

Two Sides of the Same Coin: The Ideology of Gelon's Innovative Syracusan Tetradrachm

Virginia M. Lewis

IN 2007 A PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED silver tetradrachm was identified as the first issue minted by the Deinomenid ruler Gelon in 485 after his rise to power in Syracuse.¹ This “remarkable addition to our knowledge of the coinage of Syracuse” is particularly exceptional because it departs from the usual imagery found on the Syracusan tetradrachm in this period.² The obverse of the newly-discovered tetradrachm displays the head of a river god, and the reverse has two barley grains as the main type (*fig. 1*). Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss identify the tetra-



*Figure 1: Syracusan Tetradrachm, silver, 480s-470s BCE
(auctioned in Triton XV on 3 January 2012)*

¹ C. Arnold-Biucchi and A.-P. Weiss, “The River God Alpheios on the First Tetradrachm Issue of Gelon at Syracuse,” *NumAntCl* 36 (2007) 59–74 [cited hereafter by authors’ names].

² Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss 68.

drachm and explain its iconography relative to other Syracusan and Sicilian coinage of the period. After evaluating their arguments, this paper will explore some of the political and ideological implications brought to light by the tetradrachm. It will then argue that, when read within a framework of contemporary Deinomenid ideology, the coin should be understood as an early example of the Deinomenids' repurposing of traditional Syracusan civic imagery to promote their new rule in the city and to expand Syracusan influence throughout Sicily.

The first section provides an overview of the imagery on the coin and considers evidence for its dating and types and then discusses the coin's relationship to Syracusan tetradrachms of the more common Arethusa/quadrige type. The second section proposes that when the types on Gelon's innovative issue are read together, it becomes clear that the Deinomenid tyrant recasts familiar Syracusan types to celebrate jointly his Olympic victory in 488, his rise to power in Syracuse, and his ambitions to extend that power more broadly across the island of Sicily. I argue, first, that replacing the Syracusan Arethusa with the Olympic Alpheios celebrates both the Sicilian city and its ruler's athletic victory at Olympia. Literary and material sources are then examined to show that the worship of Demeter and Persephone was well established in Syracuse by the end of the sixth century and that the Deinomenid tyrants strategically associated themselves with the goddesses to promote their power in the city. The paper concludes by returning to the main thesis that Gelon's tetradrachm should be read as an early example of this style of Deinomenid ideology, proposing that this coin was particularly effective because its ideological statement was rooted in a familiar representational system of Syracusan civic imagery.

1. *The date and iconography of the tetradrachm*

The newly-discovered issue departs from the more usual Syracusan tetradrachm types. These types, which appear on the city's earliest coinage at the end of the sixth century and persisted through the fifth century and beyond, have the four-horse chariot on the obverse and the head of Arethusa on the reverse (*fig. 2*). By contrast, this tetradrachm displays two barley grains

on the reverse inside of an incuse square, along with the inscription ΣΥΡΑ to designate the city of Syracuse. On the obverse appears a male head with a long wavy beard, two horns above his temples, and “non-human” ears.



Figure 2: Syracusan tetradrachm, silver, ca. 510–500 BCE
(ANS 1941.153.883)

Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss (60–61, 65–67) date the issue to 485 on the basis of the letter forms and style of the inscription, arguing that this was the very first issue struck by the Deinomenid tyrant Gelon. Based on relative chronology, they place the coin at the very beginning of Boehringer’s Group II, which was issued during Gelon’s reign in Syracuse. They argue, first, that the abbreviated style of the ethnic resembles that on Boehringer’s Group I Series 2, which probably ends just before Gelon takes over Syracuse in 485;³ on Series 2, the reverses have no inscription, while the obverses display the abbreviated ethnic with the earlier three-barred sigma. Group II Series 3 begins with Boehringer’s coin no. 34, on which the abbreviated ethnic

³ On the dating of the end of Series 2 and the beginning of Series 3 see N. K. Rutter, “The Coinage of Syracuse in the Early Fifth Century B.C.,” in R. Ashton et al. (eds.), *Studies in Greek Numismatics in Memory of Martin Jessop Price* (London 1998) 307–315. See also D. Knoepfler, “La chronologie du monnayage de Syracuse sous les Deinoménides,” *SNR* 71 (1992) 5–45, esp. 11; C. Boehringer, *Die Münzen von Syrakus* (Berlin 1929) plates 1–3.

appears. Now, however, the ethnic has the same four-barred sigma that appears on the newly-discovered tetradrachm.⁴ On Series 3, the abbreviated inscription lies in exergue below the chariot on the obverse, while the reverse has the full inscription (ΣΥΡΑΦΟΣΙΟΝ), with four-barred sigma and qoppa. Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss propose that the new tetradrachm should be dated to just before Group II no. 34, as its four-barred sigma innovates in form from the earlier three-barred form in Series 2, but it does not yet have the full ethnic that appears in Series 3. They observe, furthermore, that on the new coin the male head on the obverse fills the entire flan as does the head of Arethusa for the first time on no. 34. Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss thus conclude that the coin was minted in 485 as Gelon's very first Syracusan issue.

Although a date of 485 is appealing because it aligns with Gelon's arrival in Syracuse, some caution should be exercised before accepting this date. The arguments of Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss take into account both the letter forms of the ethnic and the type of the male head. However, one could object that there need not necessarily be a clean chronological break between letter forms; it is possible that the three- and four-barred sigma overlapped for a time. In this case, the tetradrachm may belong to a slightly earlier period. Conversely, the enlarged head of Arethusa on no. 34 could have influenced the enlargement of the male head on the new coin rather than the other way around, which would allow the new tetradrachm to have been issued slightly later. Whether or not the coin can be placed precisely in 485, it shares aspects of style and letter forms with Syracusan tetradrachms minted during Gelon's rule.⁵ Although

⁴ Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss 60–61.

⁵ The absolute dating of Syracusan issues depends both on the dates of coin hoards, on the one hand, and also on changes in Syracusan letter forms. Boehringer, Knoepfler, and Rutter have scrupulously examined the change from qoppa, which appears on Syracusan coinage up through Group II Series 4, to kappa, which first appears in Group II Series 4, but replaces qoppa thereafter. See C. Boehringer, "Hieron's Aitna und das Hieroneion,"

the possibility that the coin was minted just before Gelon came to power cannot be entirely ruled out,⁶ the available evidence suggests that it was likely issued under his tyranny in Syracuse during the period from 485 to 478, and possibly even in 485 as Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss propose.

While the identification of the barley grains on the reverse of the coin is relatively straightforward, the bearded male on the obverse presents a greater challenge to interpreters. He is represented with a long, wavy beard, two horns above his temples, and non-human ears. The figure lacks an inscription, which would permit a more secure identification, but Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss have proposed that he is the river god Alpheios. They first argue that the horns designate the figure as a river god. Then, by analogy with other Sicilian poleis (and Gela in particular) that portray river gods who are linked to the city's foundation, they suggest that Syracuse, too, may have featured a river god who was associated with Syracusan ideology. Finally, they identify the river god as Alpheios because of the myth preserved in literary sources that connects the Olympic river to the Syracusan spring of Arethusa.⁷ Although the identification of this river god as Alpheios fits well in a Syracusan context in

JNR 18 (1968) 91–95; Knoepfler, *SNR* 71 (1992) 12–27; Rutter, in *Studies ... Price* 311. The shift can be dated to the period 478–474 on the basis of two Deinomenid inscriptions: a dedicatory inscription at Delphi commissioned by Gelon in 479–478 to celebrate his victory at Himera, which uses qoppa, and the inscription on a helmet dedicated by Hieron at Olympia to celebrate his victory in the Battle of Cumae in 474, which has kappa. Rutter (311–312) argues convincingly that Boehringer's Group II Series 4 must, then, date between 485 and 478, and that Group II was issued after 485 during Gelon's reign in Syracuse. This further supports a date during the earlier part of Gelon's tyranny in Syracuse for the new tetradrachm.

⁶ If the coin was issued just before Gelon came to power, then Hieron's use of similar civic symbolism in literary sources to promote his rule in the 470s and 460s is drawing on a longstanding and rich Syracusan tradition instead of representing part of a Deinomenid-driven ideological program (on which see below). In either case, the coin is a striking emblem of Syracusan civic ideology.

⁷ Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss 61–64.

the first half of the fifth century, other possible candidates must be considered seriously before settling on a tentative identification.

Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss first consider the possibility that the bearded male could be the river god Acheloos since it has been proposed that all representations of the man-headed bull represent this deity. However, following the general consensus among numismatists that river gods on coins often represent local streams, they conclude that the one on the tetradrachm, too, is more likely local. If that is so, the search for his identity narrows, but there are still at least two possibilities.

One is that the bearded, horned male on the tetradrachm could represent the river god Gelas whose image Gelon transported from Gela when he moved to Syracuse. The Deinomenid family first rose to power in Gela, where they had held an ancestral priesthood of Demeter and Persephone for several generations, according to Herodotus (7.153). The eldest of the four sons of Deinomenes, Gelon was the first of the brothers to become tyrant of Gela. After serving as general under Hippokrates who preceded him as tyrant, Gelon became the regent for the tyrant's sons upon their father's death in 491. Instead of preserving the rule for his charges, he made himself tyrant. At this time, he also minted the city's first coinage, on which the river god Gelas was portrayed as a bearded, man-faced bull (*fig. 3*).

After a successful campaign in eastern Sicily, Gelon saw an opportunity to expand his territory when *stasis* arose in Syracuse in 485 between the aristocratic *gamoroi* and the proponents of democracy. Taking the side of the landowning class, Gelon restored the *gamoroi* to Syracuse, but then immediately seized power in the city for himself.⁸ With his energy directed toward Syracuse, Gelon granted the rule of Gela to his brother Hieron, who would later himself become the tyrant of Syracuse (Hdt. 7.154–155).

⁸ On the *gamoroi* see N. Luraghi, *Tirannidi arcaiche in Sicilia e Magna Grecia. Da Panezio di Leontini alla caduta del Dinomenidi* (Florence 1994) 282–287.



Figure 3: Geloan didrachm, silver, ca. 490 (ANS 1997.9.2)

When he took control of Syracuse and named himself tyrant, might Gelon have stamped the river god Gelas on a Syracusan tetradrachm as a symbol of the Deinomenid regime? Although this cannot be entirely ruled out, it is unlikely. Gelon's installation of Hieron as tyrant of Gela suggests that ruling Gela was a less desirable post than the tyranny in Syracuse.⁹ In light of this, a nod to the eponymous god of Gela on Syracusan coinage would honor too highly the city he handed over to his brother in contrast with his own city. The river god on Gelon's Syracusan tetradrachm is thus more likely a statement of the tyrant's newly-acquired power that celebrates his more prestigious position than it is a symbol that recalls his former reign at Gela.

If the river god Gelas seems an unlikely emblem for Gelon's new city, then perhaps the new tyrant instead sought out a local Syracusan river god to portray on the coinage. In the periods before and during the reign of the Deinomenids, the acropolis and city center of Syracuse were located on the island of Ortygia. The small island contains no rivers, but there is a local river, the

⁹ Herodotus (7.156.1) says that "after he took Syracuse, he made less of an account of ruling over Gela, having turned it over to his brother Hieron. But he ruled Syracuse and Syracuse was everything to him," ὁ δὲ ἐπεῖτε παρέλαβε τὰς Συρηκούσας, Γέλῃς μὲν ἐπικρατέων λόγον ἐλάσσω ἐποιέετο, ἐπιτρέψας αὐτὴν Ἰέρωνι ἀδελφεῷ ἑωυτοῦ, ὁ δὲ τὰς Συρηκούσας ἐκράτυνε, καὶ ἦσάν οἱ πάντα αἱ Συρήκουσαι.

Anapos, whose mouth is on the Syracusan mainland, just across the Great Harbor from Ortygia. Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss (63) note that Anapos appears on Syracusan coinage later, in the last quarter of the fifth century. Against this identification, however, they argue that although Anapos is associated with the later city when he appears on its coinage, he does not seem to have any known significance for Syracuse earlier in the fifth century. Anapos, furthermore, is represented only as an unbearded youth, not as a bearded figure, and, unlike other river deities on coins (e.g. Gelas on the coins of Gela), Anapos plays no role (that we know of) in the city's foundation myth. Even though there is no earlier or contemporary evidence for Anapos in Syracuse to strengthen the case that the river god on the new tetradrachm is he, the possibility that the river god is an early representation of Anapos cannot be completely ruled out unless more evidence comes to light.

Finally, we return to Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss' identification of the river god as Alpheios, on the basis of the mythic link between him and Arethusa, the spring nymph of Ortygia. Although the fullest narrative account of the connection between Arethusa and Alpheios is preserved only by later writers,¹⁰ Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss cite the connection between the Iamid ancestor of the victor Hagesias whom Pindar calls a "fellow-founder" of Syracuse and the river Alpheios as early evidence for the association: in Pindar's *Olympian* 6.57–58, Iamos wades into the Alpheios when he prays to Poseidon and Apollo.¹¹ Pindar's poem only loosely associates Iamos with the river Alpheios, but another source provides better support for an

¹⁰ Mosch. 6, Ov. *Met.* 5.487–641, Paus. 5.7.3.

¹¹ Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss 63. On the fraught translation of Pindar's term *συνοικιστήρ* see Z. Stamatopoulou, "Inscribing Performances in Pindar's *Olympian* 6," *TAPA* 144 (2014) 7 n.21. C. Eckerman, "Notes to a Recent Edition of Pindar's *Olympian* Odes," *Exemplaria Classica* 19 (2015) 199, argues that the word indicates the subordinate role of the victor in the colonization rather than an equal status as a "fellow-founder." In any case, Pindar suggests that the Iamid victor, Hagesias, was involved in the foundation of the city.

early connection between Syracuse and Olympia. Already in the sixth century, the poet Ibykos linked the Syracusan spring Arethusa and the river Alpheios, which demonstrates that the watery bond was part of Syracusan civic ideology well before Gelon ruled the city.¹² Furthermore, as Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss emphasize, Alpheios and Arethusa are part of the city's foundation narrative, at least in later versions, since they are mingled together in the foundation oracle that Pausanias presents.¹³ This oracle may have been known in Syracuse by 485, but even if it is a later invention it may preserve an earlier belief that the river Alpheios played a role in the foundation of Syracuse.

It is ultimately impossible to be certain that the river god on the tetradrachm is Alpheios. The only other partial visual representation of Alpheios appears on the East Pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. Unfortunately, Alpheios' head is missing, though fragments of what are probably his beard remain where his head would have rested on his hand. This sculptural representation thus, at least in this small respect, aligns with the bearded form on the tetradrachm.¹⁴ Despite the

¹² A scholiast to Theocritus writes: "Arethusa: a spring in Syracuse. They say that Alpheos came through the sea ... as Ibykos says when he mentions in passing the Olympian bowl," Ἀρέθουσα· κρήνη ἐν Συρακούσαις. φασὶ διὰ πελάγους Ἀλφειὸν ἦκειν <...>, ὡς φησὶν Ἴβυκος παριστορῶν περὶ τῆς Ὀλυμπιακῆς φιάλης (schol. Theocr. 1.117a; Ibykos *PMG* 323). For the suggestion that Ibykos' poem might be an epinician for a Syracusan victor see J. P. Barron, "Ibycus, Gorgias and Other Poems," *BICS* 31 (1984) 22. On Ibykos' activity in Sicily see E. Bowie, "Wandering Poets, Archaic Style," in R. Hunter et al. (eds.), *Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture: Travel, Locality and Pan-Hellenism* (Cambridge 2009) 122–124.

¹³ Paus. 5.7.3. Thucydides (6.3.2) adds that the earliest settlement in Syracuse was on the island of Ortygia, making a colonial role more likely for Arethusa than for Anapos.

¹⁴ On the identities of the river gods on the East Pediment see E. Simon, "Zu den Giebeln des Zeustempels von Olympia," *AthMitt* 83 (1968) 162–165. Scholars generally agree, following Paus. 5.10.7, that the river god reclining in the left corner of the pediment is the Alpheios while the god in the right corner is the Kladeos. See, among others, J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in*

lack of comparative visual evidence, Ibykos' poem strengthens the conclusions of Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss, since Alpheios is the only river god who is associated with Syracusan ideology before or contemporaneously with the tetradrachm. The remainder of this paper, therefore, follows their identification of the river god as Alpheios.

Gelon's tetradrachm is exceptional not only for its previously unknown types, but also because its innovative iconography reworks the familiar Syracusan tetradrachm types. The minting of coins began in Syracuse at the end of the sixth century, a few decades before Gelon came to power in the city. On the city's earliest tetradrachms, the quadriga appeared on the obverse with a small representation of the head of the nymph Arethusa on the reverse inside an incuse square (*fig. 2*). The quadriga represented elite competition and, in particular, the prestigious chariot race at Olympia where elite families from the Greek West participated in disproportionately high numbers.¹⁵ On the reverse, Arethusa emblemized the mythic link between Syracuse and Olympia through the tale of the river god Alpheios' pursuit of the spring nymph from the Peloponnese through the sea until she arrived in Syracuse. The main types on the Syracusan tetradrachms displaying the quadriga on the obverse and Arethusa

Classical Greece (Cambridge 1972) 34; J. Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology* (New York 1993) 204; J. Barringer, "The Temple of Zeus at Olympia, Heroes and Athletes," *Hesperia* 74 (2005) 223.

¹⁵ N. K. Rutter, *The Greek Coinages of Southern Italy and Sicily* (London 1997) 115, links the quadriga to the interests of the elite *gamoroi* in Syracuse. On participation at Olympia by Western Greeks see C. Morgan, *Athletes and Oracles: The Transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the Eighth Century BC* (Cambridge 1990), and "The Origins of Pan-Hellenism," in N. Marinatos et al. (eds.), *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches* (London 1993) 18–44; H. K. Philipp, "Olympia, die Peloponnes und die Westgriechen," *JdI* 109 (1994) 77–92; R. Neer, "Delphi, Olympia, and the Art of Politics," in H. A. Shapiro (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Archaic Greece* (Cambridge 2007) 255–264; C. Antonaccio, "Elite Mobility in the West," in S. Hornblower et al. (eds.), *Pindar's Poetry, Patrons, and Festivals: From Archaic Greece to the Roman Empire* (Oxford 2007) 265–286.

on the reverse persisted throughout the fifth and into the fourth century.

However, over time both the quadriga and Arethusa types were altered, and additional symbols were incorporated. As we have seen, starting during Gelon's rule in the 480s, the head of Arethusa was enlarged to take up the entire flan, and four dolphins encircling her head were added (*fig. 4*). At the same time, a flying Nike who crowns the charioteer with a wreath was added above the quadriga.¹⁶ While the earlier quadriga type signified elite competition at the games more generally, the crowning Nike more specifically represents victory in this race and refers to Gelon's recent Olympic chariot victory of 488.¹⁷



Figure 4: Syracusan tetradrachm, silver, post-485 (ANS 1997.9.11)

The Alpheios tetradrachm may have been a commemorative issue minted to celebrate Gelon's rise to power in Syracuse.¹⁸ If, as Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss argue, the coin was minted just before Boehringer's Series II, then the head of Alpheios which

¹⁶ Knoepfler, *SNR* 71 (1992) 27–28; Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss 60–61, 65–66; K. Morgan, *Pindar and the Construction of Syracusan Monarchy in the Fifth Century B.C.* (New York 2015) 62.

¹⁷ Morgan, *Pindar* 63. Compare the Messenian tetradrachm minted by the tyrant Anaxilas ca. 480 to celebrate his victory in the Olympic mule cart race, on which see Rutter, *The Greek Coinages* 119–120.

¹⁸ Morgan, *Pindar* 62–63.

fills the entire obverse may also have influenced the type of the Syracusan tetradrachm in future issues, where the head of Arethusa increases in size (*fig. 4*) to correspond with Alpheios' head on the earlier tetradrachm.¹⁹ Alternately, the larger head of Arethusa might have influenced the large head of the river god if the newly-discovered coin was minted subsequently. In either case, the Alpheios tetradrachm and the issue featuring the flying Nike above the quadriga should both be understood and interpreted together within a program of Deinomenid expression of power in Syracuse under Gelon's rule. As an additional Deinomenid numismatic innovation, the Alpheios coin offers an important complement to the flying Nike tetradrachm series. The next section will argue that this coin is an example of the Deinomenid appropriation of Syracusan imagery to express the family's increasing power in Sicily, which began during the reign of Gelon and continued under his brother Hieron's rule.

2. *The Alpheios tetradrachm and Deinomenid adaptation of Syracusan civic imagery*

Alpheios and Arethusa

One reason that the imagery on the Alpheios tetradrachm is so powerful is that it reworks the more usual Syracusan tetradrachm types to glorify the Deinomenids and to promote their interests. The obverse displaying Alpheios bears a clear link to the familiar quadriga/Arethusa tetradrachm. As we have seen, according to the myth the Olympic river god pursued Arethusa under the sea from Olympia to Syracuse, where their mingled waters emerged as the spring Arethusa. The mythic link between Arethusa and Alpheios was part of Syracusan civic ideology by at least the sixth century, and this civic symbol therefore predates Deinomenid rule. The choice to represent Alpheios rather than Arethusa on Gelon's Alpheios issue, however, changes the meaning of the imagery significantly by focusing on the Olympic member of the pair rather than on the Syracusan nymph.

On tetradrachms of the quadriga/Arethusa type, Arethusa represents the unique connection that the Syracusans have with

¹⁹ Morgan, *Pindar* 63, suggests a correspondence between the two coins.

the site of the panhellenic games at Olympia through the nymph's link to the river god. Yet, by displaying the head of Arethusa, the coin also honors the topography of Syracuse itself since the nymph is a personification of the spring on Ortygia. On later issues, dolphins swim around the nymph's head, which thus represents the island of Ortygia in miniature (*fig. 4*). The myth of Alpheios' pursuit of Arethusa was especially relevant for the city because Syracuse was a Greek colony founded in the eighth century by Corinthians led by Archias (Paus. 5.7.3). Upon arrival, the Greeks encountered native Sicels, whom they engaged and drove off of the island of Ortygia, where the earliest Greek settlement was established (Thuc. 6.3.2). Greeks and Sicels lived alongside one another, but conflict between the two groups continued into the fifth century,²⁰ making the myth of Alpheios' pursuit of Arethusa a fitting metaphor that remained relevant for the contact between Greeks and native populations well after the initial foundation.²¹ In addition, the city experienced tension between the diverse populations who inhabited it. After Gelon came to power in Syracuse in 485, he forcibly moved new groups of citizens to the city from Gela, Kamarina, Megara Hyblaea, and elsewhere,²² and both Gelon and Hieron continued to hire Peloponnesian mercenaries, many of whom ultimately obtained Syracusan citizenship.²³ In this civic context,

²⁰ C. Antonaccio, "Colonization: Greece on the Move, 900–480," in *The Cambridge Companion to Archaic Greece* 201–202.

²¹ C. Dougherty, *The Poetics of Colonization: From City to Text in Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1993) 69, argues that the myth is a metaphor for the original colonization. M. Foster, "Hagesias as *Sunoikistēr*: Seercraft and Colonial Ideology in Pindar's Sixth Olympian Ode," *ClAnt* 32 (2013) 316, adds that the myth of Arethusa and Alpheios is relevant not only to the original archaic foundation of Syracuse, but also to Hieron's more recent colonization of Aitna in 476, when the tyrant mixed Peloponnesians together with Syracusans to be the new citizens of Aitna.

²² Hdt. 7.156.1–2, Thuc. 6.5.3. On Gelon's accumulation of power in Syracuse see Luraghi, *Tirannidi* 299–300.

²³ Diod. 11.72.3. On the makeup of the population of Gelon's Syracuse see Luraghi, *Tirannidi* 289–297.

the myth of Alpheios and Arethusa continued to offer the Syracusans a model for peaceful negotiations and relations between the members of its mixed citizenry.²⁴

By portraying Alpheios rather than Arethusa on the new tetradrachm, Gelon inverted the direction of representation. Rather than honoring the Syracusan landscape where Arethusa's spring was located, Alpheios celebrates the topography of Olympia. The focus on Alpheios in the wake of Gelon's Olympic chariot victory in 488 also evokes an earlier Deinomenid achievement. Even if Gelon's choice to place a river god on the Syracusan coin was influenced by the river god on the coinage of Gela, the decision to portray the Olympic river nonetheless makes a bold statement about the Gelon's prominence among elites in the Greek world as an Olympic victor, and it highlights the pan-hellenic cachet that he brought with him to Syracuse as the city's new ruler.²⁵

On Gelon's innovative issue, Alpheios performs double symbolic duty. On the more familiar Arethusa/quadriga tetradrachm type, the horse-drawn chariot represented elite hippic competition at the games, and was already an established emblem of the elite class at Syracuse, which Gelon linked more directly to his own accomplishment by adding the flying Nike who crowns the horses. However, on the Alpheios issue, the river god is not only linked to Arethusa as her lover, but he also performs the symbolic work of the quadriga by evoking the site of the Deinomenid victory. By substituting Alpheios for Arethusa, Gelon glorifies his own relationship with Olympia. However, this change also, importantly, leaves him room to innovate in the celebration of Syracuse on the coin's reverse. It is to the significance of this imagery that I now turn.

Barley grains and Deinomenid ideology

The two barley grains that appear as the main type on the reverse of the Alpheios tetradrachm are previously unknown on

²⁴ V. Lewis, "Cultic Connections in Pindar's *Nemean 1*," *CP* forthcoming.

²⁵ Morgan, *Pindar* 63, even suggests a parallel between Alpheios and Gelon, who were both lovers and pursuers of Syracuse.

Syracusan tetradrachms. What are we to make of them? Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss interpret them alongside other Sicilian and Southern Italian coinage with similar imagery. Barley grains appear on issues of Gela and Leontini as subsidiary symbols, and at Metapontion a single ear of barley is the main type from the earliest issues in the sixth century up through the third century BCE.²⁶ The two barley grains on the Alpheios tetradrachm could, then, be another example of a familiar type, standing for agricultural fertility that corresponds to the river on the other side, which represents fresh water. Second, Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss propose that the doubling of the grains conveys the coin's denomination. While the tetradrachm was common in Syracuse, the didrachm was the more familiar denomination in other Sicilian cities at the time. The two barley grains thus indicate that the tetradrachm is worth two didrachms.²⁷ Both the association with agricultural fertility and the designation of the denomination are reasonable explanations for the barley grains. However, the resonance of the imagery on the coin with other representations of Deinomenid ideology has not been sufficiently investigated. When situated within the larger program of Deinomenid propaganda, the barley grains emerge as celebratory symbols of the tyrants' ancestral connection to Demeter and Persephone and to the agricultural prosperity which the goddesses confer upon the city and its rulers.²⁸

Just as Arethusa had been established as a Syracusan civic symbol from at least the sixth century, so too was the worship of Demeter and Persephone prominent in the city by the time

²⁶ Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss 64. See also Rutter, *Greek Coinages* 27–29, 47–51, 129–132; S. Noe (rev. A. Johnston), *The Coinage of Metapontum Parts 1 and 2* (New York 1984).

²⁷ Arnold-Biucchi and Weiss 64–65.

²⁸ Morgan, *Pindar* 63, also raises this possibility briefly. V. Hinz, *Der Kult von Demeter und Kore auf Sizilien und in der Magna Graecia* (Wiesbaden 1998) 55, recommends caution when identifying grains with the cult of Demeter. In this case, the preponderance of evidence for the Deinomenid connection to the goddesses' worship justifies the identification.

Gelon rose to power there.²⁹ While the goddesses may have been worshipped in the open air from the time of the city's foundation,³⁰ material evidence for them in Syracuse is first attested in the second half of the sixth century. Excavations in the Piazza della Vittoria in Syracuse led by Giuseppe Voza uncovered an archaic inscription to the "Great [Goddesses]" in a sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone, indicating cult activity in honor of them there from the latter part of the sixth century.³¹ On the island of Ortygia itself, fragmentary remains of a terracotta votive plaque represent the goddesses side-by-side. Before it was damaged, the relief probably stood about one meter high. Its discovery in the Piazza Archimede places it in the center of Ortygia, and Alan Shapiro has argued that it probably dates to the 480s.³² Although it is difficult to say whether the plaque pre- or post-dates the Alpheios tetradrachm, it nonetheless indicates that the cult was active in the city during the Gelon's rule. Beyond Syracuse, material remains attest that Demeter and Per-

²⁹ E. Ciaceri, *Culti e miti nell storia dell'antica Sicilia* (Catania 1912), argued that Gelon imported the cult of the goddesses from Gela to Syracuse. However, important archaeological discoveries in Syracuse over the past century have revealed evidence for their worship before Gelon came to Syracuse. See Hinz, *Kult von Demeter und Kore* 95–111.

³⁰ N. Bookidis, "The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Cornith and Colonization," in C. A. Di Stefano (ed.), *Demetra: la divinità, i santuari, il culto, la leggenda* (Pisa 2008) 101, 104, compares the worship of Demeter in Corinth, which took place in the open air, and that in the Sicilian colonies, suggesting that this style of worship may have been transferred from mother city to colony.

³¹ G. Voza, "L'attività della Soprintendenza alle Antichità della Sicilia orientale," *Kokalos* 26–27 (1980–1981) 683 with Tav. CXXIV Fig. 3. See also Hinz, *Kult von Demeter und Kore* 106, 220–225. A. Pautasso, *Terrecotte arcaiche e classiche del Museo civico di Castello Ursino a Catania* (Rome 1996) 135–136, proposes that the Deinomenid patronage of the cults of Demeter and Persephone led to the increase in production and variety of types of the figurines.

³² H. A. Shapiro, "Demeter and Persephone in Western Greece: Migrations of Myth and Cult," in M. Bennett et al. (eds.), *Magna Graecia: Greek Art from South Italy and Sicily* (New York 2002) 93–95. A date as early as the sixth century has also been proposed.

sephone were worshipped widely in Sicily. In Gela and Selinous, material remains indicate cults of the goddesses already in the seventh century, and by the period between the mid-sixth century and beginning of the fifth, evidence of their cult has been documented in at least fourteen cities throughout the island.³³ The widespread popularity of and devotion to the goddesses allowed them to represent local or pan-Sicilian interests, depending on the context in which they were celebrated.

Although not much information about the use of barley in Syracusan cult practice survives, barley was particularly associated with Demeter in other cultic contexts. From the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, for instance, we know that barley was a main ingredient in the ritual drink—the *kykeon*—used in Demeter's rites at Eleusis.³⁴ The doubling of the barley grains on the Alpheios tetradrachm is unique on coinage of this period. While Demeter and Persephone do not regularly appear together in visual representations, Alan Shapiro has collected examples from Sicily and Southern Italy where they are represented as a pair, including the early fifth-century plaque found on Ortygia discussed above.³⁵ The doubling of the barley grains may therefore reflect the pairing of mother and daughter, and indeed we will see that Gelon and Hieron are designated as the priests of both goddesses together in the literary sources.

As material evidence confirms the worship of Demeter and Persephone in Syracuse by the end of the sixth century, historical sources likewise indicate their importance to the Deinomenid tyrants. According to Herodotus, Telines, an ancestor of the Deinomenid family, obtained the hereditary priesthood for his descendants by using the cult objects of Demeter and Persephone to resolve a *stasis* in Gela. Herodotus emphasizes that

³³ Hinz, *Kult von Demeter und Kore* 124–135, 139–141, 220–225 (with figs. 62–64).

³⁴ *Hom.Hym.Dem.* 208. On the *kykeon* see H. Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretative Essays* (Princeton 1994) 47.

³⁵ Shapiro, in *Magna Graecia* 94.

Gelon was the descendant of this Telines, implying that Gelon, too, held the hereditary priesthood.³⁶ Furthermore, Herodotus links Gelon's political ambitions to the wealth and power that resulted from grain production: when the Greek embassy asks him for aid against the Persians, he offers enough grain to feed the entire army if the Greeks will cede the command to him (7.158). The barley grains on the Alpheios tetradrachm are thus well suited to the ideological program of a leader who was the priest of Demeter and Persephone and whose authority, and the expansion of that authority, was linked to agricultural production.³⁷

In keeping with his inherited role, Gelon promoted the worship of the goddesses. Diodorus says that after he defeated the Carthaginians at the Battle of Himera in 480, the largest military victory of his career, he used a portion of the spoils to build temples for Demeter and Persephone.³⁸ Gelon's decision to honor the goddesses in this manner allowed him to fulfill his ancestral obligation while also honoring deities whose worship was well established in Syracuse. The celebration of Demeter and Persephone, who were at once Syracusan and pan-Sicilian

³⁶ Hdt. 7.153–154. This is further confirmed by Pindar and the scholia to Pindar, on which see below.

³⁷ On the expansion of agricultural production and the worship of Demeter and Persephone under Gelon's rule see B. Kowalzig, "Nothing to Do with Demeter? Something to Do with Sicily! Theatre and Society in the Early Fifth-Century West," in M. Reverman et al. (eds.), *Performance, Iconography, Reception: Studies in Honour of Oliver Taplin* (Oxford 2008) 128–160; see also F. De Angelis, *Archaic and Classical Greek Sicily: A Social and Economic History* (New York 2016) 277–278.

³⁸ Diod. 11.26.7. Several scholars have attempted to identify the site of one of the temples with part of the site excavated by Voza in the Piazza della Vittoria. See R. van Compernelle, "La signoria di Terone," in L. Braccesi et al. (eds.), *Agrigento e la Sicilia greca* (Rome 1992) 67–68; Luraghi, *Tirannidi* 319. However, Hinz, *Kult von Demeter und Kore* 98, argues for caution on the identification of this temple as Gelon's. See also D. Mertens, *Städte und Bauten der Westgriechen: Von der Kolonisationszeit bis zur Krise am Ende des 5. Jh v. Chr.* (Munich 2006) 312.

goddesses, additionally offered other Sicilians a share of the celebration while framing the temple construction as a Deinomenid benefaction.

Gelon's personal connection to the goddesses and his cultivation of their worship in Syracuse are enough to indicate that the barley grains on the Alpheios issue allude to them. However, the continued importance of the goddesses in later Deinomenid ideology in the 470s and 460s strengthens the case. Gelon's brother Hieron became tyrant of Syracuse in 478 upon Gelon's death, and, like his brother, he took advantage of the symbolic potential of the Deinomenid ancestral priesthood in Syracuse and in Sicily more broadly.³⁹ In three epinician odes celebrating the athletic victories of Syracusans during Hieron's reign, Pindar and Bacchylides use Demeter and Persephone to represent Deinomenid authority and its expansion in Sicily.

First, Pindar celebrates Hieron expressly as the priest of the goddesses in *Olympian* 6, an ode which celebrates a victory in the mule cart race at Olympia by Hieron's general, Hagesias, in 472 or 468.⁴⁰ Pindar emphasizes that Hieron attends both to the festival (ἑορτήν) of Demeter and Persephone and to the power of Zeus Aitnaios (*Ol.* 6.92–96). Hieron is here explicitly praised in his role as the hereditary priest of the goddesses.⁴¹ Furthermore, Hieron here attends not only to the goddesses, but also to the power of Zeus Aitnaios, the patron deity of the city of Aitna, which Hieron founded in 476, located north of Syracuse just below its volcanic namesake.⁴² In *Olympian* 6, Hieron's cultivation of the power of Zeus Aitnaios alongside the celebration of

³⁹ On the political use of Demeter and Persephone by the Deinomenids and also in later periods in Sicily see D. White, "Demeter's Sicilian Cult as a Political Instrument," *GRBS* 5 (1964) 261–279.

⁴⁰ On the date see the discussion at Morgan, *Pindar* 361, with further references.

⁴¹ The scholiast rightly sees the lines as confirmation that Hieron, like his ancestor Telines, held the ancestral priesthood of the goddesses (schol. *Ol.* 6.158a).

⁴² Diodorus (11.49.1–4) reports that Hieron founded the city both so that

his role as priest of Demeter and Persephone commemorates the expansion of his authority outward from Syracuse and thus especially celebrates his growing influence in eastern Sicily.

Bacchylides engages the goddesses similarly in *Ode 3* in praise of Hieron's own four-horse chariot victory at Olympia in 468. In the opening, Demeter and Kore are honored alongside the victor, immediately suggesting a link between the three. Demeter in the first line notably rules over "Sicily which bears the best fruit" rather than over Syracuse, the victor's city, which, unusually, is never named in the ode.⁴³ In a sense, the entire island replaces the conventional naming of the victor's city and implies that Sicily is Hieron's territory. As the ode continues, Bacchylides describes Hieron as ὃς παρὰ Ζητὸς λαχὼν πλείσταρχον Ἑλλάνων γέρας, "the man who obtained from Zeus the honor of ruling over the greatest number of Greeks" (11–12): at the same time that the poem implies that Hieron rules Sicily, it also emphasizes the large number of Greeks over whom he rules.⁴⁴ The superlative nature of Hieron's rule again relates him to Demeter since the rule of both Demeter and Hieron is superlative in the poem; while she rules over the most fertile island (and the entirety of it), he rules over the largest number of Greeks. In Bacchylides' *Ode 3*, Demeter and Persephone are thus once again affiliated with Hieron and are woven into lines that celebrate the extension of Deinomenid power across Sicily.

he would receive hero cult as its founder after his death and so that he would have loyal citizens nearby in the event that he required military reinforcement at Syracuse. On Hieron's motives see also Luraghi, *Tirannidi* 337–338; D. Bonanno, *Ierone il Dinomenide: Storia e rappresentazione* (Pisa 2010) 127–157; De Angelis, *Archaic and Classical Greek Sicily* 187.

⁴³ C. Mann, *Athlet und Polis im archaischen und frühklassischen Griechenland* (Göttingen 2001) 271, notes that Syracuse is not named in this ode, though he does not follow up on this observation or relate it to the Pindaric odes for Hieron. See also Morgan, *Pindar* 175.

⁴⁴ The Greek embassy in Herodotus characterized Gelon's rule similarly when trying to convince him to support their cause. See Morgan, *Pindar* 353–355; V. Lewis, "From Resolving *Stasis* to Ruling Sicily: A Reading of Herodotus 7.153–167 in an Epinician Context," *Mnemosyne* 72 (2019) forthcoming.

Finally, Pindar's *Nemean* 1 in celebration of Chromios' chariot victory in 469 or 467 includes another passage that associates Demeter and Persephone with the increase of Syracusan influence in Sicily.⁴⁵ Chromios served as regent for Hieron's son, Deinomenes, in Aitna, and the poem therefore also adopts and shapes Deinomenid ideology. The ode opens with an invocation of Arethusa and celebrates the island of Ortygia, but in line 13 it turns to praise the island of Sicily. Since the ode's opening focuses on Syracuse, the poet's mention of the "island" (νόσφ) in 13 is momentarily ambiguous and could represent the Syracusan island Ortygia, which in antiquity was referred to simply as "the island," ἡ νῆσος.⁴⁶ In line 15, however, the reference is clarified as the poem celebrates Persephone's receipt of fertile Sicily as a gift from Zeus. Pindar plays on the doubling of the smaller Syracusan island and the larger island Sicily to mirror the movement of Hieron's rule from a local power in Syracuse to a regional authority in Sicily.⁴⁷ In addition, Pindar's description of the Sicilian people in lines 16–18 incorporates praise of Deinomenid achievements into his praise for Chromios. Here, the people are "often mixed with golden leaves of Olympic olive" (17–18). By mentioning Olympic victories, Pindar praises not the victor Chromios, who never won a victory at Olympia, but the tyrant Hieron and his family who claimed several Olympic victories by the time of the performance of the ode.⁴⁸ In *Nemean* 1 Deinomenid success is linked to and praised through Persephone, the goddess who rules over Sicily, and Olympia.

In sum, the surviving epinician poems for Syracusan victors

⁴⁵ On the ode's date see B. K. Braswell, *A Commentary on Pindar Nemean One* (Fribourg 1992) 25–27.

⁴⁶ See for instance Diod. 11.67–68. Cicero similarly calls Ortygia *Insula* (*Verr.* 2.4.117).

⁴⁷ On the shifting significance of νόσφ here see Lewis, *CP* forthcoming.

⁴⁸ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Pindaros* (Berlin 1922) 254; Mann, *Athlet und Polis* 282.

mention Demeter and Persephone only in passages that celebrate the influence of the Deinomenids, and of Hieron in particular, who ruled Syracuse during the period when these odes were composed and first performed.⁴⁹ The fact that both Gelon and Hieron took advantage of the Deinomenid ancestral link to the goddesses suggests that Demeter and Persephone were central to their ideological program, and also indicates that the barley grains on the Alpheios issue represent another example of the same ideological program.

Conclusions

Whether or not the barley grains may be connected specifically to Demeter and Persephone already on Gelon's newly-discovered issue, by the time epinician poets celebrated Hieron in song, the Deinomenids were clearly linked ideologically both to the goddesses and to Sicilian fertility. Herodotus, too, highlights both the story of the Deinomenid acquisition of the hereditary priesthood and Gelon's vast wealth that was generated by grain. When the two sides of the Alpheios coin are read together, it becomes clear that the new type enlivened and refashioned the link between Alpheios and Arethusa and Syracusan worship of Demeter and Persephone so as to make a bold statement about Syracusan dominance and Deinomenid ambitions in Sicily. By substituting Alpheios for Arethusa, the tetradrachm affirms the longstanding tradition according to which Syracuse has direct and singular access to the Peloponnese, and it simultaneously celebrates the city in terms of Gelon's success at Olympia and the Deinomenid family's elite status in the Greek world more widely. The replacement of the quadriga with the barley grains, on the other hand, augurs economic growth and the spread of Syracusan, and thus Deinomenid, influence in Sicily. As an early example of the merger of civic and Deinomenid ideology, the two sides of Gelon's Alpheios tetradrachm emphasize Dei-

⁴⁹ The goddesses appear infrequently in epinician odes in celebration of other cities but are affiliated with the underworld in these instances, on which see V. Lewis, *Myth, Locality, and Identity in Pindar's Sicilian Odes* (forthcoming).

nomenid accomplishment and Syracusan authority at home and abroad that began during Gelon's reign and would continue up until the family's fall from power in 466.⁵⁰

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Department of Classics
Florida State University
vlewis@fsu.edu

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