

Pindar as a School Author in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: The Evidence of Papyri and Medieval Manuscripts

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Abstract: This paper studies the role of Pindar's poetry in Late Antique and Byzantine education up to ca. AD 1280. Based on references to Pindar in ancient and Byzantine authors, and the number and content of papyri and medieval manuscripts, it traces the gradual narrowing of the school syllabus from Pindar's entire *oeuvre* to the *Epinicians* (Victory Odes) in the fourth century AD and eventually a Byzantine 'selection' of only the *Olympians* and *Pythians*. It also examines select papyri and manuscripts for signs that they served educational purposes. It is argued that, as in the case of many 'classical' Greek authors and texts, the transmission of Pindar's works, and their reception in Late Antiquity and Byzantium, cannot be separated from their use in schools.

Keywords: Pindar, *Epinicians*, Late Antique and Byzantine education, papyri, manuscripts

Nigello Wilson nonagenario

1. Introduction

By ancient as well as modern judgement, Pindar (ca. 518–after 446 BC) counts as the greatest of the Greek choral lyric poets of the archaic and early classical periods. He is also the only one whose work is not only known from book fragments and/or papyrus finds, but has in part survived through the medieval manuscript tradition.

In Hellenistic times Pindar's entire *oeuvre* was edited in seventeen books, probably by Aristophanes of Byzantium (ca. 257–180 BC). It can roughly be divided into 'songs for gods' and 'songs for humans', a distinction already found in rudimentary form in the list of Pindar's works in P.Oxy. 2438.35–9 (= Ar. Byz. fr. 381 Slater), and more fully in that of the *Vita Ambrosiana* (I 3.6–9 Drachmann), which seems to reflect the classification of Proclus (*Chrest.* §§32–6 Severyns), probably after Didymus (see Ercoles 2020). Foremost among the 'songs for gods' are the *Dithyramb*s and *Paean*s (hymns in honour of Dionysus and Apollo respectively); the 'songs for humans' are primarily represented by the *Epinicians* (Victory Odes), praise poems composed by commission for victors at the pan-Hellenic games, namely the *Olympia*, *Pythia*, *Nemea* and *Isthmia*. It is the *Epinicians* that have come down to us in an unbroken line of manuscript transmission. The purpose of this paper is to inquire how this came about, and why Pindar's other works were lost—until their partial rediscovery on papyri from the late nineteenth century on. It is argued that Pindar's position as a school author in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Middle Ages was a significant factor.

Few people today would recommend Pindar for use in schools. His odes are highly complex in language and often allusive in content, requiring considerable mythical, historical and cultural background knowledge. However, they retain a place on many university syllabuses—although one wonders how many students and academics would agree with Eustathius of Thessalonica, the twelfth-century cleric and chalcenic scholar of the pagan classics, who in his *Preface to Pindar* (34.1 Kambylis) opined that the *Epinicians* '... are most of all in circulation because they are fuller of human interest [than Pindar's other poems], sparing in myth/concise and otherwise too not entirely unclear' (οἱ καὶ περιάγονται μάλιστα διὰ τὸ ἀνθρωπικώτεροι εἶναι καὶ ὀλιγόμυθοι καὶ μηδὲ πάνυ ἔχειν ἀσαφῶς κατὰ γὰρ τὰ ἄλλα).¹

In antiquity, by contrast, and in Byzantine times Pindar was firmly entrenched at the more advanced end of the secondary school syllabus. Taught by the *grammatikos*, this was inten-

¹ The meaning of the hapax ὀλιγόμυθος is contested. Most scholars prefer 'sparing in myth', but Negri (2000: 138–49) makes a good case for the sense 'concise'.

ded to give pupils (aged ca. eleven to fifteen years) a broad foundation in language and literature before some went on to study rhetoric and philosophy at the tertiary level. This syllabus or curriculum, as I will call it for lack of a better word, was never fully fixed. But there is evidence, primarily from the distribution of extant literary and school-text papyri, for an early 'core' of Homer, Euripides, Menander and the Attic orators, which any *grammatikos* could expand as he saw fit.² In the first century AD the Roman poet Statius claims that his late father taught the following poets at his school in Naples (*Silv.* 5.3.146–48): Homer, Hesiod, Epicharmus, Pindar, Ibycus, Alcman, Stesichorus, Sappho, Callimachus, Lycophron, Sophron and Corinna. This curriculum must have been more extensive than average because most of the poets mentioned did not belong to the 'core'. However, Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.46–72) also names several more *recherché* poets, including Stesichorus, as suitable reading in Greek for boys who aimed to become orators. And Lycophron's *Alexandra*, a notoriously opaque poem in 1474 iambic trimeters consisting largely of a prophecy of the Trojan princess Cassandra, was popular in Byzantine schools, as is evident from the large number of surviving manuscripts.³

In the time of Statius, reading Pindar at school very probably included selections from his entire *oeuvre*. Papyri of non-epinician odes equipped with diacritical reading-aids and fragments of separate commentaries on these poems suggest as much (see §2.1 below). But by the fourth century AD the syllabus clearly had become restricted to the *Epinicians*—just as, for example, the canon of Euripides had narrowed to the ten plays of the so-called 'Selection', which survive in numerous manuscripts, accompanied by ancient scholia. Subsequently, Pindar's *Epinicians* never ceased to be in circulation. They continued to be annotated and cited by both providers and recipients of literary education. The history of Pindar as a school author, therefore, cannot be separated from the textual transmission of his poems, nor from their ancient and medieval reception. The present study aims to provide answers to three important questions:

² According to Morgan (1998: 69, 313), the four most common authors found in school-text papyri, identified mainly by their writing-style (cf. Cribiore 1996: 97–118), are Homer (58), Euripides (20), Menander (7) and Isocrates (7). This picture closely resembles the data for literary papyri collected by Netz (2020: 13–15). Of some 7000 fragments, nearly a quarter (1680) belong to Homer, followed at some distance by Demosthenes (204), Euripides (169), Hesiod (137), Isocrates (132) and Menander (105). In an age when advanced literacy was limited to a relatively small educated elite, it is not surprising that literary prestige and popular taste largely coincided (cf. Cribiore 2001b: 242–43; Netz 2020: 13–14). The separation of the two is a modern phenomenon.

³ For the curriculum of Statius the Elder in the context of Graeco-Roman education in the early Imperial period see McNelis (2002); for 'core' as opposed to 'peripheral' authors see Morgan (1998: 71–73, 85–89, 310–11, 313, Tables 13 and 15).

- (1) Why is Pindar the only one of the nine canonic lyric poets of antiquity (Alcman, Sappho, Alcaeus, Anacreon, Stesichorus, Ibycus, Simonides, Bacchylides, Pindar) who survived into the Middle Ages?
- (2) Why have only the *Epinicians* come down to us via the Byzantine manuscript tradition?
- (3) Why are the *Olympian* and *Pythian Odes* far better represented in papyri and medieval manuscripts than the *Nemeans* and *Isthmians*?

In addition, it will be possible to shed new light on some Pindar manuscripts (including one that has been neglected far too long) and on the methods and aims of literary education in Late Antiquity and Byzantium.

Naturally, this paper can only give a glimpse of a very broad subject. In particular, it will stop short before the Palaeologan renaissance, that most fruitful period of Byzantine scholarship lasting from the late thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth century. Even a brief overview of the Pindar editions and commentaries produced during that time, let alone their afterlife, would fill another article. Instead I will primarily concern myself with the development of Pindar's position as a school author and its implications for the transmission of the text.

2. Pindar and the Late Antique school syllabus

2.1 The formation of the canon

The importance of the Late Antique and Byzantine school syllabus for the transmission of Ancient Greek literature can hardly be overemphasised because the preservation of many authors and texts was aided substantially by their continued use in education. Conversely, exclusion from the curriculum could spell doom. From about the fourth century AD, Menander was gradually replaced with Aristophanes, which no doubt is the main reason why he was no longer copied towards the end of antiquity (the latest papyri date to the late sixth or early seventh century). Similarly Sappho, who is mentioned by Statius (*Silv.* 5.3.155; cf. above) and still attested as a school author in the fourth century AD (Themist. *Or.* 20.236c; cf. below), did not make it into the medieval manuscript tradition. Again the latest texts, fragments of two parchment codices from Egypt (P. Berol. inv. 5006 and 9722), belong to the sixth or seventh centuries.

In the absence of an Imperial Roman Ministry for Education, the process by which the narrower and wider canons were formed must have been largely self-selecting and self-reinforcing. A notable factor was the popularity of a text, which in antiquity largely corresponded to literary prestige and pedagogical value (cf. n. 2). Popular texts tended to acquire commentaries and glossaries, whose existence in turn was likely to widen their readership, spawning yet further helpful 'secondary literature'. A good example is the Byzantine triad of Euripides: *Hecuba*, *Orestes* and *Phoenissae*. The three plays belonged to the medieval core canon, but to judge by the number of extant papyri and ancient quotations, *Orestes* and *Phoenissae*, and to a lesser extent *Hecuba*, were already the most widely-read Euripidean plays by the second century AD (for *Phoenissae* as a school text in antiquity see Cribiore 2001b). In other cases pedagogical considerations seem to have been at the forefront. Aristophanes superseded Menander probably because he was considered more classically Attic (Cribiore 2001a: 201), whereas Sappho's Lesbian dialect is difficult and the erotic content of her poems easily seen as unsuitable for the education of young Christians.

What, then, about Pindar? Since he had a long-standing reputation as 'by far the greatest of the nine lyric poets' (Quint. *Inst. Or.* 10.1.61 *novem ... lyricorum longe ... princeps*), it is not surprising that he was the choral-lyric poet who continued to be read in schools, while Sappho, until her early-Byzantine fall from favour, filled the slot for monodic lyric. The gradual restriction of the Pindaric reading-list to the *Epinicians* is again evident from papyrus finds. The Mertens-Pack 3 (MP³) database (<http://www.cedopalm3.uliege.be>) currently lists fifty-five papyri that have been attributed to Pindar with certainty, including separate commentaries (cf. Fries 2017: 747 with n. 5). If one considers their dates, the number of fragments from the *Epinicians* roughly equals that of Pindar's other poems until the third century AD; after that we have only the *Epinicians*—indeed only the *Olympians* and *Pythians*. The fact that no more than three papyri are decisively dated to the fourth century or later, with two others being borderline third or fourth, may seem insufficient data to build an argument on.⁴ However, the narrowing of the Pindaric canon is confirmed by the indirect tradition, where quotations of non-epinician odes peter out in the late second century AD (Irigoin 1952: 94–96; Rutherford 2012: 100–101).

But why the *Epinicians*? It is reasonable to assume that they were as hard to understand in later antiquity as they are now, with their difficult poetic language and their often cryptic references to myths, people and historical events. The ancient scholia, which fill three volumes in the modern standard edition Drachmann (1903–1927) and were distilled into the margins of early codices from even more extensive separate commentaries, especially the great compilation of Didymus 'Chalcenterus' (ca. 65 BC–AD 10), are testament to the level of exegesis required.

⁴ Fourth century AD or later: P. Oxy. 5038 (IV, *Olympians*), P. Oxy. 1614 (V, *Olympians*), P. Vindob. G 29817 (V/V1, *Pythians*, commentary); borderline: P. Berol. 17047 (III/IV, *Olympians*), P. Berol. 13419 (III/IV, *Pythians*, commentary).

One possible answer is suggested by Eustathius' statement that the *Epinicians* 'are most of all in circulation because they are fuller of human interest, sparing in myth/concise (ὀλιγόμυθοι) and otherwise too not entirely unclear' (Eust. *Prooem. in Pind.* 34.1 Kambylis). Presumably Eustathius was simply guessing here because he no longer had first-hand access to Pindar's non-epinician odes.⁵ All three reasons he adduces for the popularity of the *Epinicians* could have been proposed without comparison with other genres, especially if by ὀλιγόμυθος he meant 'concise' rather than 'sparing in myth' (cf. n. 1). It is likely, however, that a similar judgement was reached at a time when most of Pindar's works were still circulating and could be compared to each other. The *Epinicians*, by their very genre, are more concerned with real-life humans than, for example, the *Dithyrambs* and most of the *Paeans*, and thus more 'sparing in myth'. Both these qualities may have made them more relatable to Late Antique readers, who increasingly were Christians. At the same time the *Epinicians* are grander than the *Encomia*, shorter praise poems often written for the same clients, but intended to be performed at a private symposium following the public victory celebration. Other reasons that have been adduced for the growing preference for the *Epinicians* are their high content of maxims and other pieces of general advice—both staples of ancient education—and the fact that the great pan-Hellenic games, except perhaps the *Nemea*, were celebrated until at least the late fourth century AD (cf. Irigoin 1952: 96–97; Rutherford 2012: 101–2; Ucciardello 2012: 108 with n. 19).

Thus in the fourth century AD the philosopher and rhetorician Themistius probably thought only of the *Epinicians* when he mentioned Pindar among the great poets who metaphorically attended the school of his late father (Themist. *Or.* 20.236c). The same is likely to apply to a story related by the fifth-century church historians Socrates (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.16) and Sozomenus (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.18). When in AD 362 Emperor Julian (the Apostate) issued a law which effectively banned Christians from studying and teaching pagan literature, Apollinaris of Laodicea the Elder and his better-known son Apollinaris the Younger constructed a 'classical' curriculum based on the Bible. This included, among other literary endeavours, an epic version of the Old Testament (in twenty-four books!), the Gospels recast as Platonic dialogues—and odes on the model of Pindar (Wilson 1983: 10; Fries 2017: 747–48; cf. Agapitos 1998: 171–74 on other contemporary reactions to Julian's law). Fortunately for the preservation of Greek literature, the law was repealed by Julian's successor, and the new canon did not catch on.

⁵ That Eustathius could only read the *Epinicians* can be deduced from the fact that all his quotations of Pindaric fragments are paralleled in the indirect tradition or can reasonably be attributed to *Isthmian Odes* that have not survived, but were still available to him in a copy which had not yet lost (all of) the final portion of the book of *Isthmians*. See Neumann-Hartmann (2019: 535–36, 540–41).

2.2 Material evidence

The material evidence provides further valuable information about Pindar's position in the Late Antique school curriculum and the way he was read in educational contexts. His name is absent from Criboire's catalogue of surviving school exercises on papyrus, potsherds (*ostraka*) and wax-tablets (1996: 175–284), nor have there been new finds since. This is not surprising, since elementary pupils would hardly have been instructed to use lyric poetry to practise their handwriting; the genre is rare even among the 'advanced' authors listed in Morgan's Table 13 (1998: 310–11), who are represented only once or twice by potential school-text papyri.⁶ Still one wonders whether advanced students never had to make their own copies. Perhaps some of the Pindar papyri written in more informal hands belong in this category (see Ucciardello 2012: 109–10 for an annotated list of papyri of the *Epinicians* and discussion).

However, many professionally produced Pindar papyri show signs that suggest an educational background. They are equipped with lectional signs—accents, breathings, punctuation and quantity marks—and occasionally also with marginal notes excerpted from larger commentaries, the precursors of the medieval scholia. None of these 'extras', which were meant to help with the construction, correct pronunciation and understanding of a potentially difficult text, were the preserve of students. Teachers, scholars and educated recreational readers too may have found them useful additions to their copies. However, they would have had to learn the application of diacritics and the technicalities of writing comments from someone—and this person was most likely the *grammatikos*. It is reasonable to say, therefore, that all annotated papyri of canonical authors reflect such literary training (cf. McNamee 2007: 61), although the more prolific the diacritics, or the more basic the notes, the more probable it seems that the papyri were directly used in schools.

Prosody or quantity marks, the longum (–) and breve (·), still used today for scanning Greek and Latin poetry, are first attested in papyri of the second century BC and became increasingly widespread, even in prose texts, from the first century AD on (Turner and Parsons 1987: 12). However, their primary purpose in antiquity was not to enable metrical scansion, but to indicate the quantities of the vowels alpha (α), iota (ι) and upsilon (υ), which in classical Greek could be either long and short. This helped readers to distinguish homographs in uncial script, like the first-declension dative singular ending in –ΑΙ (with silent iota adscript) and the nominative plural ending in –ΑΙ. In both cases the value of the signs is restricted to the vowel on which they stand; they do not mean that the whole diphthong is to be treated as long or short—an important difference to the use of – and · for metrical scansion, as will be discussed further below on the Byzantine Pindar manuscripts B and G.

⁶ Sappho appears with PSI XIII 1300, an *ostrakon* dated to the second century BC; full description in Criboire (1996: 231–32, no. 247).

The prosodical mark-up also helped to identify rare words and unfamiliar forms (especially those with Doric long alpha for Attic-Ionic eta in choral lyric) and the correct pronunciation of the texts at a time when spoken Greek was losing its vowel-length distinctions.⁷ The idea that pronunciation according to rules no longer operative in everyday speech was part of literary education in Late Antiquity is supported, for example, by the fact that the Atticist lexica of the second and third centuries AD issued numerous prescriptions on the topic (see Vessella 2011–2012, 2014, 2018; Colomo 2017: 110–11).

A good illustration of a Pindar papyrus from a learned milieu is P. Oxy. 841 (MP³ 1361), which has preserved our most substantial portion of the *Paeans* (ed. pr. Grenfell and Hunt 1908; modern standard editions Snell and Maehler 1989; Rutherford 2001).⁸ It is dated to the early second century AD by the census list on its front and furnished with the full range of lectional signs and extensive marginalia, written partly by the two distinct hands responsible for the main text, partly by others (on the hands of P. Oxy. 841 see Rutherford 2001: 140–43, 149). The papyrus meets five out of the six criteria which Turner set out for identifying a scholar's text (Turner 1956: 144–45; cf. McNamee 2007: 37–41 with n. 123).⁹ However, McNamee (2007: 41) pointed out the somewhat inelegant nature of the hand that wrote *Paeans* 1–7, the unusually wide margins and gaps between the columns (clearly intended to take annotations) and the basic nature of several of the marginalia. None of these features preclude that P. Oxy. 841 is a scholarly text, which is favoured by the presence of notes reflecting Hellenistic philology (see below). The two conflicting impressions can perhaps be united if we consider this copy of the *Paeans*, which probably filled two rolls originally, as one that belonged to a succession of learned schoolmasters who took a text carefully marked up for reading (aloud)—the majority of the lectional signs appear to be original—and added annotations that would help to elucidate the difficult poetry.

The marginalia in P. Oxy. 841 (edited and translated by Rutherford 2001) range from short comments on the text to quite substantial exegetical notes. Both have their roots in Hellenistic scholarship; the names of several important scholars are quoted, unfortunately in abbreviated form so that it is not always clear who is meant (Rutherford 2001: 149–50). One certain source is Theon of Alexandria, a grammarian of the Augustan period, who among numerous other learned works produced a commentary on Pindar which covered at least the *Paeans* and *Epinicians*, as we know from a scholium to Pi. Ol. 5.18 (= 42a) and P. Oxy. 2536,

⁷ This process began in Egypt in the third century BC and was more or less complete in all dialects, except Attic, in the second century AD (Colomo 2017: 109–10).

⁸ The papyrus is held in the British Library. Because of the major cyber attack on the library's computer system in October 2023, no digital images are currently available (last checked on 17 July 2026).

⁹ The criteria are (1) 'practised' rather than calligraphic handwriting in the main text, (2) being written on the recto of the papyrus, more often than the verso, (3) correctness of the scribe's work, (4) lectional and critical signs, (5) revisions by a second, often less formal, hand, (6) marginalia. Turner himself quotes P. Oxy. 841 (and P. Oxy. 852 of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*) as exceptions to 'rule' no. (2).

which preserves fragments of commentary on the *Pythian Odes* (for a recent study on this papyrus see Ucciardello 2012: 119–26). In P. Oxy. 841 Theon appears in the margin of column iv, at Pi. *Pae.* 2.37–8: ...] ἀλκαὶ δὲ τεῖχος ἀνδρῶν / ὕψιστον [ῥιστα]ται ('The valour of men stands as the loftiest wall'), where the note reads ΑΛΚΑΙ ΘΕΩ(Ν). Thus he apparently preferred the dative singular ἀλκαῖ, marked with a longum in the papyrus, instead of the nominative plural ἀλκαί, which according to Grenfell and Hunt (1908: 28, 83) stands equipped with a breve in the main text. This would alter the meaning of the clause to 'through men's valour the wall stands loftiest', for which the rest of the note, probably also taken from Theon, compares the beginning of Pi. fr. 213 Snell–Maehler (= Maxim. Tyr. 12.1) πότερον δίκῃ τεῖχος ὕψιον (ὕψιστον schol. *Pae.* 2.37b) / ἢ σκολιαῖς ἀπάταις ἀναβαίνει / ἐπιχθόνιον γένος ἀνδρῶν ... ('whether the earthly race of men scales the higher wall through justice or by crooked deceit ...'). The text of *Pae.* 2.37–8 is too fragmentary to be certain what Pindar wrote—modern editors tend to accept the nominative ἀλκαί—but the passage well illustrates the problems of interpretation that could arise for readers of *scriptio continua*.

Thus P. Oxy. 841 can—with due caution—be used to support the theory that, before about the third century AD, at least some of Pindar's non-epinician odes were read in schools. The fact that (despite some basic material) the standard of its annotation is high may be a sign that even in the second century AD extending the syllabus beyond the *Epinicians* was ambitious.

By contrast, P. Oxy. 5201 (MP³ 1351.3), which Barrett and Obbink (in Henry et al. 2014: 116–17) on the basis of the script tentatively dated to the first century BC or the first century AD, seems more representative of ordinary use. It is a fragment of an elementary commentary on Pindar's *Olympians* (1.17–27 and 33–9 are preserved).¹⁰ The lemmata write out the poetic text in full, without division into metrical cola (the normal practice of ancient scribes when they were not specifically copying a book in verse). They are followed by notes which largely offer paraphrases of the relevant passages in *koinē* Greek, with a few learned explanations interspersed. Some of the very basic information has found its way into the medieval scholia, where it joins excerpts of the finest Hellenistic scholarship.

Parts of a similar commentary on the *Pythians* survive in P. Vindob. inv. G 29817 (MP³ 1356), a single leaf of a papyrus codex from the fifth or sixth century AD (McNamee 1994; cf. Fries 2023: 59–60).¹¹ Again the elementary nature of the notes, which mainly consist of paraphrases of the text, glosses on difficult words and mythological explanations, suggests that it belonged to a school edition of the *Pythians*, perhaps preceded by the *Olympians*. Such a partial edition of Pindar's *Epinicians* would correspond to the Byzantine 'abbreviated re-

¹⁰ Digital image at https://portal.sds.ox.ac.uk/articles/online_resource/P_Oxy_LXXIX_5201_Commentary_on_Pindar_Olympian_1/21185020. (Accessed 2 December 2025.)

¹¹ Digital image at https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_4036685&order=1&view=SINGLE. (Accessed 2 December 2025.)

cension', which contained only the *Olympians* and *Pythians* (see §3.2 below). Irigoin (1952: 114–15, 121) located the archetype of this recension in the fifth century AD.

In addition to commentaries, students and teachers require lexicographical resources. Plenty of basic glossaries to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (the so-called *scholia minora in Homerum*) have survived on papyrus, arranged not in alphabetical order like a dictionary, but in the order of the Homeric texts (see Landon 2008; *scholia minora* in school hands are catalogued by Criore 1996: 253–58). In Late Antiquity some such word-lists to Homer and Euripides entered the lexicon of Biblical glosses attributed to St. Cyril of Alexandria (fifth century AD), which in turn was merged with the monumental lexicon of Hesychius (fifth or sixth century AD) sometime before the eighth century (Dickey 2007: 89, 100–101). In its own manuscript tradition Cyril's lexicon is regularly accompanied by a corpus of 'minor lexica'. One of them, a collection of glosses on Demosthenes, Pindar and Aristophanes, entitled *Rhētorikai Lexeis* (*Rhetorical Dictionary*), was edited by Naoumides (1975). It is preserved in twelve manuscripts, ranging in date from the late tenth century to 1743. Several of these codices also contain the *Technē Grammatikē* (*Art of Grammar*) attributed to the Alexandrian scholar Dionysius Thrax, but probably composed no earlier than the third or fourth century AD, which was the standard grammar of Greek in Byzantium. This company alone suggests that the *Rhētorikai Lexeis* was intended for school purposes—even though in its present state it will have been of limited use. As it stands, the lexicon is a compilation of fragments, which Naoumides (1975: 25–30) considered to be a product of the ninth century. It consists of a rhetorical dictionary, based mainly on Demosthenes, interrupted by glosses on Pindar's *Olympians* (ending at 2.61) and Aristophanes' *Clouds*, *Peace* and *Frogs*, again only partially covered and in mixed order. The ancestor of the poetic portion was dated by Naoumides (1975: 27–28, 40) to between the fifth and seventh centuries AD, on the grounds that several shared errors betray misreading of uncial letters and some glosses consist of words that only gained currency in early Byzantine times. If this collection was a school glossary to Pindar and Aristophanes, as Naoumides (1975: 31) plausibly deduced from its similarity to the Homeric *scholia minora*, it gives us a valuable glimpse into the status of Pindar in secondary education towards the end of antiquity. In fact, Naoumides (1975: 33) surmised that the individual components of the *Rhētorikai Lexeis* were compiled from marginal notes in a school text of the relevant authors. It is impossible to tell how much they originally covered—of Pindar perhaps only the *Olympians* and possibly the *Pythians*. These odes already survive in far more papyri than the *Nemeans* and *Isthmians*—nineteen as against seven, according to the MP³ database, including the commentaries in P. Oxy. 5201 and P. Vindob. inv. G 29817 (above)—and circulated separately in numerous Byzantine manuscripts of the so-called 'abbreviated recension' (§3.2 below). It is also worth noting that *Clouds* and *Frogs* belonged to the Byzantine triad of Aristophanes (together with *Wealth* rather than *Peace*).

3. Pindar as a school author in Byzantium

3.1 The ‘Dark Ages’ and beyond

The period between the mid-seventh and the early ninth century AD, when the Eastern Roman Empire was beset by the first Arab conquests and the religious turmoil created by the iconoclast controversy, is commonly known as the ‘Dark Ages’ because of the concomitant decline in cultural and scholarly activity.¹² However, one can hardly agree with Naoumides (1975: 40) that ‘it is unthinkable that during that time poets like Pindar and Aristophanes were studied in the schools’. There may not have been much scholarly activity expended on the authors of the higher literary syllabus, but the basic education system must have remained intact because it continued almost unchanged from antiquity throughout the Greek Middle Ages until the Ottoman sack of Byzantium in 1453. As Wilson (1983: 61) put it, ‘[w]hen intellectual life begins to blossom again after the final defeat of the iconoclasts all the indications are that the schools were still using almost all the same books for the same purposes as they had in the reign of Justinian’.

The primary purpose of secondary and higher education in Byzantium was to prepare students for positions in the Church or the Civil Service (Constantinides 1982: 1–2). Postholders were expected to be masters in Classical Greek prose composition, but in contrast to modern practice, the models were not restricted to Attic prose authors. Poeticisms were appreciated as advertising the writer’s learning. This applied not only to official compositions, but also to private letters, which were often intended for later publication. A good example from the High Byzantine Empire is the correspondence of Michael Choniates (ca. 1138–1222), the scholarly archbishop of Athens from ca. 1175 to 1205, when the Fourth Crusade reached the city and he lost both his see and—arguably worse for him—his library. Choniates was a student of Eustathius and is best known to classicists as the last person who demonstrably owned a copy of Callimachus’ *Aitia* and *Hecale*, from which he quoted extensively (Wilson 1983: 204–6). But his letters are also adorned with Pindaric excerpts, many of which seem to betray first-hand knowledge of the poems and to expect the same of his addressees. Thus, for instance, in *Epist.* 56.8–9 (ed. Kolovou 2001) Choniates calls his friend Kopsenos ‘a steadfast pillar of friendship, according to your Pindar’ (φιλίας ἀστραβῆς κίων, κατὰ τὸν σὸν Πίνδαρον), on the model of *Ol.* 2.81–2 Ἑκτορα ... Τροίας / ἄμαχον ἀστραβῆ κίονα (‘Hector, Troy’s invincible pillar of strength’). Since Choniates wrote at least half of his 181 letters after the loss of his books, only some of which he would later retrieve, one

¹² For a brief account of the ‘Dark Ages’ see Wilson (1983: 61–68). Despite the general downturn, two momentous changes took place towards the end of this period: (1) the introduction of paper from the Arabs as an alternative writing-material to papyrus and parchment, and (2) the development of the Byzantine minuscule script from the Late Antique chancery cursive. Their importance for the history of the book and the transmission of ancient texts can hardly be overestimated.

wonders whether he knew several *Epinicians* by heart. Overall the quotations, as indexed by Kolovou (2001: 378), show a clear preponderance of the *Olympians* and *Pythians* over the less commonly read *Nemeans* and *Isthmians*.¹³

Some 250 years before Choniates, in the first half of the tenth century, a secondary school-master, whose name is unknown, corresponded extensively with colleagues and former students, many of whom had acquired high positions in the Byzantine administration. Of this so-called Anonymous Professor 122 letters survive in a single tenth-century manuscript (British Library, Add. 36749). His style was described by the most recent editor as highly rhetorical, proficiently Atticist and replete with reminiscences of classical and patristic literature (Markopoulos 2000: 19–20). In his index Markopoulos (2000: 152) identifies four allusions to Pindar, but only one of them is of unambiguous provenance: Anon. Prof. *Epist.* 68.7–8 κότον ἐγκείμενον παλαιὸν τῇ σῇ καρδίᾳ φυλάττων ('nursing the old anger you have laid up in your heart') ~ Pi. *Pyth.* 8.8–9 ὅπότεν τις ἀμείλιχον / καρδίᾳ κότον ἐνελάσῃ ('whenever someone drives implacable anger into his heart'). Here *κότος* ('anger, grudge') is practically restricted to archaic and classical Greek poetry and does not occur elsewhere with *καρδία* ('heart'). The other three references to Pindar are less definitive.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is clear that Pindar was part of Byzantine education long before we have other witnesses or indeed extant manuscripts.

3.2 Manuscripts, teachers and scholars

Like most Ancient Greek works that have come down to us through the medieval manuscript tradition, Pindar's *Epinicians* were transcribed into minuscule in the ninth century, but no copies predating the late twelfth century survive. The manuscript tradition is split into two branches, which go back to different subarchetypes in majuscule. The Ambrosian branch is named after its single representative, codex Ambr. C 222 inf. (A), which has been re-dated by Mazzucchi (2003, 2004) from ca. 1280 to 1180–90, making it one of the two oldest extant Pindar manuscripts. The content of the book identifies it as an advanced school collection, containing as it does numerous works belonging to the higher syllabus. The first two plays of the Aeschylus triad, *Seven against Thebes* and *Persians*, are followed by the Aristophanes triad *Wealth*, *Clouds* and *Frogs* (plus the beginnings of *Knights* and *Birds*),

¹³ Like Eustathius (p. 6 with n. 5), Choniates will not have had direct access to Pindar's non-epinician poems. Kolovou (2001: 378) marks two of her four allusions to Pindaric fragments with an asterisk, indicating possible first-hand knowledge (cf. Kolovou 2001: 349). But her reasons are unclear, and both passages (Pi. fr. 77, 169a.1 Snell-Maehler) were widely quoted already in antiquity.

¹⁴ Anon. Prof. *Epist.* 83.1–2 δεξιός ... φίλος ('a suitable friend') + 102.13 φίλος ... δεξιός ~ *Nem.* 3.8 (ἀοιδὸν ...) δεξιωτάταν ὁπαδόν ('song ... the most suitable companion'), but *δεξιός* is commonly applied to persons in the sense 'suitable (for a task), clever' (LSJ s.v. IV). The likeliest source for the reference to Pelops' ivory shoulder in *Epist.* 101.7–8 is indeed Pi. *Ol.* 1.25–7, but the story was widespread (e.g. Ael. *Aristid. Or.* 21.10; Nonn. *Dion.* 18.24–30), and the Professor could have known it from elsewhere.

Lycophron's *Alexandra*, the pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield of Heracles*, the first twelve of Pindar's *Olympian Odes*, Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Oppian's *Halieutica*, Dionysius Periegetes, and Theocritus' *Idylls*. Many of the texts, including Pindar, are also accompanied by scholia.

The second branch of the Pindar tradition divides further into two manuscript families. One transmits all four books of *Epinicians*. It is thus called the 'complete recension', although only one heavily contaminated codex of the early fourteenth century now comes close to completeness. The other family or 'abbreviated recension' comprises only the *Olympians* and *Pythians*, which are already represented by more than twice as many papyri as the *Ne-means* and *Isthmians* (cf. §2.2 end). One may suggest that this early popularity of the *Olympians* and *Pythians*, due presumably to the prestige of the Olympian and Pythian games, the poetic grandeur of many of the odes and their position at the beginning of the corpus of *Epinicians* as compiled by the Alexandrians, led to the gradual formation of a school 'selection', comparable to the Byzantine triads of the dramatists.

Three manuscripts merit closer attention because they yield important information about Byzantine school practice in different historical and cultural contexts. They are the codices Vat. gr. 1312 (B) of ca. 1180 (the oldest medieval Pindar manuscript together with the redated Ambr. C 222 inf.), Gotting. philol. 29 (G) and Vindob. suppl. gr. 64 (Vi), which are both from the later thirteenth century (ca. 1260–1280).¹⁵ The three manuscripts are not closely related. G and Vi belong to different branches of the 'abbreviated recension', whereas B is a mutilated exponent of the 'complete recension'. Let us first consider B and G, which share an extraordinary feature: prosodical annotation to an extent that is unparalleled in Greek manuscripts before the early fourteenth century, when Demetrius Triclinius raised metrical studies to the highest level since the end of antiquity.

I have offered a detailed analysis of the prosodical annotation in B and G in Fries (2017).¹⁶ In both manuscripts it is largely by the first hand and so presumably copied from the respective exemplars (cf. Fries 2017: 763). But the use of the quantity marks differs from that in papyri in an important way. They not only indicate the length of the ambiguous vowels alpha, iota and upsilon (cf. §2.2), although this remains a common application, but also point out metrical licences such as metrical lengthening, correption (the shortening of a long

¹⁵ For descriptions of the manuscripts see Irigoin (1952: 157–65 (B), 170–6 (G), 216–19 (Vi, called 'manuscript of Germanos', after an otherwise unknown scholar whose notes it transmits)) and Fries (2017: 749–50 (B, G), 766–7 (Vi)). Digital images of B are available at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1312.pt.1 and https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1312.pt.2; for Vi see https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_6052604&order=1&view=SINGLE. (Accessed 2 December 2025.) No images of G, which is in a very bad state of conservation, have been published yet.

¹⁶ Parts of the description and conclusions are reproduced here *verbatim* or with only slight modification, but new information has been added where appropriate. In particular, I correct my assumption that Eustathius' commentary on Pindar was never written (Fries 2017: 764) in favour of its early loss, since it now appears that Eustathius referred to its content several times in his later writings.

vowel, diphthong or triphthong before another vowel), and the variable prosodic effects of *muta cum liquida* (a plosive (π β φ; τ δ θ; κ γ χ), followed by a liquid (λ ρ) or nasal (μ ν)). In other words, the prosody marks were for metrical scansion, as well as aids to the reader in cases of graphic ambiguity. The latter continued to be a concern in minuscule even after the iota subscript became widespread in the twelfth century, since this only helped to distinguish between ‘proper’ and ‘improper’ α-diphthongs, that is αῖ (= αῖ) as against αῖ.

The two uses of prosody marks in B are well illustrated by Pi. Ol. 13.10 (fol. 84r) Ὑβριν, Κόρου ματέρᾱ θρασύμυθον (‘Hybris, the bold-tongued mother of Excess’). Here ματέρᾱ carries a longum over both alphas. But while the first longum indicates the quantity of the vowel in the ancient manner, marking it as a Doric alpha (for Ionic-Attic μητέρα), the second one signals that the final alpha is long by position before θρασύμυθον, beginning with *muta cum liquida* (θρ-). However, the passage also shows that not every vowel or syllable in need of disambiguation is marked in B. In the following two lines, Ol. 13.11–12 (fol. 84v) ἔχω καλά τοι (τε B² cett. recte) φράσαι, τόλμα τέ μοι / εὐθεῖα γλῶσσαν ὀρνύει λέγειν (‘I have noble things to say, and straightforward courage compels my tongue to speak’), readers learning to cope with Pindar’s dialect and metre would have benefitted from a longum over the alpha of τόλμα (to distinguish the Doric form from Attic-Ionic τόλμη) and from an indication that in the sequence εὐθεῖα γλῶσσαν the *muta cum liquida* γλ- does not render the final alpha of εὐθεῖα long by position. A breve was indeed added over that vowel, but by a later hand, which may be identical with that of a metrically competent fourteenth-century corrector (Fries 2017: 760 with n. 43). The same scribe also put a breve over the second alpha of the neuter plural καλά and corrected τοι to τέ above the line, in line with all other text witnesses.

The prosodical annotation in G is also inconsistent and much less sophisticated. All the prosody marks in this manuscript are apparently by the scribe of the main text, who also acted as the rubricator. But while the vast majority of the longa were added in the latter’s bright purple ink, the far fewer brevia are in the dark brown of the main script, which may suggest that they were already in the exemplar (cf. Fries 2017: 763). The signs mark naturally long and short vowels (in accordance with the ancient custom), some cases of short vowels that are long by position (e.g. Pyth. 1.66 ἄνθησεν) and *muta cum liquida* making position or not (e.g. Ol. 13.30 πενταέθλω (actually trisyllabic πενταέθλω), Ol. 13.20 μέτρα (sic)). As demonstrated by Ol. 13.30, G has more prosodical errors than B, and three phenomena marked in B remain unrecognised: metrical lengthening, correction and the rather recon-dite licence of final nu, sigma and rho making position.

What, then, can we deduce from these observations? In Fries (2017) I argued that no systematic metrical analysis can have been intended in either B or G, but that the evidence is consistent with the idea that, as in antiquity, the prosodical annotation was for guidance

in the rhythmical reading aloud of Pindar's odes, most probably in an educational context. Both books display other indications of being scholarly productions, which probably served several generations of schoolmasters: extensive scholia, supplementary notes in hands of different periods, traces of heavy use and, in the case of G, the presence of two other advanced school texts, Nicander's *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca*.

Unfortunately, we have very little direct information on Byzantine teaching practices. But given the high price of books throughout the period (Wilson 1975: 3–4; Mango 1975: 38–39), one assumes that often the master read out the set texts from his copy, asking the students to repeat what they have heard and perhaps to commit it to memory or writing (Hunger 1989: 76–77; Markopoulos 2008: 788). As to the metrical factor, the *Technē Grammatikē* (*Art of Grammar*) attributed to Dionysius Thrax (§1 *Gramm. Graec.* I.1 5.4–5) names 'accurate reading according to prosody' (ἀνάγνωσις ἐντριβὴς κατὰ προσωδίαν) as the 'first part' of grammar (cf. §2 *Gramm. Graec.* I.1 6.5–13). By προσωδία ('prosody'; literally 'singing along') ancient scholars from the second century AD on meant the principal aspects of pronunciation, that is accentuation, breathings and vowel quantity (Probert 2015: 924–27). But in a subsequent section, entitled Περὶ συλλαβῆς ('About the Syllable'), 'Dionysius' treats the quantity not just of vowels, but of syllables, in essentially the same way as modern metricians discuss 'prosody'. On this basis his probably seventh-century commentator Stephanus (*Gramm. Graec.* I.3 204.25–8) advocated metrical instruction as a part of elementary education:

φασί τινες οὐ καλῶς ἐν εἰσαγωγικῇ τέχνῃ περὶ μέτρων γράψαι τὸν Διονύσιον· τὸ γὰρ περὶ συλλαβῶν περὶ μέτρων ἐστίν. εὖ δὲ πεποιήκεν ὁ τεχνικός, ὥς ἂν ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡλικίας συνήθειαν ἔχοιεν οἱ παῖδες ποδίζειν τοὺς στίχους.

Some say that Dionysius did not well to write about metrics in an introductory textbook; for the study of syllables is part of metrics. But the grammarian has done the right thing, so that children get used to scanning the verses from the youngest age.

We do not know to what extent Stephanus' advice was heeded. From the eighth century we still have evidence for the teaching of the main stichic verses (Ignatius, *Vita Tarasii* 423 ed. Heikel 1891), and even the Anonymous Professor in the tenth century could ask his students to compose iambs in honour of a prominent citizen (*Epist.* 94.5–8). But generally interest in metrics was low between the end of antiquity and the beginning of the twelfth century.

Our codex B is likely to be a product of the first renaissance of metrical and indeed Pindaric studies, which began with Isaac Tzetzes, brother of the prolific scholar-teacher John Tzetzes (ca. 1110–1180). Isaac Tzetzes, who died young in 1138, is the author of a verse treatise

on Pindaric metre, which covers the *Olympians* and the *First Pythian* (ed. Drachmann 1925; analysis by Irigoien 1958: 57–72). This largely depends on Hephaestion's *Encheiridion* (*Handbook on Metre*), produced in the second century AD, its scholia and the ancient metrical scholia to Pindar, but it also displays genuine understanding of the subject. Isaac Tzetzes made numerous competent corrections to the ancient material (see Irigoien 1958: 69–72) and supplied his own analysis of *Olympian* 1, which in the text available to him lacked the metrical scholia (cf. Tzetzes, *Comm. in Metr. Pind.* p. 27.14–17 Drachmann). Both these tasks required the ability to scan, and he may have annotated his personal copy with *longa* and *brevia* in the way we have seen in B and G. Some two centuries later the greatest Byzantine metrician, Demetrius Triclinius (ca. 1280–1335), did the same with his texts, using an extended scanning system of his own invention.

From somewhat closer to the date of B we have Eustathius' *Preface to Pindar*, a lengthy introduction to a commentary on the *Epinicians* (ed. Kambylis 1991b), written probably before 1160, when Eustathius (ca. 1110–1195), later archbishop of Thessalonica, was still professor of rhetoric in Constantinople and deacon at the Hagia Sophia (Kambylis 1991a: 6–8). The commentary itself has not survived, but is alluded to several times in the *Preface* and Eustathius' later commentaries on Homer and Dionysius Periegetes (Kambylis 1991a: 9–13, 19–22; Neumann-Hartmann 2019: 547–50). At the end of the *Preface* (38.4 Kambylis) Eustathius declares that the purpose of his commentary was to collect 'from Pindar's victory odes what is useful knowledge for all who wish to write or, in general, to understand' (τὰ ἐκ τῶν Πινδαρικών ἐπινικίων ... χρήσιμα εἰς εἶδῃσιν εὐχρηστον τοῖς καὶ γράφειν καὶ ἄλλως δέ πως νοεῖν ἐθέλουσι). This statement and the fact that Eustathius discussed not only the *Olympians* and *Pythians*, but also the *Nemeans* and *Isthmians*, suggest that the commentary was not primarily intended for secondary education—as Eustathius' enormous extant commentaries on Homer and Dionysius Periegetes certainly were not. Rather it was a product of his rhetorical teaching, the tertiary level of ancient and Byzantine education, and aimed at aspiring intellectuals who wanted to adorn their writings and conversation with poetic flourishes and other pieces of learning gleaned from Pindar. We have seen the practice in the letters of Eustathius' student Michael Choniates (§3.1).

It is possible, therefore, to connect the two statements in the *Preface* on the effect of Pindar's poetry *when heard* with an educational milieu:

Eust. *Prooem. in Pind.* 9.4 Kambylis

καὶ ὡς ἱλαρύνει μὲν ἀκοὴν οἷς καὶ ξυνετὰ λαλεῖ καὶ πρὸς γλύκασμα ... καὶ λέξεις
δὲ τὰς ἐκ τριόδων ἀπορρίπτων παρεμπλέκει που καὶ ἅς ὁ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀκούσας
πάνυ ἐπαπορεῖ·

And that he pleases the sense of hearing of those for whom he speaks intelligibly and sweetly ... and rejecting colloquial language, he also in places interweaves words which he who has heard the beginning doubts entirely.

Eust. *Prooem. in Pind.* 15 Kambylis

καὶ ἡ καινότης δὲ τῶν διαλέκτων, δι' ἧς καινοφραδὴς ἐστὶ καὶ ἀλλόκοτος εἰς
ἀκοὴν, ἡ τοῦ βιβλίου δηλώσει ἀνάγνωσις.

And the novelty of the dialects, on account of which he is innovative and unusual to the sense of hearing, will be revealed by the reading of the book.

With 'the book' in the second passage Eustathius meant his own work, that is the *Preface* together with the commentary (Kambylis 1991a: 11–12). In the *Preface* he illustrates and analyses Pindar's use of dialects, focusing on their obscurity. But their first effect is on the ears, and it is tempting to speculate that the 'novelty of the dialects' (ἡ καινότης ... τῶν διαλέκτων) would be even more impressive if the words were pronounced with something approaching their original rhythm. A learned and aspiring twelfth-century schoolmaster may have attempted to teach his students just that. For him a Pindar copy like B would have been the ideal text-book—and a treasure to pass on to interested successors.

Codex G shows even stronger signs of coming from such a practical background. Its prosodical annotation is less ambitious than that of B, but it stands out clearly—even in dimmer light—by its purple colour, which in over 700 years has lost little of its brilliance. Moreover, it seems that in G popular odes, such as *Pythian* 1, which has always been among the most widely-read *Epinicians*, or *Pythian* 11, which is short and tells the well-known myth of the House of Atreus, are marked up more extensively. This again fits best into a pedagogical context. Indeed Colomo (2017: 116) suggests that the heavy prosodical annotation in some of the prose papyri she examined did not necessarily extend to the entire scroll. Teachers or students may have treated individual passages for practice in the classroom.

The date of G is significant too. Irigoin (1952: 172) placed it in the middle of the thirteenth century, whereas Nigel Wilson (*private communication*) is inclined towards ca. 1280, after palaeographical comparison with dated manuscripts from the last quarter of the thirteenth century. In any case, the codex comes from a politically, economically and culturally turbulent period. After the sack of Byzantium by the Crusaders in 1204, the Imperial court

was moved to Nicaea, until the capital was regained in 1261. During the exile two emperors in particular, John III Vatatzes (r. 1222–1254) and his successor Theodore II Lascaris (r. 1254–1258), took an interest in keeping the school system going as well as possible (Constantinides 1982: 9–27; cf. Wilson 1983: 219–25). The most prominent scholar of the time, Nicephorus Blemmydes (ca. 1197–1272), received a full liberal education; and although his autobiography (ed. Munitiz 1984) is not too precise about his classical reading—it only mentions ‘the books of Homer and the other poets’ (*Curr. Vit.* 4; cf. Constantinides 1982: 7–8; Wilson 1983: 222)—Blemmydes is likely to have read Pindar, unless no copy was available.

Lack of books was a serious problem during the Nicaean Empire. Efforts were made to retrieve those which had been scattered after the sack of Byzantium—Blemmydes himself was sent on such a mission (Constantinides 1982: 12–13, 134), and Michael Choniates tried to recover his own library (cf. § 3.1)—but many books were lost forever and had to be reproduced, if exemplars could be found (for classical and patristic texts still read before 1204, but not available afterwards, see Wilson 1967: 55, 61–62 with n. 26). This zeal for cultural restoration is probably the reason why several important manuscripts of classical authors date to the second half of the thirteenth century. Apart from G, there are the Pindar codices Vi (below) and Vat. gr. 121 (T), and also, for example, the invaluable Vat. gr. 909 of Euripides, which alone transmits all nine ‘Selection’ plays (except *Bacchae*) with extensive old scholia.

The limited availability of writing material, paper as well as parchment, was another problem. Parchment had always been in fairly short supply—especially during Lent—and correspondingly expensive, but the situation seems to have been particularly bad in the thirteenth century, given the number of surviving palimpsests. Contrary to common belief, Christian texts often fell victim to palimpsesting, despite official condemnation of the practice by the Church. They were covered with the standard Greek grammars, but also with literary school texts, like Homer or the Sophoclean triad (Wilson 1975: 1–3; Constantinides 1982: 135–36; for a discussion of relevant manuscripts see Gamillscheg 1977).

Codex Vi of ca. 1260 to 1280 almost certainly belongs to that group (Gamillscheg 1977: 211 n. 5). Here Pindar’s *Olympians* and *Pythians* (mutilated after *Pyth.* 5.55) are written over a tenth-century *sticherarion*, a hymn book for the Orthodox morning and evening prayer. The parchment is of very high quality, but shows signs of heavy wear partially predating its re-use: darkened edges, holes and cuttings, and illuminations that could not be fully removed. It was not, therefore, the best palimpsest parchment, but the text and scholia of Pindar are written over and around these blemishes with great care. This care also includes minute attention paid to the ephelcystic nu and additional punctuation intended to facilitate reading—though no prosody marks. All this suggests a school book, produced during a

period of restoration when the demand for educational texts was greater than the supply of suitable raw material.

4. Outlook and conclusion

If I end at this point, this is for lack of space and not because the following two centuries have nothing of interest to offer. On the contrary, in 1280 (the putative *terminus ante quem* for G and Vi) we are on the eve of the Palaeologan renaissance, which in classical studies was defined by the activities of four eminent scholar-teachers: Maximos Planudes (ca. 1255–1305), Manuel Moschopoulos (born ca. 1265), Thomas Magister (ca. 1275–1346) and Demetrius Triclinius (ca. 1280–1335) (see [Wilson 1983: 230–41, 244–56](#) for brief accounts of their lives and work). All of them produced editions with commentaries of the poets usually read in schools, including Pindar. The work of Moschopoulos (see [Irigoin 1952: 270–86](#)), which was restricted to the *Olympians* but was soon extended, perhaps by one of his students, to the *Pythians* and the first three *Nemeans* (see [Fries 2023: 56–59](#)), became particularly influential. Traces of it are found in over sixty of the some two hundred extant Pindar manuscripts. By contrast, the more scholarly, and metrically advanced, edition of Triclinius ([Irigoin 1952: 331–64](#); [Fries 2023: 54–56](#)), who built on his predecessors, but alone covered all four books of *Epinicians*, enjoyed less immediate success—a sign that book production continued to be influenced by the school system. This effect also lasted throughout the Italian Renaissance, when the readership of Greek literature increasingly shifted to non-native speakers, educated in the Western tradition. Many of the first printed editions of Greek texts were of school authors, and it is probably no coincidence that the *editio princeps* of Pindar, published in Venice by Aldus Manutius in 1513, came with three other texts of the extended syllabus: Callimachus’ *Hymns* (first published in Florence in 1494), Dionysius Periegetes and Lycophron’s *Alexandra*. The Aldine did not, however, become the printed vulgate of Pindar. This honour rightly went to the edition, with ancient scholia, of Zachary Callierges, which appeared in Rome in 1515 and was only superseded by the magisterial editions of Heyne (1798) and Boeckh (1811).¹⁷

By tracing Pindar’s role as a school author from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire and beyond, I hope to have provided some insight into an education system which remained in place for well over a millennium and which in some important aspects of teaching literature did not differ markedly from modern practice. It has become clear how much the study of the subject relies on papyri and medieval manuscripts and, conversely, how much the transmission of the Greek classics depended on their use in schools. The unbroken pop-

¹⁷ On the first two printed editions of Pindar see briefly Fries (2023: 63–65). The Callierges Pindar has been extensively studied by Fogelmark (2015).

ularity of Pindar's *Epinicians*, especially the *Olympians* and *Pythians*, ensured their survival on a broad manuscript basis—even if one would like to have earlier codices and more of the Ambrosian branch—and the surprisingly good state of the difficult text. Contrast, for example, the widespread corruption and even loss of text in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy and *Supplices*, which did not belong to the Aeschylean school triad. Finally, we have brought into the limelight the roots of the two most important cultural developments of the Greek Middle Ages. The scholarly revival of the ninth century would have been impossible, had the schools not maintained a certain standard during the 'Dark Ages'. And if one considers the prosodically annotated Pindar codices B and G in their wider context, it is evident that the Palaeologan renaissance, and especially the high metrical expertise of Demetrius Triklinius, did not come out of nowhere.

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