

Herausgegeben von:

Thomas Corsten
Fritz Mitthof
Bernhard Palme
Hans Taeuber

TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte
Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Band 29, 2014

HOLZHAUSEN
DER VERLAG



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Vertreten durch:

Thomas Corsten, Fritz Mitthof, Bernhard Palme, Hans Taeuber

Gemeinsam mit:

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E-mail: franziska.beutler@univie.ac.at

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E-mail: hans.taeuber@univie.ac.at oder bernhard.palme@univie.ac.at

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I N H A L T S V E R Z E I C H N I S

Christian B a r t h e l: Eine <i>Origo Gentis Blemmyorum</i> in den <i>Dionysiaka</i> des Nonnos von Panopolis	1
Amin B e n a i s s a: A Lease of Crops by a Soldier of the <i>Mauri Scutarii</i> (Taf. 1)	17
Lajos B e r k e s: Die christusliebende Thebais (Taf. 3)	23
Jana G r u s k o v á – Gunther M a r t i n: Ein neues Textstück aus den „Scythica Vindobonensia“ zu den Ereignissen nach der Eroberung von Philippopolis (Taf. 12–15)	29
Todd M. H i c k e y: A Misclassified Sherd from the Archive of Theopemptos and Zacharias (Ashm. D. O. 810) (Taf. 2)	45
Annika B. K u h n: The <i>chrysophoria</i> in the Cities of Greece and Asia Minor in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods	51
Federico M o r e l l i: Il vino del padrone. P.Eirene III 21, P.Wash.Univ. II 105 e P.Laur. IV 185	89
Federico M o r e l l i: SB XXIV 16219: Una lettera di Atias in difesa di una donna	95
Amphilochios P a p a t h o m a s: Ein Mietvertrag über ein Haus aus dem byzantinischen Hermopolites (Taf. 4–5)	99
Amphilochios P a p a t h o m a s: Bemerkungen zu einem „Papyrus aus dem unruhigen Alexandria am Vorabend der arabischen Eroberung“ (SB XVI 12425)	107
Ioan P i s o – George C u p c e a: Ein <i>centurio regionarius</i> aus der <i>legio X Fretensis</i> in Dakien (Taf. 6–7)	115
Ioan P i s o: Zur Reform des Gallienus anlässlich zweier neuer Inschriften aus den Lagerthermen von Potaissa (Taf. 8–9)	125
Jacek R z e p k a: Dolichos of Delphi and the Origins of the Long Run in Panhellenic Games	147
Marjeta Š a š e l K o s: The Problem of the Border between Italy, Noricum, and Pannonia (Taf. 10–11)	153
Georg-Philipp S c h i e t i n g e r: Die letzte Schlacht des Scipio Aemilianus. Überlegungen zu seinen innenpolitischen Absichten im Jahr 129 v. Chr.	165
Peter S i e w e r t – Julia T a i t a: Funktionäre Olympias auf einem hocharchaischen Bronzeblech (BrU 6) (Taf. 3)	183
Konrad S t a u n e r: Finanzliteralität im Imperium Romanum am Beispiel der <i>argentarii</i> und <i>signiferi</i> . Dokumentationsexperten im zivilen und militärischen Finanzwesen (späte Republik – Prinzipatszeit)	193
Karl S t r o b e l: Einige Bemerkungen zur Diskussion um die Errichtung der Provinz Pannonia	255

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Bemerkungen zu Papyri XXVII (<Korr. Tyche> 754–766)	261
Adnotationes epigraphicae V (<Adn. Tyche> 37–44)	267
Buchbesprechungen	279
<p>Rupert B r e i t w i e s e r (Hrsg.), <i>Behinderungen und Beeinträchtigungen / Disability and Impairment in Antiquity</i>, Oxford 2012 (V. Dasen: 279) — Maria Emilia C a v a l i e r e, <i>Dediche di occidentali nel santuario di Apollo a Delfi (VI–IV a.C.)</i>, Oxford 2013 (J. Piccinini: 281) — Takashi F u j i i, <i>Imperial cult and imperial representation in Roman Cyprus</i>, Stuttgart 2013 (F. Camia: 283) — Jens H e r z e r (Hrsg.), <i>Papyrologie und Exegese. Die Auslegung des Neuen Testaments im Licht der Papyri</i>, Tübingen 2012 (P. Sänger: 285) — Elizabeth A. M e y e r, <i>The Inscriptions of Dodona and a New History of Molossia</i>, Stuttgart 2013 (T. Corsten: 291) — Stephen M i t c h e l l, David F r e n c h, <i>The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Ankara (Ancyra), Vol. I: From Augustus to the end of the third century AD</i>, München 2012 (C. Wallner: 292) — Andrew M o n s o n, <i>Agriculture and Taxation in Early Ptolemaic Egypt. Demotic Land Surveys and Accounts (P.Agr.)</i>, Bonn 2012 (W. Clarysse: 295) — Christoph S c h m e t t e r e r, <i>Die rechtliche Stellung römischer Soldaten im Prinzipat</i>, Wiesbaden 2012 (P. Sänger: 298) — Simone S i s a n i, <i>In pagis forisque et conciliabulis. Le strutture amministrative dei distretti rurali in Italia tra la media Repubblica e l'età municipale</i>, Roma 2011 (L. Cappelletti: 300) — Inge U y t t e r h o e v e n, <i>Hawara in the Graeco-Roman Period: Life and Death in a Fayum Village</i>, Leuven, Paris, Walpole, MA 2009 (M. Langellotti: 303).</p>	
Indices	305
Eingelangte Bücher	309

Tafeln 1–15

Die *Annona Epigraphica Austriaca* erscheint auf der Homepage des Instituts für Alte Geschichte der Universität Wien (<http://altesgeschichte.univie.ac.at/forschung/aea/>) und wie bisher auch in der Zeitschrift *Römisches Österreich*.

JACEK RZEPKA

Dolichos of Delphi and the Origins of the Long Run in Panhellenic Games

There is a general agreement that the Ancient Olympics were the oldest Pan-Hellenic games and provided a model for the remaining three festivals, which — according to the Greek tradition — were created roughly two centuries later. It is generally believed, too, that most of the Athletic contests, especially, track and field, were originally introduced into the Olympic program and then adopted by the other great festivals. Modern scholars, even if they are not certain about the chronology transmitted from Antiquity, and especially if they question the date of the first Olympics or the names of the first victors, rarely can suggest any positive solutions to the puzzle, which the surviving victors' lists pose.

Thus, the long run, commonly known as the *dolichos* was believed to be introduced into the Olympic program during the 15th games (in 720 BC). This date we owe to a number of sources, which, however, are much later. The early Olympic chronology was originally worked out by Hippias of Elis. The fullest record can be found in the *Olympic Victors (Olympionikai)* by Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius has Acanthus as the first winner of the *dolichos*, which was run naked.¹ Unfortunately, Eusebius' direct sources are not easy to identify.² Yet, the same or similar information can be found in a number of authors. Among them, the most competent was probably Flavius Philostratus, late second-century/early third-century AD sophist and rhetorician, who authored the specialized treatise *On gymnastics*. He states that *in the next Olympics* (after the 14th games) *a long-run contest was established and won by Acanthus of Sparta*.³ Acanthus opens a long series of 44 Spartan winners in the Olympic Games that abruptly became less frequent after 580 BC.⁴ Still, this fact may

¹ Eusebius, *Olympionikai*, [Π]εντεκαιδεκάτη. Ὀρσιππος Μεγαρέδς στάδιον. Προσετέθη δολίχος, καὶ γυμνοὶ ἔδραμον. ἐνίκᾳ Ἄκανθος Λάκων — *The fifteenth. Orsippus of Megara won stadium. The long run was added, and they ran naked. Acanthus of Laconia won*. See ll. 73–5 in the edition of P. Christesen, *Olympic Victor Lists and Ancient Greek History*, Cambridge 2007, Appendix 4.1 on pp. 386–407.

² The scholarly debate over Eusebius' sources and methods of work is neatly summarized in P. Christesen *Olympic Victor Lists* (n. 1) 232–76, who leaves the question without pursuing any definitive conclusions.

³ Fl. Philostratus, *On gymnastics* 12: (κατὰ δὲ τὴν) μετ' ἐκείνην δολίχου ἀγῶν καὶ ἐνίκᾳ Σπαρτιάτης Ἄκανθος.

⁴ A. Hönle, *Olympia in der Politik der griechischen Staatenwelt. Von 776 bis zum Ende des 5. Jahrhunderts*, Bebenhausen 1972, 128–31, n. 3; M. Meier, *Aristokraten und Damoden:*

be much more important for the history of Greek athletics, since according to one of the Greek traditions Acanthus was the first Greek athlete running naked.⁵

However, there existed a contradictory tradition at Delphi, which derived the name of the *dolichos* from an otherwise unknown Dolichos of Delphi. The only clear trace of this Delphic story is a fragment of an otherwise unknown author, Apollonios quoted in the *Lexicon* of Photius.⁶ This Apollonios was classified by Felix Jacoby as a local historian of Delphi,⁷ and this classification might convince. Apollonios' note remained unnoticed in the modern treatments of the Ancient Greek games. It seems worth re-considering whether the evidence allows us to keep the traditional view that the Olympic *dolichos* was introduced at so early a date, before the Delphic long-run contest.

I mentioned that the importance of the Acanthus' date for Greek history results from the fact he was believed to be the "first inventor" of athletic nudity in Greece. Admittedly, there were more candidates. Pausanias, who seems to agree with other authors that Acanthus was the first long run runner in Olympia,⁸ makes Orsippus of Megara, the winner of the *stadion* during the same Olympics, the inventor of Athletic nudity. In the latter case, Pausanias tells a typical *aition*, beyond doubt — unreal as a story of a hero turning an accident that should handicap his chances into his benefit, although consisting of realistic elements. Pausanias rationalises the *aition* and suggests that Orsippus deliberately let his clothes fall down.⁹ This version was certainly coined at Megara, by and for the Megarians, and it was attacked by the supporters of

Untersuchungen zur inneren Entwicklung Spartas im 7. Jahrhundert v. Chr. und zur politischen Funktion der Dichtung des Tyrtaios, Stuttgart 1998, 31–2.

⁵ Dion. Hal. 7.72.3: ὁ δὲ πρῶτος ἐπιχειρήσας ἀποδυθῆναι τὸ σῶμα καὶ γυμνὸς Ὀλυμπίᾳσι δραμῶν ἐπὶ τῆς πεντεκαίδεκάτης ὀλυμπιάδος Ἄκανθος ὁ Λακεδαιμόνιος ἦν — *the first man who undertook to strip and run naked at Olympia, at the fifteenth Olympiad, was Acanthus the Lacedaemonian* (translation E. Cary, Loeb Classical Library). The same tradition was known to Eusebius, who, however, missed an opportunity to name the first inventor of athletic nakedness, see above note 1.

⁶ Photius, *Lexicon*, s.v. Ἀμφίδρομος δαίμων· οἶον ὁ γενέθλιος· οὕτως Αἰσχύλος. καὶ ὁ δολιχὸς δρόμος· Δολίχου δὲ τινος Δελφοῦ πολλάκις τοῦτον νικῶντος κληθῆναι δολιχόν· οὕτως Ἀπολλώνιος ἐν τῷ Περὶ Δελφῶν — *Amphidromos is a daimon, the spirit of birth is the same, so Aischylos. And the long run: after a certain Dolichos of Delphi had won this run several times it was called the dolichos; thus Apollonios in the book on Delphi.*

⁷ *FGrHist* 403 F1.

⁸ Paus. 5.8.6, as it was conjectured by H. Hitzig and H. Blümner, *Des Pausanias Beschreibung von Griechenland vol. 2.1*, Leipzig 1901, 310–1. Otherwise, we should suppose that Pausanias listed two first winners of *diaulos*, and did not include *dolichos* in his *dossier* of the contests.

⁹ Paus. 1.44.1: Ὀρσιππος, ὃς περιεζωσμένων ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσι κατὰ δὴ παλαιὸν ἔθος τῶν ἀθλητῶν Ὀλύμπια ἐνίκα στάδιον δραμῶν γυμνός, φασὶ δὲ καὶ στρατηγούντα ὑστερον τὸν Ὀρσιππον ἀποτεμέσθαι χώραν τῶν προσοίκων· δοκῶ δὲ οἱ καὶ ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ τὸ περίζωμα ἐκόντι περιρρηῆναι, γνόντι ὡς ἀνδρὸς περιεζωσμένου δραμεῖν ῥάων ἐστὶν ἀνὴρ γυμνός — [*Near Coroebus is buried*] *Orsippus who won the footrace at Olympia by running naked when all his competitors wore girdles according to ancient custom. They say also that Orsippus when general afterwards annexed some of the neighboring territory. My own opinion is that at Olympia he intentionally let the girdle slip off him, realizing that a naked man can run more easily than one girt* (translation W.H.S. Jones, Loeb Classical Library).

Acanthus of Sparta as the first naked competitor with a counter-story about the sudden death of Orsippus because of his clothes falling down.¹⁰ Augusta Hönlé believed that Orsippus had been the true first inventor, since his race had been the opening event of the games. However, she thought that all runners of the Olympics 720 had competed naked.¹¹ Luigi Moretti also thought that Orsippus had been the inventor of athletic nakedness, because an epigram inscribed in the Antonine period praises him as such.¹² He thinks that the inscription is a re-publication of an earlier monument,¹³ which is, however, impossible to prove. In antiquity the epigram was attributed to Simonides but included in the Greek anthology without any name (app. 272). This attribution may indeed support an early dating of the tradition that Orsippus had invented athletic nudity. Rather, we should think, that once the invention of athletic nudity was associated with the 15th Olympics, there was a natural tendency to credit the best known competitor of these games for this invention. Orsippus, the stadion-winner of these Olympics, was the obvious candidate.

Yet, serious objections were already in Antiquity raised against an introduction of athletic nudity at so early a date. Thucydides agreed that it was the Lacedaemonians who *were the first to contend naked and, after stripping openly, to anoint themselves with oil when engaged in athletic exercise*, yet also remarks that *formerly, even in the Olympic contests, the athletes contended wearing belts that covered their privy parts; and it is not many years since that the practice ceased* (translation C.F. Smith, Loeb Classical Library).¹⁴ Undoubtedly, Thucydides, while writing about *not many years* that elapsed from the introduction of Olympic nudity to his times, could not be thinking about a period of ca. 300 years. Since a passage in Plato's *Republic* Book V¹⁵ seems to support Thucydides' statement, the date of introduction of nakedness into Greek games and gymnasia is repeatedly discussed.¹⁶ Homer, who does not know this

¹⁰ Noted in *Schol. ad Iliad* 23.683: κατὰ τὴν δεκάτην καὶ τετάρτην Ὀλυμπιάδα ἐφ' Ἴππομένους Ἀθήνησιν ἄρχοντος Ὀλυμπίαςι στάδιον θεόντων ἐν περιζώμασι συνέβη ἓνα αὐτῶν Ὀρσίππον ἐμποδισθέντα ὑπὸ τοῦ περιζώματος πεσεῖν καὶ τελευτήσαι· ὅθεν ἐθεσπίσθη γυμνοὺς ἀγωνίζεσθαι — *In the fourteenth Olympiad, when Hippomenos was archon of Athens, and the runners ran a stadion in girdles it happened to one of them, Orsippus, whose clothes slipped down, that he fell and died. From that time onwards it was decided to compete in nudity.*

¹¹ Hönlé, *Olympia* (n. 4) 30–2.

¹² *IG* VII 52.

¹³ L. Moretti, *Olympionikai, i vincitori negli antichi agoni olimpici*, Roma 1957, 61–2, entry no. 16 ORRHIPPUS.

¹⁴ Thuk. 1.6.5: ἐγυμνώθησάν τε πρότοι καὶ ἐς τὸ φανερὸν ἀποδύντες λίπα μετὰ τοῦ γυμνάζεσθαι ἠλείψαντο· τὸ δὲ πάλαι καὶ ἐν τῷ Ὀλυμπικῷ ἀγῶνι διαζώματα ἔχοντες περὶ τὰ αἰδοῖα οἱ ἀθληταὶ ἠγωνίζοντο, καὶ οὐ πολλὰ ἔτη ἐπειδὴ πέπανται.

¹⁵ Plat. *rep.* 452c.

¹⁶ Since the literature on this aspect of Greek life is immense, it seems reasonable to send readers to a good review of earlier scholarship in M. Golden, *Sport and Society in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge 1998, 65–9. He follows Larissa Bonfante, *Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art*, *AJA* 93 (1989) 543–570, and Myles McDonnell, *The Introduction of Athletic Nudity: Thucydides, Plato, and the Vases*, *JHS* 111 (1991) 182–93, who convincingly shows that Plato developed Thucydides' remark on the Greek athletic custom, and — after the analysis of

phenomenon, provides a *terminus post quem* in the eighth century BC. Archeology (statues of gods, heroes and — it is still debatable — heroised men; vase paintings) may suggest that the invention of athletic nudity is a bit later, and the *terminus ante quem* should be looked for during the sixth century BC.¹⁷ A (prevailing) low-dating of Greek athletic nakedness combined with a conviction that the long run was the first contest, in which athletes were unclothed, resulted in a recent interpretation placing the introduction of the *dolichos* into the Olympic program in the early sixth century BC.¹⁸ Of course, this date does not fit in the Ancient Olympic chronology at all. Admittedly, most of today's scholars agree that the early Olympic chronology is construed, and hardly mirrors the actual dates or changes in the Games' schedule.¹⁹ Even the date of the first Olympics is debatable,²⁰ the institution of the pan-Hellenic *agon* according to the most recent research may be delayed until the seventh century BC.²¹ Still, it seems prudent to conclude with Catherine Morgan that in the present state of evidence "the question of the date of the institution of the Olympic Games must remain open".²² We can attempt, however, to understand how the Ancient Greeks construed the early Pan-Hellenic games in the centuries to come.

There may be a little doubt that the beginnings of early Pythian games, held for the first time in the early sixth century BC were better known in Antiquity than the

archaic vases — suggests that nudity dominated in Athens in the mid-sixth century BC, and probably even before that in Sparta and Olympia. Yet, it is reasonable to conclude with Bonfante (p. 553) that we can trace rather stages than the date of introduction of athletic nudity. Iconography is not consistent, and although it is possible to enumerate many seventh-century vases representing nude males at sport activities, this way of representing sportsmen dominates first in the mid-sixth century BC.

¹⁷ See: Golden, *Sport and Society* (n. 16) 66–7, and more explicitly Christesen, *Olympic Victor Lists* (n. 1) 354. In another work Christesen connects the institution of nudity in the games with the hoplite-fostered democratization of the Greek society in the later Archaic period, see: P. Christesen, *The Transformation of Athletics in Sixth Century Greece*, in: G.P. Schaus, S.R. Wenn (eds.), *Onward to the Olympics: Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games*, Waterloo (Ontario) 2007, 59–68.

¹⁸ Y. Kempen, *Krieger, Boten und Athleten: Untersuchungen zum Langlauf in der griechischen Antike*, Sankt Augustin 1992, 130–3; 161–2.

¹⁹ Chr. Wacker, *Das Programm der antiken Olympischen Spiele*, in: W.-D. Heilmeyer, N. Kaltsas, H.-J. Gehrke, G.E. Hatzi, S. Bocher (eds.), *Mythos Olympia: Kult und Spiele*, Berlin 2012, 269.

²⁰ Twenty five years ago A. Mallwitz, *Cult and Competition Locations at Olympia*, in: W. Raschke (ed.), *The Archeology of the Olympics*, Madison 1988, 79–101, 101, argued even for a series of annual games starting in 704 and antedating the introduction of chariot racing during the first big, four-years games (24th).

²¹ The earliest known water-supplying wells in Olympia suitable for larger numbers of visitors were created in haste, of easily datable contemporary material in the early seventh century BC, H. Kyrieleis, *Die frühe Geschichte Olympias — Mythos und archäologische Forschung*, in: *Mythos Olympia* (n. 19) 61–5, on p. 64, see also H. Kyrieleis, *Olympia: Archäologie eines Heiligtums. Zaberns Bildbände zur Archäologie*, Darmstadt 2011, 133.

²² C. Morgan *Athletes and Oracles: The Transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the Eighth Century BC*, Cambridge 1990, 48.

origins of the Olympics.²³ At least, the dates of new contests, although controversial, seem more reliable, and it is likely that the year 582 BC we have mentioned as the ancient date of the first Delphic athletic and stephanitic games is true.²⁴ Pausanias reports that the Delphians copied the Olympic schedule, and added two running contests for boys: the diaulos and the dolichos.²⁵

Of course, we cannot accept Apollonios' rationalisation of the long run's name. No man called *Dolichos* was behind the first long run contests.²⁶ We are in the sphere of myth or legend, therefore. We may indicate another Dolichos present as a significant hero in the early Eleusinian myth²⁷ and at the Eleusinia.²⁸ This Eleusinian Dolichos is absent from the surviving part of the sacred calendar as restructured by Nikomachos at the turn of fifth century BC.²⁹ It was suggested that Dolichos had been in Eleusis an epithet of Pluto, and not a distinct deity or hero.³⁰ Still, there is at least one more Eleusinian — Delphic analogy: Eleusinian Telesidromos³¹ has his Delphic counterpart Eudromos.³²

If we accept that the first *dolichos* in the Pan-Hellenic games was held at Delphi in 582 BC, the earliest possible date for the introduction of this contest into the Olympic program is 580 BC with the 50th (fiftieth) Olympic Games. As we have seen, almost all

²³ *Marmor Parium* I 38, Paus. 10.7.3.

²⁴ Still, ancient traditions did not allow modern scholars to decide whether the first crowned games took place in 582 or already in 586 BC. A scholarly debate on this issue has a long record since the late 19th century, and it is sufficient in this place to recall recent voices in this discussion, Stephen Miller arguing for 586 (S.G. Miller, *The Date of the First Pythiad*, CSCA 11 [1978] 127–158) and Alan Mosshammer defending 582 (A. Mosshammer, *The Date of the First Pythiad — Again*, GRBS 23 [1982] 15–30).

²⁵ Paus. 10.7.5: ἔθεσαν δὲ καὶ ἄλλα τότε ἀθληταῖς πρῶτον, τὰ τε ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ πλὴν τεθρίπτου καὶ αὐτοὶ νομοθετήσαντες δολίχου καὶ διαύλου παισὶν εἶναι δρόμον — *On that occasion the Delphians founded for the first time prizes for athletes, too, the competitions being the same as those at Olympia, except the four-horse chariot, and they themselves decreed that there should be running-races for boys, the long course and the double course* (translation W.H.S. Jones, Loeb Classical Library).

²⁶ δολιχός, simply: long, was the most obvious name for the long run in Greece (the word deriving from a common Indoeuropean root for long things), see: P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Paris² 1999, 291–2.

²⁷ *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 155.

²⁸ IG I³ 5, l. 5 from c. 500 BC: [Πλούτο]γι Δ[ολί]χοι θεοῖν τρίττοαν βόαρχον ἐν τεῖ ἑορ[τεῖ --] — *To Pluton, Dolichos and the Goddesses (one should give) in the feast a triple sacrifice starting from ox*. Cf.: H. von Prott, *Ein IEPOΣ ΝΟΜΟΣ der Eleusiniern*, MDAl(A) 24 (1899) 241–66, 252.

²⁹ K. Clinton, *IG I² 5, the Eleusinia and the Eleusinians*, AJPh 100 (1979) 1–12, 7; F. Graf, *Zum Opferkalender des Nikomachos*, ZPE 14 (1974) 139–44.

³⁰ von Prott, *Ein IEPOΣ ΝΟΜΟΣ* (n. 28) 255. Clinton, *IG I² 5* (n. 29) 4 n. 12; 7, accepts this view with some reserve. Let us note, however, that Ludwig Ziehen finally expressed a doubt if the beginning of l. 5 may be restored as [Πλούτο]γι. On the other hand, he could not find a better restoration of the following letters than Δ[ολί]χοι, see: L. Ziehen, *Zu den Leges Sacrae: I*, Hermes 79 (1944) 214–9, 215.

³¹ Also known from to IG I³ 5.

³² H.T. von Prott, L. Ziehen, *Leges Graecorum Sacrae*, Leipzig 1906, no. 73 (p. 217), but see: F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*, Paris 1969, no. 76 (p. 152).

sources place this event in the 15th (fifteenth) Olympics in 720. I believe that we should seriously consider a possibility that an early compiler of the Olympic victor list (why not the very first one, Hippias) did emend (rather than mistake) πεντήκοντα or πεντηκοστή to πεντεκαίδεκα or πεντεκαϊδεκάτη. Such an emendation certainly satisfied Hippias' of Elis conviction that the Olympic Games were always senior in comparison with other Pan-Hellenic games. Furthermore, there were certainly contesting traditions about who actually won one or another contest, and a number of names Hippias was to fit into his chronology was very likely greater than the number of actual victors. Thus, he gained an additional thirty five games to accommodate the number of winners' names into a new extended chronological framework.³³ The example of the *dolichos* casts some light, I believe, on the way in which Hippias composed his list.

Needless to say that this new date of institution of the *dolichos* at Olympia (in 580 BC) corresponds better with the traditions that link the introduction of athletic nudity with the first long run at Olympia and with the iconographic evidence that shows a complete victory of athletic nakedness first in the early sixth century BC. In it concurs also with numerous premises in Pausanias and other sources that the Olympics underwent significant changes c. 580 BC,³⁴ perhaps possible due to the Elean seizure of Olympia and advanced by the appearance of the Pythian, Isthmian and the Nemean Games.³⁵

Institute of History
Department of Ancient History
Warsaw University
Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28
00-927 Warszawa, Poland
jrzepka@uw.edu.pl

Jacek Rzepka

³³ On the other hand, we have very little information of the Olympic victor list in *dolichos* from the period before 484 BC (the later games are covered by *POxy* 222 = *FGrHist* 415). The only known long-race winner between Acanthus and 484 is Phanas of Messenia, contemporary to Aristomenes, mentioned in Pausanias (4.17.9). He belongs, however, to the sphere of the Messenian political myth.

³⁴ The data have been collected and critically exposed in Christesen, *Olympic Victor Lists* (n. 1), 491–504. An unusual concentration of changes in early sixth century BC led Weniger to the conclusion that there was a new start to the Olympics in 576 BC, see: L. Weniger, *Olympische Studien: Wann wurde die erste Olympiade gefeiert?*, *ARW* 20 (1921/2) 41–78.

³⁵ See: P. Siewert, *Die wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Bedeutung der Bronze-Urkunden aus Olympia. Mit der Erstedition einer frühen Thearodokie-Verleihung als Beispiel*, in: H. Kyrieleis (ed.), *Olympia 1875–2000. 125 Jahre Deutsche Ausgrabungen. Internationales Symposium, Berlin 9.–11. November 2000*, Mainz 2002, 359–70, 361 (dating the birth of the Elean-written Olympic bureaucracy to the middle third of the sixth century BC) and *Olympic Rules*, in: W. Coulson, H. Kyrieleis (eds.), *Proceedings of an International Symposium on the Olympic Games*, Athens 1992, 113–7, 114. Also M. Kōiv, *Early History of Elis and Pisa: Invented or Evolving Traditions?*, *Klio* 95 (2013) 315–368, esp. 351–2, finds important arguments for the Elean overtake of Olympia in the late Archaic period.