CLAS 0210
Sport in the Ancient Greek World

- Class 2

- Friday 29 January

- The ancient games as ritual and politics

Gymnasion (Gymnasium)

The Gymnasion at Olympia

King Agesilaos
(4th c. BC)

Pausanias
(2nd c. AD)

Stadion
(Latin: Stadium)

Stadium at Delphi

- gymnos — *naked, nude*
- gymnastes — *trainer in nude exercises, coach*
- athletes — *professional athlete*
- athlon — *a prize given at a contest*
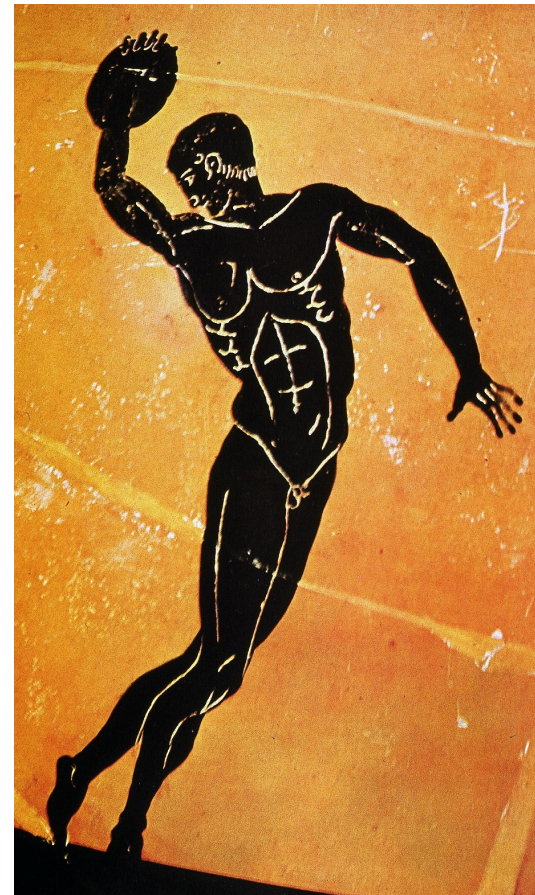- athlos (pl. athla) — *contest (games)*

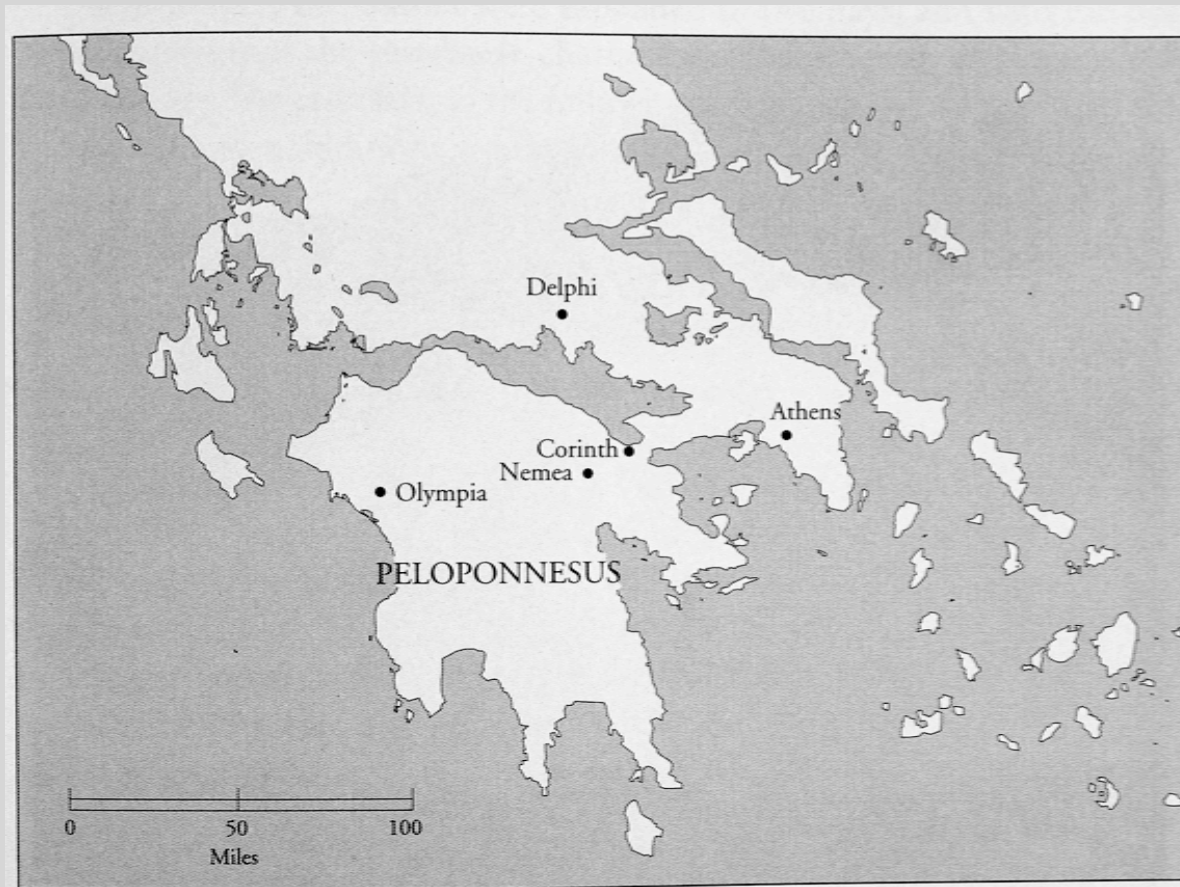For all technical terms, consult Stephen G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics*, Glossary (p. 241).

Long jump

Discus

Sites of the major Greek Games

Map 6
Sites of major Greek games. The Olympics were held at Olympia; the Pythian Games at Delphi; the Isthmian Games near Corinth at Isthmia; and the Nemean Games at Nemea. Together, these four constituted the ancient "circuit" of Greek athletic festivals. The most important local games were held at Athens during the Pan-athenaic festival.
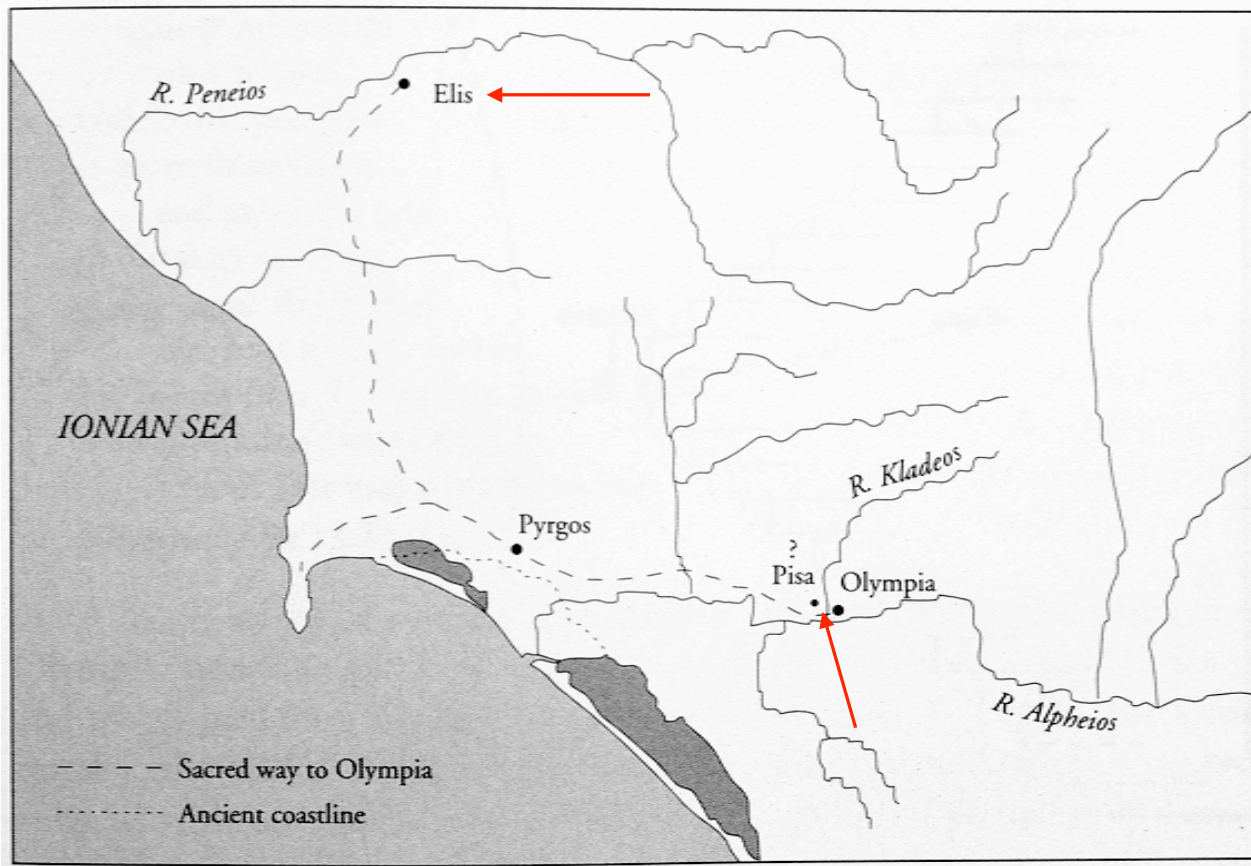
Inscriptions

Excavations

Vase paintings

Location of Olympia, Elis, River Alpheios

Map 9
The athletes' route from Elis to Olympia. Two days before the Olympics began, the judges, athletes, and their trainers began their 36-mile journey along the sacred way to Olympia.

The Ancient Olympics: Fact or Myth?

Question:

We've just celebrated the 28th Olympiad of the modern Games, inaugurated 108 years ago. For how many years did the ancient Games run?

A: For about 1,200 years, beginning in 776 BC

Your guesses…

- 60
- 80
- 200 x 4
- 250 x 3
- 300
- 400 x 4
- 500
- 700
- 800
- 1,000
- 1,200 x 2
- 1,500

The Ancient Olympics: Fact or Myth?
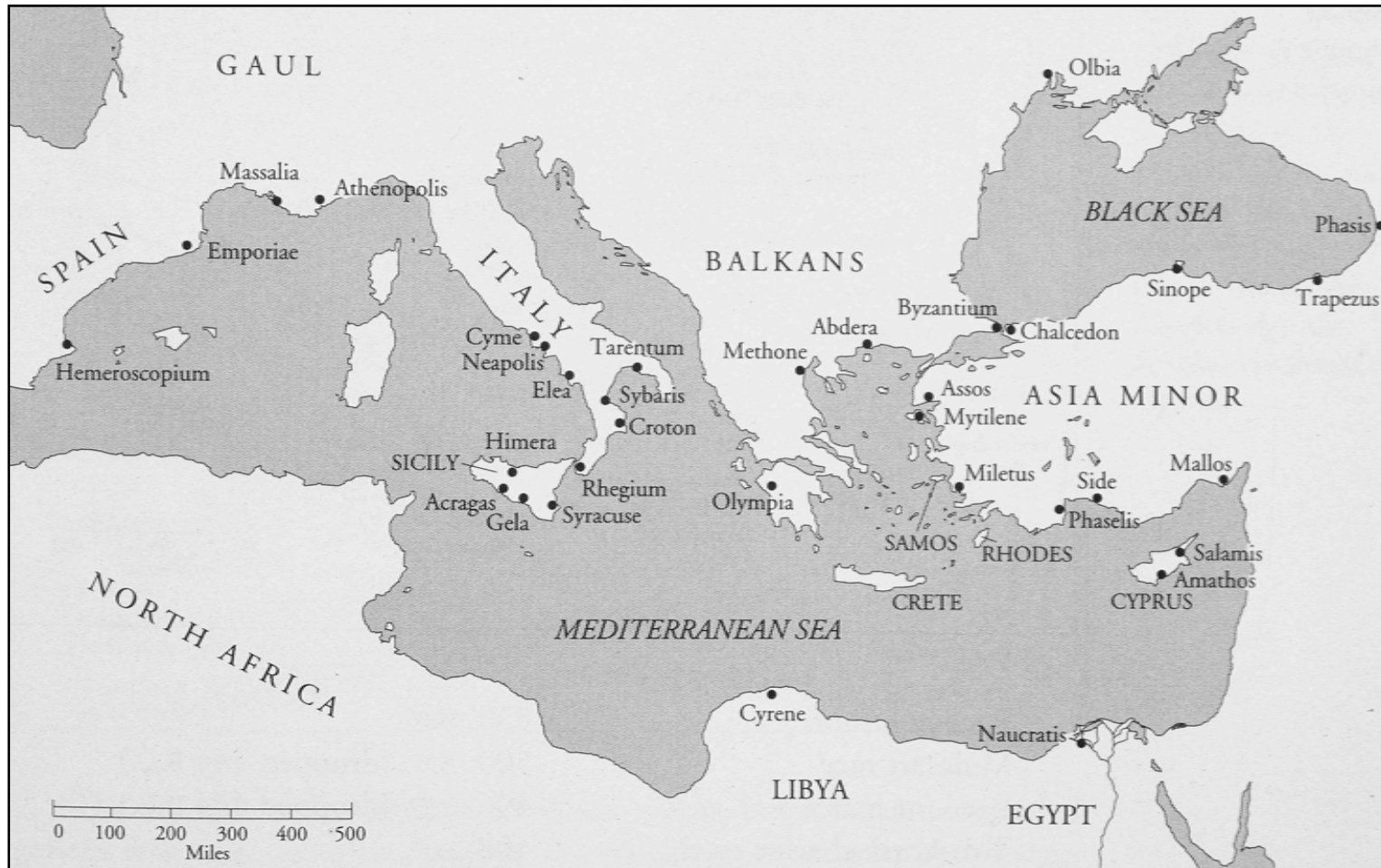
Question:

War caused the cancellation of the modern Olympics in 1916, 1940, and 1944. How often were the Games cancelled in antiquity?

A: Never — they were held every fourth summer for over 1,000 years, without a break.

Greek colonies outside Greece that sent athletes to Olympia in the 5th century BC

The Ancient Olympics: Fact or Myth?

Question

Then, as now, the Olympic Games were open to competitors of all nations and races. True or false?

A: False. The Games were multinational, but panhellenic ("all-Greek"), rather than truly international

The Ancient Olympics: Fact or Myth?

Question

Both men and women competed in the ancient Olympic Games.
True or false?

A: False.
Only free, male
Greeks could take part

Terms to remember

- Hellas (Greece); Hellenes (Greeks); Panhellenic

- "Crown" (stephanitic) games (stephanos = crown)

- Olympia, Delphi, Nemea, Isthmia, with crowns of:

- Olive, laurel, wild celery, pine

- The circuit of games = the periodos

- The 4-year cycle of Olympic Games = an Olympiad

What was *not* at the ancient Olympic Games?

✖ No winter events (introduced only in 1924)

✖ No water sports (swimming, diving, sailing…)

✖ No ball sports

✖ No team sports of any kind

✖ No events for women

✖ No gold, silver, and bronze medals

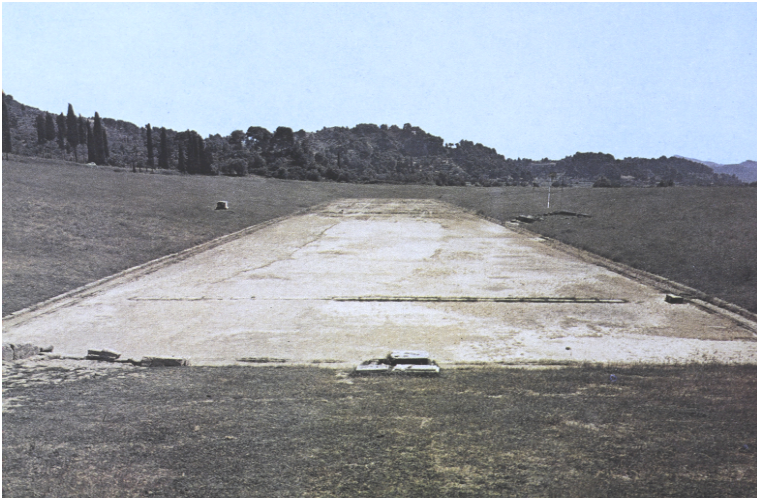✖ No prizes for coming 2nd or 3rd

✖ No marathon race

Mount Olympus

The Greeks did all these things… just not at the Olympic Games

Stadia for footraces

Olympia

Delphi

- Stadion
- = a unit of length, 600 ancient feet
- = a footrace that was 1 stadion in length
- = the parallel-sided place for running the "stade race" (modern stadium, although these are generally oval in shape)

Hoplitodromos
(hoplite race)

- Hoplites = foot soldier

The Ancient Olympics: Fact or Myth?

Question

The Olympic Marathon race was introduced to memorialize a famous runner at the Battle of Marathon, in 490 BC

A.: False. The marathon is an entirely modern race, first held at the 1896 Olympic Games

1896 marathon →

VENUE 13
PARNITHA MOUNTAIN BIKE VENUE

VENUE 12
SCHINIAS ROWING CENTER

VENUE 14
ANO LIOSSIA HALL

VENUE 1
OLYMPIC VILLAGE

VENUE 2
OLYMPIC SPORTS COMPLEX

VENUE 3
PERISTERI BOXING HALL

VENUE 4
GALATSI OLYMPIC HALL

VENUE 6
NIKAIA WEIGHTLIFTING HALL

VENUE 5
GOUDI OLYMPIC COMPLEX

VENUE 7
FALIRO COASTAL ZONE

VENUE 11
MARKO
CENTE

VENUE 8
HELLINIKO OLYMPIC COMPLEX

VENUE 10
MARKOPOULO SHO

VENUE 9
VOULIAGMENI OLYMPIC CENTER

Marathon

Athens

The Ancient Olympics: Fact or Myth?

Question

The ancient Games always began with the lighting of the sacred Olympic flame.

A.: False.
The torch relay to the Games and the lighting of the Olympic flame is a creation of the "Nazi" Berlin games of 1936

Torch relay races

member of winning team

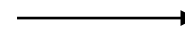- Nike (victory)

Altar

The riddle of the rings

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, creator of the modern games

- Leni Riefenstahl, director of the 1936 movie *Olympia*

The fake 'ancient' rings, 1936

FACKELSTAFFELLAUF OLYMPIA-BERLIN

block with rings

starting line at Delphi