



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BSc (Simon Fraser University, 1987)
BA (University of Victoria, 2013)

“The *Tao* of Pindar: *Charis* and *Hybris* in Pindaric Cosmology”

Department of Greek and Roman Studies

Thursday, August 20, 2015
10:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B415

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Ingrid Holmberg, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Prof. Lauren Bowman, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Margaret Cameron, Department of Philosophy, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Alexandra D’Arcy, Department of Linguistics, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Although Pindar's victory songs, or *epinikia*, were commissioned and performed to celebrate athletic victories, they present persistent reflections on the narrow limits of human prosperity, the inexorable cycle of success and failure, and the impossibility of appropriating any aspect of a godly nature. The present work provides a close reading of the *Pythian* series to illustrate how Pindar uses prayer, myth and *gnomai* to secure the moral and psychological reintegration of the athletic victor back into his close-knit community upon his homecoming (νόστος). As a re-integration rite, the challenging and dark elements of mortal limitation and failure are read as prophylactic statements against the destructive effects of *hybris* (ὑβρις). The Odes rest upon an archaic cosmology of reciprocal and harmonious exchange between humans themselves and between humans and the gods which is captured by the principle of *charis* or grace (χάρις). Ὑβρις is a breach of this reciprocity and the antithesis of χάρις since it is the unilateral claim of property, prestige, or privilege as well as the transgression against the divine dispensation which governs the cosmos (κόσμος). Modern psychological research shows how such concern for, and such precaution against, ὑβρις may be prudent given that victory fosters a drive for dominance. Pindar's promotion of a customary way which supports general well-being and prosperity, as in the dynamic of χάρις and ὑβρις, expresses a notion common across a great number of traditional or vernacular societies. One such example is the *tao* of ancient China.