

CLAS 0210

Sport in the Ancient Greek World

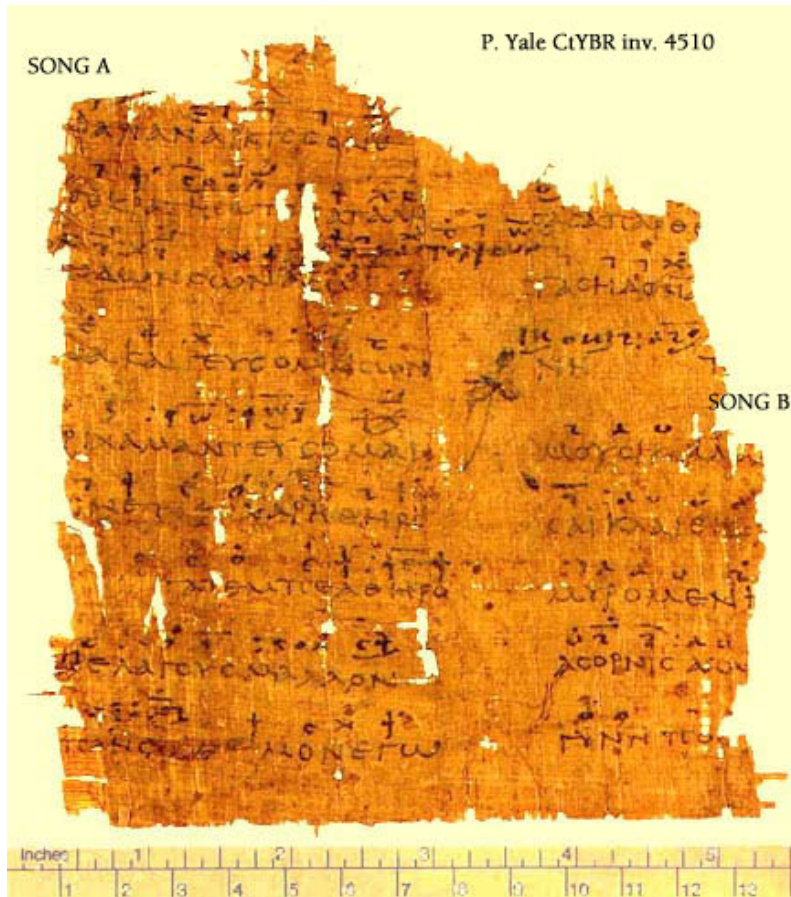


Class 14

Friday 26 February

Athletic events III:

The Combat Sports



2nd century A.D. song sheet,
on papyrus

Ancient Greek Music



2nd Hymn to Apollo, from Delphi

Instruments



Phorminx



Lyra

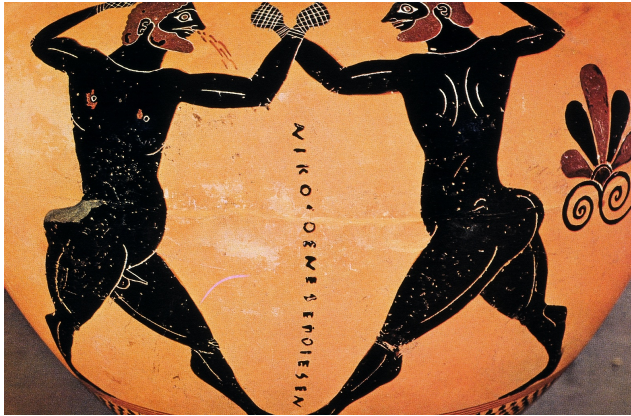


Aulos



WRESTLING

(*pale*)



BOXING

(*pyx*)



ALL-IN WRESTLING

(*pankration*)

Boxing (pyx)

- No classes for competitors of different weights
- Only a division between events for “boys” and “men”
- A “boy” (at Olympia) = between 17 and 20
- “Youth” events introduced in 4th century BC



Boxing (pyx)

- No rulebook has survived
- grappling or clinching (as in wrestling) **not allowed**
- blows with side or heel of hand **allowed**
- **not illegal** to hit a man when he was down

judge with forked rod



hitting a man while down



- A very low blow!



- Boxers clinching:
judge intervenes to
separate them



Boxing boys from Thera (16th c. BC)



Geometric (8th c. BC) boxers

Rules of boxing at Olympia supposedly first drawn up by
Onomastus of Smyrna
(1st winner in boxing at Olympia, 688 BC)

Differences from modern boxing



- Contest not divided into rounds
- Ended by knockout or hand raised in submission



- Use of bound-on leather straps or thongs (himantes), rather than gloves





Himantes (boxing thongs)

“ants”
sphairai (“balls”) =
padded gloves used for practice



Early form

4th century BC

Roman

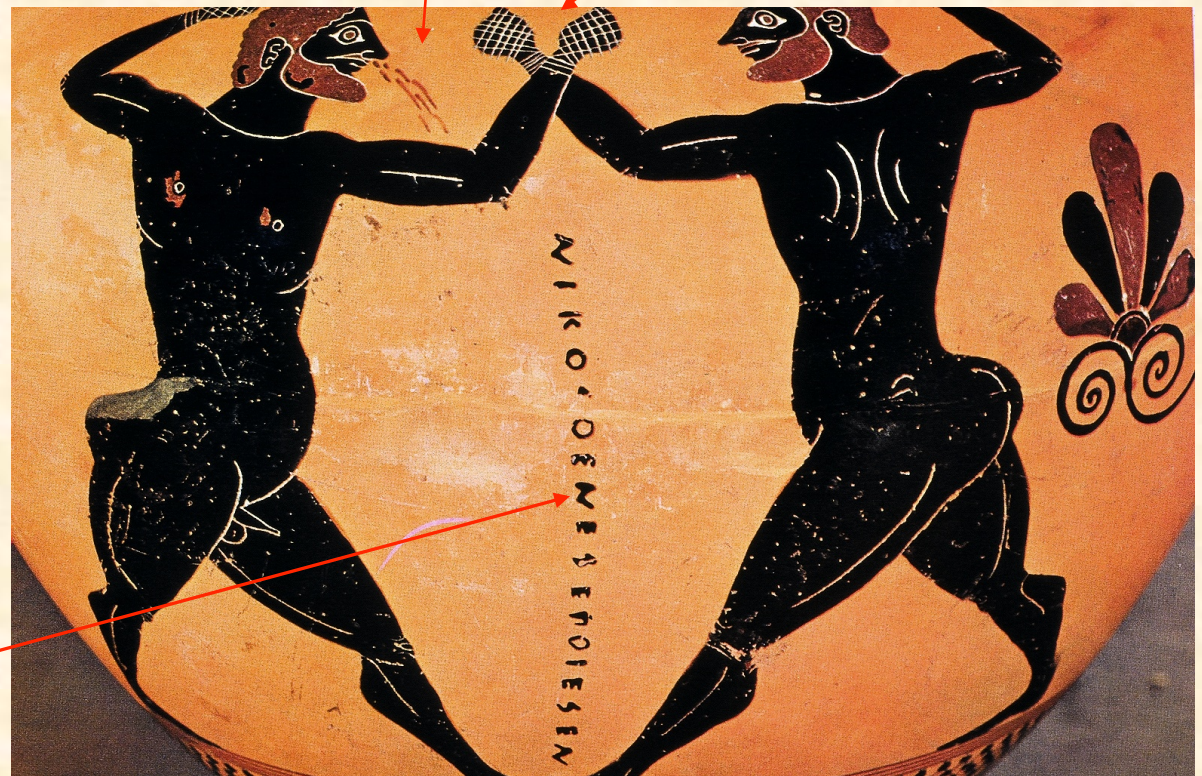


Black-figure amphora by Nikosthenes



bloody nose

himantes



"Nikosthenes made me"

A boxing death at the Nemean Games

- *Arete* # 38 = Pausanias Book 8, Ch. 40
- Damoxenos vs. Kreugas
- Contests in which neither opponent conceded were decided by taking turns to land a punch, without any defense

Wrestling (*pale*)

- The event athletes themselves preferred
- **palaistra** (wrestling school or club) very common in most Greek cities
- wrestling for fun rather like a round of golf with friends
- Greek literature full of metaphors drawn from wrestling



- **palaistra**: wrestling school or club
- **akoniti**: “dustless” victory (i.e., without a fight)
- **orthia pale**: 3 falls to the winner (“upright wrestling”)
- **Stlengis** or **strigil** to remove oil/dust





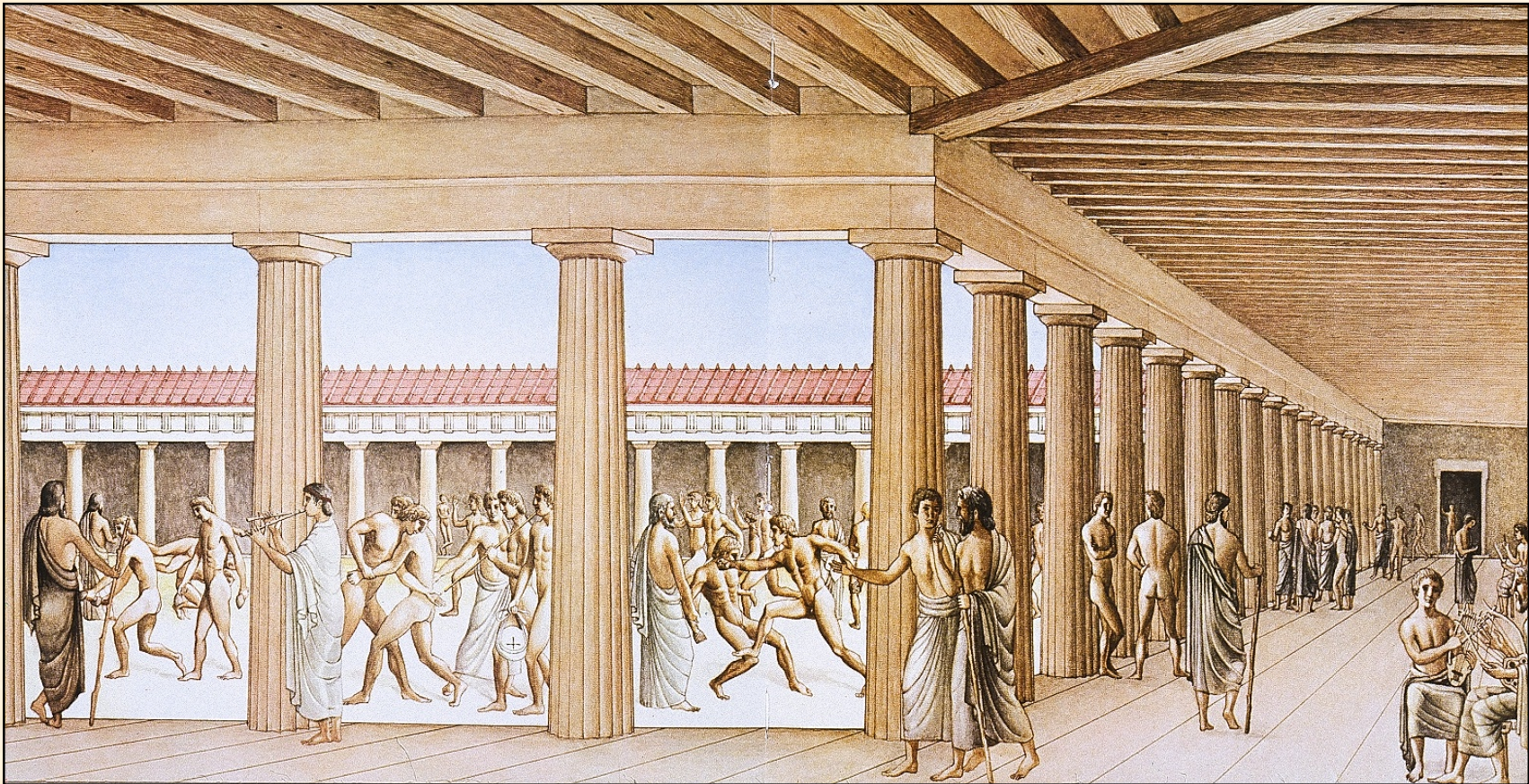




The “flying mare”



The local palaestra



All-in wrestling (*pankration*)

- not simply brutal fighting
- next after chariot-racing, **Pindar** wrote most victory poems for this
- Pindar attributes to it all the qualities of *arete*, symbolizing the aristocratic athletic ideal
- pankration seems to be a mixture of boxing and ground wrestling, in which hitting with the fist was allowed





- conceding defeat





- kicking and hitting allowed

Illegalities



biting



eye-gouging



- *A final story:*
- Arrhachion, who dies in the moment of victory in the pankration
- *Arete ## 44-45*

Some terms and names to remember:

Boxing (**pyx**), wrestling (**pale**), and **pankration**

Onomastus of Smyrna (1st winner in boxing at Olympia, 688 BC)

Himantes (things wrapped around knuckles, wrist, and forearm)

Sphairai (padded boxing gloves used in practice)

Arete #38, on **Kreugas** at the Nemean Games

Palaistra (wrestling school or club)

Akoniti (“dustless” — i.e., victory without a fight)

Orthia pale (“upright wrestling”)

Strigil (Latin) or **stlengis** (Greek) — implement for scraping off oil and dust

Arrhachion the pankratiast (see *Arete* #44 and 45)