

Dietrich Ramba:

Determination of the Poignant Characteristics of Sports in the Greco-Roman Antiquity

Summary:

This dissertation emphasizes and determines the poignant characteristics of Greco-Roman sports.

Our work is primarily based on the sources of classical philology and archaeology. The period we examine is ranging from the beginning to the abolition of the Olympic Games (776 B.C. to A.D. 393).

Formally we split the work in two parts: Part one deals with the generally accepted canon of sports of the Greek-Roman world, and we use our knowledge of part one for the determination of the characteristics in part two.

We open part one with the athletics (wrestling, boxing, *pancration*, jump, javelin and discus, running events and *pentathlon*), followed by ball games, aquatics, weight-lifting and archery. We also pay attention to the munera (gladiatorial combats and wild beast shows). Finally we concern with chariot-racing, divided in the *hippic Agones* of the Greeks and the Roman *Iudi circenses*.

In the second part we determine and describe the seven characteristics (public, professionalism, chances, achievement, numbers, titles, records) of sports in the ancient Greco-Roman world and makes a comparison to the seven characteristics (secularism, equality of opportunity, specialization, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification, the quest for records) given by A. GUTTMANN (*From Ritual to Record*, 1978)

Sports meetings were an important part of public life. Masses of people came together (e. g. Olympia, Colosseum), for entertainment, talk, commercial means and political intents.

From the beginning sporting competition was seen as a profession. A high expenditure of time and personal was necessary for success. The professionals were often on tour, and most of them were organized in associations.

Equality of chances was of uncommon importance in ancient sports. The participants were divided into age-categories, opponents were drawn. Fixed rules and qualified referees took care for a high level of equal chances for all.

The Greco-Roman world was an achievement-oriented society. Especially in sports people measured, rated and compared.

Figures were of great importance in all fields of antique life. In sports they were the dominant medium to present achievements and victories.

The athletes struggled not only for victories, but especially for titles. Victories in eminent meetings were combined with material or financial profits and the acquisition of privileges.

All ancient athletes were keen on records, they even looked for combinations of victories or established curious combinations of attainments to be "the one and only".

We have concluded, that sports in the Greek-Roman antiquity were formed by the seven above-named characteristics.