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"Isthmian 8: Binding, Exchange, and Politics"

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Fall 2009

The historical context of *Isthmian* 8 and Pindar's acknowledgement of his Theban origins has provoked much discussion concerning Pindar's relationship to the Persian Wars and the medizing of Thebes. Pindar's reference to the ἀτόλματον Ἑλλάδι μόχθον (I.8.11) has prompted most to date the poem after the battle of Plataea in 479 and rout of the Persians.¹ The poet's expression of grief, τῷ καὶ ἐγὼ, καίπερ ἀχήμενος / θυμόν (I.8.5), and his discussion of the shared mythological heritage between Thebes and Aegina (I.8.16-19) have been interpreted as the poet's personal apology for Thebes' support of the Persians during the war.² Following from this, Pindar's account of Themis' insistence on the marriage between Peleus and Thetis becomes symbolic of an attempt at reconciliation between the warring powers of Greece by providing an example of a more civilized council.³ However, with the advent of Bundy's *Studia Pindarica* and his argument that all components of epinician poetry are intended solely for the purpose of praise and that the biographical details of the poet are unrelated to their interpretation, Pindar's Theban origins become irrelevant as does the historical context of the poem.⁴ Köhnken, following in the tradition of Bundy, sees no reason to look outside the ode for the source of Pindar's grief; rather he points to the death of Kleandros' cousin, Nikoklēs, as the reason for the poet's expression of mourning.⁵ Others, such as Ruck, have argued that Pindar's expression of mourning is for all of the Aeginetans who died during the Persian War, particularly at Salamis.⁶ Indeed, the ode is similar to Simonides' poem composed for the Spartans after the Battle of Plataea, which may have been performed at the Isthmian Games.⁷ The major question therefore pertains to how much we allow the political circumstances at the time of the ode's performance and Pindar's Theban identity to dictate our interpretation of the poem.

Rather than merely pointing to the first person statements in order to determine the relationship of *Isthmian* 8 to contemporary events, perhaps a more fruitful means of interpreting the poem would be an examination of the discourse accompanying Pindar's references to current political events. Discourse related to binding, unbinding, and loosening accompanies his initial allusions to the end of the Persian war and continues throughout the poem.⁸ However, whenever Pindar refers to a loosening or an instance of unbinding, he always qualifies his statement with language related to exchange. It seems that the liberation of Greece from the threat of Persian domination results in an unbinding from war and a "rebinding" within a system of exchange. Throughout the ode, Pindar takes care to show that one cannot be completely "unbound"; rather,

¹ Farnell 1930: 285, Finley 1955: 29, 143, Finley 1958, Bowra 1964: 113-114, Köhnken 1975: 25, Carey 1981: 184, Lefkowitz 1991: 45, Hubbard 2001: 396, Burnett 2005: 107ff. The text used throughout this paper is the 1971 Teubner edited by Maehler and Snell. Many, many thanks to Gregory Nagy, Lauren Curtis, Emrys Bell-Schlatter, and the other members of the Fall 2009 Pindar seminar for their help.

² Farnell 1930: 286, Finley 1955: 29 Lefkowitz 1963: 211, Nagy 1990: 207, Lefkowitz 1991: 44-46.

³ Finley 1958: 126.

⁴ Bundy 1962: 35ff.

⁵ Köhnken 1975: 32. For more conjectures concerning Nikoklēs, his relationship to Kleandros and the battle at which he may have died, see Bury 1892: 133, Köhnken 1975: 25-26.

⁶ Ruck 1968: 674.

⁷ Rutherford 2001: 39, Shaw 2001: 179-180.

⁸ Lefkowitz 1991: 129-131 also notes the references to loosening in Pindar's discussion of the Persian War.

instances of unbinding or loosening within the poem are accompanied by discourse pertaining to exchange and reciprocity.

Moreover, Pindar's references to binding and loosening have parallels in the Indic tradition in a way that relates to politics. In his discussion of Indic tradition, Dumézil notes a dichotomy of sovereignty and binding between Varuna, a deity of violent binding and warfare, and Mitra, a deity of unbinding and contractual obligation:

Varuna is the “binder.” Whoever respects *satyam* and *sraddha* (in other words, the various forms of correct behavior) is protected by Mitra, but whoever sins against them is immediately bound in the most literal sense of the word by Varuna . . .⁹

In a comparison with Roman religion, Dumézil describes Romulus, Varuna's Roman equivalent, as a binder as well and cites an example from Plutarch in which Romulus was notorious for literally binding those who either disagreed with him or violated a law (*Romulus*, 26). In contrast to the violent binding of Varuna, Dumézil discusses Mitra as unbinder of those whom the more violent deities have bound. However, while Mitra does not bind *per se*, he represents a system of contractual, reciprocal exchange. Indeed, the root Indo-European **mei* from which Mitra's name is derived is the basis for a number of words relating to the concept of gift exchange and contractual obligation.¹⁰ Mitra engages in exchange, contract, and mutual obligation rather than Varuna's militaristic binding. Dumézil broadens this dichotomy further by suggesting that these opposites form two types of sovereignty: one based on the martial binding practiced by Varuna and another largely based on reciprocal exchange and contract embodied by Mitra. From Dumézil's analysis, it seems that Indo-European societies fluctuate between these two extremes, depending on whether or not the society in question is in a state of war or peace and if the normal rituals of exchange have been violated. As Dumézil states:

Just as in the relations between men and gods, Mitra takes “that which is well sacrificed” (that which, therefore, poses no question, since the ordinary mechanism of sacrifice suffices to guarantee its fruit) and Varuna “that which is badly sacrificed” (so as to punish the clumsy or ill-intentioned sacrifice), so in the relations between men, Varuna the binder and Jupiter the avenger might have been involved at first with the oath as “avengers,” whereas Mitra and Dius Fidius were “recorders” of the oath, or seen as the “drafters” of its terms.¹¹

From Dumézil's analysis, we see that Mitra governs the system of exchange when it functions according to plan in a given society. However, Varuna's ethics are invoked when the system is violated and binds the one who has breached a contractual obligation. These two types of binding correspond with theories of gift exchange that govern the structure of Pindar's poetry.

This dichotomy between war and peaceful exchange correspond with the principles of aristocratic gift exchange that are evident in Pindar's poetry. As Lévi-Strauss and Mauss have noted, the exchange of gifts and exchange of hostilities are closely related, and societies either exchange one or the other in their relations with each other, as Lévi-Strauss comments, “There is

⁹ Dumézil 1988: 95.

¹⁰ Benveniste 1973: 80-81.

¹¹ Dumézil 1988: 79.

a link, a continuity between hostile relations and the provision of reciprocal prestations. Exchanges are peacefully resolved wars, and wars are the result of unsuccessful transactions.”¹² If we apply the principles of gift exchange discussed by Mauss and Lévi-Strauss the dichotomy between Varuna and Mitra, Mitra represents a properly functioning system of exchange whereas Varuna represents the deterioration of the exchange of gifts to one of hostilities. As Leslie Kurke has shown in *The Traffic in Praise*, the basic principles of gift exchange govern Pindar’s relationship to his patron and how the poet refers to himself and his poetry.¹³ Pindar, it seems, has a vested interest in ensuring that the system of gift exchange functions appropriately and does not deteriorate into warfare.

If we apply the aforementioned studies of rituals of binding, unbinding, and exchange to Pindar’s use of similar discourse in *Isthmian* 8, we find that Pindar uses this discourse in conjunction with the aftermath of the Persian wars in order to advocate a transition from the exchanging of hostilities that occurred during the Persian wars back to a system of obligation based on gift exchange, not one of hostilities. Although Pindar and Greece writ large have been released from the binding achieved through warfare, Pindar advocates a return to an economy based on contract and gift exchange. During the opening of the poem, Pindar’s references to Tantalus (I.8.9-11) and exhortation to the *komos* not to fall into a deficit of crowns, ἐν ὀρφανίᾳ πέσωμεν στεφάνων (I.8.6), are attempts to restore a proper system of exchange after the Persian wars. Themis’ intervention and suggestion that Thetis marry Peleus rather than Zeus or Poseidon features another example of exchange, exogamic marriage, that results in the unbinding of both gods and the resumption of order on Mt. Olympus. By engaging in exchange, potential disaster is averted in the divine sphere. Achilles, as the product of this union, functions as a force that restores the proper system of exchange violated in times of war. Even when Pindar describes Achilles’ exploits on the battlefield, he does so with language that echoes his previous statements concerning the governing capacity of the Aiakidai and portrays Achilles as one who aids in the restoration of a proper system of exchange, especially in Helen’s return to Sparta (I.8.51). When placed in the context of the political situation at the time of the poem’s performance, it seems that Pindar advocates a shift back to the contractual system of reciprocity found in the polis rather than the martial, binding notion of sovereignty evident during times of war. Thus, Pindar uses the principles that govern his poetry to express a desire for political stability.

During the opening of *Isthmian* 8, Pindar discusses the relief felt by most of Greece after the victory over the Persians at Plataea. Although he describes this respite in terms of a release from a burden, he includes several caveats against indulging in their newfound state of freedom.

ἐκ μεγάλων δὲ πενθέων λυθέντες
 μήτ’ ἐν ὀρφανίᾳ πέσωμεν στεφάνων,
 μήτ’ κάδεα θερά-
 πειυε· παυσάμενοι δ’ ἀπράκτων κακῶν . . . (I.8.6-7)

The juxtaposition of releasing and stopping reveals Pindar’s concern with moderation in the celebration of victory. Although he and the *komos* have been released, λυθέντες (I.8.6), he tempers this state of release with an exhortation not to fall, πέσωμεν (I.8.6). The implication is

¹² Lévi-Strauss 1969: 67. See also Mauss 1990: 35ff.

¹³ Kurke 1991: 1-12.

that although they have been released, they have not been released to such an extent as to fall, which would imply descent into a state of chaos. Indeed, the *komos* does not fall into a deficit of crowns, μήτ' ἐν ὀρφανίᾳ πέσωμεν στεφάνων (I.8.6). As Kurke argues, the victor would have dedicated the crowns which he received to the city in order to bestow *kudos* upon it, which makes the crowns objects of exchange.¹⁴ By stating that the *komos* does not fall into a deficit, ἐν ὀρφανίᾳ (I.8.6), Pindar indicates that they have no shortage of things with which they can participate in a system of exchange. If read in these terms, Pindar essentially tells his audience that although they have been freed from one type of bondage, they are still “bound”, in a sense, within a system of reciprocity and exchange. He continues his exhortations against excessive celebration by commanding against indulging in their cares and refraining from *koros* by extension. Pindar concludes his string of exhortations with παυσάμενοι (I.8.7). The stopping motif inherent in παυσάμενοι connects with his previous admonition against falling. Although they have been freed, they do not fall, rather they stop. The implication is that their release does not come with a complete falling from a system of exchange; rather it is a transition from the binding that comes with wartime to the reciprocity of gift exchange. Moreover, ἀπράκτων (I.8.7) can mean “unprofitable.”¹⁵ If we interpret this word in the context of exchange and binding, the ἀπράκτων κακῶν indicates that the war from which they have been freed was not conducive to exchange. Thus, Pindar programmatically indicates a shift from war to peaceful exchange and at the same time perhaps foreshadows the negative implications of excessive unbinding during the mythical digression concerning Thetis.

Pindar continues in this vein with a reference to Tantalus that implicitly recalls *Olympian* 1, the only other poem in the Pindaric corpus in which Tantalus appears, and Tantalus' *koros* that causes him to steal from the gods and violate principles of exchange.

ἐπειδὴ τὸν ὑπὲρ κεφαλᾶς
γε Ταντάλου λίθον παρά
τις ἔτρεψεν ἄμμι θεός,
ἀτόλματον Ἑλλάδι μό-
χθον . . .
δόλιος γὰρ αἰ-
ων ἐπ' ἀνδράσι κρέματα (I.8.9-11, 14)

Although Pindar describes the freedom that all of Greece feels as how Tantalus would feel if someone freed him from his burden, his description is accompanied by a caveat against indulging in this state of release to excess at the risk of being “rebound”. The reference to Tantalus and his punishment evokes the way in which Varuna binds those who breach contracts and laws. In the same way that Varuna binds those who default on a debt, so Zeus binds Tantalus, as Pindar describes in *Olympian* 1. Because Tantalus yields to *koros* by stealing nectar from the gods, κόρω δ' ἔλεν ἄταν ὑπέροπλον (O.1.56-57), he is bound to live a life of uncertainty, the opposite of what Pindar describes in I.8. However, Pindar's use of κρέματα (I.8.14) only a few lines later recalls Tantalus' original punishment, ἂν τοι πατήρ ὑπερ / κρέμασε καρτερόν αὐτῷ λίθον (O.1.56-57).¹⁶ This continued reference to Tantalus is perhaps

¹⁴ Kurke 1991: 204-208. See also Benveniste 1973: 346-356 for more on *kudos*.

¹⁵ Bury 1892: ad loc.

¹⁶ Bury 1892: ad loc and Carey 1981: ad loc also note the verb's connection to Tantalus.

a caveat against engaging in *koros* similar to that of Tantalus at the risk of being bound again. Pindar qualifies his early discussion of λυθέντες (I.8.6) by using legal discourse and language related to systems of exchange in order to demonstrate that he and the *komos* merely shift from one system of obligation to another. That is, they transition from being bound by a Varuna-esque form of sovereignty to the reciprocity symbolized by Mitra.

The mythical digression concerning the marriage of Thetis encapsulates Pindar's worries concerning the end of the Persian war and his attempt to advocate a shift in the different methods of sovereignty, binding, and types of exchange. If Thetis marries either Zeus or Poseidon, then her offspring will be more powerful than either of them and could potentially overturn the entire cosmic order (I.8.31ff).¹⁷ As Slatkin and others have noted, Thetis has the ability to upset the normal principles of law and order governing the gods.¹⁸ Indeed, Thetis figures prominently as one who is able to unbind Zeus and recall the Titans from Hades in the *Iliad*. Achilles mentions this aspect of Thetis in his plea to her.

ἀλλὰ σὺ τὸν γ' ἔλθοῦσα ὑπελύσασο δεσμῶν
ὥχ' ἑκατόγχειρον καλέσασ' ἐς μακρὸν Ὀλυμπον,
ὄν Βριάρεων καλέουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δέ τε πάντες
Αἰγαίων - ὁ γὰρ αὐτε βίην οὐ πατρὸς ἀμείνων -
ὅς ῥα παρὰ Κρονίῳ καθέζετο κύδει γαίων. (*Il. A.* 401-5)

When Ares, Athena, and the other gods bind Zeus and render him powerless, Thetis has the ability to release Briareos from his bounds in order to unbind Zeus. As Slatkin comments, Thetis' unbinding of a Titan whom Zeus has previously bound reinforces Zeus' sovereign power over the other gods.¹⁹ While her unbinding of Zeus results in the restoration of order on Mt. Olympus, the unbinding of Briareos runs the risk of overturning the natural order which Zeus himself has established by binding the Titans in the first place.²⁰ Moreover, as Achilles comments, Briareos has similar attributes to the would-be child of Thetis in *Isthmian* 8 in that he is stronger than his father, ὁ γὰρ αὐτε βίην οὐ πατρὸς ἀμείνων (*Il.A.*405).²¹ Thetis has the power to overturn systems of exchange at will by unbinding, which means that her possible divine offspring could inherit this power to an even greater extent.

If we turn back to *Isthmian* 8, Pindar's depiction of this myth functions as a study in proper binding and exchange and is an example of the way in which the rituals of gift exchange can end hostilities. Pindar begins by describing the quarrel between Zeus and Poseidon.

ταῦτα καὶ μακάρων ἐμέμναντ' ἀγοραί,
Ζεὺς ὅτ' ἀμφὶ Θέτιος
ἀγλαὸς τ' ἔρισαν Ποσειδᾶν γάμῳ
ἄλοχον εὐειδέα θέλων ἐκάτερος
ἔαν ἔμμεν· ἔρωσ γὰρ ἔχεν. (*I.8.*27-29)

¹⁷ Finley 1955: 226ff, Köhnken 1975: 28ff, Burnett 2005: 115-117. See Slatkin 1991 for a full discussion of Thetis' powers as well as Nagy 1979: 343-347.

¹⁸ Slatkin 1991.

¹⁹ Slatkin 1991: 68-69. As Finley, Slatkin and many others have noted, Prometheus in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vincitus* alludes to this prophecy as well. See *PV* 753ff and 907ff as well as Griffith 1983: ad loc.

²⁰ Slatkin 1991: 73.

²¹ Nagy 1979: 346, Slatkin 1991: 66.

Pindar opens his mythical digression by explicitly referring to the memory of the ἀγοραί (I.8.27), those who frequent the ἀγορά. Since the agora was a center of exchange and commerce, this reference explicitly refers to a non-martial system of exchange. By transitioning to the myth with a reference to the system of binding and contractual obligation represented by Mitra, Pindar programmatically indicates that this system of exchange is of importance in the following myth.

He continues by describing the state of deadlock Zeus and Poseidon were in during the dispute over Thetis. Zeus and Poseidon are quite literally “bound” in this argument, as Pindar states, ἔρως γὰρ ἔχειν (I.8.29). In other words, they are “frozen”, as it were, in this hostile state until the question of Thetis’ spouse is decided. Carey comments that “Thetis’ virginity is a χαλινός for the divine peace and plan.”²² In effect, Thetis is wholly responsible for binding the gods in a state of strife.

Themis’ speech echoes Pindar’s statements during the opening strophe of the poem and is a means of facilitating a transition from hostilities to exchange.

... ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν
παύσατε· βροτέων δὲ λεχέων τυχοῖσα . . .
μηδὲ Νηρέος θυγάτηρ νεικέων πέταλα
δὶς ἐγγυαλιζέτω
ἄμμιν· ἐν διχομηνίδεσ-
σιν δὲ ἐσπέραις ἐρατόν
λύοι κεν χαλινὸν ὑφ’ ἧ-
ρωῖ παρθενίας. (I.8.36-37, 42-45)

Indeed, the opening of Themis’ speech programmatically echoes the first strophe of the poem with παύσατε, which recalls Pindar’s παυσάμενοι (I.8.7) and ἔπαυσα when stating that they refrain from unprofitable evils, ἀπράκτων κακῶν (I.8.8). Moreover, Themis’ use of a form of λύω with λύοι κεν χαλινὸν (I.8.45) recalls Pindar’s ἐκ μεγάλων δὲ πενθέων λυθέντες (I.8.6). Just as Pindar and the Greeks writ large have been freed from the fear of Persian domination, so Themis frees Zeus and Poseidon both from the strife in which they have been engaged and also from the fear of being overpowered by the offspring that would result from such a union. Moreover, Themis explicitly refers to the discord Thetis’ marriage would cause among the gods as νεικέων πέταλα (I.8.42). The noun πέταλον can refer to a garland won in an athletic event.²³ If we recall Kurke’s argument concerning the crowns at the opening of the poem, Thetis’ garlands are not used in exchange; rather they are ones of war, νεικέων (I.8.42), and only bind the gods further. Thetis thus binds her fellow Olympians in a state of strife from which they can be released only by using her as an object of exchange.

Apart from merely echoing the language related to binding and releasing from the opening of the poem, Themis engages in a ritual essential to exchange when advocating that Thetis marry a mortal. By suggesting that Thetis not marry a fellow deity but rather take a mortal for her husband, Themis promotes exogamy and facilitates exchange as a result.

²² Carey 1982: ad loc.

²³ LSJ 1. The LSJ cites this passage as meaning “contentious votes.” I think that the LSJ’s suggestion is in need of revision and that Thetis’ πέταλα are meant to evoke the crowns from the opening of the poem.

Marriage in Indo-European society forms a large part of gift exchange and contractual relations between smaller social units such as households and larger ones such as nations.²⁴ The woman herself becomes a gift-like commodity of sorts and provides a reason for gifts to be exchanged.

Thus a continuous transaction exists from war to exchange and from exchange to intermarriage, and the exchange of brides is merely the conclusion to an uninterrupted process of reciprocal gifts, which effects the transition from hostility to alliance, from anxiety to confidence, and from fear to friendship.²⁵

Thetis' marriage to Peleus, or of a goddess to a mortal, resembles Lévi-Strauss' explanation of how exogamy works to secure peace between two societies. As he argues in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, the prohibition against incest is intended to facilitate exchange and relations with others by means of exogamy.

The prohibition of incest is not merely a prohibition, as the previous chapter suggested, because in prohibiting, it also orders. Like exogamy, which is its widened social application, the prohibition of incest is a rule of reciprocity.²⁶

Although Thetis' marriage to either Zeus or Poseidon would not be an example of incest, it would be an example of endogamy, since the marriage would occur within the same social/ethnic group. By practicing exogamy, Themis initiates a system of exchange and relations with the human race. In *Isthmian* 8, Themis' proposal that Thetis marry a mortal is not an attempt to secure relations with the human race, but rather an attempt to avert disaster on the divine plain by asserting the power and stability of the Olympians as a whole over the individual desires of Zeus and Poseidon. In this way, Themis acts as a regulator of the system of exchange and diverts the further binding and exchange of hostilities that would result from a union between Thetis and either Zeus or Poseidon. Benveniste even comments that Themis' Indic parallel "is the order within the house and the family established by that of divine will, that of Mitra and Varuna."²⁷ Thus, by advocating exogamy with the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, Themis uses the system of gift exchange to avert its deterioration into one of hostilities.

Achilles, as the mortal offspring of the union between Thetis and Peleus, functions as a force that helps restore order in *Isthmian* 8. During his description of Achilles' various accomplishments on the battlefield, Pindar takes great care to present Achilles and his martial accomplishments as that which aids in the reinstatement of a system of exchange. Although Achilles' exploits in the Trojan War would seem to place him within an exchange of hostilities rather than gifts, Pindar portrays Achilles as one who aids in the restoration of a proper system of exchange and stability to the polis. He puts Achilles in the context of the Aiakidai and their civic attributes by means of verbal echoes. He describes Achilles as sprinkling the plain with blood, μέλανι ραίνων φόνω πέδιον (I.8.50), which recalls his earlier mention of Aiakos as settling disputes among the gods, δαιμόνεσσι δίκας ἐπείραινε (I.8.24), by repeating a form of the verb

²⁴ For more on marriage and exchange, see Lévi-Strauss 1969. For more on gift exchange in general, see Mauss 1992.

²⁵ Lévi-Strauss 1969: 69. For more on marriage and marital imagery in Pindar, see Kurke 1991: 108-134.

²⁶ Lévi-Strauss 1969: 51.

²⁷ Benveniste 1973: 384.

ράινω. Moreover, this statement occurs immediately before Pindar discusses how Achilles aided the return of the Achaeans.

γεφύρωσέ τ' Ἀτρεΐδαι –
σι νόστον, Ἐλέναν τ' ἐλύσατο . . . (I.8.51)

Not only does Achilles help the Achaeans return home, he also restores the proper methods of exchange that were broken when Paris abducted Helen by freeing her, Ἐλέναν τ' ἐλύσατο (I.8.51).²⁸ Again, Pindar uses a form of λύω in his description of how Achilles frees Helen, ἐλύσατο (I.8.51), which recalls ἐκ μεγάλων δὲ πενθέων λυθέντες (I.8.6) from the opening of the poem. Moreover, Paris' abduction of Helen violated several rituals of exchange that, accordingly, resulted in open hostilities between the Greeks and Trojans. Not only did he steal from Menelaus, which is a breach of proper *xenia*, he also improperly obtained a wife through theft rather than exchange. By presenting Achilles as the one who returns Helen, Pindar puts him in the position of restoring a proper system of exchange and ending the war. Achilles is responsible for a similar loosening that ends the hostilities between Greece and Troy, just as the loosening earlier in the poem is the outcome of the loosening of hostilities between Greece and Persia.

Even when Achilles kills Hector and Memnon in war, Pindar places him in the context of one who restores order by describing him as an οὔρος.

. . . οἷς δῶμα Φερσεφόνας
μανύων Ἀχλεύς, οὔρος Αἰακιδᾶν,
Αἴγιναν σφετέραν τε ρίζαν πρόφαινευ. (I.8.55-56)

Pindar refers to Achilles as the οὔρος Αἰακιδᾶν, which explicitly places him in the context of the civic leadership of his relatives.²⁹ Indeed, in Homer, Nestor has the epithet οὔρος Ἀχαιῶν.³⁰ Throughout the *Iliad*, Nestor is concerned with reconciliation between Achilles and Agamemnon, who quarrel over an issue of gift exchange, and can perhaps be associated with attempts to correct instances of faulty exchange. By endowing Achilles with a nearly identical epithet, Pindar further emphasizes Achilles' role as the restorer of order.

Pindar returns to his contemporary reality with Nikoklēs, Kleandros' relative who died during the Persian conflict (I.8.61ff), and Kleandros' own victory. Since Pindar has presented Achilles as someone who restores order and a proper system of exchange, by discussing the immortality Nikoklēs will obtain through poetry immediately after he has described the similar immortality bestowed on Achilles, he implicitly connects the two individuals. It is as though through his linking of the two individuals, Pindar implies that Nikoklēs, contributed to the restoration of a peaceful system of exchange as Achilles did in Troy by sacrificing his life in the Persian War. Moreover, since Nikoklēs has achieved great accomplishments throughout his lifetime, he will be immortalized by the Muses and Pindar's poetry as compensation for his labors.³¹ Pindar continues in this vein while describing Kleandros, the *laudandus*.

²⁸ See also Nagy 1979: 339ff for more concerning Achilles' association with the sea and sailing over the Hellespont.

²⁹ See Burnett 2005: 110 for an alternative interpretation of οὔρος.

³⁰ According to Cunliffe 1963, the epithet occurs in the *Iliad* at Θ 80, Λ 840, Ο 370, 659.

³¹ See Kurke 1991: 108ff for more on compensation and victory.

. . . . ἀλίκων τῷ τις ἄβρόν
ἀμφὶ παγκρατίου Κλεάνδρῳ πλεκέτω
μυρσίνας στέφανον . . . (I.8.65-66)

The verb πλεκέτω and the noun στέφανον are of interest in this instance. As mentioned previously, Kurke comments that crowns awarded to the victor were most likely dedicated to the city.

I suggest that these linguistic collocations [viz. those of glory and crowns] in Pindar and in the inscriptions reflect ritual practice: the victor dedicated his crown, and that public dedication symbolically represented the sharing of his talismanic power with the whole civic community. If this is the case, the ritual gesture is very significant, for it explicitly makes the victory into a civic triumph.³²

This ceremony has several implications with respect to *Isthmian* 8. Pindar's use of στέφανον both evokes its binding connotations and his mention of crowns during the opening of the poem, μήτ' ἐν ὄρφανίᾳ πέσωμεν στεφάνων (I.8.6). If we follow Kurke's line of reasoning and assume that the victor dedicated his crown to the city, the victor further partakes in the system of gift exchange that aids in the restoration of civil order. Indeed, the release from the threat of Persian domination has not resulted in a deficit of crowns, but rather the resumption of a system of exchange that fortifies the city through the accomplishments of the *laudandus*.

The last lines of the poem encapsulate this transition from war to peace through the reinstatement of peaceful exchange.

ἦβαν γὰρ οὐκ ἄπειρον ὑ-
πὸ χειῶ {πω} καλῶν δάμασεν. (I.8.70)

The text at the poem's conclusion has long been disputed. Although Snell and Maehler print χειῶ, this reading is tenuous at best due both to the word's rarity in Greek and to the overall sense of the passage. The only other occurrence of this word is in the *Iliad* in a simile describing Hector before his final battle with Achilles. During that instance, however, Homer explicitly refers to a snake, which is not the case here. Wilamowitz and Norwood have rejected χειῶ on these grounds.³³ The grammarian Triclinius suggests χάα, which refers to a drinking cup. Young suggests κόλπου, which refers to a fold in a garment, and which would work perfectly as the genitive object of ὑπό.³⁴ Although I have no solution for this textual conundrum, it seems that the sense of the passage is essentially the same, whether one reads χειῶ, χάα, χαλκῶι, or κόλπου.³⁵ Pindar essentially states that Kleandros has not concealed his athletic ability; rather, he has used, or spent, it in order to bring glory upon himself and his city. As Young states in support of his reading:

³² Kurke 1991: 207.

³³ Wilamowitz 1922: 196 n. 2 (cited in Norwood 1952: 161 and in Young 1973: 321), Norwood: 1952: 161-162.

³⁴ Young 1973: 322ff.

³⁵ Lefkowitz 1991: 133 n. 15 expresses the same opinion as I do with regard to the sense of the passage despite the textual corruption.

What the sentence would mean, then, is that Kleandros did not hold back his youthful strength as a miser holds back expenditures, but that he was willing to expend it, his youth, for the good and glory of his city – and for his own future fame.³⁶

Although Young's reading of κόλπου and its monetary connotations make this sentiment more evident, it seems to apply to the passage regardless of what reading one chooses. By excelling in the Isthmian Games, Kleandros takes part in ritual gift exchange that forms an essential part of peaceful relations between individuals and societies. Indeed, Pindar even connects Kleandros' exchange of his talents to the relief described at the beginning of the poem. The last line of the poem is δάμασεν (I.8.70), which recalls γλυκύ τι δαμωσόμεθα μαὶ μετὰ πόνον (I.8.8). Thus, Kleandros' willingness to "spend" his youth in pursuit of his personal fame and that of the city provides the means by which the exchange of hostilities evident during the war with the Persians can transition to the type of exchange evident in times of peace. Just as Themis advocates the exchange of Thetis in an attempt to preserve order among the Olympians, so Kleandros exchanges his youthful talents and contributes to the stability and preservation of the system. Kleandros' victory, and Pindar's ode, encapsulates the resumption of normalcy in the Hellenic world as a result of the principles of exchange.

As we have seen, Pindar's references to binding and loosening correspond to the resumption of a system of exchange after the discord of the Persian Wars. Although the notion that the principles of exchange underlie the themes of epinician poetry has long been accepted, the application of these principles to political circumstances raises some questions concerning the relationship between the two worlds of poetry and politics. In *Isthmian* 8, Pindar, in effect, not only places the political strife of his contemporary reality in terms of the mythical and anthropological principles that govern the structure and content of his poetry but also offers these principles as a solution to political problems. The view that Pindar longed for the re-establishment of the aristocratic social order could certainly find some support with Pindar's depiction of a transition from war to gift exchange.³⁷ Indeed, his aristocratic patrons would find favor with this view, which would provide some incentive for him to include it in his odes. However, something more interesting occurs in *Isthmian* 8. By translating, as it were, the aftermath of the Persian Wars and a solution to strife into epinician discourse, Pindar posits his poetry and the principles to which it adheres as a solution for political difficulties. In effect, the peace achieved at the end of the epinician ode becomes an ideal example of how political strife ought to be resolved in the world writ large.

³⁶ Young 1973: 325. See also Kurke 1991: 170ff.

³⁷ Brown 1951: 3ff, Finley 1955: 34-35.

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