

In the late fifth century BCE Hippias of Elis compiled the first cumulative list of Olympic victors. The find of fragments of three separate versions of the Olympic victor list on Roman-era papyri from Oxyrhynchus shows that Olympic victor lists, *Olympionikai*, enjoyed notable longevity and wide circulation. The enduring popularity of Olympic victor lists was due to the fact that by the fourth century BCE Olympiads had become standard chronological referents. The list of Olympic victors thus provided a convenient framework to which different kinds of information could be attached, and numerous variants of the Olympic victor list, diverging markedly in content and complexity, were produced. The purpose of this paper is to offer a concise overview of the origins and evolution of *Olympionikai* and to argue that *Olympionikai* were a distinct form of literary expression and merit careful study.

Despite the survival of one complete Olympic victor list (in the work of Eusebius) and well over 100 fragments of others, *Olympionikai* have never been the subject of monographic treatment. The only significant extant scholarship consists of surprisingly brief comments in Felix Jacoby's *Fragmente der Griechische Historiker* and ten pages in Julius Jüthner's 1909 commentary on Philostratus' *De Gymnastika*. Neither Jacoby nor Jüthner discuss the content and structure of *Olympionikai* in any detail, as a result of which the paper proposed here covers much new ground throughout.

The key components of the argumentation I will present can be summarized as follows:

1. By the early third century BCE, three different types of *Olympionikai* had come into being. The earliest *Olympionikai* were *Olympionikôn anagraphai*, which consisted of a catalog of Olympic victors and supplemental information on the Olympic Games. A second type of *Olympionikai* contained an Olympic victor list that included additional chronographic information such as the names of eponyms and kings that served as the bases of various dating systems. In the third type of *Olympionikai*, historical notices of varying length were added to the entry for each Olympiad so that the Olympic victor list was transformed into an historical chronicle.
2. *Olympionikai* came into being at a relatively late date and were never intended for performance, so it would be inappropriate to identify them as a literary genre. At the same time, *Olympionikai* served a specific range of functions and appeared in a limited number of different forms, each of which had an expected constellation of features. They were, therefore, a distinct form of literary expression.
3. *Olympionikai* repay close attention for three reasons. First, they were a standard type of text that was produced in significant numbers for nearly a millennium but have never been thoroughly studied. Second, Olympic victor lists with attached historical notices were one of the means by which literate Greeks familiarized themselves with recent events in the Mediterranean basin. The study of their contents thus provides insight into what Greeks knew about the world around them. Third, *Olympionikai* are a key source of information about chronology and athletics.

A handout will accompany the paper and will include samples of the Olympic victor lists found in Eusebius' *Chronographia*, Phlegon of Tralles' *Olympionikôn kai Chronikôn Sunagogê*, POxy I 12, and POxy II 222.