

## Pindar and the Nuance of ἀβροσύνη

In her 1992 article *The Politics of ἀβροσύνη in Archaic Greece* Leslie Kurke characterizes the “cult of ἀβροσύνη” as a lifestyle adopted by the nobility of Archaic Greece which is associated with private luxury and the Lydian East. Such luxury is characterized by “(1) long, flowing garments made of expensive material, (2) long and elaborately coiffured hair, (3) gold ornaments, (4) the wearing of perfumes and scented oils, (5) wine, (6) song, and (7) a certain sensuality, such as in the in the poetry of Sappho and Anacreon (Kurke 1992).” Furthermore, there are many instance of ἀβροσύνη in which the word does not appear. While Sappho does not use a word from the ἀβρός word family in fragment 98a.10-11, 98b.1-3 LP, Kurke indicates that the “cult of ἀβροσύνη” is still present in her lyric. Kurke continues by stating that this lifestyle is utilized by the aristocracy as a “programmatically political statement” by which they define themselves. With the onset of the Persian Wars and tendencies within the *polis* towards *isonomia*, however, the use of the ἀβρός word family and its various connotations began to be seen as barbaric and “anti-democratic.” Kurke thereby argues that epinikion poet Pindar reappropriated ἀβροσύνη to represent the means by which one can achieve athletic victory and bring glory to his *polis*.

In this paper I will explore Pindar’s application word of the ἀβρός word family and the various characteristics associated with it. I intend to illustrate not only that Pindar uses the term in a public setting in order to fuse the opposing ideologies of private luxury and public service, as suggested by Leslie Kurke, but also that Pindar employs ἀβροσύνη in its “original sense,” suggesting that the aristocracy still identifies with private luxury. This ongoing identification with private luxury is especially prominent in Pindar’s *epinikia* for King Hieron of Syracuse and the members of his court. Just as in Sappho, aspects of the “cult of ἀβροσύνη” are present in

Pindar's *epinikion* without any specific "ἄβρός" word. For the purposes of this paper special attention will be placed upon *Olympian* 1, *Olympian* 6, and *Olympian* 7. This interpretation does not seek to undermine Kurke's original analysis, but simply to add to the nuance with which Pindar uses this word family.

It should be noted that while Pindar was educated in Athens, he himself was born into an aristocratic family near Thebes in Boeotia in 522 BCE (Bowra 1969). Although he received his education in Athens, he composed epinikion for various noble families, established connections with them, and would have experienced the "cult of ἀβροσύνη" firsthand. It must be stated, nevertheless, that Pindar did recognize a fusion between aristocratic ideology and larger civic identity, as shown by Leslie Kurke. Pindar does not present of view of ἀβροσύνη divorced from the larger civic world, as Dean Hammer states in his 2004 article *Ideology, the Symposium, and Archaic Politics*. For Pindar ἀβροσύνη exists in two separate worlds, the world of "private luxury" and the larger civil world of the *polis*.

### Bibliography

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