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 978-0-521-88481-5 - Pindar: Pythian Eleven
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INTRODUCTION

I THRASYDAEUS' VICTORY

Pindar's *Pythian Eleven* celebrates the victory of Thrasydaeus of Thebes at the Pythian games. The contest in which he was successful must, if possible, be recovered from the ode.¹ The key passage is at lines 46–50. Having just mentioned Thrasydaeus and his father Pythonicus, the poet says:

τὰ μὲν ἐν ἄρμασι καλλίνικοι πάλαι
 Ὀλυμπία τ' ἀγώνων πολυφάτων
 ἔσχον θοὰν ἀκτῖνα σὺν ἵπποις,
 Πυθοῖ τε γυμνὸν ἐπὶ στάδιον
 καταβάντες ἤλεγξαν
 Ἑλλανίδα στρατιὰν ὠκύτατι.

Three different sets of honours are mentioned: (i) chariot victories 'of old' or 'in the past' (πάλαι), (ii) victories involving horses at Olympia, and (iii) victories at Pytho in the 'naked stadion'. The victory celebrated by Pindar was neither 'in the past' nor at Olympia, so it cannot be denoted by either (i) or (ii). That leaves (iii), which is conveniently specified as a Pythian victory. Rhetoric also supports the idea that (iii) is the subject of the ode: it comes climactically at the end of the catalogue of victories, and is accorded the lengthiest, most impressive description. The reference to Thrasydaeus' victory as the 'third crown' cast on his ancestral hearth (14) clinches the argument. Thrasydaeus won the γυμνὸν στάδιον, a fact which would have been as apparent to ancient commentators as it is to us.

Could στάδιον refer not to the stadion event, but to any running contest? Farnell (his edition, ii. 222) believed that it could: but Pindar's usage tells strongly against such an idea. He

¹ I deliberately exclude the scholia from consideration at this point, as information which they contain may have been taken from the ode rather than from external evidence.

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distinguishes between the stadion and the diaulos at *O.* 13.37 Πυθοῖ τ' ἔχει σταδίου τιμὰν διαύλου θ' ἄλιφ' ἀμφ' ἐνί, where he uses the appropriate terms. At *N.* 8.16 the diaulos is denoted by the expression δισσοῶν σταδίων (cf. *Σ N.* 8.26 = iii. 142.19–20 Drachmann): significantly, the poet adds the adjective δισσοῶς to secure this identification. Farnell ii. 222 and Theiler (1941) 18 (= 272) claim that at *I.* 1.23 ἐν τε γυμνοῖσι σταδίοις . . . ἐν τ' ἀσπιδόδοῦποισιν ὀπλίταις δρόμοις there is a contrast between races in armour and races without armour, the latter being denoted by the phrase γυμνοῖσι σταδίοις without a distinction between the stadion and the diaulos. But in this passage the poet refers to a succession of different, discrete contests (despite the plurals, which continue throughout): the *hoplitodromos*, the javelin, the discus. The default hypothesis must be that the γυμνὰ στάδια denote a single kind of contest too.

The stadion, then – but was it in the boys' or the men's competition?² Here too the evidence of the ode must be carefully sifted. Nowhere is Thrasydaeus explicitly said to be a boy, or to be young. There is quite an emphasis on his father, however.³ This is foreshadowed at 13–14, where Thrasydaeus ἔμνασεν ἐστίαν | τρίτον ἐπὶ στέφανον πατρῶαν βαλὼν (with πατρῶαν as ambiguous between 'ancestral' and 'of his father'), and culminates at 43–5, where the poet urges the Muse to move ἢ πατρὶ Πυθονίκῳ | τό γέ νυν ἢ Θρασυδάφῳ, | τῶν εὐφροσύνα τε καὶ δόξ' ἐπιφλέγει. The poem spends little time on the victor: the stress on his paternity is thus all the more noticeable.

This is significant because odes for victorious boys and youths typically emphasise their father. We often hear the father's name before that of the son (*O.* 10.2, 11.11–12, *N.* 5.4, 7.7, *I.* 6.3), or

² The other poems for boys in the epinician corpus are *O.* 8, 10, 11, *P.* 10, *N.* 6, 7, Bacchyl. 1, 2, 6, 7, 11. There are two poems for adolescents: *N.* 5, Bacchyl. 13. Six further odes are of disputed status: *O.* 14, *P.* 8, *N.* 4, *I.* 6, 7, 8. For boy victors in antiquity more generally see Papalas (1991).

³ Cf. Most (1985b) 23 'niemals wird Thrasydaios ohne seinen Vater erwähnt'; Gaspar (1900) 113–14 'la façon intime dont Pindare unit les succès du fils et du père [in 13–14 and 46–50] indique un vainqueur tout jeune qui n'a pas encore quitté la maison de son père'.

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else shortly after it (*I.* 8.2–4). At *P.* 10.12–16 the victorious son follows in his father's footsteps. When the father is dead, the poet imagines him in the underworld receiving the news of his son's success (cf. *O.* 8.81–4, 14.20–4), or celebrating the victory on the lyre as if alive (*N.* 4.13–22). Odes to young victors can suggest the joy which a son brings to a father (*O.* 10.86–90), the courage which is a son's paternal inheritance (*P.* 8.44–5), or the wise advice which a father gives his son (*I.* 6.66–73). Fathers are sometimes mentioned in poems for success in the adult competitions (cf. Mader on *O.* 5.7–8, pp. 68–9), but with nothing like the frequency and emphasis which we find in odes for younger victors.

In our case we can deduce that the father probably had no athletic successes to his credit (see further below). His mention is thus especially remarkable, and it is fair to conclude that he is present because he commissioned the ode in honour of his young son. The myth may also reflect this, celebrating as it does the success of the young Orestes who acts on behalf of his father Agamemnon (see section 4(ii) below).

Pfeijffer (1998) 36–7 claims that Thrasydaeus was not a boy victor. He believes that a scholium stating that he was is based on a false inference from 50–1, which (he presumes) an ancient commentator took as the statement of a young victor.⁴ That would be a wild inference indeed; but as we have seen, the view that Thrasydaeus was a boy victor does not rely on the scholium. Pfeijffer's one substantive argument (p. 37) is that 'conventions of the genre demand that Pindar and Bacchylides make clear explicitly if the victory they celebrate was won in any category other than the ἄνδρες'. But as he notes, *P.Oxy.* 222 tells us that *O.* 11 and Bacchyl. 6 were written for boy victors, even though no internal evidence suggests this. Pfeijffer (1998) 36 is thus forced to formulate an exception to his rule, according to which 'epinician

⁴ For first-person statements in Pindar taken by ancient commentators as the statements of the victor see *Σ P.* 9.161 (ii. 236.2 Drachmann), D'Alessio (1994) 130–1 with n. 46, Currie (2005) 20 n. 102.

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poets need not refer to the age category in short odes'. But the sample is not large enough to prove this, even if we could define 'short' in this context.

The ode also offers information about other victories in Thrasydaeus' family. Van Groningen's seminal account of this (1932) proceeds as follows. Thrasydaeus' victory is described as the third of the house (line 14); the ode speaks of previous victories at 41–50; the scholia provide no information beyond what is contained in the ode. The information at 41–50 vaguely associates victories (with chariots *πάλαι*, with horses at Olympia, in the stadion at Delphi) with Thrasydaeus and his father Pythonicus, but without directly attributing any specific victory to either. Pindar is vague because Pythonicus did not win any victories: if he had, Pindar would have been only too glad to make this clear.⁵ Rather, his father (Thrasydaeus' grandfather) won a chariot victory at the Pythian games, leading him to name his new-born son Pythonicus.⁶ The grandfather then won a hippic victory at Olympia. Pindar needed to bring in these victories to glorify Thrasydaeus' house; but he could not directly attribute them to the grandfather without making it clear that Pythonicus, who in all likelihood commissioned the ode, had been unsuccessful.

⁵ Von der Mühl (1958) 144 n. 10 = (1976) 178 n. 10 claims that line 45 shows that Pythonicus won a competition. This line associates Pythonicus with his son's success: it tells us nothing about his own athletic victories. Cole (1987) 558–9 assumes that the first and second victories were won by Pythonicus and Thrasydaeus, thus neglecting *πάλαι* and the significance of the father's name, as well as the vagueness of the reference to his alleged victory.

⁶ For the practice of naming a son after a victory (sporting or otherwise) cf. Hdt. 6.121.1, Hirzel (1918) 50, West (1974) 73, Hornblower on Thuc. 5.19.2 *Ἰσθμίωνικος*; also Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum Comment.* 47 (88 Pasquali) οἱ μὲν γὰρ πατέρες πρὸς μνήμην ἢ ἐλπίδα ἢ τι τοιοῦτο βλέποντες ὀνόματα τίθενται τοῖς παισίν (cited by Sulzberger (1926) 429); Kurke (1991b) 289 'in myth and epic a child is often named after a salient characteristic of one of his parents or grandparents'. According to Von der Mühl (1958) 144 = (1976) 178, the victor after whom Pythonicus was named is more likely to have been his grandfather or great-grandfather than his father, 'da wir uns den Besitzer eines Rennstalls nicht als jung und ohne Kinder vorstellen'. He may be right: but sons are sometimes born to fathers well into maturity (cf. *O.* 10.86–90).

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He thus introduced the father's name while describing some of these successes.

The above analysis needs qualification as follows: we cannot tell that it was the grandfather who won the hippic victory at Olympia, nor that his Pythian victory was the chariot race *πάλοι* described in 46. Occam's Razor gives some slight support to van Groningen's assertions. But it is not improbable that the family had more than one successful contestant before Thrasydaeus; and the vagueness of the reference in 46 suggests that the victory was in a minor competition rather than in one of the crown games. Moreover, van Groningen's 'grandfather' could have been a more distant relative still (n. 6).

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i The scholia

A pair of scholia present two possible dates for *Pythian Eleven*: the 28th Pythiad (474) or the 33rd (454).⁷ Each has found its supporters.⁸ Unfortunately, neither scholium has a secure text. They read as follows:

A (Σ Inscr. a = ii. 254.1–2 Drachmann): γέγραπται ἡ ᾧδὴ Θρασυδαίου πατρὶ νικήσαντι κῆ Πυθιάδα (474) καὶ λγ' (454) δίαιλον ἢ στάδιον ἄνδρας.⁹

⁷ The conversion of Pythiads into the Julian calendar is discussed in an appendix to this section.

⁸ The 28th is supported by Wilamowitz (1922) 259, Dornseiff (1921) 246, Norwood (1945) 246, Von der Mühl (1958) = (1976) 174–81, Bergmann (1970) 100; see further Péron (1976–7) 78 n. 100. The 33rd is supported by Düring (1943), Mommsen (1845) 63–5, Christ (1889) 13–24, Farnell ii. 221–5, Finley (1955) 160, Bowra (1936) 139–40, (1964) 402–5, Hubbard (1990) 350 n. 22.

⁹ For the triple accusative in **A**, where the participle νικήσαντι governs three different objects (κῆ Πυθιάδα καὶ λγ' (the occasion of the victories), δίαιλον ἢ στάδιον (the races in which the victories may have been won), and ἄνδρας (the competitors whom the victor defeated – in this case, presumably 'adult men rather than boys')) cf. Ant. Thess. *A.P.* 6.256.5–6 = 697–8 *GP* ἄνδρας ἡνίκα | πυγμὰν ἐνίκα Νικοφῶν Ὀλύμπια (Gow

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B (Σ Inscr. b = ii. 254.6–9 Drachmann): ἄλλως· Θρασυδαίῳ Θηβαίῳ σταδιεῖ. γέγραπται μὲν ἡ ὥδῃ τῷ προκειμένῳ νικήσαντι τὴν λγ' Πυθιάδα (454) διαύλῳ. οὐκ εἰς τὴν τοῦ διαύλου δὲ νίκην γράφει, ἀλλ' εἰς τὴν τοῦ σταδίου.¹⁰

In **A** the prominent placing of παιδί after Thrasydaeus' name (and before the participle νικήσαντι) means that we must translate 'The ode was written for the boy Thrasydaeus, victorious in . . .', and not 'The ode was written for Thrasydaeus, victorious in . . . as a boy . . .'. In other words, παιδί so placed goes with both the victories mentioned. Yet as pointed out above, they are twenty years apart. Even apart from the physical impossibility of such a prolonged career as boy athlete, there is a further problem in the apparent claim that the ode was written for two victories. The only possible parallel for the ambiguity is Σ *P.* 12 Inscr. (ii. 263.23–4 Drachmann) γέγραπται ἡ ὥδῃ Μίδῳ Ἀκραγαντίνῳ. οὗτος ἐνίκησε τὴν κδ Πυθιάδα καὶ κέ. But here the commentator first informs us that the ode was written for Midas, and then in a separate statement announces that he was successful in two different sets of games. In our case, the closeness of the participle to the victor's name means that, according to the transmitted scholium, the ode was written for Thrasydaeus' victory in the games in 474 and 454. This is a further sign of corruption.

Bulle (1871) 590 n. 2 provides a possible solution to these problems by suggesting that <ἐνίκησε δέ> has fallen out before καὶ in the scholium. This would make it clear that the later

and Page *ad loc.* remark 'After νικᾶν accusatives of the opponent, the festival, and the competition are separately common, and two in conjunction occur elsewhere . . . We do not know all three together elsewhere.').

After παιδί **A** has Θηβαίῳ σταδιεῖ τῷ προκειμένῳ in a single manuscript (**B**). This will be an interpolation from **B**.

¹⁰ A supposed third scholium can be found in Laurentianus conv. sopp. 94 (noted by Mommsen (1867) 27; this manuscript (dated c. 1330: cf. Irigoin (1952) 338) then bore the number Laurentianus 2639.94): γέγραπται ἡ ὥδῃ Θρασυδαίῳ Θηβαίῳ παιδί νικήσαντι κη' Πυθιάδα καὶ λγ' διαύλον καὶ στάδιον. οὐκ εἰς τὴν τοῦ διαύλου δὲ νίκην γράφει, ἀλλ' εἰς τὴν τοῦ σταδίου. This is a conflation of **A** and **B**.

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victory is not the occasion of the ode. The supplement parallels the language of the scholia, where we find a similar expression (ἐνίκησε μέντοι καί) in Σ *P.* 9 Inscr. a (ii. 220.25 Drachmann) used for this very purpose; cf. also Σ *O.* 1 Inscr. a (i. 15.23 Drachmann) and Σ *O.* 1 Inscr. b (i. 16.14–15 Drachmann). This would give

γέγραπται ἡ ᾧδὴ Θρασυδαίῳ παιδὶ νικήσαντι κη΄ Πυθιάδα (474)·
<ἐνίκησε δὲ> καὶ λγ΄ (454) δίαυλον ἢ στάδιον ἄνδρας.

Such a supplement is hardly a radical change, as ἐνίκησε could easily have dropped out after νικήσαντι. It yields a text which makes sense and corresponds to idioms found elsewhere in the Pindaric scholia. It also has the effect of clearly dating Pindar's poem to 474. It could be objected that we ought not to rely on emendations in our attempts to solve this problem. On the other hand, for all its incoherence, the unemended scholium does appear to claim that the ode was written for Thrasydaeus' victory as a boy in 474, and that the same athlete won a further victory as a man twenty years later. The two words added to the text aim to show how this may actually have been expressed: they do not interfere with the basic sense.

The phrase δίαυλον ἢ στάδιον also requires comment. According to Bowra (1964) 403, the order of the phrase indicates that the 474 victory was in the diaulos, and the 454 one in the stadion. But such a view is not permitted by the syntax; nor does it agree with one of the few clear pieces of information in **B**, which states that the 454 victory was in the diaulos. Before we can understand the phrase, we must take account of this second scholium.

B begins by saying that the ode was written 'For Thrasydaeus of Thebes, winner of the stadion'. It then contradicts itself, declaring instead that the honorand was the victor in the diaulos in the games of 454. It then goes back on itself once more, protesting that Pindar is celebrating the victory not in the diaulos, but in the stadion (cf. Bowra (1964) 402). Such

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confusion means that the text of this scholium must also be unsound.

Bulle's response to this ((1871) 591) is a further supplement. By inserting <τὴν κῆ Πυθιάδα σταδίῳ καὶ> between νικήσαντι and τὴν, he removed the two contradictions described above. Although ingenious, this does not command the same assent as his supplement in **A**. It yields the sense 'the ode was written for the honorand when he was victorious in the stadion in 474 and in the diaulos in 454. But he writes for the victory not in the diaulos, but in the stadion'. This is a convoluted way of saying 'the ode was written for Thrasydaeus' victory in the stadion of 474. He also won in the diaulos of 454'. There was no need for the ancient commentator to begin with a sentence apparently stating that the ode was written for two victories twenty years apart, only to go on to make it clear that it was written for the first and not the second.

No other supplement commends itself, and only extreme textual alteration would remove the contradictions. This leads me to believe that none of the sentences is itself corrupt: what is unsound is the connexion between them. The first sentence originally stood alone. The second was written by someone with a different view of the victory. The third was tagged on to contradict the second. Such a combination of different viewpoints in a single unit is regular in scholia, which frequently rely on more than one ancient source. Perhaps the third sentence was originally a comment added in the margin of a working copy of a Pindaric commentary; perhaps a scholar quoted the second sentence and added οὐκ . . . σταδίου to express his reaction to it. When the contents of such volumes were transferred to the margins of Pindaric manuscripts, it would be easy for distinctions of authorship to be neglected. There is some linguistic evidence for this analysis: the shift from γέγραπται to γράφει is uncomfortable, especially given that the subject of the latter (ὁ Πίνδαρος) is unexpressed. The presence of a μέν in the second sentence and a δέ in the third, on the other hand, is not evidence against it: such particles could have

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been added after the original two sentences had erroneously coalesced.¹¹

B thus gives two possible occasions for the ode: (i) an undated victory in the stadion and (ii) a victory in the diaulos of 454. It also contains an explicit rejection of (ii) in favour of (i); the rejection only refers to the race, however, and leaves open the possibility that the stadion victory was also in 454. At this point we may reconsider δίαυλον ἢ στάδιον in **A**. In more recent manuscripts ἢ is emended to καί, an easy alteration (cf. my note on Soph. *El.* 312n.). This would mean that Thrasydaeus won both these contests in 454, as Xenophanes of Corinth did in the Pythian games sometime before 464 (cf. *O.* 13.37), a possibility which, as just noted, is left open by the wording of **B**. But a double victory seems unlikely on other grounds. If the ode were from 454, Pindar would have pointed to this remarkable double success (as he had for Xenophon, even though those victories were not the formal occasion for the ode). Hence the poem would have to date from the alternative year, 474. This point would have been as apparent to ancient scholars as it is to us, and so there would never have been a controversy over the date.

The second sentence of **B** makes it clear that the 454 victory was in the diaulos, not the stadion. Hence we would do better to delete ἢ στάδιον in **A** with Schroeder (1900 ed., p. 67), as supported by Von der Mühl (1958) 143 n. 8 = (1976) 177 n. 8. The insertion of the offending phrase may have arisen from the apparent confusion between diaulos and stadion in the third sentence of **B**. When we add this to the previous change proposed above, we get

γέγραπται ἡ ᾠδὴ Θρασυδαίῳ παιδὶ νικήσαντι κη' Πυθιάδα (474)·
 <ἐνίκησε δὲ> καὶ λγ' (454) δίαυλον [ἢ στάδιον] ἄνδρας.

¹¹ According to Farnell ii. 222 and Von der Mühl (1958) 141 = (1976) 174, the second and third sentences make up a single unit. Its author is supposed to be saying that Pindar wrote the ode for Thrasydaeus' diaulos victory of 454, but that he wrote with reference to his success in the stadion rather than in the diaulos. It would be unfair to foist this absurdity on an ancient commentator when an alternative explanation is available.

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What, then, can we conclude from the scholia? **A** points towards an ode written in 474 for a victory in a boys' competition, while also mentioning a victory in the men's diaulos of 454. **B** contains contrasting views: one supports a stadion victory (not in 454), the other a diaulos victory in 454. Putting **A** and **B** together, we have a choice between wins in the boys' stadion of 474 and the men's diaulos of 454.

It should be clear by now that the 474 victory corresponds to the facts deduced earlier from the ode itself. An ancient scholar made the same deductions and looked in the lists of Pythian victors (first composed by Aristotle with the assistance of Callisthenes: cf. S. G. Miller (1978) 139–44, Hornblower (2004) 42) for a victory by a Thrasydaeus of Thebes in the boys' stadion. The only year with such a victory was 474, and so he assigned that date to the ode.¹² But whence the confusion over the 454 victory? This was in the diaulos (as explicitly stated in **B** and probably also in **A**), most likely the men's diaulos (as implied in **A** and not denied in **B**). Given the evidence of the poem, why was there room for error?

A possible solution to this problem runs as follows. *Pythian Eleven* does not explicitly declare that Thrasydaeus' victory was in the stadion and not the diaulos, or that he took part in the boys' competition and not the men's. It contains the evidence

¹² Whether the Thrasydaeus who won in 474 as a boy could also win again in 454 as a man is unprovable and, for our purposes, irrelevant. The balance of probabilities suggests that he could not: as Bergmann (1970) 80 notes, 'es ist unwahrscheinlich, daß ein 36-jähriger Mann noch eine ähnlich athletische Kraft besitzt wie als 16-jähriger Knabe'. Von der Mühl (1958) 143 = (1976) 176 counters by pointing to Philinus of Cos, a third-century sprinter who won 5 Olympic victories, 4 Pythian, 4 Nemean, and 11 Isthmian (cf. Paus. 6.17.2, Knab (1934) 34). But if we assume that Philinus competed in both the stadion and the diaulos, his Olympic career (for example) need not be longer than eight years (cf. Moretti (1957) 137). Hippocleas of Pelinna, who won the boys' diaulos at the Pythian games in 498, and then the men's competition in 492 and 488 (Σ P. 10 inscr. = ii. 241.22–242.2 Drachmann), provides a more reasonable career chronology. For athletes with a documented career of ten years or more see S. G. Miller (1978) 153–4 n. 26.