

*ANCIENT OLYMPIC VICTOR  
AS A ROLE MODEL*



# Introduction

- Education



- The winners of the Panhellenic Games + the *περιοδονῖκοι* + the great warriors = the best role models



# Winner as a role model in the antiquity

- Equivalent on the battlefield (the collective glory)
  - collective glory and individual glory
  - warlike and sports ideals
- Propagation of each πόλις
- The winner's example and success were emulated by others, especially by youth
- The winner's movement leading to his victory was "*the result of the dialogue with the Gaia*" (Hogenová 2000: 150).
- The basic of Olympism and Olympic education (society-winners)
- For the Greeks, the victory at Olympia was more important than the triumphs over the Romans.



# ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πάτροκλῳ

- The Olympic victor was the best man similar to ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πάτροκλῳ, when only the best heroes competed and won



- Diomedes, the king of Argos (συνωρίς)
- Epeius (πυγμαῆ)
- Aias/ Ajax the Great – Odysseus (πάλη)
- Odysseus (δρόμος - δίαυλος? --- ποδωκείην)
- Diomedes – Aias/ Ajax the Great (όπλομαχία with δολιχόσκιος ἔγχος / δόρυ)
- Polypoetes (δίσκος)
- Meriones (τοξικός)
- Agamemnon (ἄκον - ἦμα)

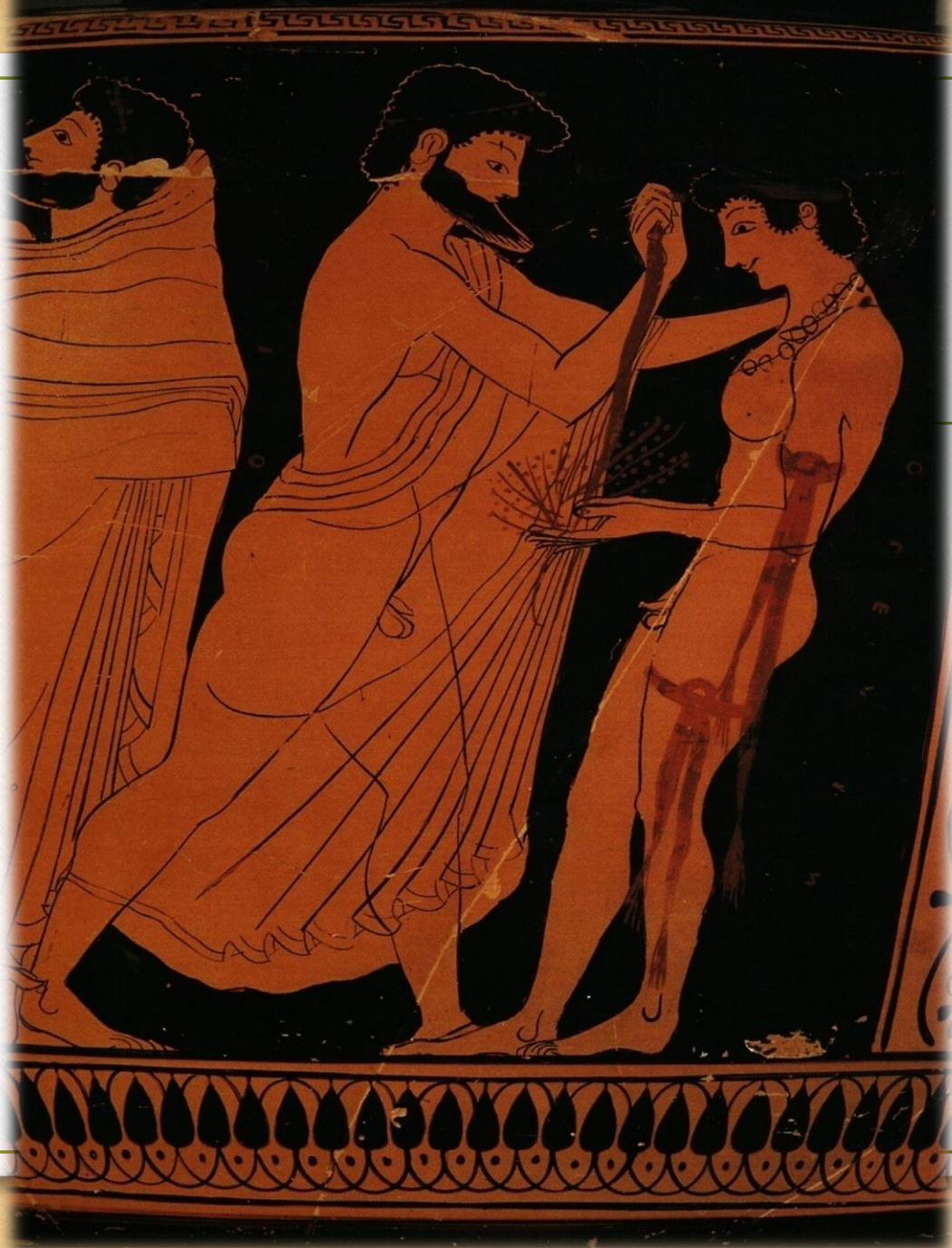


# ἄθλον



- The reward was a wreath (κότινος)
  - Kallistefanos (“Donor of the beautiful wreaths“)
- In the Panhellenic Games, the winner, with the honours, was only one, the first, and the other competitors fell into the oblivion.
  - In contrast, the *Ilias* mentions multiple awards given out in the Great Panathenaic Games and some other local games.





## Except *κότινος* here were also other advantages (1/4):

- the winner received a palm branch and a red ribbons symbolizing the victory, which were tied around his head and arm or leg
- the winner could be honored by a festive poem (epinikion), a statue, or both
- the triple victors were allowed to erect realistic statues, called *iconica* (Plin., *NH* 34.9.4)
- victors could eat for free (paid by the state) until the end of their life (in the *πρυτανεῖον*) and hold an important political, religious, etc., positions in the state
- victors also had a special honorary place in the theatre (Athen., *Deipnos.* 6.237) and during festivals
- in the struggle of battle (in the *φάλαγξ*) victors were stationed in honorable places
- taxes were largely forgiven to them in their birthplace
- the famous winners were also often released by the enemy after a lost battle

## Except *κότινος* here were also other advantages (2/4):

- the winners were sought by the rulers of some *πόλεις* and empires as a suitable husbands for their daughters or they were friends of kings and elites (e.g. Milo, Dexippus)
- the victor was (sometimes) dressed in purple and he rode a chariot with white horses, not through a gate, but a newly made hole in the walls
- Exainates from Akragatos was accompanied to the city by 300 two-team chariots with white horses (Diod. Sic. 12.82.1, 13.33.1)
- the victor's entrance to the city was simultaneously a triumphant procession (similar to the Roman triumphs) with flowers and twigs (*φυλλοβολία*)
- “sporting“ buildings were named after the victors





## Except *κότινος* here were also other advantages (3/4):

- according to Bacchylides the winner could have every woman
- kings were allowed to have special coins made to commemorate their victories
  - e.g. Gelon of Syracuse, Phillip II of Macedon

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- the victor's names were on a roll of fame of each city-state
- a lot of the winners were worshiped as heroes (during their life or when they died)
  - Phillipos of Croton, Euthymos of Locri, Theagenes of Thasos, Kleomedes of Astypalia, ...
- several victors received honorary citizenship of other *πόλεις*, some of them were called “the citizens of all the world“
- winners received special symbols of the city-states (different for each *πόλις*)

## Except *κόντινος* here were also other advantages (4/4):

- in Sparta, the winners had the right to march and fight next to the king
- in Alexandria, the winners became the members of the Musaeum

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- in Athens, the victors received 500 drachmas (Plut., *Solon* 23.5) – viz Solo's census, in Sybaris 100 drachmas, and later, according to Dio Chrysostom (*De Gloria* 1), the winner could receive 5 talets (= 30 000 drachmas)
- many legends were created about the victors (Koroibos, Milo, Theagenes, Euthyimos, ...) as well as about other great people (Homer, Empedocles etc.)
- in Plato's ideal state (Plat., *Rep.* 425D), the winner could be the guardian and this was a great honour – to be the guardian and the Olympic winner





# Horse winners

- Alcibiades, after victory at Olympia, prepared two big banquets; one for his supporters and one for his victorious horses
- Cimon, the father of Miltiades, buried his horses in the family tomb
- Statues were also created for horses
  - E.g. Cimon, Kyniska, Polyzalos, ...



# The ceremonies

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- The ceremonies of the Olympic winners were spectacular and inspiring. “*The sentiments expressed during the ceremonies of victory include elation, joy, honor and pride.*” (Kefalidou 1999: 105)
- A part of the ceremony could be also reading of the epinikion.
- The winner became an ideal example for youths, a role model and one of the best citizens. A person who spreads glory, not only his own, but that of his family and his πόλις.

"Τυνδαρίδαις τε φιλοξείνοις ἀδεῖν καλλιπλοκάμῳ θ' Ἑλένῃ  
κλεινὰν Ἀκράγαντα γεραίρων εὖχομαι,  
Θήρωνος Ὀλυμπιονίκαν ὕμνον ὀρθώσῃς, ἀκαμαντοπόδων  
ἵππων ἄωτον" (Pind., O. 3.1-4a).

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*"I pray that I may be pleasing to the hospitable sons of Tyndareus and to Helen of the beautiful hair while I honor renowned Acragas by raising my song in praise of Theron's victory at Olympia won by the choicest of horses with untiring feet"* (translation by D. A. Svarlien, 1990).

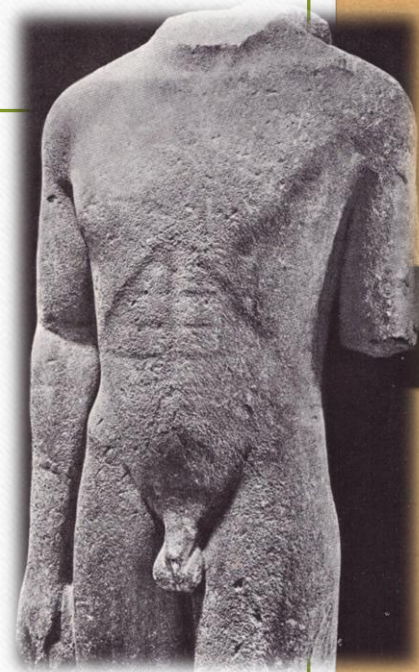
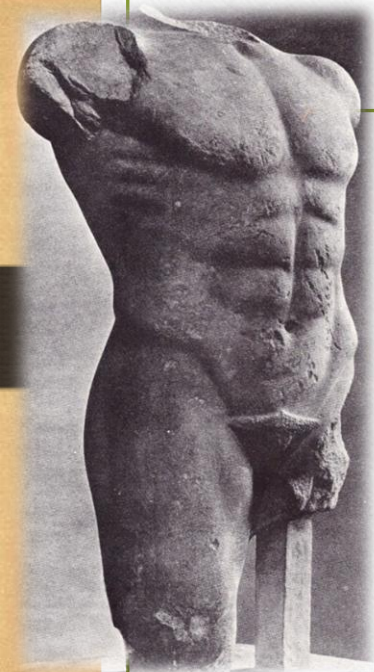
"ἐγὼ δὲ συνεργαπτόμενος σπουδᾶ, κλυτὸν ἔθνος  
Λοκρῶν ἀμφρέπεσον μέλιτι εὐάνορα πόλιν καταβρέχων" (Pind., O. 10.101a-103).

*"While I, earnestly lending my hand, have embraced the famous tribe of the Locrians, showering with honey their city of fine men"* (translation by D. A. Svarlien, 1990).

Also e.g. Pind., O. 2.52-56; 7.20-27, 76-88; 11.16-20; 13.1-5; 14.17-24.

# The educational impact

- Increasing the interest in physical activities and raising the love of “sport“ for the youth
- The youth were inspired by the best examples of collective and individual glory, that were reflected in the *ἀριστεῖᾶ πρόμαχοι* and the *ἀριστεῖᾶ ὀλυμπιονῆκαί*
- Statues of the great people



# Conclusion

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In antiquity, military and “sport“ were closely linked – an ideal citizen x *ιδιώτης*

- *ἀνδρείᾱ, ἀρετή, ἀριστεύα, ἀβροσύνη, καλοκάγαθία, σωφροσύνη, τιμή*

A victory at Olympia not only included an olive wreath and other advantages, but also served as an educational principle especially for Greek boys. These boys later became athletes and warriors-defenders their city-states.

All celebrations of the victor – the best – had to leave the most powerful impressions on the youth and thus it was the best way to educate children.

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