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Remijsen, S.

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CHAPTER TWO

Sporting Time and Sporting Space

SOFIE REMIJSSEN

INTRODUCTION

Time and space are not just neutral dimensions against which the history of sport in Greek and Roman antiquity unfolded. Time and space are aspects of culture, just like sport. The ways they are experienced, conceptualized, ordered, and given meaning are influenced by and part of what Clifford Geertz defined as “the inherited system of conceptions, expressed in symbolic forms, by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz 1973: 89). Already in the early twentieth century, Émile Durkheim argued that the ways in which we divide, measure, represent, or make value judgments of time and space are social constructs (Durkheim 1912: 14–17).

Although the concept of “social time” was developed further by some sociologists, those few studies have been overshadowed by the enormous wave of scholarship on the social character of space across the humanities from the 1980s onward.¹ In *The Production of Space*, one of the seminal works of this so-called “spatial turn,” Henri Lefebvre argued that space is not merely a physical vessel for the things in space, but also consists of the spatial practice of human actors, of the manifold relations between people and places, and of the abstract conceptualizations and images associated with spaces (Lefebvre 1991: esp. 32–3, 38–40). In the title of his book, space can be read to be both the product and the producer. This bidirectional relation nicely captures how space and time are understood today: not only as shaped by society, but also as shaping society in turn.

This chapter deals with the relations between ancient competitive sports and contemporaneous conceptions of time and space. I define ancient competitive sports as publicly staged physical contests from the time period covered by this volume, held between two or more human competitors who were governed by a (sometimes loose) set of rules, and which ended with the proclamation of one of them as the victor. The most prominent type originating in the Greek world were the so-called *agōnes* (contests), in which not only athletes, but also horse owners and musicians competed against each other. Both gladiatorial combat and chariot-racing in the circus (horse-racing track) can be considered as Roman sports under this broad definition (see Chapter 1 for further discussion of this issue).

The first section of the chapter will deal with time, the second with space. Both sections will start by introducing the typical sporting times and spaces of Classical antiquity, namely the festivals that involved sporting competitions and the architectural types that were developed especially for them. These sections do not aim at a complete overview of their features—which would be impossible within the framework of one chapter—but will address some questions about what the character of these times and spaces meant for the character of the sport, focusing in particular on the relation of sporting competitions with the sacred and with the civic community. The chapter intends to show that sport was culturally significant enough to (re)shape these times and spaces: festival dates were changed to accommodate practical concerns of sport, and—unlike in most other pre-modern cultures—monumental architectural types were specially designed for it. The final parts of each section will look at instances of how sport shaped the experience of time or space more generally, through an examination of the role of *agōnes* in the development of a universal system to structure history and through an examination of the role of sportsmen as key figures in networks that could shorten the distances ideas had to travel in the ancient world.

SPORTING TIME

Religious Festivals as a Time for Competitive Sport

Ancient sports competitions were not events by themselves; in the Greek as well as in the Roman cultural sphere, they constituted parts of festivals. The association between sport and ritual can be traced back to their early history; the earliest literary references to Greek athletic competitions situate them in the context of funerary rites, as seen in the Funeral Games of Patroklos in Homer's *Iliad*. Throughout the Roman Republican period (509–31 BCE), gladiatorial shows were likewise organized in the context of funerary rituals (Hopkins

1983: 3–6). Looking at the whole history of Classical antiquity, however, religious festivals for the gods were the primary contexts in which Greek and Roman games were held.

Sporting events did not just coincide with holidays, as they sometimes do in the modern world; they were an integral part of festivals. The most basic feature of a Greek festival was an offering at the altar of the god. Only some parts of the sacrificial animal were burned; the rest was prepared for a banquet for (parts of) the community. Depending on the scale of the festival, the offering and banquet could be accompanied by a procession, a fair, competitions, various shows, etc. (Slater 2007: 21–4). Roman public holidays were similarly celebrated with a public sacrifice in front of a temple accompanied by a banquet, and often by competitions and shows as well. This means that not all ancient festivals had sporting events, but where they did, it was one of their most prominent features. In Rome, for example, it is clear that the holding of chariot-races characterized a holiday as particularly important (Salzman 1990: 120).

Greek contests were more consistently embedded in what we would call religious festivals compared to Roman games. The vast majority of the Greek *agōnes* were named after a god, an epithet of this god, or an emperor venerated as god; some agonistic festivals were named after local sponsors, but even those festivals were founded to honor a deity. In the Greek world, moreover, people tended to use the name of the festival as *totum pro parte* for the sporting event, whereas Romans more regularly used generic descriptions such as *circenses* (circus races) for sporting events. Many Roman chariot-races were, moreover, not connected to traditional cults. The so-called calendar of 354 CE, the latest and fullest of the known Roman calendars, records 63 public holidays with racing, typically with 24 chariot-races in a day. Although some chariot-races formed part of traditional religious festivals, such as the *ludi Apollinares* (held in July), which were instituted during the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE), the majority of the holidays with racing celebrated ruling or deified emperors, in particular their military victories, birthdays, and accession dates.² However, to insist on a distinction between religious festivals per se and more politically colored public holidays as occasions for sporting events is misleading, as it reflects a modern conception of religion as a separate sphere of life, which is not applicable to antiquity, where religion permeated all aspects of society, and no festival can be seen as strictly secular.

The difference between “religious” and “public” ritual is, as a result, not significant when we look at the quality of sporting time in Classical antiquity. In the words of Geertz, chronological systems such as calendars cut time up into units “not in order to count and total them but to describe and characterize them” (Geertz 1973: 391). Marking a day as a holiday is imbuing it with a specific quality and meaning.

According to Durkheim, the sacred and the profane are the two essential spheres of life that cannot coexist in the same place or unit of time.³ Although his theory is likewise overly dichotomous, Durkheim's idea of "sacred time" is nevertheless useful to point out some characteristics of sporting time in antiquity, as competitive sports took place on holidays when normal business was interrupted.⁴

Choosing a Time in the Liturgical Calendar for Competitive Sport

The observation that sporting time could be treated as sacred time leads to multiple questions that shed light on the nature of ancient sport. Perhaps the most obvious question is: how was the moment in the liturgical calendar for a festival with a sporting component chosen? In a few instances, a relation between a historical battle and its commemorative festival can be established. The Aktia, for instance, a festival which commemorated the victory of Octavian (who later took on the title of Augustus) over Mark Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BCE, started on the 2nd of September, the day of the battle (Pavlogiannis, Albanidis, and Dimitrou 2009: 90). In most cases, however, the question of why a specific date was chosen for a festival is impossible to answer. For contests going back to the Archaic (c. 700–c. 480 BCE) and Classical (c. 480–323 BCE) periods in Greece, the sources are typically exiguous at best. In order to determine the date of an *agōn*, we have to rely on the chance preservation of a literary or epigraphic reference to its date as well as on, often incomplete, reconstructions of local calendars. It is telling that even the debate on the timing of a festival as famous as the Olympics rests primarily on the interpretation of a *scholion* (a marginal note) written by an ancient scholar, perhaps during the Imperial period (31 BCE–476 CE), on the text of a poem by the fifth-century BCE poet Pindar (Scholiast Pindar *Olympian* 3.35; S. Miller 1975).

We are best informed about Athens and Rome, where the calendars are well known. The Athenian Panathenaic festival traditionally took place on the 28th of Hekatombaion (i.e. the month beginning with the new moon before the summer solstice) (Parke 1977: 29, 33), which, according to Callisthenes (fourth century BCE), was seen as the birthday of the goddess Athena (*FGrH* 124 F52). However, as this source about the religious significance of the date is about two centuries later than the first iteration of the Panathenaic games (566 BCE), we cannot determine whether the festival was celebrated on this date because of pre-existing beliefs about its significance or whether this dating of Athena's birthday was inspired by the timing of the festival in her honor.

Official Roman calendars conveniently recorded all public holidays recognized by the state and sometimes specified which holidays were celebrated with games (*ludi*). Here too, however, the rationale behind a date often remains

unknown. The two main festivals of the god Sol, both added after the mid-first century CE, offer a good example (Salzman 1990: 127, 50). It is obvious that the *Natalis Invicti*, the birthday of the invincible Sun, was celebrated on the 25th of December because this was supposed to be the day of the winter solstice.⁵ This holiday was celebrated in the fourth century CE with a day of chariot-racing, and, every four years, with Greek-style sports contests, the *agōn Solis*. It remains unclear, on the other hand, why the grander *ludi Solis* were celebrated in October with three days of theatrical shows followed by chariot-racing on the 22nd of the month.⁶

These few examples of festivals on the supposed birthdays of gods offer good evidence that festivals could be seen as re-actualizations of sacred events, but they cannot prove that the date was generally chosen out of religious considerations. The lack of information on the factors at play at the time of a festival's establishment can be supplemented with the ample evidence for Greek festivals changing not only their name and purpose, but also their timing (Slater 2007: 30–1). For festivals with a sporting component, practical constraints were clearly a major factor in date changes.

One such concern for contests with a large catchment area was finding a date that could be easily communicated to participants using different calendars. Most Greek cities had their own lunisolar calendars with different month names. Luckily, the months all roughly coincided, as throughout the Greek world, the new moon brought a new month. But communities decided independently when it was time to intercalate a thirteenth month to keep the length of the lunar year in balance with the solar year and the passing of the seasons (R. Hannah 2005: 40). This meant that cities had different dates for the beginning of the year and different lengths of the year; as a result, counting the months instead of naming them did not solve the communication issue.

Problems surrounding the date of the Olympics show how this problem was solved. The Olympics were embedded in the calendar of the Greek city-state of Elis, which supervised the operation of the Games. Although the Eleian calendar is imperfectly preserved, we know that the Olympics were held on a full moon (i.e. the middle of a month) in the heat of summer. Texts explain that this full moon would fall on the 16th of either a month named Apollonios or of one named Parthenios, depending on whether or not the Eleians had already intercalated a month into the year in question. This means that the games were mobile within the local liturgical calendar of their organizers, which is extremely odd from a religious point of view, and it is unlikely to represent the situation of the early Archaic period. From a practical point of view, however, it makes sense. When the festival's catchment area widened from the sixth century BCE onwards, the problem of communicating when the games started became acute. According to the best available reconstruction, by the fifth century BCE, if not before, the Olympics took place on the second full moon after the summer

solstice (or the eighth after the winter solstice). In other words, the timing of the Olympics was no longer determined by the local new year, but from an internationally recognizable astronomical marker.⁷ Other observations of astronomical markers, such as the risings of Sirius and Arcturus in the night sky, could offer additional events to inform guests from around the Greek world when it was time to leave for the games (R. Hannah 2012: 86).

From the first century CE onward, the use of such astronomical markers was no longer necessary as the Julian calendar offered an alternative point of comparison—perhaps via the synchronized Egyptian calendar, which was more schematic and widely known due to the Alexandrian influence in the sciences. In this period, however, the spread of *agōnes* throughout the eastern half of the Mediterranean had created new practical concerns: games across the Mediterranean occupied similar positions within the agonistic calendar and had to compete for athletes. As a solution to this problem, some festivals were moved from their traditional date and its (acquired) religious connotations to a more practical one. By the reign of Hadrian (117–138 CE), the Nemean Games, one of the more important sets of athletic contests in Greece, had moved from the late summer to the late fall. The Panathenaia moved from the birthday of Athena in summer to the spring, perhaps to the month Anthesterion, when there was less competition with other agonistic festivals. These two examples are not outliers. A letter of Hadrian found in Alexandria Troas offers evidence for a systematic re-organization of the agonistic calendar under his reign (see Strasser 2010: 612–14, 21).

The Impact of Sport on Time Reckoning

Because festivals mark significant moments within specific years, they offer a structure that helps people to conceptualize the otherwise shapeless mass of time. Their reoccurrence marks out the course of the year, and the unique character of each iteration of a festival marks particular moments in the past. Today holidays still have a role in how we structure our individual past; a childhood memory, for example, can be dated before or after that Christmas when you got your first bike, or coincide with that summer you watched your hero win at the Beijing Olympics.

In the Greek world, moreover, some festivals had a role in the structuring of collective memories because of the absence of more convenient, widely-shared systems of time-reckoning. Most of the systems used by the Greeks to quantify the passing of years were an invention of the fifth century BCE. The standard tool was an uninterrupted list of eponyms, individuals (usually magistrates) whose names were used for identifying a specific year. With the help of such lists, one could count the years between two events. One of the chronographic pioneers of the mid-fifth century BCE, Hellanicus of Lesbos, made use of the list

of Athenian magistrates (archons), but also compiled lists of priestesses of Hera from the city of Argos and of victors in the Spartan Karneia (a festival with a musical competition). Eponyms were primarily used for local history, where the name of the eponymous individual could be remembered or was recorded in connection to an event.

By the end of the fifth century BCE at the latest, Olympic victors had become established as eponyms. Thucydides twice (3.8, 5.49) dates events at Olympic festivals by referring to the victor in the *pankration* (a contest that involved a mixture of boxing and wrestling) in a particular iteration of the Games. His choice of athlete is no coincidence: *pankration* was one of the most beloved, and hence most memorable, events (Shaw 2003: 48–9; Christesen 2007: 8–10). As these were events in recent memory, he may not have needed to consult a list. The first list of Olympic victors was compiled toward the end of the fifth century by a contemporary of Thucydides, the Eleian scholar Hippias, as part of an attempt to systematize the local history of Elis. The widely cited date of 776 BCE for the first Olympics is ultimately based on Hippias' list of Olympic victors, but we must be aware that for the period before the fifth century, Hippias could do no more than make conjectures on the basis of an incomplete and mostly undated epigraphic record and oral traditions. The date of 776 BCE is, therefore, at best an educated guess. Later elaborations of Hippias' list allow us to reconstruct the contents of his work, which has not been preserved (Christesen 2007: 45–160).

The chronographic potential of Hippias' list was rapidly understood outside of Elis, and Olympic victors in the *stadion* (c. 200 meter footrace) eventually became a temporal grid used throughout the Greco-Roman world. One can identify two essential steps in the development from Hippias' local project to the use of Olympic victors as a fundamental chronographic tool. Firstly, in the later fourth century BCE Aristotle created a kind of Olympic epoch, when he added numbers to the names offered by Hippias. By numbering the Olympiads, Aristotle greatly simplified temporal calculations based on Olympiads and helped establish the first Olympiad (dated to 776 BCE in our system of reckoning) as an epoch from which temporal distance was measured. Shortly afterward, Timaeus of Tauromenium compiled a synchronization table of Spartan kings and magistrates (ephors), Athenian archons, Argive priestesses of Hera, and Olympic *stadion* victors, which made it possible to translate dates found in earlier historical works to the Olympiad system (Christesen 2007: 170–3, 277–89; only fragments of the relevant works by Aristotle and Timaeus are preserved). Timaeus' table was later synchronized with Roman consuls.

The preeminence of the Olympics in the area of time-reckoning reflects the importance of this festival as a symbol of Hellenic identity (Christesen 2007: 4–5). Olympic victors were among the few individuals who became known on a regular basis among all Greek communities. As the ancient world was

characterized by a great diversity of local calendars and cults, primarily local rhythms shaped people's conceptualization of time, but these could not be used for historiographical projects with a wider geographical scope. Although the time-reckoning systems of particularly influential cities such as Athens and Sparta were comprehensible to non-locals, a system that transcended political sensitivities was better. The major games were something all Greek city-states (*poleis*) shared in. Even if relatively few people actually attended, the major *agōnes* did not pass unnoticed, because official local delegations were sent out by many Greek communities to attend those *agōnes*, and victors were publicly celebrated when they came home. The Olympics were the most prestigious contest of all, and conveniently the only major contest for which a victor list was created early on. In Late Antiquity, the symbolic relevance of the Olympic victors disappeared, but the Olympiad epoch outlived the games: the seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale* counts to the 352nd Olympiad (628–31 CE).

It should be noted that the Olympics followed, like many other *agōnes*, a quadrennial rhythm. This may at first glance seem impractical for connecting to local systems based on annual eponyms, but it actually offered an additional level of organization that provided more structure and enabled faster calculations. In the historiographical tradition only the Olympic Games mattered, as even non-Olympic years could be expressed in Olympic terms. For example, 70 BCE was not an Olympic year, but Greeks designated it as the third year of the 177th Olympiad, in which Hekatomnos of Miletus won the *stadion*. Moreover, in the perception of the people, each year was characterized by its own contests. 70 BCE was, for example, also a year in which an iteration of the Pythian Games (the second most important athletic contest in the Greek world and held at Delphi every fourth year) took place.

Finally, it should be asked why *stadion* victors, who were often of lesser renown compared to victors in the combat sports, ended up as universal markers of time. The reason for this is practical. Lists of Olympic victors typically cataloged the winners at each Olympiad in the order in which contests were added to the program of events at Olympia. The habit of ordering the names in this way and the conventional dates for when the events were added to the program can be traced back to Hippias. As noted before, these dates are conjectural for the events supposedly added in the eighth and seventh centuries. The *stadion* was, according to Hippias, the oldest discipline and thus the only one for which he listed victors in the first 13 Olympiads. They were therefore all that a scholar such as Timaeus, who used them for purely chronographic purposes, needed to extract from Hippias' list (Christesen 2007: 66).

The role of other *agōnes* in the ancient conceptualization of time is illustrated by an exceptional object, known as the Antikythera mechanism. In 1900, divers discovered a shipwreck off the coast of the island Antikythera in Greece, and many important artifacts were excavated from this ship, which sank c. 70 BCE.

One of them was a kind of analog computer in the form of a bronze clockwork device that traced various astronomical cycles and could in this way predict eclipses. Some of its gears traced cycles that helped regulate daily life, such as the local month names and the biennial and quadrennial cycles of various *agōnes*. The so-called “games dial” on the Antikythera mechanism is divided into four numbered quadrants, each inscribed with two names of contests. Year 1 is, for example, that of the Isthmian Games (held in spring) and of the Olympic Games (held in summer). Four of the names on this dial are not surprising: the quadrennial Olympics and Pythia and the biennial Isthmia and the Nemea were undisputedly the top games, and hence known from the Hellenistic period (323–31 BCE) on as the *periodos*, that is the “cycle.” Of course, the Greeks did not need an elaborate mechanism to tell them the date of these contests, so the purpose of this dial was largely symbolic (Jones 2017: 93). The other two contests on the dial, the Naia at Dodona (the site of an important religious sanctuary in the region of Epirus in northwestern Greece) and the Halieia in Rhodes, present a more interesting case. Although these contests did attract athletes from outside their own region in the Hellenistic period, they were far less prestigious.⁸ Recent studies point out that the mechanism was designed for the latitude of Rhodes but adapted to a different calendar used, among other places, in Epirus (Iversen 2017). The rhythm of these two contests was hence written on the dial because of their importance in the local calendars of the manufacturer and commissioner.

In the Roman world, sport could likewise be a factor in the individual experience of time, but it did not have the same impact on supra-local time reckoning systems. This can be explained both by the far lower societal status of victors (Edwards 1997), which disqualified them as potential time markers, and by the political dominance of the city of Rome, which imposed its own system of time reckoning on others.

SPORTING SPACE

Monumental Sporting Spaces

Because of the link with festivals, many early sporting competitions took place on a suitably flat area in the vicinity of a ritual site, such as an altar, tomb, or temple. The links with this sacred space became looser when a string of adaptations to playing fields led to the development of architectural types designed for specific types of competitions: the stadium, the amphitheater, and the circus.

In Greece, running tracks became permanently recognizable as sporting spaces in the sixth century BCE (Romano 1993). From that time on, stone starting and finish lines delineated the conventional distance of 600 feet (a

stadion), and earthen banks were raised for the spectators where the natural relief did not allow enough viewing points. In the Hellenistic period, the stadium developed fully as an architectural type; features such as mechanical starting gates, a semi-circular embankment or *sphendone* on one of the narrow sides of the track to provide greater visibility for more visitors, and a stone entrance tunnel for athletes to make dramatic entrances became standard features (Dimde 2016b: 266–80; see also Chapter 3 in this volume).

The amphitheater, which served primarily as a venue for gladiatorial combats and staged beast hunts, represented one of the most distinctive types of buildings in the Roman architectural tradition. The oval shape of the amphitheater probably originated from temporary wooden stands erected in the oblong Forum Romanum in Rome that were used to create a seating area for gladiatorial games (Welch 2007: 41). The first stone amphitheaters were constructed in Italy in the first century BCE, and in the first and second centuries CE, the building type spread quickly, especially in the western provinces (Welch 2007: 72–101). Amphitheaters were architecturally far more complex than stadia, as they often had an underground system of rooms and elevators to bring up human and animal participants in the games, and were typically equipped with a cloth awning to provide shade (I. Nielsen 1996: 620).

The circus was likewise a Roman building type; Greek hippodromes were never monumentalized and standardized. Because of the size of the space needed for chariot-races, circuses were often located at some distance from the sanctuary or city. The Circus Maximus in Rome, the prototype for all later circuses, started as a suitably flat area at a cult site for, among other deities, the old Roman god Consus. The Consualia, dedicated to Consus, is the earliest recorded festival with chariot-racing in Rome (Humphrey 1986: 61–2). The circus' location within the Servian walls of the fourth century BCE shows that the area was already reserved for this purpose at a time when the city of Rome was still quite small. Some constructions in the circus, such as wooden starting gates, turning posts, a stone arch, and stone eggs indicating the number of rounds were added in the Early and Middle Republic (509–133 BCE), but the canonical circus shape with two symmetrical semicircular ends only came into being during the time of Caesar and Octavian/Augustus (first century BCE—early first century CE). During that period, a drainage ditch was dug around the race track at the Circus Maximus, a wall surrounding this ditch was erected to keep the spectators safe, uninterrupted rows of seats (in stone close to the track, but still in wood higher up) were added, and the first obelisk was installed on the (presumably still wooden) barrier in the middle of the track. The underground altar of Consus, located within the track, was eventually incorporated into the turning post. The Roman prototype started to be copied in Spain even before the wooden parts of the Circus Maximus were replaced by stone under Trajan (ruled 98–117 CE) (Humphrey 1986: 67–76, 293).

These three building types were designed with a particular type of games in mind, but it should be noted that they were not used exclusively for one type. Although Greek-style athletic contests spread to Italy and Northern Africa, stadia did not, as the existing entertainment buildings sufficed to stage the new games—circuses in particular, but also theaters for the Greek combat sports such as wrestling. Similarly, amphitheaters remained fairly rare in the eastern parts of the Roman world, despite the local popularity of both gladiator games and beast hunts, because existing venues were instead adapted for those sports. Circuses, on the other hand, did spread in the East from the second century on, especially in cities that did not have stadia. However, the most important contests held in these circuses were at that point still Greek-style *agōnes* (Humphrey 1986: 71–2, 439–40; Mann 2011: 73–5).

The architectural spaces for ancient sports were among the largest monumental structures in the ancient landscape. As such they are unparalleled in other pre-modern cultures. In each case, the gradual additions to spaces created to facilitate sport improved the visibility and comfort of an expanding crowd and created a more dramatic setting for sport. Each of the aforementioned architectural types placed a large audience in an inner-facing circle, an architectural shape that allows everyone to see at the same time both the event taking place and the reactions of everyone in the audience (Chwe 2001: 20–1; Williamson 2014: 89). The monumentality of the buildings underlines, in other words, the character of Greek and Roman competitive sports as spectator sports.

Sport and Sacred Space

The first steps in the development of a dedicated sporting architecture happened at cult sites. Nevertheless, one cannot claim that ancient sport took place in “sacred spaces.” Most of the great festivals were held in the middle of a city. For many games in Archaic and Classical Greece, the marketplace (*agora*) doubled as running track; it was the temporal and not the spatial setting that defined the character of this place as an area for sports. From the fourth century BCE on, dedicated stadia were built in the vicinity of gymnasia or theaters (Höcker 1996: 888). By the mid-third century BCE gladiatorial games in Rome were similarly held in the marketplace (the Forum Romanum) and were no longer ritually connected to tombs (Welch 2007: 30–1). Sporting infrastructure was primarily an urban phenomenon, since the creation of monumental sporting architecture was typically only possible in urban centers, where such expensive infrastructure could be used for more than one festival.

Extra-urban sanctuaries did continue to house the most famous Greek contests, but even here, the development of a sporting architecture brought with it a break with sacred space. In Olympia, the earliest formal stadium and

its successor (Stadia I and II, built in the sixth and fifth century BCE, respectively) were not yet separated by a wall from the Altis, the sacred heart of the sanctuary. However, Stadium III, built in the fourth century BCE, was closed off from the Altis (Mallwitz 1972: 121, 80–5; Schilbach 1992), and this was not an exception. During the Hellenistic period, newly-constructed stadia were typically located further from the core of a sanctuary than their predecessors, as increasingly elaborated stadia required more space.

The changing way in which stadia were used, moreover, underlines this gradual break with the temple. During the Classical period (c. 480–323 BCE), stadia typically had starting blocks on either end of the race track out of religious considerations; the final length of the race was run toward the temple so that runners of a *stadion* race (a single length of the track) used the blocks opposite the temple as a starting line, while for the *diaulos* race (two lengths or one lap), the finish line doubled as starting line. From the second century BCE, however, the installation of expensive mechanical starting gates on one side of track meant that there was only one starting line, ending the religious orientation of the race (Valavanis 1999). But, as has been rightly noted by Dimde, these changes were the result of practical concerns, so it would be wrong to assume that this reflects an intentional disconnection of the temple from an activity seen as too profane (Dimde 2016b: 265–6, 77–83).

Even if, because of its historical development, monumental sporting infrastructure did not belong in “sacred space,” these buildings were nevertheless connected to it in multiple ways. Small religious shrines could be found within stadia, amphitheaters, and circuses, though usually not for the deity honored in the festival (who had a grander temple). On the north side of the stadium of Olympia (a sanctuary dedicated to Zeus Olympios), for example, there was an altar to Demeter, and many amphitheaters contained small sanctuaries to Nemesis (I. Nielsen 1996: 620).

A physical link with the sacred space of the god of the festival could, moreover, be recreated by means of a procession, which was a standard feature of ancient festivals. In the case of extra-urban games, these processions could be quite long, as they connected the organizing city with a sanctuary, sometimes located on the edge of its territory. Such processions made a symbolic claim to control over the extra-urban sanctuary and the land between sanctuary and the main urban center of the polity. The Olympic procession, for example, followed a c. 58 km long “sacred road” across the Eleian plain and would have taken most of two days (T. H. Nielsen 2007: 47).

Processions also took place within urban centers. A typical example of this kind of procession is the *pompa circensis*, the procession in Rome that transported divine statues of all the gods from the sacred heart of the city to the circus, where statues “watched” the games from a special block of seating, the *pulvinar*. This ritual was repeated for all the major festivals, and on those days, all heavy

traffic was forbidden on the route. The procession started on the Capitoline hill, which housed an enormous temple for Jupiter and, perhaps connected to this sanctuary, a building for the *tensae* or processional carts that carried the statues to the circus. The person sponsoring and organizing the games headed the procession with a large entourage, including all the performers in the games. The charioteers paraded with their chariots and horses, dressed in the color of the racing team (*factio*) to which they belonged (Latham 2016: 1–5, 232–4).

Given the current popularity of spatial approaches in history, it is not surprising that the itinerary of processions has received considerable scholarly attention. A procession did not necessarily follow the shortest route but rather wended its way through the urban fabric in the course of visiting a series of meaningful locations. The path chosen to go from the temple to the location of the festivities can thus be seen as a spatial narrative that creates an idealized image of the city (Latham 2016: 6). The circus procession in Rome went through the monumental core of the city: from the Capitoline hill to the Forum Romanum and from there along the ancient street known as the Vicus Tuscus to the Forum Boarium and the Circus Maximus. The meaning of this route changed with time. Passing through the Forum Romanum would have constituted a very different experience in the Republic, when it was the political heart of the city, than under the emperors, when its role was more symbolic. Its meaning could, moreover, be adapted by deviations from the route and building activity along the route. In the Imperial period, for example, the path of the *pompa* became dotted with temples for the cult of the emperors and triumphal arches (Latham 2016: 69 (map), 72–3). Throughout its history, however, the procession “strung together some of the most prominent pathways, districts, and landmarks of ancient Rome” and therefore, according to Latham “might have played a part in urban way-finding” (Latham 2016: 236).

Spatial Divisions and Social Hierarchies

Sporting spaces were designed to be able to hold a substantial portion of the population of any given community. During the day or days set apart for the festivals, many people simultaneously ceased work and came together in a stadium, amphitheater, or circus to watch the games. They did not take a seat randomly, however. Everyone was expected to sit in his or her proper place. By limiting the access of specific groups to certain parts of the seating area—or by banning them from entering the building completely—sporting spaces made visible and reinforced social rules and hierarchies. By this means the design and use of sporting spaces contributed to a typical function of festivals, namely the consolidation of society.⁹ Whereas the itinerary of processions reproduced an idealized vision of the space of the city, seating arrangements reproduced an idealized picture of civic society.

Social hierarchies could be visualized by regulating the seating row by row: the closer to the stage, the more important the spectator. The very best seats were those that offered the best viewing point. Already in Classical Greece the right to *proedria* (front row seating at various public gatherings) was granted only to certain functionaries and benefactors to the city, including, for example, Olympic victors (Gauthier 1985: 93–5; Shear 2011: 141). In the Roman Empire, there were regulations for certain rows. The best-known example is the Colosseum in Rome. Here, the first rows were reserved for the senators, the following rows for the equestrians, then followed citizens and freedman, and, in the highest area, furthest away from the arena, all others were allowed. The part of the front rows with the best visibility was monumentalized to house the imperial box (reserved for the emperor and his entourage), both in the Colosseum and the Circus Maximus.¹⁰ In smaller towns, the few residents important enough to serve as senators in Rome shared the front rows with the city councilors. Within this spatial hierarchy, people belonging to the same association often sat together. Inscriptions document, for example, the seating area of professional associations, of civic associations such as the *iuvenes* (Roman clubs of youth of the higher classes), and of religious groups. But membership in the same group was no ground to ignore status regulations. The religious group of the Arval brethren, for example, occupied three different areas within the Colosseum: one for its 12 priests and their families among the senators, one for the lower functionaries such as secretaries more toward the middle, and one for their slaves at the top (Kolendo 1981: 300–4; Rawson 1987).

The regulation of the seating area could also be used to reflect more equal divisions in society. Allocating seats to groups that were seen as being on the same social level could be done by allocating places by *cuneus*, a wedge-shaped division of the seating area separated by stairs, to equal divisions of the population, such as *phylai* (tribes). In the city of Hierapolis in Asia Minor and at other sites, the *cunei* of the theater were specified as being reserved for a specific *phylē* (Kolendo 1981: 304–15). In circuses in the eastern Mediterranean during the early Byzantine period circus (fifth and sixth centuries CE), the population was divided according to their partisanship for the Green and the Blue *factiones*. Although nothing suggests that the whole crowd was divided into a Green and Blue half, the most active partisans of both groups certainly had parallel seating areas near the finish line and across from the imperial box (Safran 1993: 415–17).

All inscriptions documenting highly regulated seating stem from the Imperial period (after 31 BCE), the era in which most monumental sporting infrastructures were constructed. However, the distribution of local coins over the stadium at Nemea has been used to suggest that the spectators of the Nemean Games were already seated according to a coherent system by 300 BCE. Finds of coins

minted by the city of Kleonai (which played a key role in the organization of the Games) center around the seats immediately opposite the entrance through which the athletes appeared on the race track; coins minted by communities near Kleonai cluster on both sides of the Kleonai fan block; and coins from the cities of Sicyon and Corinth (further from Kleonai and historic rivals with it) are concentrated in the western seating area, where the athletes could not be seen arriving through the tunnel (Dimde 2016b: 274). In this example, the allocation of seats embodied not an ideal picture of a civic community, but rather the relations of various cities at an acceptable traveling distance to the sanctuary of Nemea and its games. Unfortunately, we have no similar evidence for the stadium at Olympia, which attracted visitors from much further away. Here, the assembled crowd was simply seen as representative of the Greek world as a whole.¹¹ We do know, however, that women (or at least married women) were excluded from this symbolic representation of Greece. Their exclusion from the Olympic Games was both spatially and temporally defined: they were not allowed beyond the Alpheios river during the Olympic festival.¹²

The people assembled and seated in their proper places in the amphitheater or circus not only reproduced an ideal picture of the city, but also of the whole empire. In the later Imperial period, the circus could even be seen as a representation of the cosmos. This is clearest in the epigram *On Circus Races* (*Latin Anthology* 188) that explains how the 12 starting gates or *carceres* in the Circus Maximus symbolize the months and the signs of the zodiac, the four horses of the four-horse chariot represent the four seasons, the four colors of the circus factions symbolize the four natural elements, the turning posts stand for the rising and setting of celestial bodies, the barrier down the center of the track (*euripus*) symbolizes the ocean, the seven laps in the races represent the seven planets, etc. In this allegorical interpretation of the circus, space and time come together. Despite the often rowdy reality of spectator behavior, the circus became a symbol of the well-ordered world. In the ancient context it indeed made sense for a sporting space used for political communication and demonstrations of imperial power to be associated with cosmic order. This cosmological interpretation of the circus appears first in sources from c. 200 CE, but it appears particularly frequently in texts from the sixth century, which, despite some extremely bloody circus riots, was the heyday of the circus as a political instrument (Meier 2009: 211–23).¹³

Sporting Networks and the Densification of Space

Thus far, we have primarily looked at sporting spaces within their local context, in particular at how they were designed to improve the spectator experience and how they were used to project idealized images of the city. However, sport

affected not only the urban landscape, but also the integration of places within a pan-Mediterranean network. Compared to many other groups in the population, the competitors in ancient sport show a remarkable degree of mobility: athletes and, to a lesser extent, gladiators and charioteers traveled to compete, sometimes over large distances. Hence, they are an ideal subject for social network analysis, an increasingly popular methodology that involves studying individuals as nodes in a network by quantifying and/or evaluating the quality of their ties to each other in order to examine the spread of ideas or knowledge.¹⁴ This approach can help unveil the role of sport in the cultural unification of the ancient world. When several nodes are sharing the same ties, as in a family or a local community, or—to take examples from the world of sport—in a gladiator school, circus faction, or group of athletes training with the same coach, these ties are considered “strong.” It has been shown, however, that “weak” ties, representing sporadic contacts shared by only one or a few individuals, are crucial for the spread of ideas, as these represent the shortcuts between otherwise separate local networks.¹⁵ Traveling competitors formed such weak ties to multiple, sometimes distant, local networks, often through local representatives active in the organization of games. Therefore, they contributed to what we could call a densification of space in the ancient Mediterranean.

Network theory promises great advances in the field of ancient sport, as the many extant inscriptions that catalog victories, combined with inscriptions documenting the movements of official representatives of communities (such as *theoroi*), who attended festivals to participate in cultic rituals, attest to an enormous number of ties between cities. A large-scale study of agonistic networks in the period 300 BCE to 300 CE is currently directed by Onno van Nijf.¹⁶ It aims to show how Hellenistic festival networks helped to accommodate and internalize emergent political realities, and in particular Roman political hegemony, in traditional Greek terms, and how the further expansion of these networks under the emperors contributed to the globalization of civic culture in the Roman empire. In a pilot study, van Nijf and Christina Williamson map, for example, the ties created by the participants of the Amphiaraia festival between Oropos (the site of the festival) and their hometowns. This festival was reorganized as Amphiaraia Rhomaia in the second or early first century BCE and thereupon gained a considerably larger catchment area than its antecedent, at least partially due to strategic use of Roman patronage. Visualizations of the ties show that the Amphiaraia at this time became part of a more integrated network of festivals in Greece and Asia Minor (van Nijf and Williamson 2016: 53–8). In the Imperial period, the gradual global integration of local festival networks was consolidated by the emergence of an internationally operating synod of athletes. In particular the *xystarchs*, representatives of the synod who were present at each athletic festival and who often attended more than one festival

in any given year, structurally embedded weak ties into the entire system (see further Fauconnier 2017: 451–4).

The type of quantitative analysis that is part of the aforementioned project is less feasible for earlier periods. Although the number of contests in the Classical period has recently been shown to be far higher than traditionally assumed, the detailed epigraphic career overviews of athletes as we know them in particular from the Imperial period are not available for the Archaic and Classical periods, and hence the best evidence for reciprocal relationships between cities is missing.¹⁷ There are studies of the catchment area of the major contests, however, and looking at these data from a network perspective can likewise be informative. The rise of Panhellenic sentiments after the Persian wars (480–479 BCE) is a central event in Classical Greek history, but only a limited number of communities actually fought on the Greek side in these wars, so other factors must have contributed to the definition of the Greek world. The network formed around major contests such as the Olympics, and the erection of monuments at this sanctuary by a multitude of actors, definitely played an important role in the unification of the Greek world.¹⁸

In the field of Roman sport, participants in the games also show a high degree of mobility, which could be studied from a spatial perspective. The first appearances of gladiators at sites outside Rome often seem linked to the presence of the Roman army, so these too can be studied in the context of the cultural unification in the Roman world, and they are indeed often studied in the context of an ongoing scholarly debate on Romanization (Mann 2011: 80). The considerable difference between Greek and Roman sport, however, also opens the way for different questions that can be answered by means of a spatial analysis.

Gladiatorial mobility is, for example, linked to trading networks. Unlike athletes, many gladiators did not have control over when they went where. Only highly successful gladiators who became liberated from an attachment to a given gladiatorial troop could rent themselves out independently. The extent of gladiatorial mobility was, moreover, limited by the shorter average duration of their career. Nevertheless, many gladiators traveled considerable distances. Their careers can best be reconstructed from funerary inscriptions, which often record their place of origin, place of death, and occasionally places where they fought (Mann 2011: esp. 68–71, 107–8). If gladiators had moved from peripheral areas to important urban centers, this teaches us about how the slave trade affected this peculiar sport. If a gladiator performed in various cities, this teaches us about the performative network of the gladiatorial troop that owned him, or about his own network if he was independent. The gladiator Phoibos, for example, came from Cyzicus in Asia Minor and fought in Asia, Thrace, Macedon, and Thessaly (*SEG* 32.605; Mann 2011: 188 #14). The order in which these regions are given in the relevant inscription suggests that he was

not spontaneously recruited because of his fame but traveled from city to city in a south-westerly direction, perhaps making contacts along the way.

In Late Antiquity, the endemic character of urban riots linked to sport forms a central problem that could benefit from a spatial approach. Besides famine and disputes over the succession of bishops, rivalry between the two major groups of chariot-racing fans, the Greens and the Blues, was a major factor in the outbreak of such riots (Cameron 1976: 271–96; see further Whitby 2006). The movements of charioteers and other actors from the circus could perhaps even be linked to the spread of violence between chariot-racing fans. Porphyrius, the most famous of the Late-Antique charioteers, originally came from Libya before he spent most of his career in Constantinople, but he also performed in other major circuses. In 507 CE he visited Antioch and played an important role in an outbreak of anti-semitic violence there. A possibly fictional autobiographical account (*The Teaching of Jacob*) of a Jew named Jacob (who ostensibly lived in the first half of the seventh century CE) portrays Jacob as stirring up violence between fans of rival circus factions in Constantinople, Antioch, and Rhodes (Cameron 1976: 150–1). In both instances there seems to be a clear link between the circuses of Constantinople and Antioch. The lack of evidence for factional violence in the large and important city of Alexandria may indicate that activity in that city's circus was not strongly linked to the two others (Whitby 2006: 447–9). Unfortunately, however, there are relatively few sources to reconstruct the careers of circus performers, so a full spatial analysis of their networks may not be feasible as a means to illuminate patterns in the outbreak of violence.

CONCLUSION

Sporting times in the ancient world were strongly influenced by the traditional link between sport and religious ritual: throughout the whole period under discussion in this volume, sporting competitions took place during festivals. During most of this period, these festivals included religious ritual. However, the association with festivals did not put constraints on the organization of competitions. The logistical needs of the contests could be the rationale for choosing a particular date for the whole festival, or for moving the festival to a different date. The choice of location was also determined primarily on practical grounds. In a few rural Panhellenic sanctuaries, there is a clear link to sacred space, but stadia, amphitheatres, and circuses were primarily urban buildings. The monumental design of ancient sporting spaces reflects a different feature of ancient sports, namely their character as spectator sports.

Festivals played an important role in consolidating communities and reinforcing social hierarchies. The design of the sporting infrastructure was significant in that regard. Seating areas could be and were divided into various

wedge-shaped blocks holding equal parts of the community, as well as into ascending rows visualizing the social ladder.

The development of a dedicated infrastructure left a highly visible mark on the ancient cityscape. The processions leading up to them helped shape how this cityscape was experienced. Regular competitions provided, moreover, anchor points in the inherently shapeless mass of time. In a world where local time reckoning systems proliferated, the quadrennial rhythm of the Olympics became a chronological framework that could connect local histories across the Mediterranean. Finally, competitors also connected people across the whole Mediterranean. Because of their mobility, they represented shortcuts between sometimes far removed local networks, and, in this way, they made the Greco-Roman world a smaller one.

NOTES

1. Sorokin and Merton 1937 offer the first systematic discussion of “social time.” For a review of the most important theoretical discussions from the twentieth century, see Nowotny 1992. On the “temporal turn” in the twenty-first century, see Rothauge 2017. On the spatial turn, see Kingston 2010; Kümin and Osborne 2013: 305–10; and Scott 2013.
2. An online edition of the calendar can be found at: http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chronography_of_354_06_calendar.htm. For a commentary on the games, see Salzman 1990: 118–76. The latest edition of this calendar (part of a larger codex referred to as the Chronograph of 354) is Divjak and Wischmeyer 2014: 216 (for December).
3. Durkheim 1912: 49–58, 437–41. Temporal separation is just one of the many ways highlighted by Durkheim in which the domain of the profane is closed off from the sacred. See Zerubavel 1981: 101–5 for an introduction to sacred and profane time.
4. Whereas “sacred” can be a useful concept to understand Greek religion, and in particular the special character of festivals compared to everyday life, “profane” is much more problematic as a category, as there are few aspects of Greek life that religion did not permeate. See, for example, Rudhardt 1957: 7, 20–1 (who also sees “sacred” as problematic because there is no dichotomy in related Greek concepts) or Bremmer 1998: 30, who similarly argues that the Greeks had no term for “profane,” but only different types of “sacred.” Scullion 2005: 112–19 is more positive on the usefulness of a non-absolute distinction between sacred and profane for the Greek world.
5. With the calendar reforms of Caesar and Augustus, the winter solstice was supposed to fall permanently on 25 December. It had in reality already moved to 21 December by the early fourth century, due to the imperfections of this calendar. The 21st remains the day of the winter solstice today as the Gregorian reform restored the situation at the time of the council of Nicea in 325 CE.
6. For the chariot-races, see the Calendar of 354 (n. 2 above). Sol was particularly popular in the fourth century CE, so on both occasions there were more than the

- usual 24 races. *Agōnes* were not annual public holidays and are therefore not mentioned in Roman calendars, which has created considerable confusion regarding the date of the *agōn Solis* (October or December), despite an explicit confirmation of the latter in Julian *Orations* 4.156c. See Remijsen 2015: 133 n. 22.
7. Scholiast Pindar *Olympian* 3.35 attests the alternation between these two months. Scholiast Pindar *Olympian* 3.33 speaks of the eighth month after the winter solstice. Scholars have long been surprised about this mobility, see, for example, Weniger 1905: 19, 22–30, 16–35, who explains it as a way to create a balanced relation with the Heraia festival, which he presumes to be older than the Olympics and to have been held on the first of Parthenios. A standard study on the timing of the Olympics is S. Miller 1975, who argued convincingly that it must have been held during the second full moon after the summer solstice. The reconstruction of R. Hannah 2005: 37–41 (which does not engage with Miller’s reconstruction) treats the change of month merely as a consequence of the use of a local, eight-year intercalation cycle.
 8. For the Naia, see *IAG* 40 (victor from Sicyon, mid-third century BCE), *IAG* 51 (Athenian victor, c. 130 BCE), *I.Priene* 234 (Hellenistic victor from Priene). The Hellenistic Halieia are epigraphically much better attested, but mostly in Rhodian inscriptions celebrating Rhodian victors. *IAG* 50 documents a victor from Kedreai, which was in the Rhodian sphere of influence in Caria (on the mainland of Asia Minor). The geographical spread suggests that the Naia were more prestigious than the Halieia (and not the other way round as suggested by Iversen 2017: 144).
 9. Many studies on this function focus on other aspects, such as the distribution of meat after the sacrifice or on inclusion and order in processions. Zuiderhoek 2017: 94–105 offers a good introduction to this approach.
 10. Elkins 2004 argues that the imperial box was constructed on the north side of the Colosseum.
 11. See, for example, the epigrams in Ebert 1972: #20, 37–8, 56, 59, 65, 67, 69, 73, 81.
 12. Pausanias 5.6.7: “The Eleians have a law that women are cast down from this mountain when they are caught coming to the Olympic festival, or even just crossing the Alpheios, on the days prohibited for them” (trans. S. Remijsen). For further discussion, see Chapter 6 in this volume.
 13. The association between the hippodrome, violence, imperial power, and cosmic order is clearest in John Malalas 7.4–6.
 14. The literature on Social Network Theory is today endless. Well-regarded introductions are Wasserman and Faust 1994 and Yang, Keller, and Zheng 2016. For a brief introduction aimed at ancient historians, with references to further literature, see van Nijf and Williamson 2016: 45.
 15. The standard article on weak ties is Granovetter 1973.
 16. See <http://www.connectedcontests.org>.
 17. For the number of contests in the Classical period, see T. H. Nielsen 2018: 11–168. For the importance of reciprocity in reconstructing a network, see van Nijf and Williamson 2016: 51.
 18. See, for example, the tables in Scanlon 2002: 44, 50, 57, 61, 63 for the geographical distribution of Olympic victors and studies such as T. H. Nielsen 2007 or Scott 2010 for the development of notions of Greekness at Olympia.