

On the Legacy of two Exceptional Parians: Archilochos the Poet and Skopas the Sculptor

Il poeta lirico Archiloco, vissuto nel VII secolo a.C., ebbe un'influenza notevole sul celebre scultore Skopas, vissuto tre secoli più tardi nonché suo conterraneo di Paros.

Particolare attenzione viene rivolta ad un frammento di recente scoperta attribuito al poeta nel quale è narrata la battaglia tra l'esercito di Télefo e le truppe achee sbarcate in Misia nel loro viaggio verso Troia. Durante lo scontro l'eroe eraclide perse il suo scudo dopo essere inciampato su una vite fatta crescere da Dioniso, e fu ferito da Achille. Il ferimento di Télefo fu rappresentato da Skopas sul timpano occidentale del tempio di Atena Alea a Tegea, città d'origine dell'eroe eraclide. La scena, della quale sopravvivono solo pochi frammenti, si svolgeva nei pressi di una vite, simbolo dell'intervento divino nel combattimento e del carattere fatale della perdita dello scudo, elemento già sottolineato da Archiloco. Il poeta aveva interpretato tale episodio come un precedente mitico di una disavventura capitatagli personalmente in guerra, ovvero la poco onorevole perdita in battaglia del proprio scudo presso un cespuglio. Un altro riferimento all'opera del poeta va ricercato inoltre nella figura divina dell'Afrodite Pandemos. La scultura raffigura la dea nell'atto di cavalcare un ariete, simboleggiandone così il lato più passionale ed erotico. L'interesse di Skopas per tali aspetti trova un illustre precedente nel cosiddetto «epodo di Colonia», attribuito ad Archiloco e nel quale tematiche analoghe vengono affrontate con particolare audacia tramite un racconto in prima persona di un'avventura avuta presso il tempio di Era a Paros.

In an earlier article on Skopas of Paros¹, I discussed the possible Parian origin of the distinctive Skopaic style and its relation with the natural, social and cultural environment of the sculptor's native island. In particular, I found common elements shared in the work of Skopas and of his great ancestor, the poet Archilochos, and decided to follow up on the issue.

Archilochos, undoubtedly one of the most famous Greek poets of ancient times was compared only to Homer, and himself and his works were much-discussed by critics, philosophers, poets, grammarians and epigrammatists throughout antiquity from the Classical to the Hellenistic period, when Archilochos was a particularly favourite subject for poets, and as late as Roman times. A significant number of studies on Archilochos and his poetry were written by famous scholars including the philosopher Aristotle. In the 5th century, the poet's fame was well established outside the island and his poetry was highly praised. There is good evidence to suggest that the statue-type of the Walking poet holding the *chelys* lyre – a characteristic feature of Archilochos' iconography – known from Roman marble copies, was made in this period (about 440 BC) most probably by another famous Parian, the sculptor Agorakritos² and beloved pupil of the great Pheidias, to be set up in the poet's sanctuary on the island.

The same musical instrument is held by the poet shown seated on Parian silver coinage of the Late Hellenistic period (fig. 1). The figure most probably represents a new statue of Archilochos, described in an early 3rd century epigram, almost certainly composed by Theokritos³, and dedicated in his cult place in Paros on the occasion of the sanctuary's embellishment by Mnesiepes with the founding of a temenos and altars to offer sacrifices and honour Archilochos in common with two other groups of gods, designating the place as *Archilochbeion*⁴. The reference of the early 4th century orator Alkidamas to honours paid to Archilochos in Paros⁵ shows that by the end of the 5th century, the poet continued to receive honours in his heroon further beautified in the 4th century by new buildings and by the dedication of the Dokimos inscription engraved on the abacus of a reused Ionic capital dated to the last quarter of the 6th century BC (fig. 2).

Fig. 1
Obverse of Late Hellenistic silver coin of Paros, ca. 75 BC, showing Archilochos seated, holding a *chelys* lyre in his left hand and a book roll in his right hand. Munzkabinett der Stadt Winterthur.





Fig. 2
The Dokimos inscription from Paros.
Archaeological Museum of Paros,
inv. No. 733.

Archilochos was a daring and uneasy mind. Looking for better opportunities, he travelled a lot outside Paros either to participate in colonization movements or to fight against enemies of his country. Especially in the case of Thasos, a colony of Paros in the North Aegean, Archilochos served Paros both as citizen and soldier. He participated in the second colonial enterprise on the island – the first was led by his father Telesikles – and fought against local hostile groups on the Thracian coast. Having travelled widely from the Aegean, Ionia and Asia Minor, to Syracuse and South Italy in the West, the poet seems to be well aware of weather at sea, of ships and sailing. As a soldier involved in many fights to defend his home, he finally lost his life in the naval battle against the neighbouring Naxians. Historical accounts related to his bravery in battle and heroic death⁶ describe that his fellow citizens sank two enemy ships and captured the rest which they brought back to Paros with Archilochos' body. They buried the poet on the island with great honours, even though in life he had spoken badly of his home. The contradiction noted by these sources apparently intended to secure Archilochos' reputation as it reflected the reputation of Paros itself. The invective poetry and ways, on one hand, and the patriotism and bravery, on the other, composed the two sides of the unique complex personage of Archilochos whom the Parians greatly honoured in his sanctuary on the island. His cult was kept alive in Paros for many centuries, preserving and transmitting his poetry to his fellow countrymen and beyond and establishing his legacy as a national treasure⁷.

It is in this Parian world marked by the distinct personality of Archilochos, the follower of Enyalios and possessor of the gift of the Muses as himself designated his individuality (cf. Fr. 1): «But I am the servant of Lord Enyalios even as I know the lovely gift of the Muses»), where three centuries later one of the most famous sculptors of Classical Greece, Skopas

of Paros, was born. Skopas came from a family of sculptors. His father Aristandros had collaborated with the famous 5th century BC Polykleitos at Amyklai on the dedication of the trophy for the victory at Aigospotamoi by making the figure of a woman holding a lyre, representing Sparta (Paus. 3.18.8). Most probably, an older sculptor by the same name who worked in bronze (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 34.49-50), contemporary of Myron and Pythagoras, was his grandfather. The names of two other sculptors known in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC correspondingly, Skopas and Aristandros, apparently refer to members of the same eponymous Parian family of sculptors.

In the art of sculpture, Skopas initiated the unique style of *pathos*, by carving on marble stone the inner passionate world of his figures. Agitated bodies and anxious faces form a distinctive style which influenced profoundly contemporary and later generation artists down to the Middle Ages. The ancient world admired the Parian sculptor and ancient critics highly praised statues by him, especially his extraordinary Maenad⁸. His fame as a sculptor, *αγαλματοποιός*, among the ancients placed him on the same pedestal with the great Pheidias and Praxiteles⁹. Skopas was also an architect, combining in one charismatic personality the knowledge of two arts. In architecture, he showed the same bold and pioneer spirit as in sculpture by designing and realising impressive innovative ideas through his projects. On the island of Paros, he brilliantly designed and executed the Prytaneion of the city¹⁰ including the temple and cult statue of Hestia, most probably the one taken later to Rome and included among the most praised sculptures by Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 36.25). Skopas was also the architect of the most magnificent temple of the Peloponnese in Tegea of Arcadia, as Pausanias notes (8.45.5).

When Skopas grew in Paros, in the first decades of the 4th century BC, Archilochos' legacy was still alive on the island. The young sculptor surely learned the ancient traditions on Archilochos' life and poetry, the same traditions on which the 4th century historian Demeas of Paros and later Mnesiepes based their accounts of Archilochos' life. He certainly knew the heroon and grave of the poet marked by the funerary monument dedicated by Skopas' contemporary Dokimos of Paros. It is of interest that on one of the blocks of the Mnesiepes inscription among certain names, occur together the names Archilochos and Skopas: «Zosimos, Archilochos, Skopas, Timarchos, and Glaukos»¹¹. It is also attractive that one of the inscribed names is synonymous with Archilochos' companion Glaukos who participated in the second wave of colonists to Thasos together with the poet and whose grave monument was found in the agora of Thasos.

Skopas was an itinerant and prolific artist. Like Archilochos, he travelled a lot outside Paros and worked as sculptor and architect in many places of the ancient world: the Peloponnese (Elis, Tegea, Argos, Sikyon, Gortys), Megara and Attika, Thebes in Central Greece, Samothrace in the North, and many places in the East: Troad, Bithynia, Ephesos, Knidos, Halikarnassos. Like his famous ancestor Archilochos, he was also a pioneer in his own field. And as Archilochos, far ahead of his time, introduced in poetry the personal element and turned the interest from the heroic Homeric world to everyday life of men, so did Skopas by intro-

ducing in the art of sculpture the expression of strong feelings of the soul in contrast to the Classical ideal prevailing before his time. Thus, passion, desire, anger, rage, pain, fear, agony, mourning, brutality and hardness in battle, or divine fury found their ultimate expression in his statuary carved almost exclusively in marble, with one exception only of his statue of Aphrodite Pandemos for Elis made in bronze.

With regard to the commonality of innovative elements identified in the work of these two Parians, recent literary evidence related to Archilochos is of particular interest. The discovery (2005) by scientists at the University of Oxford, using multi-spectral imaging, of a new elegy¹², so far unique, of the Parian poet is of much importance. In the poem, Archilochos narrates the battle in Mysia between the Greeks and Telephos, the legendary king of the Mysians, whose descent from Arcadia links Paros and the Parians with a hero ancestor¹³. From the surviving fragments of the elegy, it seems that the narration follows the story of the battle in Mysia as told in the *Cypria*, ending with Telephos' wounding by Achilles after the Arcadian hero stumbled on a vine-shoot sent by Dionysos and lost his shield¹⁴. This detail is of significance for our understanding of Archilochos' interest in the story. Apart from the fact that Telephos was a great ancestor of the Parians, it appears that there was a deeper and more personal reason for the poet to turn his attention to this myth.

Archilochos himself had faced a similar situation. Fighting against the tribe of the Saians in the North, he lost his shield and had to desert the battlefield. As he boldly describes in his famous poem of the shield (Fr. 5W), he fled the battle and threw his shield to save his life: «Some Thracian tribesman delights in my shield, a fine piece of armour, I had to leave it by the bush. I lost it and saved my life. Why should I care about that shield? Let it go. Another day I will have another no worse than that»¹⁵. In the ancient Greek world to become a *πίψασπις* ('shield thrower') was considered cowardice; to confess it so shamelessly, as Archilochos did, was really shocking and insulting. But perhaps the justification for the poet of such an act may come from the fact that he was forced to leave his shield behind: as he states, he abandoned it «unwillingly», «οὐκ ἐθέλων». How could this phrase be interpreted? Who compelled the poet to commit such an act and become a shield thrower?

The answer may be found, indeed, in his newly discovered elegy. In the first lines (2-8), the poet sings: «if it's under the compulsion of a god one doesn't have to call (a retreat) weakness and cowardice; we turned our backs to flee quickly, for there exists a proper time for flight (lines 2-4). Even once Telephos Arcasides (from Arcadia) alone put to flight the great army of the Argives, and they fled although they were the bravest spearmen – so great was the fear the fate of the gods put upon them (lines 5-8)»¹⁶. Archilochos begins by telling the Telephos story from line 5 onwards, while in the first four surviving lines of the elegy he rather refers to a personal experience like the one he described in his poem of the shield. Thus the Telephos myth is called upon to further illustrate the act of retreat in battle under a god's will – «θεοῦ κρατερῆ[ς ὑπ' ἀνάγκης] –, or in the poet's own words «unwillingly», «οὐκ ἐθέλων» (Fr. 5W, 2). Even more, the statement of Archilochos that he abandoned his own shield by a

bush – «παρά θάμνω» (Fr. 5W, 1) – recalls Telephos’ stumbling on a vine-shoot (another bush) and loosing of his shield. Under this perspective, Archilochos’ own act of throwing the shield to save his life finds an ideal example (παρά θάμνω) in a heroic precedent.

Archilochos’ narrative on Telephos and the battle in Mysia seems to have found its best artistic expression on the sculptural decoration of the west pediment of the temple of Athena Alea in Tegea of Arcadia, an architectural and sculptural creation of Skopas. The subject chosen for the west pediment, as the one represented on the eastern pediment, the hunt of the Calydonian boar according to Pausanias (8.45.7), was perfectly suited to the local history of Tegea. In short, Telephos was the son of Herakles and the local princess Auge, daughter of the king Aleos and a priestess of Athena Alea in her temple at Tegea. The baby Telephos exposed on the mountain Parthenion, his mother Auge abandoned at sea by Aleos, was later discovered and saved by Herakles. In his adulthood, Telephos, looking for his mother, reached Mysia, where Auge had landed earlier. The local king Teuthras asked Auge’s son to aid him in the battle against his enemies. In reward, Telephos became king of Mysia. Battling against and defeating the Greeks who mistakenly landed in Mysia on their way to Troy, he was fatally wounded by Achilles and later healed by this hero. In return, Telephos led the Greeks to Troy and, upon his comeback, he founded Pergamon.

The architectural sculptures from Tegea and the proposed reconstructions of the west pediment of the temple¹⁷ (figs. 3-4) suggest that Skopas chose to represent the most exciting episode of the Telephos myth, that is, the moment when the Tegean hero was about to receive Achilles’ fatal blow. The predilection of the sculptor to project the hero’s defeat instead of his exploits, even in Telephos’ own homeland, is well in accord with Skopas’ fondness of novelty inviting his viewers to think and reflect on the message carried through his work. The vine shown between the two heroes, included in all proposed reconstructions of the pediment, aside from the different views presented on the position of the figures involved, is strongly suggestive, in my opinion, of the influence Archilochos’ narrative and message had on Skopas’ theological perception of the pedimental scene. The vine implying Dionysos’ epiphany, becomes the means to spread the powerful message of the catalytic role which divine will or in-

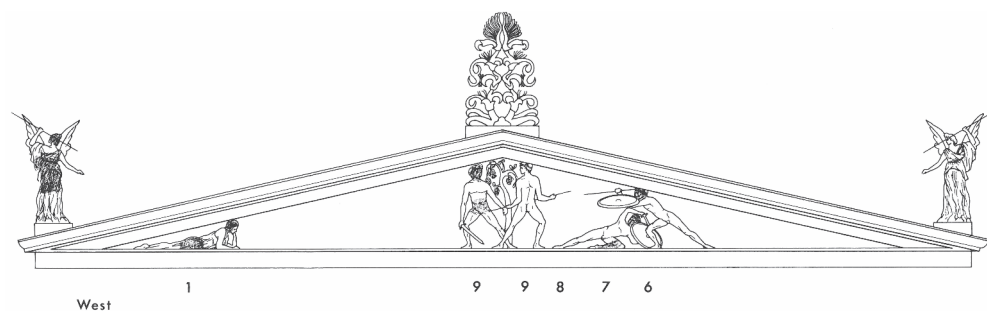


Fig. 3
Reconstruction of the west pediment of Athena Alea’s temple (after STEWART 1977, pl. 53).

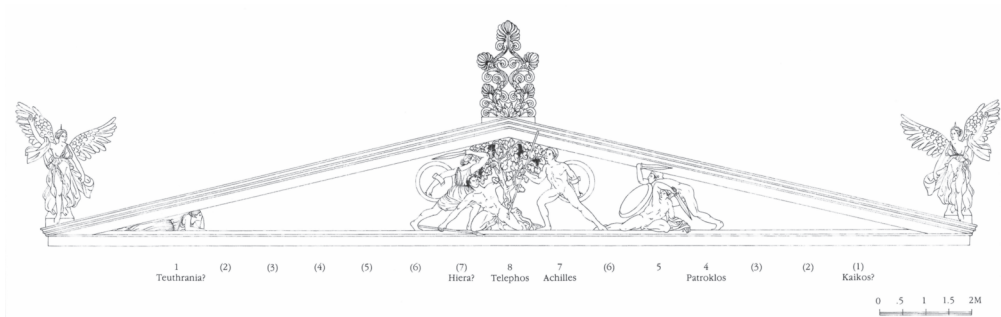


Fig. 4
Revised reconstruction of the west pediment of Athena Alea's temple (after STEWART 1982, foldout).

tervention can play in the fate of a hero, and much more of a man in the way Archilochos used the heroic example: «θεοῦ κρατερῆ[ς] ὑπ' ἀνάγκης / οὐκ ἐθέλων» to reflect on both the heroic and human world. The hero's wounding by Achilles first represented by Skopas in Tegea, was later depicted in the inner frieze of the Great Altar at Pergamon (built between 180-160 BC), where all the events of Telephos' life from birth to death were represented.

Shocking and troubling the audience/viewers is surely a common element in the work of these two Parians. The Telephos story, as said in Archilochos' poetry and as represented through Skopas' sculptures, is an example of projection of individuality as opposed to the heroic element. This turn of interest from the world of heroes/gods to men is evident throughout the work of both. For instance, another famous poem of Archilochos, the Cologne Epode, which came as a shock when discovered even to the modern interpreters of the poet, is characteristic of this tendency. In the Epode, an attempted seduction of a young girl in a meadow in the Parian countryside is described in such a daring way that caused a hot debate and divided opinions among scholars even in modern times. It was interpreted by some as nothing less than fulfilled sexual brutality and by others as tender awareness shown of the girls' expected fears. In the bottom line, Archilochos merely unravelled in front of his audience a pure individual experience by telling the story of an erotic pursuit. A similar bold representation of the force exercised on someone through intense inner feelings is highly expressed in the sculpture of Aphrodite Pandemos by Skopas, made for her sanctuary in the town of Elis in the Peloponnese¹⁸. The statue (fig. 5) shows the goddess galloping on a goat through the troubled sea to indicate excitement and seizure by a strong desire. Skopas' bronze image of the Pandemos and her message carried can be better appreciated when compared with the chryselephantine statue of Aphrodite Ourania by Pheidias made for the temple of the goddess in the same town. The contrast formed by these two images, seen and described by Pausanias (6.25.1), transmitted a clear message on the contradistinction existing in the two sides of Aphrodite's substance as the goddess of Love: the calm and sweet love ('Ourania' / heavenly) and the lustful love symbolised by the goat ('Pandemos' / common).

Another example of a common subject found in the work of both Parians, is the personification of Pothos, one of the companions of goddess Aphrodite. The first mention of Pothos in literature is found in the poetry of Archilochos¹⁹. As inscriptional evidence from Paros testifies to the worship of Peitho on the island²⁰, the poet's reference to Pothos possibly suggests that he was also worshipped in Paros. In sculpture, on the other hand, it may not be a coincidence that Skopas is the only sculptor who made statues of Pothos in two instances: a triad of Eros, Pothos and Imeros for the temple of Aphrodite in Megara (Paus. 1.43.6), and the cult statue of the goddess accompanied by Pothos and Phaethon for her sanctuary in Samothrace (Pliny, *NH* 36.25).

The projection of individuality by means of advancing via poetry or art human submission to strong emotions either to satisfy sensuality or to secure a man's life as shown in the cases discussed above, is, in fact, deeply religious as it recognizes man's humility and limitation as opposed to the divine supremacy and infinite, the heroic spirit included. The ancients considered that Archilochos' tongue and Skopas' hands produced works driven by divine inspiration. The poet was declared by the Delphic oracle as immortal²¹ and deserving of heaven; his venomous iambic verses were believed to be driven by the Muse. Skopas' art was praised as god-creating – «θεοποιός τέχνη»²².

In conclusion, innovative ideas boldly advanced against older prevailing trends, as found in the work of these two Parian personalities, may actually represent a genuine 'Parian' characteristic. In other words, it can be argued that avant-garde is a major diachronic element of the Parian society and culture well expressed both in the caustic poetic discourse of Archilochos and the representation of the inner turbulent world of the soul, τοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς ἠάδους, in the art of Skopas. And as such ideas are passed on to future generations through gifted personages and intelligent minds, there is no doubt that this kind of a 'Parian' world found its best expression in the Archaic poet Archilochos and the Classical sculptor Skopas of Paros.



Fig. 5
Statue of Aphrodite Pandemos
reproduced on a mirror-case, Paris
(STEWART 1977, pl. 33a).

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FOOTNOTES

1 KATSONOPOULOU 2004. On a further analysis of the style and connections with Paros see KATSONOPOULOU 2013.

2 CORSO 2008, esp. 276-279.

3 Theokritos, Epigram 21.

4 The Mnesiepes inscription, E₁ II, 16-19.

5 Alkidamas in Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.23.1398, 11-17.

6 The Mnesiepes (early 3rd century BC) and the Sosthenes inscriptions (early 1st century BC) drawing on the earlier account of the historian Demas of Paros.

7 On Archilochos and his age see especially KATSONOPOULOU ET AL. 2008.

8 For a most recent thorough treat-

ment on the Maenad see BARR-SHARRAR 2013.

9 *Laterculi Alexandrini* 7.3-5.

10 GRUBEN 1996 and 1999.

11 CLAY 2004, 124.

12 The newly read papyrus P. Oxy. 4708 Archilochos, *Elegies*, was found in Oxyrhynchos in Middle Egypt in 1897 and came from the same roll as two other previously published papyri (P. Oxy. VI 854 and XXX 2507) containing elegiac verses by Archilochos. For a first approach on the subject see KATSONOPOULOU 2008.

13 According to tradition (Herakleides Lembos, 22 Dilts), Paros was a colony of the Arcadians led to the island by their oikistes, Paros, the son of Parissios.

14 *Cypria*, a lost source of the 7th-6th c. BC. In Philostratos' *Heroikos*

23.24, it is Protesilaos who fighting against Telephos stripped him of his shield, and thus Achilles fell upon and wounded him in the thigh.

15 The translation is from CLAY 2004, 23.

16 My translation.

17 STEWART 1977, pl. 53 and 1982, foldout; MOSTRATOS 2013, fig. 11.

18 The image was reproduced on coins of Elis and other artefacts especially mirror-cases. See also CALCANI 2009, 52-55.

19 Frühgriechische Lyriker (ed. B. Snell) II 1972, 68, fr. 118.

20 RUBENSOHN 1949, 1846.

21 The Delphic oracle delivered to Archilochos' father Telesikles: CLAY 2004, 99-100.

22 *Palatine Anthology*, 9.774.