

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 irregularities¹).

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 whatever³).

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 works⁴). 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 τραγικά, 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):

<i>Vita Ambrosiana</i>	<i>P. Oxy. 2438</i>	<i>Horace, Odes 4.2</i>
hymnoi	dithyramboi (2)	dithyramboi
paianes	prosodia (2)	hymnoi/paianes
dithyramboi (2)	paianes	epinikia
prosodia (2)	partheneia (3)	threnoi
partheneia (3)	epinikia (4)	
hyporchemata (2)	enkomia	
enkomia	
threnoi	hymnoi	
epinikia (4)	hyporchemata	
	threnoi	

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 Boeckh, cf. I. Gallo, *Una nuova biografia di Pindaro* (POxy. 2438) (Salerno 1968) 27–45.

4) Cf. E. Lobel, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri XXXVI* (Oxford 1961).

the categories found in the *Vita Ambrosiana*⁵). 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 importance⁶). 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 rearrangement⁷).

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"⁸). 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"⁹). 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"¹⁰), in order

5) For a thorough discussion of the missing book, evidently corresponding to one of the books of *hyporchemata* in the *Vita Ambrosiana*, cf. E. Lobel (above, note 4). I. Gallo, *Gli σκόλια di Pindaro. Nota critica al catalogo pindarico del Papiro di Ossirinco XXVI, 2438, QUCC 8 (1969) 105–112*, conjectures plausibly that the *skolia* are the missing book.

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.

9) B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind*, tr. T. G. Rosenmeyer (N.Y. 1960) 72. He is followed by G. M. Kirkwood, *Selections from Pindar* (Chico, CA 1982) 301 and Blame and Envy in the Pindaric Epinicians, in *Greek Poetry & Philosophy: Studies in Honour of Leonard Woodbury*, ed. D. E. Gerber (Chico, CA 1984) 182. Cf. also A. Puech (above, note 3) 91. H. T. Deas, *The Scholia Vetera to Pindar*, *HSCP 42 (1931) 42* says that "Lucian. . . (Icarom. 27) cites the first Hymn, not the first Olympian as the first of Pindar's poems". The Greek actually reads: "the first ode of Pindar's hymns", not the first poem in the collection.

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 does¹¹).

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 fragments¹²), it can no longer be considered to reproduce any standard Alexandrian edition. P. Oxy. 2438 has, I think, conclusively demonstrated this.