

¿POR QUÉ LAS MUJERES ADULTAS ESTABAN
EXCLUIDAS DE LOS JUEGOS OLÍMPICOS?
WHY WERE ADULT WOMEN EXCLUDED
FROM THE OLYMPIC GAMES?

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ABSTRACT

It is a well-known fact that adult women were banned from attending the Olympic Games and that those who violated this rule were supposed to be executed. It is generally assumed and indeed very likely that the exclusion can be seen as a remnant of an age-old religious taboo with a terrifying and deterring effect. In ancient Greece, it is only the cult of Ephesian Artemis in which a similar restriction is applied to women, but similar rules are found all over the world and concern hunters and their wives. In addition, written sources attest that the vicinity of the sanctuary was regarded as a superb hunting ground and Early

RESUMEN

Es un hecho bien conocido que las mujeres adultas estaban excluidas de poder asistir a los Juegos Olímpicos y que aquellas que violasen esta regla supuestamente serían ejecutadas. Se asume generalmente y es sin duda muy probable que la exclusión pueda ser vista como un remanente de un tabú religioso secular con un efecto de aterrorizar y disuadir. En la antigua Grecia, solamente en el culto de Artemisa Efesia se aplicaba una restricción similar a las mujeres, pero se encuentran reglas similares por todo el mundo y conciernen a los cazadores a sus mujeres. Además, las fuentes escritas dan fe de que la

Iron Age finds also suggest that initially, hunting was the main attraction of the sanctuary. It is therefore argued that the exclusion of married women at Olympia derived from hunting ceremonies and from the related cult of Artemis.

cercanía del santuario se veía como un campo de caza soberbio, y los hallazgos de la Edad de Hierro temprana también sugieren que inicialmente, la caza era la principal atracción del santuario. Se argumenta, así pues, que la exclusión de las mujeres casadas en Olimpia derivaba de las ceremonias de caza y del culto relacionado de Artemisa.

KEY WORDS

Women, banning, Olympic Games, religion, rules.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Mujeres, prohibición, Juegos Olímpicos, religión, reglas.

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„Biological function sometimes determined religious segregation. As with most issues relating to Greek religious practice, however, the precise customs and regulations are not always simple to discern, especially from the scattered and battered evidence available to us for Greek festivals, ceremonies and sacrifices.” (Cole 1995, 183.)

IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FACT THAT ADULT WOMEN were banned from attending the most celebrated athletic festival in ancient Greece and that those who violated this rule were supposed to be executed. This regulation is quite strange for several reasons but was nevertheless not often investigated in detail. The explanations offered for its origins are obviously unsatisfactory and therefore a new attempt will be made here, based on a broad comparative material.

The main source we can rely on are the following passages of Pausanias¹:

„As you go from Scillus along the road to Olympia, before you cross the Alpheius, there is a mountain with high, precipitous cliffs. It is called Mount Typaeum. It is a law of Elis to cast down it any women (τὰς γυναῖκας) who are caught present at the Olympic games, or even on the other side of the Alpheius, on the days prohibited to women.” (Paus. 5.6.7)

1. All passages are cited in the English translation by W.H.S. Jones in the Loeb classical library. Another important and somewhat later source is Aelianus *Hist. Anim.* 5.17 who uses the same term (νόμος) as Pausanias.

„Seated on this altar a woman (γυνή) looks on at the Olympic games, the priestess of Demeter Chamyne, which office the Eleans bestow from time to time on different women. Maidens (παρθένους) are not debarred from looking on at the games.” (Paus. 6.20.9)

It was already observed that it is most probably certain that Pausanias mentions this rule „precisely because it was so unusual”.² In the second passage,³ the author obviously makes a clear distinction between *parthenos* and *gyne*, even if it is not stated explicitly, what the two terms exactly mean and how the control was actually managed. However, the potentially vital consequences and the practical enforcement of the rule required a clear and easy differentiation between the two categories and it is, therefore, legitimate to assume that the distinction was not based on age nor on some other biological features, but was defined in juridical terms, i.e. those who were unmarried were regarded as *parthenos* and *gyne* denoted a married woman.⁴

The distinction, however, seems to be quite misplaced from a practical point of view: as already observed „regular Olympic spectatorship by numerous virgins is a modern invention ... even if virgins, in general, were not banned from the male games, realistically, they were not there.”⁵ It is most probably not by chance that we have absolutely no information about virgin spectators at the Games. The regulation is thus explicitly permitting something which did (or would) not occur normally.

On the other hand, it stipulated something, that normally would not have happened otherwise even without it. Greek athletes were generally not accompanied by their wives or mothers to panhellenic Games, neither to Olympia nor to the other ones. That they were not explicitly excluded elsewhere does not necessarily mean that they regularly attended and the emphatic formulation by Thucydides 3.104 that the Delia and the Ephesia were attended ξύν τε γὰρ γυναιξὶ καὶ παισὶν

2. DILLON, M., “Did Parthenoi Attend the Olympic Games? Girls and Women Competing, Spectating, and Carrying out Cult Roles at Greek Religious Festivals”, *Hermes* 128, 2000, 457-480 (469).

3. HARRIS, A. H., *Greek Athletes and Athletics*, Connecticut, 1964, 183, thought it would be necessary to emend the text eliminating the negative, but as Dillon 2000, 457, 466-467 has shown, there is no need for such a modification in the text.

4. The term *gyne* is, on its own, ambiguous and if we only had Paus. 5.6.7, it would be impossible to tell, whether girls/maidens were equally excluded or not. In most similar cases concerning the exclusion of women, the evidence is more limited, inscriptions just stating e.g. that „γυναικὶ οὐχ ὄσιον” and therefore it is possible, at least in theory, that *parthenoi* were not excluded at other places either. But actually, it is more likely that they would have been mentioned explicitly, if they were really exempted from the general ban on women. That the term *gyne* normally included in such cases *parthenoi* as well is clearly shown by the story told by Antoninus Liberalis *Metam.* 32.5. On the distinction between *parthenos* and *gyne* in general see KING, H., “Bound to bleed: Artemis and Greek women”, In A. CAMERON / A. KURT (eds.), *Images of women in antiquity*, London, 1983-1993, discussing earlier literature and concluding that the usual and most widely used feature was marital status.

5. KYLE, D. G., *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, Malden-Oxford, 2007, 228.

rather shows that these festivals were the exception and not the rule.⁶ And in addition, it is perhaps important to underline that the complete lack of information on such family-group-travelling is not particularly likely to result from the general neglect of women in our sources. Mothers and wives did not normally attend the *gymnasia* and *palaestrae* within the individual *poleis* either, even if they were most probably not strictly excluded from these places and would have been allowed, at least in theory, to watch their husbands or sons, if they wished to do so. The regulation, therefore, made some sense in Olympia, only if it aimed mainly at the exclusion of local women,⁷ who seemed, however, to have been admitted to attend athletic competitions elsewhere in the Greek world.⁸

In addition, one should note that there was allegedly only one person, who attempted to break the rule and although she was evidently found guilty, the harsh punishment was not applied to her. Again, Pausanias' description illustrates the case very well⁹:

"They say that no woman has been caught, except Callipateira only; some, however, give the lady the name of Pherenice and not Callipateira. She, being a widow, disguised herself exactly like a gymnastic trainer, and brought her son to compete at Olympia. Peisirodus, for so her son was called, was victorious, and Callipateira, as she was jumping over the enclosure in which they keep the trainers shut up, bared her person. So her sex was discovered, but they let her go unpunished out of respect for her father, her brothers and her son, all of whom had been victorious at Olympia. But a law was passed that for the future trainers should strip before entering the arena." (Paus. 5.6.7-8)

In the imperial period, the Olympia at Ephesos copied this regulation,¹⁰ but in classical panhellenic Games, modeled on the Olympics, i.e. at Isthmia, Nemea and

6. The Ephesia is the Panionian festival (HORNBLOWER, S., "Thucydides, the Panionian Festival and the Ephesia (III 104)", *Historia* 31, 1982, 241- 245). That women and children were present, is also confirmed by Dionysius Halicarnassensis (*Ant. Rom.* 4.25.4) who adds that the Doric festival in honour of Apollon Triopaïos was similar in this respect.

7. This is explicitly stated by Aelian *Hist. Anim.* 5.17. Of course, the regulation did not specify the women to be excluded as local ones and it was applicable to any adult woman in general.

8. They were almost certainly not excluded from local games and festivals and we may assume that those who did not have to travel a long distance, were also allowed to watch the athletic competitions if these were panhellenic in character. The only explicit mentioning of women at such an occasion is the title of a mime by the 5th c. poet Sophron (Kaibel 155 n.10).

9. The episode was mentioned by many authors, including e.g. Philostratos (*Gymn.* 17), Aelianus (*Var. Hist.* 10.1), Valerius Maximus (8.15.12) and Pliny (*NH* 7.133) with the discussion by KYLE, D. G., *Sport (op. cit.)*, 222-225, who correctly concluded that "it was indeed a false etiology for a historical change in regulations about trainers".

10. ROBERT, L., "Les femmes théores à Éphèse", *CRAI* 118, 1974, 176-181; ENGELMANN, H., "Zu Inschriften aus Ephesos", *ZPE* 26, 1977, 154-155.

Delphi, there was no comparable rule, or at least there is absolutely no evidence on such a restriction and adult women were generally not excluded from other sanctuaries of Zeus either. The rule has therefore obviously nothing to do with the athletic competitions *per se* nor with the cult of the supreme Olympian god. This is emphatically shown by the ritual prescription recorded by Pausanias (5.13.10) for the great ash altar of Zeus in the Altis:

“The ascent to the *prothysis* may be made by maidens, and likewise by women (παρθένοις καὶ ὡσαύτως γυναῖξιν), when they are not shut out from Olympia, but men only can ascend from the *prothysis* to the highest part of the altar.”

There is no explicit ancient testimony about the date of the introduction of the ban and it is quite reasonable to suppose that ancient commentators did not consider this question because they were convinced that it was a very old regulation, going back perhaps to the origins of the Games or even earlier. The fact that the other panhellenic festivals did not adopt this rule could perhaps be taken to show that it was introduced in Olympia only after the institution of the Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian Games or, if we discard the historicity of the Kallipateira episode, even much later. But actually it is much more probable that the exclusion of married women was an age-old regulation,¹¹ and its *raison d'être* was already obscure or rather completely unknown already in the Archaic period. In this way, it is not surprising either that the rule was not adopted by the other panhellenic Games.

The main reason pointing to this conclusion is, above all, the severe penalty, which seems entirely disproportionate compared to the actual danger or harm caused by breaking the law. I think it is absolutely obvious that a few (or even many) married women attending the games would not have presented any danger nor any extra effort for the organisation or success of the athletic competitions. The punishment is, therefore, nonsensical in its Olympic context and makes much more sense if interpreted as a remnant of an age-old religious taboo with a terrifying and deterring effect.

Concerning the reason for the temporary exclusion of adult women, there is nothing but the short comment by Aelianus (*Hist. Anim.* 5. 17) stating that the ban was intended to achieve sexual abstinence of the athletes.¹² Ancient authors most

11. This is at least the common assumption, usually formulated without any explicit reason or reference. See e.g. KYLE, D. G., *Sport (op. cit.)*, 222, „an old, sacral ban on women”.

12. τὰς μὲν γὰρ ὁ τῆς ἀγωνίας καὶ τῆς κατ' αὐτὴν σωφροσύνης νόμος ἐλαύνει τὰς γυναῖκας. DILLON, M., „Did Parthenoi (op. cit.)”, 467, (who correctly translates the text as 'the rule of training and the sexual abstinence observed at this time by the athletes') acknowledges that there was an ancient belief 'that athletes should practice sexual abstinence in order to preserve their energies', but argues that Aelian gives the wrong reason for the disappearance of local women. I think, however, that by mentioning

probably would have agreed with this view, modern scholars, however, are seemingly all convinced that the regulation had some ritual background. Drees tried to connect it to the cult of Demeter, Mouratidis argued for a derivation from the cult of Heracles and both were convinced that the regulation originated from an early period preceding the establishment of Zeus as the lord of the sanctuary.¹³

Since in the cult of Zeus, there is certainly no parallel for excluding adult women only while admitting girls,¹⁴ it is actually reasonable to suppose that the restriction should most probably have derived from another, more ancient or earlier cult practice; but since convincing parallels are missing both in the cult of Heracles and that of Demeter, these propositions are not especially attractive. It is true that the priestess of Demeter Chamyne was exempted from the rule, but there is no similar exclusion attested for any cult of Demeter and the admission of the priestess to the games is most probably due to the fact that her sanctuary at Olympia was very close to the stadium.¹⁵ On the other hand, there were some cults of Heracles, where women in general or some of them were excluded, but it is never stated explicitly that virgins were admitted and the rule seems to be restricted to special cases and not to the cult of Heracles in general.¹⁶ In addition, assuming the cult of Heracles as a motivation

only 'sexual liaisons with the incoming athletes' he misses the point and does not realize that local wives could obviously have remained to have sex with their own husbands (participating in the Games) whose chance to win would thus be reduced.

13. DREES, L., *Der Ursprung der Olympischen Spiele*, Stuttgart, 1962, 119-124; MOURATIDIS, J., "Heracles at Olympia and the Exclusion of Women from the Ancient Olympic Games", *Journal of Sport History* 11, 1984, 41-55.

14. There are a few cases, where women, in general, were excluded from certain sacrifices/sanctuaries of Zeus: Zeus Amalos and Apotropaïos on Lindos (LSS 88 and 89). On Paros (IG XII, 5¹ no. 183 = LSCG no. 109), women were excluded (similarly to uninitiated men) from the precinct of Hypatos, who might be equated with Zeus, but PROTTE, Hans, Theodor Anton von / ZIEHEN, Ludwig, *Leges Graecorum Sacrae e titulis collectae*, Leipzig, 1906, 285, cautiously added that „quem si Iovem interpretamur, vereor ne priscam montis religionem alieno colore imbuamus, nec Parios quicquam aliud eo nomine spectasse existimo, nisi ut summi montis numen significaret.”

15. Based on Paus. 6.20.9, this was already suspected by GARDINER, E. N., *Olympia: Its History and Remains*, Oxford, 1925, 75. The sanctuary was indeed found in 2006 some 150 m to the north of the stadium approximately where Paus. 6.21.1 mentioned the precinct of Demeter Chamyne (LIANGOURAS, C., "Ἱερὸ Δήμητρας καὶ Κόρης στὴν ἀρχαία Ὀλυμπία", *AAA* 40-41, 2009, 61-74; *idem*, "Das Heiligtum der Demeter Chamyne in Olympia", in W-D.HEILMEYER *et al.* (eds.), *Mythos Olympia. Ausstellungskatalog Martin-Gropius-Bau*, Berlin, 2012, 152-155.).

16. Erythrai: Paus. 7.5.8; Gades: Sil. Ital. 3.22. Both cults of Heracles were said to derive from Tyros, i.e. they were either of Phoenician or of pre-Greek origin. The same holds true for the cult of Heracles at Thasos, where the exclusion is attested by an inscription (PICARD, Ch., "Un rituel archaïque du culte de l'Héraclès thasien trouvé à Thasos", *BCH* 47, 1923, 241-274. = LSS no. 63). The cult of Heracles Mysogynes in Phocis (Plut. *mor.* 404a) is usually also discussed among those excluding women (FARNELL, L. R., "Sociological hypotheses concerning the position of women in ancient religion", *Archiv für*

behind the rule does not explain a strange feature, i.e. the close and quite illogical connection to the river Alpheios. Obviously, many women, especially local Elean ones, who were rightly considered as the main target group of the rule,¹⁷ could have attended the Games without crossing it and those who crossed did not necessarily enter the sanctuary or the stadion. The regulation recorded by Pausanias 5.6.7 had to derive therefore most probably from a cult which was closely connected to the river.

The cult of Artemis matches this criterion perfectly¹⁸ and can be regarded as a much better candidate than any other deity for several other reasons as well. The cult of Ephesian Artemis is, as far as I know, the only cult in ancient Greece, in which a similar restriction is applied to women: those who were *parthenoi* were allowed to enter the shrine, others were strictly excluded or if they entered, they were punished with death. Two passages refer to this rule:

„A woman (γυνή) imagined that having entered the temple or shrine of Artemis of Ephesus, she dined there. And not long afterwards, she died. For death is the penalty for a woman who enters there.” (Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 4.4; English translation by D. E. Harris McCoy)

„The shrine was anciently forbidden to free matrons (γυναίξιν ἐλευθέραις) but open to men and maidens (ἀνδράσι καὶ παρθένοις); if any other woman (γυνή) entered it, death was the penalty for her intrusion unless she were a slave with a complaint against her master.” (Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 7.13; English translation by S. Gaselee)

The exclusion was not limited in time, as in Olympia, but otherwise, the same distinction and the same penalty was applied and it is also explicitly stated that men were allowed to enter.

In addition, the cult of Artemis at Olympia was, at least according to our written sources, especially well-developed: it was observed long ago that, according to

Religionswissenschaft 7, 1904, 70-94 (77), adds a question mark), but in this case, it is only the priest who has to abstain from women (except for slaves) for a year, i.e. for the period he is holding this position. As COLE, S. G., “Gynaiki ou Themis: Gender Difference in the Greek Leges Sacrae,” *Helios* 19, 1993, 104-122 (107), and DILLON, M., *Girls and Women in classical Greek Religion*, London - New York, 2001, 239-240, already pointed out, the exclusion of women from the cults of Heracles was by no means universal and it seems to have been widespread only in Roman imperial times: Aulus Gellius, *NA*. 11.6.2; Aurelius Victor, *de orig. gentis Rom.* 6.6 and Macrobius, *saturn.* 1.12.28.

17. Aelian *Hist. Anim.* 5.17.

18. Paus 5.14.6 records an altar dedicated at Olympia to both Artemis and Alpheios and there was also a temple of Artemis Alpheiaia at Letrini (Paus. 6.22.8).

Pausanias' description, she had no less than seven altars in the sacred precinct¹⁹ and Strabo (8.343) reports that there were also some annual festivals celebrated in her honour. There were, admittedly, more altars dedicated to Zeus but there were no annual celebrations for him nor for any other of the main Olympic gods.²⁰ As explained elsewhere in detail,²¹ it is very probable that her cult dominated the sanctuary of Olympia before that of Zeus and as the parallel with Ephesian Artemis suggests, it may also explain the exclusion of married women.

It might be objected though that the prescription recorded for Artemis Ephesia is an exceptional or marginal case compared to the cults of Artemis which generally favour the participation of women irrespective of their marital status. It is indeed risky to base a conclusion on a single parallel and because there are only some scattered and not very instructive comparanda in the ancient Greek and Roman world,²² one has to search for them elsewhere, mainly in ethnography. This approach was implicitly suggested by N. Gardiner who compared the regulation to those known from the Graeco-Roman world but finally concluded that women "are excluded from all military rites, the presence of married women especially being prejudicial to warriors on the warpath.... Their exclusion at Olympia was thus only natural if Zeus was a god of war."²³

Zeus was indeed worshiped at Olympia mainly as a god of military (and athletic) victory but this aspect was dominant only during the Archaic and Classical periods. In the Early Iron Age and especially during the Geometric period there were practically no dedications of weapons and warrior figurines made of bronze are also quite

19. WENIGER, L., "Artemisdienst in Olympia und Umgebung", *Neue Jahrbücher für das Klassische Altertum* 19, 1907, 96-114.

20. DREES, L., 1967, 24, mentions two passages that could attest a small annual festival of Zeus, but ZIEHEN, L., "Olympia", in *RE XVIII.1*, 1939, 2-71 (46), already noted that these are insufficient to prove annual festivals for Zeus at Olympia.

21. PATAY-HORVÁTH, A., *The Origins of the Olympic Games*, Budapest, 2015, Appendix IX.

22. The most comprehensive collections are FARNELL, L. R., "*Sociological hypotheses* (op. cit.), 76-77; WÄCHTER, Th., *Reinheitsvorschriften im griechischen Kult*, Giessen, 1910, 125-129, but cf. also PICARD, Ch., "Un rituel archaïque (op. cit.), 246-249; COLE, S. G., "Gynaiki ou Themis (op. cit.), 105; and DILLON, M., *Girls and Women* (op. cit.), 237-238. Apart from the examples cited above, the list includes Aphrodite Akraia on Cyprus, Apollo at Delphi, Ares at Geronthrai, Anakes at Elateia, Eunostos (cornhero) at Tanagra, Poseidon at Mykonos and Kronos. GARDINER, E. N., *Olympia* (op. cit.), 76, adds Mars Silvanus. The suggestion made by COLE, S. G., "Gynaiki ou Themis (op. cit.), 106, that women were apparently excluded from cults that celebrated specifically male activities or male characteristics, e.g. male professions, athletics and war is certainly well-founded in general, but in each case some more specific reason can be suspected as well, even if this is not always easy to discern. (cf. COLE, S. G., "Women, dogs and fies", *Ancient World* 26, 1995, 182-191 (183).

23. GARDINER, E. N., *Olympia* (op. cit.), 76. His conclusion is apparently based on the cult of Ares at Geronthrai (Paus. 3. 22.7).

rare.²⁴ So the warlike character of the sanctuary in its initial phase is by no means evident and given the overwhelmingly large number of geometric animal figurines, it is rather improbable. If the generally shared assumption concerning the antiquity of the ban on married women is correct, the warlike character of the sanctuary can hardly explain its origins.

Turning, therefore, our attention to the ethnographic comparanda again, one can easily recognize that it is not only warriors who are in danger of being „polluted” by married women. Taboo rules similar to the Olympic exclusion, i.e. concerning adult women for a restricted period of time are found all over the world and concern hunters and their wives. Men preparing themselves for the hunt are generally not allowed to have intercourse with their wives for a few days in advance and they should even avoid touching such objects which might have been in contact with them.²⁵ The following examples represent just a small selection:

„The Sia, a tribe of Pueblo Indians, observe chastity for four days before a hunt as well as the whole time that it lasts, even if the game be only rabbits. Among the Tsetsaut Indians of British Columbia, hunters who desire to secure good luck fast and wash their bodies with ginger-root for three or four days, and do not touch a woman for two or three months. A Shuswap Indian, who intends to go out hunting must also keep away from his wife, or he would have no luck. Among the Thompson Indians, the grisly-bear hunter must abstain from sexual intercourse for some time before he went forth to hunt.”²⁶

The main features are therefore identical with those at Olympia: the restriction applies only to adult or married women (or at least to those, who are potential sex partners, i.e. young girls or virgins are not concerned) and it is similarly limited in time. Women are strictly excluded from the rites and ceremonies following the hunt as well or at least they are separated from the hunters themselves. The worldwide presence of this seemingly nonsensical custom can most probably be interpreted as some kind of age-old ubiquitous ritualised behaviour, i.e. it is likely to have originated from a practice which was adequate for some reason in the remote past, was repeated for a long time and retained in a basically unaltered form even when society

24. On the early history of the sanctuary in general and on the geometric figurines, in particular, see e.g. FURTWÄNGLER, A., *Die Bronzen und die übrigen kleineren Funde von Olympia*, Berlin, 1980; HERMANN, H-V., *Olympia. Heiligtum und Wettkampfstätte*, München, 1972; HEILMEYER, W-D., *Frühe Olympische Bronzefiguren. Die Tiervotive* (OIForsch 12). Berlin, 1979; and HATZI, G. E., *The Archaeological Museum of Olympia*, EFG Eurobank / John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation. 2008 (with brilliant illustrations).

25. RUSSELL, N., *Social Zooarchaeology. Humans and Animals in Prehistory*, Cambridge, 2012, 161.

26. FRAZER, J. G., *Taboo. The Perils of the Soul (=The Golden bough Part II)*, London, 1911, 197-198, listing many other similar cases. This fear of adult women survives until modern times in the superstitious belief that a hunter will be unlucky if he meets an old woman on his way to the forest.

and general conditions changed; it was not properly understood any more and thus became obsolete.

Now, the sexual abstinence of men makes sense in the context of primitive hunting. The hunter has to get rid of everything which might alarm the prospective prey and chief among the signs betraying his presence for animals are scents. „Primitive” hunters therefore naturally take every precaution to eliminate them. Bathing, stripping off his cloths and anointing his body are all performed in order to achieve this goal but sexual intercourse would render all these measures ineffective since this type of activity is accompanied by very distinctive odors.²⁷ On the other hand, menstrual blood has been shown to deter animals, especially large cervids, i.e. prestigious game animals and assuming that the observation was already made by prehistoric hunters, this phenomenon could adequately explain the strict exclusion of adult women.²⁸

But why was this rule applied to the Olympic Games? Because the Games originated, in my view, from animal ceremonialism, i.e. ceremonies intimately connected with hunting.²⁹ Written sources (Xen. *Anab.* 5.3.8-11; Paus. 5.6.6) attest that the vicinity of the sanctuary has been regarded as a superb hunting ground and Early Iron Age finds, especially the bronze bovine figurines, also point to the conclusion that hunting was the main attraction of the sanctuary. The prominent role of the Artemis cult is also most likely to derive from this period. The exclusion of married women from the Games may be reasonably interpreted as a remnant of this cult and has probably been retained in the subsequent cult of Zeus as a quite nonsensical ritual prescription confined to the days of the main festival and its athletic competitions. During the *panegyris* deriving from the feasts following successful hunting the ritual exclusion of adult women persisted at least in theory, even if it was not properly understood and therefore not strictly applied any more, but apart from these days, there was, of course, no point in such a strange exclusion.

27. SANSONE, D., *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport*, Berkeley, 1988, interpreted – correctly in my view -- the anointing of one’s body, sexual abstinence before the contests and athletic nudity as ritualized behaviour deriving from pre-hunt activities practised by primitive hunters. What he did not realize, I think, is that athletic activity did not derive directly from hunting, but rather from the ceremonies following successful hunting.

28. MARCH, K. S., “Deer, Bears, and Blood: A Note on Nonhuman Animal Response to Menstrual Odor”, *American Anthropologist* 82, 1980, 125-127; KITAHARA, M., “Menstrual Taboos and the importance of hunting”, *American Anthropologist* 84, 1982, 901-903; RUSSELL, N., *Social Zooarchaeology* (op. cit.), 161.

29. For a detailed discussion see PATAY-HORVÁTH, A., *The Origins* (op. cit.).

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THE *MUNUS* IN HONOUR OF JULIA ORGANIZED BY CAESAR:
FUNERARY RITUAL, SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND POLITICAL
INTEREST IN THE REPUBLICAN ROME
EL *MUNUS* EN HONOR DE JULIA ORGANIZADO POR CÉSAR:
RITUAL FUNERARIO, DESIGUALDAD SOCIAL Y
PROPAGANDA POLÍTICA EN LA ROMA REPUBLICANA

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RESUMEN

Este trabajo se centra en el *munus* de Julia ofrecido por su padre César, para ello se analiza la figura de Julia, como hija de César y esposa de Pompeyo, y el significado que tuvo su muerte. Su *munus* demuestra cómo los combates de gladiadores, que formaron parte de los rituales funerarios durante la República, son una expresión de la desigualdad social, no sólo en función de la clase a la que se pertenezca sino también en relación con el sexo, y cómo los *munera* son utilizados por los intereses políticos de la *nobilitas*, especialmente durante el siglo I a.C., como ocurre en este caso.

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the *munus* of Julia offered by her father Caesar. It consists in the study of the figure of Julia, as daughter of Caesar and wife of Pompey, and the meaning that had her death. Her *munus* proves how the combats of gladiators, which were part of funerary rituals during the Republic, are an expression of social inequality, not only in function of the class also in relation to the gender, and how the *munera* are used by the political interests of the *nobilitas*, especially during the first century BC, as in this case.

KEY WORDS

Munera gladiatoria, Roma, Julia, César, época republicana, rito funerario, desigualdad social, propaganda política.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Munera gladiatoria, Rome, Julia, Caesar, Republic period, funeral rite, social inequality, political propaganda.

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