THE ABSENCE OF THE AEGINETANS
ON THE INTERPRETATION OF PINDAR’S SIXTH PAEAN

BY

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The main problem of Pindar’s sixth paean concerns its unity 1). The poem was written for the celebration of the Delphic Theoxenia and, though parts of it are hopelessly mutilated, the remains of the first and second triad have, as far as we are able to make out, a definite bearing on this theme. The third triad, however, suddenly opens with a eulogy of Aegina. If more of this part had been preserved, there would probably be no problem at all, but in the present state of affairs we are faced with a serious difficulty. For what has Aegina to do with the Delphic Theoxenia?

Since the publication of Pap. Ox. 841, which is by far our most important witness, many attempts have been made to solve the problem. In the present article I propose to show that, already in 1908, Wilamowitz 2) had come very near the truth but that, owing to what I consider a preconceived opinion, he came to a conclusion which was exactly the opposite of the right one. First of all, however, we shall have to examine the data of the poem itself which may possibly have a bearing on the problem. They can be summarized as follows:

1) I want to express my thanks to Mr. J. B. Hainsworth of King’s College, London, who has kindly revised my English.

A detailed account of the discussions is to be found in the recently published edition of the second and sixth paeans by Dr. S. L. Radt (Pindars Zweiter und Sechster Paian, Amsterdam 1958), where the literature is conveniently listed (add: O. Schroeder, B. Ph. W. 28, 1908, 161-174). This thorough and scholarly study has given rise to the present article. For the literature I refer once for all to it.


Mnemosyne, XV
1. The opening lines have this allusion to the circumstances of the performance (6-11) 1: δήστι γὰρ ἐπὶ χαλκοπύλωι / ψόφον ἀμών (vel ἄλων) Κασταλίας / ὄρφον ἄνδριν χορεύσιοι ἥλθον / ἐταῖς ἀμαχανίαν ἄλ[έ]ξων / τεούσαν ἐμαῖς τε τιμ[ά]ζ.

2. The central part of the paean is occupied by the myth of Achilles and of Neoptolemus' death at Delphi.

3. The Aeginetans took offence at Pindar's version of this story. In N. VII (the date of which is uncertain) the poet rejected the charge of having spoken ill of the hero.

4. When the myth has been told, Pindar turns abruptly to the praises of Aegina (123).

5. In this eulogy the chorus address the island and say (128-30) ὁδῷ σε πατρῴων / ἄξωρον εὐνάξομεν, ἄλλοι ἀκοῦσιν / βοήθαι δεκομένα κατερεῖς / πόθεν ἐλαβες κτλ.

It seems that, in the heat of controversy, scholars have lost sight of the fundamental fact that the crux of the whole matter is this: have all these items (especially 1, 3 and 5) a definite bearing on the question? Wilamowitz, though he did not state the problem in this way, apparently believed they had 2), and he suggested that the chorus consisted of Aeginetans, a supposition which was subsequently accepted by several investigators and which clearly implies the existence of a link between the five elements. On the other hand, Sitzler 3) believed he had found a sufficient motive for the praise of Aegina in the worship of which Zeus Hellanios (mentioned 125-126) was the object on the island. He pointed out that the festival of the Delphic Theoxenia was said to have been instituted as a thanksgiving celebration for the ending of a famine and that a similar famine had been ended by Zeus Hellanios, who received a cult in return at Aegina. He suggested, moreover, that here we may have to do with one and the same myth. This theory was also put for-

1) I reproduce the text as it is given by Radt.
2) Pindaros (Berlin, 1922), 134-135.
3) Zum sechsten Pään Pindars, Wochenschr. f. Klass. Phil. 28 (1911), 1015-1018. Grenfell and Hunt regarded the Aeacid ancestry of Neoptolemus as the point of connexion. This motive would be very weak. For other explanations, see Radt, o.c., 89 f.