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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:

10 [desunt fere 20 litt. μη έξετω δε νεώτερον μετέχειν τού ἄγωνος τῶν ἱπτακαι]
11 [δ]εκέτη·[και μετεχέτω·]οι[ν ἀπό μὲν ἐπταθαλῆεικα μέχρι τῆς εὐκοσίν ἐτῶν ἡλικίας παιδὸν ἀθλητέωκ], μετά δὲ ταύτην ἄν
12 [δ]ρῶν. περὶ ἐπά·[θλ.αν· ἀθλα διδόκεθο το[ῖς νικώκι desunt fere 30 lītt. ὁ]ψόνιον δὲ χορηγ(ε)ίτεῳ
14 [πανηγυρίος δραχμ]ή[ν ἐκάστης ἡμέ]ρας, ἀπὸ δὲ πεντεκαῖδεκάτης ἡμέρας τοῖς μὲν παιείν] δρ(αχμ)άς β’ (ημικυ), τοῖς δὲ ἄνθρα
15 [κ]ινοὶ τιμαὶ [δὲ κατα] [τ]ῆς Καῖκαρος ἐπ[ταγήν τοῖς μὲν παιείν ... ἰνος ετέφανος, τοῖς δὲ ἄνθρα]αεταχύνος·

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[javal 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[cept for the boys a crown of ..., for the men] 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 παιδεός Ὀλυμπικοί at the Romaia in Cos (Syll.3 1066). However, since this is the only reference to παιδεός Ὀλυμπικοί, and the age-limits at the Romaia cannot be determined with any accuracy, this evidence must be considered doubtful. On the contrary, the testimony of Pausanias shows that the upper age-limit for boys at Olympia was

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2 See L.Moretti, Iscrizioni agonistiche greche (Roma 1953) 159 on παιδεός 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. We may also observe that Pausanias was writing in the second century A.D., the probable date of the Sebastian inscription.

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. 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. 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:

[mη ἔξιστω δὲ πρεβότερον μετέχειν τοῦ ἁγώνος τῶν Ἰταλικῶν Ἰολυμπίων ἤ ἐπτακαι[δ]έκατη]

This changes only the νεώτερον of Dittenberger to πρεβότερον 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 πατέδες.

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

[kαὶ μετεχῶ][ο[ν ἀπὸ ὀκτακαιδεκά μέχρι τῆς ἔκοσιν ἑτῶν ἡλικίας ἁγενείων κρίσεως]

Dittenberger admits that ἁγένειοι 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

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3 For 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.
4 This is the date for the inscription given by the editors of SEG 11.200, 14.349.
5 See, 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.
7 Cf. IG 14.755 add. d, also CIG 5804 (restored).
8 These are possible ages for the ἁγένειοι, whose ages varied from festival to festival depending on the age of the πατέδες. See Klee, op.cit., 46-48 for "traditional" ages.
9 I 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 παίδες and ἀγένειοι receiving the same allowance of two and a half drachmas:

ήμερον ἄρα, πρὸ δὲ ήμερῶν ιέ τοῖς μὲν παιί καὶ ἀγένειοις δρ(αχμάς) βʹ (ήμικυ),
τοῖς δὲ ἀνδρῶι (ṣi)ν γʹ.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[ταγήν] στέφανος τοῖς παιί καὶ ἀγένειος καὶ ἀνδρ[ά]ς ἑταχύνος.¹³

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

10 [desunt fere 20 litt. μῆ ἐξέστω δὲ πρεσβύτερον μετέχειν τοῦ ἄγώνος τῶν
Ιταλικῶν Ἰκο]/λυμπίῳν ῥ ἐπτακαι

11 [δ]εκέτη·· [καὶ μετεχέτω]ςα[ν ἀπὸ ὀκτωκάδεκα μέχρι τῆς εἰκοσιο
ἐτῶν ἡλικίας ἀγένειον κρίεσως], μετὰ δὲ ταύτην ἀν


[δ]ψώνιον δὲ χορηγ(ε)ίςθω

13 [τ]οῖς ἄθληταίς [πρ]' ἡμερῶν [τ]ῆς πανηγύρεως λʹ, ἀμετα παίζι μὲν τοῖς
ἀγονισμένοις δοθή]ναι πρὸ ήμερῶν λʹ τῆς

μὲν παιί καὶ ἀγένειοις] δρ(αχμάς) βʹ (ήμικυ), τοῖς δὲ ἀνδρά

παιί καὶ ἀγένειος καὶ ἀνδρ[ά]ς ἑταχύνος.

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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 ἀγώνι τοῖς μὲν παιί ... 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).