



**UNIVERSITY OF PELOPONNESE
FACULTY OF HUMAN MOVEMENT AND
QUALITY OF LIFE SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS ORGANIZATION
AND MANAGEMENT**

MASTER'S THESIS

**“OLYMPIC STUDIES, OLYMPIC EDUCATION, ORGANIZATION
AND MANAGEMENT OF OLYMPIC EVENTS”**

**“Women and Sports in Ancient Greece: Participation, Spectatorship and Cult in
Olympia”**

Vasiliki Nikolouli

Supervisor: Susan E. Brownell

Profession: Professor

Sparta, December 2012



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present the position of women in the social life of ancient Greece during the Minoan, Mycenaean, (particularly) the archaic and classical, and Hellenistic times. The paper presents women who, due to their work and virtues, have excelled in various fields (science, literature, sports). It focuses on participation of women in athletic contests, which were organized in the context of religious festivals. Moreover, the paper studies the *Heraia* festival and the relationship of women to the corresponding male festival of the Olympic Games. The presence of women in the public life of the Greek state (*polis*) was limited, with the exception of Sparta, which indicates a different, more liberal attitude towards women. However there is fragmentary archaeological and literary evidence, that some women in ancient Greece managed to impose their presence on the social reality of their time, with courage, spirituality and talent, and managed to leave their name indelibly written in the pages of history.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is a longstanding belief that a woman's place in the ancient Greek world was in the home, tending the hearth and supervising domestic activities while men concentrated on the important affairs of politics, theatre, athletics and the like. The female stereotype is further reinforced by the prohibition of women in public affairs, (probably with the exception of Sparta) as well as in sciences, medicine, philosophy and sports. The evidence is fragmentary and slight in comparison to the material available about men's social, public and athletic life. What evidence is available to the scholars' points to the fact that mainly women from aristocratic and high class could possibly reach an educational level equal to men's.

The essay's limits are chronological and geographical. It focuses on the ancient world of Greece covering a period from the Minoan times to the Hellenistic era. The methodological tools have been a) the study and presentation of the ancient literary sources which refer to the position of women in the ancient society, women's customs, beliefs, religious and social participation in the various Greek festivals and events b) the study and presentation of earlier works of modern scholars on the same topic and their conclusions c) the parallel comparison and discussion of the different theories that have been put forth.

The aims of the present essay are a) to make a total presentation of the social status of women during different eras in ancient Greece and to compare women's social status with that of men's b) to present women in antiquity, who have been distinguished in different sciences (medicine, philosophy, sports) and c) to examine the role of women in the athletic events, their interest or participation in different sports and their role (if any) at the Olympic Games, the most important Panhellenic athletic event of the ancient times.

The paper is divided into four chapters. The present chapter, **Chapter 1** is an introduction to the topic. It also presents the theory of "partnership and dominator" societies, which explains the model of the diversity of genders.

Chapter 2 focuses on women's social status in ancient Greece in the Minoan and Mycenaean era, the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic period. It also examines women's position in the Greek *poleis*, their presence in sciences, medicine, sports and their role at the Olympic Games.

Chapter 3 examines the genesis of sports in Greece. It presents women's participation in charioteer and foot races as well as in other Greek sports. The evidence shows that women's participation in athletics seems to be an important part of the athletic picture even if their competitions never approached an equal footing with men's.

Chapter 4 presents the worship of Hera and it analyses the female athletic event of *Heraia* in Olympia (origins, preparations, program and participation). Moreover, it studies women in relation to the Olympic Games, why women were excluded from the Olympics and which women could exceptionally participate.

Lastly, the conclusions of all the above mentioned chapters follow in a separate part called *Conclusions*, as well as the personal thesis of the author of this paper.

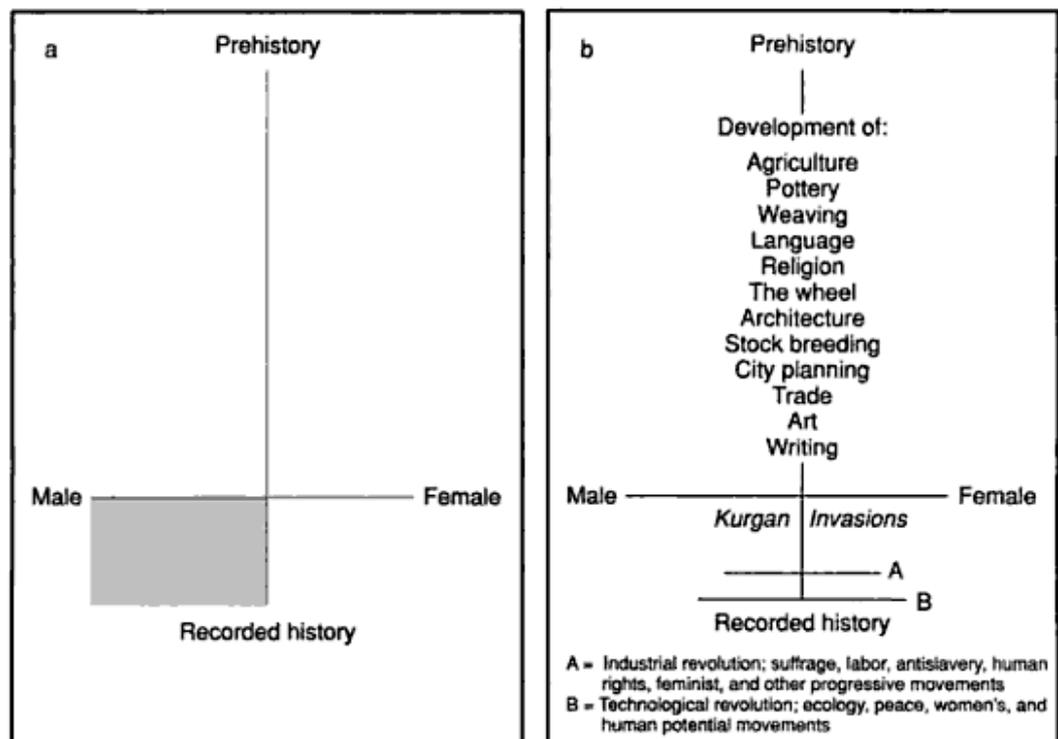
1.1.The diversity of genders: “partnership and dominator” societies

Partnership and dominator societies are models used by R. Eisler in her book *The Chalice and the Blade*, in order to explain how mankind passed from gender-egalitarian society to a male-dominated social structure (see the model in **Fig.1**).¹ She explains that partnership societies represented by chalice were generally nurturing, peaceful and egalitarian, matrilineal in social organization and the people worshipped female deities. It should be noted that the cultures were not matriarchal, that is the inverse of patriarchal, but matrilineal. In contrast to partnership societies, dominator societies represented by Eisler as the blade, worshipped fierce Gods of the sky and the lethal power of the blade. They existed in a rigid hierarchy, which was supported by force or by the threat of force. The basis for Eisler's construction of partnership and dominator models is that male and female form the basic human social organization and from it, all other power, social arrangements emanate. Overall, Eisler's dominator model is more useful than a patriarchal construct, because many women, especially those of privilege with respect to race and class are dominators and/or exist in a patriarchal social system. Eisler's partnership model is useful because it broadly defines matrilineal societies without implying that they were matriarchal.

The process by which societies became male-dominated occurred in different places and at different times, sometime between about 4.300 and 600 B.C. Destruction

¹ Eisler, R., *The Chalice and the Blade*, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1988

of the Goddess religions was as murderous assaults on clans, which were the principal units of tribal organization, in which descent was usually recognized maternally. These dominator peoples, called by scholars *Indo-Europeans (Aryans)* or *Kurgans* were from the Russian steppes. Their culture, which dates back to 7/6th millennia B.C. was characterized by patriarchy in which descent was reckoned paternally and small scale agriculture and animal domestication (including the horse).



Eisler's model: a) history as we learn it (shaded area) and b) who really did what and when (Reprinted from J. Kennard and J.M. Carter, "In the beginning: The ancient and Medieval World" in *Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (eds), D. M. Costa & S.R. Guthrie, Human kinetics, USA, 1994, p. 16)

The *Kurgans* brought their male divinities with them as they swept through Greece, Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt. These pastoral, semi-nomadic peoples brought a revolution by altering the very structure and values of the societies they conquered. They worshipped fierce Gods of the sky and the mountaintops, they were rigidly hierarchic and their technology was designed for destruction.

In ancient times, the symbols of the Goddess religions were transformed to demolish the power and popularity of Goddess. For example, the Goddess Athena changed image over time and that mirrors the transition from partnership to dominator

societies: *Athena*, “lady of Mycenaeans” became Athena the virgin warrior deity. In addition, the changing status of *Hera* exemplifies the gradual diminishing of the Goddess Hera (original *Gaia*), who once ruled alone. Later she had a young son/lover and eventually she lost her powerful status and became the jealous wife of Zeus.²

In the pre-ancient and ancient worlds, partnership societies were clan societies in which one’s loyalty was to the clan, not the individual household. In the clan society, women had political and economic power. A Goddess was a supreme deity. Ancient festivals often included sacrifice, purification, sacred rituals (usually executed by women) and initiation rites that were accompanied by foot races, games, dancing, singing and music.³

² Kennard, J. & Carter, J.M., “In the beginning: The ancient and Medieval World” in *Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (eds), D. M. Costa & S.R. Guthrie, Human kinetics, USA, 1994, p. 16-20.

³ Brumfield, A.C., *The Attic Festivals of Demeter and their Relation to the Agricultural Years*, Arno Press, New York, 1981, p. 183

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN'S SOCIAL STATUS IN ANCIENT GREECE

Chapter 1 presents the social status of women in general in the Greek societies of the *polis* in order to make clear, how this status permits women's participation in sports, which was almost entirely something made for men and officially enjoyed by men.

The interest of historical research on women has been focused, almost exclusively, on the classical era of Athens. This is primarily due to two reasons. The first reason is the large amount of the historical sources, dated from the classical Athens, in comparison with the sources from the rest of the Hellenic area. Especially when they are related to the period of the Persian Wars to the rise of the Macedonian kingdom, the sources become even richer. The second reason is the importance of historical and cultural phenomena of this period in Athens. Athens reached its highest point at that time in terms of literature, theatre, rhetoric, philosophy, art and the first scientific approaches to history writing. All those historical and cultural sources portray a civilization at the highest point of its trajectory.

In order to approach the topic of the situation of women in ancient Greece during antiquity, the researcher is using the works of the ancient literature, especially historiography, ancient drama and judicial speeches. The archaeological evidence such as pottery, statues and funeral *stelae* contributes to the knowledge about women. Moreover, the iconography of the ancient pottery gives an overall idea of women's everyday routine.

There are several problems when studying the ancient Greek literature. In drama, there is much evidence about the daily life of women and scholars may trace some problems that women had in the society but still, drama presents the main ideology of the archaic and classical societies. The heroines of drama, as well as the female representations on pottery or in sculpture, have been presented idealized, in a romantic and fantasized way. Therefore, these sources are not subjective and they must be considered carefully.

2.1. Women in the Minoan and Mycenaean society

In the Mediterranean area in ca 3000 BC, a female goddess was worshipped, symbol of the female powerful creativity. Her name was *Potnia* and she was both the goddess of earth and sea, the *great mother* of the Mediterranean. Based on this, some scholars believed in the existence of a matriarchal society, especially in Crete. However, the projection of a female figure in the context of religion does not necessarily entail a broader, social power of women. Some other scholars believe that besides Potnia, there were many male gods. Even if one accepts that Potnia was the only deity, this may not mean anything else other than that women enjoyed a high social status. There is some information about this aspect from the iconography of the frescoes in the Minoan palaces: 1. women had high religious duties 2. women took part in public feasts and hunting 3. in palaces, women's rooms were not isolated from the other parts of the building (as they were during the classical period), although other conclusions and evidence do not exist. Moreover, there is no evidence that the hereditary succession followed the *per feminas* order. There is no evidence either of the existence of matriarchal status in the Minoan period but for a significant freedom among women.⁴

In Greece, there were great kingdoms from 1400 – 1230 BC. On the mainland, the kingdom of Mycenae was the most powerful. The tablets of *Linear B* indicate the existence of free female employees who were elaborating, preserving and distributing the cereals of the kingdom, they were weaving and giving assistance to different agricultural works. In palaces though, the apartments of the female members of the royal family were isolated from the other buildings and rooms. Women in that period still held a high social position, respect and freedom, but the strong appearance of male deities and the excellent military organization of the Mycenaean kingdoms contributed to the gradual weakening of women's role in the society.⁵

⁴ Cantarella, E., *Οι Γυναίκες της αρχαίας Ελλάδας*, μτφρ. Π. Δημάκη, Εκδόσεις Παπαδήμα, Αθήνα:1998, p.33

⁵ Cantarella, E., *op.cit.*, p.36

2.2. Women in the archaic world

In the beginning of the 6th century, there was a poetic organization in Lesbos for young women of aristocratic families, supervised by the famous poet *Sappho*. These educational organizations, though, were quite sporadic in the archaic societies. Sappho's "circle" was not only educational and literate but also religious as the members worshipped their own deities and had their own feasts. The subjects Sappho was teaching were history, song and dance. She was also teaching girls how to take care of their beauty and become desirable women.

Sappho's poetic figure is as clear as her life is obscure. The poet seems to be forever in love, while Aphrodite's patronage helps her win girls who rejected her. For Sappho the love-object outshines anything else mankind admires and desire precipitates complete physical collapse. For Sappho, *love is not a part of the universe but it is her universe*.⁶

In Sparta, however one notices freedom for women in the society. Spartan women could keep the heritage of their father and could own land. Young women exercised often wearing shorts *chitons*, showing off their thighs (*φαινομερήδες*). Euripides indicates that women in Sparta leave their homes with short *chitons* and waving their veils and they exercised in stadiums along with young men. There is an inscription (*IvO* 160), in ancient Olympia indicating that *Kyniska*, daughter of king Archidamos of Sparta was the first female who won in the horse race of the Olympic Games in 396 BC.⁷

The historian Herodotus, who lived in the 5th century BC, treats Spartan women as autonomous and self-directed. Herodotus in his descriptions gives the reader a sense of their importance to the Spartan community. The role of the Spartan woman in Herodotus is varied, but the treatment is the same. The Spartan women parallel the handling of other women in *The Histories*.⁸ However, even though they are often cited to be the cause of strife between various family factions, they are seen as wise, sensible and active in politically charged matters.

⁶ Cantarella, E., *op.cit.*, p.36

⁷ Ίδρυμα Μείζονος Ελληνισμού: Από την αρχαία Ολυμπία στην Αθήνα του 1896, Ενδεικτικές πηγές, διαθέσιμο στην ιστοσελίδα: www.fhw.gr/olympics/ancient/gr/source.html

⁸ Dewald, C. "Women and Culture in Herodotus' Histories." *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*. ed. H. Foley, New York: 1981

Queen *Gorgo*, the daughter of Kleomenes and wife of Leonidas advised her father and the general court of Sparta on pertinent matters. *Argeia* attempted to ensure the kingship for her twin sons, by claiming that she did not know which the eldest was. Another woman is asked by her son to explain who his father is, after he is claimed to be illegitimate. She explains it in terms of the duration of pregnancies, which is more rational than her husband's denial. In Herodotus, Spartan women are also objects of seizure and prizes in political and familial alliances. Overall, the historian appears to treat them with a sense of respect. They are also depicted as clever and sensible, an unusual act for a male Greek writer.

Spartan women make several appearances in *The Histories* of Herodotos,⁹ often participating in the political and social arenas. Herodotos also quite often presents them as the inadvertent cause of strife within Sparta and also as the root of the most well-known political institutions.

One Spartan woman, as mentioned above, appears several times in Herodotos' work and this is Gorgo, *for Cleomenes' reign was a brief one, and he died without a son to succeed him, leaving only a daughter whose name was Gorgo (Histories, 5.48)*. He praises her skills at diplomacy and her strong character developed at an early age when at the age of nine, she urged her father Kleomenes for Aristagoras, not to support him in Ionia (*Histories 5.51*). Gorgo makes another dramatic appearance. Demaratos, an exile from Sparta, attempts to pass the news of Xerxes' invasion to Sparta. He sends a message to Spartans, which needed to be decoded. The message arrived, but there was trouble with the decipherment: *When the message reached its destination, no one was able to guess the secret until, as I understand, Cleomenes' daughter, Gorgo, who was the wife of Leonidas, divined it and told the others that, if they scraped the wax off, they would find something written on the wood underneath. This was done; the message was revealed and read, and afterwards passed on to the other Greeks. (Histories,7.239)*.

Other figures such as *Artemisia* and *Tomyris* are also seen as being quite independent and powerful. However, Gorgo is most likely given these credits due to her connection with Kleomenes and Leonidas.

On the contrary, some Spartan women are portrayed in an unflattering way in Herodotus's work. The *Minyae*, the descendants of the Argonauts, married Spartan

⁹Asheri, D., & Corcella, A., *Ηροδότου Ιστορίαι*, Βιβλία 3-4, Oxford University Press, 2010 & Ηρόδοτος, *Ιστορίαι*, Βιβλία 5-6, μτφρ. Η. Σπυρόπουλος, εκδ. Γκαβότση, Αθήνα: 1995

women, and then demanded a share of the Spartan privileges such as access to royal power. The Lakedaimonians proceeded to imprison them before executing them. However, before death, the Spartan women entered the prison. Herodotus says: *These women were all natives of Sparta and daughters of leading Spartan citizens, so no one suspected treachery, and they succeeded in getting their request granted. Once inside the prison, however, they changed clothes with the men, who were enabled by this disguise to pass themselves off as women and get out. (Histories, 4.146).* In this passage, the treachery of the women is surprising.

Almost all the remaining appearances of Spartan women are connected with fertility, childbirth and legitimacy, which were sources of anxiety for the Spartans. The first mention of Spartan concern for posterity is about the wife of Anaxandrides when the ephors criticize her, because she did not give birth to any child (*Histories 5.39*). However, Anaxandrides was of a different opinion, a male opinion far from any Athenian: *his wife had been guilty of no fault, and the magistrates' advice that he should send her away and marry another woman instead was most improper--he would do nothing of the kind.* The ephors and members of the *Gerousia* (board of elders) came to an agreement. Herodotus says: *As for your present wife, we do not ask you to divorce her; you may continue to give her all the privileges she now enjoys; but you must marry another woman as well, to bear you children (Histories 5.40).*

Far from Sparta, in Athens, during the archaic years, the position of women was very different. They lived always indoors. From the age of 13, they could get married and the purpose of their lives was to take care of the house and their children. In addition, the best education they could have was the ideal of prudence (*σωφροσύνη*): women had to see as little as possible, hear as little as possible and asking as few questions as possible. Herodotus again presents the strange attitude of an Athenian when he allowed his daughters to choose their husband, as a very rare case.¹⁰

Based on the sources, there are only a few examples of enlightened women in the archaic period, mainly from the Pythagorean societies, which were formed in the 6th century BC by Pythagoras himself in Samos. Pythagorean societies included equally both men and women and the subsequent duties were common to both men and women without exception. Women however had to undertake more duties, proper to their sex. Pythagoras had the intention of creating a society for the cultivation of strict virtues and

¹⁰ Cantarella, E., *op.cit.*, p. 76-77

principles of temperance, order, obedience to rules and to the law, bravery, loyal friendship and generally all those virtues that, according to the Dorian perspective, characterize brave men.¹¹ The learned women of that period must have been taking private lessons and must have been familiar with the theories of Xenophon and Aristotle and this can be concluded from the similarities of their texts.

Early Pythagorean women philosophers and mathematicians are considered to be *Themistoclea*, *Theano*, *Arignote*, *Myia* and *Dano*, while late Pythagoreans are *Aesara* of Lucania, *Phintys* of Sparta and *Perictione*.¹² Very little and fragmentary information is available about life and work of the above mentioned women. Placing those historical personalities in a general frame, they all followed the Pythagorean philosophical way of life style. *Ethos* for the Pythagoreans is mixed with the religion. Religion has two aspects: a theoretical (natural science and mathematics) and a practical (deeds and rituals). Ethical life had the purpose of liberating the soul from passions which keep it a slave to the body and of giving it absolute freedom, because the soul knows no other law or bonds others than those of reason and action. This *freedom*, absent from the rest of women groups in ancient societies, was given through the Pythagorean ones using science and specific religion practices.

A distinguished Pythagorean was *Perictione*. In her work *On Woman's Harmony*, one notices all the virtues of a cultivated and educated woman who has the right to speak when she has something good to say: *one must deem the harmonious woman to be full of wisdom and self control, a soul must be exceedingly conscious of goodness to be just and courageous and wise, embellished with self-sufficiency and hating empty opinion*.¹³ *Perictione* has opinion about politics, a topic almost forbidden for most women in ancient Greece, particularly Athens. According to her, there is a connection between ethics and politics. Ethics becomes prominent in politics. In one of her passages, she might have had in mind great queens of antiquity such as Semiramis, Tomyris and Artemisia, she means that women are capable of participating in politics:

¹¹ Lambropoulou, V., "Some Pythagorean female virtues" in *Women in Antiquity, new assessments*, ed. R. Hawley & B. Levick, Routledge, London & N. York: 1995, p. 122

¹² Waithe, M.E., *A History of Women Philosophers 600-500BC*, Vol.I., Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, the Netherlands, 1987

¹³ Lambropoulou, V., *op.cit.* p. 124

*if, at any rate such a woman should govern cities and tribes as we see in the case of a royal city.*¹⁴

2.3. Women in the *polis* of the classical period

The Greek *polis* (cities) was created in the beginning of 8th century all over Greece. The institutions were developed in a period of centuries and helped people of each state to create their special social characteristics.¹⁵ The Athenian democracy of the classical era is an example of the most sophisticated form of city until the 4th century BC.

The study of the social status of women in ancient Greece is easier in classical Athens than in other polis because of the large amount of literate sources. The legislation of Solon (594 BC) is the beginning of democracy. According to Solon, the basic, personal unit in polis is the *citizen*. In Athens, the paternal and maternal origin of the citizen was of primary importance. A child of a pure Athenian man and woman was an Athenian citizen and had the right to participate in public life.

References to women's social status must be carefully used because there are significant differences between women as a daughter, a sister or a wife. In addition, the social status of a married woman with children and without children is also important. Moreover, there is huge difference between rich and poor women.¹⁶ The form of the Athenian city was made based on clearly specified roles and there was no room for reversible gender relations. These roles were terms of the very survival of the polis. Through these roles, the Athenians created a whole theory about the "natural" difference between men and women.

Concerning Athenian women, they could be members of the bourgeoisie, but they didn't have any political rights because they couldn't own land therefore, they couldn't participate in *ekklesia* taking decisions regarding public issues.

Unlike the Homeric and archaic era, when women had a more active role in public life, in the classical period, none of the Greek polis gave political rights to its female citizens. Women did not have voting right, no rights to attend the *ekklesia* and

¹⁴ Lambropoulou, V., *op.cit.* p. 125

¹⁵ Mosse, C., *Η Γυναίκα στην αρχαία Ελλάδα*, μτφρ. Α. Στεφανής, εκδ. Παπαδήμα, Αθήνα: 1993

¹⁶ Gould, J., "Law, Custom and myth: aspects of the social position of women in Classical Athens", *the Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1980, p. 43

express their beliefs in public. She could not be a judge or a counselor and she could not undertake any administrative or executive task for the organization of polis.¹⁷ Women were also excluded from the cultural activities of the polis, with the exception of some religious ceremonies.¹⁸

The political absence of women in public life was so catholic, that in the rhetorical speeches there are references to women always in relation to men (husbands, fathers, brothers to these women). Rarely were they mentioned and when they were, the context was rather negative. The term *πολίτης* (citizen) for women had a limited use in the works of Aristoteles, Demosthenes and the comedian poets. It is used empathically in order to underline the difference of status between legal wives and the “others” (slaves, prostitutes).

Aristoteles in his *Politics* hold the view that men are by nature made to exercise power and women are made to be submitted under men’s power. He also laid the theoretical foundations of “qualitative” gender differences.¹⁹ Aristoteles identified woman with the starting material, opposed to the man, who was the spirit and thus he placed her outside the ground of “speech”, offering the theoretical justification to the question of why women did not have the ability to act either in public or in private life.²⁰ In the Aristotelian thought, polis is considered the perfect institute but women had no part in this. The relationship between men and women is a relationship between Lord and servant and is applied to all practices of everyday life.

The reasons of the exclusion of women from the public sphere were many. According to Reeder, the political power of the members in polis derived from their financial and social status.²¹ The political power was related to the compulsory military duties of the Athenians, which were vivid proof of Athenians political existence. Women in Athens were considered as unable to undertake military tasks, so they took a subordinate position in the society.

¹⁷ Just, R., *Women in Athenian law and life*, Routledge, London: 1994, p. 13 & 280, note 2.

¹⁸ Mosse, C., *op.cit.*, p. 56

¹⁹ Aristoteles, *Politics*, ed. W.D. Rose, Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis, Oxford, 1254b

²⁰ Cantarella, E., *op.cit.*, s. 16

²¹ Reeder, E., “Women and men in classical Greece”, in Reeder, E. (ed.) *Pandora, Women in Classical Greece*, Baltimore: 1996

Gomme used the tragedies in order to picture the position of women in Athens.²² His dubious conclusion was that women in classical Athens had significant social rights and privileges and could act freely. Most scholars do not accept his theory saying that women in real life can not be identified with literary characters. On the other hand the judicial speeches of the orators from the 4th century BC provide more reliable information about the social status of women, placing them on a very low level.

For example, the speech of Demosthenes *Against Neaira* presents clearly the low social status of women in the Athenian polis.²³ The speech divides women in three categories: the Athenians, the *heterai* (prostitutes) and *pallakidai* (household keepers). And it presents them like reproduction machines.²⁴ The speech is about a foreign woman, Neaira, married to an Athenian man called Stephanos who had no political rights but she was acting like a true Athenian citizen. The speech is excessive but it shows the contradiction between the honorable social status an Athenian woman had, with the very humble status of foreign women, leaving in Athens. It also underlines the high estimation that the Athenian women enjoyed by society due to their role as mothers to true Athenian citizens.²⁵

The Peloponnesian War signaled a change in the ethics of the Athenian society of the 4th and 5th century BC. The long absence of men in war expeditions and the large losses of men led womenfolk to undertake tasks that originally and exclusively used to be men's. During war, women had to guide slaves in their work, decide about agricultural works in the fields and make some sacrifices on the family altar. Gradually, women could spend more time out of their houses; they could interact with men and have greater freedom.²⁶

²² Gomme, A.W., "The position of women in Athens", *Classical Philology* 20, 1925, pp. 1-25

²³ Δημοσθένης, *Αριστογείτων, Πρεσβεία, κατά Νεαίρας*, εκδ. J.H. Vince, Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis, Oxford, 122, 4-7

²⁴ Cantarella, E., *op.cit.*, p. 95

²⁵ Δημάκης, Π.Δ., *Πρόσωπα και θεσμοί της αρχαίας Ελλάδας*, εκδ. Παπαδήμας, Αθήνα: 1994, p.19-20

²⁶ Cohen, D., "Seclusion, separation and the status of women in classical Athens", *Greece and Rome* 26, 1989, p.8

2.4. Women and Sciences in ancient Greece²⁷

The principles and laws of physics determine the creation and evolution of the “entire universe”, namely: the formation and development of all of the living or lifeless constituent elements of the “cosmos”. The scientific thought of the ancient Greeks replaced the beliefs in supernatural powers with natural laws and explained the natural phenomena through natural causes. In the broader Hellenic society there have been eminent and widely respected for their work female natural scientists. However, they were living in societies made by and for men therefore, these female scientists of a minor group had to face gender, social, scientific and professional challenges, difficulties and obstacles.

In the 10th-9th BC century lived a natural scientist called Aithra, daughter to the king of Troizina, mother of Theseus. She was teaching mathematics and accountancy in Corinth. Another scientist Polygnoti lived between the 7th-6th century BC although very little is known about her work. Later, during the 6th and 5th centuries, there were quite a few women natural scientists: the Pythagorean Tymycha from Sparta who, according to Diogenes Laertius, was the wife of Myllios Crotoniates. According to the testimony of the Neo-Platonic philosopher Iamvlichus Chalcidensis from Syria (245- 325 AD), she wrote an essay about sound. After the destruction of the Pythagorean School, she went to Syracuse. There, the tyrant Dionysos demanded from her to reveal the Pythagorean secrets. Tymycha preferred to cut her own tongue out so as not to give away secrets about Pythagorean beliefs.

Theano was cosmologist, astronomer and mathematician. She was the daughter of the physician Brontinus. She was student and wife of Pythagoras. She taught astronomy and mathematics in the Pythagorean School in Samos and Croton. The children ascribed to Pythagoras and Theano included three daughters, Damo, Myia and Arignote and a son Telauges who continued the operation of the Pythagorean School and taught the Pythagorean philosophy in the Hellenic world and Egypt. The writings attributed to Theano were: Pythagorean Apophthegms, Female Advice, On Virtue, On Piety, On Pythagoras, Philosophical Commentaries, and *Letters*. References

²⁷ Παλλάδα, Α., «Γυναίκες που διακρίθηκαν στις φυσικές επιστήμες στην αρχαία Ελλάδα», *Αρχαιολογία & Τέχνες* 114, Μάρτιος 2010, p.88-90

to Theano are found in the works of Atheneus, the Lexicon of Suda, Diogenes Laertius and Iamvlichus.

The Pythagorean women faced the task of educating other women about living harmonious lives and creating justice and harmony in their homes. They used a more "realistic" approach to moral philosophy while male philosophers attempted to educate men about harmony in their souls and the state through an "ideal" approach. These tasks are different because the nature of men and women is different.²⁸ This proves the female importance at home while men had the responsibility and power to make economic and political decisions.

Most Pythagorean women's writings demonstrated that life was harmonious. Some also wrote on the principle of *harmonia* or *of all things that are*. They directed their discussion in order to explain the relationship "between marital fidelity, child-rearing, parental piety, religious worship, and public demeanor on the one hand, and the *nature of [the woman's] soul*, on the other²⁹.

The Pythagorean women's approach is very important as it sheds light on the status of women in the ancient world. It was commonly believed during that period that women belonged at home and therefore couldn't have an active role in the society. These Pythagorean beliefs echoed the conditions women faced during 800-500 BCE and offered advice for others as to how to "survive" given the circumstances. The application of the principle of *harmonia* could help a woman decide what she ought to do and how she should act. Women lacked the political rights and social opportunities the men had, yet in order to be good and orderly they needed excellence. *Wisdom* was not an excellence considered necessary for a woman. *Moderation* was the appropriate virtue for women because with moderation they were able to love and honor their husbands appropriately. The social roles of this time period reflect the nature of both men and women. The roles of the Greek males were based on the political, economical and social aspects of society. Therefore, it was necessary for females to philosophize about the roles of women.

These Pythagorean works by women were able to offer support and guidelines on how to live within the social structure and maintain the harmony in the

²⁸ Waithe, M. E., *op.cit.*, p. 17

²⁹ Waithe, M. E., *op.cit.*, p. 56

home and the daily life, as well as leave behind an understanding of the history of the status of women in ancient Greece.

Iamvlichus mentions many Pythagorean women scientists from all over Greece, specialized in geometry, mathematics, music and philosophy. Some of them were wives of scientists, some others daughters or simply their students. Aglaonike or Aganike who lived in the 5th century BC from Thessaly was according to Plutarch, the first Greek woman astronomer. Appolodorus says that she was very accurate at predicting the eclipses of the Sun.

In the 4th century, there are references to Pandrosion from Alexandria, Lasthenia and Axiothea. Lasthenia came to Athens from Arcadia. She studied the works of Plato at Plato's Academy. After Plato's death, she continued her studies near Plato's nephew, Speysippos to whom she married soon later. The definition of sphere is attributed to Lasthenia. Axiothea came to Athens from the Peloponnesian city of Fliounta in order to study philosophy and mathematics at Plato's Academy. She, then, taught mathematics in Corinth and Athens. According to Diogenes, Laertius, Axiothea and Laesthenia were dressed like men in order to attend free the Academy.

In the 4th-3rd-century BC another philosopher Areti from Kyrinea, daughter of philosopher Aristippos, studied at Plato's Academy. When she finished her studies she taught physics, mathematics and ethics in Attica for 35 years and she wrote at least 40 books of various subjects.

The available biographical data of women scientists of Greek antiquity, indicate that these women moved in various areas of the Mediterranean area, namely in accessible and prosperous urban centers in developed societies, with rich culture and advanced education. Most of them derived from "scientific" families with great economic prosperity and high social position in their local community. They were dynamic and determined to study among men and then teach. At that time, they managed to be accepted in a male-dominated environment, under very difficult and hard social conditions for women.

2.5. Women and the Olympic Games

In *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, Donald Kyle discusses the topic of participation of women in the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games were open to all Greeks (*panhellenic*) and were considered as the most prestigious athletic competition.

Most of what is thought to be known about the Olympics is based on legends, the victory odes (*epinician*), dedicatory statues and vases and the writing of Pausanias, who lived in the second century A.D., namely well after the heyday of Classical Greece.

Women were not allowed to enter the Olympic stadium during the Classical period. Pausanias mentions a priestess of Demeter Chamyne looking on the Olympic Games (6.20.9).³⁰ Some scholars think the cult of Demeter Chamyne in Elis predates the Olympics. Kyle thinks the mention of the priestess could mean that the priestess was there to make sure the Olympic rituals were done properly. Pausanias also mentions virgins at the Olympics. While scholars have made various suggestions about the virgins (perhaps only virgins and not matrons were allowed; perhaps men took their eligible daughters to the events “husband-hunting”), Kyle thinks the presence of virgins could mean those girls, representing Demeter's daughter Persephone, presumably only one at a time, accompanied the priestess-Demeter.³¹

There is some evidence that there were Olympic victors who were women, owners of the winning chariots but they were not present at the events. In about 170 A.D. Pausanias (6.1.6 and 5.12.5)³² saw the Spartan woman Kinisca's victory monument. Plutarch and Xenophon also wrote about her winning the 4-horse chariot race, first in 396 and then in 392. Kinisca was the sister of the Spartan King Agesilaus. Plutarch (Ages.20.1) says Agesilaus persuaded his sister to enter the race to convey a lesson to the rest of the Greeks that all horseracing took was money, not excellence.

In Pausanias' writing there is also a story about a mother named Kallipateira (or Pherenike), from a famous athletic family who dressed herself as a trainer and accompanied her son to the event (5.6.7-8). He writes:

As you go from Scillus along the road to Olympia, before you cross the Alpheius, there is a mountain with high, precipitous cliffs. It is called Mount Typaeum. It is a law of Elis to cast down it any women who are caught present at the Olympic games, or even on the other side of the Alpheius, on the days prohibited to women. However, they say that no woman has been caught, except Callipateira only; some, however, give the lady the name of Pherenice and not Callipateira (5.6.7).

³⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Vol. III, Books 6-8, Loeb Classical Library, No. 272, translation by W.H. Jones, Harvard University Press: 1933

³¹ Kyle, D., *Sport and spectacle in the ancient world*, Blackwell Publication, 2006

³² Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Volume II, Books 3-5, Loeb Classical Library No. 188, translation W. H. S. Jones and H. A. Ormerod, Harvard University Press: 1926

In an effort to climb out of the area reserved for trainers, the woman revealed her private parts and was caught. From then on trainers had to be naked. Kyle thinks this is a false etiology of the trainers' nudity. What is particularly significant about this supposed event is that the mother was spared. She could have been tossed to her death from a cliff of Mt. Tropaion for even being on the wrong side of the Alpheios River.

In summary, Kyle believes there were a few women possibly present at the Olympics, but the policy of the games was strict in prohibiting them: There were no women physically present and competing in the events at the ancient Olympics. The Olympian Heraia though, described in detail in the following chapter, was organized at the same period with the Olympic Games. It is the most known ancient athletic event for women. Given its visibility through associations with the Olympic festival for men, the Heraia was possibly also the most influential model for similar local events, elsewhere in Greece.

1.6. Women and Medicine

In ancient Greece, Asclepiad had female assistants. His daughter *Ygeia* was the personification of health while her sisters *Panakeia*, *Iaso*, *Akeso* and *Aegli* were his assistants. Midwives appear during the Homeric years and Hesiod in *Theogony* states that *Maia* (midwife) was the daughter of Atlas. People from the Ionian cities called midwives *οφθαλητόμους*, (othalitomous), the ones who cut the umbilical cord.

During the years of Pericleus in Athens, there were midwives as well as nurses. The female physicians at that time combined magic herbs with medical practices which kept secret and helped women at the delivery. Plato says that those women were very good matchmakers because they could understand which woman matches best with a certain man in order to build a happy and healthy family.³³

Before the 4th century BC, there was a law that prohibited women to practice medicine and physiotherapy. Any woman who broke that law had to face death penalty. The first doctor in ancient Greece was *Agnodike*. She dressed in male clothes, cut her hair short and travelled to Alexandria in order to study medicine at the school of the famous doctor Herofilos. In Athens, her true identity was revealed; she went on trial but with the support of a major group of Athenian women consisted by prostitutes and

²⁷ Κότελη, Α. «Οι Γιάτραινες», *Ιατρικά Θέματα 40*, Ιατρικός Σύλλογος Θεσσαλονίκης 2006, π. 10

wives of rich men who were cured by her, she was sent free and the judges decided to allow her exercise medicine. Since then, women were allowed to study medicine under the condition to examine and cure only women³⁴.

Conclusions

In the Minoan cities women held an advanced social status, participating in religious and social life. The Mother of all, *Potnia*, was the main Minoan deity, indicating the powerful presence and importance of the female element in the Minoan societies. However, there is no evidence of women's attendance in politics or public decisions or traces of matriarchic organizations. In the Mycenaean kingdoms, women continued to have a relative freedom of moving in their societies and they were not excluded from the social and religious life of their homelands. Their social status was in harmony with the military character of the Mycenaean organization but gradually it started to get downgraded.

The Greek society of the archaic years, born from the ashes of the Mycenaean palaces, replaced the social status of women to a lower one and placed women in a well male dominated society.

In a time when it was common belief that a woman's nature was different from man's, some women were major contributors to the works of the Pythagorean school. These select women entered the Pythagorean society on an equal basis as men. Pythagoreanism described a harmony in the "cosmos" that exhibits order and beauty. Numbers could explain all things in the universe. Since numbers include both odds and evens, all things have a contradiction- light and dark, the limited and unlimited, good and evil, *male and female*. The reconciliation of these opposites creates harmony.³⁵ For human behavior, this was harmony resulted from behaving temperately or by exhibiting moderation.

But this ideal picture does not mirror the general educational level of women in the Greek *polis*. For most women in ancient Greece, the opportunities to become educated were limited. Women had limited chances to participate in the educational,

³⁴ Κότελη, Α., *op. cit.*, p.10

³⁵ Kersey, E. M., *Women Philosophers: A bio-Critical Source Book*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1989, pp.199-200

cultural, or political life of their communities. Not much evidence exists to prove that women went to schools. There is however some information about schools for virgins run by women, like the one of Sappho in Lesbos. There, young rich girls could learn music, poetry, dance and the secrets of beauty, in order to prepare themselves and be excellent and desirable future wives.

In other words, a woman's place in the ancient Greek polis was in the home, supervising the domestic activities while men concentrated on the more important affairs. Sports in women's life did exist but as explained in the following chapter before marriage, among young girls. Olympia, main stage for men's athletics, also yields the best evidence for competition among women but still the sole literary source is Pausanias. Besides this scanty literary evidence, there is archaeological evidence that proves sports activities among women, at Olympia, Sparta and elsewhere.

Concluding, evidence of women in fields of science and sports is fragmentary and sporadic and the existing information one may receive through the study of the ancient Greek world proves that under so much difficult conditions and non existing opportunities, some eminent women, found the courage and strength to study and contributing to science, they wrote their names to the eternal pages of History. The names of some women who spent time and energy to sports activities and festivals, one may never know but still the scanty evidence shows that there have always been women who loved sports and under difficult conditions did what they liked and what brought them joy and personal satisfaction

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN AND SPORTS

In order to study and understand better why women had so limited participation in public life, in which sports were an important part of it, it would be interesting and useful to refer first to the ancient philosophical theories concerning women and their nature and role in the society.

Xenophon in his *Symposium* says that Socrates, when he saw the skills of a female magician said that her tricks were a proof that women were not by nature lower than men but because they had lack of education and power (Xen. *Symp.* 2.8-9).³⁶ Socrates therefore believed that it was men's duty to educate their wives and talk with them (Xen. *Oekon.* III.12)³⁷ and teach them how to contribute to the profit of the family. Xenophon repeats some Socratic points of view, accepting the fact that nature has endowed women with memory and observation, like men, although women by nature are destined to take care of the household. He also claims that the gods gave both genders the same skill to "dominate over their own passions" (*Oekon.* III.14-15).³⁸ Socrates did recognized women's skills, he listened to their advice and sometimes he agreed that some women were wiser than him, like Aspasia, a rather strange female personality.

Some radical philosophers of ancient Greece placed women almost on the same level as men. A good example of this is the school of the *cynic philosophers* during the 5th century. The founder of the cynic school, Antisthenes claimed that women and men had the same virtues and that both had to exercise those virtues (Diog. Laert. 6.12).³⁹ The cynic philosophers doubted the importance of marriage, and they proclaimed sexual liberation. Diogenes, student to Antisthenes in Athens suggested land property for women, a suggestion very radical for the laws and the social circumstances

³⁶ Xenophon, *Symposium*, the Loeb Classical Library, No. 162, transl. O.J. Todd, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1923,

³⁷ Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, the Loeb Classical Library, No. 162, transl. O.J. Todd, Harvard University Press, , Oxford: 1923

³⁸ Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, *op.cit.*

³⁹ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent philosophers*, the Loeb Classical Library, No. 185, Vol. II, Books 6-10, trans. R.D. Hicks, Harvard University Press, , Oxford: 1925

of Athens in that period (Diog. Laert. 6.72).⁴⁰ Another cynic philosopher Kratis from Thebes spent his whole life traveling with his student Ipparhia, sharing a life together against all odds.⁴¹

The philosophical school of Epicurus in Athens (ca 309 BC) accepted a female student called Themistia (Diog. Laert. 10. 5, 25, 26)⁴² while the Pythagorians, as already mentioned, had many female students in their schools. All the above mentioned philosophers, following basically the steps of Socrates, formed the minority of the alternative philosophical thinking. These philosophers belonged to a category of thinkers of advanced thought, far from the common misogynic theories of the polis which was projecting the public opinion of the time.

Some other thinkers, although influenced by Socrates, saw the issue of gender from a very different point of view. One of them was Plato, whose opinion about women was quite contradictory.

In the ideal platonic state, male as well as female children had to be parentless. They belonged to every man and every woman who could potentially be their parents. Women had to be free from their domestic role in the family and had to cooperate with men in the administration of the polis. Men must educate their women and slaves, who had to learn music and do physical exercise. This is the “feminist” aspect of *Republic*.⁴³ On the contrary, in *Laws*, Plato suggests a quite different form of polis, where women had clearly a low position. For example in marriage, the wife had to be controlled both by her husband and the state because women were considered being by nature more “prone to hypocrisy and trickery”. Therefore, men had a “permanent fear” that women could be a demolition element for the community. Plato says that this happened in Sparta, because there women were free from the household’s work and due to their involvement in the state’s affairs, they sapped its stability (Pl. *Laws*, VI: 780a-781d & VII: 789e-790b).⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Diogenes Laertius, *op.cit.*

⁴¹ Dudley, D.R. *A History of Cynicism from Diogenes to the 6th Century A.D.* - Chicago: Aries Press, 1980, p. 46

⁴² Diogenes Laertius, *op.cit.*

⁴³ Wender, D., “Plato: Misogynist, Paedophile and Feminist”, *Arethusa* 6, 1, 1973, p. 75

⁴⁴ Plato, *Laws*, the Loeb Classical Library, No. 187, Books 1-6, trans. R.G. Bury, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1926 & Plato, *Laws*, the Loeb Classical Library, No. 192, Books 7-12, trans. R.G. Bury, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1926

In Plato's work *Timaeus*, the philosopher expresses a metaphysical conception, that cowardly and unjust men are “transformed into women” during their second birth, according to “the plans of those who created us and who knew that from men, women and other wild animals were derived” (Pl. *Timaeus*, 76-90e).⁴⁵

The evaluation of the above statements is quite difficult. On the one hand Plato claims that women have skills and they can administrate and rule the state, they have to be free from family ties and also they must have the right to own land. On the other hand, women are like slaves in the state and they are considered as “incomplete human beings”.⁴⁶

Aristotle identified *woman* with *matter* and he claimed that women are by nature “passive human beings” in the process of reproduction (Arist. *Gen.* 728^a, 17).⁴⁷ This thesis allowed Aristotle to support the subordinate social position of women. He also suggested that women must have limited rights of presence at the court. Men, the leaders of the house, had every right to participate both in the administration of polis and in judicial matters. Men were also responsible for the guidance of their women, their slaves and their children: slaves did not have the ability to take decisions, women had this ability but without stature, male children had not yet developed it (Arist. *Pol. I* {A}, 13, 1260a).⁴⁸ According to Aristotle one of the most important virtues of women is *silence*. Moreover, women are incapable to control their eroticism because they do not have the perfect logic of men. Therefore, they have to be always under control by their husbands or the state, which is divided to two: the population of men and the population of women (Arist. *Pol. I* {A}, 13, 1269b).⁴⁹

Besides all these philosophical thoughts about the role and position of the two genders, the public opinion of the ancient Greek people is yet not known. There is not sufficient evidence indicating what the average citizen was actually thinking about

⁴⁵ Plato, *Timaios*, the Loeb Classical Library, No. 234, , trans. R.G. Bury, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1926

⁴⁶ Wilamowitz – Mollendorf, von U., *Platon, sein Leben und seine Werke*, Berlin, 1959, pp. 312-313 & 573

⁴⁷ Aristoteles, *Generation of animals*, the Loeb Classical Library, No. 366, , trans. A.L. Peck, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1942

⁴⁸ Aristoteles, *Politics*, the Loeb Classical Library, No. 264, , trans. H. Rackham, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1932

⁴⁹ Aristoteles, *Politics*, *op. cit.*

women's role in the society. Evidence derives from the manners and customs of everyday life and everyday life in ancient Greece included sports as they had a significant meaning for all free citizens of the polis.

3.1. Jockeys and Charioteers

Equestrian competition was the sport of kings. Their rivals might only rarely be royal but they were always rich and this is normal because owning a horse back then was costly and of limited practical use.⁵⁰ Naturally enough, those who were winners in equestrian competitions, horse, chariot and mule cart racing, tended to represent this win as the pinnacle of sporting success. Victors in any event (and not only the equestrian ones) liked to celebrate and advertise their good fortune. Many dedicated statues to the gods whose festivals provided that platform for their performance or paid poets to write songs in their honor. The cachet of equestrian victory was widely recognized: it motivated the size of the prize for the chariot race at the Athenian Panathenea in the early 4th century BC, much larger than that for any other event and the Hellenistic scholars who placed songs for equestrian victories first in their collections of Pindar's poems for champions at each of the four great pan Hellenic festivals.⁵¹ Women could win as well. This was even true in the Olympic Games, the most prestigious festival of all, where the attendance of married women was (at least) prohibited.⁵²

Equestrian victors drew upon a range of strategies in meeting these challenges to their status. The meaning of value of women's successes could be contested. Most famous in the classical period were those of *Kynisca*, a member of one of Sparta's royal families, in the Olympic four horse chariot races of likely 396 and 392 BC.⁵³ Kynisca her self made sure of her renown, dedicated two grandiose memorials for her victories at Olympia – at a scale and expense greater than any earlier Spartan victory monuments

⁵⁰ Griffith, M., "Horsepower and donkey work: Equids and the ancient Greek imagination", *Classical Philology* 101, 2006, pp. 185-246 & 307-358

⁵¹ Golden, M., *Greek Sport and Social Status*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2008, p. 8

⁵² Dillon, M. P.J., "Did parthenoi attend the Olympic Games? Girls and women competing, spectating and carrying out cult roles at Greek religious festivals", *Hermes* 128, 2000, pp.457-480

⁵³ Kyle, D.G., "The only woman in all Greece: Kyniska, Agesilaus, Alcibiades and Olympia", *Journal of Sport History* 30, 2007, pp. 183-203

and trumpeting her attainments in an epigram much like those of other, male victors in tone. Her victory epigram is known from an inscribed marble base at Olympia and it exists in full in *Palatine Anthology*⁵⁴: *Sparta's kings were my fathers and brothers, and having won with my chariots of swift-footed horses, I, Kynisca, set up this statues. Alone, I say of the women of all Greece I won this crown.*⁵⁵

The references to fatherland and pedigree are standard in such texts as is the care to specify the event, here placed in a prominent position at the beginning of the second line. Kynisca, like all male victors, presents her own victory as special. On the face of it, then, Kynisca has done both her self and her people proud. Pausanias, writing over 500 years after the event and perhaps, having no evidence beyond this epigram, says she was exceedingly ambitious, the first woman to breed horses as well as to win at Olympia and he adds that no woman won after her matched her in distinction (Paus. 3.8.1, 15.1).⁵⁶

Besides the doubtless victory of Kynisca, Xenophon sketches a very different background on her victory saying that a woman's equestrian victory could be used by men in a manner that depreciated its worth. He explains: it was Kynisca's brother, king Agesilaus who inducted her to breed chariot teams. Xenophon knows that because he knew Agesilaus personally very well. Agesilaus's motive was to show that rearing horses was a mark of wealth rather than manly merit (Xen. *Ages.*9.6).⁵⁷ On this account, Don Kyle has outlined a thought in which Kynisca's equestrian excellence figures as a slap at Elis, Sparta's rival and enemy for many years and a riposte to Alcibiades's unprecedented display in 416 BC. Alcibiades was condemned to death in his own city and later he lived for a spell at Sparta but he was forced to flee after cuckolding King Agis. It would be difficult and pointless for any Spartan male to try to outdo what Alcibiades had done at Olympia and so Agesilaus encouraged Kynisca and got revenge by "*in effect emasculating the Olympic chariot race*".⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Pausanias, 6.I.6, 12.5

⁵⁵ Kyle, D.G., *op.cit.*, p. 183

⁵⁶ Pausanias, *op.cit.*

⁵⁷ Xenophon, *Agesilaus*, the Loeb Classical Library, Vol.VII, trans. G.W. Bowersock, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1925

⁵⁸ Kyle, D.G., *op.cit.*, p.196

The hero shrine erected in her honor at Sparta indicates that Kynisca was not the only citizen to find her triumphs worthy of fuss.⁵⁹ Located as it was near the center of the city, the shrine may have proclaimed Kynisca as a model to be emulated by Spartan girls who exercised.

Three inscriptions relating to women who entered winning chariots for equestrian events come from Delphi and they are dated to the middle of the 1st century AD. There is a surviving base, on which must have stood three statues of young women and the inscription reads⁶⁰:

Hermesianax son of Dionysus, citizen of Ceasarea Tralles and also of Corinth erected these statues of his daughters who themselves also hold the same citizenships.

Tryphosa won the sated at the Pythina Games held by the agonothes Antigonus and Cleomachidas and the stade at the ensuing Isthmian games held by the agonotheite Juventius Proclus, the first girl ever to do so.

Hedea won the race for war chariots at the Isthmian games held by the agonotheite Cornelius Pulcher, the stade at the Nemean games held by the agonotheite Menoetas. She won also the competition for girl harpists at the Sebasteia at Athens held by the agonotheite Novius, son of Philinus. She was the first girl ever to be made a citizen of (...).

Dionysia won the (... ..) held by the agonotheite Antigonus, and the stade at the Asclepeia in sacred Epidaurus held by the agonotheite Nicoteles. Dedicated to Pythian Apollo.

This stone only gives evidence of equestrian events in festivals in Delphi, Isthmian, Nemea, Sicyon and Epidaurus, in addition to the Games at Olympia, indicating that these athletic events attracted these girls from the Asian Minor to come over to the Greek mainland and compete. The inscription gives also a slight idea that these girls had a wider education not only in sports (in this case the equestrian races) but also in music: Hedea won not only won the race for war chariots at the Isthmian games but also the competition for girl harpists at the Sebasteia at Athens.

There is one further piece of epigraphic evidence, an inscription from Patrae on the Gulf of Corinth⁶¹:

⁵⁹ Pausanias, 3.15.1.

⁶⁰ Harris, H.A., *op.cit.*, p.180

⁶¹ Harris, H.A., *op.cit.*, p.181

I Nicophilus, erected this statue of Parian marble to my beloved sister Nicegora, victor in the girls' race.

The stone has disappeared and so there are no means of judging its date. It does not reveal where the victory was achieved whether at a meeting in Patrae or at one of the more famous festivals. Harris assumes that as Nikophilus would almost certainly have mentioned the latter had it been possible to do so, the local meeting seems more probable.⁶²

Nowhere was equestrian victory more valued than among the *Ptolemies* of Egypt: from Ptolemy I, who won the first chariot race for a pair of colts at the Pythian festival in 314 BC and also triumphed at Pytheia, to Ptolemy XII, chariot champion at Basileia at Leibadeia in the late 70's or early 60's BC.⁶³ The prominence of female contestants in the register is significant. *Berenice II* had won at Nemea and *Cleopatra II* joined Ptolemy VI as a Panathenaic victor. The best example is that of *Bilistiche*, one of the mistresses of Ptolemy II. Plutarch calls her a barbarian, Athenaus says she was a descendant from Argos' *House of Atreus* (Athenaus 13.596E)⁶⁴ which, according to Plutarch, was not a compliment (Plutarch, *Moralia* 753E).⁶⁵

Bilistiche was without a doubt an Olympic victor, in the first running of the pairs chariot race for colts in 264 BC and in the four-colt race in 268 BC (?). An epigram by Asclepiades in the *Palatine Anthology* pictures her success impressively: "Her purple whip and shining reins, Plangon has placed on the porticoes rich in horses, having defeated with her racehorse Philaenis, who other competes, when the colts of evening are just starting to neigh. Dear Cypris, may you bring her victory's true. Credit making this pleasure remembered for ever".⁶⁶

According to Golden, the poem probably refers to *Bilistiche*, honored already in her lifetime by a cult to "Aphrodite- *Bilistiche*". Moreover, it elevates her

⁶² Harris, H.A., *op.cit.*, p.181

⁶³ Vollgraff, W., "Inscriptions de Beotie, *Bulletin de correspondance Hellenique* 25, 1901, pp. 259-378

⁶⁴ Athenaus, *Deipnosophists*, , the Loeb Classical Library No.327, Vol.VI, Books 13-14, trans. C. B. Gulich, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 2009

⁶⁵ Plutarch, *Moralia*, , the Loeb Classical Library No. 425, Vol.IX , trans. F.H. Sandbach, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1961

⁶⁶ Asclepiades, *Anth. Pal.* 5.202, see: Kechnie, Mc P. & Guillaume, P. (ed.), *Ptolemy II, Philadelphus and his World*, Brill, 2008, pp. 373-375

achievements above those of another woman.⁶⁷ But the poem is not a simple celebration of a woman's success. She appears in the guise of a whore – both *Plangon* and *Philaenis* were names of famous *hetaerae* of the time and also in that of a jockey. Jockeys, as Golden assumes, were generally slaves or at least hirelings (like whores bought or rented for cash), certainly of low status, and rarely if ever recognized for their contribution to their horses' victories. Thus as Golden says *the epigram acknowledges Bilistiche's achievement at the same time as it undercuts it. The true credit of the poem's close is ironical.*⁶⁸

Earlier papyrus discoveries brought to light fragments of three poems written by Callimachus, to honor victors at competitive festivals. One celebrates Queen Berenice II's Nemean triumph. Then, in 2001 Guido Bastianini, Claudio Galazzi and Colin Austin published a papyrus roll from the late 3rd century BC that contained 600 lines of 112 poems, in elegiac meter, now generally attributed to Posidippus.⁶⁹ A portion of the collection is made up of 18 equestrian poems, *hippika*, on the theme of victory in horse and chariot races. There is significant evidence for the equestrian accomplishments attributed to female chariot victories among others by *Berenice I*, *Arsinoe II*, *Berenice of Syria* and of further triumphs for her at Nemea and Isthmia. Their Macedonian ethnicity is carefully stressed. The poems also demonstrate continuity with the traditions of archaic and classical *epinician poetry* and the vitality of one motif in particular, the effacement of the roles of the jockeys and charioteers.⁷⁰

One of the two longest equestrian epigrams says that Callicrates of Samos, an admiral of the Ptolemaic fleet, won the Pythian chariot race of 274 or 270 by a mere luck. At this point, charioteers protest the result and the judges are ready to leave the decision to the lot. The tide is turned by the right hand trace horse in Callistrates' team, the filly, whose nod had already brought his chariot home first: she picks up a judge's staff, *a clever female among males* and elicits a roar of approval from the crowd. They

⁶⁷ Golden, M., *op.cit.* 18

⁶⁸ Golden, M., *op.cit.* 19

⁶⁹ Bastianini, G. Gallazzi, C., & C. Austin, eds, *Pissidippi di PellaQ Epigammi* (P.Mil. Vogl. VIII 309, Milan, 2001, see also: Nisetich, F., "The poems of Posidippus", in K. Gutzviller, ed., *The New Posidippus: A Hellenic poetry book*, Oxford, 2005, 17-64

⁷⁰ Golden, M., *op.cit.* 21

proclaim her a victor. The poem ends with a reference to the statue is supposed to accompany, depicting the chariot and its driver.⁷¹

Another equestrian poem refers again to Kynisca in combination with Berenice I, the wife of Ptolemy I and mother of Ptolemy II, in which Berenice is presented like the new improved Kynisca⁷²: *mares still, Berenice of Macedon, we brought an Olympic crown, Pisatans. This possesses a celebrated fame, by which Kynisca's ancient glory in Sparta was taken away.*⁷³

3.2. Races

During the 5th and 4th centuries BC women took part in athletics in Sparta, performing naked before men. The custom was attributed to legendary Lycurgus, the founder of the Spartan constitution. Lycurgus prescribed physical training for women to fit them to become like male Spartan soldiers. Plato in his work *Republic* proposes to introduce similar training for the women of the *Guardian class* in his ideal form of state, although this practice was unknown to the Athenians. Plato limits women's athletic program to running and suggests that for this, girls over 13 years of age should wear appropriate dress. The program of races for girls proposed by Plato in his work *Law* is a strict one with the *stade* (στάδιον), *diaulos* (διάυλος), *dolichos* (δόλιχος) and *ephippios* (εφίππιος). He puts *ephippios* between the *diaulos* and the *dolichos* and he probably means the half-mile, the race which at Nemea was called *hippios*. Plato probably took for granted short distances for women because while he suggests *ephippios* for youths, the distances should be 2/3 of those of the corresponding men's races and for boys 1/2, and again he proposes no concessions of any kind for women.⁷⁴

Harris believes that for centuries Greek girls dressed in tunics, ran races in school sports and local meetings, and that at the beginning of the Christian era more formal meetings were organized at some of the great centers of men's athletics. The

⁷¹ Bernardini, P., & Bravi, L., "Note di lettura al nuovo Posidippo", *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 70, 2002, pp. 147-163

⁷² Golden, M., *op.cit.* 22

⁷³ Bettarini, L., "Posidippo e I; epigramma epinicio: aspetti linguistici", in: M. Di Marco et. Al, eds., *Pisidippo e gli altri: Il poeta, il genere, il contesto culturale e letterario. Atti dell' incontro di studio, Roma, 14-15 maggio 2004*, (Pisa), pp. 9-22

⁷⁴ Harris, H.A., *Athletes and athletics*, Hutchinson, London: 1964, p.182

evidence of Olympia suggests that while the stadia used were the same as the men's, the women's events were held at different festivals.⁷⁵

There is a lonely line of Sappho: *Hero of Gyara, that fleet-footed maiden, was a pupil of mine*, but there is no indication whether Sappho trained Hero or not. The minimal conclusion from this line is that in the island of Lesbos in the 6th century BC girls ran.⁷⁶

Girls definitely ran in Sparta where racing was a part of their famous education system, *the agoge*, an institution allegedly founded by the legendary figure of Spartan reformer Lycurgus. Scanlon says that modern scholars maintain that the unique structure of the *agoge* with initiatory institutions found in other primitive cultures suggests that its roots predate the archaic period. The system most probably has been established in the 6th century, a period associated with other Lycurgan measures. Scanlon claims that physical training would accord with the existence of *beauty contests* both in Sparta and the island of Lesbos. The date of the Sapphic institutions and customs, roughly contemporaneous with the earliest female *paideia* in Sparta, suggests that female upbringing including *sexual segregation, athletic training and homoerotic relations* was dispersed and localized from at least the late 7th century. An argument from silence suggests that such female education was rare outside of Lesbos and Sparta in the archaic period, though it must remain conjectural.⁷⁷

Theocritus (ca 300-260? BC) in his "Epithalamy of Helen" (*Idyll* 18) gives the best idealized portrait of the legendary Spartan beauty who doubtless served as a role model for younger girls. In the poem, twelve Spartan girls, former companions to the queen – to – be, praise her beauty, her skill at weaving and her musical talent. They recall their former activities: *we are all as age mates who practiced the same running course and oiled ourselves down like men alongside the bathing pools of the Eurotas, we are the four times sixty maidens, the female corps of youth (neolaia)*.⁷⁸

A series of 6th and early 5th century bronzes mirror handles and votive statues, apparently from Laconia or Laconian workshops have been interpreted by some scholars as representations of Spartan female athletes. Here the "wild "element is

⁷⁵ Harris, H.A., *op.cit.*, p.183

⁷⁶ Harris, H.A., *op.cit.*, p.182

⁷⁷ Scanlon, T., *Eros and the Greek Athletics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2002, p. 123

⁷⁸ Theocritus, "The Epithalamy of Helen (18)", *Idylls 12-18*, transl. by J.M. Edmonds, available at: www.theoi.com/Text/TheocritusIdylls.3html,

represented on many of the mirror handles by lions or griffins supporting struts but also by animals under their feet, like turtles, or the frog under a Laconian figure from Cyprus. The “marsh animals” may allude to the fact that the girls danced and ran near the bathing pools of Eurotas River as mentioned above by Theocritus.⁷⁹

An example of such a mirror handle is shown in **Figure 1**, which represents a young female athlete, with the athletic hair net, sickle “prize” on shoulder strap and some kind of an oil flask in left hand. Two griffins with the one leg are balancing on her shoulder and on the other they are holding the mirror.



Fig. 1. Bronze mirror handle, unknown site of origin, possibly from a Spartan workshop, ca 550 BC, New York Metropolitan Museum of Art

(Source: Scanlon, T., *Eros and the Greek Athletics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, fig. 5-2, p. 132)

⁷⁹ Scanlon, T., *op.cit.*, p. 132

The foot race held a special sacred prestige in Sparta. The *dromos* (track) at Sparta also served as the gymnasium in the probable absence of any proper building before Roman times.⁸⁰ The *dromos* was probably located on the banks of the Eurotas in the vicinity of the Sanctuary of *Artemis Orthia*. The Eurotas is mentioned as the place of girl's exercise by Aristophanes (*Lys.* 1308-1313)⁸¹, Theocritus (18.39)⁸², Pausanias (3.14.6)⁸³ and Cicero (*Tusc.* 2.15.16)⁸⁴. Pausanias relates the only detail for the actual ritual of a race for girls at Sparta:

At Sparta, next to the temple of Dionysus Colonatas, there is a precinct of the Hero, who, they say, guided Dionysus on his journey to Sparta. The Dionysiades and Leucippides sacrifice to this Hero before they do to the god. As for the second group of eleven women called Dionysiades for them they hold a footrace. The custom for them to run a race came from Delphi (3.13.7)⁸⁵.

Nilsson has suggested that the *Dionysiade's* number at 11 may indicate one leader who is chased by ten runners in a rite for the salvation of the state, as in the footrace of the Spartan *staphylodromoi* (grape runners), which is held during the *Carneia*.⁸⁶ Calame has proposed that the presence of Dionysus as the divinity of the adult female indicates that the footrace of the Dionysiades was an initiatory race for maidens, moving from adolescence to adulthood.⁸⁷

The footrace stands out in the Spartan athletic program for girls as one way to foster progress toward womanhood in a religious and athletic context. The other

⁸⁰ Delorme, J., *Gymnasion: Etude sur les Monuments consacres a l' Education en Grece* (des origins a l' Empire romain), Paris, De Boccard, 1960, pp. 72-74

⁸¹ Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, the Loeb Classical Library, No. 180, Vol. III, transl. B.B. Rogers, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1925

⁸² Theocritus, *op.cit.*

⁸³ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, the Loeb Classical Library, Vol. I-V, transl. W.H.S. Jones & R. Wycherley, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1960

⁸⁴ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations, on the Nature of the Gods and on Commonwealth*, transl. C.D. Yonge, N. York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1877, available at: www.thriceholy.net/Texts/Tusculan1.html.

⁸⁵ Pausanias, *op.cit.*

⁸⁶ Nilsson, M.P., *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung mit Ausschluss der Attischen*, Leipzig, B.G. Teubner, 1906, Reprint: Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche, Buchgesellschaft, 1957, p.298

⁸⁷ Calame, C. ed. *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece, Vol.I: their Morphology, Religious, Role and Social*

contests, including wrestling and discus and javelin throwing, as well as the exercises of *bibasis* (jumping in place) and dance, are to be distinguished as religiously less significant but important for eugenic purposes to serve and preserve the state.⁸⁸

There was a festival in Athens which had to do with girl's races called the *Arkteia* (arktos = bear) at the Brauronia, the quadrennial festival of Artemis Brauronia. This festival included a ritual concentrated on the girls' own concerns and roles in society. Apparently, every Athenian girl had "to play the bear" before she could marry. The chorus in the *Lysistrata* places their service at Brauron after the "grinding" of the 10 years old and before the "basket carrying" and one may imagine the girls to be 10-14 years old. These girls had assembled in the sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron, a village 32 kilometers southwest of Athens. Other girls may have performed their *Arkteia* at other Artemis sanctuaries in Attica. The girls would dress in special saffron robes, sacrifice to Artemis and in some type of initiatory ceremony, "play the bear" for Artemis. Included in the festival were processions, dancing and *footraces* for the girls.⁸⁹

Mikalson says that modern theories about the meaning of the ritual abound, but the simplest explanation may be that through the rituals of *Arkteia* these girls, as they approached puberty and marriage, were being formally initiated into the cult of goddess who would be of major importance to their lives as women in the future. Artemis is the goddess most invoked by women in casual conversation ("By Artemis,...") and as *Lochia* (of the Child bearing bed), she assisted women in child birth, a critical new role facing these girls. Women apparently dedicated garments to Artemis at Brauron after childbirth. Mothers offer dedications to Artemis on behalf of their children. Through the Arkeia the girls were essentially initiated into the cult of the goddess to whom, they would turn for help in childbirth and for the care of their own children, the goddess to whom, they as women would pray and sacrifice for the rest of their lives. This would be one religious affiliation that the girl, as a bride, would take with her from her birth family to the family of her husband. It bridged the world of her childhood in her birth family and that of her motherhood in her new family. The foundation myth of the Brauronia has however a different emphasis. According to it, the girls were playing the bear in a ritual reenactment of the original appeasement of the angry goddess. Making and keeping Artemis happy is certainly an important service to

⁸⁸ Scanlon, T., *op.cit.*, p. 136

⁸⁹ Mikalson, J., *Ancient Greek Religion*, Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 150

the state, and that may be why the chorus of the *Lysistrata* include it in their list. But in their rituals of “playing the bear”, the girls were also developing a close association with the goddess who would play a major role in their personal lives as women and mothers.⁹⁰

The evidence of running races at the Attic festivals of Artemis is provided by the unique visual evidence of thirty four vases or fragments of vases (*krateriskoi*) of girl’s races in a cultic context. The provenances of the vases under consideration include the sites of Brauron, the Athenian Agora, Salamis, the Athenian Acropolis and Munichion. The vases date from ca 510-500 to the first half of the 5th century, mid 5th century and ca. 430-420 BC. The cult of Artemis Brauronia and its penteteric festival may date as far back as the 6th century. Certain elements of iconography distinguish running from dancing or movement in procession. Philostratus in his work on *Gymnastics* vividly describes the movements of short and long distance runners:

*The runners in the stade race by the aid of their hands stir their legs into the quick run just as though their hands were wings. The runners in the long distance race do this near the goal but the rest of the time move almost as if they were walking, holding up their hands in front of them, wherefore they need stronger shoulders (On Gymn.32).*⁹¹

Scanlon claims that the movement of sprinters, including runners in both the stade (ca 200 meters) and diaulos races (400 meters) is therefore characterized by a high kicking of the legs and a high swinging of the arms with palms open and fingers sometimes splayed. Long distance runners can be recognized by the more moderate lifting of the legs and the holding of the arms close to the side with the hands held in front often in a fist. Such positions can be seen in vase paintings of male runners and in the practice of modern short and long distance runners. The movements of dancers by contrast cannot be so easily defined, except to note that dancers are often show by symmetrical arm and leg movements, but not ordinarily with the typical movements of runners just mentioned.⁹²

Of the vases under Scanlon’s study, the representations of girls running show nudes (5 pieces) and girls in short chitons (6 pieces), representations of either running or

⁹⁰ Mikalson, J., *op.cit.*, p. 151

⁹¹ Flavius Philostratus, *On Gymnastics*, transl. R.S. Robinson in sources in the History of Greek Athletics, Ann Arbor, 1955,

⁹² Scanlon, T., *op.cit.*, p. 140

dancing (12 pieces), six of these twelve depict girls in chitons, some carrying torches or a corona-shaped wreath (possible ritual elements of a chorus). Many of these possible runners (or dancers) show the head turned looking backward, an attitude that is seen in some depictions of runners. Significantly, none of the girl runners is in the pose of the long distance runners known from many representations on vases, namely a low stride, arms at the side and hands held in fist.⁹³

Many of the girls do swing their arms in the natural motion of sprinters, one high and forward, one bent back, but several of these girls run in the awkward position of having one or both arms extended in front palms upward. The pose is comparable to the attitude of the girls processing to the altar with one palm forward. Furthermore, several of the girl runners hold their fingers together or cupped as they run. The cupped-hand gesture is also present in the dancing and processional scenes.⁹⁴

Hereby, a few examples of the iconography of the ritual running in honor of Artemis at Brauron are listed as below:



Fig. 2. *Krateriskos* from Brauron, 1st half of the 5th cent, Brauron Museum (no. 568)

(Source: Scanlon, T., *Eros and the Greek Athletics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, fig. 6-I, p. 141)

⁹³ Scanlon, T., *op.cit.*, p. 141-143

⁹⁴ Scanlon, T., *op.cit.*, p. 144

Figure 2 shows of a very young girl, in a short chiton (*exomis*), wearing a red fillet in her hair. She runs to the right at full speed. The *exomis* is painted in very light, vertical black lines over the white body whose outline is visible underneath.



Fig. 3. Fragments of *Kratersikos* from unknown site, Brauronian type of red figure Attic vessel, ca 430-420 BC, Collection of Herbert A. (Cahn. inv.no.. HC 501)

(Source: Scanlon, T., *Eros and the Greek Athletics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, fig. 6-5, p. 145)

Figure 3 shows four young girls in short chitons positioned alternately between three older girls or women in *chitons* or *himatia*. The young girls resemble those shown running on the Brauronian vases, but here the one on the far left seems to be preparing to run, and the other three actually beginning to run a course. The older females seem to be aiding in the preparations (from left to right) one arranging a girl's chiton, or otherwise officiating, one holding three branches, and one holding baskets, evidently as part of a ritual. The girls and two women to the far right stand behind an altar, which also suggests a ritual context.

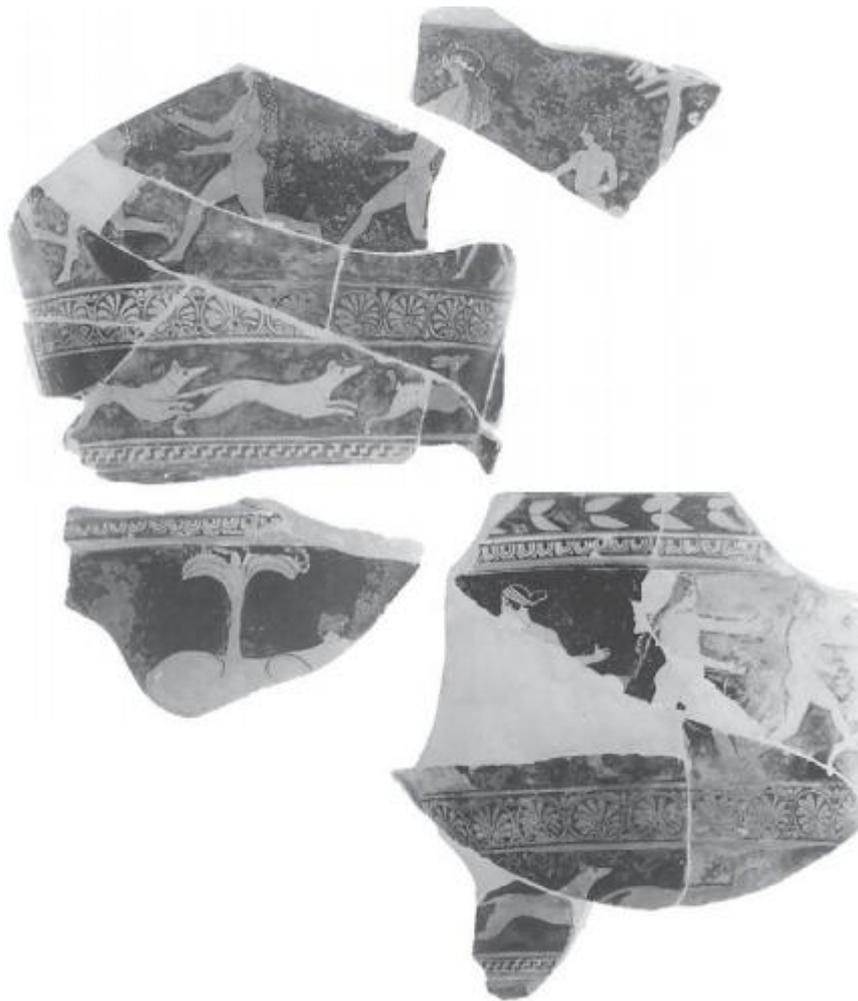


Fig. 4. Fragments of *Kratersikos* from unknown site, Brauronian type of red figure Attic vessel, ca 430-420 BC, Collection of Herbert A. (Cahn. inv.no.. HC 502)

(Source: Scanlon, T., *Eros and the Greek Athletics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, fig. 6-6, p. 146)

Figure 4 shows five girls, all nude, running to the left with a palm tree on a rocky hill to the far right. The four girls in the lead appear to be larger and older than the one following behind them. Two girls carry wreaths (as may the other three whose hands are not preserved). The next fragment shows four girls, also all nude and also in full stride but here running to the right. On the far left is a palm tree. The girl's hands are extended and at least two hold wreaths. In the lower register of both fragments is a hunting scene with four dogs chasing a fawn, suggesting the theme of flight and pursuit. The hunt is a mirror image of the scene on the body of the vase: tame hounds pursue a "wild" animal in the same manner in which a "wild" bear pursues the "tame girls".

Scanlon assumes that this iconography may be related to the role of the girls in "imitating the bear", during the Arkteia mentioned above and he explains that these

gestures represent girls literally adopting the characteristics of bears whose paws are naturally closer to the closed fist than a splayed hand and who, when standing on their hind legs, ordinarily hold their front paws before them.⁹⁵

The nudity of the girls which appears in five vases, Scanlon agrees that this is all about an unusual ritual practice which intends to evoke a sense of primitive wildness appropriate to devotees of Artemis, archetypically “Mistress of the Beasts”. Scanlon also cites the theory of Kahil who proposes that the nude girl *arktoi* are meant to recall their heroine Iphigeneia who, in Aeschylus *Agamemnon*, is wearing a saffron robe before being sacrificed. Moreover, the *Scholia* to Aristophanes *Lysistrata* say that Iphigeneia was sacrificed at Brauron, not Aulis. Scanlon also cites the proposal of Vidal – Naquet and Osborne who have argued that the change from clothes to nudity dramatizes the passage from civilization to savagery, from the tamedness of clothes to the wildness of nature. The unusual practice of nude dancing or running would be more dramatically effective as a final ritual in the ceremony, reminding those about to depart from the next stage of life of the earliest stage of infancy.⁹⁶

Last but not least altars and palm trees are found in the background of many of these scenes but without specific restriction to the iconography of girls. These two objects serve to identify the setting as that of Brauron, or of another shrine of Artemis to whom the palm was of course particularly sacred. It is noteworthy that the palm, understood broadly in Greek culture, symbolized *immortality*. The altar occupies a central place in the running activities and the girls seem to begin running very near it and perhaps back to it. While analogy with the Olympic races for men would suggest that the altar served as both start and finish, the model of the women’s *Amphidromia* suggests rather a course around the altar. Perhaps also at Brauron the altar served as the focal point round which the girl participants ran. The possibility that the run was not an actual race but an initiatory task is further suggested by the absence of any scene of the close clustering of runners, a scene familiar from depictions of men’s races.⁹⁷

Running is a salient feature of the myths and cults of Artemis, wherein her followers race through the mountains and chase animals in the hunt. Arrigoni suggests that if therefore the Arkteia is regarded basically as a sort of domestication of a force

⁹⁵ Scanlon, T., *op.cit.*, p. 145

⁹⁶ Scanlon, T., *op.cit.*, p. 149

⁹⁷ Scanlon, T., *op.cit.*, p. 151

uncontrolled and intensified by the Attic girls, the function of a ritual race was perhaps that of representing on the expressive freedom of action, of costume (and especially the nudity) and of the agonistic tension the moment of breaking loose and of the liberation of such a youthful force in view of certainly more conforming and sedate status of adult women. Running can stir devotees to frenzy or it may be the result of a madness sent by the gods.⁹⁸

3.3. The reality of Greek competition

It could be impossible for women to participate in most of the sports events of ancient Greece because wrestling, *pankration*, and especially what Homer calls in *Iliad* “painful boxing” (*Iliad* 23.653)⁹⁹ were brutal and bloody.¹⁰⁰ Injury and even death were not uncommon. It is the heavy athletes of the archaic and classical periods not the runners or *pentathletes*, who are the objects of cult worship as heroes perhaps because of their ability to both inflict pain and endure it.¹⁰¹ Thucydides for example dates events by the victories of the heavy athletes Dorieus and Androstheneis (*Hist.* 3.8 & 5.49)¹⁰²

Therefore it seems that the most important event for Greeks was not running but wrestling, a sport in which, even if clothing is worn, it is easy to be torn off. Hence how ordinary could be for a common Greek the idea of women in a bloody and naked sport? It is noteworthy that when Plato repeats his demand for physical training for women, he rejects wrestling and the *pankration* for them in favor of fencing. Apparently women never boxed anywhere in Greece,¹⁰³ other than in Sparta, where wrestling was part of women’s wider education program. Propertius sang the praise of Spartan maidens: *I marvel at the many rules of your palestra. O Sparta, but even more at the*

⁹⁸ Arrigoni, G. “Donne e Sport nel Mondo Greco Relligione e Societa”, in *Le Donne in Grecia*, ed. G. Arrigoni, Rome, Laterza, 1985, p.103

⁹⁹ Homer, *Iliad*, available at: www.kairatos.com.gr/vivlia/ILIADA.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Miller, S.G., *Ancient Greek Athletics*, New Haven, 2004, pp.46-60

¹⁰¹ Fontenrose, J., “The hero as athlete”, *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* I, 1968, pp. 73-104

¹⁰² Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the Loeb Classical Library., Books 3-4, transl. C.F. Smith, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1920 & the Loeb Classical Library., Books 5-6, transl. C.F. Smith, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1921

¹⁰³ Harris, H.A., *op.cit.*, p.181

*blessings of your gymnasium for girls (virgineum gymnasium) since a naked girl may take part in the well known games amidst men as they wrestle (3.14.1-4).*¹⁰⁴

The earliest explicit source on the Spartan female education is Critia's *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum*, written in 425-403 BC, followed by Xenophon's work *Lacedaemonians*, written ca 396-383 BC, who both mention contests of *running* and *strength* and first giving Lycurgus credit for instituting the system. Plutarch in the biography of Lycurgus much later lists the fullest program of female sports: (*Lycurgus*) *made the maidens exercise their bodies in running, wrestling and the throwing of discus and javelin so that the root of these born might better mature by taking a strong beginning in strong bodies...*¹⁰⁵ (14.1 – 15.1).

Plutarch claims that the girls were, no less than boys, freed from all delicacy and effeminacy by requiring them without clothes to process, dance at certain festivals and sing in public. The nudity in fact inspired lofty sentiment; since they took part no less than the men in bravery (*arête*) and ambition (*philotimia*). Philostratus in his work *Gymnasium*, written in ca AD 230 echoes Plutarch's claim and he adds that Lycurgus instituted female exercise *to produce more and better warrior athletes (polemikus athletes)* (27).¹⁰⁶

Chariots on the other hand were flimsy: fields, crowded, tactics included leaving the lane and cutting inside on turns and there was no central barrier to prevent head – on crashes. Under such circumstances, it is no surprise that only one team out of 42 survived to finish at the Pythian games of 462 BC.¹⁰⁷ According to Demosthenes: *“many insist that nothing in racing affords such delight as a crash and they seem to speak the truth”*.¹⁰⁸ Even the discus had a reputation of danger, though the odd numerous deaths of Hyacinthus, Acrisius, Phocus, Crocus, Thermius all in myth can have had little to do with what actually occurred in practice or competition.¹⁰⁹ In

¹⁰⁴ Scanlon, T., *op.cit.*, p. 124

¹⁰⁵ Plutarch *Lives*, “Lycurgus”, the Loeb Classical Library, Vol. 1., transl. B. Perrin, Harvard University Press, Oxford: 1914

¹⁰⁶ Philostratus, “On Gymnastics”, transl. R. S. Robinson, in: *Sources for the History of Greek Athletics*, Ann Arbor: 1955, pp. 212-232

¹⁰⁷ Pindar, *Pythians*, 5.49-54

¹⁰⁸ Crowth, N.B., “Reflections on Greek equestrian events violence and spectator attitudes”, *Nikephoros* 7, 1994, 121-133

¹⁰⁹ Moreau, A., “Le discobule meurtrier” in A. Moreau, *Mythes grecs I. Origines* (Montpellier), 1999, pp.127-146

antiquity as already presented in this paper the equestrian competition was anomalous: as it was owners of an entry who won the wreath and these rarely drove their own chariots or mule carts, let alone ride their own horses, women could compete from afar (as the winners of flat and harmless races).

Conclusions

In the Greek philosophical thought, with some notable exceptions of Socrates, the Stoic philosophers and the Pythagorians, women belonged to a different class than men, in class more or less between men and slaves. Women's role had to do mainly with household and parenting. Plato believed in freedom and education of women, although he considered women as incomplete human beings. Aristotle on the other hand believed that women had to stay outside public affairs, silent in important social and political issues and submissive to the will and orders of their husbands who had all rights to decide within and outside their homes. This neglected position of women in the society explains their limited participation in sports.

There are examples of women's participation in the equestrian races from ancient Sparta but mostly from the Hellenistic period. Those women belonged to the royal families or aristocracy, like Kyniska, Bilistiche II, Berenice I, Arsinoe II, Berenice of Syria. About Kyniska, the royal Spartan Olympic victor, unfortunately very little is known beyond her wins and dedications at Olympia. One may see her victory from two different aspects: by stressing the role of sport in a discourse of difference and detecting traces of the play of the gender in Aegisilaus possible influence, then Kyniska's win is seen not as progress or liberation, but as reinforcing female's inferior status or by seeing Kyniska's case as Aegisilaus' game of using a female victory to challenge the significance of male chariot victories. Whatever the aspect is the important issue here is that Kyniska and other equestrian victors was some political capital for her fatherland, as well as the prospect of some visibility as women attracted them to competition, as Kyniska's proud epigram attests.

Girls definitely ran in Sparta where racing was a part of their famous education system, *the agoge*, an institution allegedly founded by the legendary figure of Spartan reformer Lycurgus and there is evidence that girls ran in other parts of Greece like Lesbos but not in Athens. Running is found there in a religious, not in an athletic context.

The rituals of Artemis at the Arkteia in Athens describe the abandonment of the civilized flight to the domain of the wild, followed by eventual taming and in some cases reversion to or retention of the wild aspect even after the taming has been accomplished. At the Arkteia it is the running of a chase and not a race. The analogy is to the hunt, not to the agonistic battle that is more suited to the imaginary of male competition. The running of the chase combines the tension of quasi-sexual play with a half-tamed bear, a desperate flight from the very same beast in his half-wild aspect sympathetic to Artemis and sacrificial commemoration of both aspects embodied in the individual girls who assume the identity of the bear.

CHAPTER 4

THE OLYMPIC GAMES AND THE HERAIA

After a period of strife between Elis and Pisa, the Eleans chose a wise, elderly woman from each of the 16 city-states to settle their disputes. The women's duties included weaving a robe for Hera every four years and conducting games in her honor. Kunstler has illuminated the significance of the Heraian Games: *usually we have only the fragments of myth or heroic genealogies as remnants of kinship and exchange systems. But here, among the Eleans, there survived a practice and the memory of important socio-political prerogatives that were held by women.*¹¹⁰ He insists that the footraces conducted by age groups suggest a social organization in which the *ephebic* role of maidens and their future roles as adults central to community's economic life have not been entirely lost.¹¹¹

The 16 Elean women, Pausania's *oldest and most worthy in judgments, the best among them* were appointed, one from each of the 16 cities to settle disputes between Pisa and Elis. All married women, they oversaw the Games, further it was their duty to weave a robe for Hera every four years. As matrons of the matrilineal clans chosen for their status they oversaw the initiation rites of the community, in which the footraces frequently played a major role. They were in charge too of the choral dances in which maidens were initiated into the secrets of their femaleness and their functions within the tribe...*Psychoas' dance was probably part of a female initiation rite, which was...associated with women's control over the techniques and distributing functions of medicine, agriculture, wine making, weaving and other productive tanks. As well as the important role played by women within their clans.*¹¹²

1.4. Olympia and the Olympic Games

The Olympic Games took place at the time of the second full moon after the summer solstice, thus sometime in the summer at a time corresponding to today's late July or August. The time was not the first full moon after the solstice, for that full moon was used to signal to the athletes the beginning of their thirty days of training at Elis and

¹¹⁰ Kunstler, B.L., *op. cit.* p. 307

¹¹¹ Kunstler, B.L., *op. cit.* p. 303

¹¹² Kunstler, B.L., *op. cit.* p. 305-306

also the on set of the sacred truce, the *ekeheria*. Lee analyses the calendar system in ancient times as follows: there were Games in July if a full moon occurred in late June just after the solstice, for the second full moon would then take place in late July, thus making for an early festival. On the other hand, if there was a full moon just before the solstice, then the first full moon after the solstice would occur in the latter part of July and the second in the latter part of August. In such a case, the festival would be late. In terms of the calendar, the date was not fixed but rather movable from one Olympiad to the next, inasmuch as the early circle of the sun (365.25 days) does not correspond with the cycles of the moon (a lunar month = 29.5 days, a lunar year = 354 days). The period between Olympics varied between 49 and 50 lunar months. There was an overriding practical consideration for using the full moon to set the time of the Olympic festival as different Greek cities used different calendars. The astronomical observations were however, common to all and thus the most convenient and practical way to set the time of the Games. The connection of the full moon to the Olympics is known from Pindar who recounts Heracle's founding of the Games in honor of his father Zeus.¹¹³

The contests constituting the program of the Olympics are known from Pausanias (5.8.6.-5.9.2). The complete program of contests presented by Lee in the table below finds confirmation with a couple of exceptions, in two other sources a) a papyrus from Oxyrhyncus (POxy II.222), dated to the mid 3rd century BC by the editors and containing nearly complete or partial victor lists from 480 BC to 448 BC, but with the years 464 BC and 460 BC missing *in toto* and b) a fragment of the historian Phlegon of Tralles (FHG 606 fr. 12), which gives the victors from the Games of 72 BC.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Lee, H. M., "The Program and Schedule of the Ancient Olympic Games", *Nikephoros*, Band 6, 2001, p.7

¹¹⁴ Lee, *op.cit.*, p. 2-3

Olympiad	Year BC	Event
1	776	Stade
14	724	Diaulos
15	720	Dolichos
18	708	Pentathlon
		Wrestling
23	688	Boxing
25	680	Tethrippon (four-horse chariot race)
33	648	Pankration
		Keles (horse-race)
37	632	Boy's stade
		Boy's wrestling
38	628	Boy's Pentathlon
		Immediately discontinued
41	616	Boy's boxing
65	520	Hoplite Race
70	500	Apene (mule-cart race)
71	496	Kalpe (Mare's Race)
84	444	(Apene and Kalpe discontinued)
93	408	Synoris (two horse chariot race)
96		Heralds
		Trumpeters
99	384	Four-foal Chariot Race
128	268	Two-foal Chariot Race
131	256	Race for Single Foals
145	200	Boy's Pankration

TABLE 1: All the information provided in this table is based on Lee's list found in: Lee, H. M., "The Program and Schedule of the Ancient Olympic Games", *Nikephoros*, Band 6, 2001, p.2

The Olympic victors won great respect and social recognition. Equestrian athletes were undoubtedly of a high social class as already explained. For the great majority of ancient Olympians in the athletic events, there is no evidence at all of their social standing high or low, because it seems that ancient writers were not so interested in the question.¹¹⁵ Evidence for the value of the prizes starts with Homer, who refers to them not just in his mythological passages but in his contemporary similes as well. Anticipating a recent innovation in the modern Olympics, early 6th century BC Athens awarded 500 drachmas to any of its citizens who won at Olympia, an Isthmian victory paid 100 drachmas. Young equates making calculations of modern equivalents is concluding that it would take a skilled worker almost 15 years to earn the amount which an athlete got for one Olympic victory. Young is equating those 500 drachmas with at least \$700,000 today and probably closer to a million dollars (!) or even more. An annual income of 500 drachmas thrust an Athenian immediately into the very wealthiest classification in Solon's timocracy.¹¹⁶

The great sacrifice to Zeus was the religious highlight of the festival. There was a procession preceding the sacrifice, that the official deputations, the *architheoroi*, from the various Greek cities, participated in the parade and that they brought precious objects with them, which they displayed during the procession. In the case of the Athenians, the objects were gold vessels and incense – burners. There was time enough before the official parade for individuals to stage their own private processions, with time enough afterwards for the gold objects borrowed to be returned to the *architheoroi*. As for the sacrifice itself, no source actually describes it, but there are references to the ritual in Greek literature and art. The victim was led in procession to the altar. After being sprinkled with water, its throat was cut. Then it was butchered and its bones wrapped in fat were burned to the gods. The rest of the meat was cooked and distributed among the participants. The Olympic sacrifice must have been similar except that a large number of victims must have been offered.¹¹⁷

Pausanias tells that the great altar of Zeus used for the Olympic sacrifice was situated equally distant from the Pelopion and the sanctuary of Hera, but in front of both. However, nothing of the altar has been found by the archaeologists. Pausanias

¹¹⁵ Young, D.C., *A Brief History of the Olympic Games*, Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p. 95

¹¹⁶ Young, D.C., *op.cit.* p. 98

¹¹⁷ Lee, *op. cit.* 51

says that the first stage of the altar at Olympia, called *prothysis*, had a circumference of 125 feet. The circumference of the stage on the *prothysis* was 32 feet. The total height of the altar reached to 22 feet. The victims themselves, it was the custom to sacrifice on the lower stage, the *prothysis*. But the thighs they carried up to the highest part of the altar and burned them there. The steps that lead up to the *prothysis* from either side were made of stone, but those leading from the *prothysis* to the upper part of the altar were like the altar itself, composed of ashes. The ascent to the *prothysis* may be made by maidens and likewise by women, when they were not shut out from Olympia, but men only could ascend from the *prothysis* to the highest part of the altar. Even when the festival was not being held, the sacrifice was offered to Zeus by private individuals and daily by the Eleans (5.13.8)

At Olympia there was also the temple and altar of Hera. This was the first temple to be built in the *Altis* in ca 600 BC and the oldest building at Olympia of which any remains survive. Swaddling holds the view that it was probably erected by local tribes who paid homage to Hera, before the Eleans established Zeus as the sovereign deity in the *Altis* (Olympia's sacred center). There were two cult images in the temple, one of Hera and one of Zeus, the combination of the two statues symbolizing the union of religious beliefs between the two peoples. During excavations a limestone female head, twice life-size, was found west of the temple but it very likely belonged to a sphinx and not to the statue of Hera. As Swaddling points out, the most remarkable feature of the temple was that no two of the columns were exactly alike, differing in style, thickness and type of stone. It appears that originally all the columns were wooden and replaced one by one in stone as, over the years, they gradually rotted. They were probably not all removed at once because it would be considered sacrilegious to remove any part of the temple unless absolutely necessary. It is possible that each stone column was dedicated by a different person and this would account for the lack of uniformity. Originally only the foundations and lower parts of the walls were of stone. The upper walls were of mud brick, and wooden rafters supported the terracotta roof tiles. Last but not least, winners in the Games of Hera, held for women at Olympia, dedicated paintings of themselves in the colonnade.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Swaddling, J., *The Ancient Olympic Games*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2008, p. 22-23

4.2. Goddess Hera

The goddess *Hera*, to whom the *Heraia* festival was dedicated, was the queen of all gods. Her name is related to the word *hora* (ώρα), “the season of the year” and it is interpreted as “mature for marriage”. Her worship had two main ritual centers, the sanctuary between Argos and Mycenae (Homer is calling her *Ἥρη Ἀργεΐη* - Hera from Argos) and in the island of Samos. Her religion as the first Goddess had spread all over Greece from the very early ancient times. She was presented wearing the royal tiara (τον πόλον) and Homer uses for her the adjective *βοώπις* which means eye’s form like a cow’s in order to describe the beauty of her eyes. In Olympia, Hera had her own sanctuary long before Zeus. Her statue, in the archaic times presented her sitting in her throne next to the statue of warrior Zeus.¹¹⁹

In Olympia, women celebrated their own festival in honor of Hera. Sixteen beautiful young women (two from each tribe) introduced the festival. They offered a new veil (*peplos*) to the goddess while in the stadium virgins ran races, wearing short *chitons*, worn without undergarment, pinned at the shoulder, open on one side exposing the thigh and hemmed above the knees. The prize was an olive branch and a share from the sacrifice of a cow in the name of Hera. The myth says that the festival of Hera at Olympia (*Heraia*) was instituted by *Hippodameia* in order to thank the goddess for her marriage with Pelops. In the festival, one chorus danced and sang for Hippodameia and another did the same for *Fiscoa*, mistress to Dionysus. Women called on Dionysus, whom they expected to appear in the form of a bull. While women were gathered under the protection of Hera, in their own festival during the great Olympic Games, Dionysus, Hera’s opponent, was present at the same time, so the contrast becomes double.¹²⁰

4.3. The Olympian Heraia

Long before the arrival of the Dorian Greeks, Olympia like Delphi was a sacred place. *Gaia* or the *Great Goddess* was worshipped there before Hercules and Zeus as revealed by archaeological and literary evidence. Mouratidis has written: *It is*

¹¹⁹ Burkert, W., *Αρχαία Ελληνική Θρησκεία, Αρχαϊκή και Κλασική Εποχή*, μτφρ. Ν. Μπεζαντάκος – Α. Αβαγιανού, εκδ. Καρδαμίστα, Αθήνα, 1993, p. 285

¹²⁰ Burkert, W., *op.cit.*, p. 286-287

possible that the Olympic Games had some roots in pre-historic fertility cults, which can be detected through not only the presence of the priestess of Demeter Chamyne but also by the very fact that the vigorous athletes were crowned with wreaths of wild olive. ..The vegetation elements {arose from}...traditions of the original inhabitants, who worshipped their Goddess of nature with dances and games. With the coming of Hercules, women were excluded from the games but vestiges of the Goddess remained with the priestess of Demeter Chamyne who took over most of Artemi's functions.¹²¹

The foundation date for the *Heraia* according to Golden is in the 6th century¹²². Miller posits an origin as early as the 5th century,¹²³ like Kyle¹²⁴ and Langenfeld¹²⁵ who also suggests a 5th century foundation for the festival. Scanlon on the other hand, based on the archaeological evidence of archaic statuettes of female runners and the account of Pausanias, suggests a 6th century foundation date for the festival.¹²⁶

The Olympian *Heraia* is the most clearly described ancient athletic event for women and probably the most influential model for similar local events elsewhere in Greece. Pausania's account describes the festival in detail and the picture of a female athlete carefully given can be seen in **Fig. 5**.

Every fourth years at Olympia, the Sixteen Women weave the peplos for Hera and they also sponsor the Heraia competition. This contest is a footrace for virgins who are of different ages. They run in three categories: the youngest first, the slightly older ones next, and then the oldest virgins are the last to run. They run as follows: their hair hangs down on them, a chiton reaches to a little above the knee, and the right shoulder is bared as far as the breast. They also use the Olympic stadium, but the track is shortened by one-sixth. The winners receive a crown of olive and a portion of a cow sacrificed to Hera, and they have the right to dedicate statues with their names inscribed upon them. Those who serve the Sixteen Women are, like the sponsors of these

¹²¹ Mouratidis, J., "Heracles at Olympia and the exclusion of women from the ancient Olympic Games", *Journal of Sport History* 11,3 (Winter), 1984, pp. 51-55

¹²² Golden, M., pp. 123-132

¹²³ Miller, G., *op.cit.*, p. 156

¹²⁴ Kyle, D., "Fabulous Females and Ancient Olympia", in G.P. Schaus & S.E. Wenn (eds) *Onward to the Olympics: Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games*, Waterloo, Ontario, 2007, p. 220

¹²⁵ Langenfeld, H., "Olympia – Zentrum des Frauensports in der Antike? Die Mädechen Wettläufe beim Hera - Fest in Olympia", *Nikephoros* 19, 2006, p. 153-185

¹²⁶ Scanlon, T. "The Heraia at Olympia Revisited", *Nikephoros* 21, 2008, p. 164-167

games, women. They trace the competition of the virgins also back to antiquity. They say that Hippodameia, out of gratitude to Hera for her marriage to Pelops, collected sixteen women and with them, sponsored the first Heraia...the Sixteen Women also arrange two choral dances, they call one of *Physkoa*,¹²⁷ the other that of *Hippodameia*...The Eleans are now divided into eight tribes and from each they choose two women. (5.16.2-7).



Fig. 5. *Olympic Girl Runner*, marble reconstruction of lost bronze statue, ca. 430 B.C., (Source: Seltmann, C., *Women in Antiquity*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1955)

¹²⁷ *Physkoa* was a heroine from Elis Cile, where she lived in the deme *Oerhia* and was credited with introducing the worship of Dionysus to Elis. It has even been suggested that *Psykoa*'s cult appears to have been substituted for an earlier cult of *Artemis - Orthia*, suggested by the name of the heroine's deme. The unusual name *Orthia* may alternatively indicate some regional ties between Sparta and Elis. See: Jeanmaire, H., *Dionysos, Histoire du culte de Bacchus*, Payot, Paris, 1951, p. 216

The great antiquity of the festival given by the myths indicates that the founding of the Olympics and *Heraia* goes back to the Bronze Age. The mythical tradition associating the sixteen virgins with Hippodameia is essentially contradicted by the historical tradition that relates their institution the treaty of Elis and Pisa after the death of the tyrant Damophon in the 580's. The latter tradition maintains, as Dillon points out that only after the institution of the Sixteen ca. 580 BC were the women entrusted with the management of the *Heraia* and the weaving of the *peplos* for Hera.¹²⁸ There are several different opinions though like Young's¹²⁹ and Harris which argue that there are indeed several cogent reasons to suspect that the *Heraia* is a late addition to the Olympic festival calendar because Pausania's 2nd century report is the earliest and only reference. It seems unlikely that such a distinctive festival and race could pass for about a millennium wholly without any mention whatsoever in extant literature.¹³⁰ Even Pausanias, at pains to make it clear that he is merely recording what he was told, seems unsure of its truth. Also, Young claims that Pausanias's description of this race fits the gender customs in his own days of the Roman Empire better than Archaic or Classical Greece. Furthermore, his words never imply that the competitions were Panhellenic, or even that these were young women who come from other cities of Greece. It is more likely that the only competitors were drawn from the local population.¹³¹

According to Scanlon the historical background of the (re)organization of *Heraia* was as follows: "political and religious circumstances make the period around 580 B.C., a most appropriate time for the *re-organization* of the games to Hera. The Heraion was built in its present form by ca. 600 B.C. The long rivalry between Elis and Pisa ended ca.576 B.C. after the reign of Pyrrhos (Damophon's brother) and Elis enjoyed the restoration of its power. This was also the period when Sparta, the rising power of the archaic period, could have exerted her strongest influence on the reorganization of the *Heraia*. Pisa had been allied with Messenia in the 2nd Messinian War (ca. 640-610 B.C.), while Elis had close political and military ties with Sparta in the 6th century. Elis perhaps strengthened its ties to Sparta by reorganizing the games, which featured a girl's race *after the Spartan model* of competitions for girls. If the 6th century organization or reorganization involved creating a girl's festival open to all

¹²⁸ Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit.*, p.115

¹²⁹ Young, *op.cit.*, p. 115

¹³⁰ Harris, H.A., *op. cit.*, p. 179-180

¹³¹ Young, *op.cit.*, p. 115

Greeks (i.e. Panhellenic). Spartan girls would have certainly had the advantage of the competition through their unique athletic training. The reorganization of other Panhellenic festivals around this period attests to a similar trend for men's public contests".¹³²

Pausanias says that the *peplos* of Hera was woven by the Sixteen Women in a building especially for this purpose, at the agora of Elis, (Pausanias 6.24.9). The most famous analogy is the *peplos* for the cult statues of *Athena Parthenos* in Athens. At Athens the weaving of the *peplos* began about nine months before the presentation at the Panathenaia. Another parallel is the ritual of the maidens from *Locri Epizephyrii*, in which a *peplos* woven for Persephone was offered to the goddess as part of the maiden's prenuptial rites.¹³³

Scanlon says that the *Panatheneia* and the presentation of the *peplos* probably existed at least since the 7th century and probably long before it, but an athletics program was attached to that festival only since 566 BC. The donation of new robes to a goddess may even go back to Minoan times.¹³⁴

The program of the *Heraia* festival, based on the description of Pausanias, is of special interest. First of all, it resembles other early women's festivals with footraces, the organization of the Sixteen Women, the cult associations of the festival at the Olympia and its relation to the Olympic festival for Zeus. Moreover, the structure of the program at *Heraia* resembles the one of the earliest Olympics: a) offerings b) *agon* c) crowning of victors with an olive branch and d) the meal.¹³⁵ The Heraian *agon*, like the contests of the first 13 Olympics (776-728 BC) consisted only of the stade race, although it was shortened by the 1/6 for the maidens.¹³⁶

It has been suggested that this length was related to the Temple of Hera, with the same foot used to measure the girls' *stade* as was used for the measurement of the Temple of Hera, with the virgins running 200 "Temple - of - Hera - feet" (just as the male athletes ran the equivalent of 200 "Temple - of - Zeus - feet").¹³⁷

¹³² Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit.*, p.115

¹³³ Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit.*, p.99

¹³⁴ Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit.*, p. 100

¹³⁵ Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit.*, p. 99

¹³⁶ Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit.*, p. 99-100

¹³⁷ Romano, D., "The ancient stadium: athletes and arête", *Ancient World* 7, 1983, p.12-14

According to Scanlon, the limits of the age divisions in the Heraia were uncertain. He suggests that one division was under 13 and two older had an upper limit of 18-20. The division of the Heraian contests into 3 age categories also finds its closest parallel in the Spartan practice by which boys and girls were divided into three age classes of 6 years, each between the ages of 6 and 24 for the purposes of education and sport.¹³⁸

The style of dress by the Heraian runners was light, affording great comfort and it distinguished the girl athletes from women in their regular activities. The Heraian runners adopted a distinctive dress, unconventional for women and different from the Spartan style. *Mini chitons* of a specifically Heraian style are shown by two statues, which Scanlon takes as good examples.¹³⁹

1. The first bronze statuette (11.4 cm. high) is at the British Museum in London and it comes probably from Albania, dated ca.560BC. It may have been one of several attached to a large bronze krater (see **Fig. 6**). The statuette corresponds exactly to Pausania's description of the Heraian runners: hair let down, *chiton* a little above the knees and shoulder bare as far as the breast.



¹³⁸ Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit*, p. 101

¹³⁹ Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit*, p. 101-102

Fig. 6. Bronze statuette from Prisrend (Albania – ancient Epirus), dated ca.580 B.C, British Museum, London (Br.208)

(Source: Scanlon, T., *Eros and the Greek Athletics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, fig. 4-1, p. 102)

2. The second Heraian figure is a marble statue of a girl runner (1.54 m. high), now in the Varican Museum (see **Fig. 7**). Apparently, it is a copy of a 5th century original bronze, dated ca. 460 B.C. Scanlon is sure that it depicts a victor in the girl's race at Olympia. Its height indicates that the statue is a copy of a life-size statue originally dedicated by a Heraian victor or by her family at Olympia in her home city. The depiction of a "victor's palm branch" on the trunk of the marble support for the figure, according to Scanlon, clearly indicates that the girl has won a footrace¹⁴⁰.

The short *chiton* of the Heraian maidens at Olympia is explained as a religious custom and not as a temporary trend in fashion or a cloth designed only for comfort. This garment remained unchanged for 800 years. It was adopted sometime before 560 B.C. and maintained because it had some religious significance, carrying with it traditional connotations of the young, independent and athletic woman known otherwise primarily in myth and legend in the Greek world. Nancy Serwint explained that the Heraian costume cannot be seen as a reflection of an Amazonian style because neither the Amazons nor Artemis (to whom the Amazons were devotees) are represented wearing such a garment.

Serwint's thesis is that the Heraian costume in fact precedes the appearance of the Amazonian dress with the exposed breast. The Heraian garment is probably modeled on the men's lightweight, short *chiton*, named the *exomis* (off the shoulder) garment. The *exomis* is known in Greek art and literature before 560 B.C. and it was worn widely by men in hot weather and while performing active labor.¹⁴¹ The Heraian costume is therefore a striking example of cross-dressing. Cross dressing in ritual is one common aspect of initiation rites marking an adolescent's transition to adulthood in Greek and other cultures.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit*, p. 102

¹⁴¹ Serwint, N., "The Iconography of the Ancient Female Runner", *American Journal of Archaeology* 97, 1993, pp. 403-422

¹⁴² Burkert, W., *op.cit*, pp. 260-264

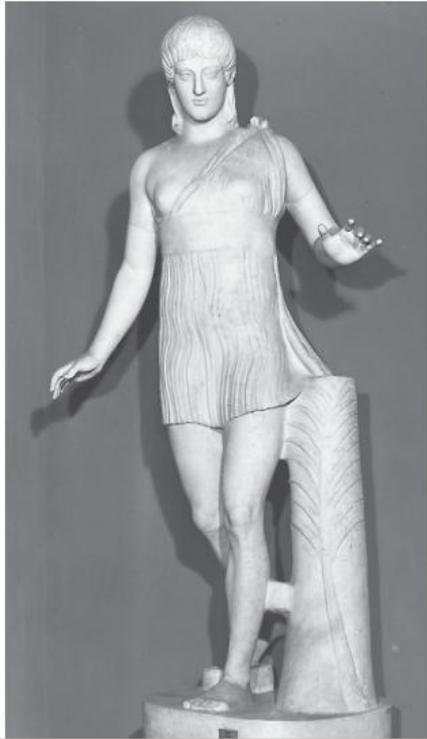


Fig. 7. Marble statue, dated ca.460 B.C, Vatican Museum, Museum Galleria dei Candellabri, XXXIV, 36.I, Vatican City (No. 2784)

(Source: Scanlon, T., *Eros and the Greek Athletics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, fig. 4-2, p. 103)

Consequently, the dress of the Heraian girls suggests that the race was part of a preparation for their status as adult females and at the same time it suggests the very activity of a footrace was unusual for females, more normally a male activity that calls for a special “male” costume. So, this dress, which was typical of the everyday activity of men, was chosen in order to allow freedom of movement to girls. At the same time, it was proper in not being too revealing. Paradoxically, as Scanlon notices, the Heraian garb, showing much of the legs and one breast, had pushed the limits far from social propriety. The *exomis* was therefore an ambiguous costume that well suited the status of the maidens, alluding to the masculine, yet revealing the feminine, maintaining nominal sartorial modesty, yet unveiling the body as an “erotic object”.¹⁴³

Pausanias mentions that the victors may also set up inscribed “likenesses” (*εικόνας*) of themselves (paintings or sculptures) in honor of Hera (5.16.3). There are in

¹⁴³ Scanlon, T.(2008), *op.cit*, p. 108

fact cuttings on many of the columns of the Heraion which probably held the paintings of victors near the well-used entrances to the temple.¹⁴⁴ No similar paintings for Olympic victors are known on the columns of the temples of Zeus and no similar customs are known for other sanctuaries where women's races were held.¹⁴⁵

It cannot be determined with the certainty whether the participants in the *Heraia* were local girls from the villages of Elis or whether the festival was open to all Greeks. Pausanias relates that an early victor in the *Heraia* was *Chloris*, daughter of Amphion of Thebes but the legend need not accurately reflect historical practice. The *Chloris* legend is evidently connected with that of Hippodameia's institution of the original games since Pausanias mentions both together.¹⁴⁶ Scanlon, taking on account the above presented bronze statuette from ancient Epirus, dated ca. 580 B.C. (**Fig. 5**), claims that it was made by a Laconian workmanship, for a girl who was a victor in the *Heraia*. The statuette came from Olympia but it was found in Epirus. Consequently, one may make the following hypotheses that: a) the statuette might have been a decoration on a tripod honoring a Heraian victor from north western Greece, set up in her homeland b) it was a dedication of a Heraian victor at Olympia, which somehow found its way to northern Greece c) it was made for a girl's victor in some unknown local contest in Epirus modeled on the Olympian *Heraia*. If this kind of statuette does imply that the *Heraia* was open to non- Eleans as early as the 6th century, the practice would be a further parallel to the Panhellenic Olympics. If the *Heraia* was Panhellenic by archaic times, it differed in this respect from the local girl's races at Brauron and Sparta. The local races may have had something of a ritual function as "tests of strength" for local maidens before marriage. According to Scanlon, the *Heraia* did resemble these local contests by including only unmarried girls as participants and by its celebration of Hippodameia's marriage in honor of Hera, goddess of all married women. So even if this *Heraia* were Panhellenic in historical times, it may have developed from an original, prenuptial festival for local maidens like the Arkteia and the girl's race at Sparta.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Herrmann, H.V., *Heligtum und Wettkampfstätte*, Hirmer, Munich, 1972, p.95

¹⁴⁵ Arrigoni, G., *op.cit.*, p. 98 & p. 192

¹⁴⁶ Weller, I., *Der Agon im Mythos. Zur Einstellung der Griechen zum Wettkampf*, Impulse der Forschung, Vol.16, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1974, p. 202-203

¹⁴⁷ Scanlon, T.(2008), *op.cit.*, p. 111

Arrigoni has claimed that the Panhellenic character of *Heraia* could be a possibility.¹⁴⁸ Serwint suggests that the *reorganization of the Heraia in the 580's might signal a chance to Pan-Hellenic status in keeping with the trend in male agonistic festivals at Delphi, Nemea and Isthmus.*¹⁴⁹ The parallels to men's festival prize olive wreath, the use of the same stadium, and the sacrifice of one heifer, support the view that the event was modeled on, the Olympic, Panhellenic format and it was not a local ritual. Apparently, local rituals for girls or women did not mimic a men's agonistic event as closely as the *Heraia* does. The *Heraia* therefore had little in common with the structure of other known local and segregated festivals for females.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Scanlon says that the fact that victors were permitted to set up images, suggests *a Panhellenic festival at which dedications in this case presumably the priests overseeing the Olympic sanctuary, giving consent to the Sixteen Women to allow the dedications.*¹⁵¹

The reasons that the girls traveled from their homes to Olympia to participate in the *Heraia* can be many. First of all, "fame" among the participants' families and "civic honor", bestowed by the sponsoring group. The girls and their families would have also sought the more private benefits of participation in a communal festival namely social networking among families present and in the religious sphere the favor of the gods, specifically in this case for a successful marriage. Unfortunately there is no evidence of their actual results. Scanlon summarizes his conclusions about the Panhellenic character of the *Heraia*, as follows¹⁵²:

1. a non – local heroine was named as the legendary first victor
2. the Panhellenic sanctuary and the goddess' altar there were used for the festival
3. Pausanias mentions no temple or altar to Hera in Elis itself
4. parallels with the men's Olympic organization are evident
5. formal permission was required for setting up victor monuments in the sanctuary of Olympia
6. prizes even symbolic ones are unheard of for exclusively local female cult festivals

¹⁴⁸ Arrigoni, G., *op.cit.*, p.100

¹⁴⁹ Serwint, N., *op.cit.*, p.419

¹⁵⁰ Langenfeld, H., *op. cit.*, p. 153-185

¹⁵¹ Scanlon, T.(2008), *op.cit.*, p. 180

¹⁵² Scanlon, T., (2008), *op.cit.*, p. 183

7. parallels with girl's contests at Panhellenic festivals of the Roman era suggest that non-local participation and the admission of male spectators were acceptable to a wider public
8. there would be ample motivation to participate as a way of seeking divine favor and an acceptably modest degree of public honor among participants, organizers and one's family
9. the exceptional effort of preparing the stadium argues against it being a small, local event

4.4. Women and the Olympic Games

Panhellenic festivals were of major social and religious importance but the evidence as to whether women actually attended these events is surprisingly inconclusive. It is quite clear that women were prohibited from attending and watching the Olympic festival which was celebrated every four years and lasted for a period of five years.

Pausanias states clearly that married women were not allowed to watch the Olympic Games but the priestess of *Demeter Chamyne* was allowed: *the stadium is a bank of earth on which is a seat for the sponsors of the competition. Opposite the Hellanidikai is an altar of white marble. Seated on this a woman watches the Olympic Games, the priestess of Demeter Chamyne. This office is bestowed on woman from time to time by the Eleans. They do not prevent virgins (παρθένοι) from watching the games* (6.20.8-9). Hence, could virgins participate but married women not? Were races open to virgins, classified according to their age categories, who competed with their hair let down, with skirts just above the knees and the right shoulder bare to the breast?

Harris argues that Pausania's passage (6.20.9) is corrupted and that the negative should be dropped, meaning that virgins would also have been excluded from the festival.¹⁵³ Dillon writes that it might seem strange that virgins were allowed to attend the Olympic festival when there were so many men competing naked in a wide variety of competitions, but men competed naked at many athletic festivals not only at the Olympics, as in Isthmian, Nemean, Pythian and Panatheneia and there is no specific evidence that women were excluded from watching these festivals. Male nudity was not

¹⁵³ Harris, A.H., *op.cit.*, p. 183

regarded as offensive to girls and women but in Athens it was probably a matter of custom that respectable citizen women did not attend athletic festivals because of the desire to limit the public appearances.¹⁵⁴

In this context, maidens are seen as “asexual” or “pre-sexual”. Yet Pausanias calls them *parthenoi* which indicates their sex rather than genetic *paides*.¹⁵⁵ Pausanias says that maidens and likewise women when they were not shut out from Olympia were permitted to climb the lower level (*prothysis*) of the ash altar of Zeus but men only were allowed of the higher level (5.13.10). He also mentions the sanctuary between the Treasury and the Hill of *Cronus* of *Eileithyia*, a goddess of childbirth, with in which *Sosipolis*, a local Elean God was worshipped (6.20.2-6). Except for one old, devout priestess, neither women nor girls were allowed in the shrine of *Sosipolis*, a form of Zeus as an infant. In both these situations, virgins were thought to be sexual enough to be banned along with women. Only men (and virgins and not women) could go to the top of altar of Zeus. In the cult of *Sosipolis* (the infant Zeus), only one priestesses could enter the inner sanctum, no other females.

Therefore, at the Olympic Games of Zeus only priestess Demeter might watch. Women could not enter. For Kyle the problem remains if virgins could watch. Based on these situations, Kyle suggests that virgins could not watch. Then the next question is if Pausanias was confused. In his day (early Roman times), female sport and spectatorship were far more public. In Rome, maidens raced in the *Capitoline Games*, women and *Vestal virgins*¹⁵⁶ attended athletic contests. So as Kyle suggests Pausanias

¹⁵⁴ Dillon, M., *op.cit.*, p. 458-459

¹⁵⁵ Kyle, D. G. (2007), *op.cit.*, p. 139

¹⁵⁶ The priestesses of the goddess Vesta were known as the Vestal Virgins. They were responsible for maintaining the sacred fire within the Temple of Vesta on the Forum Romanum. Other duties included performing rituals in regards to the Goddess Vesta, and baking the sacred salt cake to be used at numerous ceremonies in the year. They were the only female priests within the roman religious system. The head of the college of Vesta was called the Virgo Vestalis Maxima, and she was under the direct authority of the Pontifex Maximus. The college of Vesta had 18 members, though 6 were considered actual Vestal Virgins at any given time. They were selected from distinguished patrician families at an age from three to ten, and such appointments were considered a top honor for any family to receive. They each served thirty years, the first ten years as novices, then ten years as actual vestal virgins, and finally ten years as supervisors responsible for training the novices. After the thirty years of duty they were released from their duties and could then maintain a private life, including the right to marry. For men, arranging a marriage with a former vestal virgin was highly prestigious, regardless of age or the ability to

probably accepted stories about females from the perspective of his own “Second Sophistic Age”, as one wants to accept them from his own age of increased familiarity with female athletics of all levels.¹⁵⁷

According to Kyle, the assumption that virgins watched the Olympic Games in order to meet possible husbands has been canonized by no less than the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Following Stephen Instone’s 1990 article on the erotic overtones of athletics in Pindar works¹⁵⁸ now suggest that fathers brought eligible maidens to the male Olympic seeking, marriage arrangements, that virgins were allowed to watch the Games to meet possible future husbands and learn about the male world and the Panhellenic *Heraia* and Olympics were held close together in time, making it convenient for fathers and daughters to attend the *Heraia* and then the Olympics (mothers supposedly camped nearby and waited during the male Games).¹⁵⁹

Kyle admits that scholars simply do not know however when the *Heraia* was held (before or after the Olympics) and the one – cow sacrifice does not suggest a Panhellenic feast. Women’s rites were usually held in seclusion, not on a Panhellenic stage. Rather like other female, only local festivals, the *Heraia* was probably separate and segregated in time and attendance. Concerning the question if virgins did attend the male Olympics as spectators, Kyle asks: if virgin spectators were at Olympia then why did Pindar not mention them at a crown game? From this point, another question arises: whether someone checked the age and condition of young girls entering the site. Kyle points out that placing virgins with their fathers at the Olympics seems culturally incongruous. Fathers arranged marriages for their daughters but bringing the girls to the men at Olympia reverses the pattern in Greek suitor contests. If fathers wanted girls to see athletes, the gymnasium at home was more convenient. Athletic fields (beyond Sparta) were male turf. Male nudity at Olympia was erotic but not eugenic. As the myth of Zeus and Ganymede suggests, athletic eros at Olympia was male and pederastic. If moved by *Eros*, mature males, not young girls went to watch nude young men.¹⁶⁰

have children. See: Smith, W., "A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities", ed. J. Murray, London: 1875. www.Penelope.uchicago.edu.

¹⁵⁷ Kyle, D. (2007), *op.cit.*, p. 139

¹⁵⁸ Instone, S., “Love and Sex in Pindar: Some Practical Thrusts”, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, Vol. 37, Issue 1, 1990, p. 30-42

¹⁵⁹ Kyle, D. (2007), *op.cit.*, p. 139

¹⁶⁰ Kyle, D. (2007), *op.cit.*, p. 140

Furthermore, Kyle supports the view that for a father to take his girls with him to Olympia would *make him a laughingstock and inhibit his social life*. Greek fathers moreover worried about sexual abuse of children, male or female and the *Olympic Village* was a tent town with only limited security. Any father with a young girl in the midst of tens of thousands of males would have been anxious about the safety of her purity, something essential to beneficial marriage prospects. So even if virgins in general were not banned from the male games, *realistically* they were not there. Their spectatorship is a *modern invented tradition*. Sources on crown games mention slaves, sophists, magicians, horse and dogs but *only* Pausanias mentions the possibilities of virgins.¹⁶¹

Oppositely, Dillon suggests that it would have been convenient for spectators of the Olympics and possibly by the fathers of male competitors, to bring daughters with them in order to take part in these games at the same time. It is also possible to suggest that in some cases they could have been the sisters of male competitors. Fathers accompanied boy competitors to Olympia and athletic daughters could well have come to Olympia with them.¹⁶²

Dillon argues that “some virgins who attended the male competitions had come to Olympia to compete in the *Heraia*, and that the *Heraia* were held either directly before or after the Olympic festival (probably not at the same time due to the need to make use of the stadium), if this was the case, permitting virgins to watch the Olympic contests would have allowed their athletes to chaperone them while they themselves watched the contests. However, it is also completely possible that the *Heraia* were not held in conjunction with the Olympic festival, and that they attracted only local virgin competitors”.¹⁶³

A simpler solution returning to and preserving Pausania’s text is suggested by the verb *θεάομαι*, used of both the priestess and the virgins (6.20.9). At the Olympian Games at Ephesus, an imitation of the original Olympics, a priestess of Demeter was selected not for life, but from time to time to sit on the altar and watch the rites. She was not there as a fan to “see” the games but as a honorific privilege, to assist in the ritual by watching and witnessing the Olympia. Kyle notes that Pausania’s comment on virgins

¹⁶¹ Kyle, D. (2007), *op.cit.*, p. 140

¹⁶² Dillon, M., *op.cit.*, p.461

¹⁶³ Dillon, M., *op.cit.*, p.466

comes in a passage about officials and special seats, the *Hellanodikai*, and one priestess on one altar and it follows clarifications of when women and virgins were allowed at Olympia. Pausanias adds that virgins were not excluded from watching. If this means that a virgin, daughter or a virgin unmarried woman, could sit in (or with like Persephone), the priestess of Demeter for the festival, the numerous virgin viewers vanish.¹⁶⁴

Pausanias also states that no woman had ever been caught attending the Olympic festival, except *Kallipateira* (*Pherekine*) in the 5th century. Her husband had died and so she undertook to travel to Olympia, disguised as a trainer with her son Peisidoros who won his boxing contest. *Kallipeteira* in her excitement jumped over the fence separating the trainers from the competitors and revealed that she was a woman. Despite the fact that she had broken the law, she was spared the penalty of being thrown from Mount Tupaion out of respect for the fact that her father (Diagoras from Rhodes) and brothers, now her son, were Olympic victors (6.7.2).

The Roman author Aelian (ca 175 – ca 235) in his work *On the Characteristics of Animals* (*De Natura Animalium*) notes that the flies of Pisa town (near Olympia), disappear from Olympia during the time of the Olympic Games and that in this respect the flies and the local women are similar. The local women were excluded and could not cross the Alpheios River because of the rule of training and the sexual abstinence observed at this time by the athletes (*On Animals* 5.17). There was, in fact, a belief that athletes should practice sexual abstinence in order to preserve their energies.¹⁶⁵

Aelian says that the disappearance of the local women was not because of the sexual abstinence required of the athletes, but because of the official injunction that women were not to be present in Olympia for the festival, and it is inconceivable that the husbands of Elis would have trusted their wives so little that they sent them away, in order to avoid sexual liaisons with the incoming athletes. Dillon says that because they were excluded, women from elsewhere did not travel to Olympia to view the competitions and the local women disappeared because they could not be in the area at the time of the festival: the only females present were the virgins and the priestess of *Demeter Chamyne*. When Aelian refers to local women, this does not mean that he is

¹⁶⁴ Kyle, D. (2007), *op.cit.*, p. 141

¹⁶⁵ Parker, R., *Miasma, Pollution and Purification in early Greek Religion*, Oxford, 1983, p. 84

excluding non-local women from the prohibition, rather the point is that he is comparing the local flies and the local women who were both absent from Olympia during the festival there.¹⁶⁶

According to Dillon due to the emphasis given on athletic training for girls in Dorian states (Peloponnesus), it is quite possible that when Pausanias writes that the races in honor of Hera had been held from an early date, that this means that they were in fact held from the very earliest times and that the stade for virgins was inaugurated at about the same time as the stade competition for males at the Olympics. Just as virgins engaged in running as part of their upbringing in Dorian states, they could compete at the *Heraia* at Olympia, and as part of the Olympic festival itself, but perhaps at about the same time and making use of the Olympic stadium. If this was so, he continues, it is not the absence of women which is noteworthy, but it is a case of noting that the virgins attended the *Heraia* by virtue of the Dorian emphasis on training for girls.¹⁶⁷

Dillon rejects Burkert's notions that the *Heraia* occurred immediately after the Olympia and that the exclusion of women functioned as a means of highlighting the relationships within the family. Burkert states that on an evening before the Olympia, the women of Elis gathered in the gymnasium around the cenotaph of Achilles and honored him by beating their breasts. He places the *Heraia* after the Olympia, arguing that the time in between, the Olympic festival was forbidden to women: and hence the festival divided the family in order to illuminate its relationships.¹⁶⁸ Dillon supports the view that Burkert fails to note that it was not the participants of the *Heraia* who were excluded from the Olympic festival, but rather the participants who were in fact the very *parthenoi* (virgins) who could attend the festival and who participated in the *Heraia*. The women, as opposed to the *parthenoi*, did not attend the Olympia and did not participate in the *Heraia*. Consequently, the prohibition of the attendance of women at the Olympia was not an inversion of ordinary life which aimed to underline normality.¹⁶⁹

Dillon supports the view that the exclusion of women from Olympia was clearly unusual and the presence of women spectators at Isthmia presumably indicates

¹⁶⁶ Dillon, M., *op.cit.*, p.468

¹⁶⁷ Dillon, M., *op.cit.*, p.468

¹⁶⁸ Burkert, W., *Homo Necans. The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, transl. P. Bing, Berkley, 1983, p. 102

¹⁶⁹ Dillon, M., *op.cit.*, p.468

that they could also be present at the Pythian and the Nemean festivals as well as less important festivals with contests. He thinks that it is almost certain that Pausanias mentions the prohibition at Olympia precisely because it was so unusual. Finally, he parallels the exclusion of women at Olympia to some cult regulations found throughout the Greek world: the Olympic festival was a Panhellenic festival devoted to the worship of the god Zeus. Just as women were excluded from this religious celebration, there were cults which excluded men. There were several cults in which only women could participate, i.e. the *Thesmophoria* festival.¹⁷⁰

Scanlon suggests two pragmatic considerations for banning married women while allowing maidens to attend: a) namely the risks for adultery and b) the opportunity to show daughters to potential suitors. He also suggests that the “Elean adult males who wrote the Olympic rules favored a strict ban on women probably to keep their wives, and by extension the wives of all visitors too, away from any opportunity for scandal. The local Eleans were more conservative than other agonistic festival organizers in this ban”.¹⁷¹

Taking under consideration all the above accounts and aspects, one may wonder how was the Olympic village looked during the archaic and classical times, in order to consider how natural and wise it would be for family men to bring their wives and daughters to the Games. In the archaic and classical world, probably no other cult festival in Greece had such an extended tent city as the Zeus festival in Olympia with its many visitors from distant lands, who all needed lodgings during their extended stay.

First of all, the cult festival of Zeus took place during the hottest days in August. The proverbial dust, heat and water shortage in Olympia’s tent city as Sinn correctly points out must be *excruciating*.¹⁷² Diogenes Laertius says that the natural philosopher Thales died from thirst while staying at a gymnasium (I.39), a story probably made under the impression of the average conditions at the Olympian festival meadow, where the water shortage was the most extreme.¹⁷³ Besides the extreme heat and water shortage, Sinn mentions the extreme crowding together between tents and the countless individual fireplaces where the visitors prepared their meals. Consequently,

¹⁷⁰ Dillon, M., *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece*, London, N. York, 1997, p. 186-187

¹⁷¹ Scanlon, T. (2008), *op.cit.* p. 187

¹⁷² Sinn, *op.cit.*, p. 86

¹⁷³ Sinn, *op.cit.*, p. 87

greasy smoke, ashes and added heat spread throughout the tent city.¹⁷⁴ Under these circumstances, the development of a water supply system was therefore of a great importance and wells had to be built. During the first few centuries, the Olympians confined themselves to making wells that were kept functioning only temporarily. Shafts were dug deep into the ground to the ground level and as soon as the crowds of visitors left, they were filled up again. These temporary wells constituted the predominant form of water supply in Olympia until the 4th century BC.¹⁷⁵ In this context, how possible would it be for a father to take the risk and bring his little girl to the Olympic village in order to see the Games? Probably, it was not possible and the limited presence of *parthenoi* had to do with the presence of the priestess of Demeter Chamyne as ritual companions as Kyle explained.

¹⁷⁴ Sinn, *op.cit.*, p. 87

¹⁷⁵ Sinn, *op.cit.*, p. 87

CONCLUSIONS

In the Minoan cities women held an advanced social status, participating in religious and social life. The Mother of all, *Potnia*, was the main Minoan deity, indicating the powerful presence and importance of the female element in the Minoan societies. However, there is no evidence of women's attendance in politics or public decisions or traces of matriarchic organizations. In the Mycenaean kingdoms, women continued to have a relative freedom of moving in their societies and they were not excluded from the social and religious events. Their social status was good terms with the military organization of the Mycenaean kingdoms but gradually it started to get downgraded.

The Greek society of the archaic years was born from the ashes of the Mycenaean palaces. It replaced the high social status of women with a lower one and placed women in a male-dominated society.

During the archaic period, some women entered the Pythagorean societies on an equal basis with men. *Pythagoreanism* described a harmony in *cosmos*, which exhibits *order* and *beauty*. Numbers could explain all things in the universe. Since numbers include both odds and evens, all things have a contradiction- light and dark, the limited and unlimited, good and evil, *male and female*. The reconciliation of these opposites creates harmony. For human behavior, this was harmony resulted from behaving temperately or by exhibiting moderation¹⁷⁶.

Most Pythagorean women's writings demonstrated that life was harmonious. Some also wrote on the principle of harmonia or *of all things that are* and they directed their discussion in order to explain the relationship, on the one hand between *marital fidelity, child-rearing, parental piety, religious worship, and public demeanor*, and the *nature of [the woman's] soul*, on the other¹⁷⁷.

The Pythagorean women faced the task of educating other women about living harmonious lives and creating justice and harmony in their homes. They used a more "realistic" approach to moral philosophy, while male philosophers attempted to educate men about harmony in their souls and the state through an "ideal" approach.

¹⁷⁶ Kersey, E. M., *Women Philosophers: A bio-Critical Source Book*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1989, pp.199-200

¹⁷⁷ Waithe, M. E., *op.cit.*, p. 56

These tasks are different because the nature of men and women is different.¹⁷⁸ This proves the female importance at home while men had the responsibility and power to make economic and political decisions.

The Pythagorean women's approach is very important as it sheds light on the status of women in the archaic world. It was commonly believed during that period that women belonged at home and therefore couldn't have an active role in the society. These Pythagorean beliefs echoed the conditions women faced during 800-500 BC and offered advice for others as to how to "survive" given the circumstances. The application of the principle of *harmonia* could help a woman decide what she ought to do and how she should act. Women lacked the political rights and social opportunities the men had, yet in order to be good and orderly they needed excellence. *Wisdom* was not an excellence considered necessary for a woman. *Moderation* was the appropriate virtue for women because with moderation they were able to love and honor their husbands appropriately. The social roles of this time period reflect the nature of both men and women. The roles of the Greek males were based on the political, economical and social aspects of society. Therefore, it was necessary for females to philosophize about the roles of women.

These Pythagorean works by women were able to offer support and guidelines on how to live within the social structure and maintain the harmony in the home and daily life, as well as leave behind an understanding of the history of the status of women in ancient Greece.

For most women then, the opportunities to become educated were limited. Women had limited chances to participate in the educational, cultural, or political life of their communities. Not much evidence exists to prove that women went to schools. There is however some information about schools for virgins run by women, like the one of Sappho in Lesbos. There, young rich girls could learn music, poetry, dance and the secrets of beauty, in order to prepare themselves and be excellent and desirable future wives.

Evidence of women in other fields of science and sports is fragmentary and sporadic and the existing information one may receive through the study of the ancient Greek world proves that under such difficult conditions and limited opportunities, some

¹⁷⁸ Waithe, M. E., *op.cit.*, p. 17

eminent women found the courage and strength to study and contributing to science, they wrote their names to the eternal pages of History.

In the Greek philosophical thought, with some notable exceptions of Socrates, the Stoic, the Cynic and the Pythagorean philosophers, women belonged to a different class than men, more or less between men and slaves. Women's role had to do mainly with household and parenting. Plato believed in the freedom and education of women, although he considered women as "incomplete human beings". Aristotle on the other hand believed that women had to stay outside the public matters, silent in important social and political issues and submissive to the will and orders of their husbands who had all rights to decide within and outside their homes. This neglected position of women in the society explains their limited participation in all aspects of life, including sports.

There are examples of women's participation in the equestrian races from ancient Sparta but mostly from the Hellenistic period. Those women belonged to the royal families or aristocracy, like *Kyniska*, *Bilistiche II*, *Berenice I*, *Arsinoe II*, and *Berenice* of Syria. About *Kyniska*, the royal Spartan Olympic victor, unfortunately very little is known beyond her wins and dedications at Olympia. One may see her victory from two different aspects: a) by stressing the role of sport in a discourse of difference and detecting traces of the play of the gender in Agesilaus possible influence. In this case, *Kyniska's* win is seen not as progress or liberation, but as reinforcing female's inferior status or b) by seeing *Kyniska's* case as Agesilaus' game of using a female victory to challenge the significance of male chariot victories. The important issue here is that *Kyniska* (and other equestrian victors) were some political capital for her fatherland, as well as the prospect of some visibility, which women attracted to competition, as *Kyniska's* proud epigram attests.

Girls definitely ran in Sparta, where racing was a part of their famous education system, *the agoge*, an institution allegedly founded by the legendary figure of Spartan reformer Lycurgus. There is evidence that girls ran in other parts of Greece like Lesbos but not in Athens. Running is found in Athens in a religious (not in an athletic) context.

The rituals of Artemis at the Arkteia in Athens describe the abandonment of the civilized flight to the domain of the wild, followed by eventual taming and in some cases reversion to or retention of the wild aspect even after the taming has been accomplished. At the Arkteia, it is the running of a chase and not a race. The analogy is

to the hunt, not to the agonistic battle that is more suited to the imaginary of male competition. The running of the chase combines the tension of quasi-sexual play with a half-tamed bear, a desperate flight from the very same beast in his half-wild aspect, sympathetic to Artemis and sacrificial commemoration of both aspects embodied in the individual girls who assume the identity of the bear.

One of the most known female festivals was the *Heraia* festival. The similar structures and program of the Heraian and Olympian festivals suggest either a common origin or the influence of one upon the other. The cults of Zeus and Hera were possibly both established at Olympia, earlier than the archaic times, but the reorganization of the festival probably took place in the 6th century and it was still being held in Pausanias time (ca. AD 150).

The footrace for Hera was performed by maidens and seems to have had the character of a prenuptial, initiatory trial. The participation in footrace was probably open to non-Elean girls. Some scholars believe that, if the festival was of open participation, then males were probably admitted as spectators at the *Heraia*. If the *Heraia* had been strictly the festival of a local cult open only to Elean girl participants, it would have been much more likely that male spectators would not have been present. In any case, adult females would have attended the *Heraia*.

Apparently, married women could not attend the Olympic Games as spectators. However, it seems that they could and did attend other Panhellenic festivals apart from the Olympic Games, as the specific prohibition of women from Olympia suggests that there was not a similar prohibition at other Panhellenic events. The Olympic Games seem to have been unique in this context and the prohibition seems to have been not social in nature but ritual. The restriction was rather unusual and probably it is explained by the myth of Hippodameia and her withdrawal from Elis.

Some scholars believe that virgins did attend the Olympics because on the one hand male nudity was socially accepted in the archaic times and on the other hand that it was a good way for fathers to find suitable husbands for their unmarried virgin daughters. Pausanias is the only literary source giving evidence on that. Some other scholars believe that for a father to take his daughter with him to an exclusively male contest was something not accepted and not realistic, neither socially nor culturally. Pausanias wrote in the first century AD in the Roman times which means from the time he wrote to the time he is referring to, the interval is about five centuries. If the case was so, why did other ancient writers keep silent about such an important social custom

which was both Panhellenic and important in all aspects? Moreover, wouldn't the ancient comedians, with the caustic humor that characterizes them, have satirized such an event (virgin girls among nude men escorted by their fathers in order to find suitable husbands) as they did with so many other family related customs, various festivals and social events?

Last but not least, sport in antiquity has been defined as a male preserve. Studies show that women had a place in the history of sport, but women's sport in the ancient times was rather insignificant. The origins of organized female sport probably are in the city-state (*polis*) of Sparta, where physical training for females was evidently mandated albeit for eugenic purposes. The latter Hellenistic and Roman periods present other possibilities because in these eras there is more concrete evidence of women's competitive sport. Obviously in sports, like all other aspects of life, women had to battle against cultural, social and religious ideologies that associated female athleticism with sexual "deviance".

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