

NIGEL B. CROWTHER

THE SEBASTAN GAMES IN NAPLES (IVOL. 56)

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Olympic Inscription 56 is an important document for the organization of the Sebastan festival in Naples. The following are lines 10-15 on age-categories, allowances and prizes as they appear in the edition of Dittenberger:¹

- 10 [desunt fere 20 litt. μὴ ἐξέστω δὲ νεώτερον μετέχειν τοῦ ἀγῶνος τῶν
Ἰταλικῶν ἰσο]λυμπίων ἢ ἑπτακαί
11 [δ]εκέτη· [καὶ μετεχέτω] α[ν ἀπὸ μὲν ἑπτακαίδεκα μέχρι τῆς εἴκοσι
ἔτων ἡλικίας παίδων ἀθλήσεως], μετὰ δὲ ταύτην ἀν
12 [δ]ρῶν. περὶ ἐπά[θλων]· ἄθλα διδόσθω το[ῖς νικῶσι desunt fere 30 litt.
ὀ]ψώνιον δὲ χορηγ(ε)ίσιθω
13 [τ]οῖς ἀθληταῖς [πρὸ ἡμερῶν [τ]ῆς πανηγύρεως λ', ὥστε πᾶσι μὲν τοῖς
ἀγωνιουμένοις δοθῆναι πρὸ ἡμερῶν λ' τῆς
14 [πανηγύρεως [δραχ]μ[ῆ]ν ἑκάστης ἡμέρας, ἀπὸ δὲ πεντεκαίδεκάτης
ἡμέρας τοῖς μὲν παισὶν] δρ(αχμάς) β' (ἡμίσι), τοῖς δὲ ἀνδρά
15 [σι]ν γ'. τιμαὶ [δὲ κ]ατὰ [τ]ὴν Καίσαρος ἐπ[ιταγήν τοῖς μὲν παισὶν ...
ἰνος στέφανος, τοῖς δὲ ἀνδρ]άσι σταχύινος·

Translation:

[Let no one younger] than the seventeenth [(year) take part in the contest of the Iso]lympic [Italian games; let those who are aged seventeen to twenty (i.e. seventeen to nineteen inclusive) take part in boys' events], after that in the men's events. Concerning prizes. Let prizes be given to the victors ... and let an allowance be provided for the athletes [thirty] days before the fest[ival so that to all the contestants there be giv]en a [drach]m[a] each day thirty days before the [fest]ival, [and from the fifteenth day for the boys] two and a half drachmas, and for the men three drachmas. Honours according to Caesar's pr[ecept for the boys a crown of ..., for the me]n a crown of wheat.

Dittenberger restores lines 10-12 on the assumption that the age-category for boys at the Sebasta followed that for boys as Olympia, which he believes was seventeen to nineteen inclusive. As evidence that Olympic boyhood was seventeen to nineteen, Dittenberger cites the reference to παῖδες Ὀλυμπικοί at the Romaia in Cos (Syll.³ 1066). However, since this is the only reference to παῖδες Ὀλυμπικοί, and the age-limits at the Romaia cannot be determined with any accuracy, this evidence must be considered doubtful.² On the contrary, the testimony of Pausanias shows that the upper age-limit for boys at Olympia was

¹ W.Dittenberger, K.Purgold, Die Inschriften von Olympia (Berlin 1896). See also G.Buchner (et al.), "Fonti per la storia di Napoli antica," PP 7 (1952) 406-07, R.Merkelbach, "Zu der Festordnung für die Sebasta in Neapel," ZPE 15 (1974) 193.

² See L.Moretti, Iscrizioni agonistiche greche (Roma 1953) 159 on παῖδες Ὀλυμπικοί.

seventeen. Pausanias (6.14.2) relates that Nikasylos of Rhodes was not allowed to compete in boys' wrestling at Olympia, since he was eighteen years old, but had to compete in the men's event. Pausanias (6.2.10-11) records the victory at Olympia in the boys' stade of Damiskos of Messene at age twelve, and does not remark on any technical irregularity.³ We may also observe that Pausanias was writing in the second century A.D., the probable date of the Sebastan inscription.⁴

We should also consider to what extent the Sebasta can be considered Isolympic anyway, for this inscription shows clearly that the festival differed from its Olympic model in events.⁵ It has been shown on the analogy of other "iso"-festivals that a festival can be considered equal to its model in age-limits only when the term ἡλικία is expressly mentioned.⁶ It is unknown whether this was the case with the Sebasta; but, since the age-categories are set out in this inscription seemingly in some detail, this may suggest that they were not identical to those of Olympia in all respects.

On the assumption that the Sebasta did follow Olympic ages for boys, and since there is a reference to the age of seventeen in the text, I propose the following restoration for lines 10-11:

[μὴ ἐξέτω δὲ πρεσβύτερον μετέχειν τοῦ ἀγῶνος τῶν Ἰταλικῶν Ἴκο]λυμπίων ἢ
ἑπτακαὶ[δ]εκέτη·

This changes only the νεώτερον of Dittenberger to πρεσβύτερον and makes "seventeenth" refer to the upper rather than the lower limit for boys.

If there were only two age-categories at the Sebasta at this time, as at Olympia, then we must assume that the missing part of line 11 of the inscription elaborated on the regulations for παῖδες.

On the other hand, since it is known that there was a third age-category, ἀγένειοι, at the Sebasta at approximately this period,⁷ it is possible that three age-categories were accommodated in the inscription. I propose the following restoration for line 11:⁸

[καὶ μετεχῶ]σα[ν ἀπὸ ὀκτωκαίδεκα μέχρι τῆς εἴκοσι ἐτῶν ἡλικίας ἀγενείων
κρίσεως]⁹

Dittenberger admits that ἀγένειοι competed at the Sebasta, but believes that this category was added after the time of the inscription. He suggests that lines 14-15 which refer to

³For more detailed arguments that boys at Olympia were excluded at age eighteen, see my article "The Age-Category of Boys at Olympia," *Phoenix*, 42.4 (1988) 304-08.

⁴This is the date for the inscription given by the editors of SEG 11.200, 14.349.

⁵See, for example, the musical and dramatic competitions referred to at the end of the inscription. Cf. R.M.Geer, "The Greek Games at Naples," *TAPA* 66 (1935) 208-21.

⁶Cf. H.Pomtow, "Delphische Neufunde," *Klio* 14 (1915) 278 n.3, T.Klee, *Zur Geschichte der gymnischen Agone an griechischen Festen* (Leipzig-Berlin 1918) 49-51.

⁷Cf. IG 14.755 add. d, also CIG 5804 (restored).

⁸These are possible ages for the ἀγένειοι, whose ages varied from festival to festival depending on the age of the παῖδες. See Klee, *op.cit.*, 46-48 for "traditional" ages.

⁹I incorporate here κρίσεως as suggested by Merkelbach (above n.1).

allowances specifically exclude this category because of the problem of spacing. Yet the following restoration would have παῖδες *and* ἀγένειοι receiving the same allowance of two and a half drachmas:

ἡμέ[ρα]ς, πρὸ δὲ ἡμερῶν ἰέ τοῖς μὲν παισὶ καὶ ἀγενείοις] δρ(αχμὰς) β' (ἡμις),
τοῖς δὲ ἀνδρά[σι]ν γ' .¹⁰

This restoration follows the approximate spacing of Dittenberger and has the advantage of keeping the same grammatical construction of the earlier part of the sentence.¹¹

Dittenberger restores line 15 on the assumption that boys and men received a different crown: men a crown of wheat, boys an unknown crown. Yet it is highly likely on the analogy of other Crown Games, where there is no evidence for different crowns for different age-groups,¹² that all divisions at the Sebasta received a crown of wheat. Hence line 15 may have read:

ἐπ[ι]ταγὴν στέφανος τοῖς παισὶ καὶ ἀγενείοις καὶ ἀνδρ]άσι σταχύινος .¹³

In conclusion, I propose this text for lines 10-15:

- 10 [desunt fere 20 litt. μὴ ἐξέστω δὲ πρεσβύτερον μετέχειν τοῦ ἀγῶνος τῶν
Ἰταλικῶν Ἰσολυμπίων ἢ ἑπτακαί
- 11 [δ]εκέτη· [καὶ μετεχέτω]α[ν ἀπὸ ὀκτωκαίδεκα μέχρι τῆς εἴκοσι
ἐτῶν ἡλικίας ἀγενείων κρίσεως], μετὰ δὲ ταύτην ἀν
- 12 [δ]ρῶν. περὶ ἐπά[θλ]ων· ἄθλα διδώσθω το[ῖς νικῶσι desunt fere 30 litt.
ὀ]ψώνιον δὲ χορηγ(ε)ίςθω
- 13 [τ]οῖς ἀθληταῖς [πρ]ὸ ἡμερῶν [τ]ῆς πανηγύρεως λ', ὥστε πᾶσι μὲν τοῖς
ἀγωνιουμένοις δοθῆ[ν]αι πρὸ ἡμερῶν λ' τῆς
- 14 [πανη]γύρεως [δραχ]μ[ῆ]ν ἑκάστης ἡμέ[ρα]ς, πρὸ δὲ ἡμερῶν ἰέ τοῖς
μὲν παισὶ καὶ ἀγενείοις] δρ(αχμὰς) β' (ἡμις), τοῖς δὲ ἀνδρά
- 15 [σι]ν γ' . τιμαὶ [δὲ κ]ατὰ [τ]ῆν Καίσαρος ἐπ[ι]ταγὴν στέφανος τοῖς
παισὶ καὶ ἀγενείοις καὶ ἀνδρ]άσι σταχύινος·

London, Canada

Nigel B.Crowther

¹⁰ I follow here Dittenberger's suggestion of fifteen days, even though this is entirely conjectural. The number of days may possibly have been ten. Perhaps this line referred to an allowance during the festival and may have read: ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀγῶνι τοῖς μὲν παισὶ ...

¹¹ This is the only reference to an allowance in money for athletes in training at a festival. For an allowance in oil at Sparta, see IG 5.1.20,5-7; cf. L.Robert, "Catalogue agonistique des Romaia de Xanthos," RA (1978) 284.

¹² See H.W.Pleket, "Games, Prizes, Athletes and Ideology," Stadion 1 (1975) 54-71.

¹³ I am indebted here and elsewhere to the suggestions of Professor A.R.Littlewood, with whom I had many useful discussions. After this article was submitted, there has appeared the note of Frisch by coincidence in the same journal 75(1988) who makes a similar suggestion for a third age-category at the Sebasta (p.181).