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# Beyond the Big Four

Local Games in Ancient Greek Athletic Culture



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S U P P L E M E N  
T S O N L I N E

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Münster, Germany ▪ 2024

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# **Beyond the Big Four**

Local Games in Ancient  
Greek Athletic Culture

Edited by Sebastian Scharff

Teiresias Supplements Online, Volume 4

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## Preface

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In the course of the sixth century BC, the festivals of Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea canonically emerged as the four most important Greek athletic contests. Beyond these games, however, there was a large number of local contests that shaped the agonistic world of Greek city-states. Focusing on local, small-scale contests and the significance these festivals had for their organizing communities, this volume explores the aspect of competitions in the shadow of the big four. Most eminently, the book explains how the contests served as occasions on which a local identity was articulated; in this vein of inquiry, the assembled papers intersect with recent research on localism in ancient Greece. The authors shed light on all aspects of local athletic festivals, including the analysis of local disciplines, prizes, and rules. They also consider local catchment areas and ask what the games meant for each community: why and when the games were founded, how many athletes participated, and what role local sports heroes played in the political communities that put on the show.

*Beyond the Big Four* invited specialists of ancient athletics and/or experts in local/regional Greek studies to explore different athletic festivals by starting from the same set of guiding questions. The volume is a shared attempt at revealing local worlds of Greek contests by investigating the various contexts in which Greek games acquired a particular local meaning. In doing so, it goes beyond the question of ascribed status (e.g., ‘sacred crown games’) and asks whether local games can be understood as an expression of different local approaches to athletics. Behind this question is the idea that, despite the existence of a similar set of disciplines and events throughout the Greek world, there were also important idiosyncracies, or in other words: ‘agonistic cultures’ that differed from place to place. In order to reveal those differences, the volume starts from the assumption that games have a history and that their status changed over time. Thus it adapts a flexible approach and includes games which sometimes exceeded a strictly local catchment area in some periods of their history.

My heartfelt thanks go to Hans Beck (Münster) who saw the genesis of this volume through with great interest and a very positive spirit since the beginnings of the project in Montreal. Emilia Bachmann and Marvin Prüfig (Münster) helped with the editorial layout.

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