

CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF PAEONIUS FROM MENDE¹

One of the rare examples of Greek classical sculpture, which was known through the written sources and later discovered almost complete, during excavations, is the victory by Paeonius of Mende. It was found in 1875, at Olympia, in the early days of excavations², together with an inscription on a triangular pedestal³ and it confirms Pausanias' statement in his „Description of Greece”, of what he saw in Olympia⁴.

Though for most part scholars agree on the date (c. 425—420 B. C.) of this monument⁵ and on the part played by Paeonius in finishing the pediment sculptures in Olympia⁶, a veil of mystery still covers

¹ I am most grateful to professor dr. Milan Budimir for his advice on the subject of this contribution.

² The statue was discovered at the south-east corner of the temple of Zeus, three meters under ground, on the 21st December 1875, the day after the pediment (R. Weil, *Olympia I*, Berlin 1897, 118; G. Treu, *Olympia III*, Berlin 1897, 182; A. Boeticher, *Olympia*, Berlin 1885, pp. 329—334).

³ The inscription is: Μεσσανιοι και Ναυπάκτιοι ἀνέθεν Δι

Ὀλυμπίῳ δεκάταν ἀπὸ τῶν πολεμίων

Παιώνιος ἐποίησε Μενδαῶς

Καὶ τὰ κρωτήρια ποιῶν ἐπὶ τὸν ναὸν ἐνίκα

(E. Loewy, *Inschriften griech. Bildhauer*, Leipzig 1885, nr. 49, pp. 39—42; W. Dittenberger — K. Purgold, *Olympia V*, Berlin 1896, r.r. 259). The two last lines are separated from first two, are smaller in size and less regular. All four lines are in Ionic script.

⁴ Paus. V, 26, 1.

⁵ Pausanias (loc. cit.) gives two dates. One is the year 425 when according to Messenians' tradition, it was offered as a trophy of the battle on the island of Sphacteria against Lacedaemonians; the other year 455 B. C. is given by Pausanias himself, who thinks that the victory is made from the spoils from the war on the Acarnanians of Oeniadae. Discussion of the problem, J. Frazer, *Pausanias' description of Greece*, vol. III, p. 645). On account of developed transparent style, bold movement and especially originality, the later date is usually accepted, (s. G. Lippold, *Die griechische Plastik*, München 1950, p. 205 with literature; J. Charbonneaux, *La sculpture grecque classique*, Genève 1964, p. 194). The opposite opinion was defended most recently by Ch. Picard, *Manuel d'archéologie grecque II*, Paris 1939, pp. 587 ff.

⁶ Pausanias' mentioning of Paeonius as the author of the eastern pediment of the temple of Zeus (V, 10, 8) is rejected a long time ago (Frazer III, pp. 512—6, on possible solutions to the problem of the masters of pediments). Picard, p. 588, n. 1, does not exclude the possibility that Pausanias „ait été égaré par des ciceroni mal informés“. Indeed, Pausanias mentioned (V, 10, 7), when describing the east pedi-

to some extent the personality and origin of the sculptor from Mende. Except for Pausanias who speaks of Paeonius in several places⁷, this sculptor is not mentioned by any other ancient writer and Pliny does not include the name in his register of Greek artists⁸. Besides, the winged victory differs in some way in style and finish from all other sculptures of the same time, in spite of the suggested general resemblances to the Attic or Ionic school⁹, so that the artistic formation of Paeonius also remains up to now insufficiently explained.

The problems which will be dealt with here concern his origin and location of his native town Mende. Apart from the well known Eretrian colony on Pallene, founded in the VIII century B. C. on Chalcidic peninsula¹⁰, it is possible that another town of the same name existed in Thrace, near the maritime city of Aenus¹¹. Speaking of the offerings in Olympia, Pausanias mentioned a sculpture of an athlete erected by the inhabitants of Mende in Thrace, a settlement founded by Ionians¹². The same author says that Paeonius was native of Mende in Thrace¹³ and some scholars believe this problematical city, mentioned only by Pausanias, to be the birth place of the sculptor and not Mende on Chalcidic which is not, strictly speaking, in Thrace. However the main reasons which point to the Ionian origin of Paeonius, are the Ionic characters of the inscription in Olympia at a time when they were not officially used in the continental Greece¹⁴, as well as the resemblances to the Ionic style, in the treatment of movement and the finish of the drapery, especially in the group of Nereids from Xanthos¹⁵.

We would agree more with the other supposition, which regained popularity in the recent time¹⁶ and prefers to believe that Paeonius' birth place was in Mende on Chalcidic. The uncertainty about Mende

ment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, his disagreement with the guide there about the name of the charioteer of Pelops. Though Pausanias probably read the inscription on the pedestal, it is quite likely that Paeonius was named by the guide as the author of the pediment. (About the role of guides by Pausanias, Frazer I, pp. LXXVI—LXXVII). In fact the competition between Paeonius and Alkamenes (Lippold p. 205) and the unexpected victory of the first had more chance to remain for a long time in the memory of the Eleans and in local stories than the lost names of the pediment masters.

⁷ Paus. V, 10. 8: V, 26, 1.

⁸ Charbonneaux, p. 193. On the unsuccessful attempt to identify Paeonius' name in a fragment of Krates, Loewy, p. XIX.

⁹ E. Gardner, *Handbook of Greek sculpture*, London 1911, pp. 341—3; E. Pfuhl, *Attische und ionische Kunst des V Jahrhunderts*, Jahrbuch DAI 41, 1926, p. 159.

¹⁰ B. Lenk, *PWRE* XV, 1, s. v. *MENDE*.

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Paus. V, 27, 8.

¹³ Paus. V, 10, 8.

¹⁴ A. Kirchoff, *Stuiden zur Geschichte der griech. Alph.*, 1887, p. 120, n. 1. Frazer, III, p. 646; Dittenberg—Purgold, loc. cit.

¹⁵ Charbonneaux, p. 194.

¹⁶ Lippold, loc. cit.; especially G. Oikonomos (Μένδης — Μένης, ἡ πατρὶς τοῦ Παιωνίου, 'Εφ. 'Αρχ. 1924, pp. 27—40) who disallows completely the existence of the other Mende in Thrace, though this statement can be exagerrated (comp. Lenk, *Mende*).

in Thrace together with Pausanias' possible confusion on one side¹⁷ and the importance of Mende on Pallene on the other¹⁸, favour the opinion that this well known town has to be considered as the more likely possibility in the solution of the problem. In a vague sense Mende on Chalcidic could be considered in Thrace¹⁹. The Ionic alphabet can not be a decisive proof either, because though officially taken in Attica at the very end of the V century it appeared and was in partial use in continental Greece long before this date²⁰. On the other hand the language of the inscription seems to be Doric in both parts²¹, and the language a man speaks is more important in the determination of his nationality than the script he writes.

An other fact which could possibly be of help in the investigations to determinate Paeonius' native place, is the name of the sculptor.

A long time ago J. Sillig²² proposed that Pausanias' *Μενδαίου Παιωνίου* could be explained as Mendeus from Paeonia. This opinion was rightly rejected later, especially when Paeonius' signature was found in Olympia, but a possibility remains to suggest a linguistic connection between *Παιώνιος* on one side, and *Παίων, Παίονες, Παιονία* on the other²³. In this case one could consider possible that the name of the sculptor Paeonius derives from the name of his nationality²⁴ and that he was a citizen of the Greek colony Mende, but of Paeonian origin.

The barbarian tribe of Paeonians occupied Northern Macedonia but the exact boundaries of their territory have not still been located²⁵.

¹⁷ Oikonomos, pp. 33 ff.

¹⁸ P. Walters (Philologus, LXXXIV, 1929, p. 135) thought that Paeonius had written only Mendeos because the city on Pallene was sufficiently famous and denied, with certain reservations, the existence of the Thracian Mende. On the other hand the offering of Mendeans of Thrace (Paus. V. 27, 8) had only Mende on the inscription without mentioning where it is. It could be, for the same reason, that this Mende was also the well known town on Chalcidic.

¹⁹ Mende was on the list of Thracian tribut (Lenk, *Mende*) and therefore in Thrace. Comp. D. Detschew, *Die thrakischen Sprachreste*, Wien 1957, s.v. Mende.

²⁰ H. Pomtow, (*Die Paionios Nike in Delphi*, Jahrbuch DAI 37, 1922 pp. 81—2) speaks of Ionic inscriptions on the Peloponnese before the end of the V century. For Attica, M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia Graeca I*, Roma 1964, p. 134.

²¹ Pfuhl, p. 159; The Ionic dialect with Doric elements in the two last lines (Dittenberger—Purgold, loc. cit.; Frazer, III, pp. 645—646). It was suggested also that the smaller size of two last lines indicates that they were carved later by Paeonius in his own dialect, Ionic. However the smaller size of the artist's name on the inscription does not prove anything because the names of artists were usually smaller in size than the names of donors (Comp. Loewy, nrs. 41, 46, 52 etc.).

²² *Catalogus artificum* Dresden und Leipzig 1827 p. 311.

²³ Even the form *Παιών > Παῖων, Παῖων could have a connection with Παίονες (v. Blumenthal, *PWRE* XVIII, 2, s. v. *Paian*, C)

²⁴ There were some foreign names among the Greek artists which point to their origin, e. g. Βρύγιος, Σαύθης. This kind of name occurs everytime and everywhere: Srb, Srbinović, Srbljanović, Ercegovac, Ercegović, Bosanac, Bosnić etc.

²⁵ On the location of Paeonians, s. Lenk, *PWRE* XVIII, 2 s. v. *Paiones*; comp. P. Lisičar, *Našata makedonska antika*, Sovremenost 7—8, 1954, pp. 607 ff. with bibliography.

However we shall not deal here either with this problem or with the nationality of the Paeonian²⁶. The thesis of a mixture of both Illyrians and Thracians with prevailing Illyrian elements seems at present the most plausible²⁷. We shall limit our observations here to some remarks in connection with a possible relationship between a Greek town Mende and the geographical situation of Paeonians. Homer²⁸ located this tribe where the river Axios opens to the sea, near Thessaloniki, and it is very probable that their territory stretched as far as Aegean sea up to the beginning of the V century²⁹. From Herodotus³⁰ we learn that they were expecting the first Persian invasion on the sea shore, near the river Strymon, east of Chalcidic but it is not clear whether they kept this position later³¹. On account of Thucydides' statement³² they dwelt more to the North in the second part of the V century, retreating probably before the expansional politics of the Macedonians on the West and Thracians on the East. It seems after all that they were not on Chalcidic itself³³ but lived in the neighbourhood, as we see also when we notice the similarity in the material culture of the second part of VI century between Chalcidic and north-west areas³⁴. On account of this one could admit the possibility that Paeonians appeared from time to time, in the course of the VI century B. C., in the rich commercial town of Mende on Pallene and that some of them may have settled there. Paeonius of Mende was born probably between 470 and 460 B. C.³⁵, when Paeonians were rarely seen in this city so that the descendants of Paeonian family who had settled there might easily be given a name which derived from their origin. This hypothesis, however, does not exclude completely the other Mende near Aenus. Remembering the Paeonian plundering of Perinth³⁶ and the possible similar exploits towards the East, their presence in the surrounding of the Thracian

²⁶ N. Vulić, *Narodnost Peonaca*, Glas SKA CXXI, 66, 1926, pp. 1—20.; Detschew, p. 353, s. v. *Paiones*, with a short résumé of different opinions.

²⁷ M. Garašanin, *Die Ostgrenze der Illyrier auf Grund der Bodenfunde*, Symposium sur les Illyriens à l'époque préhistorique, Sarajevo 1964, pp. 155 ff.

²⁸ *Il.* 2. 848.

²⁹ Lenk, *Paiones*.

³⁰ *V.*, 12—17.

³¹ In time of Xerxes invasion, (Her. VII, 113, 124), they could have partly retreated to the North.

³² *Il.*, 96—99.

³³ Büchner, *PWRE* III, 2 s. v. *Chalkidike*; Herodotus (VII, 185) differentiates „the people of Chalcidic“ from Thracians and Paeonians.

³⁴ L. Rey, *Tombeaux macédoniens découverts à Zeitinlik*, Albania 2, 1927, pp. 28—47. On the material culture of these areas in whole s. V. I.ahov, *Problem Trebeniške kulture*, Ohrid 1965; also, Garašanin, pp. 151—175.

³⁵ Having in mind the characteristics of the statue of victory, we are inclined to share the opinion of E. Gardner (*op. cit.* p. 343) concerning the age of Paeonius: „It is difficult to assign so original a work to an old artist who followed a very different style in his younger days and had late in life fallen under all persuading Attic influence“.

³⁶ Her. V, 1.

Mende was also likely for a short period³⁷. Thus it is only with reserve that one can give preference to Mende on Chalcidic when dealing with the origin of Paeonius on the basis of his name.

This explanation of the origin of Paeonius' name we treat here only as an interesting possibility which might throw more light on the figure of the sculptor of Mende, leaving for a later date a deeper analysis of the whole problem. There are certainly a few foreign names among the artists who played an important role in the development of Greek culture³⁸ and Paeonius would not be an exception. The silence of the ancient writers on the subject of this sculptor to whom modern scholars attribute much importance, might even be explained by the sculptor's barbarian origin.

Why did Paeonius leave his native town and how did he join the Greek artistic elite, it is unknown. By which roads he travelled to Olympia and how he was victorious in competition with Alkamenes for the acroteria of the temple of Zeus³⁹, may become clear if by good fortune a new text is discovered or an inscription excavated. We can not claim either to determinate his artistic development from Mende to Eretria, Athens and Olympia, like Oikonomos⁴⁰, or to call him a disciple of Phidias, as others do⁴¹. Accepting however, Mende on Chalcidic as his homeland, it is almost inevitable that we regard the role of Athens as important in his artistic formation, having in mind the close relations between the two cities after the Persian wars⁴².

We would like to remember in the end Paeonius' statue in Olympia. The originality of the victory, the boldness of the movement, almost unknown in the contemporary art, and the favouring of the naked female body which impressively swells out, but at the same time a certain absence of the classical canons of art and a light unskillfulness in the finish of details, perhaps point discreetly also to Paeonius' origin: to the force and vitality of a wild nature, to unconscious desires of a very talented barbarian who found himself in the artistic centre of the world.

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³⁷ This event is dated in the course of the VI century B. C. and could be an exceptional success (E. Oberhummer, *PWRE* XIX, 1, s. v. *Perinthos*). Comp. however, Lippold, p. 203, on the statue of a Paeonian queen near the Sea of Marmara dated at the end of the V century.

³⁸ E. g. Bryaxis (Lippold, p. 257), Tauriskos (*ibid.*, p. 383), Brygos (A. Rumpf, *Malerei und Zeichnung der klass. Antike*, München 1953, p. 85—6). Without discussing here the problem of the painter of the potter Brygos and his foreign origin, we want only to point to a strange similarity in the style of this Thracian, of „vollfeurigen Temperaments und lebhafter Phantasie“ (C. Robert, *PWRE* III, 1 s. v. *Brygos*), to the style of the Paeonius' victory.

³⁹ S. n. 6.

⁴⁰ Oikonomos, pp. 37 ff.

⁴¹ Loewy, pp. 39—41.

⁴² Lenk, *Mende*.