

## BOOK REVIEW

*A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity*. Edited by PAUL CHRISTESEN and DONALD G. KYLE. Chichester, Malden, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. Pp. xxi + 656. Hardcover, \$ 195.00. ISBN 978-1-4443-3952-9.

“Over the last 40 years the study of ancient sport and spectacle has grown and matured into a thriving and dynamic subdiscipline of ancient studies”, the editors rightly state (2), so a survey is timely. Both editors have made substantial contributions to the field, and have gathered no fewer than 43 concise contributions, written by international scholars, into a single hefty volume.

The book is organized in two sections (Greece and Rome), which are subdivided into four parallel parts each, dealing with “background”, “places” (for Greece) or “spectacles and sport” (for Rome), “people, settings, ideas”, and “later Greek (or Roman) sport and spectacle”. Unlike some textbooks (and presumably some of our teaching!) it does not concentrate on the Greek Olympics, and the Roman gladiatorial games alone, but covers a much wider area, in subject matter (by using the concept of spectacle, as far as it has “a strong element of physical performance”, 8), in the sources discussed (there are contributions on representations of sport in art, and on the material and epigraphic evidence), in the periods considered (from the Aegean bronze and the Early Iron Age to Constantinople in the 6th century CE), in the geography studied (from the Greek West to the Roman East), and in the topics covered (including the role of religion in sport, and ancient critics of and spectacle, both in the Greek and Roman worlds).

Every individual contribution (with an average of 15 pages) has its own notes, references, and guide to further reading, and can thus be used as recommended reading for the specific aspect covered in it, be it “inscriptions as evidence for Greek sport”, “sport and society in Sparta”, “the role of religion in Greek sport”, “Greek sport in Egypt” or “Etruscan sport”, “female gladiators in the Roman world”, “Roman beast hunts”, “amphitheaters” as well as “venues for spectacle and sport other than amphitheaters”, or “Romanization through spectacle in the Greek East”.

Two chapters present recent “trends in the study” of Greek and Roman sport and spectacle, but as the volume itself enhances this study, it will in due course require a new version to be commissioned by the publisher. For instance, the relevant Roman imperial prose on the topic by the likes of “Lucian, Dio Chryostom, Pausanias, Galen, and Philostratus”, for which the current companion (80) alerts its readers only to recent studies, are likely to require a chapter of their own then which discusses their individual approaches, and their value as historical sources.

The editors’ approach to understand sport and spectacle not as isolated activities but as part of a broader social canvas, informs nearly all contributions, and makes this companion a valuable contribution not just to the ‘subdiscipline’ it explores and presents, but also for the wider social history of the ancient world. On the other hand, the editors have made the reasonable decision not to include surveys on the study of the modern reception of ancient sport, another growing research area, which will deserve a similar companion if and when its study has ‘grown and matured’ as much as the topics covered in this volume.

The book is very well produced, lavishly illustrated with excellent photographs as well as newly drawn, and very clear maps and plans, and a fully and helpful index. It is a fitting tribute that the volume is dedicated to David C. Young (1937-2013), one of the foremost scholars on a number topics covered in this excellent companion volume.

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