



A brief history of myths truce architecture and enrichment of ancient Olympic Games

*¹ Amitava Ghosal, ² Dr. Nita Bandyopadhyay

¹ Regular Research Scholar, Department of Physical Education, University of Kalyani, Kalyani, West Bengal, India

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education, University of Kalyani, Kalyani, West Bengal, India

Abstract

The Greeks were first to provide systematic and philosophical attitude toward physical education and sport. The aim of this study to discuss the foundation of the ancient Olympic games, Reviewing the myth & truce, construction, architecture, masonry, progression, Golden age of the games and the social dominance, repercussion of physical education, and sports. A systematic search of ancient Olympic, myths, truce, culture to find all relevant data. Starting of this work from the Archaic period (800 to 500BC) to Roman Greece period (146BC to 330 Ad) and also include the Classical period (500 BC to 323 BC) and Hellenistic period (323 BC to 146BC) in between them. And it's preceded by the Minoan, Mycenaean civilization (1700-1,600 B.C) and Dark ages (1200-800BC). Through the truce, during the 9th century BC Iphios 1st started the games in peace. The Classical era (5th to 4th century BC) most developmental periods of the Olympics and the falls of the pyrotechnics started after this period approximately 146 BC.

Keywords: ancient olympic, myth, truce, golden age

1. Introduction

The Greeks mark the kick-off of western civilization. They were the first group to provide a systematic and philosophical attitude toward education, physical education, and sport. And it's preceded by the Minoan, Mycenaean civilization (1700-1,600 B.C) and Dark ages (1200-800BC). The Minoan civilization evolved some 4,000 years ago. The Minoan civilization reached its peak by the year 2,000 B.C. They involve in sports like boxing, wrestling, and bull jumping for entertainment during funerals ^[5]. Around 1,700-1,600 B.C a new thalassocracy started to evolve in the Peloponnesus in the town of Mycenae. The Mycenaean traded with the cultures around the Mediterranean and naturally, their activities came at the expense of the Minoan traders. The kings, the nobles, and the high ranked soldiers took part in sports in the Mycenaean culture. Homer describes chariot races, spear throwing (similar to the javelin throw), boxing, wrestling (standing), archery, and foot races were main event during this period ^[14]. The third and last wave of invaders included the Dorian tribes. Around 1,000 B.C Dorian Tribes came from the North and conquered the Mycenaean. The mixing of the two cultures creates a common Greek language, religion, and sport. This pattern lasted for 300 years, and by Classical Period Greece became the centre of the economic empire in the Mediterranean ^[16].

The ancient Olympic Festival Which starts first full moon after the summer solstice at July or August, from which we derive the Olympic games of today, was a pivotal force in ancient Greece. Its recorded history spans more than a millennium from 776 BC to AD 393, a total of 293 Olympiads. The ancient Olympics were based on the philosophical balance among physical, moral, ethical and spiritual development that was a cornerstone of Greek

democracy. As the ideals and political forces that inspired the Games began to deteriorate, so did the festival. Finally, Under the Roman Rule, by decree of the Christian emperor Theodosius I, the Games were abolished in AD 393 ^[7, 8, 9]. So, the purpose of this research work is 1. To discuss the foundation and cornerstone of ancient Olympic games. 2. To discuss the myth & truce of the games. 3. To discuss the construction, architecture and masonry & progression of the different era of ancient Olympic games and watch how the site gradually developed all the necessary things through the different period. 4. The purpose of this work is to analyse which period is the most important for development and prosperity and the golden age of Olympics.

2. Methodology

A systematic search of ancient Olympic, myths, truce, politics and culture of ancient Greece to find all relevant data. Search terms included "ancient Olympics", "exercise and physical activity of ancient Greece", "ancient culture of Greece" "stadium of ancient Olympics" "Golden age of Greece and ancient Olympic" "Most developmental period of ancient Olympics" etc. The researcher carries out the research on historicizing the ancient Olympic games of ancient Greece. This was starting from the Archaic period (800 to 500BC) to Roman Greece period (146BC to 330 Ad) and also include the Classical period (500 BC to 323 BC) and Hellenistic period (323 BC to 146BC) in between them. Each of those periods was part of the ancient antiquity which was subdivided into above periods.

3. Observation

3.1 Myths

The aim of the ancient Olympic Games is honouring the Zeus.

The people expect that there are some kinds of contest in the religion festival or some hero's funeral. Each Panhellenic game is related to the worship of some god ^[12]. Health, sport and competitive spirit were a large part of Greek education and so it is hardly surprising that organised athletic competition would at some point be created as they had been in the earlier Minoan and Mycenaean civilization ^[7, 8, 9, 10].

There were many legends and myths about the Games and the feats of various victors, but when it comes to the formation of the Olympic games, three characters are central, Pelops, Hercules, and King Iphitos. Pelops was the local hero of Olympia and was considered the mythical founder of the Games. After his victory, Pelops organized chariot races as thanksgiving to the gods and as funeral games in honour of King Oinomaos in order to be purified of his death. It was from this funeral race held at Olympia that the beginnings of the Games were inspired. Pelops became a great king, a local hero, and gave his name to the Peloponnese. Eventually, Pelops became part of the local mythology ^[25].

According to legend, Hercules founded the Games at the place where Pelop's tomb was located in Olympia. A sanctuary was later erected in honour of Pelops in the Altis. The sanctuary, called the Pelopion, was composed of a monument surrounded by a pentagonal enclosure. As part of the ancient Olympics, ceremonies were held in honour of Pelops in front of the Pelopion. In celebration of successfully completing this labour, Hercules made a clearing in the grove of King Eurystheos of Argos, after his victory over the king of Argos, laid out the boundaries of the Altis, and instituted the first games in honour of Zeus at the site of Pelops's tomb. He is said to have fixed the distance of the original race by placing one foot in front of the other six hundred times. Hercules also planted the sacred olive tree that was later the source of crowns for the Olympic victors.

The founder of the Games is thought to be Aethlios, the first king of Elis, whose name is associated with the word 'athlete' ^[1]. Iphitos, who was descendant of Hercules, is credited with revamping the Games and imposing the institution of the Olympic truce. At the time of King Iphitos, around the ninth century BC, mainland Greece was unsettled by civil wars and migrations. Legend claims that King Iphitos went to the Oracle of Delphi and asked her how to bring an end to the wars and pestilence that were gradually destroying the land of Greece. She instructed him to reinstate the Games and declare a truce for their duration. This plan succeeded and the Olympic truce became a major instrument in the unification of the Greek states and colonies. According to tradition, it was Iphitos who first established the crown of leaves from Hercules's olive tree as a prize, again on the advice of the Delphic Oracle, who told him to go to Olympia and search for the tree "decked with gossamer webs." At these first games, King Iphitos officiated as the sole judge. Later, as the Games grew, judges from Elis (Hellanodikai) became the Olympic officials ^[30, 31].

3.2 Truce

The Greek word for the truce (ekecheiria) means "the holding of hands" and "the break of hostilities." The Olympic truce began in 884 BC as a month-long "Holy Treaty" between king Iphitos of Elis, king Lykourgos of Sparta, and king

Kleosthenes of Pisa ^[1]. The terms of the truce were engraved on a bronze discus that was kept in the Temple of Hera in the Altis at Olympia. The Olympic truce had a strong religious component from its beginning ^[30]. The ancient Olympic games were always religious in character, especially around the 5th century BC. All participating city-states acknowledged Zeus as the supreme god among gods, and they came to the sacred grounds of Olympia to compete among each other and pay their respects to Zeus' temple. On the right side of the temple of Zeus at ancient Olympic was a statue of Zeus being crowned by the truce. Violating the terms of the truce was regarded as blatant disrespect to Zeus. The official terms of the truce were Neither armies nor weapons were allowed to enter Elis Attendees whose city-state was at war could travel safely through hostile areas No death penalties were allowed ^[22]. In order to spread the news of the truce before the start of the Olympic festival, three heralds decked with olive wreaths and carrying staffs were sent out from Elis to every Greek state. It was the heralds' responsibility to reaffirm the date of the festival (each city-state had its own calendar system), to invite the inhabitants to attend and to announce the Olympic truce. Because of this, they came to be known as the "truce-bearers" (spondophoroi). These heralds were also the official warrantors of the truce and full-time legal advisors to the Eleans ^[22]. Although the Games themselves lasted for five days, the truce was in effect for one month. Later it was extended to two and then three months to protect visitors coming from further away. During the peak of religious fervour (5th century BC), violators of the Olympic truce were heavily fined. Later we find the Olympic games being held under the protection of troops in fear of a Spartan invasion ^[22].

3.3 Masonry architecture and construction

Early Dark Age (1150-900 BC)

(Sub Mycenaean 1125-1050 BC)

End of the Mycenaean period (12th century BC): There is evidence that Olympia was being used as a sanctuary.

(Proto geometric 1050-900 BC)

10th century BC: It was an established centre for worship.

Late Dark Age (900-750 BC)

(Middle geometric 850-750 BC)

8th century BC: Religious activities had blossomed.

884 BC: Truce began in as a month-long "Holy Treaty" between king Iphitos of Elis, king Lykourgos of Sparta, and king Kleosthenes of Pisa ^[1].

The end of the Dark Ages and the year of the first Olympic Games.

Archaic Period (750 - 490 BC) [The Agonal Age]

(Late geometric Period)

750 BC: That Greek city states began to organize.

704 BC: Various improvements were made to Olympia, including several walls to the east and changes to the northern boarders. Large areas ground was levelled and the sanctuary was improved.

650-600 BC: Up until the beginning of the 5th century BCE, the only major buildings at Olympia were the Heraion (Temple of Hera, wife of Zeus), at first it was called "Temple of Zeus and Hera", after established the Zeus temple it was consider as a Temple of Hera, the Bouleuterion (council house), Prytanium a kind of town hall and several treasuries in

the Altis were built ^[30].

560 BC: (Around the 55th Olympiad) the first rudimentary stadium was constructed. It was a simple track located on the Southern slope of Kronos hill ^[15].

Classical Period (490 – 323 BC)

In the 5th century BC, the sanctuary reached its peak of prosperity and permanent stone slabs (balbis) were placed across the track with parallel grooves for athletes. The track itself was usually prepared with hard-packed clay. Behind the starting line, which was initially a simple line drawn in the track surface, was space for the starting judge, and after the finish line was a space for the athletes to slow down, usually 15 m in length (interestingly, this is also the regulation length for modern running tracks). Over time, the starting procedure for races became more complex ^[6]. During the mid-5th century BC the track was surrounded on 4 side by artificial earth embankments on which 45000 spectators could watch the contest ^[25].

508 BC: Democracy was first introduced.

500 BC: Stadium was remodelled with sloping sides for spectators and shifted slightly to the east.

476 BC: Period of “Jubilation of Olympic”. This time Elis planned to start with its role as Olympic host in mind. The most important innovation that the Greeks decided it was officially designated as the agent of peace. A significant number of cities agreed to allow the Olympic officials to form judicial appeal board to settle their difference. But it was not permanent. Built Bricks and Mortar, 2 Gymnasium, Horse track in the centre of the town, permanent building for staying Hellanodikoi, numbers of Hellanodikoi expanded from 2 to 9, more athletes and best athletes came who are best known in Greek history ^[30].

472-456 BC: The first classical construction was the temple of Zeus a massive Doric 6 x 13 column, the temple was completed in 456 BC in order to house a huge cult statue of Zeus. The temple was Designed by Libon of Elis, the temple was the biggest in Greece at that time and measured 64.12 m x 27.68 m with columns 10.53 m in height. a magnificent structure that stood as the spectacular centrepiece of Olympia for the remainder of its history ^[2, 30].

470 BC: Decade of ambitious and impressive building programme like Bouleuterion, Treasures, stadium moved, spectator facility improved. The biggest tourist attraction at that time. The Prytaneion was built at the northwest side of the site ^[30].

435 BC: 13-meter-high gold and ivory statue of Zeus one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and one of the largest statues ever raised in an enclosed room. The figure depicted Zeus, seated on a throne, with a sceptre in his left hand and Nike (winged victory) in his right hand. It was the work of famed sculptor Pheidias, who had just finished the gold and ivory figure of Athena for the Parthenon (built 447 to 438 BC) in Athens. A visit to Olympia was also a pilgrimage to Zeus's most sacred locale. A number of other religious and secular buildings as well as athletic facilities were also constructed at Olympia around this time. These included bathhouses, a pool, a banquet hall / administration centre, a grand hotel for VIPs, more treasures, and several colonnades ^[2, 30].

420 BC: Sparta was excluded from the game for breaking the truce.

Mid-4th century BC: The new stadium with embankments for spectators. A complex system (hysplex) of pillars, horizontal poles, and rope created a mechanism whereby one starting judge could release all the athletes simultaneously. The finish was indicated by a simple line in the ground, and if the race was more than one stadion in length, a small turning post (kampter) was set up in the centre of the finish line.

400 BC: The Matron was constructed near the Treasures.

396 BC: The first woman to win the crown of victory was Kyniska, she was owner of horses ^[30].

Around 350 BC: The erection of the Echo Stoa, separated off the sanctuary from the area of the games and stadium. The South Stoa was built at the southern edge of the sanctuary at approximately the same time.

350 BC: The third and final stadium (capacity 45,000) was constructed in, further away from the sanctuary ^[15].

337-335 BC: Philip II of Macedonia began construction of the family memorial monument at Olympia, the Philippeum.

A number of other religious and secular buildings as well as athletic facilities were also constructed During the end of the classical era at Olympia around this time baths and a swimming pool (5th century BC), a palaestra (3rd century BC). The religion factor in the Classical athletic games became weaker and weaker. For example, the distance between the game site and worship place was gradually widening, they separated eventually at the end of 4 century B.C ^[12]. And 470 – 350 BC consider as the Golden age of Greece ^[30].

Hellenistic Period (323 – 30 BC)

330 BC: Hippodrome (780 m long), and the Theikoloi (priest's residence), a temple to Rhea (mother of Zeus), a banquet hall / administration centre, a grand hotel for VIPs, more treasures, a Gymnasium and several colonnades.

Around 325 BC: The largest building on the site, the Leonidaion, was constructed to house important visitors which was larger than the temple of Zeus. Due to the increasing importance of the games, further athletic buildings were constructed including the, and bath houses. Echo Colonnade was constructed. Palaestra was built later in this period.

200 BC: A vaulted archway was erected linking the entrance of the stadium to the sanctuary.

Roman Period (146 BC – 330 AD)

Roman intervention in Hellenic affairs began in the early 2nd century BC and ended with the loss of Greek independence in 146 BC when Rome imposed direct rule on Greece and Macedonia. It was the end of Greece, the beginning of the Roman period, and the beginning of the end for the Olympic games. The glory of the Olympic festival died with the glory that was classical Greece, although the Games lived on in a debased form under the Romans. In 86 BC Roman General Sulla robbed the Olympia and other treasures of Greece. In fact, the economic and cultural revival and political stability of the Roman occupation marked a brief renaissance of the Olympic games, albeit Roman-style. The notorious event take place in Olympic history under the emperor of Nero, for ordered all festivals in the same year of 67 AD where the

Olympic scheduled for 65 AD. That time built a villa for visit Nero and a club house for athlete union in the southernmost part of the Altis. The Games ceased to be a sacred festival and became more like gladiator contests increasingly violent and bloody. The Games also became "international" under the extensive umbrella of Roman citizenship. The free-born Greeks now named Roman slaves among their ranks. Imperial patronage saw to it that the site of Olympia was improved on a scale befitting that of a Roman showpiece. Extensive repairs to the temple of Zeus and other buildings took place and new monuments and athletic facilities were dedicated. First to be built were "modern" comforts such as several hot baths, the aqueduct that served them, and comfortable Roman guest houses. The weakening Hellenic devotion to the once-revered gods of ancient Greece was indeed no match for the juggernaut of Roman imperialism. And the game was less Pan Hellenic and more money games and win was the most important thing. The renaissance again started in Olympic games in the first half of the 2nd century and lasted most of the 2 century under the Philhellenic Antoninus emperors, Hardian and Antoninus Pius. The most important architecture was built in mid-2nd century AD. For about a millienium tourist and visitors were suffered from thrust. A Roman style bath in the south part of the Altis which was solve the problem. The statue of three Antoninus emperor Hardian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius was built. The prosperity of the game has faded in the 2nd century AD due to the Africanus victory and subsequent ancient authors. Game slowly and continuous declined 3rd and 4th century AD. The game had somehow endured at least 385 AD^[30].

80 BC: Roman general Sulla also moved the 175th Olympiad to Rome.

150 AD: Herod Atticus and his Roman wife Regilla built the Nymphaeum or a fountain which was solved the drinking water problem and acts as a work of art^[6, 7, 8, 30].

100 AD: New baths replaced the older Greek.

160 AD: An aqueduct constructed.

3.4 End of the games

With the end of the Classical period, the philosophy behind the Games began to decline, mirroring the decline in the general history of ancient Greece. Where once the worship of Zeus had been the focus, and all victory was attributed to the aid of the gods, and victors offered their crowns at the feet of their patron deity; athletes revealed in personal glory for their achievements. The Olympic games were becoming less a religious festival and more a world-premiere athletic competition. Olympic victors were showered with honour, glory, and increasingly valuable prizes during Hellenistic Roman period^[30]. In 391 AD Theodosius I banned all pagan worship and issued an edict that all pagan temples be closed. This period saw the rise of the professional athlete for the first time. Boxers added iron to their gloves to appease the thirst of the crowds for blood. The site gradually destroyed under the decree of emperor Theodosius II in 426 AD and was taken over by a Christian community who built a basilica on the site in the early Byzantine period. Earthquakes in 522 and 551 AD destroyed much of the remaining ruins, and silt from the nearby rivers Alpheios and Kladeos eventually covered the site until its rediscovery in 1829 AD by the French

Archaeological Mission and systematic excavation by the German Archaeological Institute from 1875 AD^[7, 8, 9, 30].

4. Conclusion

Through the truce, during the 9th century BC Iphios 1st started the games for peace. Agonal age started during Archaic Period. Classical era was considered (5th to 4th century BC) most developmental period of Olympics and its considered the golden age of ancient Olympics. Declination started after the end of the classical period and after the loss of the independence around 146 BC. The renaissance again started in Olympic games in the first half of the 2nd century and lasted most of the 2 century under the Philhellenic Antoninus emperors.

5. Acknowledgement

We are very tanksful to all the faculty members of Dept. of Physical Education, University of Kalyani and Dr. S. Chatterjee, Dept. of History, University of Kalyani and all of few friends who give instruction for fulfilment of this work.

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