P. OXY. 2438 AND THE ORDER OF PINDAR'S WORKS

For centuries, the most important available list of Pindar’s seventeen books of poetry was that found in the Vita Ambrosiana. Because it was complete and contained the correct number of books, it appeared to be a definitive list. Hence, it is understandable that more importance was attached to it than to the lists found in
the other vitae (Vita Thomana and Vita Metrica), the Suda, Eustathios, and in Horace, all of which are defective or contain serious irregularities).

There is another virtue to the list given in the Vita Ambrosiana: the contents are arranged in an easily recognizable order, roughly from poems addressed to gods to those addressed to men. It is only natural that scholars came to regard this list as 'standard'. And, thus, it was also tempting to go even farther and presume that it reproduced the very order of the Alexandrian edition of Pindar’s works produced by Aristophanes of Byzantium. C. M. Bowra’s analysis is representative: “...the main lines on which Aristophanes arranged his Pindaric texts are clear enough. First came the five kinds of poems addressed to gods, then the four kinds addressed primarily to men. In this scheme the Epinicians came at the end, and are the only books which have survived more or less complete”(2). Bowra simply identifies the Ambrosian list with Aristophanes’ edition, but without any authority whatever(3).

Although it was possible to overlook the very different order given in the other lists, the publication of P. Oxy. 2438 in 1961 should have raised new doubts about any standard order of Pindar’s works in antiquity. This papyrus dates from around 200 A.D. and contains fragments of a life of Pindar as well as a list of his works(4). Except for a lacuna containing the name of one book, the list contains all

1) Although the Vita Thomana mentions the existence of seventeen books, it only refers to the four books of epinicians. The Vita Metrica only mentions five of the genres. The Suda contains a number of categories not known elsewhere, including δράματα τραγωδίας, ἐπιγράμματα, ἐπικά, and prose exhortations. On the whole, Eustathios duplicates the list in the Vita Ambrosiana, but curiously omits the hymnoi, while Horace obliquely refers to a few of the genres. The most important studies on these lists and the Pindaric genres are E. Hiller, Die antiken Verzeichnisse der pindarischen Dichtungen, Hermes 21 (1886) 257–271, H. Färber, Die Lyrik in der Kunsttheorie der Antike (Munich 1936), and A. E. Harvey, The Classification of Greek Lyric Poetry, CQ 5 (1955) 157–175.

For convenience, here are the three lists of most importance for the following discussion (numbers of books are in parentheses):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vita Ambrosiana</th>
<th>P. Oxy. 2438</th>
<th>Horace, Odes 4.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hymnoi</td>
<td>dithyramboi (2)</td>
<td>dithyramboi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paianes</td>
<td>prosodia (2)</td>
<td>hymnoi/paianes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dithyramboi (2)</td>
<td>paianes</td>
<td>epinika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prosodia (2)</td>
<td>partheneia (3)</td>
<td>threnoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partheneia (3)</td>
<td>hyporchemata (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hyporchemata (2)</td>
<td>enkombia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enkombia</td>
<td>threnoi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threnoi</td>
<td>epinika (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) C. M. Bowra, Pindar (Oxford 1964) 159–160.

3) F. J. Nisetich, Pindar’s Victory Songs (Baltimore 1980) 17 also assumes that the list in the Vita Ambrosiana represents the order in Aristophanes’ edition. Cf. also A. Croiset, La Poésie de Pindare (Paris 1880) 20–21, B. A. van Groningen, Pindar au Banquet (Leiden 1960) 11, and A. Puech, Pindare IV (Paris 1961) 84. For a complete discussion of various views on these catalogues since Böckh, cf. I. Gallo, Una nuova biografia di Pindaro (POxy. 2438) (Salerno 1968) 27–45.

the categories found in the Vita Ambrosiana). What is most important, however, is the fact that the order of the works in this list is completely different from that in the Vita Ambrosiana. Although Bowra knew of this papyrus, he dismisses its importance. Yet, P. Oxy. 2438 should have confirmed what we might have suspected all along (and no one, to my knowledge, has definitely stated), that we have no evidence of any fixed order in antiquity, and that the rolls containing Pindar's poems must have been freely rearranged. By the time that a codex would have fixed the sequence, only the epinicians appear to have been in common circulation—and even within them there is a telling instance of rearrangement.

What, then, are the consequences of this suggestion? Although not great, they force us to revise some misconceptions. For example, immediately following the quotation above, Bowra goes on to speculate: “The survival of the Epinicians alone ... may be a pure accident, by which the Epinicians, coming last of the collected works, were preserved, with a few bits lost at the end.” This speculation is not borne out by the evidence. Only the Vita Ambrosiana (followed by Eustathios) mentions them last: all the other lists place them in the middle.

Another example comes from B. Snell’s well-known analysis of Pindar’s “Hymn to Zeus”, where he claims: “This poem stood at a conspicuous place in the edition of Pindar brought out by the Alexandrian grammarians; it introduced the first book of his works” (translated). Actually, the hymns come first only in the Vita Ambrosiana; they are not mentioned at all in the Vita Thomana and Eustathios; they come next to last in the Vita Metrica; they come towards the end of the Suda, and third from the end of P. Oxy. 2438.

Finally, one of the most interesting cases is presented by the catalogue of Pindar’s works that appears in Horace, Odes 4.2: Pindarum quisquis studet aemulari. In a recent analysis of this recusatio, R. Freis argues that Horace deviated from “the Alexandrian edition through which Horace knew Pindar’s works”, in order


6) After a brief survey of these lists, Bowra (above, note 2) 159 concludes that the differences “do not amount to very much”.

7) Most scholars agree that the book of Isthmians originally preceded the Nemeans, and that at some point the two books were switched, with the result that the anomalous poems (Nem. 9, 10, and 11) were preserved at the end of the Nemean collection, while the last Isthmian odes were lost. Cf. J. Irigoin, Histoire du Texte de Pindare (Paris 1952) 100.

8) C. M. Bowra (above, note 2) 160.


10) R. Freis, The Catalogue of Pindaric Genres in Horace Ode 4.2, CA 2 (1983) 30. This note does not question the validity of his analysis of the effects
to create special effects in his ode, and for that reason placed the *dithyramboi* first and the *threnoi* last. It is, however, very interesting that P. Oxy. 2438 also begins with the *dithyramboi* and ends with the *threnoi* exactly as Horace does).

The next question that naturally follows is: Was Horace, then, reading Pindar's works in an order such as that given in P. Oxy. 2438? Perhaps, but I doubt it. Unlike Homer's epics which were divided into sequentially lettered rolls, Pindar's poems appear to have been divided into self-defining genres that tended to exist in their own right as independent units. The Alexandrian editors must surely have produced some order of Pindar's works, but whatever it was, it apparently did not become canonical, and from the evidence that we do have – five different lists, plus Horace's – it is impossible to reconstruct it. Although the list in the *Vita Ambrosiana* is tidy and should retain its importance, especially for the organization of the fragments), it can no longer be considered to reproduce any standard Alexandrian edition. P. Oxy. 2438 has, I think, conclusively demonstrated this.

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So far the illuminating conclusion has been arrived at that the rich Cretan onomastica, albeit predominantly Greek in character, does contain numerous scores of non-Greek, resp. Semitic names*).

To cite a further possible bearing to the same effect, we are to recall a passage occuring in Plutarchus' biography of Solon which relates of Epimenides, the illust-

achieved by Horace’s presentation of the catalogue, but only the assumption that there was any standard 'Alexandrian edition' from which Horace was deviating.

11) Horace clearly refers to three genres: dithyrambs, epinicians, and dirges. The fourth stanza (vv. 13–16) is vague. *Deos regesque* could refer to either or both the hymns or paeans.

12) B. Snell and H. Maehler, Pindarus, Pars II (Leipzig 1984) arrange the Pindaric fragments in the order given in the *Vita Ambrosiana*.


1) M. C. Astour, Second Millenium B. C. Cypriot and Cretan Onomastica Reconsidered, JAOS 84 (1964) 240–254; for a broad outline see also C. H. Gordon, Ugarit and Minoan Crete. The Bearing of Their Texts on the Origins of Western Culture (New York 1966).