

Original Article

Gymnasium (ancient Greece)

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Abstract

In ancient Greece, the gymnasium served as a training ground for athletes participating in open competitions. It served as a venue for intellectual pursuits and social interaction as well. Gymnós, which means "naked" in Ancient Greek, is where the word originates. Athletes competed in the nude, a custom believed to promote a respect for the gods and an aesthetic appreciation of the male physique. Heracles, Hermes, and Theseus at Athens were the protectors and patrons of gymnasia and palaestrae.

Maintaining one's health and strength was also a socially significant aspect in ancient times. All males had a societal duty to be physically strong and prepared to fight at any time during those times when war was frequent. Men were required to exercise from an early age. It played a significant role in their schooling. They received martial arts instruction and training when they were eighteen. Young men spent a lot of time working out in the several gymnasiums that were located just outside the city walls of Athens. Boxing, shot put, javelin throwing, and wrestling were among their favorite sports. A typical gym included a sizable training area encircled by external areas including restrooms, practice areas, and changing rooms. Gyms in ancient Greece were exclusively for men. In ancient Greece, the earliest known gymnasium was built in Athens in the sixth century BC. It is attributed to Theseus by Pausanias. The legislation of Solon outlines how gymnasiums operate, and during the reign of Cleisthenes in the late sixth century, certain changes were made to their administration.

Keyword: Athletes, Cleisthenes, Health, Martial Art, Exercise

Introduction

The derivation of the term gymnasium Using the related verb γυμνάζω (gymnazo), which means "to train naked," "train in gymnastic exercise," and generally "to train, to exercise," the Latin word gymnasium is the Latinization of the Greek noun γυμνάσιον (gymnasion), "gymnastic school," in pl. "bodily exercises," and most commonly "school." The verb has this meaning because one stripped for exercise. In the past, the gym was used for community bathing, exercise, and intellectual and philosophical activities. The Greek term γυμναστής (gymnastēs) is the root of the English noun gymnast, which was first used in 1594. However, in Greek, the word denotes "trainer" rather than "gymnast." The gymnasium's palaistra was the area used for ball games, boxing, and wrestling.



Pompeii gymnasium, viewed from the stadium's upper wall.

Ancient Greek gymnasia's structure

Young males above the age of eighteen were trained in physical exercises in the training facility, which was established as a public institution. Gymnasiarchs, public officials in charge of overseeing the competitions and running the schools, were given the task with keeping an eye on the gymnasiums. They were also in charge of organizing the games and sports at public festivals. The gymnastai served as the athletes' trainers, coaches, and instructors. Public libraries were close by, and lectures and discussions on philosophy, literature, and music were also held in Greek gymnasiums.

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History, regulations, and traditions



An elderly guy believed to be the gym's master is shown in a hermaic sculpture. His right hand held a lengthy stick. Afghanistan, Ai Khanoum, 2nd century BC.

From very early times, the Greeks' social and spiritual lives included participation in athletic competitions, for which the gymnasium provided the tools of training and competition. The competitions were held in honor of heroes and gods, and occasionally they were a component of a regular festival or a chief's burial ceremonies. The free-spirited, active Greek way of life, which was mostly spent outside, strengthened the love for these sports, and eventually the competitions became a major part of Greek culture. The winner of religious sports competitions received the honor and esteem of his fellow people in exchange for no pecuniary compensation other than a wreath. The public was very concerned about the training of contestants for the larger competitions, therefore the state developed special facilities for this purpose, with public authorities in charge of their administration. The entire state considered a win in the major religious festivals to be an honor. Ausanias (i. 39. 3) attributes the regulation of the Athenian gymnasium to Theseus. Galen claims that during the reign of Cleisthenes (late 500s and early 400s BC), Solon's various regulations on the issue were simplified into a practical management system. Although the exact roots of physical training regimens are unknown, the habit of exercising while naked dates back to the seventh century BC. The tradition is thought to have originated in Sparta, and although several hypotheses have been put out, it is generally believed that the norm was primarily prompted by the admiration for the male body's beauty.

Development across time

Soon, the Greek gymnasium was used for purposes other than just physical activity. The Greeks' realization of the close connection between education, athletics, and health led to this development. Consequently, the gymnasium came to be associated with both medicine and education. The key components of children's early education were physical training and the preservation of their health and strength. Young men's education was limited to the gymnasium, where provisions were made for both physical pedagogy and moral and ethical instruction, with the exception of time spent on letters and music. As students grew older, institutional, methodical discipline gave way to casual chatting and other social activities. Teachers, particularly philosophers, attended the gymnasia since they were popular places for young people to go. The gymnasia became a haven for people interested in less structured intellectual pursuits as well as those who used it for physical fitness training, as philosophers and sophists regularly gathered there to deliver speeches and lectures. The Academy, the Lyceum, and the Cynosarges were the three main public gymnasia in Athens. Each was devoted to a god, whose statue was displayed inside the building. Each of the three became well-known due to their affiliation with a renowned philosophical school. Aristotle established the Peripatetic school in the Lyceum, Plato established a school that met at the Academy, which is where the school got its name and made the gymnasium famous for centuries, and Antisthenes established a school at the Cynosarges, which is where some people believe the name Cynic originates.

According to Plato, the sophist Prodicus was the first to draw attention to the link between gymnastics and health. Plato also believed that gymnastics was an essential component of education (see Republic iii. and parts of Laws). After discovering that gymnastic exercises helped his own weak constitution, Prodicus developed a widely used technique that Hippocrates later refined. Galen also emphasized the importance of using gymnastics regularly and correctly. Special exercises are recommended as treatments for particular illnesses in other ancient Greek medical texts, demonstrating how closely the Greeks linked fitness and health.

Athens organization style in ancient time

Athens were ten *gymnasiarchs* appointed annually, one from each tribe. These officials rotated through a series of jobs, each with unique duties. They were responsible for looking after and compensating persons training for public contests, conducting the games at the great Athenian festivals, exercising general supervision over competitor moral, and decorating and maintaining the gymnasium. The office was one of many ordinary public services and so great expense was entailed on the *gymnasiarchs*. Ten *sophronistae*, who were in charge of monitoring the behavior of the young people and, more specifically, going to all of their games, were positioned behind them in the organizational hierarchy. *Gymnastae* and *pedotribae* were in charge of selecting appropriate sports for the young people and instructing them in the techniques used in the various exercises. The *gymnastae* were also responsible for monitoring the constitution of the pupils and prescribing remedies for them if they became

unwell. The *aleiptae* oiled and dusted the bodies of the youths, acted as surgeons, and administered any drugs prescribed. According to Galen, there also existed a teacher specifically devoted to instruction in ball games.

Construction

Large buildings called gymnasia usually had areas for all kinds of exercises, a stadium, a palaestra, baths, covered porticos for practicing in inclement weather, and places for philosophers and other "men of letters" to hold debates and give public lectures. Due to the vast amount of area needed for building, all of the Athenian gymnasia were situated outside the city walls.

Conclusion

Although gymnastic training had been valued in Sparta primarily because it fostered warlike tastes, promoted the bodily strength needed to use weapons, and ensured the fortitude required to endure hardship, the Romans never took a liking to the Greek gymnasium because they thought it was a good way to encourage boys to be idle and immoral and had little military value. The Greek gymnastic exercises were replaced under the Roman Republic by games in the Campus Martius, camp chores, forced marches, and other horrors of war. Nero constructed Rome's first public gymnasium, and Commodus subsequently constructed another.

In the Middle Ages, jousting, feats of horsemanship and field sports of various kinds became popular and the more systematic training of the body associated with the Greek gymnasium was neglected. As Hippocrates and Galen once advocated, the idea that certain exercises had particular therapeutic benefits was no longer widely held.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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