

Between Mortals and Immortals

Kleos-driven Heroization of Athletes in 5th-century BC Greece

MA Thesis Ancient History

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Word Count: 23.535

Date: 02-08-2018

2017-2018

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Introduction

*These men set imperishable fame about their dear country, and threw around themselves the dark cloud of death. They died but are not dead: their valour gives them glory above and brings them up from the house of Hades.*¹

Throughout Greek antiquity, beliefs about death and mortality were many and diverse. While man was mortal, immortality as ‘inability to die’ was explicitly reserved for deities like the Olympic gods. As such, this can be understood as a seemingly clear dividing line between what it means to belong in the mortal world or the immortal realm. Especially in the early epic and poetic traditions, man’s mortality was highlighted and the gods’ immortality was most noticeable.² Still, however clear the partition between the two might theoretically be, mortality and immortality are complex concepts and ancient Greek notions of especially the latter were fluid, non-canonical, subject to the contemporary *Zeitgeist*, and never precisely defined according to a single Greek model.³ Instead, certain ‘degrees’ of mortality can be identified, varying in time and place, and a ‘grey area’ exists between the world of the exclusively mortal and that of the strictly immortal. Scholarship on the subject has focused on what places a person in which realm and what exactly defines immortality, as well as whether or not a certain amount of effort made movement between the domains a possibility.⁴

The grey area was occupied by those who were deemed not fully mortal nor unconditionally immortal, immortals who had been faced with mortality, and mortals who had

¹ Simonides, *Epigrams* IX. Trans. David A. Campbell, LCL 476.

² Werner Jaeger, ‘The Greek Ideas of Immortality: The Ingersoll Lecture for 1958’, *The Harvard Theological Review* 52:3 (1959) 135-157, at 136; Cf. Henk S. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology* (Leiden 2011) 391: “The standard ingredients to be found in text books may be summarized in the following definition: a god is a being who surpasses man in: 1) length of life: immortality, 2) comfort and joy, 3) knowledge of what takes place behind the scenes of life, 4) power over nature and human life.”

³ See also Ellen Oliver Collins, *Psychologically Preparing for Death: Facing your Mortality and Creating your Symbolic Immortality* (PhD diss. Pacifica Graduate Institute 2017) 19: “Immortality is a complex subject. A belief in some form of immortality is inevitably tied to the particularities of history and culture, to time and place.”

⁴ On the definition of immortality and the ‘grey area’ between mortals and immortals, see i.a. Lewis Richard Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford 1921); Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks* (New York 1925); Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton 1991); Deborah Lyons, *Gender and Immortality: Heroines in Ancient Greek Myth and Cult* (Princeton 1997); Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore 1999); Bruno Currie, *Pindar and the Cult of Heroes* (Oxford 2005); Jennifer Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults: A Guide* (New York 2007); Jan Nicolaas Bremmer and Andrew Erskine, *The Gods of Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh 2010); and David James Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes, and the Quest for Immortality in Ancient Greece* (PhD diss. Pennsylvania State University 2010).

experienced immortality.⁵ The most striking group associated with it, and arguably the most debated one, was the *ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος*: “race of men-heroes.”⁶ Classed as a special race of old that was believed to have included super-humans that portrayed “extraordinary and indefatigable”⁷ bodily excellence and were often said to be descendants of the gods, heroes were neither regarded as truly mortal like humans nor decidedly immortal like the gods. Overall and in the broadest sense a hero was no one other than a deceased mortal who retained the power to influence human affairs, deserving a degree of continuing honours that was not reserved for the ordinary dead.⁸ The primary condition for becoming heroized was therefore to die, but even though this made it impossible for heroes to be considered deathless and without agony like the gods, it was believed that their struggles and perils in life were rewarded with heroic immortality.⁹ Heroic immortality was not a literal or strict immortality like that of the gods, but metaphorically prolonged the lives of heroes by preventing that they would ‘fade into nothingness’ after they died. Scholarly literature generally agrees that there were two components that could stimulate and confirm this type of immortality: renown/fame, referred to as *kleos*, and honour, which is the most common translation of the Greek word *timē*. In the case of heroes, however, *timē* is more suited to be interpreted as hero cult specifically.¹⁰ In Greek literature from antiquity, a recurrent mythological theme was the notion that heroes who had gained enough *kleos* would later be recognized as such by the masses and come to receive *timē* after death.¹¹

The issue of heroic immortality has been one of the defining factors of scholarship on ancient Greek heroes, not only because it accords to heroes a liminal status but also because major inconsistencies exist between different classes or types of heroes.¹² Especially in recent scholarship, the blurred lines between heroes, humans, and gods have been studied intensively.¹³ Most scholars agree that the ‘hero class’ was not static: many non-heroes could

⁵ Jaeger, ‘The Greek Ideas’, 137.

⁶ Hesiod, *Works and Days* 156-160. Trans. Glenn W. Most, LCL 57: “[...] Zeus, Cronus’ son, made another [race] in turn upon the bounteous earth, a fourth one, more just and superior, the godly race of men-heroes, who are called demigods, the generation before our own upon the boundless earth.” He described how, by fighting great wars and showing strength, they earned a blessed afterlife.

⁷ “ὑπερφυεῖς καὶ ἀκαμάτους”; Plutarch, *Life of Theseus* 6.4. Trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 46.

⁸ Robert Parker, *On Greek Religion* (Ithaca 2011) 103-104.

⁹ Heather Reid, ‘Athletes as Heroes and Role Models: An Ancient Model’, *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 11:1 (2016) 40-51, at 42. According to Reid, the belief that a man was a hero depended on his ability to overcome struggles in life and revealed his virtues and strength. Since the lives of the immortal gods were believed to be free of human sufferings, heroes were thought to be mortal in life.

¹⁰ Currie, *Pindar*, 72.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² On classifying heroes, see i.a. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults*, 19, and Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults*, 183-207.

¹³ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 20; Cf. Gunnell Ekroth, *The Sacrificial Rituals of Greek Hero-Cults in the Archaic to the Early Hellenistic Periods* (Liège 2002) 14-17; Nagy, *The Best*; Currie, *Pindar*; Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults*.

turn into heroes upon gaining enough *kleos*, and received glory and honours that eventually turned into the establishment of cults in their name. These “new heroes”¹⁴ were either historical figures, heroized after their death and added to the Greek mythical narrative in new legends, or personae already existent in Greek myth and elevated accordingly because cultural, political, or socio-economic developments at a certain moment in time called for new religious changes.¹⁵ Especially the former has been the subject of debates surrounding the ‘heroic paradigm’: the lives and actions of the mythic heroes that revealed their heroism and “set forth the blueprint by which human champions might claim heroic status,”¹⁶ and consequently inspired heroization. Literary sources show a general belief that by duplicating the lives of mythic heroes and displaying strength and other extraordinary features, historical figures could try to push the boundaries between mortality and immortality and claim *kleos*, sometimes receiving cult after they died.¹⁷

To ancient Greeks the comparison between historical persons and mythic heroes came almost naturally and in the course of time, the differences between the two all but disappeared in surviving legends.¹⁸ Athletes formed one group of people who, according to our sources, were believed to have the potential to become heroized, and some reportedly ended up receiving cult as new heroes. In order to gain an understanding of the process of heroization in the form of mythicizing historical figures that elevated them to a status of new hero, the main question of this thesis is ‘What does athletes’ strive for heroic *kleos* tell us about factors influencing 5th-century BC Greek processes of heroization?’

New Heroes

Those who were believed to have the potential to display enough extraordinary features to gain *kleos* were warriors, rulers, and athletes, or “men of exceptional endowment,”¹⁹ as described by Pindar:

[...] haughty kings and men swift in strength and greatest in wisdom; and they are called by men ‘holy heroes’ for the rest of time.²⁰

¹⁴ On the “new heroes” throughout Greek history, see Christopher P. Jones, *New Heroes in Antiquity: From Achilles to Antinoos* (Cambridge 2010), esp. 38-47.

¹⁵ Currie, *Pindar*, 135.

¹⁶ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 54.

¹⁷ *Idem*, 23ff.

¹⁸ Currie, *Pindar*, 135.

¹⁹ Jones, *New Heroes*, 38.

²⁰ Pindar, *Fragment 133*. Trans. Currie, *Pindar*, 129. Also quoted in Plato, *Meno 81B-C*. Trans. W.R.M. Lamb, LCL 165: “from them arise glorious kings and men of splendid might and surpassing wisdom, and for all remaining time are they called holy heroes amongst mankind.”

This excerpt of Pindar speaks of men who possess both strength and wisdom. Especially warriors were honoured beyond compare after death and revered all throughout Greek antiquity.²¹ They wound up being buried in enormous tombs and were celebrated in song and the written record so that they, or rather their *kleos*, might live on in public memory. Especially after having died a heroic death in battle, the ‘war dead’ received cultic honours – the most visible ones were established after the Persian wars in the 5th century BC.²²

Much related to the venerated war dead were kings and other rulers who were often also generals in battle. Especially from the hellenistic period onwards, new rulers displayed their power and founded or re-founded new cities as well as festivals in order to conform to the heroic paradigm.²³ Festivals that were previously held in honour of specific deities or heroes would later be inherently linked to new patrons and often included sacrifices or offerings to their founders such as Lysander of Sparta, Alexander the Great, and the Hellenistic kings.²⁴ The heroization of these leaders tended to outshine that of the warriors and war dead, as they were compared not only to heroes but in fact to the gods themselves, which incited a shared belief among Greeks that these rulers had deserved some type of heroization or deification.

Arguably the most underexposed class of eligible heroes, however, is that of the athletes. In the 6th and 5th centuries BC, athletes received an increasing amount of respect especially due to the agonistic nature of their profession, which mostly revolved around one-on-one competition.²⁵ Towards the beginning of the 5th century, an ‘athletic ideal’ developed that allowed athletes to become associated with mythic heroes via the organisation of the competitions in which they partook, myths surrounding the games, prizes to be won, and the newly developed idea that athletes were beautiful and virtuous and as such formed the epitome of manliness.²⁶ This athletic ideal had come into being largely because of the Greeks’ newfound love for beauty and agonistic contest, as well as cultural developments stimulating

²¹ Currie, *Pindar*, 89-119.

²² Ibid. Currie gives several examples of cults for the war dead and presents epigraphical and literary evidence. Some sources date back to the 5th and 4th centuries BC, others were of a later date.

²³ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 189-190. Lunt allocates the start of this development specifically to the end of the Peloponnesian war, 404 BC. The Olympics, for example, were said to be instituted or reinstated by Herakles. In the 5th century BC, Lysias described this as one of many noble features of the hero and called it the “beginning of mutual amity amongst the Greeks.”

²⁴ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 179-209, esp. 189-201.

²⁵ Margalit Finkelberg, ‘*Timē* and *aretē* in Homer’, *The Classical Quarterly* 48:1 (1998) 14-28, at 17. Competitive values had a key role in both athletic games and myths revolving around heroes: to excel in one-on-one combat or competition was considered one of the most heroic forms of *aretē*.

²⁶ Theodore Bedrick, ‘The Race of Athletes: A Picture of the Past’, *The Classical Journal* 45:3 (1949) 136-139, at 138.

panhellenism such as the games at Olympia, Delphi, Corinth, and Nemea;²⁷ it has even been suggested that athletic games may well have served as “moral equivalents or substitutes for war.”²⁸ Especially during the 5th century BC, a select group of athletes was not only thought of as ideal, but was also heroized and accorded *kleos* and sometimes *timē* in the way they were remembered. Their *poleis* reportedly installed cults in their honour, spread new legends centred on the athletes, and in some cases sacrificed to them at their victory statues or tombs, progressively identifying them with mythic heroes and forwarding them as belonging to the grey area between mortals and immortals. The exact size of this group is debated – some twelve athletes have been identified as having had cults and rituals in their name in the 5th century²⁹ – but evidence is scarce and suggests that the phenomenon might have been more widespread, especially if one considers that not all heroes received religious attention in cult.³⁰ We call these athletes the ‘heroic athletes’.

Heroic Athletes in Scholarship

The main reason for the heroic athletes’ underexposure is that scholars tend to treat heroes and athletes separately and either cover heroic athletes briefly or as part of a larger study. In some cases the historic accuracy of the stories told is debatable, especially since many contemporary texts were probably commissioned by athletes themselves or their relatives, and they are therefore marginalised in studies.³¹ Others concentrate only on the sources, considering them as part of an author’s corpus or a specific genre, using them to stress the authors’ self-worth and elevating their status as great writers, but neglecting their role in

²⁷ Bedrick, ‘The Race of Athletes’, 138.

²⁸ William James, as quoted by Daniel A. Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals* (Chicago 2009) 27. See also William James, ‘The Moral Equivalent of War’ in: B. Wilshire ed., *William James: The Essential Writings* (Albany 1984) 349-361.

²⁹ The most complete inventory of athletes who received hero cults is given in Currie, *Pindar*, 120-123, and includes the following twelve: certainly from the 5th century BC Philippos of Croton, Kleomedes of Astypalaia, Theogenes of Thasos, and Euthymos of Locri; presumably, but not decidedly, from the 5th century Euthykles of Locri and Diognetos of Crete; possibly having lived sometime before, but heroized in the 5th century BC Oebotas of Dyme, Orsippos of Megara, and Hipposthenes of Sparta; and finally those for who cults may be presupposed, but are not attested, Polydamas of Skotoussa, Diagoras of Rhodes, and Glaukos of Karystos. There have been few attempts to look into these athletes as non-heroic, as well as to explore athlete-heroization beyond this list. Some athletes have been identified as ‘excellent candidates’ for heroization, but research has been scanty and barely looks into underlying motives for heroization in the 6th and 5th centuries. In other cases, possible evidence for new heroic athletes was part of studies of available literature *an sich* rather than the subject at hand, denying or downplaying the heroic athlete-phenomenon. Sometimes heroism is assumed for non-heroized athletes, but not further elaborated on.

³⁰ Gunnell Ekroth, ‘Heroes and Hero Cults’, in: Daniel Ogden ed., *A Companion to Greek Religion* (Malden 2007) 100-114, at 111.

³¹ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 89.

Greek social phenomena like the heroization of athletes.³² There is, however, a fair amount of on-going debates about the heroic athletes that mainly concern themselves with questions such as ‘why have these specific athletes received cult while others have not?’ and ‘how soon after the athlete’s death did the Greeks institute heroic honours?’³³ The most important question of the last decades was influenced by a focus on the development of *poleis* in the archaic period and transformations in Greek societies at the time, and comes down to whether athletes were more likely to have been heroized because of their individual athletic displays or because of external social aspects.

On the one side, François Bohringer and David Boehringer argue that athletes became new heroes not so much for their athletic achievements but rather because of their elite status and additional roles in society.³⁴ Under the influence of the spatial turn and increasing scholarship on the development of *poleis* in the archaic period, they have attempted to place the emergence of heroic athletes in the context of these turbulent times, focusing mostly on the environment in which athletes operate, the social and political functions of their new hero cults, and developments within their hometowns at the time. Especially Bohringer states that athletes became subject to heroization on account of the political interests of their *poleis*: their ambiguous position within the community as “international celebrity”³⁵ as well as “politically marginal figure in his own city”³⁶ allowed the Greeks to use such posthumous cults as a means to censor parts of their recent history.³⁷ Boehringer too reduces the heroization of athletes to a political function within the *poleis* by emphasizing their influence on *polis*-identity and feelings of connectedness.³⁸ Aside from this, he adds that heroic athletes in

³² Nigel James Nicholson, for instance, focuses his research on epinician and oral tradition as genres and compares the two by separating epinician from the hero-athlete phenomenon. Though his study is plausible, epinician cannot be seen as separate from legends and oral tradition and should rather be considered part of the hero-athlete phenomenon. Cf. Nigel James Nicholson, *The Poetics of Victory in the Greek West: Epinician, Oral Tradition and the Deinomenid Empire* (New York 2015), esp. 51-78.

³³ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 56.

³⁴ It is generally assumed that most athletes of the late archaic and early classical periods were part of Greek elites, though this view is not uncontested. The prejudice of the elitist, rich athlete as the only athlete in early competition has been debunked. On the one hand, horses were expensive and the special provenance of the wealthy, cf. Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics*, 19. On the other hand, several studies show that athletes who were assumed to be elitist were perhaps not so privileged at all, cf. David Morris Pritchard, *Sport, Democracy and War in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 2012) 35-46.

³⁵ Bruno Currie, ‘Euthymos of Locri: A Case Study in Heroization in the Classical Period’, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 122 (2002) 24-44, at 26.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ François Bohringer, ‘Cultes d’athlètes en Grèce classique: propos politiques, discours mythiques’, *Revue des Études Anciennes* 81:1-2 (1979) 5-18, at 15. He states that ‘ces cultes oblitèrent des périodes de faiblesse et de division des cités, sauvant la face de la communauté en récupérant un représentant illustre mais contestable’.

³⁸ David Boehringer, ‘Zur Heroisierung historischer Persönlichkeiten bei den Griechen’, in: Martin Flashar, Hans-Joachim Gehrke and Ernst Heinrich eds., *Retrospektive. Konzepte von Vergangenheit in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Munich 1996) 37-61, at 37, 47.

particular were *loimos*-heroes only: heroes who were involved in problematic events causing *loimos* – i.e. disaster/plague, often understood as ‘the deceased’s wrath’ or ‘wrath of the gods’ – to strike, and the community to institute cults in order to end the *loimos*.³⁹ Less explicitly, Emily Kearns’ *Heroes of Attica* agrees that heroes of the classical period must be studied via the meaning of the hero to the worshipper, emphasizing the perspective of the worshipper rather than the hero himself, and implies that heroic athletes were venerated in service of the *polis*’ political interests only.⁴⁰

Other scholars – i.e. Joseph Fontenrose, Leslie Kurke, Bruno Currie and most recently David Lunt – counter these arguments by stating that at least a big part of the heroization of athletes was owing to their athletic successes and the direct result of individual actions. Fontenrose states that individual feats of strength in particular formed the basis of an athlete’s heroization and describes a narrative much like that of Boehringer, in which an athlete may be victorious in competition but is not treated accordingly by his *polis* upon his return. He may die or vanish, bringing divine punishment to the *polis* that can be alleviated only by granting the fallen athlete *timē*.⁴¹ The identity of heroized athletes, he adds, was deliberately shaped by their actions and sometimes even replaced mythological personae completely, thanks to their actions being in line with a heroic paradigm.⁴² Kurke focuses more on the religious importance of heroic athletes and theorises that it was *kudos*, the talismanic power of victorious athletes especially from the panhellenic games, that made certain athletes prime candidates for heroization.⁴³ The power that came from *kudos* could benefit a *polis* if an athlete carrying it engaged in its military and political affairs. The first one to explicitly state that athlete’s heroization was something they could take in their own hands was Currie. He forwarded the idea that athletes were able to pro-actively boost their reputation themselves.⁴⁴ Like Kurke, Currie emphasises the special status of the athletes while still alive and their influence on the *kleos* gained either by emulating the lives of mythic heroes or by specifying their special connection to divinities in commissioned epinician odes, victory statues, or the inscriptions that accompanied them.

All in all, the debate on the question of agency and the role of athletics in classical athletes’ heroization is best described as follows:

³⁹ Boehringer, ‘Zur Heroisierung’, 37, 47.

⁴⁰ Emily Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica* (London 1989) 5-6.

⁴¹ Joseph Fontenrose, ‘The Hero as Athlete’, *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 1 (1968) 73-104.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Leslie Kurke, ‘The Economy of Kudos’, in: Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke eds., *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics* (New York 1998) 131-163.

⁴⁴ Currie, *Pindar*, 120-157.

A handful of those athletes were heroized through a complex calculus involving factors such as the extent to which an athlete's behavior while alive accorded with heroic models, the effectiveness of lobbying by friends and family, and the political situation within a given polis.⁴⁵

Important factors in an athlete's heroization were, then, individual agency, the role of athletic victories, and socio-political situations, but the debate about which factor should be emphasised is far from resolved.

It is especially remarkable how each of these studies has focused on action and reaction, practical function, and hero cult specifically as the most important vehicle of *timē*. The scholars mentioned so far do not present the function of *kleos* as a type of heroic honours nor ideologies of immortality as the basis of athletes' heroization. David Lunt did embark on a quest of looking into *kleos* as an active goal for athletes to strive for, following in the footsteps of Fontenrose, Kurke and Currie, but relayed the emphasis elsewhere. According to Lunt, *kleos* was "the key to immortality"⁴⁶ and very much within reach for Greek athletes, though he does not acknowledge the difficulty and fluidity of views on *kleos* and immortality and focuses so much on the athletes' agency that the role of other Greeks in gaining *kleos* ends up being marginalised. By focusing on the individual rather than on the community, his research overlooks reactions of the *polis* and does not extend towards the ideology behind heroization. This thesis aims to take a first step towards investigating possibilities of going beyond the practical aspects of athletes' strive for *kleos* and the function of hero cults in their name specifically as the vehicle of their heroism, and intends to start filling the gaps that previous studies have overlooked.

Goal and Methodology

The focal point of this paper, then, is the ideology behind the heroization of athletes, and I propose that heroization is indeed a result of *kleos* inspired by athletes' actions, yet needs to be secured by their communities as well. Rather than taking an either-or standpoint, then, I find that there is a midway between the opposing positions that heroization was solely made possible through an athlete's actions as Fontenrose, Kurke, Currie and Lunt argue, and heroization only for the good of the *polis*, as Bohringer and Boehringer state. My thesis focuses on combining these practical viewpoints with a larger, ideological background to do with characteristics of divinity and the way these were expressed in legends pertaining to

⁴⁵ Paul Christesen, 'Kings Playing Politics: The Heroization of Chionis in Sparta', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 59:1 (2010) 26-73, at 63.

⁴⁶ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 88. Lunt adds about *kleos* "whether in reputation, cult, or some type of advantaged afterlife," but in the case of heroic athletes seems to focus mostly on the second and third of these, which were inherently connected to one another, but were circulated in a much different way than reputation was.

athletes, as well as the way in which athletic competitions were inherently connected to heroes in particular from the onset.

According to the Plutarchian notion of divinity, it was “believed to have three elements of superiority, – incorruption, power, and ‘virtue’.”⁴⁷ As such, Plutarch points out three characteristics of divinity: power (*dúnamis*), virtue (*aretē*), and incorruption/immortality (*athanasia*). Even though he was active in the 1st century AD, he seems to have been well aware of classical Greek ideals based on this enumeration. It is not farfetched to state that this is indeed a classification which was prevalent throughout antiquity, albeit in varying forms and phrasing.⁴⁸ The Plutarchian classification of divinity can also be applied to classical athletes’ heroization as this seems to have been the product of *dúnamis*, *aretē* and heroic immortality in legend. If a person showed power and virtue, it inspired other Greeks to think about him as being ‘above all others’ and to include his life story in the Greek historical or mythical narrative either in the form of a historical account or a highly exaggerated legend, thus granting him *kleos* and sometimes eventually awarding him *timē*.⁴⁹ We can say that *kleos* is a product of great displays of power and virtue and necessary in order to become as much part of the divine world as a human possibly could: by being awarded the status of hero.⁵⁰ Of these characteristics, displaying (athletic) *dúnamis* was mostly up to the athletes themselves and depended on their agency, whereas ideas of virtue were more dependent on the *Zeitgeist* and pertained strongly to contemporary interpretations of time-honoured myths in different *poleis*. *Kleos* as the third characteristic originates from the myths themselves and again depends on notions of myth and heroism at the time. I look at *kleos*, power, and virtue as three separate, albeit connected goals for athletes as they were portrayed in several accounts that allowed them to be heroized, as well as components that could bring a community to institute hero cults for them. Therefore, as stated above, the main question of this study is as follows: ‘What does athletes’ strive for heroic *kleos* tell us about factors influencing 5th-century BC Greek processes of heroization?’

⁴⁷ Plutarch, *Life of Aristides* 6.2. Trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 47; “*Αφθαρσία καὶ δυνάμει καὶ ἀρετῇ*” can also be translated as ‘immortality, might, and virtue’. *Aretē* is a notoriously difficult to translate Greek concept. On problems concerning *aretē* in modern scholarship, see Finkelberg, ‘*Timē* and *aretē*’ and idem, ‘Virtue and Circumstances: On the City-State Concept of *Aretē*’, *The American Journal of Philology* 123:1 (2002) 35-49.

⁴⁸ Especially the idea of *aretē* was subject to change in antiquity and varied through time. By dedicating part of chapter One of this study to the three mentioned concepts in classical Greece and especially pertaining to athletes, I hope to come as close to their meanings in accordance with classical Greek thought as possible, confirming the relationship between the three as forming the basic conditions for heroization.

⁴⁹ E.g. the construction of a narrative surrounding the athlete as descendant of a god or hero, as having died a mysterious or magnificent death, or as having special powers, resulting in Greeks founding cults or performing rituals in his honour.

⁵⁰ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 55.

By focusing on both heroic and non-heroized athletes, I hope to find a pattern that illuminates the nature of heroic athletes and explains why others were not accorded heroic status on the basis of their *dúnamis* and *aretē*. Because of the prominence of cults for the heroic athletes in the early classical period, my main focus lies on attitudes towards athletes in the late 6th and 5th centuries BC. Due to the inherent connection between the panhellenic games and heroism, the area under discussion is that in which these were most influential from their beginnings to the end of the 4th century (figure 1), and the considered athletes were reported to have been victorious in at least one of these.

Sources

I use constructed narratives surrounding athletes and athleticism in the form of legends and exaggerated accounts to reveal how these might have inspired heroization in the eyes of other Greeks. Where possible, contemporary sources such as inscriptions adorning victory statues, epinician odes by Pindar, or Herodotos' *Histories* are used, though it must be stated beforehand that apart from Herodotos' work, all of these available sources were probably commissioned by athletes, their relatives, or their *poleis*, and are likely to have been exaggerated or even falsified in order to serve a purpose. It is, however, not my intention to describe realistic accounts of the athletes' lives; I consider the constructed narratives as they presented the athletes to be sufficient for our understanding of the ideologies behind heroization processes at this stage. The actual events that preceded them might be useful for further research.

Since ideologies of the early classical period were still inherently linked to Homer's epics and several other archaic sources, some accounts antedate the classical period. Other sources postdate the 5th century, because they have proven to be useful in that they shed light on ancient Greek values and described sources in the form of archaeology and art which has been lost over time, such as Pausanias' *Description of Greece* and Plutarch's *Lives*. Because of the long time-gap between these sources and the lives of the athletes under discussion, they were selected with care and considered in relation to other, earlier evidence where possible. If they are the only available sources on specific athletes or subjects, I take into consideration the underlying *Zeitgeist* and compare with sources pertaining to comparable athletes or subjects. Additional information will include the design of the panhellenic games and their status in the Greek world, for these are the games in which all of the attested heroic athletes have won competitions.

Case studies

To answer my main question, I have decided to study the Plutarchian characteristics of divinity and how they relate to narratives surrounding both heroic athletes and athletes who were reportedly not heroized, but might have been eligible for heroic honours. Due to limitations in the length of my thesis, I have confined my research to nine athletes – six who are traditionally recognized as heroic athletes and three who can be seen as eligible for heroic honours, but were never accorded them. Of the heroic athletes, I discuss the pankratiast Polydamas of Skotoussa, the boxers Glaukos of Karystos and Euthymos of Locri, Theogenes of Thasos who was victorious in both, the pentathlete Euthykles of Locri, and winner in an unknown sport Philippos of Croton.⁵¹ All of these athletes were mentioned in ancient texts that praised their *dúnamis* and *aretē* and brought to light (possible) hero cults.

I have refrained from considering Hipposthenes of Sparta, Oebotas of Dyme, and Orsippus of Megara because they predate the 5th century by so far that sources are too fragmented and too scarce, and the nature of their alleged heroism fragile. I find that in order to treat these athletes seriously in the context of my study more preliminary research is needed. I have also excluded from my research Diognetos of Crete and Kleomedes of Astypalaia, for their accounts too are limited, and as far as our knowledge of their narratives goes they fit quite well with the others and do not provide new insights that would change the outcome of this specific study. Finally, I have decided to not treat Diagoras of Rhodes; his heroism was so much tied to that of his family members that it is difficult to decipher in how far his *kleos* was tied to his own actions and role in society rather than the *dúnamis* and *aretē* of his children and grandchildren. For Diagoras, a separate study with a different starting point would be more suited, perhaps one that explores the possibilities of inheriting *kleos*.

The three non-heroized athletes that I have chosen as case studies for my research are the famous wrestler Milo of Croton, the pankratiast Timasitheos of Delphi, and Phayllos, who was a pentathlete and victorious in the stadion races.⁵² All three had won victories in panhellenic games and were reported as being great athletes, but were never said to have received cult. There are also no archaeological sources pertaining to potential heroic honours, yet they were mentioned among the most able athletes and sometimes even in one line with heroic athletes or mythic heroes. The narratives surrounding these athletes do not initially seem to differ much from the legends of the heroic athletes and they appear to have been great

⁵¹ All of these are generally recognized as having been alive and active in the panhellenic games in the 6th or 5th century BC.

⁵² Their lives too have been placed in the 6th (Timasitheos, Milo) and 5th (Phayllos) centuries BC.

candidates for heroic honours. Sources are numerous and the way in which these non-heroized athletes in particular were portrayed throughout antiquity is clear, and therefore they are well worth considering in this particular research.

Structure of this Thesis

In chapter One, I discuss the heroic paradigm that made the ‘new hero’ phenomenon possible among athletes, followed by athleticism and panhellenic games in late archaic and early classical Greece, as well as the inherent link between them and heroism. Finally, I turn towards the three Plutarchian characteristics of divinity and manners in which they might be recognised and evaluated in the accounts surrounding athletes.

Chapter Two revolves around showcases of *dúnamis* in athletics as described in sources belonging to one of three categories: the amount of victories that were attributed to athletes, the nature of these victories, and visual self-representation. Chapter Three focuses on the athletes’ *aretē* and ways in which athletes could have been active in areas other than athletic competition, displaying heroic virtues through mimicking the heroic paradigm, gaining political power through wit, and displaying military prowess. Chapter Four treats the last and most important of the characteristics, namely heroic immortality through *kleos*. In order to measure the amount of *kleos* certain athletes might have claimed or were said to have claimed, I look at literary texts and inscriptions that speak of legends and tell stories about athletes that received heroic honours or were considered to be great candidates, as well as archaeological sources pertaining to some cults. I propose that athletes’ chances at being heroized were specifically dependent on these legends and the way they were constructed to include their alleged manners of death, because the heroic paradigm was as much focused on the deaths of heroes as it was on their lives.

In my conclusion, I offer a synthesis of the preceding chapters, an answer to the main question ‘What does athletes’ strive for heroic *kleos* tell us about factors influencing 5th-century BC Greek processes of heroization?’ and include the limitations of my study. I also propose further research that is necessary to better understand the heroization of athletes in classical Greece.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Ancient Greek heroes in myth were viewed as ambiguous figures that neither belonged to the world of mortals nor the realm of immortals, and thus fell in the grey area in-between. There were, however, many types of heroes that provided different versions of a heroic paradigm. Previous scholarship on ancient Greek heroes and their classifications has been focused mostly on hero cults as a continuation of ancestor worship.⁵³ Because they became heroes only after death, their cults took place at the alleged sites of their burials, incessantly being related to death more than immortality and local rather than panhellenic.⁵⁴ Both these hero cults and the myths surrounding the heroes' personae stressed their ambiguous nature and their integration with history; in essence, heroes in myth were thus either divinities who were given a "historic perspective" or men "of a specific time in history" who assumed a divine role in legend and myth.⁵⁵ As they were in fact "ordinary (i.e. 'mortal') men who were outstanding in some way [and] were sometimes paid heroic honours after death as being the possessors of power that might be channelled to good use,"⁵⁶ heroes assumed a position in Greek religion that was supposedly achievable for 'mortal' Greeks as well; by following the heroic paradigm in life and death, they could hope to attain the same degree of divinity and heroism that the mythic heroes held.⁵⁷

This heroic paradigm cannot be fixed as a single narrative, but any story describing the life of a hero in oral tradition or early writing could be a blueprint for mortals to model their own lives and actions after, as well as for other Greeks to compare their contemporaries to in their efforts to include them in local cult and legend.⁵⁸ Some elements, however, were commonly fixed: a hero was almost always defined as personification of the aristocratic ideal that prevailed in heroic epic, i.e. beautiful, powerful, and virtuous.⁵⁹ Mythic heroes were often aristocratic or even kingly personae of divine descent who featured prominent roles in legendary wars, battles, and politics, though their heroism was made clear mostly through their ability to overcome struggles and sometimes complete a series of *athla* (tasks) like

⁵³ Rohde, *Psyche*, 117-118.

⁵⁴ Currie, *Pindar*, 162.

⁵⁵ Kearns, *The Heroes*, 134.

⁵⁶ Margaret C. Howatson ed., 'Heroes', *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Oxford Reference Online 2011), <<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/view/10.1093/acref/9780199548545.001.000-1/acref-9780199548545-e-1498>>.

⁵⁷ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 54.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ On developments in the aristocratic ideal in the archaic and classical periods, see Walter Donlan, *The Aristocratic Ideal in Ancient Greece: Attitudes of Superiority from Homer to the End of the Fifth Century BC* (Lawrence 1980).

Herakles or a *nostos* (journey homeward) like Odysseus. In doing so, their power and virtue shined through and they could gain renown or *kleos*, eventually adding to their chances at heroization. But it was not only their lives that featured in the heroic paradigm, their deaths were also important elements which were not easily emulated and depended more on subsequent legends constructed by other Greeks. In most cases, heroes reportedly died in manners heavily associated with the Greek gods or the aristocratic ideals they represented: an extremely heroic death in one-on-one battle, at the time of the rise of the *polis* death in service of the community, or by some mysterious force of nature, such as being struck by lightning, death in sacred spaces, mysterious disappearances, or being snatched away.⁶⁰ Sometimes, heroes' deaths were obscured and specifically linked to the institution of hero- or mystery cult, or described only long after the first versions of the myth had been written down. It has been noted already that while the new hero phenomenon was existent all throughout Greek antiquity, different periods created diverse new heroes, and this was much based on developments within the Greek world.⁶¹ In the late 6th and 5th centuries BC, the most prominent heroizations were those of athletes.

Athletes in Greek Society

The veneration of athletes as new heroes in late archaic and early classical Greece did not appear out of nowhere. Under the influence of panhellenism, games that permitted a growing number of Greeks to compete gained influence and became more of a spectacle as time progressed. Especially important in this sense are the *periodos* games: the Olympic, the Pythian, the Isthmian, and the Nemean games. To win one or more of the *periodos* games was a tremendous honour, and those who won all four of them could boast being *periodonikes*.⁶² The *periodos* games were modelled from the start to promote a link between the participating athletes and specific heroes by their foundation myths that included (athletic) heroes as founders of the specific games, the sites of the games, and the tokens of victory that were given to the winners of competitions.

⁶⁰ On the narratives surrounding the deaths of heroes of myth, see Corinne Ondine Pache, 'The Hero Beyond Himself: Heroic Death in Ancient Greek Poetry and Art', in: S. Albermeier ed., *Heroes: Mortals and Myths in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore 2009) 88-107, at 89-91; On death for the community, see Jaeger, 'The Greek Ideas', 138; Of the mythic heroes, Herakles was the only one to have specifically been deified rather than just heroized, and was turned into an actual god as part of the narrative of the Heroic age. Cf. Pache, 'The Hero', 104.

⁶¹ Jones, *New Heroes*, 1-2. See also Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults*, 19, and Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults*, 183-207.

⁶² Use of the term *periodonikes* is only confirmed in literature of later antiquity, from the 2nd century AD onwards, though the four games already formed an honourable quaternion in the 5th century BC as can be seen in their prominence in victory lists and inscriptions adorning victory statues. Whereas most lesser victories were grouped together and mentioned only in passing, athletes took pride in boasting their *periodos* victories more specifically.

The *Periodos* Games

The *periodos* games especially were deemed important in a world of growing panhellenism and were also called *stephanitai*, ‘crown games’.⁶³ They formed a circuit that spanned four years (table 1) and included the quadrennial Olympic and Pythian games at Olympia and Delphi, and the biennial Isthmian and Nemean games near Corinth and at Nemea.⁶⁴ These panhellenic games were open to all (male) Greeks to compete in and bestowed upon victors fame and honour that was recognized throughout the Greek world.⁶⁵

The *periodos* games were generally made up of three types of competition: the so-called *gymnikos agon* (‘gymnastic competition’), the *hippikos agon* (‘equestrian contest’), and *mousikos agon* (‘musical contest’), though the third was not present at all of the *periodos* games or added at a late stage.⁶⁶ In the case of heroic athletes, it is best to focus first and foremost on the *gymnikos agon*, i.e. footraces, the pentathlon, and combat sports such as boxing and the pankration.⁶⁷ These allowed athletes to display their physical power and virtue and embody heroes of myth, and were less influenced by status and wealth than the *hippikos agon*.⁶⁸ All attested heroized athletes were competitors in the *gymnikos agon* and could boast being *olympionikai* or *periodonikai* as they won at least one Olympic victory and in several cases all *periodos* games.

Founding Myths and Sites

The origin myths of the *periodos* games were all centred on ancient myths that were in some way tied to heroes and gods, and included inherent links to the lives and deaths of specific heroes and gods. All of the *periodos* games were located near a *heroon*, or ‘hero tomb’, and featured dedications and offerings to these heroes, as well as the gods in whose honour the

⁶³ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 111. They were called this because crowns were the only official prize of these games. There were other prizes and benefits accorded to victors in the *stephanitai*, but not always by officials of the games.

⁶⁴ The origins of the games are traditionally placed in 776, 586, 582 and 573 BC respectively.

⁶⁵ Paul Christesen, *Olympic Victor Lists and Ancient Greek History* (Cambridge 2007) 15-16.

⁶⁶ *Idem*, 15.

⁶⁷ The pentathlon included the long jump, javelin throwing, discus throwing, the stadion (a footrace), and wrestling. ‘Pankration’ literally translates to ‘all of power’ and included different fighting techniques, with a very limited number of rules.

⁶⁸ Winners in the chariot races were more dependent on wealth than power or virtue, which might be illustrated by the fact that victory crowns did not necessarily go to jockeys, but rather to the owner of the horse, who oftentimes enlisted jockeys to compete. In the case of the *hippikos agon*, it should also be noted that while women were forbidden from attending the games, some were allowed to boast victory in the Olympics by having their horses enter the contests. On women in equestrian games, see Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics*, 19, and Donald G. Kyle, “‘The Only Woman in All Greece’: Kyniska, Agesilaus, Alcibiades and Olympica’, *Journal of Sport History* 30:2 (2003) 183-203; Plutarch, *Agesilaus* 20. Trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 87: “When he noticed that some of the citizens supposed that they were important and thought highly of themselves because they bred race-horses, he persuaded his sister Kyniska to enter a four-horse chariot in the Olympic games, because he wanted to show the Greeks that the victory did not depend at all on excellence, but on money and expenditure.”

games were held. As such, they combined commemoration of the deceased heroes to the newfound glory of the living athletes and emphasized the ambiguous nature of heroes and games.

The Olympic games held a special relationship with Pelops and Herakles. They were said to have been either founded or reinstated by Herakles, as the oldest stadium at the site was laid out next to the Pelopeion (figure 2, no. 3) that was believed to have been a sanctuary dedicated to Pelops by Herakles.⁶⁹

The sanctuary is said to have been set apart to Pelops by Heracles the son of Amphitryon. Heracles too was a great-grandson of Pelops, and he is also said to have sacrificed to him into the pit. Right down to the present day the magistrates of the year sacrifice to him, and the victim is a black ram.⁷⁰

By definition, then, Herakles is connected to Pelops and the founding of the Olympic games. Pelops himself was honoured there because of the chariot race that won him the hand of Hippodameia near Olympia:

And now he partakes
of splendid blood sacrifices
as he reclines by the course of the Alpheus,
having his much-attended tomb beside the altar thronged by visiting strangers. And far shines that
fame of the Olympic festivals gained in the racecourses
of Pelops, where competition is held for swiftness of feet
and boldly labouring feats of strength.⁷¹

As such, Pelops too was specifically linked to the Olympic games already in the late 6th and early 5th centuries BC.⁷² As the Olympic games were connected to these heroes specifically, it is not surprising that they were held mostly in honour of the god Zeus, and the ancient site featured a temple of the god (figure 2, no. 1). Sacrifices were made to both the god and Pelops during the course of the games.⁷³

The Pythian games were associated with Apollo especially because of their location, but also because they had allegedly been initiated as funeral games to the Python after Apollo

⁶⁹ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 131.

⁷⁰ Pausanias 5.13.2. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, H.A. Ormerod, LCL 188.

⁷¹ Pindar, *Olympian* 1.90-96. Trans. William H. Race, LCL 56.

⁷² Pindar's epinician odes were commissioned by other Greeks from ca. 500 BC onwards and it is likely that they were all inspired by stories that circulated throughout the Greek world as part of an oral tradition or even other written sources at the time.

⁷³ On the program of the Olympics, see Nigel Jonathan Spivey, *The Ancient Olympics* (Oxford 2005), esp. 125-168.

killed the creature and were said to have featured at the start *mousikos agon* only.⁷⁴ The founding myth of the Pythian games was modelled to include a battle between a god and a monster, inherently connecting them to the divine world, and the games were placed right next to the Delphic oracle. As a religious centre, the site was comprised of much more than a *gymnasium* and horse tracks. The most important religious building was the temple of Apollo (figure 3, no. 1), but a *heroon* was nearby as well: that of Neoptolemos, son of Achilles. He had allegedly died at Delphi, though accounts of the myth differ. Pindar tells of Neoptolemos:

the god (Apollo) had sworn,
that because he (Neoptolemos) had killed aged Priam,
who leapt up towards the courtyard altar,
he would not come to his welcoming home
or an old age
in life. He slew him as he
was quarrelling with attendants
over countless honors
in his own sanctuary at the broad navel of the earth.⁷⁵

Pindar's account connects the death of Neoptolemos consciously to the site of Apollo's oracle and the Pythian games. It is likely that the games included sacrifices not only to Apollo, but to Neoptolemos as well.

The other *periodos* games were less in prestige, but also connected to heroes. The Isthmian games were said to have been instituted in honour of Melikertes, a babe whose mother flung herself into the sea while carrying him. After the boy had drowned, Pausanias tells us:

There was an altar of Melicertes. At this place, they say, the boy was brought ashore by a dolphin; Sisyphus found him lying and gave him burial on the Isthmus, establishing the Isthmian games in his honour.⁷⁶

According to this myth, Sisyphus founded the Isthmian games in honour of the drowned boy near his tomb. It is not surprising that they were also dedicated to Poseidon, on account of his special connection to water and the Isthmus. The Isthmian games were located near one of his sanctuaries. Finally, the Nemean games were most commonly believed to have been founded as funeral games for Opheltes, the son of king Lycurgus of Sparta and his wife Eurydice, and

⁷⁴ Joseph Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins* (Berkeley 1959) 374; It was said that the Python was a snake-monster sent by Hera to kill Apollo's mother Leto. In Delphi, he slayed the monster and it was there where both his oracle and the Pythian games were placed.

⁷⁵ Pindar, *Paeon* 6.112-120. Trans. William H. Race, LCL 485.

⁷⁶ Pausanias 2.1.3. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 93.

hosted first by the Seven Against Thebes after they had killed the serpent who had caused the infant's death.⁷⁷ The games were held in honour of Zeus and were located near both a sacred precinct in his honour and Opheltes' *heroon*.

By connecting honours to the dead and immortals with celebrations and glory for competing athletes, the *periodos* games might be viewed as monuments to the deceased that linked the world of mortals to the realm of immortals and explicitly took up a position in-between, much like heroes themselves.⁷⁸

Victory Tokens

Victory in the *periodos* games earned an athlete many tokens that emphasized his newfound relationship with heroes. That they were deserving of heroic honours was made clear through 5th-century stories that circulated about victorious athletes who had not been accorded due rewards, and caused disaster to strike either by divine punishment or because they were indeed believed to have been heroized.⁷⁹

Rewards for the games were numerous: there were financial rewards, athletes were sometimes placed in positions of power, and their religious status was elevated.⁸⁰ Especially the latter was thanks to the legends surrounding different types of victory tokens in the *periodos* games. Athletes received from the organisers of the games one prize, i.e. a victory crown, hence the name *stephanitai* or 'crown games'.⁸¹ These crowns were believed to represent Prometheus' bonds as commemoration of the suffering he had to endure for the benefit of humankind,⁸² and symbolically celebrated victory and subservience to the gods, all the while conveying both power and virtue.⁸³ Aside from a crown, all games awarded their victors palm fronds, of which Plutarch informs us:

The equality of the leaves is similar to a contest or a race, because they spring up in opposition to each other and run along together, and that the word *nike* (victory) itself is derived from the fact that they do not 'yield'. [...] There is more plausibility in the view that the ancients admired the

⁷⁷ Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Malden 2007) 138.

⁷⁸ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 125.

⁷⁹ Nicholson, *The Poetics of Victory*, 24.

⁸⁰ Waldo E. Sweet, *Sport and Recreation in Ancient Greece: A Sourcebook with Translations* (New York 1987) 3.

⁸¹ The term *stephanitai*, much like *periodonikes*, has only been found in later sources. The first evidence for this term dates to the 4th century BC, when new games were being organised and the group of *stephanitai* was already expanding. It is a useful term, however, in studies of the *periodos* games in earlier times as well, because it literally refers to 'games in which a crown is given'. On the *stephanitai*, see Sofie Remijnsen, 'The So-Called "Crown Games": Terminology and Historical Context of the Ancient Categories for *Agones*', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 177 (2011) 97-109.

⁸² Nicholas James Richardson, 'Panhellenic Cults and Panhellenic Poets', in: David M. Lewis et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume V: The Fifth Century BC* (Cambridge 1992) 223-244, at 223.

⁸³ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 111.

beauty and shapeliness of the tree, like Homer when he compared the beauty of the Phaecian maiden to ‘the shoot of a palm tree’.⁸⁴

And he continues:

I will contribute first to the remark that the fame of victors ought to remain unfading and exempt from old age, as far as is possible. Now the palm is one of the most long-lived of plants, as the Orphic poems somewhere attest: ‘They lived as long as the high-fronded shoots of the palms’.⁸⁵

The palm frond was accordingly associated with victory, virtuousness, beauty and old age/immortality and allowed athletes to boast a likeness to heroes. Another special honour for victorious athletes at the sites of the games was the right to erect a victory statue that was a type of votive offering which had to be commissioned by the athletes themselves, their family or their *polis*, and granted them the right to self-representation towards the gods.⁸⁶ This privilege was rare in late archaic, early classical Greece and must therefore have been a tremendous honour. Rewards were also given in victorious athletes’ own *poleis*, including lifelong *sitesis* – the invitation to meals at the expense of the *polis*⁸⁷ – and a large welcoming feast upon their return home.⁸⁸ Finally, victorious athletes were honoured in text and the oral tradition, by commissioning epinician odes of Simonides or Pindar, and victory songs,⁸⁹ which may be interpreted as a type of ‘verbal monument’, much like the inscriptions on the bases of statues and in victory lists on *stelai*,⁹⁰ which were also rights granted to the athletes.

All in all, the *periodos* games were from the outset designed to connect athletic victors to heroes and gods. Victory in the *periodos* games gave athletes the chance to display their *dúnamis* and *aretē* in actions and victory tokens, in order to claim *kleos* and inspire legends and songs that eventually led to their heroization.

⁸⁴ Plutarch, *Table Talk* 8.4B-C. Trans. P.A. Clement and H.B. Hoffleit, LCL 424.

⁸⁵ Idem, *Table Talk* 8.4E.

⁸⁶ Marc Domingo Gyax, *Benefaction and Rewards in the Ancient Greek City: The Origins of Euergetism* (Princeton 2016) 117.

⁸⁷ IG I² 77, translation from Sweet, *Sport and Recreation*, 120-121: “And all those who have won an athletic event at the Olympic, Pythian, Isthmian, or Nemean Games shall have the right to eat free of charge in the city hall and also have other honours in addition to the free meals. Whoever has won or will win the four-horse chariot race or the two-horse chariot race or the race with rider in the Olympic, Pythian, Isthmian, or Nemean games shall also have the right of free meals in the city hall and they will also get the other honours engraved on the stele.”

⁸⁸ It has been argued that victorious athletes were honoured by the *polis* by tearing down part of the city wall in order to symbolize how there was now enough protection so that it was not needed, though the only historical case in which this can be said for sure was the homecoming of Nero, so this is probably an exaggeration. See Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 122-123.

⁸⁹ Nancy Felson and Richard J. Parmentier, ‘The “Savvy Interpreter”: Performance and Interpretation in Pindar’s Victory Odes’, *Signs and Society* 2 (2015) 261-305, at 264.

⁹⁰ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 100.

Dúnamis

How does one measure an athlete's *dúnamis* and its use for his potential heroization? First it must be determined what Greeks understood by athletic *dúnamis*. The word *dúnamis* is derived from the verb *dúnamai*, 'to be capable of', and can be translated as potentiality, ability, capacity, or most often power.⁹¹ In general, athletic *dúnamis* can be interpreted as a man's athletic ability, or the power he has naturally that he can employ in order to become a successful athlete. Because of the agonistic nature of Greek societies, only athletes who were victors in competitions could speak of themselves as successful; in the greater (panhellenic) games it was either win or lose, second or third place did not matter.⁹² In the case of a loss, or not winning first place, an athlete could face shame upon returning to his hometown.⁹³ The amount of victories that were ascribed to a specific athlete showed his potential as an athlete and added to ideas about his *dúnamis*: his victories would not only attest his capabilities as an athlete, but also raised every prospect of being heroized.

Aside from the quantity of victories athletes could claim as theirs, the nature of these victories was equally important. It has been argued that there were no accounts of records and that the speed of the fastest runner or the strength of the mightiest boxer was not viewed as important.⁹⁴ However, inscriptions that were put up by victors, their relatives, or their *poleis* often call victorious athletes 'the best' or 'swift of feet', and in a few cases do mention a specific record.⁹⁵ There is some dispute about the historicity of the few specific records or the partiality that might have played a role in putting up these inscriptions, but the mere fact that these types of expressions were being used to single out the magnificence of these athletes tells us that it was not at all unimportant. Instead, it can be stated that overall records were merely subordinate to records among direct competitors. Being the best amongst peers was more important than trumping athletes who had lived 50 or 100 years earlier and gave athletes the right to be represented by themselves or others as being a possessor of athletic *dúnamis*.

Victories and records were inscribed on tomb stones and on the bases of victory statues. As such, they became the primary vehicle by which athletes' *dúnamis* shined through and by which athletes' claimed victories could be commemorated. The statues that adorned

⁹¹ John R. Wallach, 'Demokratia and Aretē in Ancient Greek Political Thought', *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek Political Thought* 28:2 (2011) 181-213, n22 at 189.

⁹² Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle*, 191.

⁹³ Idem, 190, 195.

⁹⁴ On the discussion surrounding ancient Greek athletics and records, see Marcus Niebuhr Tod, 'Greek Record-Keeping and Record-Breaking', *The Classical Quarterly* 43:3-4 (1949) 105-112.

⁹⁵ Suda, s.v. 'Φαύλλος'. Trans. David Whitehead, *Suda Online* (2001) <<http://www.stoa.org/sol-entries/phi/143>> accessed 06-07-2018: "Fifty-five feet (16.5 meters) far jumped Phayllos, the discus he threw five less than hundred."

victory lists were also vehicles of *dúnamis* themselves. The right to commission a statue at a prominent place in a *polis* or as a dedication was only granted to especially able athletes.⁹⁶ The right to visual self-representation was a special privilege that in the early classical period was shared only with a very limited group of extraordinary citizens. Victory statues represented a “continuous homage”⁹⁷ to athletes and memorialized their fame, often at the place of the games in which they were victorious and/or at the *agora* in their hometowns.⁹⁸ The aesthetic of victory statues was designed to convey *dúnamis* and show likeness to mythic heroes, especially those who were already associated with the *periodos* games, effectively showing the qualities that “the spectator [had] admired and desired in the athlete from the start”⁹⁹ and ideally “alienating [the] viewers”¹⁰⁰ to an extent that the athletes in question were portrayed as having as much *dúnamis* as mythic heroes and elevating them to a higher status.¹⁰¹ One of the ways in which artists probably attempted to cause this effect was by making the statues larger than life-size, “push[ing] the limits of mortal representation”¹⁰² and inherently linking them to the mythic heroes.¹⁰³ In other words, great statues conveyed great *dúnamis*, and this was consciously sought out by athletes and the artists who created their victory statues.

In conclusion, an athlete’s *dúnamis* was conveyed firstly via reaching a significant number of victories, secondly through achieving extraordinary athletic feats such as being the first to win a victory for his *polis* or being the best in a certain event, and lastly via visual self-representation in sculpture. These three things lay in the hands of athletes themselves rather than their *poleis* and as such confirm their agency in the way they were viewed by the general public.

⁹⁶ Gygax, *Benefaction and Rewards*, 120. Gygax states: “Statues were granted only under special circumstances: if the athlete were the first to obtain a victory for his polis, for instance, or the first in a long time or in a certain event, [...] if the victories were accompanied by other achievements, [...] or if the athlete simply enjoyed – for whatever reason – the necessary support within his community.”

⁹⁷ *Idem*, 124.

⁹⁸ *Idem*, 126.

⁹⁹ Susanne Turner, ‘In Cold Blood: Dead Athletes in Classical Athens’, *World Archaeology* 44:2 (2012) 217-233, at 220.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 103.

¹⁰² *Idem*, 102.

¹⁰³ That mythic heroes were larger than normal humans is attested in several sources. Philostratos, for instance, dedicated a large part of his *Heroikos* to an argument between a vinedresser and a Phoenician about whether or not there were ever men who were as tall as 10 feet. For an elaborate discussion of this conversation in *Heroikos* and other sources pertaining to the size of heroes, see Jeffrey Rusten, ‘Living in the Past: Allusive Narratives and Elusive Authorities in the World of the *Heroikos*’, in: Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean and Ellen Bradshaw Aitken eds., *Philostratus’s Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century C.E.* (Atlanta 2004) 143-158, at 148-155.

Aretē

The *aretē* ideal is less easy to define than the *dúnamis* ideal. As it is mostly translated as ‘virtue’, I will make use of this translation, though one must keep in mind that Greek *aretē* was not as morally loaded as ‘virtue’ is nowadays. In fact, already in classical Greece *aretē* was a much debated concept. In Plato’s *Meno*, *aretē* is said to refer not to man’s excellence as a man, but rather as a role-bearer in relation to other role-bearers:¹⁰⁴

Men: [...] if you take the virtue of a man, it is easily stated that a man’s virtue is this – that he be competent to manage the affairs of his city, and to manage them so as to benefit his friends and harm his enemies, and to take care to avoid suffering harm himself. Or take a woman’s virtue: there is no difficulty in describing it as the duty of ordering the house well, looking after the property indoors, and obeying her husband. And the child has another virtue—one for the female, and one for the male; and there is another for elderly men—one, if you like, for freemen, and yet another for slaves. And there are very many other virtues besides, so that one cannot be at a loss to explain what virtue is; for it is according to each activity and age that every one of us, in whatever we do, has his virtue; and the same, I take it, Socrates, will hold also of vice.¹⁰⁵

Following this interpretation, which focuses on people’s specific roles in life, the *aretē* of an athlete would be to excel as an athlete, not as a man. Margalit Finkelberg describes this type of *aretē* as “role-related specific excellence”¹⁰⁶ or “that quality or set of qualities which enables one to fill a particular role and to discharge its duties.”¹⁰⁷ An athlete would be accorded *aretē* if he excelled as an athlete. However, in order to be heroized, athletes would have to measure up to the *aretē* of mythic heroes, which was not so easily done.

Thanks to the athletic nature of some of the mythic heroes – Herakles, Theseus, ‘swift-footed’ Achilles – athletes were capable of showing much of the heroic ideal through their *dúnamis*, but in order to reach perfect heroic excellence and become elevated to the status of new hero, other factors such as military prowess, wisdom, justice and piety, or even beauty and charisma, were important as well and contributed to an athlete’s heroic *aretē*. In order to make their *aretē* clear, athletes assumed other important roles in their societies, especially in political and military fields that contributed to the welfare of their *poleis*. That athletes were especially useful in warfare was expressed by Philostratos, who says about classical Greek athletes:

Thus they trained without falling ill and were slow to grow old. Some of them competed for eight Olympiads, some for nine, and they were good also at fighting as hoplites, and they fought in

¹⁰⁴ Finkelberg, ‘Virtue and Circumstances’, 37.

¹⁰⁵ Plato, *Meno* 71E-72A. Trans. W.R.M. Lamb, LCL 165.

¹⁰⁶ Finkelberg, ‘Virtue and Circumstances’, 37.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

defence of their city walls; nor did they fall there but were thought worthy of rewards and trophies, using warfare as training for athletics and athletics as training for warfare.

Heroic excellence of the mythic heroes could be found in their specific versions of the heroic paradigm as well as their usefulness for Greek societies in political and military functions. In general, this was both directly and indirectly emulated by 6th- and 5th-century BC athletes. It was already observed by several scholars, most importantly by Lunt, that athletes strived to emulate the heroic paradigm by consciously copying the works and lives of heroes.¹⁰⁸ In doing so, and by commissioning statues that looked very much like those of the mythic heroes, which bore their names, athletes strived to be associated with the same heroic virtues and inspired others to grant them *kleos* and heroize them. Secondly, and this is more according to the theories of Bohringer and Boehringer, athletes could excel in both political and military matters. By being prominent in politics and assuming political careers, athletes could display wealth, status and wisdom, which were features that mythic heroes had allegedly enjoyed as well. More importantly, by assuming roles in the military, athletes were able to use their strength and emphasize the talismanic power that their athletic feats had bestowed on them in order to serve their *poleis*.¹⁰⁹ This prompted citizens to recognize their *aretē* and honour them in the same ways they honoured their mythic founders and other heroes.

Kleos

Kleos, more so than the other two attributes, depended on the peoples' opinions, as well as the construction of legends as a result. In order to gain a good perception of the ancient concept of *kleos*, and its value for our understanding of classical Greek heroization, I return first to the meaning of the terms 'immortality' and *kleos* before addressing ways of measuring its influence on athletes' heroization. As mentioned earlier, the ancient Greek conception of immortality is not to be confused with modern Western thoughts about the subject, which are predominantly of Christian origin and define godly immortality – the belief that God is everlasting and timeless¹¹⁰ – versus personal immortality: the belief that the human soul is

¹⁰⁸ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 54.

¹⁰⁹ Kurke, 'The Economy of Kudos', 131-163.

¹¹⁰ Richard Swinburne, 'Immortality', in: Ted Honderich ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford Reference Online 2005)

<<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/view/10.1093/acref/9780199264797.001.0001/acref-9780199264797-e-1189>>, accessed 28-04-2018: "According to Christian and other Western theology, God is immortal in the strictest sense that he can never die, either because he is essentially everlasting (i.e. his nature is such that if he exists at one time, he exists at all times) or because he is eternal or timeless (i.e. he exists outside time)."

eternal, trapped in a temporal body, and after one's physical death may experience an eternal afterlife.¹¹¹

Instead, ancient Greek notions of immortality were complex and not fixed, but fluid and time-specific. Where concepts of godly immortality were described, they have been relatively constant and portrayed the gods as not necessarily eternal: in Hesiod's *Theogony*, for instance, the story of the gods' origin and genealogy is narrated, showing how their existence had a beginning but no end and was thus immortal, yet not eternal.¹¹² Furthermore, in his attempt to define the Greek gods, Albert Henrichs states:

If gods would be subject to death, their power would be finite and limited by their mortality. [...] the human form which the Greeks shared with their gods often served as a reminder of the distance that separated mortals and immortals.¹¹³

With this in mind, the defining characteristic that lies at the basis of the god-human dichotomy is the opposition between immortality in the sense of 'being deathless' and mortality, in which case 'being deathless' may be identified as the "ultimate benchmark of divinity."¹¹⁴

But Greeks too knew a type of personal immortality that remains difficult to define.¹¹⁵ While evidence for active belief in the immortality of the human soul in early sources is rare,¹¹⁶ Greeks – especially in the archaic and (early) classical period – did not necessarily view personal immortality as literal deathlessness. Individuals were believed to be able to achieve another form of immortality, however, based on social status and the collective memory of the Greeks and rooted in mediators that are known to have contributed to the legacy of individuals. The most important of these mediators were funerary works (epitaphs,

¹¹¹ John Bowker, 'Afterlife', in: John Bowker ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford Reference Online 2000) <<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/view/10.1093/acref/9780192800947.001.0001/acref-9780192800947-e-201>>, accessed 28-04-2018: "Personal immortality entails that after our death (as identified by others) we ourselves shall enjoy experiences, possibly after an interval, and shall live another life, and continue to do so forever. The doctrine may involve only the survival of our 'soul' conceived of as an immaterial thinking substance contingently and temporarily lodged in our present body. Or it may involve resurrection of the body itself."

¹¹² Albert Henrichs, 'What is a Greek God?', in: Jan Nicolaas Bremmer and Andrew Erskine eds., *The Gods of Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 2010) 19-39, at 30.

¹¹³ *Idem*, 29.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Several definitions of personal immortality might apply to different circumstances and periods, as well as individual circumstances of the authors of ancient texts in which they may be found. The aim of this thesis is not to treat all of these, but to focus on the one tied to *kleos* that was an active component of the process of trying to break through the dividing line between the realm of mortals and that of immortals.

¹¹⁶ R. Lattimore (1962) as quoted in Currie, *Pindar*, 73: "from the evidence of epitaphs, the belief of both Greek and Roman, in immortality, was not widespread, nor very strong".

stelai, tombs) and *kleos* (fame and the ‘things that are heard’¹¹⁷); they were expected to convey the names of the dead for eternity, metaphorically prolonging the lives of the deceased and protecting their places in the collective memory of the Greeks,¹¹⁸ much like heroes such as Achilles were said to have done. By being included in the Greek collective memory, one would leave the constrictions of individual memory and avoid the temporality it was connected to.¹¹⁹

Different groups of prominent Greeks attempted to gain *kleos* much like heroes in order to earn the same chances at this type of metaphorical immortality and be venerated as a new hero, in some cases receiving cult, but mostly relying on *kleos*. The word *kleos* is derived from the verb κλύειν (*klúein*), which means ‘to hear’ and thus literally translates to ‘that which is heard’,¹²⁰ and as mediator of name and identity provides its agent with a type of heroic personal immortality that is fully dependent on both his/her actions and the reactions of the public. Though inherently literary – not to be found outside of written literature – *kleos* may be viewed as a widespread phenomenon in Greek epic and legend as part of the heroic paradigm.

Kleos was a product of the abovementioned *dúnamis* and *aretē* in the context of heroism. As potential new heroes displayed the two characteristics of divinity/heroism, they inspired legends and myths surrounding their persona and their stories were told for a long time after their deaths, mostly as part of oral traditions and sometimes in writing. But not only *dúnamis* and *aretē* were part of *kleos*; the heroic paradigm also included heroes’ relationships to the gods and the ways in which they died and were celebrated after death. These parts of the heroic paradigm were not just important, but we will find that especially in the case of athletes, these were crucial to their chances at heroization. Heroic athletes’ elevation into a *kleos*-immortal state was mostly thanks to their heroic or mysterious deaths, and this bestowed upon them more talismanic power than Kurke’s *kudos* or their athleticism, effectively turning them into a super-human being or even local deity and elevating them into the ‘grey area’ between mortals and immortals.

¹¹⁷ Simon Goldhill, *The Poet’s Voice* (Cambridge 1990) 70.

¹¹⁸ Matylda Obryk, *Unsterblichkeitsglaube in den griechischen Versinschriften* (Berlin 2012) 156.

¹¹⁹ Nicolas Russell, ‘Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs’, *The French Review* 79:4 (2006) 792-804, at 794.

¹²⁰ Goldhill, *The Poet’s Voice*, 69.

Chapter Two: *Dúnamis*

An athlete's *dúnamis* can be measured by the amount of victories he is said to have won, the nature of these victories, and visual self-representation in sculpture. In order to make sense of the similarities and differences between heroic athletes and non-heroized athletes, I present an inventory of inscriptions and texts recounting the victories that were attributed to different athletes and conveyed their *dúnamis*. I start with three athlete who may be classified as *dúnamikos* athletes, or 'especially able' athletes; they are without a doubt considered to have been heroic athletes and were specifically known for their feats of strength. After that, I turn to heroic athletes whose *dúnamis* was mentioned in passing or as part of an exaggerated legendary account, or whose athletic feats have survived only fragmentarily. Finally, I turn to athletes who are not counted amongst the heroic athletes, but displayed great *dúnamis* and would have been candidates for heroization in 5th-century BC Greece, but were never reported to have been honoured in cult.

Dúnamikos Athletes

Three heroic athletes who were especially known for their strength were Polydamas of Skotoussa, Theogenes of Thasos, and Glaukos of Karystos.¹²¹ Polydamas, son of Nikias, was a late 5th-century pankratiast who was described by Pausanias as the "tallest of all men except those called heroes and any other mortal race that may have existed before the heroes"¹²² and thus explicitly linked to the mythic heroes of the Heroic age. It is very likely that his victory statue was especially designed to be larger than life-size and resembled the physique of cult statues of gods and heroes.¹²³ Not only the part of Pausanias' account that called Polydamas the 'tallest of all men', but the fact that he added how it stood on a high pedestal as well gives the impression that the statue itself was indeed very large.¹²⁴ The sculpture itself has not survived so it is uncertain in how far it bore a resemblance to Herakles or other heroes, but remains of the statue base were found in Olympia.¹²⁵ It is broken into two large pieces and bears a relief depicting parts of the narrative that was constructed around the athlete, which he was most famous for. Not much is known of the victor in terms of historical facts: he was said

¹²¹ The names used to refer to these athletes vary: one might also come across Poulydamas/Pulydamas of Skotussa/Scotussa, Theagenes of Thasos, and Glaucus of Carystus.

¹²² Pausanias 6.5.1. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

¹²³ Walter Woodburn Hyde, *Olympic Victor Monuments and Greek Athletic Art* (Washington 1921) 45-46.

¹²⁴ Pausanias 6.5.1.

¹²⁵ The base now stands in the Museum of the History of the Olympic Games of Antiquity in Ancient Olympia. It was dated the second half of the 4th century BC. His statue would then not have been commissioned by himself, but rather his sons or grandsons. The fact that they were allowed to put the statue up at Olympia confirms the longevity of his fame.

to be an Olympic victor and was rumoured to have performed various feats of strength that showed his athletic *dúnamis*. He allegedly won more prizes in the pankration, but how many and in which games remains uncertain.¹²⁶

Pausanias mentioned Polydamas' athletic career only in passing, but goes into full detail about his alleged other displays of strength. These would have included slaying a lion, fighting a bull and pulling off one of its hooves, and stopping a speeding chariot with one hand.¹²⁷ He was even said to have defeated and killed three of the 'Immortals', soldiers of a Persian elite army units (figure 4),¹²⁸ which was a great feat but ultimately was recorded to have cost him a second victory in the Olympic games:

It is said that [Promachos] also overcame at Olympia Pulydamas of Scotussa, this being the occasion when, after his safe return home from the king of Persia, he came for the second time to compete in the Olympic games. The Thessalians,¹²⁹ however, refuse to admit that Pulydamas was beaten one of the pieces of evidence they bring forward is a verse about Pulydamas: Scotoessa, nurse of unbeaten Pulydamas.¹³⁰

The Thessalians tried so hard to claim that their Polydamas was unbeaten because, normally, a defeat would have been disastrous for an athlete's chances at gaining *kleos*. However, the fact that Polydamas' defeat was said to have been due to a victory over three 'Immortals' only would have added to his fame. Hardships were at the core of the legends surrounding mythic heroes, and to overcome struggles was a sign of *aretē*. Polydamas was not the only heroic athlete who was defeated specifically because of an earlier victory against a heroic opponent; Theogenes was also defeated after having been victorious in competition against an equal, only to come back even stronger.

Accounts of Theogenes' life are much more extensive concerning his athletic victories. Several archaeological sources attest to his cult and can be used as back-up to the available literary accounts. Some epigraphic material was found in Delphi, Olympia, and Thasos,¹³¹ and Pausanias gives an extensive account of his athletic accomplishments as well.¹³² Theogenes, son of Timoxenos, came from an elite family full of magistrates and probably lived in the late 6th, early 5th century BC; his attributed victories are traditionally

¹²⁶ Pausanias 6.5.4. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272: "besides his prizes for the pancratium" rather than "besides his Olympic victory."

¹²⁷ Pausanias 6.5.4-6.

¹²⁸ Michael B. Charles, 'Immortals and Apple Bearers: Towards a Better Understanding of Achaemenid Infantry Units', *The Classical Quarterly* 61:1 (2011) 114-133, at 114-115.

¹²⁹ Skotoussa was one of the *poleis* in Thessaly, Greece, and its citizens were therefore Thessalians.

¹³⁰ Pausanias 7.17.5-6. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

¹³¹ Jean Pouilloux, *Recherches sur l'histoire et les cultes de Thasos* (Paris 1954) 67.

¹³² Pausanias 6.11.2-9.

placed in the first quarter of the latter century. Sources are clear about the *dúnamis* attributed to Theogenes: early on in his life, his talent for athletics already shined through. When he was nine years old, it was said, he carried a bronze statue home from the agora, and when the Thasians became mad at him for it and demanded punishment, he carried it all the way back and placed it back on its pedestal.¹³³

When his career as an athlete had begun, Theogenes strived to become the first to win both the *pyx* (boxing) and the pankration in the Olympic games in the same year, and in his first attempt to win both he even defeated another heroic athlete named Euthymos. Since Euthymos was at least his equal, this earned him much respect but was said to cost him his victory in the pankration:

For Theogenes of Thasos, wishing to win the prizes for boxing and for the pancratium at the same Festival, overcame Euthymus at boxing, though he had not the strength to gain the wild olive in the pancratium, because he was already exhausted in his fight with Euthymus.¹³⁴

Rather than ruining his chances at becoming heroized, this story of Theogenes' loss might have strengthened his connection to the mythic heroes and eventually, he allegedly did manage to win in both the *pyx* and the pankration, but in the Isthmian games instead of the Olympics. His *dúnamis* was also made clear in accounts pertaining to the rest of his career: it was said to have spanned no less than 22 years, in which Theogenes won two victories at Olympia, three consecutive victories in the Pythian games – one of which was *akoniti*, 'dust-free',¹³⁵ – ten in the Isthmian games and nine in the Nemean games. The total number of victories ascribed to him was 1200, 1300, or 1400.¹³⁶ The list of *periodos* games that Theogenes won is mostly known from an epigram on the base of his victory statue at Delphi and Pausanias' account. He was said to have been undefeated in the *pyx* and only defeated once in the pankration. The Delphic inscription tells us:

You, son of Timoxenos¹³⁷ [. . .]
For never at Olympia has the same man been crowned

¹³³ Pausanias 6.11.2-4.

¹³⁴ Pausanias 6.6.5. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

¹³⁵ A 'dust-free' victory meant that an athlete had no competitors and therefore won by default. This was mostly thanks to the *dúnamis* of the eventual victor: he was known for having so much power that others were too afraid of losing to dare to compete against him.

¹³⁶ The precise amount of victories is unknown. Even throughout antiquity, different accounts mentioned various numbers of victories. Plutarch, *Precepts of Statecraft*, 811E. Trans. Harold North Fowler. LCL 321: "he had collected [...] twelve hundred head-bands" (though the manner in which is criticised by Plutarch, the matter is presented as a fact); *Syll*³ 36: The victory list inscribed in the statue base of Theogenes' victory statue in Delphi 1300 victories in "the lesser contests"; Pausanias 6.11.6. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272: "The total number of crowns that he won was one thousand four hundred."

¹³⁷ The name of Theogenes' father is still debated. It is said to have been either Timosthenes or Timoxenos, since different sources name him variously.

for victory in boxing and in pankration.

But you, of your three victories in the Pythian Games, won one unopposed,
a feat which no other mortal man has accomplished.

In nine Isthmian Games, you won ten times. For twice
the herald proclaimed your victories to the ring of mortal onlookers
in boxing and pankration on the very same day.

Nine times, Theogenes [sic], you won at the Nemean Games.

And you won thirteen hundred victories in the lesser contests.

Nobody, I declare, defeated you in boxing for twenty-two years.

Theogenes, son of Timoxenos, from Thasos, won these events:

[A list of Theogenes' victories in the *periodos* games follows].¹³⁸

From this citation we can deduct the following: firstly, though Theogenes probably did not win in the *pyx* and pankration in one year at the Olympics, he did succeed in being the first to win both in separate years. Secondly, he was allegedly the first to win *akoniti* (according to this epigram). Thirdly, he won the Isthmian *pyx* and pankration both in one year. Last, but certainly not least, the inscription describes that Theogenes won 1300 victories in lesser, local games. In Pausanias' account, it is even said that he extended his list of victories outside of the *pyx* and pankration by taking up running:

He devoted himself to winning fame among the Greeks for his running also, and beat those who entered for the long race. [...] The total number of crowns that he won was one thousand four hundred.¹³⁹

Almost undefeated, Theogenes achieved successes that “no other mortal man”¹⁴⁰ had accomplished before and was elevated to a status higher than the average mortal through his athletic feats. We can say for certain that Theogenes' alleged *dúnamis* was one of the reasons that eventually inspired his heroization.

Also known for his extraordinary strength in the *pyx* was Glaukos, the son of Demylos, who probably lived in the late 6th century BC. He was most famous for tales of his “plough touch”¹⁴¹ that revealed his athletic *dúnamis* and ensured many of his victories, even

¹³⁸ Syll³ 36, cf. IAG 21, Jean Pouilloux, *Récherches*, 78-82. Translation by Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 79. The inscription was dated somewhere in the early 4th century, probably two or three generations after his lifetime. The victory statue was thus set up probably by his grandsons or their sons, or by the citizens of Thasos.

¹³⁹ Pausanias 6.11.5-6. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

¹⁴⁰ Syll³ 36, line 5.

¹⁴¹ Pausanias 6.10.2.

turning the game around when he was on the brink of losing. About this “plough touch”, Philostratos tells us:¹⁴²

When Glaukos of Karystos was giving way to his opponent in the boxing at Olympia, his trainer Tisias¹⁴³ led him to victory by encouraging him to strike “the blow from the plow”. This meant a right-handed punch against his opponent; for Glaucus was so strong with that hand that he once straightened a bent plowshare in Euboea by hitting it with his right hand like a hammer.¹⁴⁴

Many of Glaukos’ victories were attributed to this specific strike: amongst them were mentioned a crown in the Olympics, two at the Pythian games, and eight at both the Nemean and Isthmian games.¹⁴⁵ Further mentioned by Pausanias is his victory statue at Olympia:

The statue of Glaukos was set up by his son, while Glaucias of Aegina made it. The statue represents a figure sparring, as Glaucus was the best exponent of the art of all his contemporaries.¹⁴⁶

Several attributes that added to Glaukos’ *dúnamis* are made clear in the abovementioned accounts: he was a *periodonikes*, the best in the *pyx* of his time, and his son commissioned a victory statue in the early 5th century BC that depicted Glaukos in action, so that his ability as a boxer was made especially clear. His *dúnamis* was revealed in the first use of his famous blow and inspired his fame. That this was not without struggles, I will elaborate on in chapter Three.

Other Heroic Athletes

To other heroic athletes the following statement of Nigel Nicholson applies:

What is important is their Olympic victories, not their broader athletic records. Second, their athletic achievements constitute a sign of greater things to come rather than the pinnacle of the achievements for which they are being remembered.¹⁴⁷

The athletic victories of these athletes are marginalized and their *dúnamis* either assumed by or absent from the accounts that are left of them or their cults. This does not mean that their *dúnamis* was unimportant: the mere fact that they were all mentioned as Olympic victors shows how much athletic prowess meant to the ancient Greeks.

¹⁴² Philostratos, or Philostratus, is a late source. He lived in the 2nd-3rd century AD. His *Gymnastikos* dates ca. 219 and is said to have been an attempt to revive ancient Greek athletics. However, the story he tells us was mentioned in Pausanias and some other, older sources as well that have only survived via others, such as Lucian who quoted Simonides or indeed Philostratos.

¹⁴³ In Pausanias’ account, he was encouraged and trained by his father.

¹⁴⁴ Philostratos *Gymnastikos* 20. Trans. Jeffrey Rusten and Jason König eds., LCL 521.

¹⁴⁵ Pausanias 6.10.3.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

¹⁴⁷ Nicholson, *The Poetics of Victory*, 175.

The first example of these heroic athletes is Philippos of Croton, son of Butacides, who was mentioned by Herodotos – our only remaining source on Philippos – as “a victor at Olympia and the goodliest Greek of his day,”¹⁴⁸ but whose successes as an athlete are otherwise absent.¹⁴⁹ Just how victorious he was as an athlete is disputable and his cult was given another origin. While the fact that Philippos was said to have been an Olympic victor would have attested to his *dúnamis* and was important, it played only a minor role in his heroization as indeed a ‘sign of greater things to come’, on which I elaborate in chapters Three and Four.

A heroic athlete of whom we do have quite a substantial account is Euthymos of Locri, son of Astykles. Euthymos was a boxer who had three Olympic victories to his name as well as several great feats of strength.¹⁵⁰ The main catalyst for the reveal of Euthymos’ *dúnamis* was reportedly the fact that he had carried a strikingly large and heavy rock into Locri and placed it outside his front door; it was believed to still be there when Aelian wrote his account because no one else had been able to move it.¹⁵¹ The idea was likely that the rock had gained talismanic power as one of the first showcases of Euthymos’ *dúnamis*, and acted as an object that conveyed his heroic powers. The inscription adorning his Olympic victory statue, dated 472 BC, further states the following:

Euthymos of Lokroi, son of Astykles, having won three times at Olympia
Set up this figure to be admired by the mortals
Euthymos of Lokroi Epizephyrioi dedicated it
Pythagoras of Samos made it.¹⁵²

The second sentence has been erased and re-inscribed, which means that the original line unfortunately cannot be recovered. Perhaps it was changed to the current phrasing when Euthymos’ cult was first instated. The three mentioned victories are usually dated 484, 476 and 472 BC, and Euthymos was defeated only by Theogenes in 480 BC.¹⁵³ The statue itself was said to be “very well worth seeing”¹⁵⁴ and possibly resembled cult statues of mythic

¹⁴⁸ Herodotos 5.47. Trans. A.D. Godley, LCL 119.

¹⁴⁹ While the institution of his cult is traditionally placed in the 470s BC, this was done posthumously and Philippos himself is believed to have lived in the 6th century BC.

¹⁵⁰ Pausanias 6.6.4 Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272: “[...] it would not be right for me to pass over the boxer Euthymus, his victories and his other glories.” In general, Euthymos’ life is placed in the first half of the 5th century BC.

¹⁵¹ Aelian, *Historical Miscellany* 8.18. Trans. Nigel Guy Wilson, LCL 486: “The Locrians show an enormous stone which he carried and put down outside his front door.” Aelian was a Roman author who lived in the late 2nd, early 3rd century AD. The stone was said to have laid at that exact spot for some 600-700 years.

¹⁵² IvO 144, translation by Stephen G. Miller, *Arete: Greek Sports from Ancient Sources* (Berkeley 2004) 113.

¹⁵³ Currie, ‘Euthymos of Locri’, 24.

¹⁵⁴ Pausanias 6.6.6. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

heroes or gods. Combined with the inscription adorning it, it can be concluded that this was done on purpose, in order to showcase Euthymos' *dúnamis*. Euthymos' *dúnamis* may not have been a direct cause for his heroization, but it did inspire a significant myth surrounding his person in which he defeats the so-called 'Hero of Temesa' that reveals his heroic *aretē* and shows some other parts of the heroic paradigm that influenced his *kleos* and increased his chances at heroization.

Euthykles, his fellow Locrian, was a pentathlete whose dating is still subject of debate. Luigi Moretti has argued that he must have lived around the same time as Theogenes, Euthymos and Astylos of Croton in the early 5th century BC, because they appear together in Kallimachos' *Aetia*.¹⁵⁵ Fragments remain of the *Aetia*, and the passage about Euthykles tells us that "Euthykles, when you came from Pisa (= Olympia), having defeated men (at the games)."¹⁵⁶ Euthykles was, then, reported as an Olympic victor, but more information about his athletic career is unavailable. Nicholson argues that he might have been celebrated in epinician, but sources for his theory are lacking.

Non-heroized Athletes

Aside from the heroic athletes, there were also successful athletes who did not receive heroic honours, but were said to be at least as able as those who did receive heroic honours. Probably the most famous or at least "the most illustrious of athletes"¹⁵⁷ is Milo of Croton, who was reported to have lived in the 6th century BC and was perhaps the greatest wrestler of all time, having won six Olympic crowns for victories in this sport.¹⁵⁸ The fullest account of Milo was given by Pausanias and lists numerous legends that were linked to his great strength and power. Milo was portrayed as a *periodonikes* and was accorded six victories in the Olympics, seven at the Pythian games, ten at the Isthmian games and nine at Nemea. He was rumoured to have carried his own statue into the Altis of Olympia and to have exhibited strength above all others:

It is further stated that Milo carried his own statue into the Altis. His feats with the pomegranate and the quoit are also remembered by tradition. He would grasp a pomegranate so firmly that nobody could wrest it from him by force, and yet he did not damage it by pressure. He would stand

¹⁵⁵ Nicholson, *The Poetics of Victory*, 101.

¹⁵⁶ Kallimachos, *Aetia* 84. Trans. C.A. Trypanis, T. Gelzer and Cedric H. Whitman eds., LCL 421.

¹⁵⁷ Strabo, *Geography* 6.263. Trans. Horace Leonard Jones, LCL 182.

¹⁵⁸ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 68.; Diodoros Siculus, *Library of History* 12.9.5-6. Trans. C.H. Oldfather, LCL 384: "For we are told that this man, who had won the prize in Olympia six times and whose courage was of the measure of his physical body [...]."

upon a greased quoit, and make fools of those who charged him and tried to push him from the quoit.¹⁵⁹

These feats of strength were apparently used by Milo to display his *dúnamis* and show off his strength. By doing so, he supposedly tried to gain fame among Greeks. There is some debate about the amount of Olympic victories that Milo won; Pausanias stated that he won six times and was defeated a seventh time by another Crotonian, but this is not according to the inscription of Milo's victory statue at Olympia that was attributed to Simonides¹⁶⁰ and says:

This is a beautiful statue of beautiful Milo, who, by the banks of Pisa, conquered seven times and never once fell on his knees.¹⁶¹

Whether it was six or seven, Milo was said to have been a *periodonikes* multiple times in his career. Regarding his strength, it had even been stated that Milo once attended a meeting of the Pythagoreans when the building began to cave in, and held up the roof so that all members of the group were able to leave in time, escaping death himself while doing so:

And its (Croton's) fame was increased by the large numbers of its Pythagorean philosophers and by Milo, who was the most illustrious of athletes, and also a companion of Pythagoras, who spent a long time in the city. It is said that once, at the common mess of the philosophers, when a pillar began to give way, Milo slipped in under the burden and saved them all, and then drew himself from under it and escaped.¹⁶²

Why, then, is he not included in the list of heroic athletes? The absence of heroic cult in his honour was certainly not due to a lack of displayed *dúnamis*. As allegedly the greatest wrestler of all time and possibly the first *periodonikes*, he was definitely a candidate for heroism.

So was his fellow Crotonian, Phayllos, who lived in the first half of the 5th century BC, and was accorded three Pythian victories. Two times he won as a pentathlete and once a runner. For this he was honoured with a statue at Delphi, dedicated by the Crotonians. Pausanias tells us:

There is a statue at Delphi of Phaylus of Crotona. He won no victory at Olympia, but his victories at Pytho were two in the pentathlon and one in the foot-race.¹⁶³

The erection of the statue at Delphi is dated the first quarter of the 5th century BC, close to the accepted date of his victories. It is supposedly the same Phayllos, though this is still somewhat

¹⁵⁹ Pausanias 6.14.6. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

¹⁶⁰ A poet from the 6th and early 5th centuries BC.

¹⁶¹ *Palatine Anthology* 16.24. Trans. W.R. Paton, LCL 86.

¹⁶² Strabo, *Geography* 6.263. Trans. Horace Leonard Jones, LCL 182.

¹⁶³ Pausanias 10.9.2. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 297.

doubtful, who was credited centuries later with a record in the long jump which to this day is also still subject of debate.¹⁶⁴ It seems most likely that this record was attributed to Phayllos sometime after his death in an attempt to glorify his *dúnamis* to fit his *aretē*. What the reasons were for this exaggeration we do not know, but it was most likely thanks to the noted later interest of those like Alexander the Great that his person was turned into an extraordinary legendary figure.¹⁶⁵ That Alexander the Great had a specific interest in Phayllos, however, is remarkable in the sense that Croton also boasted heroic athletes such as Philippos. Legends about Phayllos must have already circulated around Greece throughout the classical period, spreading his fame. Sometime after the 3rd century BC, still, a scholion on Aristophanes commented on Phayllos:

Phayllos was a first-class runner and an Olympic victor, famous as a *hoplitodromos*, and nicknamed the ‘odometer’. He was also a pentathlete about whom the following epigram was written:

Five and fifty feet flew Phayllos,
But dished the *diskos* a hundred minus five.

There was also another Phayllos who was an athlete, victorious at the 8th Olympiad, and a third Phayllos who was a thief.¹⁶⁶

That the record was heavily exaggerated is clear, and there are doubts about the historicity of the different Phaylloses and possible mix-ups between them.¹⁶⁷ Also striking is how in this account, Phayllos was accorded an Olympic victory, whereas he was not viewed as an Olympic victor by Pausanias based on the inscription at Delphi. Perhaps he did win an Olympic victory, but only after the erection of the statue at Delphi, or maybe he did not win at Olympia, but was accorded this victory posthumously as part of his constructed narrative. In the eyes of Greeks, via the accounts of his life, Phayllos would have been viewed as a capable athlete who did win victories in *periodos* games. However, that the athletic feats of Phayllos, minus the long jump record, were not the chief reason for his heroization has been acknowledged already.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ On the difficulties surrounding Phayllos as a disk-thrower and jumper, see Harold Arthur Harris, ‘An Olympic Epigram: The Athletic Feats of Phayllos’, *Greece & Rome* 7:1 (1960) 3-8.

¹⁶⁵ In *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch states that Alexander the Great sent gifts to the Crotonians to honour their athlete Phayllos. Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 34. Trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 99.

¹⁶⁶ Scholion on Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* 214. Trans. Miller, *Arete*, 47.

¹⁶⁷ Harris, ‘An Olympic Epigram’, 3.

¹⁶⁸ Marco Romano, ‘L’epigrafe Ateniese A Phayllos’, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 123 (1998) 105-116, at 106.

Last, but not least, I turn to a Delphian named Timasitheos,¹⁶⁹ a pankratiast who probably lived in the 6th century BC. While sources that tell the narrative surrounding the athlete are scarce, it is known that he was accorded two Olympic victories and three Pythian victories in his sport.¹⁷⁰ Pausanias tells us this:

Not far from Promachus is set up the statue of Timasitheüs, a Delphian by birth, the work of Ageladas of Argos. This athlete won in the pancratiun two victories at Olympia and three at Pytho.¹⁷¹

These victories were believed to have proven his athletic capabilities; being twice Olympic victor by itself would have accorded to him *dúnamis* comparable to that of several of the heroic athletes. Then there is also the fact that his statue was built by Ageladas, who was most famous for creating victors' statues and is generally thought to have been the same Ageladas who taught Phidias, Myron, and Polykleitos.¹⁷² The second account that we have left is that of Herodotos, who mentions Timasitheos, but does not believe his account to be necessary for his narrative, and tells us: "Timasitheus the Delphian [...] whose achievements of strength and courage were most mighty, as I could relate."¹⁷³ Timasitheos, then, was well known for his strength and would have inspired a strong sense of *dúnamis* in the eyes of other Greeks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that the differences between heroic and non-heroized athletes in terms of their *dúnamis* are only marginal. In general, the heroic athletes share the following characteristics: they were Olympic victors or *periodonikai*. All had visual self-representations in the form of statues set up in the Altis of Olympia, Delphi and/or their hometowns *agoras* with adorning victory lists or epigrams celebrating their wins. All were mentioned as being the strongest, the swiftest, unbeaten, or something of the like.

The non-heroized athletes, however, fit this picture perfectly as well. There were many other Olympic victors, some of which were also *periodonikai*, who had self-representations in statues and epinician odes, who were celebrated in epigrams and were mentioned in victory lists, and who were referred to as strongest, wisest, and best of their kind. Perhaps Phayllos' lack of an Olympic victory was reason to grant him less *kleos* than the heroic athletes and not venerate him as such. However, the fact that he was associated with a record in the long jump

¹⁶⁹ Also spelled Timasitheus.

¹⁷⁰ The Olympic victories of Timasitheos are traditionally dated 516 and 512 BC.

¹⁷¹ Pausanias 6.9.6. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

¹⁷² Richard Neudecker, 'Ageladas', *Brill's New Pauly* (Brill's New Pauly Online 2006), <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e107490>.

¹⁷³ Herodotos 5.72. Trans. A.D. Godley, LCL 119.

even long after his death could not have sprung from nowhere. His story still spread throughout the Greek world centuries after he had died and he even gained more of a legendary status as time progressed. Perhaps the difference can be found in his *aretē* or the requirements for *kleos* in manners of death. The most striking lack of a cult is in the case of Milo. He was mentioned in numerous literary sources and would have many vehicles for *kleos*, but he was not honoured as a hero, or at least not in cult. The reason for this lies not in a lack of *dúnamis*, however, for his athletic abilities did inspire commemoration.

That *dúnamis* was an important factor contributing to heroization is clear, as well as the fact that a large part of an athlete's *dúnamis* was conveyed through vehicles that he himself was able to manage. Enough training could lead to victory, inscriptions adorning victory statues could report these victories and were perhaps in several cases exaggerated or modified – especially if they were set up by relatives after the athlete's death –, and victory statues were more often than not probably designed to show athletic *dúnamis*. In other words, the athlete in his athletic role was a chief agent in constructing the manner in which he was commemorated by his *dúnamis*.

Chapter Three: *Aretē*

In order to make heroization possible, athletes not only had to display athletic *dúnamis*, but also heroic *aretē*, ‘role-related specific excellence’, which was connected to the heroic paradigm when it came to reproducing heroic *athla* or assuming political or military roles in service of their *poleis*. Below, I give an account of heroic athletes and several non-heroized athletes who showed much heroic virtue outside of their athletic achievements, starting with heroic athletes who specifically strived to emulate mythic heroes. The chapter further explores what I have called *enáretos* athletes, or ‘virtuous’ athletes, who assumed political and military roles in their respective *poleis* and displayed *aretē* through individual actions in service of their hometowns. I end with athletes who were not heroized but were, in several ways, outstanding in the abovementioned areas.

Emulating the hero

I start again with Polydamas. Accounts of his life communicate his *dúnamis* mostly, but also reveal that he was active in other fields than athletic competition. Pausanias tells us:

Others have won glorious victories in the pancratium, but Pulydamas, besides his prizes for the pancratium, had to his credit the following exploits of a different kind.¹⁷⁴

Even though these ‘exploits’ were important for Polydamas’ alleged *dúnamis*, they were not related to athletic competition and pertained more specifically to his heroic excellence. The most important exploit, again, is Polydamas’ fight with the three Immortals (figure 4). Considering the history of the relations between Greece and Persia in the early 5th century BC and ever-growing panhellenic ideals, as well as the role the Immortals had played in the Persian war, it would have been a great victory to kill not one, but three of the guard. The Immortals were throughout Greek antiquity accorded a legendary status, and though there is some dispute about whether or not the Persians Polydamas fought were actually the same Immortals that were described by Herodotos or another elite part of the Persian army, the association is clear and inspires a link with heroic immortality in stories told about this athlete.¹⁷⁵ Pausanias described the story as follows:

Dareius, [...] learning when he was king of the exploits of Pulydamas, sent messengers with the promise of gifts and persuaded him to come before his presence at Susa. There he challenged three of the Persians called Immortals to fight him—one against three—and killed them.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Pausanias 5.5.4. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 188.

¹⁷⁵ Charles, ‘Immortals and Apple Bearers’, 125.

¹⁷⁶ Pausanias 5.5.7. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 188.

It has also been argued that this was a conscious attempt to re-enact Herakles' combat with the triple-bodied Geryon.¹⁷⁷ Whether or not the story was true, accounts of Polydamas' life further verify his conscious attempts at embodying the mythic heroes by re-enacting their *athla*:

Here on Mount Olympus Pulydamas slew a lion, a huge and powerful beast, without the help of any weapon. To this exploit he was impelled by an ambition to rival the labours of Heracles, because Heracles also, legend says, overthrew the lion at Nemea.¹⁷⁸

By reiterating Herakles' *athla*, Polydamas showed specific heroic *aretē* according to the heroic paradigm. This was strengthened by his commissioned statue that probably made him look much like the mythic heroes as well, in size and grandeur.¹⁷⁹ The stories that were spread among Greeks about Polydamas, then, were designed to portray not only his *dúnamis* as an athlete, but his *aretē* as well.

Another athlete who had tried to approach heroes by emulating them was Theogenes. While he was especially famous for his strength, Pausanias tells us:

He devoted himself to winning fame among the Greeks for his running also, and beat those who entered for the long race. His ambition was, I think, to rival Achilles by winning a prize for running in the fatherland of the swiftest of those who are called heroes.¹⁸⁰

Theogenes' race at Phtia¹⁸¹ was thus already in antiquity recognized as a conscious attempt at showcasing heroic *aretē*. By imitating Achilles' swiftness and outdoing the hero, Theogenes was adamant that he brought to light his own *aretē* and appeared even better than Achilles himself, showing just how deserving he was of heroization.

Another way in which he was compared to heroes was by way of his appetite. While athletes were often associated with moderation in both physical exercise and diet,¹⁸² several heroes – most notably Herakles – were said to have enormous appetites and were even ridiculed for it in comedy.¹⁸³ In this context Posidippos of Pella¹⁸⁴ allegedly presented an epigram underneath a statue of Theogenes and put the following words in the mouth of the athlete:

¹⁷⁷ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 72.

¹⁷⁸ Pausanias 5.5.5. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 188.

¹⁷⁹ See also chapter Two, page 26.

¹⁸⁰ Pausanias 6.11.5.

¹⁸¹ Phtia, Thessaly, was the home *polis* of the Mirmnons and Achilles.

¹⁸² Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics*, 32.

¹⁸³ On gluttony in ancient Greek texts, see Susan Hill, *Eating to Excess: The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World* (Santa Barbara 2011), esp. 81-102.

¹⁸⁴ A 3rd-century BC epigrammatic poet.

I once ate a Meionian bull on a bet;
Because my native land, Thasos, could no supply enough food for Theogenes¹⁸⁵;
However much I ate, I still asked for more.
I accordingly stand here, made of bronze, with my hand stretched out.¹⁸⁶

This fragment implies that however much Theogenes ate, he always wanted more as his appetite was – much like that of heroes – unlimited. By imitating both Achilles and Herakles, then, Theogenes reportedly displayed similar virtues to theirs and was further compared to mythic heroes in later written texts. This inspired other Greeks to associate him with these mythic heroes and to recognise his superiority over ‘normal’ humans as a super-human new hero.

Glaukos too was quite virtuous even by modern athletic standards, for he did not specifically re-enact mythic works, but epitomized athletic and heroic perseverance. In Greek agonistic culture perseverance was a great virtue, for losing was out of the question. He also embodied a newer Greek ideal of being able to go from zero to hero through overcoming many hurdles, seeing as

Glaukus, inexperienced in boxing, was wounded by his antagonists, and when he was boxing with the last of them he was thought to be fainting from the number of his wounds. Then they say that his father called out to him, “Son, the plough touch.” So he dealt his opponent a more violent blow which forthwith brought him the victory.¹⁸⁷

From then on this “plough touch” was the blow that Glaukos used, and he reportedly won every single match. Just like the heroes, he overcame his obstacles and persevered in order to come out on top. He was also said to have commissioned an epinician ode by Simonides, which has been lost but was quoted by Lucian in the 2nd century AD:

But think how a famous poet¹⁸⁸ praised Glaukus when he said
“Not even mighty Polydeuces¹⁸⁹ would raise his hands to fight him, nor Alcmena’s iron son.”¹⁹⁰
[...] in fact they both continued to enjoy reputation and honour among the Greeks, Glaukus for his strength, the poet for this song in particular.¹⁹¹

He was credited by Simonides with so much *dúnamis* and *aretē* that even heroes would shy away from fighting him. While Lucian does not agree with this statement, he does tell us that

¹⁸⁵ Theogenes was the name used by Posidippos mainly for metrical reasons.

¹⁸⁶ Posidippos as quoted by Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters* 10.412E. Trans. S. Douglas Olson, LCL 235.

¹⁸⁷ Pausanias 6.10.2. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

¹⁸⁸ Simonides.

¹⁸⁹ One of the Dioskouri, son of Zeus and brother of Helen and Clytaemestra.

¹⁹⁰ Herakles.

¹⁹¹ Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture Defended* 19. Trans. A.M. Harmon, LCL 162.

Greeks continued to honour both Glaukos and the poet for the legends about the athlete, thus confirming the *kleos* it had earned him.

A heroic athlete who is nowadays known almost exclusively via his painstakingly obvious mythical narrative is Euthymos. I have mentioned his *dúnamis* and illustrated that he was not more extraordinary as an athlete than Theogenes or Polydamas. However, Euthymos' actions and his life did inspire a legend that was perhaps the most fantastic of all heroic athletes' legends. His *aretē* lies in the story about his fight against the 'Hero of Temesa'. The legend is told in four major accounts by Pliny the Elder, Strabo, Pausanias and Aelian. Although the original source has never been determined, these four accounts – which are generally in agreement – form a relatively well-structured story:

Odysseus, so they say, in his wanderings after the capture of Troy was carried down by gales to various cities of Italy and Sicily, and among them he came with his ships to Temesa. Here one of his sailors got drunk and violated a maiden, for which offense he was stoned to death by the natives. Now Odysseus, it is said, cared nothing about his loss and sailed away. But the ghost of the stoned man never ceased killing without distinction the people of Temesa, attacking both old and young, until, when the inhabitants had resolved to flee from Italy for good, the Pythian priestess forbade them to leave Temesa, and ordered them to propitiate the Hero, setting him a sanctuary apart and building a temple, and to give him every year as wife the fairest maiden in Temesa. So they performed the commands of the god and suffered no more terrors from the ghost.¹⁹²

Pliny and Aelian describe the offerings to the Hero rather as a tribute or taxes, and the hero as a human rather than a spirit of the Fourth age.¹⁹³ Whether he was seen as a revenant or a tax collector, all versions of the legend state that Euthymos came across Temesa and learned of the hero's offenses to the *polis*. In all accounts it is said that he drove out the spirit and liberated Temesa, which was probably hard to do, since the 'hero', as one of Odysseus' men, was by association and by definition a virtuous and excellent fighter and a worthy opponent.

It has been argued already that the fight between Euthymos and the Hero of Temesa was told as part of an initiation cult centred on virgin girls and their transition to womanhood.¹⁹⁴ Consequently this connects Euthymos with Herakles and his fight against Acheloös for the hand of Deianeira, as described in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*:

For I had as a wooer a ricker, I mean Achelous, who came in three shapes to ask my father for me, [...]. Expecting such a suitor as that I was always praying, poor creature, that I might die before

¹⁹² Pausanias 6.6.7-8. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

¹⁹³ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 7.47. Trans. H. Rackham, LCL 352; Aelian *Historical Miscellany* 8.18.

¹⁹⁴ Currie, 'Euthymos of Locri', 35.

ever coming near his bed. But at the last moment, and to my relief, there came the son of Zeus and Alcmene, who contended with him and released me.¹⁹⁵

The myth of Euthyimos thus holds the same narrative as that of Herakles and Deianeira, which was written down by Sophocles but probably circulated throughout Greece as part of oral tradition before that. Whether this was the result of a conscious attempt by Euthyimos to be associated with mythic heroes is uncertain, but the fact remains that in his story, heroic excellence shines through via connections with the myths of Herakles.

***Enáretos* Athletes in Military and Politics**

Philippos was not heroized so much for his *dúnamis* as he was for his *aretē*. While we know almost nothing of his athletic victories, the following things were said about him by Herodotos:

He had betrothed himself to the daughter of Telys of Sybaris and was banished from Croton; but being disappointed of his marriage he sailed away to Cyrene, whence he set forth and followed Dorieus, bringing his own trireme and paying all charges for his men; [...] For the beauty of his person he received honours from the Egestans accorded to none else: they built a hero's shrine by his grave, and offer him sacrifices of propitiation.¹⁹⁶

In contrast to his *dúnamis*, Philippos' *aretē* becomes quite clear from this small passage. He had been banished from Croton for falling in love with a woman of the rivalling city Sybaris, i.e. for political reasons. From there on, he sailed to Cyrene and met Dorieus, who was the son of Spartan king Anaxandrides and was headed to Sicily so that he could found his own colony.¹⁹⁷ This Dorieus had grown up thinking he would become king of the Spartans, but his brother was granted this title instead on account of being the firstborn son of Anaxandrides. Because Dorieus believed to be "first among all of like age with himself; and [...] fully believed that he would be made king for his manly worth,"¹⁹⁸ he left Sparta. It was even said that he had come to Croton to aid in the *polis*' fight against Sybaris, which added to Dorieus' *aretē* and fame there.¹⁹⁹ By association and aiding in this just cause for a good and well-respected man, Philippos would have gained much respect.

Secondly, Philippos was a rich man and undoubtedly part of the Crotonian elite. He was able to buy his own trireme, which would have been very expensive, and paid all additional charges for his men. And these men were probably not few in numbers either, for a

¹⁹⁵ Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 9-21. Trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, LCL 121.

¹⁹⁶ Herodotos 5.47. Trans. A.D. Godley, LCL 119.

¹⁹⁷ *Idem*, 5.43.

¹⁹⁸ *Idem*, 5.42.

¹⁹⁹ *Idem*, 5.44.

trireme needed some 170 or 180 rowers to set sail.²⁰⁰ Finally, the Segestans who had killed Philippos reportedly honoured him as a hero for his beauty and likeness to the mythic heroes specifically. The ‘enemy hero’ was a theme evident in literary sources and often involved a *loimos*-scenario in which disaster struck one’s enemy, which could only be lifted if the man was venerated as a hero.²⁰¹ Not so much heroized for his *dúnamis*, then, Philippos’ *aretē* was recognized by his enemies mainly through his beauty and, perhaps accompanied by a fear of *loimos*, he was elevated to a superhuman status and honoured as a hero.

I have mentioned of Euthykles the one Olympic victory that we know of. Kallimachos continues that Euthykles was deprived of due honours after his victory because of political reasons. Since democracy was still on the rise and the Greek aristocracy had hard times in the 5th century BC, it appeared strange and fraudulent to Locrian citizens when the following occurred:

From there, returning (home), you (Euthycles) came bringing driving mules as a gift. And when the people, who always choke with indignation against the rich, said that you received them on condition to harm your fatherland, they all voted secretly against you. And to the (bronze) statue, which the Locrian city itself had set up in your honour... the villains did many things that the gods hate.²⁰²

Because of political reasons and disdain against the extremely rich and powerful, Euthykles was not given the honours that were customary for victorious athletes. From this passage we can infer that Euthykles was first of all counted among the rich and would have been part of the Locrian elite. Secondly, he apparently took office as an ambassador, most likely as a reward and because of the fame Olympic victors had among other *poleis*. A position as ambassador would not have been granted to Euthykles if he had not been deemed virtuous.

Above, I have told of Theogenes’ re-enactment of mythic heroes in order to display the same virtues and excellence as they had done. But his *aretē* was also expressed in other ways: Theogenes was a rich man and part of the Thasian aristocracy. When he came back from his last athletic contest, he was able to meddle into the political affairs of his *polis* and use fame and money to influence Thasos. Dio Chrysostom tells us the following:

²⁰⁰ Alec F. Tilley and Helmuth Schneider, ‘Trireme’, in: Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, *Brill’s New Pauly* (Brill’s New Pauly Online 2006) accessed 15-07-2018, < http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1220430 >.

²⁰¹ See also Margaret Visser, ‘Worship Your Enemy: Aspects of the Cult of Heroes in Ancient Greece’, *The Harvard Theological Review* 75:4 (1982) 403-428, at 410 for the enemy cult of Philippos in Segesta. She mentions many other examples of cults for enemy heroes as well.

²⁰² Kallimachos, *Aetia* 85. Trans. C.A. Trypanis, T. Gelzer, Cedric H. Whitman eds., LCL 421.

When he gave up competing and returned to his native city, thenceforth, though his body was past its prime, he was a man inferior to none in the affairs of his country, but was, so far as a man may be, a most excellent citizen. For that reason, probably, he incurred the enmity of one of the politicians. And although while he lived, the other man merely envied him, yet after the death of Theagenes the other committed a most senseless and impious act; for under cover of night he would scourge the man's statue, which had been erected in the centre of the city.²⁰³

Much like Euthykles' story, this narrative highlights political envy as the cause of statue abuse. If indeed, as expected, some athletes' statues were seen as not only representations but as true incarnations of the one they portrayed, like cult statues of the mythic heroes and gods, this would have meant extreme sacrilege and it was all due to Theagenes' role in Thasian politics. In Dio's account, Theagenes is not only represented as a great athlete, but as "inferior to none in the affairs of his country" and "so far as man may be, a most excellent citizen." As such, Theagenes was portrayed as wise and good enough to convey a great deal of *aretē*.

Non-heroized Athletes

I have noted in Chapter Two the *dúnamis* of several other athletes and how they were not at all inferior to the attested heroic athletes, but was it the same for their *aretē*? Milo first of all would have been deemed quite the virtuous man in the 5th century BC, though with a note that may have influenced his heroic aptitude.

Milo definitely fit the bill in terms of emulating the mythic heroes and fulfilling roles of societal importance. It was reported that he joined Pythagoras of Samos in his rise to power in Croton and supported him in a battle against Sybaris – Croton's biggest rival city-state – around 510 BC when hostilities against the philosopher had reached their climax.²⁰⁴ Perhaps believed to have been under the influence of *kudos*, he joined as a general the Crotonians and

When the Sybarites advanced against them with three hundred thousand men, the Crotoniates opposed them with one hundred thousand under the command of Milo the athlete, who by reason of his great physical strength was the first to put to flight his adversaries. For we are told that this man, who had won the prize in Olympia six times and whose courage was of the measure of his physical body, came to battle wearing his Olympic crowns and equipped with the gear of Herakles, lion's skin and club; and he won the admiration of his fellow citizens as responsible for their victory.²⁰⁵

This passage of Diodoros Siculus tells us a number of things that circulated among Greeks about Milo. First of all, the athlete brought the Crotonians to victory against the Sybarites

²⁰³ Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse 31*, 95-96. Trans. J.W. Cohoon, H. Lamar Crosby, LCL 358.

²⁰⁴ Charles Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History* (Indianapolis 2001) 6-7.

²⁰⁵ Diodoros Siculus 12.9.5-6.

even though they were outnumbered three to one, which was a great military achievement. Secondly, the phrase ‘whose courage was of the measure of his physical body’ implies that Milo was a large man, perhaps even thought to be superhumanly or heroically so. That this belief prevailed throughout antiquity is confirmed in Lucian’s *Charon*, where Lucian puts the following words in the mouth of the ferryman:

Tell me:

Who is the burley man yonder, the hero so tall and handsome,
Towering over the throng by a head and a broad pair of shoulders?²⁰⁶

Hermes answers him that this is Milo, an athlete from Croton. By his alleged looks and appearance, then, Milo was already more than compared to heroes: he was called one himself as well. He was said to have strengthened his connection to heroism by emulating Herakles in battle, which is also made clear in Diodoros’ passage. Herakles was often portrayed carrying a club – his weapon of choice – and wearing the skin of the Nemean lion as a cloak (figure 5). Milo’s likeness to this hero probably exuded both confidence and power, which was reinforced even more by the Olympic crowns that he wore, proving his *dúnamis* and conveying *kudos*, effectively frightening the enemy and contributing a great deal to the victory of Croton.

One thing, however, might have stood in the way of his *aretē*, though it must be noted that the critique that follows was given mostly by moralists as a ‘brawns, no brains’ metaphor, in discussions of the meaning of life, or in medical treatises promoting moderation and balance. Milo was supposedly a very strong man, as we have seen, and one who wanted to show off his strength as well, but he was not thought to have been very smart. In this context, he was ridiculed:

It is no great thing to possess strength, whatever kind it is, but to use it as one should. For of what advantage to Milo of Croton was his enormous strength of body?²⁰⁷

In how far this type of statement was of actual influence among the general Greek public is uncertain, though they do undermine the idea of the athlete as a military success story being synonym to the Greek allotment of *aretē*. However, seeing as more athletes were considered to be less intelligent and more ‘brawns, no brains’, and there were some examples of brawny and less intelligent athletes who were indeed heroized, these accounts were probably less

²⁰⁶ Lucian, *Charon* 8. Trans. A.M. Harmon, LCL 54.

²⁰⁷ Diodoros Siculus 9.14.1. Trans. C.H. Oldfather, LCL 384.

influential in the heroization-process than the overall belief of the late archaic and classical athlete as military prodigy.

Phayllos of Croton too was one of these military prodigies. Though not an Olympic victor, he was venerated for his *dúnamis* and displayed heroic excellence via his military performances as well. The tales that circulated about Phayllos spoke of how he was the only Crotonian, or rather the only Greek from Italy, to join the Greek alliance against the Persians in the Persian war:

Of those that dwell farther off than these, the men of Croton alone came to aid Hellas in its peril, and they with one ship, whereof the captain was Phaýllus, a victor in the Pythian games. these Crotoniats are of Achaeian blood.²⁰⁸

Not only was Phayllos the only citizen of South-Italy who came to aid in the Greek cause, but it was even said that he was able to have equipped a ship of his own in doing so, and manning it with Crotonians who were in mainland Greece.

He also fought at sea against the Persian, in a ship of his own, equipped by himself and manned by citizens of Crotona, who were staying in Greece. Such is the story of the athlete of Crotona.²⁰⁹

So, Phayllos was able to buy his own ship and equip it, and also fight in the Persian war, meaning he had armour to wear and probably belonged to the Crotonian elite as well. That this would have been of help in gaining *kleos* is made clear in the case of Philippos, not coincidentally also a Crotonian athlete. The fact that Phayllos was honoured for his *aretē* while participating in the battle of Salamis is made clear in both Pausanias' description of him as "not [...] Phaýllus the famous athlete, but for the man who had done such an exemplary and patriotic deed."²¹⁰ In addition, he was given a dedicated statue on the Akropolis in Athens, which was discovered in 1889 and bore an inscription. This inscription, though heavily restored, stated something along the lines of:

Phayl[los was admired by a]ll
For he was thrice [vi]ctor [in the games
At] Delphi, an[d captured ships
W]hich Asia sent forth²¹¹

This inscription itself confirms the description that Pausanias gave of Phayllos, and "in a surprisingly combined way bears witness to the fame deserved by Phayllos both in athletic

²⁰⁸ Herodotos 8.47. Trans. A.D. Godley, LCL 120.

²⁰⁹ Pausanias 10.9.2.

²¹⁰ Christian Habicht, *Pausanias Guide to Ancient Greece* (Berkeley 1998) 116.

²¹¹ IG I³ 822. Trans. Matthew Dillon and Lynda Garland, *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Socrates (c. 800-399 BC)* (London 1994) 236-237.

and military fields”²¹² by stating both his biggest victories as an athlete and his military role in the battle. The statue was put up among other athletes who had displayed military prowess and were probably used as ‘*exemplum virtutis*’, effectively reminding those who gazed upon them of their *aretē* in service of the Greek world.²¹³

Finally, regarding Phayllos’ *aretē*, one last part of his tales stands out, which was not mentioned by Pausanias or Herodotos, but in Plutarch’s *Life of Alexander*. He wrote how it was believed that Alexander, when he became king, wanted to gain *kleos* among the Greeks himself, and did this by abolishing tyranny and granting the Greek *poleis* gifts. In doing so, he honoured Croton as well, as Plutarch states:

He sent also to the people of Croton in Italy a portion of the spoils, honouring the zeal and valour of their athlete Phayllus, who, in the Median wars, when the rest of the Greeks in Italy refused to help their brother Greeks, fitted out a ship at his own cost and sailed with it to Salamis, that he might have some share in the peril there. So considerate was Alexander towards every form of valour, and such a friend and guardian of noble deeds.²¹⁴

So honoured were his ‘zeal and valour’, then, or his *aretē*, that Alexander the Great was inspired by him to send to Croton great gifts. It was not Philippos the heroic athlete or Milo the great wrestler who had emulated Herakles in battle that was the inspiration, but rather the virtuous Phayllos who had been a great aid in the Greek cause. Of course, it may have been part of Alexander’s pro-panhellenic campaign at the time, but it does come to show that Phayllos was venerated a long time and mainly thanks to his *aretē*, perhaps even more so than heroic athletes of Croton.

Last, but not least, I return to the Delphian athlete Timasitheos. This athlete was considered very strong and courageous,²¹⁵ and as such embodied a heroic ideal in the sense that he was very manly. Pausanias adds to this: “His achievements in war too are distinguished by their daring and by the good luck which attended all but the last, which caused his death.”²¹⁶ According to Pausanias, then, Timasitheos was also someone with good luck. Luck was believed to be either short-lived or mixed with lesser fortune, “granted by the gods in accordance with due measure,”²¹⁷ so the fact that his good fortune was followed by bad fortune that led to his death, then, should come as no surprise. But Timasitheos’ daring,

²¹² “In modo sorprendentemente combinato testimonia della fama meritata da Phayllos sia in campo atletico che in quello militare”; Marco Romano, ‘L’epigrafe ateniese’, 106.

²¹³ Idem, 109.

²¹⁴ Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 34.

²¹⁵ Herodotos 5.72.

²¹⁶ Pausanias 6.9.6.

²¹⁷ Peter Samaras, *Divine Phthonos in Pindar* (PhD. diss. University of Toronto 2004) 48.

strong, and active role in successful war efforts attests to a heroic excellence that would show his *aretē*. After all, the same could be said about several mythic heroes, like Achilles, whose military achievements were ‘distinguished by their daring’ too, and on whom good luck was bestowed by the gods, until his last war effort, in which he was killed. Timasitheos, then, was in our literary sources viewed as full of *aretē* that was inspired by his war efforts and good luck.

Conclusion

The *aretē* of Greek athletes in the classical period can be found in three ways. Firstly, their emulation of the mythic heroes conferred to them the same type of heroic excellence and created a link that would inspire others to grant them *kleos* and eventually heroize them in newly constructed narratives. By looking like the mythic heroes in sculpture and by re-enacting their *athla*, athletes were said to actively seek to display the same virtues as heroes possessed. This was not limited to accounts of heroic athletes, but was also reportedly consciously attempted by non-heroized athletes such as Milo. Secondly, an athlete could excel in political matters. By being prominent in politics and assuming a political career, especially the aristocratic ideal was attainable for athletes as well and they could display wealth, status, and wisdom. While heroic athletes were not always known for their wits, they were sometimes awarded political functions in their *poleis*, since they were able to use their fame and influence for the benefit of the *polis*, hence Euthykles’ appointment as an ambassador. Of the non-heroized athletes mentioned above, none were especially known for political matters, though it may be expected that numerous successful athletes ended up with a political career.

Thirdly, and arguably most importantly, by assuming roles in the military, athletes were able to use their strength and emphasize the talismanic power that their athletic feats had bestowed on them in order to serve their *poleis*. Not only did the citizens of their hometowns value this above all else, but it was also a way to create a link with mythic heroes and prompted the people to honour these athletes in the same ways they had honoured their mythic founders and those who had fought for them in an earlier age. Not only heroic athletes, but non-heroized athletes too were honoured for their military prowess long after they had died. Displays of *aretē* were thus in essence in the hands of athletes themselves. Especially the personification of mythic heroes was reportedly done consciously by athletes. However, the *kleos* that was the result of these displays of *aretē* were dependent mostly on the benefits they had for the community, as well as eventual chances at heroization that might have been inspired by this.

Chapter Four: *Kleos*

Kleos, meaning ‘things that are heard’ or ‘fame’, is the key to heroic personal immortality and heroization. If an athlete showcased enough *dúnamis* and *aretē* for his name to be spread throughout the Greek world and for his name to live on in legend after his physical death, he would have gained enough *kleos* to become a prime candidate for heroization. Heroes’ actions and their societal worth did not, however, make up the whole legends; heroic athletes were also honoured because their narratives included specific ways in which they had died and were sometimes granted hero cult. Below, I give an account of these specific features of the legends surrounding both heroic athletes and other athletes, starting with heroic athletes whose deaths were peculiar and included disappearances. A second focal point are the heroic athletes whose deaths were probably viewed as virtuous by either including a significant age or heroic endings, as well as heroic athletes whose manner of death was not explained, but whose deaths were mentioned along institution of cults in their name. Lastly, I return to the non-heroized athletes covered in chapters Two and Three as well. In cases where cult is described or attested through archaeological sources, any possible link to the *kleos* of the specific athlete is laid bare as well.

Heroic Athletes and Mysterious Deaths

One legendary heroic athlete who reportedly died a mysterious death was Euthymos. The consequences of his victory against the Hero of Temesa as it was told were great. According to Pliny the Elder, Euthymos was honoured so much for this specific victory, that

By the command of the same oracle and with the assent of Jupiter the supreme deity, Euthymos [...] was made a saint in his lifetime and to his own knowledge.²¹⁸

This would then be one of the earliest cases in which a historic person became heroized during his lifetime.²¹⁹ Whether this was actually the case is debatable: there are no contemporary sources alluding to the veneration of this athlete, and the tale of his fight against the Hero of Temesa was already so fantastic that it would not be farfetched to state that this too was nothing more than a myth. Also striking is the role of the oracle in the story of Euthymos’ heroization; it was only when an oracle prescribed his heroization that he was actually given the honours. The possibility that Euthymos became heroized during his lifetime does not mean that the assumed manner of his death has not influenced the honour he received. In the case of his death, Aelian reported that he “went down into the river Caecinus,

²¹⁸ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 7.47.

²¹⁹ Lunt, *Athletes, Heroes*, 75.

which runs past the city of Locri, and disappeared.”²²⁰ Whether Euthymos indeed went into the river and died is uncertain because contemporary sources describe neither this part of the story nor the details of his death in the river. There may have been an accident causing him to fall into the river or perhaps he was killed and fell. Among the possible theories is also suicide, in which case the story of his disappearance might have served as a cover-up for the shame and *miasma* that was associated with suicide.²²¹

In scholarship, Euthymos’ disappearance into the river is most often related to Euthymos’ possible mythical transformation into a river deity and the common idea that not Astykles, but Kaikinos²²² had been the ‘actual’ father of Euthymos and he was thus the son of a river god:²²³

Euthymus was by birth one of the Italian Locrians, who dwell in the region near the headland called the West Point, and he was called son of Astycles. Local legend, however, makes him the son, not of this man, but of the river Caecinus, which divides Locris from the land of Rhegium and produces the marvel of the grasshoppers. For the grasshoppers within Locris as far as the Caecinus sing just like the others, but across the Caecinus in the territory of Rhegium they do not utter a sound. This river then, according to tradition, was the father of Euthymus.²²⁴

By portraying Euthymos as the son of the river in which he disappeared and surrounding the story with an air of mystery by stating that he had ‘disappeared’ rather than drowned, this narrative opens up the possibility of Euthymos’ passing being a type of homecoming.²²⁵ This homecoming would then symbolize his elevation into a river deity, which can also be confirmed by some evidence pertaining to his cult. The most important evidence for this cult is a series of herms found in the ‘Grotta Carusa’ – a sanctuary of the Nymphs located in Locri Epizephyrri, Euthymos’ hometown – which date back to the 2nd half of the 4th century BC.²²⁶ The herms depict a bull-headed man that is meant to portray a statue of Euthymos. One of them shows the man-bull with an altar and a basin, with a knife next to it (figure 6). According to Currie, this was likely a depiction of the cult of Euthymos and the rituals surrounding it that involved a cult statue and offerings at an altar.²²⁷ The portrayal of Euthymos as a man-bull could confirm his status as a river deity and authorise his connection

²²⁰ Aelian *Historical Miscellany* 8.18.

²²¹ On suicide in ancient Greece, see Elise P. Garrison, ‘Attitudes toward Suicide in Ancient Greece’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 121 (1991) 1-34.

²²² Also spelled ‘Caecinus’.

²²³ Currie, ‘Euthymos of Locri’, 41-43.

²²⁴ Pausanias 6.6.4. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

²²⁵ Currie, ‘Euthymos of Locri’, 42-43.

²²⁶ *Idem*, 29.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

to the river god Kaikinos, making him a demigod like the mythic heroes.²²⁸ It has also been suggested that Euthymos replaced the hero of Temesa in his cult when he drove the antagonist of the legend out.²²⁹ However, that he was already honoured as a river deity in life or how this story came to be cannot be stated with certainty.

A second part of the legend concerns the victory statues of Euthymos and was given by Pliny when he quoted Kallimachos:

I noticed that Callimachus records as an unparalleled marvel that a statue of him there (at Locri) and another at Olympia were struck by lightning on the same day, and that the oracle commanded that sacrifice should be offered to him; this was repeatedly done both during his lifetime and when he was dead, and nothing about it is surprising except that the gods so decreed.²³⁰

Again we are told that Euthymos' legend included an explanation of the athlete's honours being paid to him during his lifetime. Both his victory statues being struck by lightning on the same day would have been viewed as a sign of the gods – Zeus in particular – and was added reason to inspire veneration of the athlete. Pliny also confirms here that Euthymos' cult included sacrifices to the hero, which can also be seen in the 4th-century herms. According to Pliny, the lightning strikes that hit the victory statues were the initial cause for Euthymos' heroization, but this cannot be said for certain because the original text by Kallimachos is too fragmented to make further sense of.

What is certain, however, is that the narrative surrounding Euthymos the athlete was constructed to fit the heroic paradigm: he too was of divine descent, displayed in his life *dúnamis* and *aretē*, and gained much *kleos* in the form of a substantial legend, which even led to his attested hero cult. Whether the legend of Euthymos was as extensive as it is today from the onset is disputable; the parts about his death would have been crucial for his connection to Kaikinos, and would have granted him his powers if he was indeed viewed as a river deity. As these parts were indispensable, Euthymos' alleged cult honours during his lifetime might have been of a different nature than the ones from a century later, or even non-existent. The fact that he was indeed fully heroized, however, is clear enough.

Aside from Euthymos, other athletes were said to have been of divine descent and even connected to a water deity as well: Glaukos was recognized as the descendant of a sea-deity who bore the same name Glaukos. Pausanias tells us: "Legend has it that he was by birth

²²⁸ Currie, 'Euthymos of Locri', 29.

²²⁹ Idem, 30-35.

²³⁰ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 7.47.

from Anthedon in Boeotia, being descended from Glaucus the sea-deity.”²³¹ It was no coincidence that he was associated with the sea-deity, since it was common practice in classical Greece to link people who bore the same name to each other. Polydamas the athlete, for example, was likely commonly associated with Polydamas who advised Hektor during the Trojan War.²³² In the same way, Glaukos was associated with the sea-deity that bore his name.

The manner in which this Glaukos died is uncertain, but it is implied that he may have died of natural causes or old age. In how far this would have influenced his chances at heroization remains difficult to determine, but what is striking about this athlete is that even Currie admits that there was no attested cult for the athlete, but he did have an island named after him ‘Glaukos’.²³³ Most of the Greek islands were named after geomorphological characteristics, or gods and heroes. That an island was named after an athlete, then, was quite exceptional and can best be understood as a type of heroic honours that was not much different from honours at a hero’s tomb, seeing as Glaukos was indeed buried on this island as well.²³⁴ Since heroes did not necessarily receive cult, Glaukos’ *kleos* in the form of a centuries-long legend, his *dúnamis* and *aretē*, and his association with the eponymous sea-deity made him a good candidate for heroization. These are the reasons why he is usually counted among the heroic athletes.

Heroic Athletes and Virtuous Deaths

Polydamas’ *dúnamis* and *aretē* were strong enough to inspire *kleos*, but how did this add up to the point where heroization was due? Both Polydamas himself and the citizens of Skotoussa promoted a narrative surrounding the athlete that connected him to the heroic paradigm, turning his life into legend and exaggerating stories to such a degree that he managed to become represented as a super-human rather than just a mortal human.

What really connected Polydamas to heroism, though, was rather the part of the story in which his death is narrated. According to Pausanias and other sources on Polydamas, the athlete died a relatively heroic death, even though it was not in battle. While it was deemed a foolish decision to even enter a cave with his friends in the summer, his alleged decision to

²³¹ Pausanias 6.10.1. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

²³² René Nünlist, Justus Cobet, and Ernst Badian, ‘Polydamas’, *Brill’s New Pauly* (Brill’s New Pauly Online 2006) <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/polydamas-e1001280?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.brill-s-new-pauly&s.q=polydamas> accessed 29-7-2018.

²³³ Currie, *Pindar*, 122-123.

²³⁴ Pausanias 6.10.3. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272: “When he died the Carystians, they say, buried him in the island still called the island of Glaucus.”

stay and hold up the roof while his friends fled the scene was deemed an act of heroism – albeit, a small sign of *hubris* as well:

But after all, the prophecy of Homer respecting those who glory in their strength was to be fulfilled also in the case of Pulydamas, and he too was fated to perish through his own might. For Pulydamas entered a cave with the rest of his boon companions. It was summer-time, and, as ill-luck would have it, the roof of the cave began to crack. It was obvious that it would quickly fall in, and could not hold out much longer. Realising the disaster that was coming, the others turned and ran away; but Pulydamas resolved to remain, holding up his hands in the belief that he could prevent the falling in of the cave and would not be crushed by the mountain.²³⁵

According to this excerpt, the legend of the death of Polydamas was inherently linked to his strength, much like Hektor's demise in the Trojan War. When Pausanias says 'the prophecy of Homer', it is likely that he means a passage in the *Iliad* in which Andromache tells Hektor "Ah, my husband, this might of yours will be your doom, and you have no pity for your infant child or for unfortunate me, who soon will be your widow."²³⁶ Aside from this connection to Hektor, another link was made clear through the name Polydamas, which was both the name of this heroic athlete and the name of one of Hektor's most trusted advisors.²³⁷ Bearing this name again would inherently show a connection to heroism and confer *kleos* to the one named 'Polydamas' by association with the name itself.

As a consequence of the legend, it was said that Polydamas indeed turned into a hero after his death and retained the power to influence the world of the living, in this case through his statue at Olympia. In his satire *The Parliament of the Gods*, Lucian says: "Already the statue of Polydamas the athlete heals those who have fevers in Olympia."²³⁸ Heroes, especially those associated with athleticism, were sometimes assigned healing powers,²³⁹ and Polydamas was not the only athlete whose statue was honoured and thought to have healing abilities: in the same sentence, Lucian tells us that it was rumoured that the statue of Theogenes was also capable of healing.²⁴⁰

Let us turn to Theogenes next. As we have seen already, he appears to have been portrayed a lot like Polydamas. Both had allegedly won an important victory against a heroic opponent that was followed by a major defeat in the Olympic games, and both had victory

²³⁵ Pausanias 6.5.8-9. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

²³⁶ Homer, *Iliad* 6.407-409. Trans. A.T. Murray and William F. Wyatt, LCL 170.

²³⁷ René Nünlist, Justus Cobet, and Ernst Badian, 'Polydamas'.

²³⁸ Lucian, *The Parliament of the Gods* 12. Trans. A.M. Harmon, LCL 302.

²³⁹ On the allotment of healing properties to statues in antiquity, see Maria Elena Gorrini, 'Healing Statues in the Greek and Roman World', in: Ildikó Csepregi and Charles Burnett eds., *Ritual Healing: Magic, Ritual, and Medical Therapy from Antiquity until the Early Modern Period* (Firenze 2012) 107-130.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

statues that were accorded healing powers at Olympia. However, Theogenes' cult on Thasos is much more visible still than the cult of Polydamas has ever been. The legend of Theogenes centred mostly on his victory statue at Thasos and the desecration of his statue – which was probably seen as an incarnation of the athlete himself. As was said by Pausanias:

When he departed his life, one of those who were his enemies while he lived came every night to the statue of Theogenes and flogged the bronze as though he were ill-treating Theogenes himself. The statue put an end to the outrage by falling on him, but the sons of the dead man prosecuted the statue for murder. So the Thasians dropped the statue to the bottom of the sea, adopting the principle of Draco, who, when he framed for the Athenians laws to deal with homicide, inflicted banishment even on lifeless things, should one of them fall and kill a man.²⁴¹

Theogenes' statue was explicitly said to have been a type of substitute for Theogenes himself who, by falling on the perpetrator, exacted revenge for his maltreatment. After the statue was convicted, it was said that the Thasians threw it into the sea. It got lost, but a *loimos*-scenario followed. The Delphic oracle was consulted and told them first to “restore the exiles,” and then:

When all who were in exile had returned and no improvement came, and the Thasians consulted the god again, the story is that the Pythian priestess gave them the following reply: “Him that did fall in the ocean's deep sands you now have forgotten, even Theogenes staunch, victor in myriad games.”²⁴²

The end of the *loimos*-scenario came only when the statue of Theogenes became venerated and ‘sacrificed to as to a god’. Again, an oracle had a prominent role in the heroization of an athlete. According to Pausanias, the cult of Theogenes was not limited to Thasos, but “there [were] many other places [...], both among Greeks and among barbarians, where images of Theogenes had been set up, who cures diseases and receives honours from the natives.”²⁴³ No evidence was found for cults outside of Thasos, but a late 3rd- or early 2nd-century BC deposit box tells us that indeed, a shrine was put up for Theogenes and offerings were being made (figure 7). An inscription adorning the box says:

Those who sacrifice to Theogenes should donate not less than an obol in the offertory-box beforehand. Who does not make this donation beforehand as proscribed shall be possessed by the god. The money, that shall be donated every year, should be given to the high-priest. He should keep it until 1000 drachmae have been collected. Every time the prescribed sum is collected the

²⁴¹ Pausanias 6.11.6.

²⁴² Dio Chrystostom, *Discourse* 31.97. Trans. J.W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby, LCL 358.

²⁴³ Pausanias 6.11.9. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

council and the people have to deliberate on which dedication or construction for Theogenes it should be spent.²⁴⁴

Not only was the statue of Theogenes honoured, then, but he himself became venerated as a hero as well and sacrificed to. Not only did his legends include his own efforts, but added to the legends was the premise that Theogenes was the son of a hero as well. Pausanias states:

The Thasians assert that Theogenes is not the son of Timosthenes. They say that Timosthenes was a priest of the Thasian Herakles and that the spirit of Herakles, in the form of Timosthenes, had intercourse with the mother of Theogenes.²⁴⁵

Theogenes was viewed as the son of Herakles and as a semi-hero or even a demigod, since Herakles himself had been deified rather than heroized as well.²⁴⁶ As such, Theogenes fits perfectly in the heroic paradigm. Not only was he of divine descent, but he was also portrayed with *dúnamis* and *aretē*, leading to *kleos* in the form of legend and stories, and was reported to have been granted *timē* by not only the Thasians, but Greeks and barbarians alike. Also striking in Theogenes' narrative is the role of the Delphic oracle in his heroization: by decree of the oracle, the Thasians restored his statue and continued honouring their new hero.²⁴⁷ He was thus the prototype of the heroized athlete as new hero.

In chapter Three, I argued that the most prominent reason for Philippos' heroization in Segesta by the Segestans was the beauty that could be considered among his *aretē*, as described by Herodotos. However, other features stand out concerning his alleged *kleos*, including the way he died and the honours he was supposedly given in cult. Philippos was ultimately the only heroic athlete who was said to die in battle, while he was in service of Dorieus the Spartan prince.²⁴⁸ It has been plausibly argued by Nicholson that the story of Philippos' death was inspired mostly by his maltreatment in Croton.²⁴⁹ He argues that Philippos, upon returning home from his Olympian victory, was not accorded due honours because he had been banished, and that the honour he received from the Segestans was compensation for his lack of honours in his hometown.²⁵⁰ He received a hero's shrine by his grave and was offered sacrifices of propitiation, which could indeed mean within this narrative that the wrongdoings of Croton were neutralised in the end. Two possible reasons

²⁴⁴ Martin R. Roland, 'Un nouveau règlement de culte thasien', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 64-65 (1940) 163-200, at 175.

²⁴⁵ Pausanias 6.11.2. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Pache, 'The Hero', 104

²⁴⁷ Pausanias 6.12.8.

²⁴⁸ Herodotos 5.47.

²⁴⁹ Nicholson, *The Poetics of Victory*, 37-38.

²⁵⁰ Nicholson, *The Poetics of Victory*, 169-170.

behind the institution of a cult for Philippos in Segesta have been suggested as well, though with the limited account it is difficult to determine whether one of them is true: firstly, it might have been possible that “Philippos had to be appeased, since he had caused some kind of problem for the Segestans”²⁵¹ (a *loimos*-scenario), and secondly, perhaps he was “thought to be able to help the worshippers in some way.”²⁵² These two explanations are, however, not specifically attestable and need more evidence in order to be confirmed.

In essence, the narrative of Philippos of Croton fits the heroic paradigm perfectly, showcasing *dúnamis* and *aretē* accordingly while being victorious in (worthy) competition and overcoming struggles, dying a hero’s death, and being rewarded for his *kleos* by commemoration in legend and heroic honour in cult. There is no doubt that the narrative surrounding the persona of Philippos, even with how little is left of it, tells the story of a man who was worthy of heroization and eventually did acquire it.²⁵³

Last of the heroic athletes is Euthykles. Euthykles is the perfect example of heroization thanks to a *loimos*-scenario. Not only was he an Olympic victor who had shown that he had *dúnamis*, but he was also deprived of due honours when he became ambassador and, afterwards, was thrown into prison and died there.²⁵⁴ His statue was first torn down, causing *loimos* to strike and the Locrians to find an answer to the plague that had been set upon them by Euthykles and the gods. After they found out that it was their wrongdoings against Euthykles that caused the *loimos*, they built an altar for Euthykles and honoured his statue “like that of Zeus.”²⁵⁵ Again we see how a new hero was initially said to have done wrong and punished for things he did not do, then came a *loimos*-scenario, followed by due honours given to the hero – again, as instructed by an oracle – and propitiation of the athlete.

Non-heroized athletes

The heroic athletes either died a mysterious death, i.e. one that was obscured in written sources and thus enhanced the mystery surrounding the narrative, a virtuous death, or a heroic death in battle followed by heroic honours, mostly thanks to the *kleos* they had gained through their displays of *dúnamis* and *aretē*. The *kleos* that was proclaimed in their legends was bestowed upon them in the construction of the narratives after their deaths, emphasizing not only the lives of the heroic athletes, but their deaths and eventual signs of hero cult or other

²⁵¹ Ekroth, *The Sacrificial Rituals*, 171.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ The truth behind the story is of course doubtful, but the legend in itself already tells us a lot of the thoughts behind heroization and its conditions.

²⁵⁴ Nicholson, *The Poetics of Victory*, 156.

²⁵⁵ Kallimachos *Fragment* 85 [diegesis II 5). Trans. C.A. Trypanis, T. Gelzer, Cedric H. Whitman eds., LCL 421.

marks of heroism as well. This last part is where the similarities between the heroic athletes and non-heroized athletes end.

Again, first of the non-heroized athletes is Milo. His narrative includes an elaborate part concerning his death, which was brought about by *hubris* and did not inspire other Greeks to think of the athlete as particularly virtuous. Concerning Milo, the following account was given by Pausanias:

The story has it that he came across in the land of Crotona a tree-trunk that was drying up; wedges were inserted to keep the trunk apart. Milo in his pride thrust his hands into the trunk, the wedges slipped, and Milo was held fast by the trunk until the wolves – a beast that roves in vast packs in the land of Crotona – made him their prey.²⁵⁶

The tragic end that Milo suffered is argued to have been the main reason for his likeness to heroes such as Herakles.²⁵⁷ However, a close reading of the passage – and the identification of ‘good death’ or ‘mysterious death’ being a part of the heroic paradigm – gives way to a somewhat different interpretation of the segment. Firstly, especially Pausanias makes clear that the primary reason for Milo’s attempt at splitting the trunk of the tree was to show off his strength, i.e. his *hubris* was to blame for his death. *Hubris* was a Greek term for behaviour that displayed insolence, contempt, and excessive violence, often including taunting the gods by peacocking or ignoring divine signs of warning and oftentimes ending in death.²⁵⁸ The term *hubris* can be seen as the direct opposite of *aretē*, the characteristic that Milo’s persona probably would have wanted to show in the way he acted in this narrative.

A second outstanding part of this excerpt is that Milo was eaten by wolves specifically. Wolves in classical Greece had a particular part in legend and fable, often appearing in a role that is cunning and stands in opposition with dogs – man’s loyal friends.²⁵⁹ Milo cause of death, then, by wolves – cunning creatures that were notoriously anti-loyal – could have been another attempt at showing the gods’ contempt at his *hubris* and a divine punishment that ended his life in a most un-heroic way.

Aside from his un-heroic death, there is no cult attested for this athlete. Milo was commemorated in legend as a man who held a high amount of *dúnamis* and *aretē* by emulating Herakles and other heroes, and by being a great athlete and a showman. His narrative was constructed in a way that not only conveyed these features, but it also

²⁵⁶ Pausanias 6.14.8. Trans. W.H.S. Jones, LCL 272. See also Strabo, *Geography* 6.12. Trans. Horace Leonard Jones, LCL 182.

²⁵⁷ David H.J. Larmour, *Stage and Stadium: Drama and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (Hildesheim 1999) 58.

²⁵⁸ Rush Rehm, *Radical Theatre: Greek Tragedy in the Modern World* (London 2003) 75.

²⁵⁹ Richard Buxton, *Myths and Tragedies in their Ancient Greek Contexts* (Oxford 2013) 39.

highlighted his lack of heroism, reporting how “he relied upon [...] strength [and] he brought on himself the end of his life.”²⁶⁰ Why or how the legends surrounding Milo were constructed in this way that emphasized his lack of heroism is unclear, but his story was used rather as a warning than as a veneration of this athlete as a hero.

Phayllos, too, was portrayed in a way that conveyed a lot of *dúnamis* and *aretē*, but striking in his case is a lack of mention of his death at all. Though he was a victor in the Pythian games and was said to display much *aretē* by being the only Greek from South-Italy to come to aid in the Greek cause during the Persian wars, he was not accorded heroic honours in cult, nor was he commemorated as a hero. He was granted special status among other athletes who had been active in military roles and whose statues were placed on the Akropolis, but this did not automatically mean that he was heroized. It is highly unlikely that Phayllos was ever reported to have died while aiding in the Persian war, because figures such as Pausanias or Herodotos would have probably mentioned it in their accounts. While Phayllos displayed *dúnamis* and *aretē* in his story, then, he qualified for heroization but did not receive any. In order to find out why, further proof and research is needed.

Last, but not least, I return to Timasitheos. While we have seen that this athlete was quite full of *dúnamis* and *aretē*, he was in the end not accorded heroic honours. He had been extremely successful both in athletics and in military efforts, until his last war act, which was seen as without virtue and honour. I have argued before that association with good leaders was cause for athletes to be considered just as virtuous and full of *aretē* as well. However, Timasitheos did not associate with good leaders, but ended his life as supporter of an adversary of the Athenians, as Pausanias elaborates on:

For when Isagoras the Athenian captured the Acropolis of the Athenians with a view to setting up a tyranny, Timasitheus took part in the affair, and, on being taken prisoner on the Acropolis, was put to death by the Athenians for his sin against him.²⁶¹

Timasitheos associated with a potential new tyrant and was therefore considered sinful, which ultimately led to his death sentence. All his chances at heroization went out the window from the moment he decided to support Isagoras. This final act caused the athlete’s death to be most un-heroic. We have seen that enemy heroes were not uncommon in classical Greece, and Timasitheos might have been granted heroization, were it not for the fact that he was sentenced to death; being sentenced to death was considered only for the heaviest offences,

²⁶⁰ Strabo, *Geography* 6.12.

²⁶¹ Pausanias 6.9.6.

reserved for the worst crimes that went against the laws.²⁶² The late 6th century was a turbulent period in Athens concerning the rise of democracy and struggles for power between aristocrats Kleisthenes and Isocrates – who had the help of Kleomenes I of Sparta –, and in this context, it is not surprising that Timasitheos did not become heroized, but was rather sentenced to die an un-heroic death.

Conclusion

While *dúnamis* and *aretē* were important components that inspired fantastic stories of athletes in the form of *kleos*, or ‘fame’, the accounts of their lives (and deaths) included more than just strength and virtue. As I have made clear in Chapter One, the heroic paradigm was dependent much on the way heroes were reported to have died and the way they were allegedly honoured in cult and legend, i.e. their *kleos* in terms of ‘the things that were heard’.

The heroic athletes, as they have been collected as a group up to now, include athletes who were said to have died in mysterious ways – e.g. Euthymos –, whose deaths were reportedly heroic – e.g. Philippos –, and whose deaths were obscured but mentioned in combination with specific heroic honours – Glaukos, for instance. Hero cults were said to have been instated in most cases in their honour, thus attesting to their heroization. The main vehicles for athletes’ cults were reportedly their statues, which might have been seen as ‘talismanic doubles’ or incarnations of the athletes themselves much like cult statues for the gods and heroes, or shrines at their tombs, again connecting the athlete as a hero to the athlete as a deceased man.

Non-heroized athletes, however, were not said to have received cult and seemingly had unreported deaths or deaths that were connected one way or another in terms of *hubris* or other behaviour that was thought to be immoral. They did display *dúnamis* and *aretē* much in the same way as the attested heroic athletes, but entered Greek narratives as *personae* who had allegedly died in an immoral way and never accorded any type of heroic honours specifically. In conclusion, absence or disappearance of heroic status for these athletes did not stem from lesser athletic abilities or lesser virtuousness, but lied exclusively in their legends, or *kleos*.

²⁶² Hans Neumann and Gottfried Schliemann, ‘Death Penalty’, *Brill’s New Pauly* (Brill’s New Pauly Online 2006) <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/death-penalty-e1216600?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.brill-s-new-pauly&s.q=death+penalty#e1216620> accessed 29-07-2018. Especially in Athens, the death penalty was reserved as a punishment for those accused of “premeditated killing (*phónos*) and sedition and high treason (*katálysis tou demoû, prodosia*) [...], but also religious offences such as desecration of the temple (*hierosyilia*) and [...] publicly taunted godlessness (*asébeia*).”

Conclusion

The focus of my thesis has been to explore athletes' alleged strive for *kleos* in ancient sources and to find out in what way this correlates with classical Greek concepts of heroization. Scholars so far have interpreted heroization either in terms of athletes' individual agency or as a social process that was meant to elevate athletes' *poleis* in the eyes of other Greeks by glamourizing their alleged feats. I conclude that it is also possible to explain heroization as a product of the way athletes' *dúnamis*, *aretē*, and – most notably – *kleos*, which depends heavily on the first two attributes, were described in several types of sources. Athletes achieved *kleos* by allegedly displaying powerful athleticism (*dúnamis*) and virtue (*aretē*) in their actions and in visual self-representation. They were then also granted *kleos* in legend and song by fellow Greeks, which raised their chances of becoming heroized over time. By looking into Greek accounts of nine athletes – six who are counted among the heroic athletes of late archaic and early classical Greece, and three who are not – and finding ways in which they were said to have displayed *dúnamis* and *aretē*, as well as additional components that defined in how far they were believed to have gained *kleos*, I have laid bare similarities and divergences between the groups. I have explored vital conditions that determined whether or not an athlete was thought to be worthy of heroization, and conclude that the defining factors for heroization lay not so much in actions and reactions of both athletes and the *poleis* in which they were honoured, but rather in the narratives that were based on the accounts of their athleticism and other major feats and most likely constructed only after their deaths.

To begin with, an athlete's *dúnamis* can be quantified in terms of significant victories that were attributed to the athlete, through the supposed achievement of extraordinary athletic feats, and via visual self-representation in sculpture that was specifically designed to convey his *dúnamis*. Differences between heroic athletes and non-heroized athletes are marginal: of several non-heroized athletes it was said that they had performed the same types of athletic feats as heroic athletes had done, and both categories were represented in the same way in both legend and sculpture. In other words, excessive *dúnamis* was not limited to heroic athletes. It would therefore be ill-considered to assume that some athletes were venerated because of their incredible athletic power alone. However, it did add to their fame as athletes and thus contributed to their *kleos* and inspired commemoration in legend and sometimes cult.

Secondly, the *aretē* ideal of classical Greece, i.e. athletes' 'role-related specific excellence' regarding heroism, or heroic brilliance, could be met in a threefold way: either through reported military or political distinction, or via supposed mimicry of the lives of

mythic (athletic) heroes such as Herakles or Achilles. Mimicry could be achieved by performing special deeds, dressing up as mythic heroes, or through sculpture paralleling the appearance of heroes' cult statues. On the one hand, this meant that athletes could actively contribute to the way in which they were connected to the mythic heroes, but on the other hand their *aretē* was depended on other citizens of their *poleis*. Again, in most ways the heroic athletes did not particularly distinguish themselves as such: the narratives surrounding heroic athletes displayed the same type of behaviour in both the athletes and their *poleis'* citizens and the ways in which they portrayed *aretē* as those that dealt with non-heroized athletes. Both heroic and non-heroized athletes displayed *aretē* by assuming a role in politics or the military and fighting for their *poleis* or in the name of particularly virtuous leaders, and both groups sometimes allegedly deliberately tried to measure up to the heroic paradigm. While this was not the defining factor for heroization, or the part that possible heroization depended on most, it did prove to be inspirational for the legends constructed around the lives and actions of the athletes and, by extension, gave rise to their fame.

Lastly, and most importantly, already in the earliest Greek literature *kleos* pertained to the heroic paradigm as a whole; not only the lives of heroes, but also the ways in which they had reportedly died and how they were by ancient accounts venerated added to their chances of gaining heroic immortality through *kleos*. This was no different for athletes who became new heroes. They could strive to display *dúnamis* and *aretē* in order to acquire fame, but the legends that circulated and defined their heroization and possibly ended up earning them honour in cult were in the hands of other Greeks and could only be told in full after their alleged deaths. The heroic athletes, as they have been grouped together up to now, are unambiguously involved in tales of mysterious deaths, incredibly heroic deaths, and deathly incidents mentioned specifically in combination with the institution of their cults which were otherwise obscured. In contrast, the non-heroized athletes whom I have studied reportedly died un-heroic deaths or in a way that was never mentioned in their narratives. It can be asserted from this last attribute, which relied a great deal on what happened after an athlete's passing, that manners of death and cult were indeed factors that influenced heroization greatly, rather than constructed consequences of becoming elevated to the status of new hero.

In conclusion, it is sound to assume that athletes' display of *dúnamis* and *aretē* was believed to help them acquire *kleos*. However, other factors that influenced processes of heroization illuminate how the athletes at hand were ultimately dependent on other Greeks to construct narratives about their lives and deaths and to decide on whether or not to heroize the

athletes posthumously. These factors were the inherent link between the athletes and heroes of the Heroic age in the competitions they competed in, the manner in which they were reported to have died, and whether or not it was mentioned that they were venerated as heroes in death. Scholars of ancient Greek history have previously identified athletes' agency as the defining factor of heroization (Fontenrose, Kurke, Currie, Lunt) or focused on the benefits that the heroization of famous persons brought to a *polis* (Bohringer, Boehringer). However, both athletes themselves and their *poleis* were able to influence processes of heroization, but were in general dependent on classical Greek ideologies that underlay the phenomenon and were less easily influenced by politics or agency and more by the contemporary *Zeitgeist* that defined whether or not athletes could be commemorated as new heroes and even granted cult. The heroization of athletes was indeed a complex interplay between the agency of athletes, deliberate actions and reactions of *poleis* to developments that called for religious change, and the way in which athletes' accounts were constructed and circulated through time. None of the factors *an sich* gives a full explanation of the heroization of athletes, but together they form a relatively wholesome clarification of the phenomenon.

It is a valuable and widely respected concern that scholarship has focused systematically on the heroization of athletes as prior to their veneration in cult. Equally commendable is the fact that heroic athletes have been defined as such by sources that attest to their cults. My premise that heroization relied heavily on narratives constructed around the deaths and cults of athletes, and defined their final honour in *kleos*, may inspire further research into the stories that surround the athletes and their lives and deaths. Rather than focusing on the results of heroization, it can be rewarding to focus on the motivations behind the ways in which their narratives were constructed as well as the timeline that surrounded the creation of these legends in order to truly grasp the meaning of heroization in classical Greece. By studying specific athletes and their narratives in the context of contemporary and later developments within Greek communities, as well as the truth behind the stories, it might be possible to further define 'heroic athletes' as such and even to figure out, more conclusively, if the heroization of athletes might indeed have been more widespread than originally has been assumed.

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Abbreviations

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Figures

Year of the <i>periodos</i> cycle	Games
Year 1	Isthmian games Olympic games
Year 2	Nemean games
Year 3	Isthmian games Pythian games
Year 4	Nemean games

Table 1: Cycle of the *periodos* games.



Figure 1: Map of the Greek world depicting the spread of the influence of panhellenic games. The area in red shows the influence of the panhellenic games in the fifth century BC. Source: KU Leuven, 'Ancient Olympics' <<http://ancientolympics.arts.kuleuven.be/eng/TB031EN.html>>.

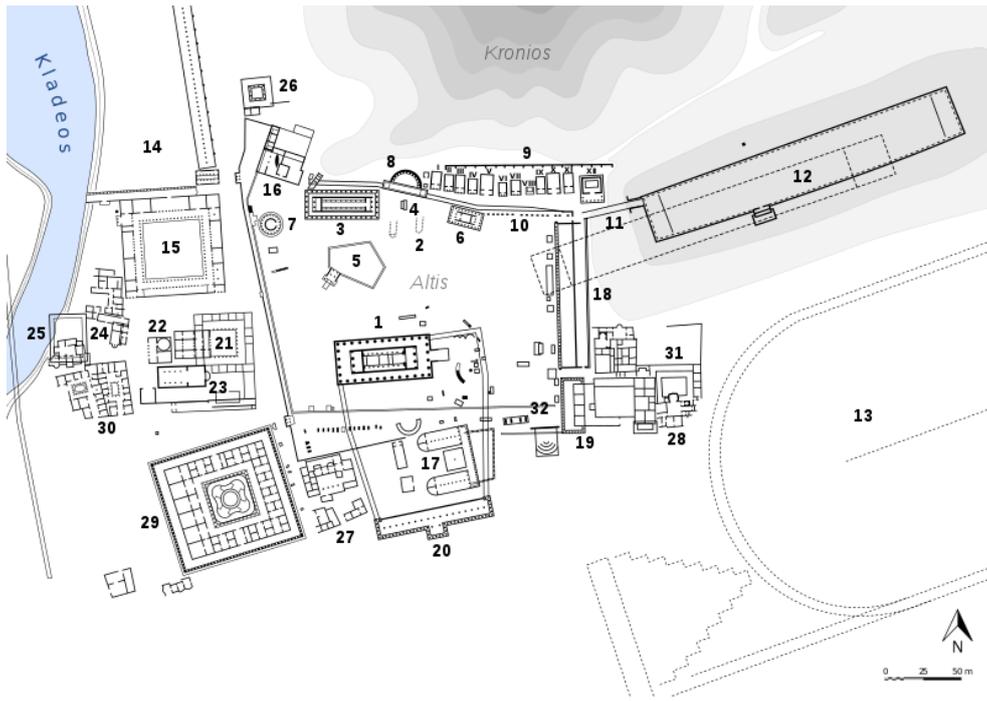


Figure 2: Map of ancient Olympia showing the locations of the major buildings and sites. Source: Sofie Remijsen, *The End of Greek Athletics in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2015), 41.

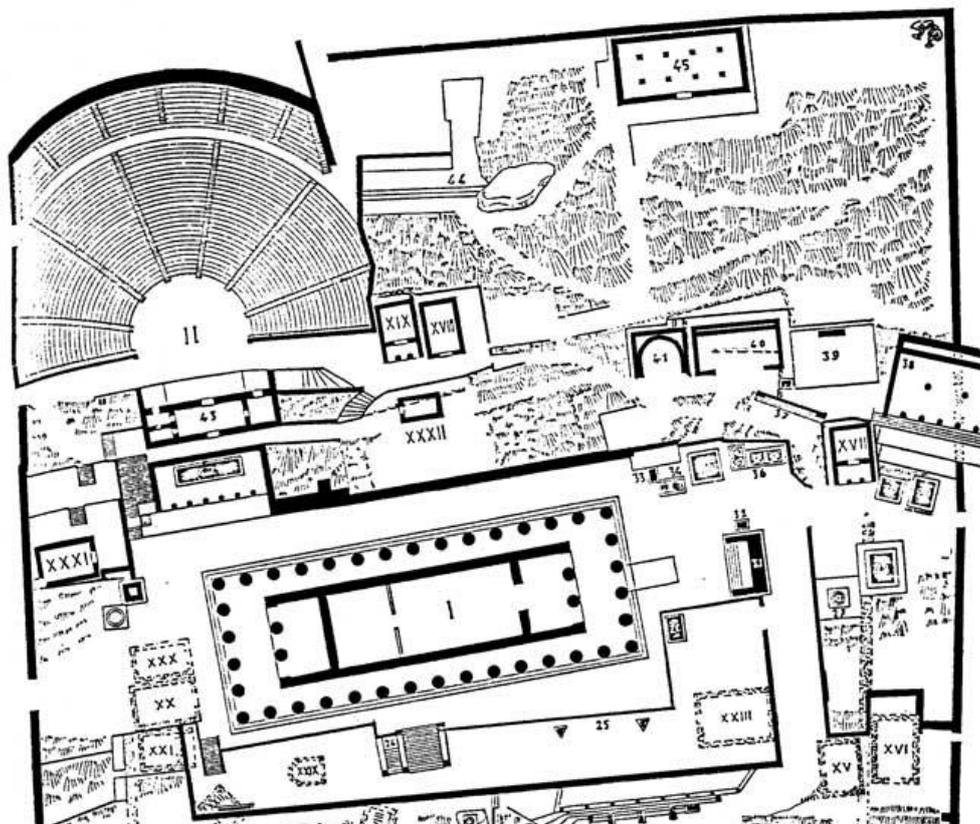


Figure 3: Map of ancient Delphi showing the temples and structures built at the sanctuary of Apollo. I is the main temple for Apollo, no. 39, to the northeast of Apollo's temple, is the *temenos* of Neoptolemos. Source: Pierre de la Coste-Messeliere, *Au Musée de Delphes. Recherches sur quelques monuments archaïques et leur décor sculpté* (Paris 1936).



Figure 4: Relief on the statue base of Polydamas of Scotussa depicting king Darius and four women watching while he holds one of the Immortals over his head. Source: *The Museum of the Olympic Games of Antiquity*, inv. 45.



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Figure 5: Attic red figure kylix depicting Herakles wearing the skin of the Nemean lion and carrying his club while participating in a procession of gods and goddesses. Source: photo by Maria Daniels, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Antikensammlung.



Figure 6: Herm depicting Euthymos of Locri as a man-bull relating to his cult. From the Grotta Caruso, second half of the 4th century BC. Source: F. Costabile et al. eds., *I ninfei di Locri Epizefiri* (Catanzaro 1991) 199, no. 321.

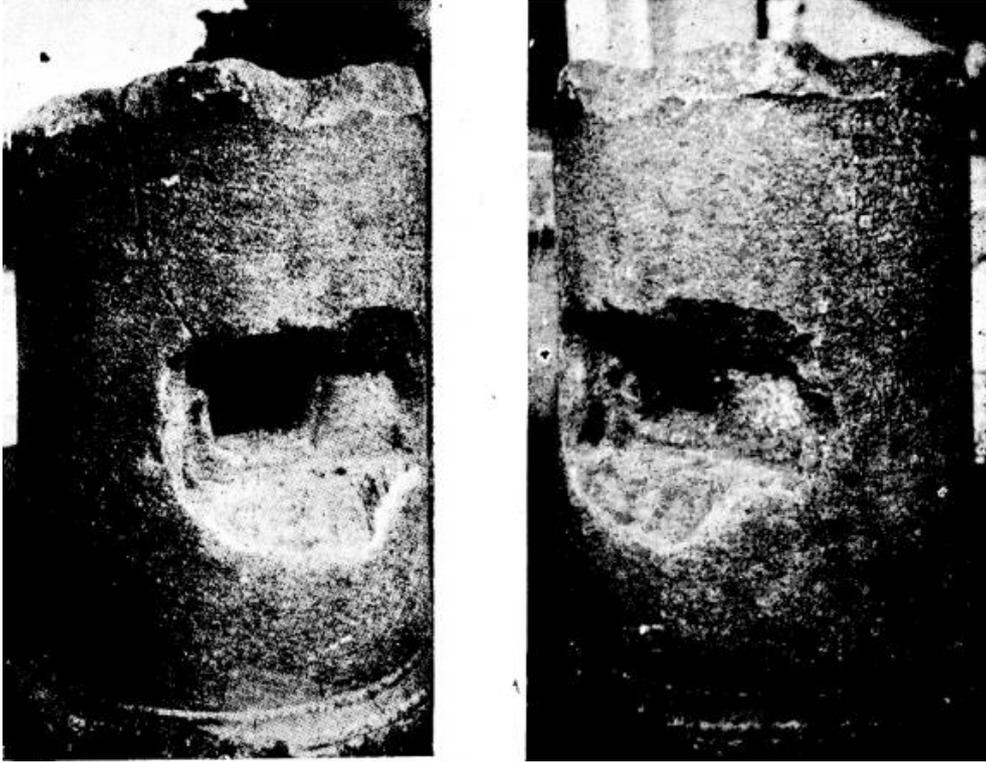


Figure 7: Deposit box for offerings to Theogenes of Thasos. Source: Martin R. Roland, 'Un nouveau règlement de culte thasien', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 64-65 (194) 163-200, at 164.

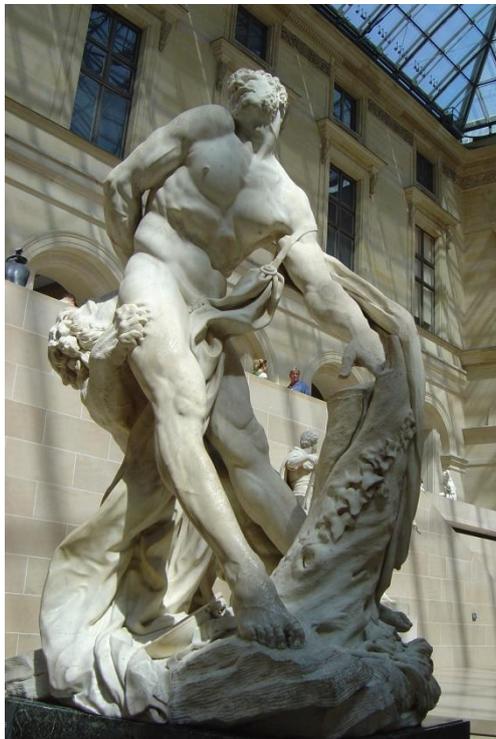


Figure 8: Marble statue showing the demise of Milo. Made by Pierre Paul Puget, 1683. Source: photo by Philippe Fuzeau, Musée du Louvre, department of sculptures, France, 17th and 18th centuries, <<https://www.louvre.fr/en/mediaimages/milon-de-crotone-1>>.