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Myth, Art, War and Greek Sanctuaries

Gillian Shepherd
Sanctuary of Zeus Olympios, Olympia

To have a sanctuary you need:

• An altar (for the sacrifices and related ritual activities)
• A marked-off sacred space (*temenos*)

But you do not need:

• a temple (although this may be used for the cult statue and valuables)
• or any of the other buildings often found in sanctuaries, e.g. stoas, theatres etc (although these may contribute to the festivals and grandeur of a particular sanctuary)
Main types of sanctuaries

- State sanctuaries (including urban and suburban e.g. the Sanctuary of Athena on the Acropolis in Athens)
- Extra-urban sanctuaries (e.g. the Argive Heraion)
- Interstate sanctuaries (also known as pan-Hellenic or interurban e.g. Olympia and Delphi)
Argive Heraion (ie Sanctuary of Hera) and the Argive Plain
NB: Amphictyony
Basic ground plan of a Greek temple
NB Altar and temenos
The Orders
Olympia (plan; NB Altis, Mt Kronos, Alpheios)
Reconstruction of a bronze tripod cauldron, Olympia
Original fragments of the later 8th cent. BC

Cf *Iliad* 23.264 (funeral games of Patroklos)
Stadium, Olympia (looking east; NB 1 stade = approx. 185 m)
The Olympic Games

- Traditional founding date of 776 BC
- Held every 4 years, part of great festival of Zeus
- Different events: footraces, hoplitodromoi (hoplite races), chariot and horse racing, jumping, boxing, wrestling, the pankration, and the pentathlon (wrestling, long jump, running, discus, javelin)
- Only Greek males could attend and compete (but cf. Kyniska)
- Participants had to pay for own training (ie tended to come from wealthier class)
- Only first prizes
- No team games
- Rules and fines against cheating
- Actual prize an olive wreath, but…
  - Feasts to celebrate
  - Rewards in hometown, e.g. free meals, good seats at events, positions of influence, cash
- Highly prestigious for victor and his polis
Olympia (reconstruction)

Temple of Hera, Olympia (c. 590 BC)

“The order of the temple is Doric, and columns stand all around it. In the opisthodomos (= back porch) one of the columns is of oak…”

Pausanias 5.16.1 (2nd cent. AD)
Temple of Zeus, Olympia (470-50)
Architect Libon
Spoils of war: victory of Elis over Pisa
Spartans dedicated gold tripod for gable after victory over Athens at Tanagra, 457
Temple of Zeus, Olympia
NB Pheidias
East pediment, Temple of Zeus, Olympia (NB Sterope, Oinomaus, Zeus, Pelops, Hippodameia)
Temple of Zeus, West Pediment, Centauromachy (Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs)
Theseus, Pethithoos (grandson of Zeus and king of Lapiths)
Temple of Zeus, Olympia
Metopes
Labours of Herakles
Temple of Zeus, Olympia
Metope no. 3:
Stymphalian birds

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Temple of Zeus, Olympia
Metope no. 10
Athena, Herakles and Atlas
(golden apples of the Hesperides)

Temple of Zeus, Olympia
Metope 12
Cleaning the Augean stables
Temple of Zeus, Olympia
Metope 12
Herakles and the Bull

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Reconstruction of the Sanctuary of Zeus, Olympia
Treasury terrace, Olympia
Pausanias (6. 19) names the donors (problem: 10 names but 12 sets of foundations); the names may related to the remains in the following order (west to east):

- Sikyon (Greece)
- Syracuse (Sicily)
- Epidamnos (Albania)
- Byzantium (= Istanbul)
- Sybaris (Sicily)
- Cyrene? (North Africa)
- Cyrene?
- Altar?
- Selinus (Sicily)
- Metapontum (Italy)
- Megara (Greece)
- Gela (Sicily)

“There are some other things worth recording which are kept [in the Sikyonian Treasury]: Pelop’s gold-handled dagger and Amaltheia’s horn…a box-wood statue of Apollo with a gilded head…”