

# RIDE LIKE THE WIND: EQUESTRIAN SPORT IN HELLENISTIC AND EARLY IMPERIAL RHODES

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**Summary:** During the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods Rhodes had a vibrant athletic culture, with numerous agonistic festivals. In keeping with the trend throughout the Greek-speaking world which suggests a diminished presence of hippic sport in Greek games, especially beyond the *periodos* contests and some prominent local festivals, equestrian competitions are attested in Rhodes only for the Great Halieia. Notwithstanding this trend, Rhodian elites maintained a keen interest in breeding, training, and racing horses throughout this period. Victories were commemorated at the sites of competition, especially regarding major interstate games, as well as in sanctuaries and other prominent sites in Rhodes. Moreover, a substantial body of evidence strongly suggests that, contrary to scholarly orthodoxy, frequently Rhodian elites engaged in equestrian sport from a young age, usually starting in their twenties, and hence at the outset of their public service careers.

The island of Rhodes had a distinguished sporting tradition since at least the fifth century BCE. Numerous Rhodian athletes achieved multiple notable distinctions in the Greek athletic circuit, including Diagoras and his progeny in the Classical period, the runner Leonidas and the wrestler Leon in the Hellenistic period, as well as another Rhodian *periodonikes* runner of the first century CE whose name does not survive.<sup>1</sup> In addition to distinguished athletes in gymnastic events, there was also a strong tradition of engagement with equestrian sport among the Rhodian wealthy. Similar to athletes, in the case of practitioners of equestrian sport their achievements are primarily known by the chance survival of the inscribed statue bases of their commemorative monuments. Cumulatively,

1 Diagoras and family: Pind. *Ol.* 7; *IvO* nos. 151, 152, 153 and 159; for additional testimonia see Poliakoff 1987: 119–20; Golden 2004: 51. Leonidas: Paus. 6.13.4; Philostr. *Gym.* 33. Leon: *NIvO* no. 30. Early Imperial *periodonikes*: Robert 1966, with SEG 65.653 for more recent scholarship.

this record points to a vibrant domestic agonistic scene in Rhodes, especially during the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods, which partly coincides with the apogee of the island's economic, cultural, and to some degree political clout. Much of the above took place in the capital city of Rhodos but athletic activity, including contests, are also documented throughout the rest of the island.<sup>2</sup> In the ensuing discussion I focus on modes of pursuing and commemorating equestrian victories by Rhodian elites. Extant monuments suggest vigorous commemorative practices of equestrian victories within the sanctuaries and urban sites of the island during the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods, at a time when the number of equestrian contests and monuments celebrating victories in such contests, vis-à-vis the overall number of games and monuments, was diminishing in many parts of the Greek-speaking world. Furthermore, whenever possible the documentation from Rhodes suggests a departure from the widely recorded trend, as evidenced in other parts of the Greek world, of engaging in equestrian sport in middle and old age. In Rhodes, on the contrary, scions of elite families that were not skillful in gymnastic sport often pursued equestrian sport at a young age, before or contemporaneously with the formal launch of their military and civic careers. Rhodian equestrian victories and their commemoration emerge, therefore, as a distinct localized tradition that was systematically articulated and promoted by the wealthy elites of Rhodes.

### **Equestrian Competition in Hellenistic and Imperial Greece**

Equestrian competition was practiced in Greece since at least the time of the Homeric epics, and possibly well before. A sport for the wealthy who could afford to purchase, breed, maintain, and transport teams of supreme-quality racing horses, equestrian sport was integrated in institutionalized *agones* at the interstate and local level since the Archaic period and attracted considerable investment by elites during the late Archaic,

2 Throughout the paper, I refer to 'Rhodes' to denote the island/federal city-state, and 'Rhodos' to denote the capitol city located at the northernmost corner of the island.

Classical and early Hellenistic periods, fueled partly by the intense interest by spectators and other sport enthusiasts.<sup>3</sup> Starting in the middle Hellenistic and especially during the late Hellenistic and Imperial periods Greek *agones* proliferated, but did elites and games audiences keep up the same level of interest for equestrian sport? Before turning to Rhodes, a brief survey of select relevant testimonia is in order.

Reports in the Olympic victor list of Africanus regarding two alleged suspensions of equestrian contests in the Olympic games during the late Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods are almost certainly inaccurate.<sup>4</sup> Thanks to extant inscribed victor lists, among the *periodos* games equestrian contests are documented for the Isthmian games until the late second century CE and at the Sebastan games until the late first century CE.<sup>5</sup> Beyond the major games, equestrian contests are documented in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods in some Greek agonistic festivals. In the case of Athens, equestrian contests are epigraphically documented for the Great Panathenaia until the mid-second century BCE, and in prize *amphorai* until the late second/early first century BCE.<sup>6</sup> Equestrian training and competition must have continued in Athens during the Imperial period, but at a reduced scale. An Athenian decree of 38/7 BCE refers to equestrian drills by ephebes in the *gymnasion* and an inscription of the

3 For recent overviews with references to older literature see Mann & Scharff 2020 and Mann 2025: 46 and 86-87; Nicholson 2021.

4 Crowther 1995, especially 111-19; but see Farrington 1997: 22-23, who believes that equestrian events were not held in the Olympic games for quite some time during the Imperial period.

5 Isthmian games victor lists recording equestrian victors, Meritt 1931: no. 14, 72-77, 3 CE; Meritt 1931: no. 15, 29-50, latter part of second century CE; Meritt 1931: no. 16, 32-38, 181 CE. Farrington 2012 collects all the testimonia for victors, including in equestrian events, at the Isthmian games. The quadrennial Kaisareia games were held in Corinth right after the biennial Isthmian games, and during the Imperial period both games were administered by the same *agonothetes*. Given the temporal and spatial proximity it is very likely that many athletes and horse owners competed in both (see e.g. IG XII 6.1.340, ca. 1-50 CE). For the Isthmia and Kaisareia see Farrington 2012: 15 and 25. For a victor list of the Kaisareia games recording equestrian victors see Biers & Geagan 1970: ll. 64-80, 127 CE. For the Sebasta victor lists see Miranda de Martino 2014.

6 Shear 2021: 185-96 and 428-48, with tables 5.9-5.15; Streicher 2022: 58-64.

Imperial period contains an isolated reference to the *synoris*.<sup>7</sup> An interest in equestrian sport in the third century CE, at least among some quarters of the Athenian social elite, can be safely deduced from the honorific inscription commemorating hippic victories of the *periodonikes* Prometheus.<sup>8</sup> Usually taken as proof that interest in Greek-style equestrian sport continued unabated or experienced a renaissance in the late Imperial period, the record of Prometheus is not as straightforward as it is usually assumed to be.<sup>9</sup> Any assessment about equestrian sport in the Imperial period must first and foremost take into consideration the extremely low number of attested by name games with equestrian contests vis-à-vis the overall number of games with only gymnastic and/or thymelic contests known from the same period. This is especially the case for the better-documented regions of mainland Greece, select Aegean islands, and especially Asia Minor.

The Asklepeia, held in the sanctuary in Epidauros, were never in the same league with top-tier games (such as the old Big Four, other games included in the expanded *periodos* of the Imperial period, or longstanding and venerable agonistic festivals like the Great Panathenaia) but, because of the popularity of the sanctuary, it nevertheless attracted considerable interest among athletes. The program of the Asklepeia-Kaisareia, as it was called in the early Imperial period, included equestrian contests until at least 32–33 CE.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, a limited number of less populous Greek communities consistently held equestrian contests throughout the Hellenistic, and at times in the Imperial period. Since their foundation in 196 BCE the Eleutheria in Larisa, in the heart of hip-potrophic Thessaly, comprised an extensive array of equestrian events in their program. The Eleutheria were held at least until the early Imperial period, when the documentation dries out, although this should not

7 Equestrian drills in the *gymnasion*, IG II<sup>2</sup> 1043.21; *synoris*, IG II<sup>2</sup> 12686.

8 IG II<sup>2</sup> 3769; Moretti 1953: no. 89; Strasser 2021: no. 160. Moretti 1957: no. 932, assigns his Olympic victory to the games of 241 CE; Hallof 2025: no. 945, dates Prometheus' Olympic victory before 240–253 CE.

9 E.g., Moretti 1953: 263; Crowther 1995: 119; Strasser 2021: 389. I intend to discuss in greater detail the Prometheus inscription as well as other testimonia pertaining to Greek-style equestrian sport in the late Hellenistic and Imperial periods on another occasion.

10 IG IV<sup>2</sup> 1.101.

necessarily imply that the festival was discontinued.<sup>11</sup> While the Eleutheria was the flagship agonistic festival in Thessaly during the Hellenistic period, there were other games of strictly local appeal with equestrian events held in Larisa.<sup>12</sup> Outside Thessaly, in Thespiai equestrian contests as part of the Erotideia festival are attested consistently for the Hellenistic and Imperial periods.<sup>13</sup> In Messene, from a total of eight securely documented festivals of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, equestrian contests are attested for three, two of which were probably short lived as they were held in honor of Roman dignitaries in the early Imperial period.<sup>14</sup> Even if direct evidence for equestrian contests in specific festivals is lacking, in some areas interest in horse breeding and racing can be indirectly confirmed through dedications by local victors in *periodos* games.<sup>15</sup>

- 11 Zafeiropoulou et al. 2004: 124-25, no. 26, second century BCE; *IG IX* 2.526 (after 196 BCE), 528 (early first century BCE), 534 (first century BCE); Arvanitopoulos 1911: no. 27 (early first century BCE).
- 12 *IG IX* 2.527, 531 and 532, late first century BCE/early first century CE; Theocharis *AD* 16 B (1960), p. 185, Imperial period. These games were held in commemoration of a victorious battle conducted by the Thessalians during the Third Macedonian war, and took place in Larisa since the late second century BCE until the early Imperial period. For these games and the presence of Italians in Thessaly see Helly 1983. In the Imperial period the Kaesareia in Larisa comprised an *apobates* contest, *IG IX* 2.614b. For details of these and other games with equestrian contests in Hellenistic and Imperial Thessaly see Zafeiropoulou et al. 2004, especially 69-78, but one should beware of the moralizing tone of the authors regarding Greek sport during the Imperial era.
- 13 *IG VII* 1764, second/first century BCE; Roesch 2009: no. 186, second/first century BCE; no. 188, 6 BC-2 CE; no. 191, first half of second century CE; no. 192, second half of second century CE. Equestrian contests are attested in other Boiotian festivals of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods e.g., *IG VII* 2871, ca. 75 BCE.
- 14 Asklepieia, see *SEG* 41.323, 5-6 and the comments/emendation on the same inscription by Slater 2012: 178; games honoring P. Cornelius Scipio, *SEG* 63.289, 36, after 4 CE, with comments by Jones 2019: 27-34; games honoring the emperor Tiberius, *SEG* 41.328, 34-35, 14 CE.
- 15 E.g., in Samos interest in equestrian sport among elites during the early Imperial period can be deduced by *IG XII* 6.1.340, ca. 1-50 CE, dedicated at the Heraion, in commemoration of the victories of a local at the Isthmian and Kaisareian games. Similarly in Rhodes, on the current state of the evidence equestrian contests are attested in the Great Halieia, the only Rhodian festival with hippic events, until the middle of

This having been said, and taking into consideration the chances of survival, collectively the record for Hellenistic and especially Imperial Greece suggests that the majority of agonistic festivals did not comprise equestrian contests in their program. Beyond the *periodos* and other top games, after the late Hellenistic period regional and local games with consistent programs of equestrian contests are less frequently attested for mainland Greece and the islands. Even more notable is the rarity of equestrian contests among the hundreds, as attested in the epigraphic and numismatic record, games of various denominations (*hieroi, thematikoï*) in Asia Minor during the late Hellenistic and Imperial periods. Some examples: in Ankyra Pylaimenes, high priest of the Imperial cult in 2/1 BCE and son of the last king of Galatia Amyntas sponsored a gymnic and equestrian contest, the latter with chariots and individual horses.<sup>16</sup> The description fits a Greek-style *agon*. In connection with the same contest, the list recording the high priests and their accomplishments specifies that Pylaimenes made available his land to be used as a horse-racing track (ἵππόδρομος). This clearly suggests that Ankyra lacked a permanent venue for horse racing at this point. Interestingly, when Pylaimenes served in the same office in 7/8 CE he did not finance athletic or equestrian contests. In addition to the games sponsored by Pylaimenes, sacred gymnic and musical contests are attested for the Imperial period in Ankyra, but there is no other indication of horse or chariot racing.<sup>17</sup> In Termessos, during the Imperial period, there is evidence for at least 20 distinct contests, but the number was probably higher.<sup>18</sup> This count does

the first century CE. There are, however, two additional attested Rhodian champions in equestrian events from the Imperial period, one of whom possibly (Teleutias, *IG* XII 1.76, victor at the Olympic *synoris*, probably for adult horses; for the date see Moretti 1987: 88; Hallof 2025: no. 854, first century BCE/first century CE) and the other certainly (Theopropos, *IvO* 239, Olympic champion at the horse race; Hallof 2025: no. 929, beginning of third century CE) postdate the last attested equestrian victor at the Great Halieia. Overall ca. 20% of known Rhodian equestrian victors date from the Imperial period, and only ca. 8% after ca. 50 CE.

16 Mitchell & French 2012: no. 2, 20-29.

17 For surveys of agonistic festivals in Ankyra during the Imperial period see Robert 1960; and more recently Uzunaslán 2021.

18 See *TAM* III 1.141-200, discussed in Heberdey 1923 and supplemented by Robert 1978: 34-35; İplikçioğlu et al. 1992: no. 1; İplikçioğlu et al. 2007: no. 29.

not include the annual *gymnasion* games for the local youth.<sup>19</sup> It is not always possible to establish a secure link between a victor list or honorific inscription and an attested contest, but on the present state of the evidence the most likely interpretation is that only three out of all the attested games in Termessos comprised equestrian events in their program.<sup>20</sup> In Oinoanda, also during the Imperial period, there is extensive documentation for five distinct games with gymnastic and thymelic contests, but no indication of equestrian events.<sup>21</sup> During the Imperial period there were five *agones* documented in Side: two *themides*, an *isopythios* Phoibeios contest which was upgraded to sacred eiselastic and renamed Pythia during the third century CE, a sparsely documented Olympic contest, and a *mystikos agon*, the latter being most likely an exclusively thymelic contest. A depiction of a chariot race on the base of an altar associated with the sacred eiselastic Pythia points to the possibility of equestrian competitions in the context of the most high-profile agonistic festival of the city. But there is no evidence for horse/chariot racing in any of the other games held in Side and, perhaps most importantly, there is no trace of a permanent hippodrome in the vicinity of the city.<sup>22</sup> Finally, in Imperial Syedra there were at least four *themides*, with no evidence for equestrian contests in any of them.<sup>23</sup> Many additional examples from Asia Minor can be adduced.

A comprehensive and thorough study is certainly a precondition for a more secure assessment of this phenomenon. But the preceding overview, certainly selective although not necessarily unrepresentative, suggests that starting in the late Hellenistic period equestrian sport had a proportionally diminished presence in the commemorative landscape and the competitive calendar of the Greek-speaking world as docu-

19 TAM III 1.202-11 and 213.

20 The *themis* of T.Cl. Agrippas (TAM III 1.185) and two unidentified contests (TAM III 1.199 and 212).

21 SEG 44.1165-1201; Wörrle 1988.

22 For agonistic inscriptions from Side see IK Side 120-38; for the portrayal of a chariot race in an altar see IK Side 134; for an overview of the games at Imperial Side see Uzunaslın 2008.

23 See Papakonstantinou 2019: 100-1, with new testimonia and a summary chart in Saraçoğlu 2021.

mented by both honorific athletic monuments and victor lists of agonistic festivals.<sup>24</sup> The gradual decrease of references to equestrian contests and victories was accompanied by a decrease in references to equestrian facilities.<sup>25</sup> Shifts in perceptions and practices connected to equestrian contests and their commemoration can therefore be documented for a wide geographical scope and over the *longue durée*. The reasons behind the shift in the perception and practice of Greek-style equestrian sport in the late Hellenistic and Imperial periods are complex and lie beyond the scope of the present study. Suffice it to say that while broad factors with far-reaching impact were certainly instrumental, local factors could often substantially affect the perception and pursuit of equestrian sport, a popular but at times semantically ambivalent practice, and thus impact participation patterns and representation/commemoration strategies.<sup>26</sup> In the remainder of this paper I intend to explore how local social mechanisms, experiences, and actions contributed in shaping a profuse and distinctly Rhodian cultural form of equestrian competition and victory commemoration. This cultural form – we can also call it a local tradition – was eagerly embraced and promoted by Rhodian elites at a time when some of their social peers in other parts of the Greek-speaking world were scaling down their investment and overall involvement in equestrian sport.

24 Crowther 1995 provides a survey, but there are some omissions and misunderstandings. For an example of the latter, Crowther 1995: 119 misconstrues the κελῖα, an event in the annual ephebic festival of Artemis Orthia in Sparta (*IG* V 1.264, 271, 282, and 313), as a *keles* race for boys. Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 189 argue that the κελῖα was a singing competition; Kennell 1995: 51–52 more accurately identifies it as a competition in singing that imitated hunting cries.

25 See Viziinou 2019 based on a sample of over 350 inscriptions from the Archaic period to late antiquity referring to hippodromes and equestrian contests.

26 See, for instance, Golden 1997 and Papakonstantinou 2003 for Classical Athens; cf. also Mann & Scharff 2020 for prominent elite strategies of equestrian victory commemoration in the Classical and Hellenistic periods.



### Local Traditions of Equestrian Sport in Hellenistic and Early Imperial Rhodes

It is in the context of the wider trajectory of equestrian competition in Greek *agones* over the Hellenistic and Imperial periods that one should assess the evidence for equestrian sport and its commemoration in Rhodes. In addition to being the home of some of the most distinguished athletes in the history of ancient Greek sport, Rhodes hosted numerous agonistic festivals. The Great Halieia was the flagship agonistic festival that regularly attracted, especially in the post-Classical world, top athletes and performers. Moreover, a number of games of primarily or purely local appeal are attested in the island during the Hellenistic and Imperial periods. Some of these festivals are scarcely documented, so their content and history are disputed. But one can argue with confidence that, in addition to the Great Halieia, the Asklapieia, Diosoteria, Dioskouria, Great Erethimia, Olympia, Panathenaia, Poseidania, Romaia, and Tlapolemeia comprised gymnastic contests in their program.<sup>27</sup> There is also a strong possibility that the same was the case for the Epitaphia and the Herakleia. In addition to all these festivals with games, several other festivals are attested by name. Some were certainly agonistic festivals. Among the sparsely documented ones, some were thymelic or their program cannot be substantiated. Many of the attested festivals were held in Rhodos, but there is evidence for agonistic festivals held in the territories of the old constituent *poleis* (Ialysos, Lindos, Kamiros). Given the above, it would not be surprising if the total number of agonistic festivals with gymnastic contests held in Rhodes at some point, not necessarily concurrently, in the course of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods was approximately twenty.<sup>28</sup>

27 During the mid-late Imperial period, there was also a contest of Pericles (Περικλείος ἀγών) in Rhodes, see SEG 54.724 and Strasser 2021: no. 125, end of second/early third century CE. This was most likely a *themis*, a contest offering monetary prizes. Such contests were usually sponsored through an endowment established by a local member of the civic elite, in this instance an otherwise unattested Pericles. *Themides* are well documented for the Imperial period, and it is likely that there were more in Rhodes during the period in question.

28 Despite the relative abundance of documentation, there is no reliable scholarly overview of agonistic festivals and other aspects of athletics in Hellenistic and Imperial

Among the attested Rhodian games, and in keeping with the wider trend adumbrated in the preceding section, equestrian contests can be securely documented only for the Great Halieia until the early Imperial period. Furthermore, all documented victors in equestrian events at the Great Halieia were Rhodian. Rhodian elites also competed and won in equestrian contests in other parts of the Greek world, including in the Big Four games. There is some evidence that some of the most prestigious victories in equestrian events won by Rhodians outside Rhodes were also commemorated at the site of victory.<sup>29</sup> However, the record strongly suggests that Rhodians commemorated their victories in equestrian events primarily by dedicating monuments in the major sanctuaries and other prominent sites throughout the island.<sup>30</sup> What is more, the extant record suggests a strong Rhodian trend towards local particularism and differentiation in equestrian sport practices.

Following U. Hannerz, we can think of the local as the space “in which a variety of influences come together, acted out perhaps in a unique combination, under those special conditions”.<sup>31</sup> The local is, in other words, a cultural laboratory of discourses, practices, and meanings, that might occasionally produce distinct responses and representations to wider fields of social practice.<sup>32</sup> Sport was in the ancient Greek world such a field with a broad, diachronic reach. Greek-style sport was a mainstay of education, a salient field of competition, and a touchstone of multiple identities. Not surprisingly, throughout its history there were numerous broad shifts and trends in the practice, representation, and recalibration of Greek sport. Some of these shifts (e.g., the shift towards institutionalization in the Archaic period; the incorporation of sport practices in civic youth training programs like the *ephebeia*, starting in the fourth century BCE) had a long-lasting effect. Others were ephemeral. What should not

Rhodes (for an incomplete summary account see Ringwood Arnold 1936). For agonistic festivals in Rhodes during the Archaic and Classical periods see Nielsen 2018: 54 and 152–53.

29 *IvO* no. 239, second half of second century CE.

30 See Ma 2013 for a thorough and insightful analysis, with extensive coverage of examples from Rhodes, of the practice and meaning of statuary dedication in the Hellenistic world.

31 Hannerz 1996: 27.

32 For a recent localist approach in ancient Greek history see Beck 2020.

be lost in this broad perspective is the agency and interactivity of individuals and groups directly engaged with sport (e.g., athletes; spectators; communities; *gymnasion* trainees; even individual benefactors of sport) that could potentially transform select facets of wider trends into local cultural forms. The multivocality of local sport practices can be observed in connection with regulatory frameworks, civic youth training programs, and many other aspects of the broader field of Greek sport.<sup>33</sup> In turn, distinctly local practices and meanings attached to sport could potentially affect sport competition in its wider scope.

An instance of recalibration of Greek sport practices that shaped a distinct local tradition can be observed in connection with equestrian competition and its representation in Hellenistic and early Imperial Rhodes. Sport victories and their commemoration, through monuments dedicated primarily in the island's sanctuaries, were instrumental in constructing civic and status identities, especially among the social elite. In keeping with practices of their social peers throughout the Hellenistic and most of the Imperial periods, Rhodian members of the affluent class eagerly embraced the established – with nearly global validity for the Greek-speaking world – template of civic maturation and self-validation through the triad of sport, tenure of civic and/or military office, and benefaction.<sup>34</sup> Among those talented enough to successfully compete in gymnastic events, some seemingly focused on training and competing systematically only in the younger age classes, although many went on to achieve notable athletic success as adult men. For those that were flush with cash but devoid of physical skills, equestrian sport was the only viable alternative. Here Rhodian civic elites had an advantage: one would expect that, as a corollary of the economic strength of their homeland especially during the Hellenistic period, on average there would be a wider pool of wealthy Rhodians committed to equestrian competition than most other parts of the Greek world.<sup>35</sup> While diverse benefactions

33 For the multivocality of regulatory frameworks in ancient Greek sport see Papakonstantinou 2025.

34 Papakonstantinou 2019: chapter 5.

35 On Rhodian elites and other facets of social life and civic organization in Rhodes during the Hellenistic period see Gabrielsen 1997, supplemented by Boyxen 2018 and Thomsen 2020.

and the practice of gymnastic sport at the highest level was undeniably valued and, whenever possible, systematically pursued by Rhodian elites, the evidence is equally conclusive that the same group aggressively invested in equestrian sport at the highest level (especially since equestrian contests were scarcer in local games starting in the late Hellenistic period) as a more predictable and longer-lasting conduit to a distinguished victory record.

The record of equestrian victors in major games of the Classical and Hellenistic period suggests that, in general, Greek elites tended to systematically pursue equestrian sport in middle and advanced age. With some exceptions, mainly members of royal families, the trend is attested widely enough to be perceived as a globalizing and integrative practice within the wider horizon of Greek sport. Mark Golden, who thoroughly collected and studied the data, suggested two main factors that deterred young men of elite backgrounds that were not physically fit to engage in gymnastic sport from pursuing equestrian competition at a young age: (a) lack of full access to family stables and financial resources, usually realized at a more advanced age, and (b) the danger of being perceived as physically weak or inferior compared to other young men who excelled in gymnastic sport.<sup>36</sup> Once elite men (and sometimes women) reached a more mature age, the argument goes, both of these factors holding back horse owners would cease to exist. Family fortunes and stables were under their control, and there would be less of an incentive for the audiences in games to draw contrasts between older men who relied on others to ride and drive versus athletes, decades younger than them, who personally fought for victory.

In general, Golden's thesis holds well for the Classical and Hellenistic periods and has become something of an orthodoxy in scholarship on Greek sport.<sup>37</sup> Surprisingly, however, the equestrian victories record of Rhodian elites does not form part of these assessments. The fact remains that Rhodes, along with Athens, are the only Greek communities (excluding royal courts) with a substantial record of equestrian victories by their citizens as well as a plethora of other testimonia that allow for a partial,

36 Golden 1998: 120-23.

37 E.g. van Bremen 2007: 358; and in connection with Rhodian elites, Scharff 2015-2022: 309 and 2024: 85.

or at times substantial, reconstruction of the lives and family trees of several equestrian victors. More specifically, in the case of Rhodes the same testimonia in many cases permit the documentation of the chronological sequence of major milestones in the sporting achievements, military service, and office-holding record of elites and their blood kin. The question then naturally arises: to what extent during the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods did Rhodian elites follow the blueprint of equestrian competition at a mature age that is widely documented for Athens, other Greek communities, and the Big Four games?

### **Equestrian Victors in Hellenistic and Early Imperial Rhodes: A Prosopographical Overview<sup>38</sup>**

#### ***(a) The Formidable Nikagoras, Son of Nikon***

Greek elites who pursued equestrian sport overwhelmingly chose to engage specialist charioteers and jockeys to perform the actual racing. They had ample resources to hire these horse-racing professionals, and the credit for victory always went to the owner of the horses and not the charioteer or jockey. The known instances of Greek elites who took the time to educate themselves on how to race their horses or chariots and then proceeded to race in person are extremely rare, and there is not a single example known from Rhodes. Hence in the ensuing discussion I assume that, in keeping with the dominant practice throughout the ancient Greek world, Rhodian owners of horses hired specialists to perform the actual racing in games in Rhodes and throughout the Greek world. One prominent example of such a Rhodian horse owner is Nikagoras of

38 The discussion that follows is not exhaustive. It focuses on Rhodian equestrian victors whose personal life or familial context is sufficiently well known to allow an assessment on how their engagement with equestrian sport figured in their public careers as well as on how it contributed to the articulation of family histories of distinction. The objective in the ensuing discussion is not to establish absolute chronologies, but rather to shed light on a detectable pattern and its manifestation through specific practices, namely the integration of a local Rhodian tradition of pursuing distinction through hippic victories in the overall discursive trajectory of elite civic service.

Lindos, the most decorated equestrian victor known to date from Rhodes. It is no exaggeration to claim that he was one of the most accomplished contestants of his generation in hippic sport throughout Greece. His commemorative statue base dedicated at the sanctuary of Athena in Lindos recorded victories in the most prominent contests of his day (Olympic, two victories; Pythian, one victory; Isthmian, three victories; Nemean, three victories), as well as at the Great Panathenaia of Athens (one victory), the Hekatombaia in Argos (one victory), the Pythia of Sicyon (three victories), and the Lykaia in Arcadia (one victory).<sup>39</sup> Nikagoras boasted of victories at the two- and the four-horse chariot races for colts and horses, as well as in the race for single horses.<sup>40</sup> The geographical and qualitative scope of Nikagoras' victories implies a well-funded, meticulously structured, versatile, and efficiently managed operation of breeding, training, and racing horses for a considerable period of time, possibly over a decade.

Several fragments of Panathenaic amphoras, decorated with scenes of four-horse chariot racing and marked by secondary dedicatory dipinti bearing the name of Nikagoras were discovered in Rhodes in the 1960s but are still unpublished. The amphoras are precisely dated to the archonship of Demokleides (316/315 BCE).<sup>41</sup> During the fourth century BCE, in preparation for the Great Panathenaia oil was collected in the three years prior to each iteration of the festival but not in the year in which the festival was held. The oil was subsequently poured into amphoras, which were then dated by the name of the archon of the year in which the oil was collected, and stored. Finally, the oil-filled amphoras were presented as prizes at the first edition of the Great Panathenaia following

39 *Lindos* II 68; Moretti 1953: no. 35. For a summary and tentative chronology of Nikagoras' career, which differs on several points from the present discussion, see Farington 2025: no. 1.98.

40 In the remainder of the paper victories in individual or teams of horses refers to fully-grown (τέλειοι) horses; discussion of victories in individual or teams of colts refers to races of πῶλοι.

41 The Nikagoras Panathenaic amphoras fragments are mentioned in passing, without any or with limited discussion, in numerous publications, e.g. AD 23B 1968: 436; Frel 1972: 290; Frel 1992: 131-32; Valavanis 1986: 458-59; Bentz 1998: 106-7 and catalogue no. 4.125; Scharff 2015-2022: 320 n. 124 and 2024: 96 n. 185.

its collection.<sup>42</sup> Hence the oil contained in the amphora fragments found in Rhodes and marked as collected during the archonship of Demokleides was awarded at the Great Panathenaia of 314 BCE, which is therefore the date of Nikagoras' victory at the flagship Athenian festival. His victory at the *synoris* for horses at the Lykaia is independently attested in *IG V* 2.550.VI, 27 where the Lindian Nikagoras, as it was common practice in victor lists and other monuments dedicated outside the island, was referred to as Rhodian. In the same iteration of the Lykaia a certain Boubalos from Kassandreia was victorious in the *keles* for horses. Kassandreia was established in 316 BCE, and therefore that date is a firm *terminus post quem* for the victory of Nikagoras at the Lykaia. There have been some scholarly attempts to accurately date the Lykaia victor lists in *IG V* 2.550, which records the victors in two iterations of the festival, as well as in *IG V* 2.549, a near-contemporary inscription that records the victors in three iterations of the Lykaia. There are several unknowns and none of the chronological reconstructions is completely convincing, but the most persuasive interpretation of these victor lists was provided by Theophil Klee in 1918 and was later accepted by Luigi Moretti.<sup>43</sup> According to this reconstruction during the last quarter of the fourth century BCE the Lykaia festival was biennial, and the iteration in which Nikagoras won (*IG V* 2.550.VI) was held in 313 BCE. Luigi Moretti tentatively dated Nikagoras' two Olympic victories in 308 BCE, but he was open to the possibility that they were achieved in two distinct Olympic festivals.<sup>44</sup> Given

42 For the process of collecting and awarding olive oil at the Great Panathenaia see Tiverios 1974: 151-52; Shear 2003: 96-97; Valavanis 2014, especially 376-77.

43 Klee 1918: 66-68; Moretti 1957: 127. A reconstruction on the assumption that the Lykaia were quadrennial was proposed by Kourouniotis 1905 and more recently by Mahoney 2016, especially 182-230. Cf. De Rossi 2011: 71-72. Despite some uncertainties, Klee's reconstruction and proposed dates of the Lykaia festival on the basis of the festival's victor lists is overall more convincing as it fits better the life and careers (athletic or otherwise) of all victors that can be fairly securely identified in said victor lists.

44 Moretti 1957: nos. 490-91. Hallof 2025: nos. 744-45 dates Nikagoras' Olympic victories before 300/290 BCE on the basis of letter forms in *Lindos II* 68 and tentatively dates Nikagoras' victory at the Lykaia at 304 BCE without considering any other testimonia linked to Nikagoras. Similar to Moretti, Hallof also considers the possibility that Nikagoras was victorious in distinct iterations of the Olympic games.

the victories of Nikagoras in other festivals (Panathenaia, Lykaia) during the second half of the 310s, and considering the stiff competition at the Olympic games it is perhaps preferable to assign his Olympic victories to 312 and 308 BCE.

Overall, one gets the impression that *Lindos* II 68 represents the highlights of Nikagoras' horse racing endeavors ca. 315-305 BCE. This approximate chronological scope is in keeping with the wide range of victories, in individual horse and chariot racing involving steeds of both age groups, in other Big Four games besides the Olympics. It is true that, similar to his Olympic victories, in theory Nikagoras could have achieved his three Isthmian and three Nemean victories in a single iteration of these festivals. But, again, given the intense competition and the multiple entries at that level, it is more likely that Nikagoras' victories in prestigious Big Four festivals besides the Olympic games were spread out over several years.

Nikagoras' personal life story provides further insights on the timeline of his engagement with equestrian sport at the highest level. Nikon, father of Nikagoras, was priest of Poseidon Hippios. Priests of Poseidon were senior cultic posts, usually attained just before the more prestigious priesthood of Athena Lindia. The priesthood of Athena Lindia was usually attained at a mature age of ca. 60 years.<sup>45</sup> Nikon's priesthood has been dated to ca. 302 BCE by C. Blinkenberg and, more recently, to 292 BCE.<sup>46</sup> There are, therefore, two possible reconstructions regarding the approximate year of birth of Nikagoras.<sup>47</sup> In the first scenario (Nikon priest in 302 BCE), Nikagoras was born ca. 332 BCE, in the second (Nikon priest in 292 BCE) in 322 BCE. That would make Nikagoras ca. 18 years old

45 Blinkenberg 1937: 13 and 1938: 19-20; Badoud 2015: 132.

46 Blinkenberg 1937: 19; Badoud 2015: 348 dates it to 292 BCE.

47 All age calculations throughout this paper are based on an average of 30 years between generations. This tallies with the rule of thumb, indicated by some Greek authors (e.g., Hdt. 2.142; Plut. Cat. Ma. 15; Artem. 2.70), regarding the approximate length of generations. There is some evidence that Rhodian male elites did not get married until their mid-twenties at the earliest (e.g., Euphranor, son of Damagoras, discussed below). Be that as it may, 30 years between generations is employed here as a reasonable approximation, and in many instances the age gap between different generations of a family would have been greater or shorter. Even if one allows for such deviations, the trend that emerges from the ensuing discussion remains valid.



at the time he won the *tethrippon* for colts at the Great Panathenaia in 314 BCE according to scenario I (Nikon priest in 302 BCE), and ca. 8 years old according to scenario II (Nikon priest in 292 BCE). Clearly scenario I is preferable. There is also a possibility that Nikon, the father of Nikagoras, was slightly older than 60 when he became priest of Poseidon Hippios, in which case Nikagoras was likely born in 337-332 BCE. In this case, he would have been in his late teens or early twenties when he won at the Great Panathenaia, and in his mid to late twenties when he was crowned Olympic champion ca. 312 and 308 BCE. Everything points to Nikagoras being active in horse racing at the highest level since his late teens and into his twenties for at least a decade starting ca. 315 BCE. His honorific monument displayed at the Acropolis of Lindos must date to ca. 305 BCE or very shortly thereafter.<sup>48</sup>

**(b) Three Generations of Equestrian Victors:  
Philophron, Astymedes, and Philophron**

Was Nikagoras' apparent timeline of equestrian competition and victories at the top games of Greece at a precocious age, ostensibly before extensive engagement with civic life, an extraordinary exception to the pattern, accepted as the dominant paradigm by most commentators, of principally mature and elderly men investing and competing in equestrian sport? The answer, as far as Hellenistic Rhodes is concerned, is categorically no. A commemorative ensemble of three statues dedicated at an urban sanctuary in Rhodes, honoring three generations of equestrian victors from the same family, intimates the systematic and long-term pursuit of horse racing victories by Rhodian elites – a strategy that, as already pointed out, is also strongly implied in the victory monument of the prodigiously successful Nikagoras. For the youngest of the honorees in the three-statue monument, it also suggests a timeline of engagement with equestrian sport that roughly corresponds to the pattern detected in the honorific inscription for Nikagoras. The monument celebrates the

48 In *Lindos II* 68 Blinkenberg, not being aware of the then undiscovered Panathenaic amphora fragments that date securely the victory of Nikagoras at the Great Panathenaia, argued for a 306/5 or 304/3 BCE date for his Lykaia victory, and therefore dated the monument of Nikagoras ca. 300-290 BCE. Badoud 2015: 227 no. 537, dates it to ca. 260 BCE, which is way too low.

victories of Philophron II son of Archinomos I from Lindos at the *synoris* for horses at the Nemean games; of Astymedes I son of Philophron II at the *tethrippon* for horses at the Isthmian games; and finally, the victory of Philophron III son of Astymedes I, the grandson and son of the first two honorees respectively, at the *tethrippon* for horses at the Olympic games.<sup>49</sup> Letter forms in the three inscriptions as well as established facts about the lives and careers of some of the sculptors who worked on the monument suggest that even though individual statues were dedicated not long after the victories of each honoree, the three statues were brought together and dedicated as an ensemble towards the end of the third century BCE after the Olympic victory of Philophron III.

The father of Philophron II, Archinomos I son of Philophron I, was one of the Lindian delegates to legal proceedings in Rhodos, honored in *IG XII.1.761, 17*. The decree is traditionally dated to ca. 325 BCE, but a strong case was recently made for a date shortly after 304 BCE.<sup>50</sup> A son of Philophron II honored in the three-statue monument, Archinomos II, was probably *hierothyas* in ca. 270-260 BCE.<sup>51</sup> In that case Archinomos II must have been born in the late fourth or early third century BCE, which would suggest a date of birth sometime in the last third of the fourth century BCE for Philophron II.<sup>52</sup> Finally Kalliades son of Sthenis, the sculptor that produced the statue of Philophron II is attested once more in Rhodes ca. 250-240 BCE, but his career could have spanned a wider chronological range.<sup>53</sup> All the above does not really allow us to pinpoint

49 For the family victory monument, originally dedicated in a sanctuary near the acropolis of Rhodos, see Kantzia 1999. For the context of discovery see *AD 44 B2* (1989) 480-82 (*SEG* 45.1066); cf. *SEG* 49.1075; *editio princeps*: Zimmer & Bairami 2008: 154-59 (*SEG* 58.814). Part of the statue base, bearing the inscription for one of the honorees, was published earlier by Kontorini 1980 (*SEG* 26.688, mistakenly dated to the Imperial period by Crowther 1995: 116; for the correct date see Moretti 1987: 84). For possible identifications of the honorees see Zimmer & Bairami 2008: 155-56.

50 Badoud 2015: 75-80 and 372-75.

51 *Lindos II* 86, with comments by Blinkenberg, col. 301; he dates the inscription to ca. 270 BCE. Cf. Badoud 2015: 228, no. 546, who dates it ca. 260 BCE.

52 The name of Philophron II can be restored in a fragmentary inscription (*SER* no. 29), tentatively dated by Badoud (2015: 213 no. 199) ca. 260 BCE.

53 *Lindos II* 103, dated ca. 240 BCE by Blinkenberg and ca. 250 BCE by Badoud 2015: 228 no. 562. Less likely, Kansteiner et al. 2014: no. 3124 date *Lindos II* 103 to 240-220 BCE.

the Nemean victory of Philophron II with much accuracy. Any date between ca. 300-250 BCE is possible. A date ca. 280-260 BCE that is closer to the documented activity of the sculptor Kalliades is likely.<sup>54</sup>

Astymedes I, the second in chronological order honoree, was the son of Philophron II and was probably born in the early third century BCE, most likely ca. 290s-280s BCE. It has been suggested that he might be identified with the homonymous priest of Helios mentioned in amphora stamps dated by scholars to ca. 214-204 BCE, but these dates are insecure.<sup>55</sup> Asklaon and his brother, sculptors of Astymedes' statue, were very likely the sons of the celebrated Athenian sculptor Phrymachos, but their career and work in Rhodes cannot be pinpointed with accuracy.<sup>56</sup> Just like Philophron II, the available data cannot assist in dating the victory of Astymedes I at the Isthmian games with much accuracy.

Fortunately, we are better placed to estimate the date of the equestrian victory of the third and final honoree of this family commemorative exedra dedicated at a sanctuary in Rhodos. Based on the approximate date of birth of his father, Philophron III son of Astymedes I was born ca. 260-250 BCE or perhaps a few years later. That date is independently confirmed by the fact that Philophron III can be identified with a sacred treasurer (*hierotamias*), a senior post in which he served ca. 200 BCE.<sup>57</sup> At the same time the sculptor, Phyles of Halikarnassos, who worked on his victory statue had a long career, but in the statue base for Philophron III he signs as *euergetas*, a title awarded to him by the Rhodians ca. 225 BCE.<sup>58</sup> With this title, he is attested in Rhodes ca. 225-213 BCE, and thus we can estimate his activity in the island as *euergetas* ca. 225-

54 Badoud 2015: 279 no. 34 dates the statue of Philophron II ca. 260 BCE.

55 Zimmer & Bairami 2008: 156; Finkielsztejn 2001: 191. If this chronological range for his priesthood of Helios is roughly accurate, then Astymedes I was younger than his brother Archinomos II discussed in the preceding paragraph. For the uncertainties and problems surrounding the currently assigned dates of priesthoods of Helios on the basis of amphora stamps see the subsequent segment.

56 Zimmer & Bairami 2008: 156-57. Kansteiner et al. 2014: no. 3119, date the statue honoring Astymedes I to the second half of the third century BCE. Badoud 2015: 279 no. 45, dates it to ca. 240-230 BCE.

57 *Lindos* II 244a, 11; for the date see Badoud 2015: 232 no. 677.

58 Kontorini 1980: 381.

210 BCE.<sup>59</sup> One can fairly confidently, therefore, set ca. 210 BCE as the *terminus ante quem* date for the Olympic victory of Philophron III. But if, as it seems very likely, the statue of Philophron III was dedicated shortly after his Olympic victory,<sup>60</sup> then said victory occurred within the years or shortly before Phyles was granted the title of *euergetas*. That means that we can very plausibly narrow down the date of the Olympic victory of Philophron III to 224, 220, 216, or 212 BCE.<sup>61</sup>

Assuming that Philophron III was ca. 50 years old when he served as *hierotamias*, then he would have been in his mid-twenties in 224, ca. 30 years of age in 220, in his mid-thirties in 216, and in late thirties in 212 BCE. It should be underscored that in the case of Philophron III, these dates correspond to the pinnacle of his equestrian racing career, exemplified by an Olympic victory. It is certain that Philophron III had won equestrian victories in games held in other Greek sanctuaries and cities before his Olympic victory, thus strongly implying an active involvement with equestrian sport at an even younger age than the estimated time of his victory in Olympia.<sup>62</sup>

In view of their successful record at some of the top games, one must assume that in addition to Philophron III, other members of this family commemorated in the exedra must have achieved many additional equestrian victories in games across the Greek world. While any such victories are passed in silence, the monument celebrates instead the most

59 Badoud 2015: 279 no. 36 who dates (p. 215 no. 240) the statue of Philophron III ca. 215–210 BCE.

60 Kontorini 1980: 381 dates it to the last quarter of the third century BCE.

61 Even though chronological placements of victories by L. Moretti and lately by K. Hallof are often approximations, no victors for the *tethrippon* for horses are assigned for these iterations of the Olympic games. See Moretti 1957: nos. 578–90 and the corresponding sections in Moretti 1970 and 1987; cf. Hallof 2025: nos. 370–81. Hallof 2025: no. 776 dates the Olympic victory of Philophron III ca. 250–225 BCE; Kansteiner et al. 2014: no. 3406 date the victory of Philophron II ca. 280 BCE, the victory of Astymedes I ca. 250 BCE, and the victory of Philophron III ca. 220 BCE.

62 One can refer to the case of Akestorides of Alexandria Troas, a hippic victor and contemporary of Philophron III (Moretti 1953: no. 43; Ebert 1972: no. 68). Like Philophron III, Akestorides was also Olympic champion but by the time of his Olympic victory he could also boast of victories at the Nemean games, the Asklepieia in Epidauros, as well as at games in the Arcadian communities of Lousoi and Pheneos.

prestigious victory achieved by each generation of the family. The objective of this monument, therefore, was not to synopsise and memorialize a cluster of notable victories, as was the case in the monument for Nikagoras, but rather to craft a civic memory and family tradition of equestrian sport success by adumbrating a trajectory of systematic engagement with this elite sport, culminating in the ultimate prize: a victory crown in the Olympic *tethrippon*, the most prestigious equestrian event in Greek athletics.

*(c) Kleonymos, Son of Damokrates*

The same pattern of engagement with athletics, including equestrian sport, followed by a career of distinguished civic service combined with the forging of family traditions of distinction, is intimated in other honorific monuments that allow glimpses of the prosopography of honorees. Such is the case of Kleonymos, who was honored with a statue dedicated in a sanctuary in Rhodos for his victory in the *synoris* at the Nemean games.<sup>63</sup> The fragmentary inscription has been consistently dated ca. 200 BCE on letter forms.<sup>64</sup> Kleonymos' father Damokrates was priest of Aphrodite in Kamiros ca. 208-204 BCE, a senior religious post.<sup>65</sup> Kleonymos himself was a member of a panel of judges dispatched to arbitrate a dispute between Delphi and Amphissa in 180/79 BCE; immediately following their service the Rhodian judges, including Kleonymos, were honored as *proxenoi* in Delphi.<sup>66</sup> In ca. 170 BCE he was recorded as one of the contributors to a subscription in Kamiros.<sup>67</sup>

This picture is complicated by the fact that the same Kleonymos is identified with a priest of Helios mentioned in Rhodian amphora stamps. Various dates have been proposed for Kleonymos' priesthood including,

63 *Lindos* II 698 (Ebert 1972: no. 69). It is worth noting in connection with Kleonymos that the commemorative epigram for his Nemean victory might imply (ll. 7-8) that his grandfather was also a victor, possibly at the Great Halieia. See Ebert 1972: 207.

64 Blinkenberg in *Lindos* II 698; Peek 1942: 206; Wilhelm 1948: 80; Ebert 1972: no. 69; BE 1970: no. 417. Badoud 2015: 214 no. 232, dates it before 187 BCE.

65 TC 43.25. Blinkenberg, *Lindos* II 698, col. 995, dates it to 204 BCE, accepted by Ebert 1972: 204-5; Badoud 2015: 221 no. 393, dates it to 208 BCE.

66 Member of panel of judges: *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 614.25 (*FD* III 3.383.25, which dates the arbitration to 180/79 or 179/78 BCE). *Proxenos*: *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 585.224-25.

67 TC *Suppl.* 157b.I.26. For the date see Badoud 2015: 224 no. 461.

most recently, 187, 185, or 182 BCE.<sup>68</sup> Despite the spate of publications in recent years, Rhodian amphora stamps are still imperfectly understood and a chronological sequence of the priests of Helios mentioned there cannot be established with confidence.<sup>69</sup> Also related is the fact that Kleonymos served as priest of Helios in an intercalary year. But, once again, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the placement of intercalary years in the calendar of Hellenistic Rhodes, and current reconstructions of said calendar do not assist in pinning down with accuracy the priesthood of Kleonymos.<sup>70</sup>

The evidence from the amphora stamps cannot be considered independently of the known life trajectory of Kleonymos and other prosopographical considerations. It is crucial to keep in mind that the eponymous priesthood of Helios was the most senior of priesthoods in Rhodes, usually held after the priesthood of Athena Polias in Lindos and all other priesthoods by men of ca. 65 years of age. Taking as a point of reference the lowest of the recently proposed dates, one can assume momentarily

68 187 BCE, Badoud 2015: 193 and 200; 185 BCE, Lund 2011: 278; 182 BCE, Finkielsztein 2001: 192 followed by Habicht 2003: 565. Even less likely, some scholars advocating a high chronology for Rhodian amphora stamps have suggested that Kleonymos held his priesthood in the 190s, e.g. Lungu 1990: 214, who proposed a 198 BCE date.

69 The tendency to date Kleonymos' priesthood in the 180s BCE is partly based on an allegedly immediate chronological proximity in the priesthoods of Kleonymos and a certain Philodamos. A Rhodian amphora stamp mentioning the latter has been found in the foundations of the stoa dedicated by Philip V in Delos, hence Philodamos must have been priest of Helios before 179 BCE, date of death of the Macedonian king and Kleonymos, according to this argument, must have served at around the same time. See Castelli 2017: 7. Kleonymos and Philodamos were probably contemporaries and served as priests of Helios within the span of a few years, but the exact dates as well as whether one succeeded the other cannot be ascertained. See also the reconstruction in Lund 2011.

70 Badoud 2015: 178-79 takes into consideration the alleged chronological proximity of the priesthoods of Kleonymos and Philodamos and his overall evaluation (for which see especially Badoud 2015: 138-52) and chronological placement of intercalary years in proposing the year 187 BCE for the priesthood of Kleonymos. But as Iversen 2018-2019, especially 94-96, has demonstrated there are serious problems with Badoud's calculations of intercalary years, hence his estimates should not be relied upon without further study: "The result is that the foundation of intercalations upon which Badoud has built his arrangement of the priests of Helios coupled with the evidence on amphora stamps is also on extremely shaky ground" (Iversen 2018-2019: 96).

that Kleonymos was priest of Helios in 182 BCE, and hence he was born ca. 247 BCE. That means that he was in his late forties when he won at the Nemean games, in his late sixties when he was member of the panel of judges active in Delphi, and in his late seventies during the subscription in Kamiros. In the same scenario (Kleonymos as priest of Helios in 182 BCE), his father Demokrates was born ca. 277 BCE, and was in his early to mid-seventies when he served as priest of Aphrodite. Kleonymos, therefore, would have been on the more mature side of the spectrum during the arbitration proceedings between Amphissa and Delphi while his father Demokrates would have been older, possibly considerably so, than usual for a priesthood in Rhodes. Taking as a starting point one of the earlier dates suggested for Kleonymos' priesthood would entail even longer civic careers for Kleonymos and his father. Given all the above, one should consider revising the approximate date for Kleonymos' priesthood of Helios to ca. 170-160 BCE, thus placing his date of birth ca. 230-225 BCE. Once a later date for the priesthood is considered, all other known activities of Kleonymos and his father comply with the mainstream template of the life trajectory and sequence of office holding of most Rhodian civic elites.

Hopefully, future discoveries will further clarify the life and career of Kleonymos. On the present state of the evidence, it can be asserted that, similar to other Rhodian elites, Kleonymos engaged with equestrian sport and was victorious at a major interstate festival at the outset of his public service career, namely decades before he took up senior civic and religious posts. It is also likely, if his priesthood of Helios dates to the 160s BCE, that he achieved equestrian distinction at an early age, probably in his twenties.

***(d) Two Equestrian Champions at the Great Halieia:  
Theaidetos and Andrias, Sons of Autokrates***

An additional example worth reviewing concerns Theaidetos and Andrias, two brothers from Lindos prominent in the first half of the first century BCE. Theaidetos and Andrias were scions of an illustrious family. Their father Autokrates was priest of Athena Lindia, the most prestigious

priesthood in Lindos, in 89 BCE and served as admiral in the first Mithridatic war.<sup>71</sup> Theaidetos was the older of the two brothers. The narrative of an inscription adorning the monument set up ca. 85-80 BCE in honor of Theaidetos commences with his victory at the first ever competition in the *tethrippon* for colts at the Great Halieia, and then moves on to the naval exploits of the honoree during the first Mithridatic war.<sup>72</sup> From other Lindian inscriptions we learn that Theaidetos was *hierothyas* in 86 BCE and priest of Athena Lindia in 62 BCE.<sup>73</sup>

This reference to the inaugural race in the *tethrippon* for colts at the Great Halieia is by itself of significance: the equestrian program of the flagship agonistic festival of Rhodes was expanding at a time when interest in equestrian sport in other parts of the Greek speaking world was stagnating or diminishing, a fact that clearly demonstrates the unwavering commitment of Rhodian elites to equestrian sport. As already pointed out, Rhodian elites eagerly competed in equestrian contests in the major agonistic festival of their island, and local victors prominently commemorated their victories. The extant record provides additional evidence for the expansion of the equestrian program of the Great Halieia, with the introduction of the *synoris* for colts at some point in the first century BCE.<sup>74</sup>

Theaidetos' younger brother Andrias followed in the family's footsteps with military and cultic appointments culminating in his tenure of prestigious priesthoods, including the priesthood of Athena Lindia in 56 BCE.<sup>75</sup> The honorific inscription of a monument dedicated by Andrias' wife a few years after his priesthood of Athena records the highlights of

71 Blinkenberg 1938: 20.

72 IG XII 1.75b. Commentary by Blinkenberg 1938: 20 who dated the monument to 92-82 BCE; Badoud 2015: 206 no. 28 dates it to ca. 80 BCE.

73 *Lindos* II 293c.21, *hierothyas*; *Lindos* II 1, fr. G, col. III, 345, priest of Athena Lindia.

74 IG XII 1.1039, for a Great Halieia victory in the *synoris* without further elaboration, presumably implying a race for adult horses; Badoud 2015: 239 no. 921 dates it to ca. 70-30 BCE. *MDAI(A)* 25 (1900) 107, 106, honoring a female victor in the *synoris* for colts at the Great Halieia postdates IG XII 1.1039, and should be dated to the early Imperial period. Cf. Thomsen 2020: 21, n. 17.

75 *Lindos* II 1, col. 133-34.



his public career including his victory, similar to his brother, in the *te-thrippon* for colts at the Great Halieia.<sup>76</sup> The two brothers' achievements furnish additional clues regarding the public career trajectories of civic elites of Lindos in the first half of the first century BCE. Being ca. 60 years of age when he served as priest of Athena Lindia would entail a birth date for Theaidetos ca. 122 BCE. Paul Iversen has argued that Theaidetos' *te-thrippon* victory at the Great Halieia occurred before the first Mithridatic war – hence a few years before the monument was dedicated after the end of the war – at the very end of the second century or the beginning of the first century BCE, the four possibilities being the iterations of 101, 97, 93, or 89 BCE.<sup>77</sup> But later iterations of the Great Halieia are also possible for Theaidetos' victory, namely 85, if held, or 81 BCE. Everything points to Theaidetos achieving his Halieia victory at a young age, possibly in his twenties or thirties, and at a time when he was forming his public persona image and launching a career in public service.<sup>78</sup>

The timing of the victory at the Great Halieia of Theaidetos' younger brother, Andrias, is more uncertain. Born ca. 116 BCE, his honorific monument recording the victory dates from ca. 53 BCE, but his victory might have occurred at any point since the mid-90s BCE. A clue might be derived by the narratological structure of Andrias' inscription. When they

76 *Lindos* II 322. Badoud 2015: 234 no. 745 dates Andrias' monument to 56 BCE. But as Blinkenberg, *Lindos* II 1, col. 92 and 102-4 demonstrated, a view accepted by other scholars (e.g., Habicht 2003: 567-68 and Iversen 2018-2019: 111; see also Badoud 2015: 45-47) the usual sequence of service in priesthoods for Lindian elites was Athena Lindia, Zeus Polieus, Artemis Kekoia. Andrias had held all three by the time his monument was dedicated, hence the monument must postdate by at least two full years the date of his tenure of the priesthood of Athena Lindia in 56 BCE.

77 Iversen 2018-2019: 62 and n. 107. Iversen seems to suggest that Theaidetos won at the Great Halieia before his service in the Mithridatic wars because the equestrian victory is mentioned first in his honorific inscription before his military service. But if a narrative in reverse chronological order was employed, as was common in many honorific inscriptions from Rhodes in the late Hellenistic period, then the equestrian victory was achieved after Theaidetos' military exploits. The fact that the lower part of *IG* XII 1.75b is missing precludes, at the present state of the evidence, a definitive answer on this issue.

78 Blinkenberg 1938: 20, reached a similar conclusion but he deduced a young age on the erroneous assumption that equestrian victors rode their own horses and chariots.

summarize the highlights of a public career, many honorific texts from Rhodes seemingly refer to events and career landmarks in reverse chronological order. This is certainly the case with the inscription in the monument of Andrias which commences with his priesthoods, held at a senior age, followed by his leading military appointments which were probably held, as was common among civic elites, during his middle age. His victory in the *tethrippon* for colts is mentioned last, and if the reverse order principle applies, then it was achieved before his military appointments and the priesthoods. Besides the inscription honoring Andrias, the same narratological strategy is encountered in other honorific inscriptions, especially in the so-called CV inscriptions that listed in some detail the most important civic and religious offices held by an honoree, as well as in family monuments, namely monuments dedicated by family members of an honoree.<sup>79</sup> The practice of recording civic and athletic achievements in a certain order might also reveal a valuation, expressed in the form of ranking of important milestones in the lives of civic elites. In this view equestrian or gymnastic victories at a young age ushered in a distinguished public career, culminating in the most prestigious senior priesthoods.

It is also illustrative of commemorative strategies that the statue of Theaidetos was set up in a sanctuary in Rhodos, whereas the one recording the victory of his brother Andrias was dedicated in Lindos. Given the prominence of the family in Lindos, it would be surprising if Theaidetos did not commemorate his Great Halieia victory and other civic achievements and services with a monument in the acropolis of Lindos as well. Similarly for Andrias, considering that his most notable equestrian victory was also in the Great Halieia, a victory monument in Rhodos would have been most appropriate. The extent of equestrian success of the two brothers is also revealing. It is apparent that members of this prominent

79 Examples of honorific inscriptions from Rhodes that are certainly or very likely drafted in reverse chronological order include *Lindos* II 236, a fragmentary CV or family monument, dated 140-130 BCE by Blinkenberg and ca. 129 BCE by Badoud 2015: 231 no. 674; *TC* 63, Hellenistic; *IG* XII 1.58, dated by Badoud 2015: 206 no. 18 to 69-79 CE; *SEG* 43.527, after 85 CE. While equestrian victories are often mentioned towards the end of family or CV honorific inscriptions, occasionally gymnastic victories are mentioned first followed by other stages of the public record of the honoree, e.g. *Lindos* II 707, ca. 40-30 BCE (Blinkenberg)/before 39 BCE (Badoud 2015: 212 no. 183).

Lindian family actively engaged with horse racing and invested enough resources to secure victories at the most prestigious festival of the island, but not beyond: if the success record of other Rhodian elites is anything to go by, Theaidetos and Andrias must have tried their luck outside Rhodes, but victories at the Great Halieia was the best they could achieve. These victories were then integrated into their life narratives of civic achievements and commemorated in prominent locations throughout the island. The family connection was not so obvious as in the joint monument of Philophron, Astymedes, and Philophron but the point would not have been missed in their native Lindos, where the family was so well known, even if the public careers and equestrian victories of the brothers were celebrated in distinct monuments.

***(e) Family Monuments: Euphranor, Son of Damagoras; Antilochos, Son of Menodoros; Lapheides, Son of Lapheides; and Leon, Son of Pausanias***

Finally, a record of successful engagement with equestrian sport at a young age is also documented for Euphranor, son of Damagoras.<sup>80</sup> Sometime after 85 BCE members of his family dedicated a statue at the sanctuary of Helios at the acropolis of Rhodes celebrating his victory at the *tethrippon* for horses at the Great Halieia. Everything suggests that the monument was dedicated shortly after Euphranor's victory. This Euphranor, who hailed from a distinguished nautical family, can be perhaps identified with the Rhodian admiral bearing the same name who fought on the side of Julius Caesar in Alexandria in 48-47 BCE.<sup>81</sup> His father Damagoras was distinguished in the first Mithridatic war, and is mentioned in a subscription list of *πρεσβύτεροι* of 82 BCE honoring a gymnasiarch of the group during the Romaia festival.<sup>82</sup> Based on the above, we

80 Kontorini 1993 (SEG 43.527). For this monument, Euphranor, and his family see also Ma 2013: 161-63 and 209-10; Keesling 2022: 93-94.

81 Kontorini 1993: 96.

82 IG XII 1.46, 157; dated by J. Benediktsson, in Blinkenberg 1938: 27-28, to 68 BCE, a date followed by many scholars including Kontorini 1993: 86. But Badoud 2015: 131-32 and 399-404 dates it to 80 BCE, referring to the Romaia of 84 or 80 BCE. Iversen 2018-2019: 105, who convincingly reconstructs (contra Badoud) the Rhodian calendar as well as the chronological positioning of Rhodian festivals, believes that it refers to the Romaia of 82 BCE.

should accept a date of birth ca. 100 BCE for Euphranor. The honorific inscription that accompanied his monument mentions no spouse, a fact that demonstrates, as the first editor of the text correctly assumed, that Euphranor was a bachelor and therefore a young man at the time of the monument's dedication.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the fact that his naval service as simple recruit, ostensibly during the Mithridatic wars, is the only other distinction mentioned in the commemorative monument, points strongly in the same direction. Everything suggests, therefore, that at the time of his equestrian victory Euphranor was a young man in his late teens or, more likely, in his twenties. His Great Halieia victory can be dated to the late 80s or more likely the 70s – hence in the Great Halieia of 81, 77, or 73 BCE. In addition to a coveted equestrian victory at the flagship agonistic festival of the island, the monument in a way also celebrated Euphranor's debut in public life.

A similar trajectory can be convincingly reconstructed for other Rhodian equestrian victors, including Antilochos, son of Menodoros. He was victor ca. 70-50 BCE at the Great Halieia in the *tethrippon* for horses and soon afterwards members of his family dedicated a statue to commemorate his victory, most likely in the sanctuary of Helios at the acropolis of Rhodos.<sup>84</sup> No spouse of Antilochos is recorded in the list of family members who honored the Great Halieia victor, and no public service is mentioned. The fact that Dorotheos, the brother of Antilochos and among the dedicants of the statue was ostensibly a bachelor as well, is also indicative. Comparable to Euphranor, it is reasonable to assume that at the time of his victory Antilochos was a young man, most likely in his twenties.

Another example of a family monument celebrating an equestrian victory concerns Lapheides, son of Lapheides of Lindos. His father (also called Lapheides, son of Lapheides) was priest of Athena Lindia in 10 CE and in that year a commemorative monument was set up in the acropolis of Lindos honoring Lapheides senior, his wife Nikassa, and Lapheides junior.<sup>85</sup> The inscription recording the honors for Lapheides junior lists (Il.

83 Kontorini 1993: 94.

84 IG XII 1.72a (Badoud 2015: 206 no. 24, second quarter of first century BCE). For prosopographical observations on Antilochos' family see Rice 1986: 210-17.

85 Lindos II 391 for Lapheides senior, 392a for Nikassa, and 392b for Lapheides junior.

6-8) his naval service, ostensibly as a simple seaman, and a victory in the *tethrippon* for horses at the Great Halieia. There is, however, a fragment of a second inscription on a statue base honoring Lapheides junior. It was set up in the *gymnasion* of Rhodos and records that at some point he had also served as gymnasiarch of the *neoteroi*.<sup>86</sup> Clearly, when his statue was dedicated at the acropolis of Lindos in 10 CE Lapheides the younger could claim an equestrian victory at the Great Halieia and basic naval service but had not held any public office, which can only mean that he was still a young man, probably in his twenties. The monument for the same individual set up in the *gymnasion* in Rhodos was dedicated later than the statue in Lindos and, as comparanda from other honorific inscriptions for Rhodian elites suggest, it must have listed meticulously all civic offices and priesthoods as well as acts of public generosity performed by the younger Lapheides.

Finally, there is evidence for successful engagement with equestrian sport at a young age for Leon, son of Pausanias, a member of perhaps the most distinguished Rhodian athletic family of the late Hellenistic period. Family members of Leon dedicated, most likely in the sanctuary of Helios in Rhodos, a statue commemorating his victory in the horserace for colts at the Great Halieia.<sup>87</sup> Once again, in this family dedication there is no indication that Leon was married at that stage – there are no references, in other words, to a spouse or children. There is, however, a CV inscription for Leon's son, Pausanias, dated ca. 40 BCE.<sup>88</sup> As of the date that this monument was dedicated the son of Leon had not held any senior office, most notably one of the priesthoods, but had demonstrated an exemplary record of early- and mid-career achievements and civic service: wrestling victory as a boy at the Great Halieia, service in the Rhodian navy, trierarch twice, phylarch with a victory at the Epitaphia, gymnasiarch of the *neoteroi*, and member of the *boula*. This record of civic service

86 *TC Suppl.* 240, App. 29a, dated by Kah 2018: 288 no. 17 to 15-50 CE.

87 Kontorini 1989: no. 74 (*SEG* 39.760). Plutarch son of Heliodoros, the sculptor who made this statue, was active in the first half of the first century BCE, Kansteiner et al. 2014: no. 3964. The chronological classification of extant statue bases by the sculptor Plutarch suggests that the editors of *Der Neue Overbeck* consider the statue base for Leon as one of the earliest testimonia for this sculptor, dating possibly in the 90s BCE.

88 *Lindos* II 707 (for dates, see n. 79).

strongly suggests a man in his forties or early fifties. If the date usually assigned to this monument is correct, then Pausanias the son of Leon was born ca. 90-80 BCE. That would suggest that Leon, the equestrian victor at the Halieia was born ca. 120-110 BCE and, in conjunction with the evidence provided by the monument dedicated by Leon's family, that his victory must date ca. 95-85 BCE, in other words in his twenties or early thirties.<sup>89</sup> Incidentally, these dates also broadly fit with the life trajectory and the distinguished career of the nephew of Leon the Great Halieia equestrian victor, Leon son of Myonides. He was Olympic champion and victor in all major contests in Greece in the wrestling and the pankration.<sup>90</sup>

### Conclusion

The individual and family histories behind some of these monuments were certainly exceptional in the magnitude of the achievements commemorated – the multiple victories of Nikagoras in the top games in Greece, for instance, or the crowns won by three successive generations of the family of Philophron. Yet, in a way, these same monuments also exemplify a persistent and clearly discernible trend among local elites to pursue and single out for honorific representation equestrian victories at the Great Halieia, the most emblematic of all Rhodian agonistic festivals, as well as in prominent games in the Greek mainland. In tandem with civic elites throughout the Greek-speaking East, during the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods Rhodian elites organically integrated in their honorific life narratives, publicly deployed in statue bases, a victory record in major games followed by a career of civic service. The abundant

89 Hence in the games of 93, 89, or 85 BCE – the latter if held. See Iversen 2018-2019: 105 for the argument that the Great Halieia of 85 BCE were cancelled.

90 *NivO* 30. Leon the Olympic champion was therefore first cousin of Pausanias, the boys wrestling champion at the Great Halieia. Assuming that the cousins, as was often the case, Leon and Pausanias were of approximately the same age, the athletic career of Leon the Olympic champion, usually assigned to the second half of the first century BCE (e.g. Strasser 2018: 159-60, for references to past literature and some doubts), can be dated to ca. 65-45 BCE.

documentation from Rhodes suggests local nuances of this broader pattern. The active pursuit of equestrian sport at the highest level by Rhodian elites, as a more predictable and longer-lasting conduit to a distinguished victory record, can be documented even at times, namely the late Hellenistic and early Imperial periods, when evidence from outside Rhodes suggests a reduced penchant for as well as a concomitant reduced symbolic import of equestrian competition and victory. In Rhodes, on the contrary, and despite the fact that very likely the only festival in the island that comprised equestrian contests were the Great Halieia, at times engagement with equestrian sport can be documented for multiple members, spanning several generations, of elite Rhodian families. Last but not least, there are strong indications that, contrary to the widely attested practice of equestrian sport being pursued primarily by mature men, many (although not necessarily all) Rhodian elites took up equestrian sport relatively early, usually at the outset of their careers of public service. If that is correct, then we are confronting a partial departure from the view that equestrian sport and victories were a demonstration of abundant wealth, as well as a late-age crowning achievement of an already established public figure. In that regard Rhodian elites forged and eagerly embraced a localized tradition of perceiving and practicing equestrian sport. For some Rhodian elites engagement with equestrian sport at a young age, especially when accompanied by victories in prominent games, was a crucial, secure, and illustrious springboard to the public stage.

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