

OLYMPIAN 12 AND THE COINS OF HIMERA

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IN 1968 A COIN WAS PUBLISHED of special significance for Pindar scholars. It is a tetradrachm from Aetna, the colony founded by Hieron in 476 B.C., showing on its reverse a seated Zeus holding a thunderbolt by his side in his right hand and a scepter with an eagle perched on top of it in his left hand.¹ This closely approximates the description of the dormant eagle on Zeus' scepter in *Pythian* 1. Both coin and description probably have as their model a statue of Aetnean Zeus mentioned by a scholiast on *Ol.* 6 and probably erected by Hieron in honor of the new city.² I think that Himera may offer another, even closer, connection between coins and victory odes.

Olympian 12, written in 466 B.C. for the victories of Ergoteles of Himera in the long-run,³ begins by invoking Tyche, daughter of Zeus Eleutherios.⁴ The uncertain fortunes of man are then described at some length, almost to the point of redundancy, in balancing stanzas covering over half the poem.⁵ The epode brings us to the victor, who would have been an "in-fighting cock" if he had stayed in Crete but who now "clasps" (*βαστάζεις*) the warm baths of the Nymphs in Himera.

Commentators have had some difficulty with *βαστάζεις*: the scholia gloss it *ὑποῖς καὶ ἐπαίρεις τῇ δόξῃ* (*Ol.* 12.25a Drachmann) and *ἐπαίρεις καὶ αὔξεις* (*Ol.* 12.27a Drachmann), and this metaphorical interpretation has been followed by the majority of scholars: Damm (1765), Dissen (1830), Mezger (1880), Gildersleeve (1881), Rumpel (1883), Fraccaroli (1894), Cerrato (1913), Sandys (1919), Puech (1922), Farnell (1932), Lattimore

¹C. Boehringer, "Hieron's Aitna und das Hieroneion," *JahrbNumuGeld* 18 (1968) 67–98. The coin is well illustrated in G. K. Jenkins, *Ancient Greek Coins* (New York 1972) fig. 365. See also C. M. Kraay, *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (Berkeley 1976) plate 49 fig. 837.

²Boehringer (above, n. 1) 81. Boehringer goes on to connect the famous "Demarateion" and *Pythian* 2, but this is hardly convincing.

³For the date see W. S. Barrett, "Pindar's Twelfth *Olympian* and the Fall of the Deinomenidai," *JHS* 93 (1973) 23–35.

⁴Barrett (above, n. 3) 35 suggests that a cult of Zeus Eleutherios was established at Himera after the fall of the Deinomenidai in 466.

⁵U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Pindaros* (Berlin 1929) 305, notes that the ode is constructed "mit prächtigem Parallelismus der Gedanken."

(1947), and Bowra (1969).⁶ A literal interpretation was offered by Christ, who thought the victor was bathing; Norwood dismissed this as "trivial" but still argued eloquently for a literal interpretation and guessed that the victor was "irrigating his land for the first time."⁷ Becker and then Fränkel returned to the bathing idea, the former thinking of the soothing bath after exertion (cf. *Nem.* 4.4) and the latter pointing out that the bath symbolized the acceptance of the wanderer into his new home.⁸ Fränkel has been followed by Thummer and Nisetich, the latter of whom accepts the metaphorical interpretation as well, while Slater rejects Fränkel and combines metaphoric and literal: "met. *clasp, embrace*."⁹ Gerber and Verdenius return to the old interpretation "exalt."¹⁰

Coins support Christ's interpretation that *βαστάζεις* is not purely metaphoric (as in *Isth.* 3.8) but describes a physical action (as in *Pyth.* 4.296). A long-lived series of Himeraian tetradrachms beginning in the 470s and lasting until the 410s shows on the reverse a large female (presumably the Nymph Himera) in the center pouring a libation over an altar and to one side a figure reaching out with one hand into the fountain in which he is bathing.¹¹ We know that the hot springs still found in the area were famous in ancient times,¹² and clearly it is these that the coin depicts. It seems likely, then, that Pindar describes Ergoteles as engaging in the same activity as the figure on the coins. Although most of the figures in the series are Silenoi, a number of illustration of early types definitely show a man bathing in the fountain.¹³

⁶C. T. Damm, *Lexicon Pindaricum* (Berlin 1765); L. Dissen, *Pindari Carmina* (Gotha 1830); B. L. Gildersleeve, *Pindar* (New York 1881); J. Rumpel, *Lexicon Pindaricum* (Leipzig 1883); G. Fraccaroli, *Le Odi di Pindaro* (Verona 1894); L. Cerrato, *Le Odi di Pindaro* (Genoa 1913); J. Sandys, *The Odes of Pindar* (London 1919); A. Puech, *Pindare* (Paris 1922); L. Farnell, *The Works of Pindar* (London 1932); R. Lattimore, *The Odes of Pindar* (Chicago 1947); C. M. Bowra, *The Odes of Pindar* (Harmondsworth 1969).

⁷G. Norwood, "Pindarica," *CQ* 9 (1915) 3-4.

⁸O. Becker, "Pindars Olympische Ode vom Glück," *Die Antike* 16 (1940) 48; H. Fränkel, *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens*³ (Munich 1968) 97 f.; *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums*² (Munich 1962) 500 n. 8 (= *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* [New York 1973] 440 n. 8).

⁹E. Thummer, *Pindar: Die Isthmischen Gedichte* 1 (Heidelberg 1969) 71 n. 46; F. J. Nisetich, "The Leaves of Triumph and Mortality" *TAPA* 107 (1977) 264 n. 93; W. J. Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar* (Berlin 1969).

¹⁰D. E. Gerber, *Euterpe* (Amsterdam 1970) 387; W. J. Verdenius, "Pindar's Twelfth Olympian Ode," *Zetesis: Festschrift E. de Strycker* (Antwerp 1973) 341, a copy of which F. Nisetich kindly sent me.

¹¹See F. Gutmann and W. Schwabacher, "Die Tetradrachmen und Didrachmenprägung von Himera," *MBNG* 47 (1929) 101 ff. and Kraay (above, n. 1) figs 764, 766.

¹²Diodorus 5.3.4; Strabo 6.275. The scholiast to *Ol.* 12.27b Drachmann, though, locates them in Sicilian Megara.

¹³Kraay (above, n. 1) fig. 764; Gutmann and Schwabacher (above, n. 11) types H5,

It is tempting to take the argument one step further and to say that it is Ergoteles' victory that inspired the bather coin type and when this was later forgotten a Silenos was substituted for the victor.¹⁴ Such a connection with the bather-type, however, is unlikely: it is the Silenos not the man who appears on the earliest examples, and it seems improbable that a commemorative issue would have such longevity.

A second possible connection of *Olympian* 12 and Himeraian coins is more controversial.¹⁵ Ever since Heyne, scholars have maintained that the cock of line 14 alludes to the common early coin type of Himera showing a cock on obverse and sometimes a cock or hen on reverse.¹⁶ K. Dietel challenged this on the ground that the cock is describing Ergoteles when he was still in Crete and so should have nothing to do with Himera, and he has been followed by Verdenius and Nisetich.¹⁷ This objection, however, assumes that the cock refers to the present coinage of Himera and so is inappropriate since "the simile refers to the time prior to Ergoteles' exile, *before* he came to Himera,"¹⁸ whereas in fact the coin type had shifted by then. When Theron of Acragas took over the city in the 480s the coin type shifted from cock on obverse and cock or hen on reverse to cock on obverse and Acragantine crab on reverse. Similarly when democracy was

H5a. Professor D. E. Gerber, who generously read and improved this paper, points to a parallel in Simonides fr. 167.5–6 Bergk (= 6.5–6 West): οὐ γὰρ εἴκεν/ θερμὴν βαστάζειν ἀνδρὶ φίλῳ πρόποσιν. If this similarity in phrasing is not fortuitous, it may reflect an implicit contrast between the cool drink of the symposium and the warm bath after the contest (cf. *Nem.* 4.1–5).

¹⁴Ergoteles' victory has sometimes been credited with inspiring an apparently commemorative series of tetradrachms that seems to reflect the Olympic games in its biga with driver labelled "Pelops" on the obverse and the Nymph Himera on the reverse. So Farnell (above, n. 6) 2, page 98, following Head; see also Kraay (above, n. 1) 215. We should note, however, that Ergoteles won in a footrace, whereas the coins depict a chariot. Regarding the apparently commemorative representation of a mule-car on coins of Rhegium and Messana, Kraay remarks that the type, "though occasioned by Anaxilas' [Olympic] victory, appears to have been chosen in order to conform with the quadriga of the Syracusan obverse" (214).

¹⁵I pass over the suggestion of L. Lacroix, *Monnaies et colonisation dans l'occident grec* (Brussels 1965) 126–128, who connects some early fifth-century Himeraian didrachms showing the nymph, a caduceus, and the inscription ΣΩΤΗΡ with the invocation of σῴτειρα Τύχα in *Ol.* 12. Lacroix himself attenuates the connection by noting several non-Himeraian odes that mention the city's savior and by concluding that prayers invoking local city-saving deities were common in Magna Graecia. In any case, the caduceus remains unexplained and it is not Zeus Soter but Zeus Eleutherios who was honored at Himera (see above, n. 4).

¹⁶C. G. Heyne, *Pindari Carmina* 1 (Göttingen 1798) 153 f.; Dissen (above, n. 6) 141; Fraccaroli (above, n. 6) 313; Gildersleeve (above, n. 6) 226; Puech (above, n. 6) 142 n. 3.

¹⁷Verdenius (above, n. 10) 339 n. 47; Nisetich (above, n. 9) 262 n. 91.

¹⁸Nisetich (above, n. 9) 262 n. 91.

finally established (466 at the latest), the coinage shifted once again, this time to chariot on the obverse and Nymph plus bather on the reverse.¹⁹ Thus the shifts in coinage reflect the shifts in Himera's fortunes. Since the fortunes of Himera and Ergoteles are viewed in the ode as similar—both were involved in political stasis, both now enjoy a glorious present—it seems more than coincidental that the shift in Ergoteles' fortunes is presented in two images that are precisely the coin types reflecting Himera's shifting fortunes.²⁰

We may now invest the apparently redundant lines about the lack of a *σύμβολον πιστόν* (7 f.) with considerable meaning. Coins are a *σύμβολον*²¹ that is not *πιστόν*; they shift and their shifting reflects the shifting fortunes of both city and victor. All man can do is pray to Tyche.²²

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¹⁹There is, of course, a certain unavoidable circularity here, for the coins are dated by their supposed reflection of political change. Kraay (above, n. 1) 215 n. 2 suggests that the freedom reflected in the new series is from Syracuse not Acragas, but this sits ill with his statement that the chariot on the obverse reflects "the increasing dominance of this Syracusan type" (215). For our purposes it makes little difference.

²⁰This does not eliminate Fränkel's interpretation of the bath as a mark of homecoming or Nisetich's interpretation of the cock as "the swaggerer who fights only with his own kind" ([above, n. 9] 262 n. 91, quoting G. Thomson; see also E. K. Borthwick *CQ* 26 [1976] 199).

²¹The word is found three times in Old Comedy meaning "coin" (see LSJ s.v. V).

²²I am grateful to the Journal's referees for their helpful suggestions.