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Menander, Lampon and the Price of Victory (Pi. Ne. 5 & Ba. 13)

When Pytheas of Aegina won the pancration at Nemea in one of the youth categories in the late 480s, his victory, uniquely for a gymnastic victory, was celebrated in two long odes, one by Pindar and one by Bacchylides. Both odes name his trainer, Menander, but their representations of Menander are strikingly different. This difference must be explained by the particular commission given to each poet, and, more generally, by the awkward choices that confronted a wealthy aristocrat who sought prestige through athletic victories at a time when training was a necessity, but when the best athletic trainers not only had to be hired, but also were in a position to make awkward demands.

Previous scholarship on Menander has focused on the fact that he is Athenian, and what this tells us about the date of the ode or Aeginetan attitudes to Athens (Cole, *Pindar's Feasts* 1992; Pfeijffer, *CQ* 1995, *Three Aeginetan Odes* 1999). But the treatment of Menander's citizenship must be seen within the broader treatment of the athletic trainer in these odes, and it is this context that this paper seeks to provide. The argument will also provide a new reading of Ba. 13.196-8.

The representations of Menander in *Ne. 5* and *Ba. 13* share many elements: both represent the professional trainer as bound to the victor by gift exchange; both are vague about what training exactly involved; both represent inherited excellence rather than teachable skills as key to winning a pancration victory; and both seek to make the fact that Menander is Athenian acceptable to an Aeginetan audience. But there is a major difference: *Ba. 13* represents Menander as responsible for the victory, while Pytheas fades into the background.

Why the odes diverge in this crucial respect must be referred to the circumstances of the odes' commission. Either Pytheas' father Lampon commissioned both odes, and specified that Bacchylides should briefly catalogue Menander's victories, or the Athenian Menander commissioned the ode from the Ionian Bacchylides to be part of the same celebration organized by Pytheas.

It certainly makes sense that Menander, at the end of a long and successful career, should want to insert himself into the aristocratic record of victory, but Lampon's incentive in either case needs explanation. A compelling narrative that emphasizes the compromises involved can, however, be constructed. Lampon was an extremely wealthy aristocrat seeking, in the wake of the democratic ructions of 488-86, to maintain his clan's position of power before the Aeginetan demos and the other aristocratic clans. The preeminent way to collect prestige on Aegina was through victory in gymnastic sports, and Lampon's marriage had brought him some athletic success on his wife's side. Lampon thus had some hope of victory, but maximized his children's chances by hiring Menander, a famous and successful coach. This was expensive, and came with a catch: Menander wanted, in the event of success, recognition of his full achievements as well as payment, and, although such recognition would threaten the value of the victory, Menander's track record made this a price Lampon was ready to pay.