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DAVID M. PRITCHARD

SPORT, DEMOCRACY AND WAR IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

BY
DAVID M. PRITCHARD

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SPORT, DEMOCRACY AND WAR In Classical Athens

Athenian democracy may have opened up politics to every citizen, but it had no impact on participation in sport. The city's sportsmen continued to be drawn from the elite, and so it comes as a surprise that sport was very popular with non-elite citizens of the classical period, who rewarded victorious sportsmen lavishly and created an unrivalled programme of local sporting festivals, on which they spent staggering sums of money. They also shielded sportsmen from the public criticism which was otherwise normally directed towards the elite and its conspicuous activities. This book is a bold and novel exploration of this apparent contradiction, which examines three of the fundamental aspects of Athens in the classical period – democratic politics, public commitment to sport, and constant warfare – and is essential reading for all of those who are interested in Greek sport, Athenian democracy and its waging of war.

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Preface

This book accounts for the anomalously high standing of elite sport in democratic Athens. In writing it I have been supported by many institutions and individuals. I completed the first draft of this book on consecutive postdoctoral research fellowships at Macquarie University and the University of Sydney. I revised this draft for publication while a senior lecturer at the University of Queensland. I completed most of this revision away from my university. In the first half of 2011 I was a research fellow at the University of Copenhagen. I am indebted to Vincent Gabrielsen, who, along with his colleagues in the SAXO Institute, supported my application, regularly discussed the book with me, and integrated me fully into their seminars and classes. This long stay was made possible by the generosity of the Danish Central Bank, which gave me one of the apartments which it maintains for overseas scholars in the city's historic quarter of Nyhavn ('New Harbour'). Before I took up this fellowship and, again, in early 2012 I was a visiting scholar at the University of Sydney's Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia. Sincere thanks go, for both visits, to Eric Csapo and Peter Wilson, who supported my application and invited me to deliver one of the book's chapters as a seminar to the members of their ARC-funded theatre project, and to John Keane, who, while away in Berlin, generously lent me his house. When I returned from Copenhagen, in the second half of 2011, I took up a faculty fellowship in the University of Queensland's Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies. I thank Graeme Turner, this centre's director, for this fellowship, which provided, as I was trying to finish this book, invaluable teaching relief and a supportive and stimulating environment in which to work.

I also owe thanks to many others. I am immensely grateful to Mark Golden, Donald G. Kyle and Thomas Heine Nielsen, who read, and commented on, the book in its entirety. I owe a lot to those individuals who made helpful suggestions when I spoke about the book's findings at universities in Aarhus, Adelaide, Arlington, Athens, Austin, Brisbane,

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Cambridge, Cardiff, Christchurch, Copenhagen, Delhi, Dunedin, London, Melbourne, Nagoya, Odense, Providence and Sydney. Special mention should be made of the Nicholas Anthony Aroney Trust, which, for a third time, gave me a research grant to complete a book. I thank the editors who have given me permission to publish in this book material which first appeared elsewhere. An early version of the book's argument was published as Pritchard 2009. Chapter 2 is a substantially revised version of Pritchard 2003. A shorter version of Chapter 4 was published as Pritchard 2012b. Chapter 6 draws heavily on Pritchard 2010. I would also like to thank Michael Sharp of Cambridge University Press for his longstanding support of this book and to acknowledge the good research assistance of Atticus Cox, Murray Kane and Sarah Plant. Final thanks go to my closest relatives for humouring me during this book's realisation. I cannot pay back my family for its years of encouragement. But I can dedicate this book to my parents, Gabrielle M. Crompton and Douglas Pritchard, my stepfather, Alan B. Crompton, my sister, Hannah Spoto, and my wife, Jumana Bayeh.

Unless it is otherwise indicated, all of the book's translations are my own.

Abbreviations

The abbreviations of the names of ancient writers and their works in this volume follow those of S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, third edition, New York and Oxford (1996). The abbreviations of journal titles are those of *L'année philologique*.

Collard, Cropp and Lee	C. Collard, M. Cropp, and K. H. Lee

(eds.), Euripides: Selected Fragmentary

Plays, vol. 1. Warminster, 1995.

Diels and Kranz H. Diels and W. Kranz (eds.), Die

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Giannantoni G. Giannantoni (ed.), Socratis et

Socraticorum Reliquiae, 4 vols. Naples,

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IG Inscriptiones Graecae. Berlin, 1873–.

IVO W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold (eds.),

Inschriften von Olympia. Berlin, 1896.

Jensen C. C. Jensen (ed.), Hyperides: Orationes

Sex cum Ceterarum Fragmentis. Stuttgart,

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Kassel and Austin R. Kassel and C. Austin (eds.), Poetae

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Librorum Fragmenta. Leipzig, 1886.

B. Snell, R. Kannicht and S. Radt (eds.), Snell, Kannicht and Radt

Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta. 5 vols.

Göttingen, 1971–2004.

T. Thalheim (ed.), Antiphon: Orationes et Thalheim

Fragmenta. Leipzig, 1914. M. L. West (ed.), Iambi et Elegi Graeci. West

2 vols. Oxford, 1989, 1992.

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CHAPTER I

Problems, models and sources

I.I THE ANOMALY OF ELITE SPORT IN DEMOCRATIC ATHENS

In classical Athens the high standing of athletics was a striking anomaly. Democracy may have opened up politics to every citizen but it had no impact on athletic participation. The involvement of Athenians in athletics depended on the extent of their schooling. Training in the standard sporting events was provided by an athletics teacher. But it was only the upper class who could afford his classes, because the democracy did not subsidise education. Everyone recognised this training as essential for a creditable performance in a race or bout. As they missed out on this teacher's classes, lower-class Athenians simply decided against entering athletic contests. In view of the fact that the athletes of democratic Athens continued to be drawn from the upper class, it comes as a surprise that athletics was still highly valued and supported by the lower class. The Athenian dēmos ('people') judged athletics to be an unambiguously good thing and associated it with justice and the personal virtues of courage and self-control. The power which the democracy gave lower-class citizens allowed them to turn this high evaluation into pro-sport policies. Thus they gave sportsmen who were victorious at the Olympics or one of the other international sporting festivals their highest public honours. In the democracy's first fifty years they created an unrivalled programme of local sporting festivals, on which they spent a large amount of money. In addition they carefully managed the public infrastructure for athletics. But the most anomalous aspect of the way in which the demos treated athletics was their protection of it from the public criticism which was normally otherwise directed at the upper class and its conspicuous activities.

This book attributes this anomaly to the relationship which the classical Athenians perceived between athletics and their own waging of war. Ancient historians have not yet studied the impact of this cultural overlap

on sport's public standing. The Athenian *dēmos* described athletic competition and battle with a common set of words and concepts. They saw both as contests with agreed rules, which tested personal virtues and the fitness of their participants. Both types of contest involved toils and dangers. Victory was attributed to the courage of athletes, hoplites and sailors, and defeat to cowardice. Lower-class citizens believed that divine aid was also required for victory in battle or the stadium.

Democracy may not have changed the class background of athletes but it did transform war. The Athenian demos massively increased the scale and the frequency of military expeditions. Lower-class citizens valued war more highly than any other secular activity. They also extended military participation to every stratum of the citizenry. The creation of a publicly controlled army of hoplites as part of the democratic revolution, the subsequent expansion of the city's navy and the provision of military pay opened up war – like politics – to large numbers of lower-class Athenians. In the democracy it was how audiences of this social class responded which determined the outcomes not only of political and legal debates but also of dramatic competitions. Thus public speakers and playwrights were under pressure to represent the new experiences of the lower class as hoplites and sailors in terms of the traditional moral explanation of victory on the battle- and sportsfield. These transformations made sure that the cultural overlap between sport and war had a double impact on the standing of athletics. The first effect was that lower-class citizens assimilated this upper-class preserve with the mainstream and highly valued activity of war. The second effect was that they now had personal experience of something which was akin to athletics and hence could empathise more easily with what athletes actually did. Together these effects explain fully why the Athenian demos valued sport as highly as they did, protected it from public criticism and founded a large number of sporting festivals.

I.2 THE SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION OF ATHENIAN CITIZENS

As the argument of this book divides the classical Athenians into two discrete classes, we should clarify, at its outset, the structure and the character of social differentiation under the democracy.² Public speakers

¹ This is not to deny the valuable recent reflections on the general relationship between athletics and war in the Greek world; see, for example, Barringer 2005: 228–9; Cornell 2002; Golden 1998: 23–8; 2004: 173–4; Lavrencic 1991; Müller 1996; Pleket 2000a: 631–2; Reed 1998; Singor 2009: 599.

² The model of Athenian society which I discuss here will be familiar to social historians of classical Athens and draws heavily on Fisher 1998b; Gabrielsen 1994: 43–73; Markle 1985: 266–71; Ober 1989: 194–6; Pritchard 2004: 212–13; Rosivach 1991; 2001; Vartsos 1978.

and playwrights drew distinctions between citizens on the basis of, for example, military roles, Solonian telē or income classes, occupation and residence in the country or the city.³ But the distinction which they judged to be the most important for their audiences and hence introduced considerably more frequently than the others was between hoi plousioi ('the wealthy') and hoi penētes ('the poor').⁴ This distinction clearly played a vital role in determining how citizens interacted socially and what public services they performed. Thus this book uses different terms for social differentiation, such as elite and non-elite citizens and the upper class and the lower class, strictly as synonyms for the wealthy and the poor. In the literature of classical Athens this dichotomy always implied much more than the greater prosperity of one group of citizens relative to another; for public speakers and dramatists clearly used it to distinguish between two social classes which, in reality, had different ways of life, pastimes, clothing and types of public service.⁵

The rarity, by contrast, of references to Solon's *telē* in classical texts or inscriptions indicates how the Athenian people considered these income classes to be less important than the dichotomy between the wealthy and the poor.⁶ The part which Solon's classes played in the running of the democracy was also more limited.⁷ The Athenians of the fifth century employed them to restrict to a particular stratum of citizens a recurring magistracy or, for example, land grants in a colony or compulsory service in the navy by tying such a public benefit or obligation to membership of one or more *telē* ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 26.2; Thuc. 3.16.1; *IG* I³ 46.44–6). In the course of the next century, however, they appear even to have stopped using them in this way, as, towards its close, candidates for magistracies simply ignored the requirement to belong to one or another *telos* and no one was sure any longer what the qualifications were for membership of each income class ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 7.4, 8.1, 47.1; cf. Isae. 7.39).⁸ At no point, finally, did Solon's *telē* play a part in the determining of who

³ For the drawing of distinctions between citizens on the basis of military roles, see, for example, Aesch. *Pers.* 435–71; Ar. *Ach.* 162–3; Lys. 14.7, II–I2; 14–I5; 16.I2–I3; on occupation, see, for example, Ehrenberg 1951: 113–46; Roselli 2011: 111 – both with references; and on residence, see, for example, Ar. *Nub.* 628; *Pax* 254, 508–11, 582–600, II72–90; Eur. *Or.* 917–22; Dover 1974: II2–I4; Vartsos 1978: 242.

⁴ See, for example, Ar. *Éccl.* 197–8; *Eq.* 222–4; *Ran.* 1006–7; *Plut.* 29–30, 149–52, 500–3, 1003–5; *Vesp.* 463–8; Dem. 22.53; [Dem.] 51.11; Eur. *Supp.* 238–43; Isoc. 20.19; Lys. 24.16–17; 26.9–10; 28.102; Hansen 1991: 115–16; Rosivach 2001: 127.

⁵ Gabrielsen 1994: 43-4, 238 n. 1 pace Rosivach 1991: 196 n. 4.

⁶ Vartsos 1978: 231. For these references, see Rosivach 2002: 42-5.

⁷ Hansen 1991: 106-9; Gabrielsen 2002b: 212-14.

⁸ With Gabrielsen 2002b: 213; Rosivach 2002: 38-9.

should pay for liturgies and the extraordinary war tax or in the assigning of different types of military service to individual citizens.9

The way of life and physical appearance of wealthy Athenians and their significant contributions to public life made them conspicuous among the city's residents. 10 They probably numbered close to 5 per cent of the citizen body." Wealth relieved them of the necessity of work and so gave them a life of skhole or leisure (e.g. Ar. Plut. 281; Vesp. 552-7; Men. Dys. 293-5). It also allowed the wealthy to pursue pastimes which were simply too expensive and time-consuming for the poor. Groups of wealthy friends regularly came together for a sumposion or drinking party, which was normally preceded by a deipnon or dinner party (e.g. Ar. Vesp. 1216-17, 1219-22, 1250).12 Symposiasts may have begun with educated conversations but, as they became more intoxicated, regularly took up drinking games, had sex with hired entertainers and stumbled onto the city's streets as part of a komos or drunken revel in honour of Dionysus. We can easily see why public speakers and comic poets thought the upper class to be overly fond of alcohol, prostitutes and gourmandising.¹³ In the Frogs of Aristophanes, for example, a slave agrees that his master is indeed a gentleman because he knows how - to put it politely - to soak and poke (739-40). Wealthy citizens were constantly criticised for wasting their private resources on such conspicuous conviviality instead of liturgies and eisphorai or extraordinary war taxes. 14 They also set themselves apart by taking part in hunts, conducting public love-affairs with boys and young men of citizen status, joining the cavalry corps, and pursuing horse racing and chariot racing.15 This book adds athletics to this list of upper-class pursuits.

10 Christ 2007: 54, 68; Ehrenberg 1951: 99; Vartsos 1978: 239.

14 E.g. Ar. Plut. 242-4; Ran. 431-3, 1065-8; Dem. 36.39; Lys. 14.23-9; 19.9-11; 28.13.

⁹ Scholarship of the last decade has put beyond doubt that Solon's income classes had no bearing on the type of military service which citizens chose; see Pritchard 2010: 23-7 with bibliography.

¹¹ This estimate is based primarily on the number of *eisphora*-payers in fourth-century Athens; see, for example, Hansen 1991: 90–4, 109–15; Pritchard 2004: 212, 212–13 n. 23; Rhodes 1982; Taylor 2007: 89 *pace* Davies 1981: 24–7.

¹² For the drinking party as an elite activity in classical Athens, see Cooper and Morris 1990: 77–8; Murray 1990: 149–50; cf. 1993: 207–13.

¹³ E.g. Ar. Av. 285-6; Eccl. 242-4; Eq. 92-4; Nub. 1072-3; Ran. 715, 1068; Vesp. 79-80, 493-5; Aeschin. 1.42; Dem. 19.229; Lys. 19.11.

For hunting as an upper-class activity, see Chapter 2. For pederastic homosexuality and equestrian pursuits as the same, see Chapter 3.

This distinctiveness of wealthy citizens extended to their physical appearance. This is clearly reflected in the final scene of Aristophanes' Wasps where a rich son finds it difficult to convince his poor father to give up his tribon ('coarse cloak') and embades ('cheap slippers'), which were the standard attire of the poor in the poet's other plays, for a khlaina or upper-class cloak and a pair of shoes called 'Laconians', which were evidently something of a luxury (1331-58).16 It is no easier for him to get his father to walk in the manner of the wealthy (1168-73).17 In other plays Aristophanes noted how the upper class wore signet rings and could afford warmer clothing (e.g. Eccl. 632; Nub. 332; Ran. 1065-8), while its younger members styled themselves as Spartans by wearing clothes with wool-tassels and keeping their beards untrimmed and their hair long. 18 In the same vein public speakers associated the tribon and embades with poor citizens and recognised the distinctive attire of the wealthy (e.g. Isae. 15.11; Lys. 16.19). Elite Athenians of the fifth century may have spent much less on clothing and tombs than their sixth-century forebears (Ar. Eq. 1325; Thuc. 1.6.3-6), but clearly they could still be recognised visually as a distinct stratum of the citizen body.19

The wealthy also stood out for providing the democracy with its political leaders, as only they were capable of bearing the demands and the dangers of hē dēmagōgia or the leadership of the people (e.g. Ar. Eq. 191–3).²⁰ Athenian politicians had to develop domestic and foreign policies, manage public finances, propose decrees and amendments, argue for their proposals in public forums and carry political contests into the law-courts. Only the well-educated could undertake such complex tasks.²¹ But this book confirms that education in classical Athens depended on the private wealth of individual families.²² Thus it was only the sons of wealthy citizens who could purse the three traditional disciplines of education and take lessons with the sophists in public speaking, which clearly was a vital skill for anyone aspiring to political leadership.²³ As politics took up a great deal of time, politicians also required skholē, which was – as we have seen – a

¹⁶ Aristophanes frequently associates these two items of dress with poor citizens; see, for example, *Eccl.* 633, 847–50; *Plut.* 842–3; *Vesp.* 33, 115–17. For the different clothing of the two social classes, see, for example, Geddes 1987: 311–15; M. C. Miller 2010: 317–21; Rosivach 2001: 127–8.

¹⁷ Bremmer 1993: 18-20.

¹⁸ E.g. Ar. Eq. 579-80; Nub. 14; Vesp. 467-8, 474-6.

¹⁹ For this restraint of conspicuous consumption in the fifth century, see Fisher 1998b: 90–1; Morris 1992: 128–55.

²⁰ Heath 1987: 37; Ober 1989: 112; Pelling 2000: 13-14.

²¹ Ober 1989: 115, 182-91; Robb 1994: 125-56, 183.

²² Chapter 2. ²³ Chapter 3.

preserve of the upper class. Political leaders, finally, were expected to pursue each other in the law-courts on the charges of unconstitutional proposals or acts of treason (e.g. Din. 1.100–1; Dem. 22.66–7; 24.173–4). As a consequence, they faced the constant threat of prosecution for crimes whose punishments were fines of thousands of drachmas, exile or death.²⁴ This danger made *hē dēmagōgia* unattractive to everyone except the extremely confident, the legally powerful and those who were able to withstand the imposition of heavy monetary penalties.²⁵ It was only wealthy individuals who could brave such risks (e.g. Dem. 10.70).

In classical Athens elite membership and tax obligations were closely associated: elite citizens were obliged to pay particular taxes, which, in turn, helped them to prove their membership of the elite.²⁶ Public speakers emphasised that it was the wealthy who undertook liturgies, such as the khorēgia or chorus-sponsorship and the trierarchy, and paid the eisphora whenever it was levied.27 Aristophanes subjected the same observation to comic exaggeration. In his Knights, for example, the caricature of the politician Cleon threatens a poor retailer with liability for this tax (923-6): 'You will be truly punished by me, when you are weighed down by eisphorai; for I am going to register you among the wealthy.' In his Frogs the dead Euripides is accused of teaching rich citizens how to evade the trierarchy by dressing in rags and claiming to be poor men (1062-5). Like archaic aristocrats, wealthy Athenians were under enormous social pressure to perform agatha or benefactions for poor neighbours and the city as a whole.28 Liturgies were widely thought to be a duty of the upper class.²⁹ As individuals who performed liturgies gained political and legal advantages, many regularly volunteered to do so.30 Those who did not could be forced to perform one by a magistrate or the legal procedure of the antidosis or exchange of properties.31 If a citizen who had been assigned a liturgy believed that there was another who was better qualified to do it because of his greater prosperity, he could use the antidosis-procedure

²⁴ Fisher 1998b: 93. ²⁵ Sinclair 1988: 138.

²⁶ Davies 1981: 13; Gabrielsen 1994: 43–4; Hansen 1991: 110; Vartsos 1978: 241–2.

For the wealthy as liturgists in Athenian speeches, see Davies 1971: xx-xxi; 1981: 9–14. As eisphora-payers, see, for example, Antiph. 2.3.8; Dem. 4.7; 10.37; 27.66; Lys. 22.13; 27.9–10; Christ 2007, 54.

²⁸ Gabrielsen 1994: 48–9. For the private acts of charity of the wealthy, see, for example, Dem. 18.268; 19.170; 59.72; Lys. 16.4; 19.59; 31.15; Rosivach 1991: 193–4.

²⁹ E.g. Ar. Lys. 653-4; Dem. 42.22; Lys. 27.10; Christ 2006: 171-84.

³⁰ For these advantages, see Chapter 3.

[&]quot; For this procedure, see Christ 1990.