

## Scenes from a Marriage: About Aphrodite ἀργυρόπεζα and ‘Wedding Metaphors’ in Pindar’s *Pythian* 9

Marriage is currently acknowledged as the *Leitmotiv* of Pindar’s *Pythian* 9 (Carson 1982, Gentili 2006:239f.): the Epinician opens with a wedding (Apollo and Cyrene, vv. 6–13) and closes with a wooing scene (Alexidamus and his bride, vv. 114–25), in ring-composition. The paper examines thematic aspects and phraseological patterns of the marriage scenes in the Epinician, which might be inherited, and has a twofold scope: (1) to explain the epithet ἀργυρόπεζα (of Aphrodite, v. 9) in the light of Vedic and Latvian traditions about silver-colored wedding goddesses and divine brides, (2) to provide phraseological comparanda for peculiar Pindaric collocations which occur in the central part of the ode.

(1) Aphrodite ἀργυρόπεζα ‘silver-footed’ welcomes Apollo and his bride Cyrene to her new home:

Pind. *Pyth.* 9.9f.

ὑπέδεκτο δ’ ἀργυρόπεζ’ Ἀφροδίτα

Δάλιον ξεῖνον

“Silver-footed Aphrodite welcomed her Delian-born guest” (Race)

Although the comparison with ἀργυρόπεζα Θέτις (Hom.+) may suggest that ἀργυρόπεζ’ Ἀφροδίτα is a ‘sea-goddess’ (Gildersleeve 1885 s.v. ἀργυρόπεζα), the association of Aphrodite and [SILVER] may be inherited. The epithet Ἀργυρῆς ‘silver-colored’ (of Aphrodite: Ath., Steph. Byz., Hdn.), which matches Ved. *árjunī-* ‘silver-colored’ (cf. Janda 2006, Kölligan 2007:120), may in fact reflect a characteristic Aphrodite shares with Uṣas and with the Latvian sun-goddess Saule. In particular, all three goddesses are ‘silver-colored’ and closely related to weddings: while Saule dresses in silver in wooing scenes (cf. *LD* 34014 *tec, Saulīte, sudrabota* | *nu jāj tavi precenieki* “cours, Saule, argentée, / voici qu’arrivent tes prétendants”, Jonval 1929, 138), the role of Aphrodite ἀργυρόπεζα in *Pythian* 9 strikingly resembles that of the two Arjunī (maybe Uṣas and Rātrī) in RV X 85.13 (*sūryāyā vahatūh prāgāt* [...] *árjunyoḥ páry uhyate* “Sūryā’s wedding proceeded [...] in the two Arjunī’s she is conveyed [to her new home]”, Jamison – Brereton): these divine figures seem to be connected with the welcome of the new bride to the new home.

(2) The metaphorical use of the terms ἄγω ‘to lead the bride’ and μείγνυμι ‘to join [someone] to [someone]’ in the central part of the ode (vv. 71–5) can be explained in a comparative perspective, namely on the strength of two striking parallels:

(a) Telesikrates (Pindar’s patron) ‘leads’ his glory in the same way as Alexidamus leads his bride, cf. v. 75 *δόξαν ἱμερτῶν ἀγαγόντ’ ἀπὸ Δελφῶν* “Telesikrates, who has led desired fame from Delphi” and vv. 122f. *παρθένον* [...] *ἄγειν ἱππευτῶν Νομάδων δι’ ὄμιλον* “(Alexidamus) led [...] the maiden through the throng of Nomad horsemen”. The collocation [to LEAD – GLORY] parallels Ved. [*śrávas-* – *VAH*] (RV VI 65.3), while [to DESIRE – GLORY], which underlies the MN Κλεήρατος, Ἐρασικλῆς, Ἐρατοκλῆς, may semantically match Ved. *śráva ichámānah* (RV VI 58.3+).

(b) Telesikrates ‘mixes’, i.e. ‘joins’, the city of Cyrene to good fortune as the marriage joins Apollo to his bride Cyrene: vv. 71f. *νῦν ἀγαθέα Καρνεϊάδα* || *υἱὸς εὐθαλεῖ συνέμειξε τύχη* “the son of Carneiadas has joined her (sc. the city of Cyrene) to flourishing good fortune” and v. 13 *ξυθὸν ἀρμόζοισα θεῶ τε γάμον* | *μυθθέντα κοῦρα* “joining together in a marriage of mutual consent the god and the maiden”. The figurative use of [(to) MIX] for the union of animated (i.e. ‘to mingle with someone’) and for (non-)animated beings (i.e. ‘to mix [someone or something] with something’) in the same literary context may find a Vedic parallel: in RV X 95.1 ‘to mix words (i.e. to exchange words)’ (cf. *vácāmsi miśrā kṣhnavāvahi nú* “[Purūravas:] let us two now exchange words”) seems to echo the image of the mortal mingling with the immortals (RV 95.9ab *yád āsu mārto amṛtāsu nispṛk / sám kṣhñbhīh krátubhir ná pṛñkté* “when a mortal, going to caress immortal women, mingles [with their bodies] amid their cries ...”).

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of the marriage scenes in Pindar’s *Pythian* 9 allows to identify some striking parallels in other Indo-European poetic traditions: (1) the connection between silver-colored goddesses and wedding is attested in Greek, Vedic and Latvian texts, (2) some Vedic comparanda can be identified at a phraseological and stylistic level for isolated Pindaric collocations.

### References

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