



# Games and Sanctuaries in Ancient Greece: Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, Nemea, Athens

*Panos Valavanis*

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As religious rituals, rites of passage, and celebrations of the body, athletics were deeply woven into the fabric of ancient Greek life. Modelled after physical exercises and competitions that existed in earlier Near Eastern cultures, hundreds of athletic contests were held throughout the ancient Greek world. In the eighth century, B.C. the games held at Olympia began to surpass all others in their fame and splendour and would give rise to a world history of sport that continues to this day. Published to coincide with the return of the Olympics to Greece in 2004, this thoroughly researched book studies sport in ancient Greece over a span of a millennium and a half - from the earliest mentions of athletics in Homer's Iliad and other literary sources, through the Classical age, and into the Hellenistic, Roman, and late antique periods. With more than five hundred illustrations, the book tours the monumental stadiums, bathhouses, temples, and other structures built to host the athletic events and to house the wealth of art created to pay tribute to the athletes, gods, and heroes of the games.

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