



# **The Poetics of Victory in the Greek West: Epinician, Oral Tradition, and the Deinomenid Empire (Greeks Overseas)**

*Nigel Nicholson*

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*The Poetics of Victory in the Greek West* examines the relationship between epinician and the heroizing narratives about athletes, or "hero-athlete narratives," that circulated orally in Sicily and Italy in the late archaic and early classical period. Drawing on the colorful stories told about athletes in later sources, the fragments of Simonides, and the surviving odes of Pindar and Bacchylides, it argues that epinician was formed in opposition to orally transmitted narratives and that these two forms—epinician and the hero-athlete narrative—promoted opposed political visions, with epinician promoting the Deinomenid empire and its structures and the hero-athlete narrative opposing Deinomenid rule. Combining an intimate knowledge of the material culture of the Greek West with an innovative use of available source material, *The Poetics of Victory in the Greek West* exposes the rich intersections between athletics and politics in Sicily and Italy, offering a new and compelling account of Deinomenid self-promotion and of the varied and complex communities that operated under the Deinomenids' control or within their shadow. Further, by establishing models of production and interpretation for the orally transmitted narratives and bringing them into dialogue with epinician, *The Poetics of Victory in the Greek West* reveals much about epinician as a form, how it developed in the Greek West, what meanings it already carried, and what meanings it accrued as it was appropriated by Hieron the second Deinomenid ruler.

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