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The Prosperity of Tyrants: Bacchylides, Herodotus, and the Contest for Legitimacy

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Catastrophic falls from good fortune captivated the archaic and classical Greeks in a way that may seem oddly familiar to the observers of modern journalism. No one had, in the Greek imagination, been richer and more powerful than the doomed Lydian ruler Kroisos. [1] Of course, some may have had larger piles of gold and more extensive tracts of land, but Kroisos chose to invest a substantial amount of wealth in dedications to the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. For the many Greeks who visited this center of Hellenic culture, Kroisos' wealth thus remained visibly material and imposing long after his death. Generations of modern students working their way through the first book of Herodotus may have squirmed in frustration as they painfully translated the terms for Kroisos' dedications and the surprisingly detailed description of Delphi at 1.50-51, but Herodotus included this material because it appealed to his contemporaries.

The implications of Kroisos' wealth and piety towards Apollo, however, changed when, in 546, the Persian king Kyros captured Sardis and brought Kroisos' rule to a catastrophic end. Kroisos may have given more lavish gifts than any other man to the god at Delphi, but such transcendent generosity did not save him in the end. The contrast between wealth and piety on the one hand and Kroisos' evil end on the other not only made a good story but also raised questions as to the value of such pious **[End Page 57]** dedications. If Kroisos had had such poor luck, why should any other potentate or wealthy individual bother giving to the god?

Kroisos may have been Lydian, but he became a part of Greek culture. According to Plato, individual Greeks, even in the fourth century, would refer to Kroisos and Solon together as men who had combined wisdom and power (*Letter 2*.311a). This fine reputation seems to have existed already in the fifth century. In 470, Pindar included Kroisos as an exemplar in an ode for Hieron (*Pythian* 1.90-94) [2] :

> If you are fond of always hearing sweet things spoken of you, do not be too distressed by expenses (*dapanai*), but, like a steersman, let your sail out to the wind. Do not be deceived, my friend, by glib profit-seeking (*kerdos*, pl.). The loud acclaim of renown (*doxa*) that survives a man is all that reveals the way of life of departed men to storytellers (*logioi*) and singers alike. The kindly excellence (*philophrôn areta*) of Kroisos does not perish.

This reference, though brief, pulls together a number of themes central to epinician poetry. Kroisos was rich, but he freely indulged in expenditures of wealth (*dapanai*) and did not allow a desire for profit to distract him. [3] In return, he was able to convert material wealth into *doxa*, the reputation conferred upon him by humanity in general--like Plato, Pindar indicates that Kroisos was famous beyond the narrow range of formal poetry and occupied a prominent place in the everyday conversation of Greeks. Kroisos' generosity allowed him to demonstrate his peculiar "kindly excellence," the *aretê* of subordinating material wealth to kindly deeds. Kroisos earned a great reputation because Greeks felt that he had "embedded" his wealth within a larger social context. Wealth he had, but, as with any rich man who earns Pindar's praise, this wealth was not an end in itself but a means whereby its owner could help and support his friends. Kroisos was, in fact, so successful in converting financial into symbolic capital that even when he was dead, and thus unable to lavish additional **[End Page 58]** rewards upon his friends, both professional poets and everyday Greeks returned to him that praise which serves as the "interest" for symbolic capital.

Disaster has perhaps always been a more popular topic than unalloyed good fortune--certainly this was true in the classical period. The fifth-century lyric poet Likymnios of Chios, for example, composed a poem in which Kroisos' daughter Nanis betrayed the city in order to become the lawful wife of Kyros--a promise that the Persian king did not, in fact, honor (*PMG* 772). Kroisos' fate, however, incorporated one spectacular scene that captured in visual form the contrast between his good fortune and the evil turn which overwhelmed him. A famous vase by the painter Myson, now in the Louvre (G 197), pictures Kroisos, in Greek clothes, seated upon the pyre, prepared to immolate himself before he can be captured. One fragmentary Athenian vase that dates from 480-50 pictures a Asiatic figure, a pyre, and a Greek flute player and seems to represent a tragedy; on these grounds, Beazley suggested that the Athenians might even have seen the story of Kroisos acted out at the base of the Akropolis. [4]

For once, however, we can go beyond speculation. Two distinct versions of Kroisos' fate--each with a climactic rendition of Kroisos upon his pyre--survive from antiquity. Bacchylides' third ode, an epinician written for Hieron of Syracuse, and Herodotus' account of Sardis' fall are tantalizingly similar yet clearly distinct on a number of points, both large and small. The two versions of this story have not drawn as much scholarly attention as might be expected--perhaps because the similarities seem so obvious. Charles Segal examined the two versions as exemplifying two very different attitudes towards mortality: "Bacchylides' narrative points back to the Archaic world; Herodotus' points ahead to the Classical and," as Segal argues, "to an essentially tragic conception of human life. Bacchylides treats the story with the pathos and exuberance of the developed choral lyric. Herodotus' account has its closest affinities with the spirit of Sophoclean drama." [5] Herwig Maehler, for example, points out that Herodotus' prose account seems to have become the standard version, which others like Xenophon, Ktesias, and perhaps Ephoros subsequently followed. [6] The differences which separate Bacchylides and Herodotus, however, are sufficiently great that, for Maehler, the later Herodotean **[End Page 59]** account cannot depend upon that of Bacchylides. Recently, Gregory Nagy has discussed both accounts as exemplifying the ambiguities of wealth, luxury, and power as conceived in archaic and classical Greek culture. In Herodotus (who has little use for tyrants), [7] Kroisos is a rare exception, an absolute ruler who nevertheless embodies positive as well as negative traits. Kroisos may well have been the first man to have enslaved the Greeks and thus to have begun the modern chain of injustice that culminated in Xerxes' invasion (Hdt. 1.6.2), but even Herodotus cannot wholly deny (although he perverts and sourly construes), Kroisos' generosity.

The relationship between Bacchylides and Herodotus is, however, even more complex and involves more contested assumptions than has been generally supposed. Leslie Kurke has, for example, shown how disparate Greek attitudes towards wealth and luxury had been in the archaic period. [8] Products of east Greek culture such as Sappho, Alkaios, and Anakreon openly embraced the conspicuously luxurious lifestyle embodied in the term *habrotês*. "*Habrotês*," Kurke states, "is specifically an *aristocratic* lifestyle, consciously embraced by the ruling class to distinguish them from everybody else." [9] In the fifth century, Pindar is, however, far more defensive in his use of *habros* and related words. For him, such luxury can be defended only when deployed for some other, communal goal (such as the support of athletic competition which brings glory to the community as a whole). [10] This same defensiveness appears also in Bacchylides 3 and subtly informs the treatment which Bacchylides gives to Kroisos.

At the same time, the connection between Herodotus and Bacchylides is far closer and more striking than has generally been supposed. The two accounts are sufficiently distinct to show that Herodotus clearly did not copy Bacchylides in the mechanistic fashion by which later prose sources often exploited their sources, but it is unreasonable to expect Herodotus to work in such a leaden and rigid way. Rather, Herodotus internalized the story as a whole and produced a version that was his own--its links to Bacchylides sufficiently clear to invite comparison and its differences sufficiently complex to reveal his own very different interpretation of the story. Even if Herodotus did not have Bacchylides' particular **[End Page 60]** poem in mind, he was reacting against a specifically poetic tradition that equated Kroisos with *olbos*.

Olbos is a contested term that can designate material "wealth" and "riches," but can also denote a more general "prosperity." Its precise value in Herodotus is, as we will see, a polemical reinterpretation of its more traditional meaning. Even before we begin examining the accounts of Bacchylides and Herodotus in detail, however, we can suggest something of the emphasis that Herodotus places on *olbos* and its adjectival form *olbios*.

Even a quick survey will establish that *olbos* and *olbios* are extremely rare terms in Greek prose, and that Herodotus' focus upon them as key words is remarkable.

Neither word ever appears in any of the Attic orators or in Thucydides. In Aristotle, these terms appear only five times--and all of these five instances are quotations of poetry. Only once does Plato--whose language often has a poetic flavor--use either of these terms in his own prose (*Protag*. 337D: *olbiôtatos*, superlative of *olbios*). Herodotus might seem to be more fond of these terms, since he uses various forms (including negatives) of these words twenty times--but of these twenty, sixteen occur in five chapters that describe just two key elements of the story of Kroisos, his encounter with the Athenian sage Solon and his appearance on the pyre. [11] Herodotus has taken the category of *olbos* and given it, in the story of Kroisos, a prominence that it never attains anywhere else. Forms of this word occur in a fifteen-hundred-word stretch of Herodotus more times than they do in all the other millions of words in surviving classical Greek prose combined. We do not need elaborate statistical tests to see that this is not a random clustering of terms.

In poetry, by contrast, the terms *olbios* and *olbos* are reasonably common, but far more so, relatively speaking, in Pindar and Bacchylides than in any of the tragedians. Herodotus has thus not only fastened with almost obsessive force upon a marked poetic term, but one which particularly categorizes epinician poets such as Pindar and Bacchylides.

Nor does this term occupy a "normal" position in the *Histories*. Herodotus opens his history with an extended history of Kroisos and his **[End Page 61]** [Table] **[Begin Page 63]** family, and the two episodes in which *olbos* figures so prominently are also programmatic, establishing general themes that shape Herodotus' overall view of history throughout his story. Herodotus is exploring and redefining in prose the assumptions which underlay epinician poetry and he is even willing to give to a poetic term unparalleled prominence so that the connection can stand out more clearly.

But before we can evaluate Herodotus' revisionist interpretation, we need first to see more clearly the Bacchylidean version which, either as a specific instance or an example of a wider genre, provides the starting point for Herodotus. Already in the Bacchylidean version, the ambiguities of the *turannos* Hieron's position play a role which, if less visible than the challenges to Apollo and to Delphi, is at least as important to the poem.

Kroisos on the Pyre 1: Bacchylides' Version

Two years after Pindar's brief but paradigmatic reference to Kroisos at *Pythian* 1.90-94, Bacchylides made the Lydian king the center of another ode written in honor of Hieron. The ode revolves around the climactic scene in Kroisos' life, when Sardis has fallen and he ascends the pyre to be burnt alive along with his wife and daughters rather than fall into the hands of the Persians (Bacch. 3.33-47):

> He mounted the pyre with his dear wife and his daughters with beautiful hair; [35] they were weeping inconsolably. He raised his arms to the steep sky and shouted, "overweening deity, where is the gratitude (*charis*) of the gods? Where is lord Apollo? [40] The palace of Alyattes falls into ruins . . . countless . . . city . . . the Pactolus whirling with [gold runs red with blood], [45] women are brutally led out of the well-built halls. What was hated is loved. To die is sweetest." [12]

Bacchylides does not minimize the challenge which this poses for Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi. Bacchylides makes it clear that Kroisos had given greater gifts to Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi than any other man alive (Bacch. 3.61-62). If such a man could end his life in this grim fashion, **[End Page 63]** where indeed was the *charis*, the gratitude, with which the gods repaid their mortal benefactors? If the gods did not honor the obligations to which well-bred mortals adhered, why should any man lavish gifts upon them beyond the minimal required sacrifices?

First, Kroisos' behavior towards Apollo was more generous in degree, but the specific relationship that he sought to cultivate was by no means simply that of mortal to divinity. Kroisos had transferred to the divine plane a very pragmatic tactic common in human social relations. Greek politics were precarious and a change in government in a tiny Greek city-state could force members of the elite to go into exile, leaving behind forever all of their worldly possessions. Even if later they could return to their homeland,

all of their property would have been appropriated and dispersed. Nevertheless, many of the Greeks who are driven from their homes seem to have prospered--at least materially--thereafter. Members of the Greek elite seem, in fact, to have cultivated a complex web of ritualized friendships at least in part so that, in case of exile or disaster at home, they could as exiles find secure refuge and often support. [13] Ostracized from Athens, Themistokles took up residence at Argos (Thuc. 1.135.3), but when the Athenians pursued him for Medism, he was able to take at least temporary refuge at Corcyra (136.1). Ultimately Themistokles reached Persia where he (who was famous as the hero of Salamis), boldly claimed that "a good service (*euergesia*) was owed" to him (1.137.4): he warned Xerxes to retreat and claimed (falsely) to have been responsible for not destroying the bridges over the Hellespont and thus cutting off Xerxes' retreat. Themistokles' actions are typical of his particular character--duplicitous, bold, and brilliant--but Themistokles and Kroisos were both after the same thing: they wanted to establish a record of *euergesiai* with those more powerful than they as a kind of insurance against disaster. The aristocratic Andocides, exiled in a bitter dispute at Athens, later boasted that he had acquired *xeniai* and *philotêtes* with many--including kings and city-states and other individual *xenoi* (*On the Mysteries* 145)--a claim that the author of Lysias 6 felt bound to ridicule. [14] When Lysias fled an oligarchic government at Athens, barely escaping with his life and forced to abandon his brother to execution, he was not only himself sufficiently solvent to **[End Page 64]** provide a generous financial contribution to the Athenian democratic resistance (2,000 drachmas and 200 shields), but he was able to call upon Thrasydaios, a ritualized guest-friend of his from Elea in Italy, to provide 2 talents (12,000 drachmas), a very large sum indeed ([Plut.] *Lives of the Ten Orators* 835F). Gift exchanges cemented elaborate networks of ritualized friendship and these provided a kind of final insurance that protected members of the Greek elite from utter ruin.

Kroisos had, by his gifts to Apollo, attempted to establish with Apollo the same kind of relationship that other Greeks established with powerful men outside of their immediate *poleis*. And just as a Themistokles or a Lysias would have expected support from their friends when catastrophe overwhelmed them at home, Kroisos expects similar, but more powerful, support from Apollo. Kroisos had sedulously attempted to convert a large portion of material wealth--the lavish gold, electrum, and silver offerings to Apollo--into an immaterial, but tangible relationship with the god.

Gloomy as the situation appears to Kroisos perched upon his pyre with his weeping female family members around him, in the end he is saved. The investment earns its reward. The *charis* of the gods is established. First, Zeus brought a dark cloud overhead and doused the burning pyre with a rainstorm (55-56). Then, even more miraculously, Apollo whisked Kroisos and his daughters away from this disastrous position and placed them among the Hyperboreans (Bacch. 3.58-61), a familiar Greek paradise to which Perseus was able to pay a brief visit at Pindar *Pythian* 10.30-46. There he would, according to Greek conceptions, be able to enjoy a life of physical ease and pleasure in an idealized climate. [15] The gentle life which he, as ruler of the fabulously wealthy Lydian empire, had enjoyed would now continue indefinitely. In return for his lavish support of Delphi, Kroisos received from his divine friend a perfected version of the exile's retreat.

The connection between the myths in epinicians and the patrons who commissioned the poems is often, to put it mildly, obscure, and has stimulated much scholarly analysis. In Bacchylides 3, however, there is no such ambiguity, and the clarity of the equation has, if anything, discouraged **[End Page 65]** scholarly interest. Immediately after Bacchylides observes that Kroisos sent the "greatest" gifts to Delphi of any mortal, we hear (63-66) that "of all mortal men who live in Greece, not one, O greatly-praised Hieron, will be willing to say that he has sent more gold than you to Loxias." Kroisos' gifts constituted piety, *eusebeia*, and this piety motivated Apollo to rescue Kroisos from destruction. Hieron, whose generosity to Apollo exceeds that of any Greek, thus has a correspondingly greater share of *eusebeia* and claim to the god's favor.

But Bacchylides 3 is not simply about Apollo, and it deals with more than the apparent failure of Kroisos' gifts. Important as the defense of Delphi may be, it is, in fact, subordinate to another, more subtle, theme: Kroisos' (and, by extension, Hieron's) wealth and the light which this wealth sheds upon the character of its possessors (rather than on Apollo). The discomfiture of Apollo and of Delphi serves to distract from questions about Kroisos and Hieron, so that answers are implicitly delivered to questions that are conventional but that the poet does not explicitly raise. If some epinician poems assert that wealth is a good thing and that the rich deserve praise, [16] not all Greeks shared this attitude (as we will see when we come to Herodotus). As Anne Burnett put it, "worse [i.e., than being a tyrant] perhaps for the man who composed his Olympian ode, was the fact that the victor did not drive his own team or

even train his own horses, but simply paid the bills. It was a flagrantly bought triumph that the poet had to praise, but Bacchylides produced for Hieron an ode in which there is no bitterness, no hypocrisy, no cynicism, and no reproach. With an idealism apparently undaunted, he searched as usual for virtue and the answering touch of god, and gracefully managed to find them, even in this somewhat tarnished victory." [17] Justifying Apollo and Delphi was not Bacchylides' primary concern. Pindar had pointed out in *Pythian* 1 that Phalaris, because of his cruelty, received no praises after his death (95-98), but, in practice, the tyrant with a harsh reputation faced such problems already while alive. Whatever Hieron's powers at home, he could not compel anything from a Zakynthian, a Corinthian, or a Milesian. Bacchylides needed to construct for his *turannos* a persona to which Greeks far beyond his physical control could freely give praise and admiration. He needed to make of his Hieron a Kroisos rather than a Phalaris.

Like Arkesilaos, the ruler of Kyrene (Pind. *Pyth*. 5.13-14), **[End Page 66]** Hieron, we are told, combines power and wealth (Bacch. 3.11-14). Taken as a whole, the poem expands the theme that appears briefly in *Pythian* 1. Hieron, like Kroisos, is fabulously wealthy, but, like Kroisos, Hieron accumulates wealth so that he can give it away (Bacch. 3.13-20):

> He knows not to hide his towered wealth under black-cloaked darkness. The temples teem with cattle-sacrificing festivities; the streets teem with hospitality. Gold flashes and glitters, the gold of tall ornate tripods standing before the temple, where the Delphians administer the great precinct of Phoebus beside the Castalian stream.

The poem makes a subtle transition in these lines. It opens by celebrating Hieron's victory at Olympia (1-14), but the mention of wealth shifts our gaze to Hieron's contributions at Delphi.

The poem does not, however, simply deal with a geographical transition, but takes as a major theme the transubstantiation of material wealth into something else. [18] Lines 13-20 draw our attention to the materiality of this wealth. Hieron is so generous that he can fill the temples with his sacrifices and even the streets with his hospitality. The poem is not bashful about the tangible nature of these riches, but conjures up the seductive flash and glitter of gold. In this regard, Bacchylides and Herodotus are very close. Tripods, we hear from Bacchylides, made of gold, stand before the temple of Apollo, just as Herodotus (1.51.1) describes Kroisos' massive bowls of gold and of silver which flank the temple's entrance.

After focusing upon the riches and hospitality of Hieron, the poem takes a sudden turn. Bacchylides begins his transition to, and marks the significance of, Kroisos' story with an emphatic statement (Bacch. 3.21-22):

> The god! the god! let one honor (*aglaizethô*), for *he* is the best of prosperities (*olbos*, pl.).

From mortal generosity we move to the gods. The sacrifices and hospitality, like the golden tripods at Delphi, may serve mortals, but they **[End Page 67]** are gifts to the gods, and justly so, for the poet boldly asserts that the god himself is the best *olbos*, "prosperity." [19] Invest, as it were, in the god, and he will make you *olbios*. Give lavishly of your material wealth and it will be converted to symbolic capital over which the god will watch and from which Hieron, the donor, will, like Kroisos before him, reap later benefits.

But where we started with the flash of gold and the heavy tripods at Delphi, the poem moves to a different context (Bacch. 3.85-90):

> To the thoughtful, what I sing is intelligible. The air of the deep sky is undefiled. The water of the sea does not decay. Gold is delight (*euphrosuna*). It is not lawful for a man to bypass gray old age and recover flourishing youth.

Bacchylides begins with physical paradigms of excellence: the "air of the deep sky," the "water of the sea," and gold all bring to its fullest expression the concept of purity. Each is perfect, undefiled, and unchanging, and in this priamel Bacchylides may well be consciously echoing and refining the famous opening lines of Pindar's first Olympian ode. [20] But where Pindar moves from the excellences of water and of gold to the pre-eminent position of the Olympic games, Bacchylides' priamel moves very

differently, shifting direction at the end and climaxing in a negative cap. [21] Rather than saying A, B, and C are outstanding but D is the most outstanding of all, the final element contrasts with the first three by its weakness and inferiority. The deep *aithêr* is undefiled and the water of the sea does not decay, but man is neither pure nor incorruptible. He must endure "gray old age" and may never again "recover flourishing youth." The return to gold--that element with which the Kroisos tale began--serves only to emphasize a discontinuity. However much gold Hieron may possess, he himself remains mortal. This priamel thus ends in a problem and, if the poem were to end here, it would leave the patron's fate covered in very dark shadows indeed. The human condition only appears the more **[End Page 68]** limited and impermanent when illuminated by the flashing light of gold. Gold may be *euphrosunê*, joy, especially the joy of celebration, but *euphrosunê* is for mortals a transitory phenomenon, for mortal life is limited.

But the poem does not end at the start of line 90. It continues and introduces its final transition (Bacch. 3.90-98):

> And yet the gleam of a mortal's *aretê* does not diminish along with the body--no, the Muse nurtures it. Hieron, you have displayed to mortals the most beautiful flowers of prosperity (*olbos*). Silence is no ornament for a successful man. With remembrance of fine deeds a man will also sing the gracious recompense (*charis*) made by the honey-voiced Cean nightingale.

Although Bacchylides develops the idea at somewhat greater length, this passage is closely related to the Kroisos exemplum at *Pythian* 1.90-94. In both cases, *aretê* allows humans to transcend the limits of personal existence and live on in the minds of men, even when they, as physical beings, have vanished. Pindar points out that poets help keep bright the memory of noble men (*P*. 1.94). Bacchylides is more specific: others will sing about Hieron because the honey-voiced Cean nightingale--Bacchylides himself--has composed this poem in his honor. In both cases, the *aretê* which brings lasting fame is not simply that excellence needed to achieve a victory. *Aretê* is not a self-sufficient entity which, by its mere presence, can insure a good reputation--hence, Phalaris, for all his wealth and power, enjoys nothing but contempt in men's minds (*P*. 1.95-98). *Aretê* is precisely parallel to wealth: both must be expended outwards and applied in such a way that they win the good will of men. The *aretê* of Kroisos that lives on is specifically "kindly" (*P*. 1.94: *philophrôn*). The *aretê* of Hieron lives on because Bacchylides is the friend of Hieron and, in its concluding words, the poem reveals itself as the demonstration and sign of Bacchylides' own *charis*. The epinician poet cannot promise that Apollo will snatch Hieron off to an eternal paradise, but the poem itself proves that the poet's *charis* is sure. Hieron will never need to raise his arms in despair, like Kroisos on the pyre, and ask "where is the *charis* of my poet?" Where Kroisos' generosity won the proven aid of Apollo, and Hieron too can hope for a special relationship with the god, there is no need for hope when it comes to Bacchylides. The poem exists. The mechanism for undying fame **[End Page 69]** is in place. The *charis* of the poet is on eternal display. The material wealth has been successfully invested, transmuted into symbolic capital that draws interest each time someone encounters Bacchylides 3. The poem justifies the bold language of Bacch. 3.21-22: the god rescued Kroisos and the poet, Hieron's friend, has praised his patron. But the support of Apollo and of Bacchylides alike is itself contingent and testifies to the generosity of Kroisos and of Hieron. The benefactions which Kroisos and Hieron received thus not only prove the moral worth of god and poet, but of the *Tirana* who earned subsequent help by their previous unstinting and open-hearted generosity. Kroisos and Hieron win material rewards later because they cared more for people than for their piles of gold.

Nothing in this poem is neutral or uncontested--almost anything in the poem would have drawn protests from some segment of Hellenic society. Bacchylides' poem is at its most polemical when it attempts to take some things for granted. The same story can have a very different complexion, as the Herodotean version will demonstrate. Even before we come to Herodotus, however, consider one particular conclusion that the poet makes (Bacch. 3.75-84):

> Winged hope loosens the wits of ephemeral creatures. Lord Apollo . . . said to the son of Pheres: "Being a mortal, you must cultivate twin thoughts: that tomorrow will be the last day you see [80] the sun's light, and that you will complete another fifty years of life deep in wealth. Give pleasure to your spirit while performing pious deeds, for this is the highest of profits."

According to the poet, Apollo himself urges men to take pleasure while doing pious things, e.g., lavish wealth upon sacrifices and celebrations in honor of the god but enjoyed by mortals. The expenditure of wealth in pleasing ways becomes a high imperative of human life and, according to this criterion, a Kroisos or a Hieron stands at the pinnacle of human achievement. Bacchylides' language makes a subtle appeal to general attitudes, for, as Burnett points out, "the familiar Greek doctrine of living for the day . . . was a form of piety open to the very poor and the very rich as well." [22] Bacchylides wrote in the same general period when, according to **[End Page 70]** Thucydides, conspicuous consumption began to fall out of fashion and, in Greek society as a whole, following the Spartan lead (Thuc. 1.6.4), "the rich did their best to adopt an egalitarian lifestyle (*isodiaitoi*)." Although the self-consciously crusty Spartans eschewed elaborate verbal rhetoric, one can easily imagine how the Sthenelaidas of Thuc. 1.86 might have dealt with Bacchylides 3. More important, since there were only a few Spartans and they tended to stay close to home, any mid fifth-century Greek could have conjured up the grim persona of a Spartan and turned this against Bacchylides 3: wealth has no meaning when set beside the *aretê* of Leonidas. Simply by existing in the minds of the Greeks, the Spartans created a rhetorical position which Greeks hostile to a Hieron--or any rich man--could adopt.

We cannot, of course, point to any particular examples of such "Spartan" attacks on Bacchylides 3, since the fragmentary literary record is not designed to preserve such materials, but we can point to one other literary work that, while hardly adopting the Spartans as a model, nevertheless attacks the assumptions which underlie Bacchylides. A decade after Bacchylides 3, the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus would portray such conspicuous consumption in a very different light. [23] We are, however, fortunate to have one other major account of Kroisos on the pyre. Although the outline of the story is similar, Herodotus changes the details and gives the incident a completely different rhetorical cut--and one that is just as tendentious as that which we find in Bacchylides.

Kroisos on the Pyre 2: Herodotus' Version

Few would be surprised to find that terms such as *olbos* and *olbios* are unusually common in Pindar and Bacchylides. These poets were commissioned to write poems that, for the most part, celebrated the good fortune of their patrons. In epinician poetry, any victorious household or city-state is *olbios*, i.e., it possesses *olbos*, "prosperity" (e.g., Bacch. 12.4; Pindar *O*. 7.11, *P*. 9.4), but this term *olbos* plays an especially important role in two surviving epinicians. *Pythian* 5 ultimately unites the *olbos* of Arkesilaos as recent victor (14) and the ancient *olbos* of the Battiad dynasty (55) in the haunting image of the dead Battiads beneath the earth (102) sharing equally with their living descendant in "their *olbos*." Bacchylides 3 **[End Page 71]** likewise repeats the term three times (the only other epinician poem to do so), and the three appearances of this term mark crucial turning points in the poem. We discussed the emphatic lines in which Bacchylides declares that "the god! the god!" is the greatest form of *olbos* (21-22). The term *olbos* appears at two other points and frames the poem. [24] We hear in its opening lines that Victory and Aglaia ("Glory") made Hieron *olbios*, a possessor of *olbos*, at Olympia (5-8), and this *olbos* returns again towards the conclusion (93), but in an altered form, with the prosperity transmuted from material to a more permanent form. The poem seeks as one of its primary rhetorical goals to establish that Hieron is, if nothing else, a man who, because he is rich, generous, and successful, deserves the epithet *olbios*.

Herodotus introduces this common poetic term into his narrative in one of the most famous--and arguably least historical--scenes in the *Histories*. According to Herodotus, the Athenian Solon visited Kroisos during his travels, even though Solon should have finished his travels twenty years before Kroisos took office. The scene is the first attestation of a popular genre in Greek literature: the encounter between the sage and the potentate. Its purpose is not to reproduce exact occurrences of the past, but to introduce general themes that shaped the overall scheme of events. Herodotean narrative--here as so often elsewhere--affects a disingenuous simplicity, for it will misrepresent the claims of the Greek elite and even twist the meaning of *olbos* to suit its own ends, treating as given an understanding of that term that jars with that in the epinician tradition.

According to Herodotus, Kroisos received Solon kindly and, after the Athenian had spent a restful few days, Kroisos ordered his attendants to give Solon a tour of his treasuries so that he could see for himself how (1.30.1), "great and prosperous (*olbios*) all these things were." Having suitably primed his guest, Kroisos then asked him who was the most *olbios* (1.30.2) man he had ever seen in his extensive travels across the earth (expecting, of course, that Solon would choose him).

And, of course, Solon disappoints Kroisos. He assigns the first prize for *olbos* to Tellos, a fellow Athenian. When pressed for second, he turns not to Kroisos but to two Argive brothers, Kleobis and Biton. Apart from the relationship to Kroisos, this ordering is informative. Kleobis and Biton are strong young men, with adequate material wealth, but both prize-winning athletes (1.31.1: *aethlophoroi*), who died in triumph. Their fellow **[End Page 72]** citizens commissioned (1.31.5), "statues of Kleobis and Biton and dedicated them at Delphi on the grounds that they were the best men." The statues (which, surprisingly, have survived and were discovered in the French excavations at Delphi), fill much the same purpose as would later epinician poetry: both the statues and the poems served to enshrine a particular event in a permanent, artistic medium that would command attention for generations to come. These two young athletes might, if they had lived a century later, have been immortalized by Pindar or Bacchylides.

Like Kleobis and Biton, the Athenian Tellos possesses no great material wealth (1.30.1). Unlike Kleobis and Biton, however, Tellos has no panhellenic reputation. Where Kleobis and Biton died young and, like Achilles, won fame, Tellos fulfilled the other half of Achilles' famous destiny, remaining at home, living in a prosperous *polis* until he had become a grandfather (1.30.4). But Solon ranks Tellos above Kleobis and Biton, and Herodotus' narrative makes an oblique point against the values inscribed in Pindar and Bacchylides. Less distinguished by epinician standards, Tellos, with his prosperous family and his late death fighting in a border skirmish, is, however, a model citizen for the *polis*. A city-state filled with men like Kleobis and Biton, dying young before they could raise a family, would soon fade away. Tellos reproduces himself, insures the continuity of his family, and plays his role in maintaining the state.

Kroisos, of course, could not care less whether Solon placed Tellos first, second, or nowhere--he is dismayed that he himself, with all of his wealth and power, does not register as first or second and presses Solon to explain his criteria. Solon obliges with an elaborate description of the countless vicissitudes that impinge on human life. He culminates in the dictum "a human being is entirely what happens to him" (1.32.4: *pan esti anthrôpos sumphorê*), and then turns to Kroisos with a final explanation of his criteria (Hdt. 1.32.5-7):

> [5] To me you seem to be very rich and to be king of many people, but I cannot answer your question before I learn that you *ended your life well*. The very rich man is not more *olbios* than the man who has only his daily needs, unless he chances *to end his life with all well*. Many very rich men are not *olbioi*, many of moderate means are lucky. [6] The man who is very rich but not *olbios* surpasses the lucky man in only two ways, while the lucky surpasses the rich but not *olbios* in many. The **[End Page 73]** rich man is more capable of fulfilling his appetites and of bearing a great disaster that falls upon him, and it is in these ways that he surpasses the other. The lucky man is not so able to support disaster or appetite as is the rich man, but his luck keeps these things away from him, and he is free from deformity and disease, has no experience of evils, and has fine children and good looks. [7] If besides all this he ends his life well, then he is the one whom you seek, the one worthy to be called *olbios*. But refrain from calling him *olbios* before he dies; call him lucky.

Herodotus establishes a fundamental distinction in the interpretation of *olbos*. For Kroisos, *olbos* is a simple measure of material wealth. Since he possesses treasuries more lavish than any other man, he must obviously have the most *olbos* of any man. Solon, however, insists on adding the dimension of time. For him, *olbos* is less a simple scalar measurement at any given time than it is a judgment passed upon a person's entire life.

Solon points out that wealth has its advantages, but that luck prevents many problems for which wealth is no remedy. Human beings are subject to external forces and narrow limits circumscribe those aspects of life that we can control (Hdt. 1.32.8-9):

> [8] It is impossible for one who is only human to obtain all these things at the same time, just as no land is self-sufficient in what it produces. Each country has one thing but lacks another; whichever has the most is the best. Just so no human being is self-sufficient; each person has one thing but lacks another. [9] Whoever passes through life with the most and then dies agreeably is the one who, in my opinion, O King, deserves to bear this name. It is necessary to see how the end of every affair turns out, for the god promises *olbos* to many people and then utterly ruins them.

The debate between Kroisos and Solon resolves itself into a difference about human existence. Kroisos focuses upon the wealth that he has accumulated and the powerful position that he has established for **[End Page 74]** himself. He further assumes--or so Solon rather tendentiously implies--that he is in some sense a master of his own fate and that his material powers have allowed him to gain control over his life. Solon, however, emphasizes the contingent nature of human existence--for the Herodotean Solon, at least, the human being is not an autonomous, self-defining entity, but a subject constantly produced by external and accumulating events. [25]

To the extent that the few surviving fragments of Solon's poetry allow us to judge, Herodotus offers a very fair representation of Solon. [26] The Herodotean Solon sets an ideal length to human life as does Solon fr. 20 (although the two disagree on the precise figure, suggesting seventy and eighty years respectively). The Herodotean Solon (1.32.3) not only calculates the number of days in seventy 360-day years (25,200), but factors in the "intercalary" months needed to round this figure out (35 intercalary months adding 1,050 days) so that he arrives at 26,250 as the number of days in a 70-year life span. His analysis may be most compelling as an argument for the modern Julian calendar (there are, in fact, 25,550 days in a seventy-year period and Solon's calculations add almost two years' worth of days). Nevertheless, according to Plutarch (*Solon* 25.3), the historical Solon also took a keen interest in the calendar, seeing to it that days were calculated so as better to correspond with the moon. Overall, the Herodotean Solon shows an interest in numbers, quantification, and precise description that suits Solon the lawgiver.

But if Herodotus captures something of the pragmatic flavor of Solon with the calculation of days and interest in the calendar, consider the attitude towards wealth that appears in the fragments of Solon. In fr. 15 West, Solon observes that wealth says nothing about whether its owner is *kakos*, "ignoble" or *agathos*, "noble." Wealth is not permanent, whereas *aretê* is constant, and Solon would thus never trade *aretê* for wealth. The Herodotean Solon emphasizes that Tellos and Kleobis and Biton are all comfortably well-off, but not extremely rich. Solon fr. 24 states that "they have equal wealth who own great silver and gold, plains of wheat-bearing land, horses, donkeys, and who only possess enough so that their stomachs, bodies, and feet are comfortable," as well as a wife and child. All surplus wealth is excess baggage that we cannot take with us when we die. The **[End Page 75]** most widely studied surviving fragment of Solon (fr. 13) is an extended discussion of wealth and its impermanence in the face of forces beyond mortal control. When the Herodotean Solon states that "a human being is entirely what happens to him" (1.32.4), he might have been offering an interpretation of fr. 13.

While the encounter between Kroisos and Solon almost surely never took place, Herodotus sketches a Solon generally faithful to Solon's surviving fragments and thus he lends to this encounter a certain verisimilitude and authority. It is worth stressing those elements that seem in accord with Solon, because Herodotus does not, as we will see, always follow this tradition so closely. The "truth effects" which he elicits here render his narrative more plausible and distract from the subtle ways in which he manipulates the traditional authority of Solon--even (or especially) a patently fictionalized Solon.

Later, during the second scene in which *olbos* figures so prominently, Sardis has been captured and Kroisos finds himself seated upon the pyre, waiting to be burnt alive. In both Bacchylides and Herodotus, Kroisos, perched upon his pyre, turns his reproachful gaze upon the god on whom he has lavished such generosity (Hdt. 1.87.1):

> He invoked Apollo, crying out that if Apollo had ever been given anything by him that had caused enduring *charis*, that he should offer help and deliver him from the present evil.

Kroisos calls upon the same quality, *charis*, in Herodotus as he does in Bacchylides. In both authors, his predicament upon the pyre becomes a touchstone that determines whether generosity to the god is worthwhile. In both cases, the same initial event follows this prayer. A sudden rainstorm appears from nowhere and douses the flames (Hdt. 1.87.2, Bacch. 3.55-56). According to Bacchylides, Zeus brought the cloud (55). Herodotus mentions no divinity, but, in his account, Kyros concludes that Kroisos must be "dear to the gods" (*theophilês*). The rainstorm and rescue from destruction, in both cases, demonstrate that piety pays.

But such general similarities only provide a background against which the differences between the two versions of this story stand out. Whereas the Myson amphora and Bacchylides 3 both represented a dignified Kroisos, who chooses to place himself upon the pyre and to take his own life, the Herodotean

Kyros orders that a defeated Kroisos be placed **[End Page 76]** upon the pyre (Hdt. 1.86.2). [27] Above all, in Bacchylides, Apollo rescues Kroisos from his fate and translates him to the Hyperboreans. In Herodotus, no such miraculous event takes place--instead, we have Solon.

In the Herodotean account, Solon is indirectly responsible for saving Kroisos. Kroisos had resigned himself to his fate, calling upon Solon in his extremity, but not asking for or receiving mercy. Kyros became curious as to what Kroisos was saying and Kroisos was not anxious to explain. Only after repeated requests by Kyros' interpreters (1.86.5: *lipareontôn autôn*), did Kroisos choose to explain what Solon had told him about *olbos* and the fragility of human fortune. Only after Kyros hears the lesson of Solon and recognizes in Kroisos on the pyre a proof of Solon's statements does he decide to spare Kroisos. Not until this point, when he sees that Kyros is unsuccessfully trying to put out the flames of the pyre, does the Herodotean Kroisos call upon the *charis* of the god.

Bacchylides' interpretation of Kroisos' fate has never been controversial. Kroisos was rich. He was able to lavish presents on Apollo. He earned the *charis* of Apollo and was rewarded with translation to a luxurious and blissful existence among the Hyperboreans. Wealth, properly used, allowed Kroisos to rise above the most catastrophic vicissitudes. Great wealth, the poem emphasizes, can, if wisely used, matter a great deal.

The Herodotean account adopts a different and yet still finely balanced position. It would have been easy for Herodotus simply to discredit the "special relationship" between Kroisos and Delphi--every Greek who visited Delphi after the fall of Sardis and gazed upon the spectacular dedications of Kroisos must have, at some level, been sensitive to the problem which Kroisos' fate posed. On the other hand, Bacchylides constructs an account that removes the rough edges and suggests that the possession of wealth alone allows some men to be better than others--a sentiment bitterly assaulted in Greek literature, where it is a *topos* that wealth and *aretê* are not necessarily linked. [28] The Herodotean Kroisos does earn some return for his generosity. Apollo is his patron and manages to forestall the destruction of Sardis by three years and, according to the oracle at Delphi, Apollo was, in fact, the individual responsible for rescuing Kroisos from the flames (Hdt. 1.91). Piety, *eusebeia*, does pay. **[End Page 77]**

But if, in Herodotus, wealth is something, it is not everything and counts for far less than in Bacchylides. If anything, Kroisos' grand resources led him to push too hard and caused his fate. Solon had stressed to Kroisos that wealth, beyond a minimal amount needed for basic comfort, was irrelevant. Kroisos initially dismissed Solon as a fool, but later recognized the profound truth of Solon's words. Bacchylides' poem, as we saw, skillfully represented the transformation of material riches to symbolic capital and to the immaterial, yet tangible and permanent wealth of poetic fame. Herodotus likewise builds his story around a transformation, but of a very different kind. Where Bacchylides' Kroisos simply continues his luxurious existence in another location, the Herodotean Kroisos is transformed from potentate to sage. [29] He lives on not as resident of an idealized tropical resort, but as a mortal who has exchanged riches and power for wisdom. Kroisos owes his greatest thanks not to the god, but to Solon, whose words ultimately rescued him and--more importantly--changed his life.

Herodotus includes two separate, but convergent, causes, each of which motivates the events that overtake Kroisos. The first cause makes Kroisos' fate inevitable before Kroisos himself was even born. The first member of the Mermnad dynasty, Gyges, had reluctantly seized power by force. Apollo promised to him and to his immediate descendants the office of *basileus* of the Lydians, but also promised that retribution would fall upon his family in the fifth generation (1.13.1). Kroisos was the fifth Mermnad king and even Apollo, despite his best efforts, could not get the Fates to put the end of Mermnad rule off to the following generation (1.91.2).

At the same time, however, Kroisos is not simply a neutral pawn of the Fates. His own actions also motivate his fall. Herodotus chooses Kroisos as the main starting point for his narrative for definite reasons. After running through various tales from the heroic age, Herodotus dismisses all such evidence (Hdt. 1.5.3): **[End Page 78]**

> These are the stories of the Persians and the Phoenicians. For my part, I shall not say that this or that story is true, but I shall identify the one whom I myself know was first responsible for unjust deeds (*adika erga*) against the Greeks, and thus proceed with my history, and speak of small and great cities of men alike.

Herodotus thus declares that moral criteria have shaped his history. The strife between Greeks and non-Greeks is part of a self-replicating series in which injustice spawns retribution and Herodotus looks to the first clear historical link in this chain. *Historia* itself, it has been argued, "is a juridical concept, semantically distinct from later uses of the word and from the current use of *history*." [30] Herodotus is a *histôr*, a term that etymologically means "the one who has seen," and thus "knows" the truth. In the Boiotian dialect, *histôr* seems to be equivalent to the Attic *martus*, "witness." [31] In a famous passage of the *Iliad* (18.497-508), the *histôr* (501) is the arbitrator who settles a dispute. Herodotean *historia* is thus a textual arbitration, in which the historian, by his inquiries, is able to pass judgment on specific Greeks and non-Greeks alike.

Herodotus does not leave his audience long in suspense as to who this initial culprit was or how he transgressed against the Greeks (Hdt. 1.6):

> [1] Kroisos was a Lydian by birth, son of Alyattes, and *turannos* of all the nations west of the river Halys, which flows from the south between Syria and Paphlagonia and empties into the sea called Euxine. [2] This Kroisos was the first foreigner whom we know who subjugated some Greeks and took tribute from them, and won the friendship of others: the former being the Ionians, the Aeolians, and the Dorians of Asia, and the latter the Lacedaemonians. [3] Before the reign of Kroisos, all Greeks were free (*eleutheroi*): for the Cimmerian host which invaded Ionia before his time did not subjugate the cities, but raided and robbed them.

[End Page 79]

Pindar cites the kindly *aretê* of Kroisos and he seems to have enjoyed a popular reputation among Greeks as a whole. Herodotus describes Kroisos' dedications at Delphi in some detail (1.50-51) and the friendship which Kroisos offered to the Spartans. Kroisos' depredations extended only towards the minority of Greeks perched upon the west coast of Asia Minor. Herodotus, however, came from one of these city-states, Halikarnassos, and he sets out to create a picture of Kroisos for the Greeks as a whole that takes the Lydian subjugation of Asia Minor fully into account. Kroisos may or may not be *basileus* of the Lydians, but he is *turannos* of his domains as a whole, since many of them are non-Lydian and were conquered by force. Kroisos was the first man to take away freedom from any Greeks, and he did so not by occupying their lands or imposing a new form of government, but by forcing them to pay him tribute. The hereditary guilt of the Mermnads and the actions of Kroisos himself reinforce each other.

Herodotus' treatment of Kroisos is a masterpiece of balance. He does not paint him as a villain (as he does Periander, who also enjoyed a good reputation among many Greeks). [32] Rather, he establishes in him a pattern of acquisitiveness that sets the stage for the four great kings of Persia: Kyros, Kambyses, Dareios, and Xerxes, who, more than any individual Greeks, will dominate the rest of the *Histories*. [33] The ambivalent role of wealth and the interpretation of *olbos* stand at the center of this presentation.

Even a rapid comparison of *olbos* as Herodotus represents the concept and its appearance elsewhere reveals the subtle manner in which Herodotus has manipulated language to make his case. While Herodotus does provide a picture of Solon that markedly resembles the fragments, on one important topic he misrepresents him. Four times Solon in the surviving fragments of his poetry uses *olbos* or *olbios* and, in each case, Solon uses the term in a sense far closer to that of the Herodotean Kroisos than to that of his Herodotean namesake. At Solon fr. 6.3, we hear that great *olbos* helps engender *hubris* and this *olbos* is clearly material wealth. At fr. 34.1-2, he accuses some of embarking on "raids for booty" (*harpagai*) and having "an expectation of riches" (*elpis aphneê*), each of them thinking that **[End Page 80]** he would find "great *olbos*." Likewise, at the beginning of the crucial fr. 13, in which Solon anticipates the theme of mortal prosperity and its impermanence, he prays that the gods may give him *olbos* (fr. 13.3). The context makes it clear that *olbos* consists of having many possessions (7: *chrêmata*) and is synonymous with *ploutos*, the regular word for material wealth. Elsewhere, Solon defines that person as *olbios* who possesses "dear children, horses, hunting dogs, and a guest-friend from another country (fr. 23)." This sets a generous, but definite, limit upon useful wealth and in this resembles the Herodotean Solon, but in one fundamental respect it differs. The fragments of Solon assume that *olbos* does consist of material wealth.

More importantly, Solon fr. 13 does not reflect the defining characteristic of *olbos* in Herodotus. Solon speaks of *olbos* as something that one can have at a particular time and then lose. The rich man is *olbios* as long as he is rich, even if disaster strikes at some later date. Nowhere does the poetic Solon suggest that *olbios* be reserved as a retrospective epithet for men who have completed their lives. The two central ideas of the Herodotean Solon--that mere wealth does not constitute *olbos* and that no man can be called *olbios* until after his death--reflect an interpretation of this key term that is foreign to the language of Solon himself. The poetic Solon has an outlook very similar to that of his Herodotean counterpart, but his linguistic usage is closer to that of the Herodotean Kroisos.

The differing interpretation of *olbos* attributed to Solon is perhaps a small, though revealing, point. The semantics of *olbos*/*olbios* may be less important than the fact that Solon's fragments evince a skepticism about simple material wealth that is, in spirit at least, close to what we find in Herodotus' Solon. The misrepresentation of epinician *olbos* is, however, much more significant. Herodotus assigns to Kroisos, his archetypal rich potentate, a simplistic attitude towards *olbos* that has no parallel in the picture that Pindar and Bacchylides sketch for any of their patrons. The Herodotean Kroisos is a "straw man," who endorses an unsophisticated and unacceptable view of *olbos* that the poetic representations of tyranny methodically eschew. Herodotus' Kroisos is brought into the narrative where he espouses attitudes that undercut his authority from the start and that no poet would have associated with his patrons.

It is hard to conceive that anyone with any familiarity with the values of the archaic world could have openly assumed that present prosperity was permanent. Charles Segal, for example, has argued that the language of Bacchylides 3 carefully frames Kroisos' and "Hieron's 'towered wealth' (13) in the larger, less secure perspective of human **[End Page 81]** mutability." [34] In the epinician texts, the impermanent, fleeting quality of *olbos* is one of the most pervasive themes. Pindar (*O*. 6.96-97) prays that "time to come may not shatter *olbos*." In *Pythian* 3, one of the Hieron odes, the imperfections of mortal *olbos* (*P*. 3.89) are a major theme and we hear (*P*. 3.105-06) that "the *olbos* of men does not stay secure for long, when it follows weighing upon them in abundance." The time and duration of *olbos* are a common theme, precisely because mortal *olbos* never lasts forever. "*Olbos* lasts longer if it is engendered in accordance with a god" (*N*. 8.16-17)--but even greater length still implies finiteness of duration. The "*olbos* of those who revere Zeus lives longer" (*I*. 3.5-6). That person is *olbios* whom good reports possess" (*O*. 7.10). The victor enjoys a *kairos*, an opportune time, of *olbos* (*N*. 7.58)--precious precisely because it is, like all *kairoi*, limited.

The concept *olbos* is as flexible in usage as the English "prosperity," less a settled term than a space within which to construct a particular interpretation of what *olbos* should be. "Great *olbos*" attends Arkesilaos (*P*. 5.14) because he is a *basileus* and because he has just won a victory at the Pythian games (15-23). The person who has wealth and a good reputation "is watering a healthy *olbos*" (*O*.5.22-24). In his other major ode for Hieron, Bacchylides provides his own definition of *olbos*: "*Olbios* is he to whom a god has given a share of fine things, and a rich life to live out with enviable luck" (Bacch. 5.50-53).

Epinician poets never mention *olbos* without qualifying it in some way. Bacchylides uses the definition of *olbos* at 5.50-53 as a transition to another sentiment (53-55): "no man on earth was born to be fortunate (*eudaimôn*) in everything," and this statement provides, in turn, a transition to a story about the toils that afflicted even Herakles. Pindar cites Peleus and Kadmos as "men who are said to have possessed the utmost *olbos*," but he introduces their prosperity only to bring home the message that no mortal's life is free from suffering (*P*. 3.86-90). Elsewhere, Hieron's poets sing to him of mythological figures whose *olbos* overwhelmed them. In *Olympian* 1, Tantalos was a living exemplum of *olbos*--until his good fortune grew too much for him (*O*. 1.54-56). In *Pythian* 2, although Ixion had "received a sweet life among the gracious children of Cronus, he did not withstand his *olbos* for long, when in his madness of spirit he desired Hera" (*P*. 2.25-27). **[End Page 82]**

The epinician poets make no attempt to minimize or conceal the overwhelming material prosperity which tyrants such as Hieron enjoy. [35] On the other hand, neither Pindar nor Bacchylides flouts the conventions of archaic Greek thought. They constantly balance the present *olbos* of a Hieron against the fragility and ultimate limitedness of any mortal success. The *olbos* of a tyrant is precious, as is, for much the same reason, that glory that mortals receive from victory in one of the games. The *olbos* itself will not last, only its echo will survive inscribed in poems and in the *doxa*, "reputation," of its possessor. Pindar and Bacchylides bring to the foreground the constraints of mortality and use these to place the

good fortune of their *Tirana* into a framework that the broad audience of Hellas can accept.

A generation later, Herodotus retells the story of Kroisos on the pyre polemically, refusing to represent a Kroisos who decorously acknowledges his limitations and the impermanence of his current prosperity. Interestingly, he does not convert his Kroisos into a Periander who butchers his enemies (Hdt. 5.92G), a Gelon who sells Greek citizens into foreign slavery for no good reason (Hdt. 7.156.2-3), or a Xerxes who cuts in half the eldest son of a benefactor (Hdt. 7.38). He simply makes of Kroisos a fool who could not, as Pindar put it of Tantalos, "digest" his *olbos* or who allowed present good fortune to delude him. Kroisos is never wholly negative, but he only attains to a full measure of dignity after his fall, when he acknowledges Solon's wisdom, understands the emptiness of his previous good fortune, and embraces the more commonly acceptable view that lays far less stress upon individual wealth. But this picture only works because Herodotus excludes from his account all those pious expressions of human frailty with which Pindar and Bacchylides construct their praises of Hieron.

The epinician poets and Herodotus promote two opposing positions in a larger ideological struggle. The epinician poets attempt to read into the permanent, poetic record the great power and wealth of their patrons, but they seek to do so while implying that their patrons do not pursue the wealth for its own sake or let their present success blind them to their own mortality. We never hear of how Hieron accumulates his riches. Always the poets direct their audience's gaze towards the free-spirited manner in which their patrons lavish their existing riches on horseracing, in the great games, and on hospitality. However successful they may be, men **[End Page 83]** such as Hieron, as represented by their own poets, dwell constantly upon the sufferings of Peleus and Kadmos, and they never forget men such as Ixion or Tantalos who let their good fortune go to their heads.

Herodotus, by contrast, begins his story of Kroisos by identifying at least one socially poisoned source of Kroisos' wealth--the tribute unjustly imposed upon the Greeks of Asia Minor. Kroisos brings on his own destruction because he seeks to expand his position even further and attacks Kyros. Kroisos furthermore indicates to Solon that he has no feeling for his position as a mortal. Wealth to Kroisos is everything. The rich man is *olbios* and considerations of future events are for fools. On the one hand, the Herodotean Kroisos demonstrates a ludicrously naive pride in his accumulated wealth and shows that he has no feeling for the proper rhetoric of wealth. On the other hand, his equation of *olbos* with riches is perfectly traditional and follows the usage that we find in Solon's own fragments. The Herodotean Solon polemically reinterprets *olbos* in such a way as to deny this concept to Kroisos. Herodotus' representation of Kroisos is as tendentious as that of Bacchylides, each struggling to make the Lydian despot serve a larger purpose and to make the same story drive home very different points.

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Notes

1. On the impact that Kroisos had upon the Greek imagination, see Evans 1978.34-35.

2. The translations of Pindar included here are based on those of Diane Svarlien which are included in Perseus 1.0.

3. Perhaps the clearest ancient analysis of the politics of generosity appears in the speech which Thucydides attributes to Alkibiades at 6.16; on the function of this ethic of generosity in Pindar, see Kurke 1991.163-94; on its function in the later, but better documented, fourth-century Athenian democracy, see Ober 1989.226-33.

4. Beazley 1955.

5. Segal 1971.40.

6. Maehler 1982.33, Xen. *Cyr*. 7.2, Ktesias *FGrH* 688 fr. 9, Nikolaos v. Damaskus *FGrH* 90 fr. 68, Diod. 9.2 and 9.34 (possibly from Ephoros).

7. See How and Wells 2.338-47, appendix 16, "Herodotus on Tyranny."

8. Kurke 1992.96.

9. Kurke 1992.94.

10. Kurke 1992.109.

11. I.e., *olbos*: Hdt. 1.32.9, 1.86.5; *olbios*: Hdt. 1.30.1, 1.30.2, 1.30.3, 1.30.4, 1.31.1, 1.32.5, 1.32.7 (twice), 1.34.1, 1.86.3, 1.86.5; *anolbios* ("not *olbios*"): 1.32.5, 1.32.6; *anolbos* ("lack of *olbos*"): 1.32.6; outside of these passages, forms of *olbios* show up at Hdt. 1.216.3, 6.24.2, 6.61.3, and 8.75.1.

12. Translation based on that of Diane Svarlien.

13. On the general functions of "ritualized friendships" in the classical period, see Herman 1987.

14. Lysias 6.48; on the places where Andocides went during his exile, see Macdowell 1962.4-5; on the aristocratic character of Andocides' boast, see Herman 1987.35.

15. Compare, for example, Elysion at Homer *Od*. 4.563-68, the *nêsoi makarôn* at Hes. *WD* 169-73, and the *nêsos makarôn*, at Pind. *O.* 2.70-74; on the land of the Hyperboreans in *Pythian* 10, see Köhnken 1971.168ff. and Burnett 1985.180 note 14; on the *nêsoi makarôn*, see West on *WD* 171.

16. On this, see Kurke 1991.163-94.

17. Burnett 1985.66.

18. For a discussion of this theme of transubstantiation in the poem, see Burnett 1985.61-76, e.g., "What begins as sordid riches becomes, under the influence of this music, a strange alloy of gold, fire, water, light, and bloom, and it ends as the enduring possession of Hieron."

19. On the equation of *olbos* with Apollo, I follow Nagy 1990.276, but will ultimately pursue a somewhat different perspective on *olbos* (which he renders here "bliss") in Bacchylides and Herodotus.

20. So Maehler 1982 on Bacch. 3.85-92.

21. Contrast the "principal of intensification" in *Olympian* 1, in which each element gains in weight, but the intensity is unidirectional: Race 1990.9-11.

22. Burnett 1985.74.

23. On this, see Crane 1993.

24. See also Pindar *N*. 9.3 and 45, *I*. 3/4.5 and 76.

25. Hence comes "the paradoxical contrast between inward, spiritual potency and outward weakness" noted by Segal 1971.50.

26. On the relationship between the Herodotean Solon and the fragments, see Chiasson 1986.

27. Segal 1971.40.

28. E.g., Solon fr. 15 West = Theognis 315-19; also Theogn. 183-92, 523-26, 683-86, 747-52.

29. Note that Herodotus never seems quite able to bring himself to paint Kroisos in unambiguously positive terms, even in his new existence as wise man. Kroisos is not the most practical or dignified sage: his advice leads to Kyros' death (Hdt. 1.207-14) and when Kambyses, in a fleeting moment of clarity, points out these shortcomings, Kroisos has to scramble out of the room and be hidden by the servants before Kambyses kills him: Lateiner 1989.221-22.

30. Nagy 1990.250.

31. Schwyzer 1923.491.18, 492.7, 503a28, etc.

32. See, for example, Diogenes Laertius 1.94-100, where Periander appears as one of the seven sages.

33. On the characterization of Kroisos, see, for example, Immerwahr 1966.154-61, Flory 1987.81-82, Nagy 1990.274-79.

34. Segal 1976.111.

35. On this, see Kurke 1991.224.

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