

This paper is an attempt to contextualise the poetry of Pindar's contemporary and rival Bacchylides in the geographical, historical, political, and social circumstances in which it was commissioned, performed and circulated.

When tracing the activities of a mobile professional poet it is necessary to take into account both existing commissions and the absence of commissions both from specific communities and from individual patrons in order to make sense of the geographical distribution of the poetry. In the case of Bacchylides, Pindar, and Simonides – international/pan-Hellenic poets – the distribution of patronage can be subjected to comparative analysis as they all operated in the same broad geographical and generic space. A comparative study of the distribution of commissions for individual poets gives one a sense both of the larger international context in which they operated and of the individual relationships within that larger picture.

Catherine Morgan (2007) provides a combined presentation of the epinician odes by both Pindar and Bacchylides, which demonstrates, in correlation with the victory lists, that citizens of only a few and specific states from among the states which provided victors commissioned victory odes. Morgan claims that the picture of patronage does not change substantially by the addition of the much smaller corpus of Bacchylides' epinicia. However, differences between the two become visible if we take into account not just the victory odes but also the civic poetry by Bacchylides and Pindar where Athenian commissions, in the case of Bacchylides become prominent (*Odes 15, 16, 18, 19*), and Pindar's composition of a paean for the Ceans (*Pi. Paean 4=fr.52d Maehler*) is very striking given the absence of Theban patronage for Bacchylides (Rutherford 2001). A comparison between Pindar's epinician career and spread of commissions with Bacchylides' patrons illustrates the diverse and individual career paths of individual poets and raises questions about the factors involved.

My aim here is to place Bacchylides on a map of Greece and Magna Graecia in both a literal and a literary sense in an attempt to understand where, why and how he operates as a poet. Which patrons chose him as their poet for individual praise and which communities for civic commissions; what was the origin of these patrons and what were the connections between particular communities for which Bacchylides composed (e.g. *xenia, proxenia* - Herman 1987)? Did these communities have anything in common in terms of mythological tales, ethnic origins (Fearn 2003), or colonization? Particular emphasis will be placed both on the frequency of commissions and on the role played by political connections, as far as these can be deduced from his poems. These may help to explain the choice of Bacchylides by and his readiness to produce for particular communities, the manner of their presentation and Bacchylides' apparent rejection by other cities. In a poetic environment which was both closely related to and defined by external circumstances, issues such as politics, preferences, and recommendations should be taken into account in order to obtain a complete picture. Since both epinician and civic poetry were evidently used for individual and collective demonstration, self-definition, and propaganda (Wilson 2003, Rutherford 2004), poetic activity must be set against the background of the political scene of the 5th century, tensions, relationships, and ties in the Greek world. Chronology and prosopography (Hornblower 2004) are also very important as they can enlighten us both as to the geographical storyline of Bacchylides' gradually growing fame in the Greek world and the relationships of individuals with particular cities or even city-relations. This analysis will be made in comparison to Pindar's geography of private and communal commissions.