Sustaining the message of the Zanes, Rome consciously and conspicuously endorsed Olympic regulations with these images.

55 J. Ebert, "Zur neuen Bronzeplatte mit Siegerinschriften aus Olympia (Inv. 1148)," *Nikephoros* 10 (1997), 217-233; Sinn, *Olympia*, 119-129; I. Weiler, "Der 'Niedergang' und das Ende der antiken Olympischen Spiele in der Forschung," *Grazer Beiträge* 12.3 (1985-86), 235-263.

and other Imperial Age writers of the Second Sophistic played key roles in fashioning the glorious image of early Olympia as a haven of peace and a force for pan-Hellenism. Pausanias' detailed compilation of sights and stories from Olympia long made him a treasured and trusted guide, but studies have shown that he carefully structured an early pan-Hellenic Olympia, selectively recording information at Olympia and commemorations of Olympic victories in various city-states, passing on suspect tales about origins and athletes, and emphasizing the archaic and classical periods more than the Hellenistic and Roman eras.[56] Adding to the later perceptions of Olympia, the writer Philostratus glorified early, supposedly natural Greek athletics and suggested later decline even as philhellenic emperors of his own era embellished Olympia and supported the spread of athletic festivals and facilities.[57] Later Greeks under Rome, nostalgic for the old days of independence and victory over Persia, enhanced the image of the *gymnasion*-trained athlete-soldier-citizen with harmony of body and mind, and beauty and goodness (*kalokagathia*) in balance. In the modern West, idealistic Hellenists and Olympists embraced such glorious notions for many years, but Olympic history is moving on.

Conclusion: Sport and spectacle in Greece and China

In conclusion, after challenging the modern West's appropriation of ancient Olympia, we can rewrite ancient sport as a matter not of decline from a classical pinnacle but of dynamic development before and therapeutic adaptation after the Classical Age of Greece. Archaeology suggests that the ancient Olympics did not begin as early or as gloriously, decline as tragically, or end as soon as we had assumed, and history reveals the fifth-century Classical Age as a time of nearly self-destructive politicization and factionalism.

The potential for comparative study of Greek and Chinese sport is rich on numerous specific issues: social status and mobility of athletes and performers, constructions of masculinity and virtue, gender, locations and facilities, state and local levels, degree of tolerance for violence, sport-management

56 Continuing reevaluations of Pausanias' recording, ordering, and structuring of Olympia as emblematic of pan-Hellenic culture, König, *Athletics and literature*, 158-204, argues that Pausanias' compilation, selection, and emphasis of athletic commemorations (inscriptions and statues) reflect contemporary tensions between attempts to recapture or distance the past. Newby, *Roman world*, 202-228, also discusses Pausanias' attention to archaic and classical victor monuments at Olympia in his construction of a pan-Hellenic past. See my review essay on both works, "Greek Athletics in the Roman Empire: Literature, Art, Identity and Culture," in *The Classical Journal* 103 (2007): 107-113.

57 König, *Athletics and literature*, 301-344.

concerns with decorum, judging, and corruption, to name a few. To discuss competitive physical performance in Greece and China more generally over its long history, however, I suggest a comparative model of overlapping activities within a spectrum or continuum from sport to spectacle, a relationship like the bisected circle of *yin* and *yang* with oppositional but interdependent elements. The traditional moralistic contrast of sport as good and spectacle as bad is too simplistic. Yes, Greek sport was more participatory and Roman spectacles were more spectatory, and, yes, Greek competitors were citizens while Roman performers often were not, but some performed, some watched, and some produced spectacular sports and sporting spectacles in both cultures.

In both Greece and China, sports (from rituals to athletics) were inherently spectacular, and many spectacles utilized the appeal of sport and physical performance. In small states in Greece and China, organized sport enhanced community, expressed ethnicity and identity, and provided inherently appealing and spectacular entertainment, but empires and super-states before and after Greece, and in China, orchestrated elaborate spectacles with eclectic elements and a higher degree of supervision and centralization. Often held as displays before or in honor of exalted leaders, imperial spectacles required more emphasis on preparation and bureaucratization, spectatorship, monumentality of settings or facilities, and standardization, but retaining the essential sporting elements of skilled physicality and suspense of outcome added to the appeal of state spectacles.

Ideological perspectives aside, the evaluation of activities as sports or spectacles is largely a numbers game—a matter of scale and scope (e.g., population, resources, geographical extent) from small city-states to great empires. Can we really compare Olympia, a sanctuary, with Athens, Sparta, or other city-states, or with Rome's Mediterranean-based empire? Olympia hosted a pan-Hellenic festival quadrennially, but, every year, Athens and Sparta each had many civic festivals, which were locally supported and emphasized local involvement. Mainland Greece, with a fourth-century BCE population of perhaps two million, eventually became a small part of Rome's vast empire. Rome, a city of over a million people in itself (perhaps four times the population of classical Athens), ruled an empire of perhaps fifty million spread over a million and a half square miles. With a mixed population, imperial resources, policies of consolidation and centralization, and a logistical talent for housing and organizing mass entertainments in massive architectural monuments, Rome sponsored elaborate and eclectic sports and spectacles until the empire and its resources collapsed.

Traditional sports and imperial spectacles were not incompatible in Greece or China. Sport came first, with local, culturally adapted variations, and sport endured within later ecumenical empires that also had centralized and spectacular state spectacles as mass entertainment and rituals of power. Unless we're focusing on the early rise (or later persistence) of local sport, once strong dynastic empires appear, the better comparison for sport and spectacle in China is not classical Olympia and Greece but Rome and the Roman empire (or pre-Greek Near Eastern empires).

Postscript on the modern Olympics

A model of overlapping sport and spectacle—spectacular sport or sporting spectacles—also applies to the modern Olympics in our modern global world of space-age technology, supernatural sport science, and invasive media attention. Ideals of brotherhood, participation, and good will still face challenges of resilient nationalism, greed, and graft. The International Olympic Committee must be diligent and not naïve, enforcing clean judging and appropriate conduct within the rules before and during the contests, and allowing positive, non-chauvinistic expressions of the ethnic pride of smaller nations as well as super-states. The games should be dynamic and open to constructive change, but humanism in sport—that sense of shared humanity and the thrill, joy, and good health that sport can bring—must be preserved.

Afterword

Olympic Philosophy between East and West

Heather L. Reid

Traditional lists of ancient Greece's contributions to the world generally include philosophy and the Olympic Games. The two institutions date to roughly the same epoch,[1] but little attention has been paid to their connection beyond associations of time and place. It is a relationship worth exploring, especially now that Beijing has hosted the third summer Olympic Games in the eastern hemisphere and the modern Olympic movement seeks to stretch its Hellenic heritage across time and cultures. From the seeds of pan-Hellenism, it hopes to reap multiculturalism: to put the ideas that unified ancient Greece in the service of uniting the world. But is this ambition even rational? Does it make sense to strive for multicultural goals using apparently monocultural means? In this afterword, I argue that the Olympic Games' ancient Hellenic heritage is particularly relevant to its modern multicultural goals. It is the philosophical nature of Olympic-style sport that gives the games the potential to build bridges between East and West and to promote the shared ideal of unity, articulated by the Chinese as their official Olympic slogan, "one world, one dream."

The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, China's emergence as a sport superpower, and the rise of East Asia in Olympic sport provide the Olympic movement with an opportunity to counterbalance its Western values and ideals with those of China and the East, thereby recentering Olympic philosophy between East and West, and redirecting Olympism back toward its ideological origins in ancient Greece. As Christos Evangeliou has shown, the ancient Hellenic philosophy from which modern Olympism is supposed to derive is not a characteristically Western ideology, as is often assumed, but rather a "centrist" perspective that resulted from a need to mediate among diverse cultures in the ancient Mediterranean, which contains in its original form

1 The games are considered older, dating to at least the eighth century BCE, while philosophy conventionally begins with Thales in the seventh century BCE.

many more characteristics now associated with the East.[2] Indeed, Panos Valavanis and Donald Kyle have shown that, in many ways, the Olympic Games peaked as a public event and spectacle in the Hellenistic period when the consolidation of the Macedonian empire infused some Near Eastern imperial practices into them. By reexamining the language of Olympism in light of Eastern ideas about metaphysics, politics, and especially the ethics of virtue, I hope to recast modern Olympic philosophy in an ecumenical light. This more tolerant and flexible understanding of modern Olympism better reflects the ancient Hellenic philosophy from which it derives and may better serve the movement's multicultural goals in this age of globalization.

It is perhaps unsurprising to claim that the relationship between Olympic-style sport and ancient Greek philosophy is built upon the concept of *agôn* (contest or struggle);[3] after all, the Olympic Games are still known in Greece as the *Olympiakoi Agônes*. What is controversial is the claim that *agôn* serves the cause of multiculturalism, given that it is the quality used by scholars such as Geoffrey Lloyd and Ren Hai to *distinguish* Greek from Chinese approaches to both philosophy and sport in antiquity.[4] By interpreting Olympic *agôn* as ideally truth-seeking or philosophical, however, I will expose its tendency to subvert authoritarian hierarchies, accommodate diverse world-views, and unify communities around more impartial and universal kinds of knowledge. We will observe this function by comparing various accounts of sport and philosophy in ancient Greece, from the funeral games in Homer's *Iliad* to Plato's prescription of athletic training for the cultivation of virtue in the *Republic*. In each context, Olympic-style *agôn* worked

2 This is the central argument of Christos C. Evangeliou, *Hellenic Philosophy: Origin and Character* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006).

3 The concept of *agôn* in Greek life is usually associated with Jacob Burckhardt, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization,* translated by Sheila Stern (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 160-213. This work contains Burkhardt's famous argument that Hellenic society was fundamentally agonistic, but the particular chapter should be read in context with the others to get both a sense of how Greek culture changed during the millennium as well as a history of the ancient Olympic Games.

4 According to G. E. R. Lloyd, *Adversaries and authorities: Investigations into ancient Greek and Chinese science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 121, "the basic contrast between Greek and Chinese cultures lies in the aggressive adversariality—the agonistic spirit—that animates the first, and the sense of compromise and the avoidance of confrontation that guide the second." This is an important comparison between the intellectual environments in ancient Greece and China. It does not assume previous knowledge of the literature and provides a useful context for a similar comparison of sport in these societies. Hai Ren, *A Comparative Analysis of Ancient Greek and Chinese Sport* (doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, 1988), 3, concludes that, in comparison with ancient Greek sport, the Chinese version is less centralized, standardized, and competitive.

to remove the concepts of virtue and merit from relativistic, culture-specific standards controlled by worldly rank and power and to push them toward universal ideals. In this way, athletic games resolve what I call the paradox of multiculturalism: the need to simultaneously affirm difference and commonality.

The ancient Olympic heritage

Recent research suggests that footraces began at Olympia as early as the eleventh century BCE, well before the site and its games gained importance as an interstate sanctuary in the eighth century BCE.[5] But the Olympic Games most certainly do not mark the birth of athletics. Scholars describe identifiably athletic activities more than a millennium before the Olympic Games among Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Minoans, and Hittites.[6] Already in these earliest accounts, sport is used to provide evidence of personal merit, divine favor, mastery of beasts, and worthiness to lead. Donald Kyle describes these earliest contests as "fields of play on which status was defined and social orders were (re)constituted." He notes, however, that competition was rarely open and equal. Superhuman emperors and Egyptian pharaohs could not risk losing.[7] However reassuring to their communities, these "contests" differed fundamentally from Olympic-style sport because they deliberately lacked the power to subvert authoritarian hierarchy.

What the Greeks brought to sport are what I call its philosophical or truth-seeking characteristics. As far back as the funeral games staged in Homer's *Iliad,* we find contests that are relatively open, impartial, and publicly scrutinized.[8] Indeed, the *Iliad*'s games showcase the power of sport to negotiate competing claims to honor. The dramatic tension that drives the epic is a dispute between King Agamemnon's political authority and Achilles' military prowess, which gravely threatens the Achaeans' common cause in the war against the Trojans. Although authority was generally unchallenged in ancient Chinese culture, the *Iliad*'s dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon generates an authentic question about worthiness to lead and

5 See Panos Valavanis, "Thoughts on the historical origins of the Olympic Games and the cult of Pelops in Olympia," *Nikephoros* (2007), and Catherine Morgan, *Athletes and oracles: The transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the eighth century BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 27-105.

6 See Scanlon, Chapter Six of this volume.

7 Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and spectacle in the ancient world* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 37.

8 Kyle, *Sport and spectacle,* 51, states that, "Myceneans knew and probably practiced chariot racing, some athletic contests (boxing, running, wrestling, possibly combats in arms), and possibly bull sports, all probably in the context of funerals but without artificial facilities."

serious community interest in determining it. The dispute is at least partially resolved and the Achaeans are reunited as a result of the games.

On the surface, it may appear that the contests staged at ancient Olympia were completely different from the warriors' games at Troy. Distinctive for their nudity and crowns, the ancient Olympic Games were part of a religious festival, centered upon ritual sacrifice. Their purpose was not to distribute wealth and honor among men, but rather to win the favor of the god. The athletes competed not to win a prize, but rather to become a prize: a kind of gift to the god. By honoring Zeus with their most beautiful and valuable assets, the community hoped to receive such practical benefits as bountiful harvests or victory in war. When we scratch the surface, however, and ask *why* athletic contests became part of a religious festival, we find the same truth-seeking function observed in Homer.

At Olympia, athletic contests served the epistemological needs of religious ritual: they were a reliable method of finding out what (or more accurately who) is most pleasing to the god. They began with this question, standardized impartial testing methods, and put their results in the service of community. The question originally addressed by the Olympic Games is the central question of Plato's *Euthyphro*: How can we know what is holy and therefore pleasing to the gods? It was a serious question in ancient Greek religion because the success of prayers and sacrifices was generally believed to depend on the gods' pleasure with the offerings. But traditional methods for discovering the holy were notoriously undependable. Euthyphro's technique of following mytho-poetic tradition lands him in the unholy position of prosecuting his father for murder. The declarations of oracles, such as Delphi's, were believed reliably true, but hopelessly enigmatic.[9] Witness the story of King Croesus boldly going to war after being told by the oracle that he would destroy a great kingdom: it turned out that the destroyed kingdom was his own. Whether one believes the divine mind to be perfect or merely capricious, knowing it was a persistent religious problem that could not be solved by appeal to myth, tradition, or worldly authority.

Long before philosophy forged its own path toward the mind of god, athletic success had been associated with divine favor. Hesiod had suggested that the gods favor athletes and Homer had depicted the gods Athena and Apollo as interested and even interfering in the results of athletic contests.[10] Given these beliefs, the staging of races seemed capable of answering

9 Olympia seemed to have housed an oracle for a time as well; see Pindar, *Olympian Odes* 8.1, and Strabo, *Geographica* 8.3.30.

10 Hesiod, *Opera et Dies*, 654-659. In Homer's *Iliad,* Athena and Apollo interfere with the chariot race, and Athena effectively determines the outcome of the footrace by making Odys-

religious questions by allowing the gods to select their own favorites. The earliest footraces at Olympia probably started at the edge of the sanctuary and finished at or near the altar, where the winner was given the honor of lighting the sacrificial flame.[11] The tokens of victory—an olive wreath, palm branch, and ribbons tied around one's head and limbs—were all associated with sacrificial animals and priests.[12] Over time, the testing conditions were standardized and contests were held in a specially prepared stadium with precise starting-blocks, equal running lanes, impartial judges, and clearly visible results. Competitors were stripped even of their social inequalities: they competed in the nude, anointed with sacred olive oil. By reducing the influence of worldly bias, the standardization and objectification of testing conditions at Olympia served not only the need to recognize divine preferences, but also the task of unifying a diverse, pan-Hellenic community.[13]

Olympia was an interstate sanctuary, and its standardized athletic games resolved a multicultural paradox by allowing the expression of political rivalries while simultaneously confirming a common Hellenic identity and rewarding cooperation. We must remember that a primary purpose of religious ritual was to gain practical benefits, such as bountiful harvests, for the community at large. By setting aside their worldly differences to impartially address religious questions, Hellenic rivals were effectively uniting for a common cause. The immense collection of statues, armor, and other valuables left in the sanctuary as thanks for answered prayers stood as enduring evidence that Olympia's method was effective and reliable.[14] Belief in the victor's social worth was affirmed by the grandiose rewards and privileges granted him by his home community. The greatest benefits from Olympia, however,

seus' competitor slip and fall in the homestretch.

11 This is confirmed by a passage in Philostratus, *Gymnasticus* 5, and archaeologists such as Valavanis, "Thoughts."

12 A very strong case can be made that the athletic victor symbolically *is* a sacrificial victim—not one who is slaughtered but one who is nevertheless dedicated or given over to the god. See Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion,* translated by John Raffan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 56, and David Sansone, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Burkert's book focuses on the various forms of Greek religion and includes a chapter on the cult at Olympia that sheds light on the religious function of athletic games.

13 This phenomenon reflects the beliefs of Parmenides (fr. 7.5T) and Pythagoras that truth, since it is reliable and impartial, is a point of community between gods and humans. See Arnold Hermann, *To Think Like a God: Pythagoras and Parmenides, the Origins of Philosophy* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2004), 26.

14 The proliferation of athletic contests as part of religious festivals all over the ancient world can be interpreted as further evidence that this method of seeking knowledge was popular and thought effective.

went to the larger Hellenic community. The religious cooperation expressed in the games paved the way for economic and military cooperation without subjection to a single authority. Indeed, the absence of such politically independent economic partners in contemporary China may explain why a similar festival did not develop there.[15]

Sport, philosophy, and the challenges of multiculturalism

I have argued that the distinctive feature of Olympic-style sport is its truth-seeking or philosophical nature. History also tells us that the ancient Olympic Games unified diverse, even warring, Hellenic tribes around a common cause.[16] If Olympic-style sport is to remain a force for intercultural communication and understanding today, however, we must better comprehend the link between the games' philosophical nature and their political potential. Already, the link to truth-seeking makes sport an expression of what Aristotle considered a natural and universal characteristic of all humanity. "All men by nature," he says, "desire to know."[17] Indeed, Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin identify the need for inquiry as a basic similarity between ancient Greek and Chinese cultures.[18] But this universal desire to know must be expressed by sport in a particular way if it is to meet the challenges of multiculturalism. What are the distinctive characteristics that sport shares with philosophy and how might they serve multicultural goals?

The first characteristic of an authentic desire to know is the acknowledgment that one does not know already. This was, of course, the famous dictum of Socrates—"I know only that I don't know"—an enduring idea now emblazoned on T-shirts for sale in Athens's Plaka. Over a century before Socrates' birth, however, Pythagoras was said to have invented the term "philosopher," which means "lover of wisdom," in order to describe those thinkers who

15 Lloyd, *Adversaries and authorities,* 128, makes this contrast in comparing ancient Greek and Chinese philosophy, as does Ren, *A Comparative Analysis,* 216-217, in comparing their sports. The size of China, both in terms of population and space, is another explanation for lack of a similar festival; see Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early China and Greece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 14.

16 It is perhaps more than coincidence that athletic contests take hold at Olympia about the time that it becomes an interstate sanctuary, set apart from competing political domains for the express purpose of worshiping a common god. The Olympic Games' miracle was not supernatural. Athletics allowed Hellenes to simultaneously embrace their local identities *and* shared cultural ethnicity, and they can still do so today. See Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and spectacle*, 76.

17 Aristotle, "Metaphysics," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* two volumes, edited by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1.1.980a.

18 Lloyd and Sivin, *The Way and The Word*, 2.

acknowledged their own ignorance.[19] Insofar as *agôn* is philosophical, then, it must first be grounded in doubt and acknowledged ignorance. It must address an authentic question—a question that cannot be answered simply by appeal to worldly authority or accepted tradition. Athletic contests, accordingly, must begin with their results in question.

The second requirement of truth-seeking, the application of impartial standards, is intimately connected to the first. Those who reject the assumption that our beliefs qualify as knowledge exhibit an appreciation for the limitations of human subjectivity. Insofar as "truth" indicates something universal and eternal, the knowledge of such truth(s) must be reliable and demonstrable—not just a matter of belief, persuasion, or worldly power. This impulse toward the universality of truth is often identified as the origin of philosophy. It apparently inspired the earliest Greek philosophers from Miletus, in Asia Minor, as well as the Pythagoreans, who believed that there was order in the world, or *kosmos*, which could be measured and understood using impartial criteria such as number and proportion.[20] Impartial mechanisms for truth-seeking act to neutralize the effects of human fallibility and worldly bias, providing equal opportunity for diverse ideas. The basic structure of Olympic-style sports, such as common starting-lines and level playing fields, exhibit a similar drive for rational impartiality.

The third characteristic of philosophical *agôn* is the public nature of the contest: the spectators' scrutiny of the process and the community's interest in the results.[21] In the funeral games of Homer's *Iliad*, and at ancient Olympia, the community is unified by the games. Olympic-style *agôn* is not a popularity contest; as Plato frequently reminds us, a majority of subjective opinions is just as fallible as a solitary one. Rather, the crowd's surveillance of the impartially judged contests assures that the rules are followed and the results therefore accepted as valid.[22] As discussed by Panos Valavanis in

19 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Volume I, translated by R. D. Hicks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 1.12.

20 The Milesians sought a single substance underlying all things. The Greek term, *kosmos,* means not only universe but order. The general idea of Pythagoreanism was to impose order on disorder. Numerical philosophy emphasized proportion and a common standard by which all things could be measured/ordered. See, for example, Hermann, *To Think Like a God*, 106.

21 This is implied in the common roots of the words *agôn* and *agora.*

22 Stephen G. Miller, *Arete: Greek Sports from Ancient Sources,* second edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 19, takes the Olympic Games' lack of subjective judging to be a key reason for their endurance and prestige relative to other athletic festivals, such as Delphi's Pythian Games, which did host subjectively judged contests. There were subjectively judged contests to choose heralds and trumpeters at Olympia, but they were not on the order of the athletic contests. This is a very useful collection of primary texts in translation relevant to sports in ancient Greece. Organized by subject, this book is easy to find and enjoyable to

Chapter Nine, this public scrutiny in turn functioned to ensure a surprisingly high degree of impartiality and fairness among the Elean judges, who at one point in history were pressured by public opinion to alter previous practices that had led to occasional bias in favor of Elean competitors. This process accommodates competing claims to virtue among diverse factions and individuals without resort to tradition, authority, or violence. Since it has a common interest in the accuracy of the contest results, the observing community's scrutiny also assures acceptance—even when the outcome subverts conventional authority or wisdom.

The meeting of East and West

It is plausible that the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing worked athletically to accommodate competing claims to virtue through the characteristics of authentic questioning, impartiality, and public scrutiny. The Chinese proved that they deserve recognition as a force on the global stage, and the United States demonstrated that its own claims to excellence still have merit. But if it is the philosophical nature of Olympic sport that promotes multiculturalism, then Olympic philosophy, too, should be capable of accommodating diverse cultural traditions. Such ideological multiculturalism is much more in question. Noting that the modern Olympic movement is steeped in the beliefs of the West, some would say that Olympism's arrival in the East is nothing more than a victory for Western cultural imperialism. Another way to look at it, however, is as an opportunity for the Eurocentric Olympic movement to counterbalance its Western values and ideals with those of China and the East, thereby recentering its philosophy between East and West, and redirecting Olympism back toward its ideological origins in ancient Greece.

In its first fundamental principle, Olympism declares itself to be a philosophy of life.[23] Immediately, this raises a challenge to multiculturalism. Is everyone in the Olympic movement expected to have the same philosophy of life? What do we mean by "philosophy of life"? René Descartes, the "father" of modern Western philosophy, thought of himself as a "citizen of the world"[24] and regarded his work as culturally transcendent because it used

read: a good place to start studying ancient Greek sport. See also see Nigel Crowther, "The role of heralds and trumpeters and Greek athletic festivals," in *Athletika: Studies on the Olympic Games and Greek athletics* (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 2004), 185.

23 International Olympic Committee, Fundamental Principle of Olympism #1, *Olympic Charter* (Lausanne: IOC, 2004), p. 9.

24 In at least one of his early writings, Descartes used the pseudonym "Polybius, citizen of the world"; René Descartes, "Preliminaries," in John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald

what he thought were the culturally unbiased tools of logic and reason to uncover universally valid truths.[25] Unfortunately, the ideal of rational impartiality is very difficult to achieve in practice. Too often, it amounts to the stronger culture forcing its "universal" idea of truth on the weaker. But when non-Western ways of thinking are applied to Olympism, we find that the "truth" is a much less rigid concept.

In Eastern philosophy, truth need not have one exclusive expression. In fact, the attempt to nail down the truth by articulating or "naming" it is believed to lead one astray. From the Eastern perspective, truth seems to be intrinsically mysterious, Laozi says at the opening of the *Daodejing*:

> A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way.
> A name that can be named is not a constant name.
> Nameless, it is the beginning of Heaven and earth;
> Named, it is the mother of the myriad creatures
> And so,
> Always eliminate desires in order to observe its mysteries;
> Always have desires in order to observe its manifestations.
> These two come forth in unity but diverge in name,
> Their unity is known as an enigma.
> Within this enigma is yet a deeper enigma.
> The gate of all mysteries.[26]

Laozi's resistance to "naming" the *Dao* and his characterization of it as an "enigma" and the "gate of mysteries" reflects the foundational principles of Hellenic philosophy: uncertainty and wonder. "Philosophy" *means* "love of learning" and, in its ancient expression, reflects an attitude or spirit rather than the crusade for universal truths with which it came to be associated later in the West.

When truth is understood as intrinsically mysterious, the emphasis shifts from result to process and divergent understandings are actually encouraged.[27] Socrates did not articulate universal truths; in fact, he did not

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Murdoch, editors, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes,* Volume I, 2, n.1.

25 Says Descartes, "the power of judging well and distinguishing true from false—which we properly call 'good sense' or 'reason'—is naturally equal in all men"; Descartes, "Discourse on Method," VI.1, in *Ibid*., 111.

26 Laozi, *Daodejing* 1.1, translated by Philip J. Ivanhoe in Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, editors, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy,* second edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001); all quotations from the *Daodejing* are from this source unless otherwise indicated.

27 Sarah Allan, "Introduction," in Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, translated by D. C. Lau (New York: Everyman, 1994), xxi. It is often pointed out that the *Daodejing* has been translated into Eng-

write at all. Plato's Socratic dialogues aim to show readers their ignorance rather than to communicate knowledge. This Hellenic spirit fits perfectly with Laozi's description of the Daoist sage:

> To know that one does not know is best;
> Not to know but to believe that one knows is a disease.
> Only by seeing this disease as a disease can one be free of it.
> Sages are free of this disease;
> Because they see this disease as a disease, they are free of it.[28]

Confucius also identifies "love of learning" as his own characteristic virtue.[29] "Love of learning" is the attitude that prevents such important qualities as trustworthiness from becoming vices—in this case, "harmful rigidity."[30] Furthermore, it is an attitude that promotes engagement with others. As Confucius comments: "Do I regard myself as a possessor of wisdom? Far from it. But if even a simple peasant comes in all sincerity and asks me a question, I am ready to thrash the matter out, with all its pros and cons, to the very end."[31]

The Eastern and Hellenic emphases on attitude and process rather than on results not only serves the philosophical project, but also the athletic one. Confucius identified ritual as the primary means for cultivating appropriate attitudes, and the Olympic Games are already rich in meaningful rituals.[32]

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lish more than any other Chinese text. The best explanation for this is neither popularity nor accuracy, but rather the fact that the original Chinese is so richly ambiguous that it accommodates an enormous variety of interpretations. My own experience teaching the text is that translations vary dramatically, and the only way to get at the variety of possible interpretations is to consult several of them.

28 *Daodejing*, 71.

29 Confucius, *Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, translated by Edward Slingerland (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003), 5.28: "In any village of ten households there are surely those who are as dutiful or trustworthy as I am, but there is no-one who matches my love of learning."

30 *Analects* 17.8 (Slingerland): "Loving Goodness without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of foolishness. Loving wisdom without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of deviance. Loving trustworthiness without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of harmful rigidity. Loving uprightness without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of intolerance. Loving courage without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of unruliness. Loving resoluteness without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of willfulness."

31 Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, translated by Arthur Waley (New York: Vintage, 1989.), 9.7.

32 Besides the emulation of worthy models, Confucian virtue is shaped by the sincere practice of ritual (*li*). Ritual promotes virtue by putting the practitioner in the right state of mind—that is, by cultivating the kinds of attitudes that constitute *jen* itself. Ritual functions as a tool to

More important, emphasis on process rather than results allows for multiple interpretations of success.[33] It is this elasticity that serves as the first key distinction between analytical Western philosophy and traditional Eastern philosophy. The intellectual humility characteristic of Olympism's ancient Hellenic heritage better serves the Olympic movement's modern multicultural goals.

After stating that "Olympism is a philosophy of life," the Olympic movement's first fundamental principle goes on to explain its vision of that life as one "exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind."[34] From the Eastern perspective, the emphasis in this statement rests squarely on the phrase, "balanced whole." As reflected in *yin yang*, the best-known symbol of Chinese thought, existence is perceived inclusively as a harmonious collection of complementary opposites: the emphasis is on the whole and not on the parts. The Western analytical tradition (just as its name suggests) focuses on analyzing or, to use Descartes's locution, "divid[ing] up into the smallest possible parts."[35] Hence, it conceives humanity in terms of individual persons composed of separate minds and bodies.[36] This view is also found among the ancient Hellenes, but modern Western philosophy's epistemological ranking of mind over body hinders the Olympic cause. Descartes's search for an irrefutable cornerstone upon which to build certain knowledge yielded the famous statement, "I think, therefore I exist."[37] Since

shape and constrain a person's natural exuberance and desire (*Analects* 1.2, 6.27, 8.2, and 9.1 [Slingerland]). Specifically, it requires a person to subordinate personal desires and interests to something larger. From the Eastern point of view, however, such flexibility better serves the ideal: "When it comes to being Good," says Confucius, "defer to no one, not even your teacher" (15.36).

33 This is especially important in an age in which the medal count is so closely linked to population and GDP that most countries in the world cannot hope for Olympic success in the conventional sense. See Andrew B. Bernard and Meghan R. Busse, "Who Wins the Olympic Games: Economic Resources and Medal Totals," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 86:1 (February 2004), 413-417. See also Arthur Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1939), 36: "Success, however, is a theme seldom dealt with in the *Analects*; for it is well known that the Way 'does not prevail in the world,' and the merits of the true *chün-tzu* are not such as the world is likely to recognize or reward."

34 See *supra*, n. 23.

35 Descartes, "Rules for the Direction of the Mind," 13, in *op. cit.*, 51.

36 Probably reflecting contemporary ethical discussions about human will as the seat of moral responsibility, Olympism specifies body, will, and mind.

37 Descartes, "Second Meditation," 25, in Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch, editors, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes,* Volume II, 17. Note that "I think, therefore I exist" is a paraphrase of Descartes's main point in the "Second Meditation," not an exact quotation. I cannot resist sharing an anecdote here. While giving a series of lectures on philosophy of sport in Beijing, I asked the class whether anyone had heard of Descartes. A Chinese student raised

it is impossible to think without at the same time existing, Descartes took the act of thinking, and therefore his mind, to be the one most certain aspect of his existence—infinitely more certain and important than ideas about his body, which inevitably depended upon unreliable senses.[38] By contrast, in Chapter Five, Vivienne Lo shows the importance of "sense and sensuality" in ancient China.

Sport, conventionally associated with the body, has suffered from Western philosophy's emphasis on a separate and superior mind. Olympism's attempt to "exalt" sport by combining body with will and mind may be a reaction to this hierarchy. What Eastern philosophy offers, however, is a holistic picture of the human being that emphasizes internal harmony over external muscularity. Westerners tend to think of the body structurally, in terms of flesh and bones, muscles and levers, whereas East Asians focus on the internal flow of blood, *xue*, and energy, *qi*.[39] Westerners tend to associate thought with the brain, while the ancient Chinese located thought in the middle of a body, associating it with the "heart-mind" and sensations experienced in the belly.[40] In philosophical terms, the root or seed of virtue (*de*), intimately connected with the Way (*Dao*), resides within a person and is cultivated partly through physical movement. Confucians perform ritual (*li*) in order to "remember" the *Dao*,[41] while Daoist martial artists use movement to cultivate *qi*, the "floodlike energy" Zhuangzi takes to be the source of virtue.[42]

Ancient Hellenic philosophy generally shares the Western distinction between the spiritual mind or soul (the word *psychê* designates both) and a less

her hand and said, "We think, therefore we exist." I was delighted both that she could actually quote Descartes, and that she had added an Eastern spin by replacing the individual "I" with the collective "we."

38 Descartes found the mind and its characteristic act of thinking to be really distinct from—and more important than—the body, other persons, and nature itself. True to his Christian upbringing, he associated mind with non-physical spiritual substance, and even found a way to keep his god atop the hierarchy. Descartes, "Third Meditation," *Ibid*.

39 Akio Inoue, "Critique of modern Olympism: A Voice from the East," in Gertrud Pfister and Liu Yueye, editors, *Sports—The East and the West: Documentary volume of the third international ISHPES seminar, "Sports, the East and the West": Shunde, Guangdong, China, 16-22 September 1996* (Sankt Agustin, Germany: Academia-Verlag, 1999), 165.

40 See Waley, *Three Ways of Thought*, 44.

41 Susan Brownell, *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 125: "They make use of a principle recognized by Confucius fifteen hundred years before Bourdieu: when structured body movements are assigned symbolic and moral significance, and are repeated often enough, they generate a moral orientation toward the world that is habitual because the body as a mnemonic device serves to reinforce it."

42 "Zhuangzi," in Ivanhoe and Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy,* 365; all quotations from the *Zhuangzi* are from this source unless otherwise indicated.

important material body. What is different is that ancient Hellenes thought of bodily movement as a product of the *psychê* (mind/soul)[43] and, in Plato's case at least, sought to train the *psychê* for virtue—like the Chinese—partly through bodily movement. In the *Republic*, an educational program in gymnastics is established "chiefly for the sake of the soul" (410bc) and athletic contests are used to determine worthiness for advanced study.[44] The related Platonic doctrine that the knowledge sufficient for virtue is "recollected" rather than acquired also reflects Chinese holism. In adapting its philosophy to serve its multicultural goals, the Olympic movement would do well to adopt the ancient Greek and Chinese attitudes toward truth and the body.

Virtue ethics as common ground for a multicultural Olympic movement

Perhaps the most beneficial contribution that ancient Greek and Chinese philosophy can make to the contemporary Olympic movement concerns ethics. Olympism's ethical vision is articulated thus: "Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles" (*Olympic Charter*, 9). From the Western point of view, the key phrase here is "universal fundamental ethical principles." The discovery and articulation of such principles was the focus of modern European ethical philosophy. Immanuel Kant expressed the categorical imperative as a rule: "Act only according to the maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."[45] Like Descartes before him, Kant took his imperative to be infallible, unavoidable, and applicable to all humanity because it was derived from pure reason.[46] In principle, it was an attempt to raise individuals above personal feelings and particular concerns

43 For Homer, the *psychê* was life itself and the word for body, *sôma,* signified a corpse—a body lacking in movement because its *psychê* had escaped it at death. Plato uses the word *sôma* to signify living bodies and he considers the *psychê* to be the seat of reason, but he doesn't seem to have abandoned the idea that the *psychê,* and most specifically the spirited part of the soul, *thymos,* is what moves the body. For an excellent discussion of these terms and ideas, see Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: In Greek Philosophy and Literature,* translated by T. G. Rosenmeyer (New York: Dover, 1982), 8-22.

44 See Heather L. Reid, "Sport and Moral Education in Plato's *Republic*," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 34:2 (2007), 160-175.

45 Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 421.

46 *Ibid*., 411: "…principles should be derived from the universal concept of a rational being in general, since moral laws should hold for every rational being as such."

that could not be justified in a universal (and hence ethical) way.

In practice, however, unbiased application of any rule is difficult. The typically Western belief that there are such things as universal, fundamental, ethical principles encourages people to make and enforce rules derived from sources, such as a definition of human rights, which claim to be universal even though they represent the view of a particular group. This situation certainly contributed to the attacks on China's human-rights record by activists, politicians, and the Western media that surrounded the Beijing Olympic Games, and to the resulting perception by many Chinese thinkers that human rights are a question of national sovereignty and not universal principles. The danger in these situations is that those in power tend to impose their paradigm upon the "uncivilized" by punishing or excluding those who don't follow their rules.[47] Says Laozi:

> The more prohibitions and rules,
> The poorer people become….
> The more elaborate the laws,
> The more they commit crimes.[48]

The alternative to rules offered by both ancient Greek and Chinese philosophy is virtue ethics. In a speech six months after the end of the Beijing Olympics, Hein Verbruggen, who had been the International Olympic Committee's liaison with Beijing as the chair of the coordination commission, contested the assumption of human-rights activists that their view of human rights is universal. He argued that the IOC has its own vision of human rights based on classical Greek virtues. The focus on virtue rather than on rules in ethics may better serve Olympic ideals, not least because it focuses on personal perfection rather than on the correction and control of others.[49] In this

47 Arguably, the very founding of the IOC was the invention of a bureaucracy to exemplify and enforce these universal principles. Conveniently, it was an aristocratic bureaucracy that could back up its principles with worldly power. Inconveniently, however, the group tended to confuse its social and cultural values with the universal principles it was supposed to be promoting. Consistent with the Western spirit of modernism and colonialism, the wealthy Europeans of the IOC interpreted Olympism as a successful, civilized ideology to be disseminated for the benefit of a largely uncivilized world. The "educational value of a good example" would be understood here as setting up a paradigm of European aristocracy to which youth around the world would aspire to conform.

48 Laozi, *Daodejing* 57, in *Tao Te Ching: Lao Tzu*, translated by Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993).

49 It should be noted here that there is an ancient Chinese philosophical tradition called "Legalism" that rejects the virtue-based approach of Confucianism and Daoism, and focuses precisely on law and punishment; see Waley, *Three Ways of Thought,* 152-196.

respect, the Eastern tradition is very similar to the version of classical Greek ethics that Verbruggen outlined, and perhaps indicates a common ground on which East and West can move forward together.

Modern Western ethics have traditionally focused either upon rules and principles (as in Kant's deontological ethics) or upon concrete consequences (as in utilitarianism). Virtue ethics, by contrast, focus on the character or excellence of the person doing the action rather than on rules or results. In this way, virtue ethics are able to avoid the kind of precise definitions and "objective" measurement of results that cause so much conflict in practice among those stipulating the definitions and taking the measurements. By understanding good actions in terms of good persons, virtue ethics leave the question of goodness and virtue themselves open to negotiation and demonstration. In this way, a diversity of voices from various cultural traditions and personal perspectives are considered without reducing the discussion to a moral relativism that lacks any standard for evaluation. As with athletic games themselves, virtue ethics begin with agreement about basic criteria, such as the format and objective of the event, then proceed to accommodate various perspectives within that basic format.

The ancient Greek concept of virtue (*aretê*) is already familiar to Olympic ideology. The ancient Chinese concept of virtue (*de*) is not so different from *aretê* as it might at first seem. First, both *aretê* and *de* are understood as a kind of power in the soul, what the Greeks called *dynamis* and Sinologist Arthur Waley translated as "moral force." [50] In both traditions, this soul-power is connected with the body: for the Chinese, because they made no strict distinction between body and soul; for the Greeks, because bodily movement (*kinêsis*) was a product of the soul and therefore a means both to cultivate and demonstrate its health.[51] Because it is a power of the soul, virtue is available to everyone no matter their race, class, or gender. The Confucian philosopher Mencius claimed that the seeds or "sprouts" of virtue are found naturally in every human being; indeed, he compares having them to having four limbs: "to have these four sprouts and to say of oneself that one is unable to be virtuous is to steal from oneself."[52] In Chapter Eight, Mu-chou

50 For more on the nature of *dynamis* and its connection to *aretê*, see Plato, *Republic* 477bc and 430b. *Analects*, 33 (Waley), says that *de* "is a force or power closely akin to what we call character and contrasted with *li,* 'physical force.'"

51 For the connection between *kinêsis* and *psychê,* see Plato, *Phaedrus* 245c-246a, *Laws* X 894c, and *Sophist* 254d; and Aristotle, *De Anima* 413a-b and 432a-433b.

52 Mencius 2A6 in Ivanhoe and Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. The entire passage reads as follows: "From this we can see that if one is without the heart of compassion, one is not a human. If one is without the heart of disdain, one is not a human. If one is without the heart of deference, one is not a human. If one is not without the heart of approval

Poo relates the notion of "sprouts" to the ideal of the hero in ancient and contemporary China, and points out that the first character in the Chinese word *ying-xiong* originally meant "a new sprout of plants, or flower bud."

In keeping with the botanical metaphor, we may note that virtue is cultivated within individuals rather than taught or transmitted from outside. This reduces the importance of worldly power and authority in achieving virtue. Reflecting Olympism's "educational value of a good example," Confucius says that one can always "find a teacher" either by emulating good people or being reminded by bad people "of what needs to be changed in myself."[53] Because the "teacher" here is not an external authority, and the lesson learned is not a fixed formula, the virtue-ethics model evades the pitfalls of modern Western ethics. Authority in virtue ethics is derived not from a leader's worldly position, but rather from his or her virtue.[54] Confucius advises that, "To demand much from oneself and little from others is the way [for a ruler] to banish discontent."[55] This political ideal may be called a virtue culture, in which the leader's virtue has a magnetic effect that draws others in and inspires them to be and do their best within the community. Virtue (*de*), says Confucius, "never dwells in solitude; it will always bring neighbours."[56] To illustrate, we might imagine a champion basketball team led by one great player whose excellence inspires everyone else to work hard and play their best. Star athletes are often considered to be modern-day heroes.

The inspirational value of athletic excellence is not virtue ethics' only connection to sport. Virtue ethics also recognize the difficulty of achieving virtue, and therefore emphasize the process or struggle (*agôn*). For the Hel-

and disapproval, one is not a human. The heart of compassion is the sprout of benevolence. The heart of disdain is the sprout of righteousness. The heart of deference is the sprout of propriety. The heart of approval and disapproval is the sprout of wisdom. People having these four sprouts is like having four limbs. To have these four sprouts and to say of oneself that one is unable to be virtuous is to steal from oneself. To say that one's ruler is unable to be virtuous is to steal from one's ruler. In general, having these four sprouts within oneself, if one knows to fill them all out, it will be like a fire starting up, a spring breaking through! If one can merely fill them out, they will be sufficient to care for all within the Four Seas. If one merely fails to fill them out, they will be insufficient to serve one's parents."

53 *Analects* 7.22 (Slingerland); see also *Analects* 4.17: "When you see someone who is worthy, concentrate on becoming their equal; when you see someone who is unworthy, use this as an opportunity to look within yourself."

54 G. E. R. Lloyd, *Ancient Worlds, Modern Reflections: Philosophical Perspectives on Greek and Chinese Science and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press [USA], 2004), 45: "Rather, the focus of Chinese attention was usually on persuading the ruler or his ministers or those in positions of power or influence—and to achieve this end, of winning people round, without being *seen* to be manipulative."

55 *Analects* 15.14 (Waley).

56 *Analects* 4.25 (Waley).

lenes, *agôn* is not just a name for sport; it generally represents the human struggle to perfect ourselves through effort and toil. Plato describes the path to virtue as arduous and uphill. Confucius concurs: "Goodness cannot be obtained until what is difficult has been duly done"[57] As in athletics, training and ritual are key to the process in both traditions. Once a state of virtue or excellence is attained, however, good actions flow effortlessly from it—not unlike an athlete in the "zone" who acts without deliberation and can do no wrong. The Chinese call this *wuwei* (effortlessness). Plato believed that a virtuous person couldn't help but act rightly.[58] So the athletic struggle for excellence mirrors and sometimes combines with the lifelong struggle for virtue. Near the end of the *Republic*, Socrates says: "The struggle (*agôn*) to be good rather than bad is important, Glaucon, much more important than people think. Therefore, we mustn't be tempted by honor, money, rule, or even poetry into neglecting justice and the rest of virtue." (*Republic* X, 608b)

Freedom from such worldly concerns as popularity, money, and power is another feature of virtue ethics that might benefit the Olympic movement. In the Eastern tradition, Laozi declares: "The worst calamity is the desire to acquire." But,

> To produce without possessing;
> To act with no expectation of reward;
> To lead without lording over;
> Such is Enigmatic Virtue![59]

Confucius actually distinguishes the virtuous person from the non-virtuous by explaining that the former "understands rightness" while the latter "understands profit."[60] He adds that good people feel at home in goodness whereas others pursue virtue only in the hopes of profiting from it.[61] Hellenic virtue ethics need look no farther than Socrates' famous chastisement of the Athenians for their "eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation, and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom, or truth, or the best possible state of your soul."[62] It is the achievement of virtue

57 *Analects* 6.20 (Waley).
58 This is often called Plato's denial of "*akrasia*" (weakness of will); Socrates argues at *Protagoras* 355a ff. that if an agent has true knowledge of the right thing to do, he couldn't help but do it.
59 *Daodejing*, 46, 10 (Ivanhoe).
60 *Analects* 4.16 (Slingerland).
61 *Analects* 4.2 (Slingerland).
62 Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates,* translated by G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1975), 29d.

in itself that brings appropriate honors, wealth, and authority with it. Indeed, the Olympic movement's popularity, power, and profits all depend on its moral worthiness: corruption among athletes, officials, and IOC members is its greatest threat.

Moreover, virtue ethics mesh well with Olympism's political goal: "…to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity."[63] Violence amounts to weakness for Laozi because it begets further violence:

> Use Tao to help rule people.
> This world has no need for weapons,
> Which soon turn on themselves.
> Where armies camp, nettles grow;
> After each war, years of famine.
> The most fruitful outcome
> Does not depend on force,
> But succeeds without arrogance
> Without hostility
> Without pride
> Without resistance
> Without violence.[64]

Confucius also condemns force as ineffective: "If you try to guide the common people with coercive regulations and keep them in line with punishments," he says, they "will become evasive and will have no sense of shame."[65] A virtue-ethical approach not only accommodates both Eastern and Western ideas, it promotes the principles of Olympism without reducing them to a formula or enforcing them as rules. The common ethical denominator in virtue ethics, like athletics, is simply our humanity.

Conclusion: The model of harmony

The Olympic movement's ability to legislate and enforce its own values through punishment and exclusion has enjoyed little success, though this did

63 IOC, Fundamental Principle of Olympism #2, *Olympic Charter*, 9.
64 *Daodejing* 30 (Addiss & Lombardo).
65 *Analects* 2.3 (Slingerland); the rest of the passage reads: "If, however, you guide them with Virtue, and keep them in line by means of ritual, the people will have a sense of shame and will rectify themselves."

not stop China's critics from calling for a boycott of the Beijing Olympics.[66] A renewed focus on inspiration through virtue, both the leaders' own and that of the athletes, may help the movement reach its goals. This was the model in ancient Greece, where a healthy skepticism about the reliability of *nomos* (law or convention) was combined with a deep respect for *physis*—nature in the sense of ultimate reality, much like the Chinese *Dao* or Way.[67] The ancient Hellenes saw harmony among virtue, politics, and nature. Aristotle said that a true city-state "must be concerned with virtue" because, otherwise, its laws are reduced to mere agreement and the community loses its ability to make people "good and just."[68] In Plato's philosophy, the just community reflects the virtuous soul, which itself moves in congruence with the heavens.[69] An emphasis in the Olympic movement on virtue rather than rules that are assumed to be universal emerges as an appropriate effort toward "promoting a peaceful society," one that ably reflects both Eastern philosophy and Olympism's own Hellenic heritage.[70]

This effort to view Olympism through the lens of Chinese philosophy is not aimed at supplanting the modern Western view—or any other. The goal is just mutual understanding: to become aware that even common values expressed in clear language can be interpreted differently by different people without losing their philosophical meaning. Just as Olympic athletes from diverse cultural backgrounds compete in a common arena, diverse understandings of Olympism can find common ground. And the winner of the contest in a given Olympiad, or even the dominant athlete in a given era, does not tell the whole story of the sport. To find meaning, we must consider a panorama of perspectives and seek harmony among them. Practiced philosophically, Olympic-style sport puts the competitive individualism associated with the West in service of the harmony and unity characteristic of the East.

The point, in the end, is not that one perspective is superior to the other or even that individual regions should privilege their particular heritages.

66 Examples that come to mind include the previously discussed issue of "amateurism," the ongoing battle against doping, and the occasional exclusion of countries for political reasons, such as South Africa during *apartheid*.

67 Lloyd, *Ancient Worlds*, 163: "Along with a strong sense of the objectivity of *phusis*, nature, went different views of what was often its antonym, where the term *nomos* covered laws, customs, conventions."

68 Aristotle, *Politics* 1280b5-12.

69 Plato's *Republic* postulates three social classes that reflect this tripartite theory of the soul. The connection between virtue and planetary movement is found in *Timaeus* 47bc, 90d.

70 See IOC Sport and Environment Commission, *Olympic Movement's Agenda 21: Sport for Sustainable Development* (Lausanne: IOC, 1996), www.olympic.org.

The point is to *learn from one another*—to realize that true philosophy is a love of wisdom and learning, which can cooperatively search after truth and the one "Way" without limiting its meaning to a single expression. This is Olympism's Hellenic heritage, one that served (and probably spawned) Olympic ideals for over 1,000 years in antiquity.

Contributors

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