

Cultic Connections in Pindar's *Nemean 1*

This paper argues that Pindar's evocation of Ortygia as the "hallowed breath of Alpheos" in the opening of *Nemean 1* for Chromios of Aitna should be understood as an allusion to a wider network of the cult of the river god, Alpheos, shared by the Syracusans and the Peloponnesians. When Hieron founded Aitna, he recruited 5,000 Peloponnesians and 5,000 Syracusans as its new citizens (Diod. 11.49). Peloponnesian mercenaries moreover served in the armies of Gelon and Hieron and were likely granted Syracusan citizenship (Asheri). Recent scholarship has shown that myths in Pindar can unite communities (Foster), foment political change or maintain the status quo (Kowalzig), and advertise a city's merits to panhellenic audiences (Hubbard). Understood in a context of Peloponnesian immigration to Sicily, the opening of *Nemean 1* refers to Syracusan traditions connecting the Sicilian city not only to Olympia but also to a system of cult worship of Artemis Alpheioa in the Peloponnese. This cultic system emphasizes the shared tradition of the two populations Hieron in particular sought to unite.

Interpreters who explain the opening line of *Nemean 1* as a reference to Arethusa base their readings on the tradition that the Peloponnesian river Alpheos mixed its waters with the spring of Arethusa on the island of Ortygia in Syracuse (Dougherty, Foster). Literary evidence (Ibycus *PMG* 323, Paus. 5.7.3) and early Syracusan coinage confirm that Arethusa was an important civic symbol, and suggest that by the late 470s when Pindar composed *Nemean 1*, the bond between river and spring functioned as a metaphor for the city's original foundation from Peloponnesians (Dougherty). The metaphor further applied equally well to Hieron's recent foundation of Aitna where half of the new citizens were Peloponnesians (Foster). Pindar therefore has several good reasons to recall a connection between Arethusa and Alpheos.

Though scholars have discussed Arethusa as an important colonial symbol, the full resonance of this symbol can only be fully understood in connection to another goddess—Artemis. In *Pythian* 2 for another Sicilian, Hieron, Pindar hails Ortygia as the “seat of Artemis Potamia” (*P.* 2.7). The scholia believe that the goddess invoked in the opening of the ode is identical to the goddess Artemis Potamia (Schol. N.1.inscr.b) and explain that Artemis received the cult name Alpheioa because the river Alpheos fell in love with her and pursued her until she reached Ortygia. Carey and Braswell have observed that Pindar’s evocation “the hallowed breath of Alpheos” in *Nemean* 1 should therefore be understood as an allusion to the cult of Syracusan Alpheioa.

Building upon the interpretations of Foster, Dougherty, Carey, and Braswell, this paper argues that a third link between Syracuse and Olympia hinted at by the Pindaric scholia articulates another important connection contained within Pindar’s references to Alpheos. The scholia report that the goddess in Syracuse was called Artemis Alpheioa because the river Alpheos runs through the Artemision near Elis (Schol. N.1.3). A reading of an early fifth-century fragment by the Argive poet Telesilla (*PMG* 717) together with two passages of Pausanias (5.14.6; 6.22.9-10) and an account of the cult given by Strabo (8.3.12) confirms that the cult workshop of Artemis Alpheioa was practiced in Letrini, Elis, and Olympia, and was known of in Argos. The Pindaric scholia, moreover, identify the Artemis worshipped in Syracuse as the same goddess who shared an altar with Alpheos at Olympia (Schol. O.5.10a).

The three possible allusions contained in the “hallowed breath of Alpheos”—the Syracusan spring nymph Arethusa, the Syracusan Artemis Alpheioa, and the Peloponnesian Artemis Alpheioa—aptly suit Hieron’s recruitment strategy. Other odes for the tyrant emphasize similarities between the Syracusans and the Peloponnesians during a time when he was

appealing to Peloponnesians to join his new colony of Aitna (Bonanno, Hubbard). Pindar's evocation of Ortygia as the "hallowed breath of Alpheos" in the opening of *Nemean 1* for Chromios of Aitna not only evokes the unique connection between Syracuse and Olympia through the link between Arethusa and Alpheos, but also aligns religious practices of the new citizens of Aitna—Syracusans and Peloponnesians—within the cultic network of Artemis Alpheioa.

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