

Interactive praise of Syracusan Musical Culture in Pindar's *Olympian* 1 and Bacchylides 5

This paper examines Bacchylides' and Pindar's *encomia* for Hieron of Syracuse in *Olympian* 1 and Bacchylides 5th Ode. Hieron commissioned both poems for the celebration of his victory in the single-horse race at Olympia in 476 BCE. Commissioning both poets for the same athletic victory could invite a certain level of competition between the poets. If one poet were to demonstrate his own poetic superiority, this would ensure future commissions (Most 2012). The ancient scholia ($\Sigma Nem.3.143 = Dr.iii62$, , $\Sigma Ol.2.154c = Dr. iii98-99$, Drachmann 1997), in fact generally assume such an antagonistic relationship between Pindar and Bacchylides, as their odes routinely stress the composer's poetic skill (Lefkowitz 1991). However, when both poets magnified the same victor's achievement during a public performance, they must have been aware of each other's presence, and composed their projects with an eye towards securing future commissions from their commissioner. The present paper will argue that Pindar's and Bacchylides' praise of Hieron's musical taste presents a composite picture of the Syracusan ruler as the artistic connoisseur *par excellence* of all living human beings. I will further suggest that this represents an instance of planned complementarity between Pindar's *Olympian* 1 and Bacchylides 5. While complementary imagery and diction in the *encomia* for Hieron can be explained with reference to the commissioning process, the musical culture at Hieron's court also allowed for more direct interaction between the poets.

Hieron promoted his sole rulership as an alternative to the political systems of Athens and Sparta when these powers began to dominate the Greek mainland in the fifth century BCE. He remodeled Syracusan temples and theaters according to architectural traditions from mainland Greece. He also hosted famous literary authors from all of Greece at his court so as to present

Syracuse as one of the foremost intellectual centers of the Greek world (Morgan 2015). The commissioning of both Pindar and Bacchylides for the same victory in 476 BCE was part and parcel of this transformation of Sicilian musical culture. As such, patterns of close verbal engagement between *Olympian* 1 and Bacchylides 5th Ode might even suggest conscious collaboration between the poets to embed their songs in Hieron's cultural milieu.

Bacchylides' frames his entire poem as a finely woven gift (*ἄγαλμα... ὑφάνας ὕμνον* B.5.4-10). The speaker depicts himself as a distinguished attendant of the Muses (*Οὐρανίας κλεινὸς θεράπων* B.5.14) and expects that Hieron will fully appreciate the complexity of his work. He even singles the Syracusan ruler out as the only living human being capable of understanding the poem (*γνώση... τῶν γε νῦν αἴ τις ἐπιχθονίων, ὀρθῶς* B.5.3-6). Bacchylides thus foregrounds praise of Hieron's intellectual capacity (*γνώση* 5.3). More specifically, he illustrates the workings of Hieron's mind through the language of visual and intellectual perception; if Hieron will "look at" (*ἄθρησον* B.5.8) the poem unfolding before him with his mind (*νόῳ* B.5.8) he will enjoy it (*ἀμπαύσας μεριμνᾶν* B.5.7).

As Maehler (1982) has observed, several of these themes are resumed at the close of Pindar's *Olympian* 1. Pindar, like Bacchylides presents himself as Hieron's guest (*ξένον* Ol.1.103; *ξένος* B.5.11). Pindar also metaphorizes his poetry in service of Hieron as a finely-woven gift (*δαιδαλωσέμεν ὕμνων πτυχαῖς* Ol.1.104; *ὑφάνας ὕμνον* B.5.10). Furthermore, both poets depict Hieron as the only human being who can truly appreciate their art (*μή τιν' ...καλῶν τε ἴδριν* Ol.1.103; *γνώση... τῶν γε νῦν αἴ τις ἐπιχθονίων, ὀρθῶς* B.5.3-6). A preliminary glance at Bacchylides 5 and *Olympian* 1 suggests that the poets followed an encomiastic program which Hieron had laid out for them. He could have individually distributed such a program to both of the poets. Nevertheless, the poems must be examined within Hieron's radical transformation of

Sicilian oral song culture. As Andrew Morrison 2007 has demonstrated, the reperformance of Pindar's odes was integral to this process. I therefore suggest that complementary imagery and diction in Bacchylides 5 and *Olympian* 1 can, in addition to prescriptions by their commissioner, be ascribed to active collaboration between the poets.

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