

# THEMIS VINDICATES THETIS

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**ABSTRACT.** Based on approach which stems from neoanalysis and intertextuality, the paper aims to highlight the suitability of Achilles' afterlife place through escalation of alternatives. Beginning with the Underworld, the research goes on with the Elysian Fields, the Islands of the Blessed and Mount Olympus and ends up with Leuke Island, presenting an updated information about it, carrying out a comparative analysis and justifying it as the most appropriate afterlife place for the hero via a holistic context whose focal points are cult, caliber, mythological and symbolic reasons.

**KEYWORDS:** Achilles, afterlife, Leuke, cult, panHellenism, deification.

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## *Introduction*

The epic poem of the Iliad offers a lot of emotions if everyone bears in mind its core; it is a writing work of war but simultaneously, not belligerent. This kind of beautiful contradiction is depicted also in the central hero of the epic who is characterized by many situations which are reflected in literature sources with different versions. To begin with, his way of death is ambiguous. Apart from the well-known incident with the poisonous arrow, there is another point of view. Medical experience and knowledge point out that if a vascul is damaged at some point, then after some time – usually a few minutes – the blood coagulates at that specific point. Then, a permanent clot is formed and as a consequence, the bleeding stops.<sup>1</sup> However, the reduced coagulability of the blood cannot be neglected since it requires more coagulation time. This condition constitutes haemophilia.<sup>2</sup>

Another fact which is even more complicated is the place of Achilles' afterlife and thus, the current paper is going to deal with the qualitative aspects of a portion of questions that have not been answered in total and have not been of great interest to scholars as well, until now. The first question, the answer to which is the

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<sup>1</sup> D. Kouvelas (2002) 16

<sup>2</sup> A. Giannitsaros (1989) 373

easiest one, is related to the justice that Homer renders to Achilles or not. Despite the range of the Achaean hero, he insists on presenting him as a mere shadow in the realm of Hades<sup>3</sup> and for that reason, it can be argued that the poet does not express his philosophical support for him<sup>4</sup>. This is proved by the juxtaposition of certain facts. Firstly, Odysseus meets his beloved mother in the Underworld and likewise, the ghost of Patroclus appears from the Underworld to Achilles, begging him to take care of his burial.<sup>5</sup> However, in the epic poem of *Odyssey*, it is written that the gods intend to send Menelaus to the Elysian Fields, next to the legislator Rhadamanthys where there is no winter; only the wind Zephyrus blows, who is sent by the Titan Oceanus for the pleasure of everyone who lives in there.<sup>6</sup> This bewilderment is magnified if anyone considers that the criterion for this afterlife place for Menelaus is purely of a family nature. So, in fact, the epic poet partially negates himself and posits few exceptions of people who eventually escape perpetual death but the overall conclusion is that death and darkness remain the basic rule.<sup>7</sup>

This pessimistic perception of Homer about afterlife – in essence, the precursor of the Aristotelian conception – is strengthened by the lack of complete meaning of the soul since nothing of a psychological feature is observed. To put it differently, the soul was characterized by unconsciousness (the attitude of Ajax towards Odysseus is also an exception)<sup>8</sup> but there were no psychological characteristics attributed to it.<sup>9</sup> Certain people whom death does not mean indeed death but an eternal effort for atonement (e.g. Tantalus, Sisyphus, Tityos, Danaids etc.), that is another story.<sup>10</sup> When a human being dies and the soul is carried to the Underworld, its eternal residence there can mean exclusively two things; the best scenario is the lack of tautness and the worst scenario is the absolute darkness without a trace of pleasure.<sup>11</sup> Bearing all the above in mind, it is easily understood that the opinion of Homer which gives emphasis mostly on the dark side of the afterlife, cannot be portrayed but one-dimensional and with blinkers.<sup>12</sup> In any case, it seems

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<sup>3</sup> K. Doukas (1999) 321

<sup>4</sup> V. Spanos (2019) 413

<sup>5</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 731

<sup>6</sup> K. Doukas (1999) 123

<sup>7</sup> K. Matijevic (2016) 24

<sup>8</sup> R. Edmonds III (2014) 6

<sup>9</sup> J. Bremmer (1983) 16

<sup>10</sup> B. Ehrman (2020) 99

<sup>11</sup> R. Edmonds III (2014) 5

<sup>12</sup> C. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 84

that all that does matter to Homer is the light of the sun on earth and since death is inevitable, it should be accompanied by glorious deeds.

*Elysian Fields and Islands of the Blessed*

The persistence of the almost complete identification of the afterlife with Hades seems not to be a general and common belief but merely an opinion of Homer. The perception of the existence of alternative afterlife places is adopted not only from the time of Homer to that of the Roman Empire but also much earlier, during the Aegean civilization ruled by the Minoans, from the Greek island of Crete.<sup>13</sup> This variety is precisely due to what is called mythical space which has nothing to do with reality and science and as expected, logic is marginalized.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the spatial planning of these places such as the Elysian Fields or the Islands of the Blessed, does not coincide with the double Christian concept of heaven and hell. They can be anywhere; from the very edge of the planet earth to the moon.<sup>15</sup> According to Diodorus of Sicily, the Islands of the Blessed are linked to the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Rhodes because there was fresh air, the atmosphere was healthy and the production of goods was not a problem at all. All these, contributed to the happiness of the residents.<sup>16</sup> The geographer Strabo also speaks of the Elysian Fields, at the edge of the Iberian Peninsula where Rhadamanthys and Diomedes lived, among others, in an area with temperate climate, warmth and with good air. Concerning the Islands of the Blessed, he thinks that they are at the opposite side of the ancient Gadeira (modern Cadiz)<sup>17</sup> or perhaps the modern Canary Islands,<sup>18</sup> in the Atlantic Ocean. Philostratus believes that the Islands of the Blessed are defined by the Libyan borders and ascend towards the uninhabited cape.<sup>19</sup> Plutarch is distinguished by pretty much the same perception when he makes reference to the Islands of the Blessed in the Atlantic Ocean which are divided via a very narrow channel and they are ten thousands stadiums far away from Libya.<sup>20</sup> Still, probably the Elysian Fields and the Islands of the Blessed are not one and the

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<sup>13</sup> A. Morgan (1983) 4

<sup>14</sup> F. Tuan (1977) 99

<sup>15</sup> E. Gee (2020) 2

<sup>16</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1997) 213

<sup>17</sup> P. Theodoridis (1994b) 79

<sup>18</sup> P. Theodoridis (1994b) 172

<sup>19</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1994) 105

<sup>20</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1993c) 41

same<sup>21</sup> but both of them acquire a special significance for Achilles, though not holistic.

The ancient literature is quite rich regarding this point of view, impoverishing in that way the notion of Homer. Hesiod argues that there are souls of heroes which reside at the end of the earth and more specifically, on the Islands of the Blessed where happiness is everlasting.<sup>22</sup> Pindar mentions the Islands of the Blessed where the Titans Cronus and Rhea rule and among people there, Peleus and Cadmus live.<sup>23</sup> Apollodorus points out that Cadmus and Harmonia abandoned Thebes in Boeotia and after military operations, they ended up to be the royal couple of the Illyrians. Some time later, they were transformed into snakes and Zeus' decision for them was to live forever in the Elysian Fields.<sup>24</sup> Euripides underlines the afterlife of Cadmus and Harmonia as well, on the Islands of the Blessed, after the intervention of Ares.<sup>25</sup> Lycus, the son of Poseidon and Celaeno, one of the Pleiades, was transferred by his father to the Islands of the Blessed.<sup>26</sup> The same author brings Menelaus in the foreground one more time. According to him, after a wandering of eight years, he regained his authority in Sparta and after Hera made him immortal, she sent him to the Elysian Fields, together with Helen.<sup>27</sup> When Telegonus killed Odysseus without knowing that he was his father, he carried the dead body along with Penelope to the island of Circe. Telegonus and Penelope got married and the daughter of the Titan Helios sent them to the Islands of the Blessed.<sup>28</sup> Herodotus narrating a campaign by the Persian king Cambyses, notes a place which is already known to the Greeks by the name "*Island of the Blessed*".<sup>29</sup> Plato assumes that every person whose life is characterized by fairness, heads for the Islands of the Blessed, away from any evil.<sup>30</sup> Nonnus quotes beautiful groves and meadows in the Elysian Fields with prominent figure, the judge Rhadamanthys.<sup>31</sup> Lycophron mentions the Islands of the Blessed, based on the transfer of Hector's bones from Troy to them.<sup>32</sup> Anonymous in the work "*Select Papyri*" presents the Elysian Fields

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<sup>21</sup> P. Beekes (1998) 23

<sup>22</sup> S. Skartsis (1993) 111

<sup>23</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2008a) 111

<sup>24</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999b) 31

<sup>25</sup> G. Giannaris (1993) 199

<sup>26</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999b) 63

<sup>27</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999b) 177

<sup>28</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999b) 193

<sup>29</sup> B. Anastasopoulou and X. Tsaka (1992a) 57

<sup>30</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999d) 299

<sup>31</sup> W. Rouse (1940) 105

<sup>32</sup> G. Mooney (1921) 129

as the end of the march of holy men.<sup>33</sup> Virgil claims that Anchises, the father of Aeneas, is considered to live after his death in the Elysian Fields.<sup>34</sup> Ovid considers that Orpheus meets Eurydice in the Elysian Fields.<sup>35</sup> Valerius Flaccus states that even the legendary steersman of the Argo ship, Tiphys, rests in the Elysian Fields.<sup>36</sup> Quintus Smyrnaeus posits that demigod Memnon, the last ally of the Trojans who was killed by Achilles, continued his life after death in the Elysian Fields<sup>37</sup>, at his goddess mother's request – Eos – to Zeus. Statius names Persephone as the consort of the Elysian monarch<sup>38</sup> and also notes that Amphiaras makes noise that the rest of the Elysian folks understand.<sup>39</sup> Apuleius alleges that Isis shines despite the darkness of Acheron and the depths of the river Styx, notifying the existence of the Elysian Fields.<sup>40</sup> Last but not least, Antoninus Liberalis deems that Zeus ordered Hermes to carry Alcmene's body to the Islands of the Blessed where she got married to Rhadamanthys.<sup>41</sup> Even if questions are raised regarding which personalities roll in to the Elysian Fields or the Islands of the Blessed, it is more than obvious that this afterlife perspective cannot be set aside.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, it is proven, in the most assertive way that this perception not only had a great consistency but was also diachronic.

As for Achilles, there are of course ancient sources which connect him to those kind of paradises. Apollonius describes a situation in which Hera informs Thetis that her son, after his death, will live in the Elysian Fields.<sup>43</sup> Apollodorus is somehow differentiated and supports that Achilles and Medea lived on the Islands of the Blessed.<sup>44</sup> Pindar puts the hero together with Rhadamanthys, Cadmus and Pelus on the Islands of the Blessed.<sup>45</sup> Plato argues that the gods sent Achilles on the Islands of the Blessed because of his decision he took about the dilemma of choosing long but inconspicuous life or short life accompanied by glorious death and –

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<sup>33</sup> D. Page (1941) 479

<sup>34</sup> T. Tasopoulos (1964) 116

<sup>35</sup> M. Papatomopoulos and I. Tsavari (2002) 396

<sup>36</sup> H. Blomfield (1916) 118

<sup>37</sup> A. Way (1913) 115

<sup>38</sup> J. Mozley (1928) 571

<sup>39</sup> J. Mozley (1928) 195

<sup>40</sup> E. Kenney (1998) 173

<sup>41</sup> F. Celoria (1992) 92

<sup>42</sup> F. Solmsen (1982) 22

<sup>43</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999c) 347

<sup>44</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999b) 155

<sup>45</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2008a) 111

indirect – immortality.<sup>46</sup> Ovid puts Achilles in the Elysian Fields along with other ancient mythical personalities.<sup>47</sup>

At this point, a second question rises to the surface and its content has to do with whether the Elysian Fields or the Islands of the Blessed – with all due respect to all the other heroes who live in these places – fit Achilles as an afterlife place or not. The question can be extended, wondering how a man who in the prime of his youth not only understands and realizes fully the inevitability of death and its philosophy as a whole but embraces it with indelible honor, experiences the gloomy Underworld<sup>48</sup> or is equated with other heroes who objectively, do not match him since his caliber is immense. The answer to this question is a complicated one and demands a complex and detailed analysis based on the significance of Achilles for the whole ancient world.

### *Basic cult of Achilles*

On a basic level, Achilles is neither just a hero nor an epic hero only; he is a cult hero as well.<sup>49</sup> The peculiarities of his worship begin from the wider area of Thessaly, the region in central Greece in which his homeland, Phthia, was put. The united perception of Thessaly is reflected from the very ancient times until the period of Roman dominance. These federations of the Thessalian quartets (Pelagiotis-Estiaiotis-Thessaliois-Phthiotis) were called “*Thessalian League*” (“*Thessalians’ Koinon*”). Its power was such that the control of the region reached up to Delphi.<sup>50</sup> Even the Athenian reality adopts the character of the hero focusing on Thessaly in total. For instance, Orestes allegedly has Achilles as a pattern, killing Aegisthus with a knife from Thessaly,<sup>51</sup> not just from Phthia. However, his death was the element which marked his cult throughout Thessaly. It should be noted that in the context of a cortege to Troy, it was Thessalians who were taking part and not residents from just a city who could assert that Achilles’ origin derives from it. Therefore, taking into consideration that his tomb was at Troy and not where he was born, his cult spread – at an initial stage – all over Thessaly.<sup>52</sup>

Following the above placement, at the estuary of the river Scamander in Hellespont, the epicenter of the hero’s funerary cult was formed. The location is called

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<sup>46</sup> H. Andreadi (1991) 47

<sup>47</sup> M. Papathomopoulos and I. Tsavari (2002) 461

<sup>48</sup> K. King (2009) 52; J. Redfield (1992) 101

<sup>49</sup> G. Nagy (2020)

<sup>50</sup> A. Avramea (1974) 18

<sup>51</sup> C. Kraus (1992) 161-163

<sup>52</sup> J. Maclean and E. Aitken (2001) 78

Sigeion and in Greek language means “*the place where silence prevails*”. A concise description about Sigeion belongs to Philostratus whose family came from Lemnos, the island of Hephaestus, right across the shores of Troy.<sup>53</sup> A magnificent tomb – Achilles’ grave – was there, so that every ship could see it, being thus an imposing spatial reference point.<sup>54</sup> However, even though his cult is taken for granted and widespread at this area, the exact position of the tomb is a problem difficult to solve even nowadays.<sup>55</sup> The annual course of a ship from Thessaly to Troy involved sacrifices and offerings to Achilles, both as dead and god.<sup>56</sup> In general, the influence of the Homeric epics is pervasive not only on the level of hero cult but in funeral ceremonies as well.<sup>57</sup> To put it differently, the quality size of Achilles made Homer compose the Iliad and this enhanced to a great extent, the configuration of the hero’s cult.<sup>58</sup> Yet, all the epic poems which existed in the ancient times contributed to this direction.<sup>59</sup>

Over time, there were transitions regarding his worship because the honors which were given to him, suited just a dead man and not a god. Consequently, the fact that Thessaly was being tested by natural disasters was logically considered as a commonly accepted view at that age. This is why the contribution of Apollonius of Tyana seemed to be quite big, by restoring the proper honors for Achilles<sup>60</sup> and using the tomb as an oracle.<sup>61</sup> According to him, the problem was that though Thessaly is the cradle of Greece,<sup>62</sup> the Thessalians were in no position to perceive the true impact of his cult all over Greece, did not participate in common national games and supported the Persians and thus, Achilles punished them.<sup>63</sup> The first recorded leader who visited Sigeion was Xerxes in 480 BC<sup>64</sup> while other important figures made the same thing, such as Alexander the Great. When he disembarked at Troy, he made sacrifices and offerings,<sup>65</sup> honoring his role model, with whom he

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<sup>53</sup> S. Follet (2004) 221-224

<sup>54</sup> G. Nagy (1979) 338-343

<sup>55</sup> J. Cook (1973) 173-174

<sup>56</sup> J. Maclean and E. Aitken (2001) 78

<sup>57</sup> J. Adams (2007) 9

<sup>58</sup> N. Coldstream (1976) 17

<sup>59</sup> L. Farnell (1921) 340

<sup>60</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1994) 51

<sup>61</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1994) 35

<sup>62</sup> V. Spanos (2018) 9-10

<sup>63</sup> B. McLoskey (2017) 64-69

<sup>64</sup> B. Anastasopoulou and X. Tsaka (1992c) 83

<sup>65</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1993b) 59

was identified.<sup>66</sup> The Roman emperor Caracalla<sup>67</sup> cannot be excluded because it is not random that Rome understood the magnitude of Achilles and the Trojan War. For this reason, Rome was urging the devotion of the Greeks to the cult of Achilles and the heroes in general. It is worth noting that throughout the Roman Empire, there was no place which managed to preserve its past to that extent, except for Troy. Thus, Rome declared Larissa in 196 AD as a free city and capital of Thessaly,<sup>68</sup> a region that is strongly linked to the son of Peleus because of the bonds between it and Troy. This becomes particularly important if anyone ponders that Troy is actually the transit center between the Aegean Sea and Euxine Pontus, a geographical point with extreme worldwide geopolitical significance, even in the present.

*PanHellenic cult of Achilles due to Leuke Island*

By changing scale and leveling up, Achilles differentiates himself and is no longer just a hero, an epic hero or a cult hero. The cult of a hero obviously cannot identify with god cult since the first is limited to a specific spatial context with the body buried there while the second covers a wide geographical range.<sup>69</sup> This kind of transition initially leans on the epic poem of Aithiopsis where is written that the Nereid goddess Thetis lifts her son's body of the pyre and carries it away, on an island which is called Leuke or White Island.<sup>70</sup> Leuke cannot be identified with the Elysian Fields or the Islands of the Blessed because the latter were put outside the borders the humans were setting in the framework of journeys in the known world back then<sup>71</sup> while the first, is included in the boundaries of the Greek world at least from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>72</sup> The symbolism which exists in the name of the island cannot be marginalized because its relevance to a color that, according to ancient beliefs, depicts the passage from death to a paradise reality, is more than evident.<sup>73</sup> The importance of the white color is also reflected in the transition of the souls of Penelope's suitors in the Odyssey which crossed the streams of Oceanus and the White Stone.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1993b) 37

<sup>67</sup> I. Rutherford (2009) 237-238

<sup>68</sup> T. Axenidis (1947) 54 & 170

<sup>69</sup> H. Abramson (1978) 40-41

<sup>70</sup> M. West (2003) 112

<sup>71</sup> E. Rhode (1925) 537

<sup>72</sup> G. Hedreen (1991) 320

<sup>73</sup> A. Karachalios and V. Noula (2019) 367

<sup>74</sup> K. Doukas (1999) 649



The rest of ancient bibliography is also aware of this island. Apollodorus quotes that the body of Achilles was buried on Leuke.<sup>75</sup> Pindar says that Leuke is an island in the Euxine that shines like the moon.<sup>76</sup> Euripides presents Thetis telling Peleus that she will make him immortal and together, they can see their beloved son on the island of Leuke.<sup>77</sup> Strabo writes that in the Euxine there is an island called Leuke, to the north of Europe's cape (Aries forehead) and the cape of Asia (Carambis).<sup>78</sup> Philostratus claims it was Poseidon that made the island appear in the Euxine, for Achilles and for sailors.<sup>79</sup> Pausanias addresses that beyond the river Istros, there is a sacred island which belongs to Achilles and it is called Leuke. The island is full of dense forests, animals – either tame or wild – and encloses the temple and the statue of the demigod.<sup>80</sup> It is very likely that healing rituals were performed in the temple at the behest of Pythia via the Delphi oracle.<sup>81</sup> The sanctuary operated from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>82</sup> Arrian, during his voyage in the Euxine Sea, makes also note about Leuke, a temple devoted to Achilles, a wooden statue of the hero and an oracle while there were no inhabitants and many offerings such as cups, rings and gems had been found, as well as inscriptions.<sup>83</sup> Many other writers also include Leuke in their works such as Quintus of Smyrna, Lycophron, Skymnos, Demetrios of Callatis, Hesikyos, Hermias, Skylax of Caryanda and Stephanos of Byzantium.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, in 1837, material from Achilles' temple was used for the building of a lighthouse.<sup>85</sup> The scientific team "*Black Sea Company*", investigated the bottom of the sea around the island and as a result, ancient shipwrecks were discovered, including an ancient Greek merchant ship from Peperethus, the modern island of Skopelos which took the name "*Patroclus*".<sup>86</sup>

The critical issue about Leuke is the fact that Achilles lives there as an immortal god<sup>87</sup> while the versions about his wife are various, including Iphigeneia, Medea,

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<sup>75</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999b) 155

<sup>76</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2008b) 425

<sup>77</sup> T. Roussos (1993) 139

<sup>78</sup> P. Theodoridis (1994a) 205

<sup>79</sup> J. Maclean and E. Aitken (2001) 82

<sup>80</sup> A. Tataraki (1992a) 137-138

<sup>81</sup> A. Rusyaeva (2003) 3

<sup>82</sup> A. Rusyaeva (2003) 4

<sup>83</sup> W. Falconer and T. Falconer (1805) 16-17

<sup>84</sup> I. Turcanu (2015) 52

<sup>85</sup> A. Karachalios and V. Noula (2019) 369

<sup>86</sup> A. Karachalios and V. Noula (2019) 370

<sup>87</sup> C. Tsagalis (2007) 100

Polyxena and Helen.<sup>88</sup> With Achilles, Helen bore a son whose name was Euphotion.<sup>89</sup> In later literature, it seems that Achilles has as son with Penthesileia named Cayster.<sup>90</sup> Though the information about this fact is not enlightened, the paper recommends Penthesileia as the more suitable wife for Achilles since she is distinguished for the self-sacrifice of the first, the character strength of the second, the kindness of the third and the beauty of the last. Besides, the Amazons' beauty was praised. For instance, the Amazon Hiera, wife of Telephus, was considered to be more beautiful than Helen.<sup>91</sup>

It seems that Leuke is the epicenter of a worship whose rays are on the one hand many and on the other hand, very long. At an initial stage, the results of the excavations in Olbia and the surrounding area certified that the settlers from the Ionian city of Miletus and the cities from the Aeolian tribe on the coasts of Asia Minor, expressed a strong and special interest in the son of Peleus and Thetis.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, the impact of Achilles in the Aegean Sea, Euxine and Asia Minor is too big and the evidence for this comes from cults and designations in areas such as Olbia, Cimmerian Bosphorus and Byzantium.<sup>93</sup> For example, in Sigeion, there was a small town named "*Achilleion*"<sup>94</sup> and near the island of Leuke there was the "*Road of Achilles*"<sup>95</sup> which was also called the "*Grove of Achilles*".<sup>96</sup> The honors he enjoyed on Leuke were equal to the gods<sup>97</sup> and the interfusion of this god cult as – among others – protector of the sailors with the name "*Achilles Pontarches*" or "*The Lord of the Scythian Land*"<sup>98</sup> was a logical consequence. The speed of this interfusion has to do with the fact that the Greeks and primarily the Thessalians, already knew about Euxine Pontus from the time of the Argonautic campaign.<sup>99</sup>

At this point, the deeper meaning between the island and the mouth of Danube is going to be analyzed. The god cult on Leuke contains in its core something more than meets the eye. Though Achilles is closely related to the element of water, a

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<sup>88</sup> T. Roussos (1992) 163

<sup>89</sup> H. Doolittle (1961) 109

<sup>90</sup> M. Rici (2019)

<sup>91</sup> C. Martin de Jesus (2016) 270

<sup>92</sup> J. Larson (2007) 206

<sup>93</sup> L. Farnell (1921) 285-286

<sup>94</sup> P. Theodoridis (1994d) 101

<sup>95</sup> B. Anastasopoulou and X. Tsaka (1992b) 75

<sup>96</sup> P. Theodoridis (1994c) 95

<sup>97</sup> G. Hedreen (1991) 315

<sup>98</sup> A. Rusyaeva (2003) 1

<sup>99</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999c)

quality which was delivered to him from his mother,<sup>100</sup> essentially, his sovereignty is over the dipole “*land-sea*”. The prefix “*Ach-*” of his name is found in river gods of ancient Greek mythology (Acheron – Achelous – Inachus), in a river in the modern city of Arta (Arachthos), in locations (A[n]chialos), even in the name of one of the many ancient Greek tribes, the Achaeans and is connected to the liquid element, the sea and its vastness.<sup>101</sup> At the same time, he is connected to the river sediments which transfer volumes of water. His relationship with this dipole emerges from both his parents since his mother is a sea goddess and his father has direct link with earth and clay.<sup>102</sup>

Some remnants of these relationship still exist. First, Sperchios river to whom Peleus promised his son’s blond hair if he would return from Troy,<sup>103</sup> springs within today’s Prefecture of Phthiotida and drives out to the Malian Gulf. Second, at the mouth of Scamander River, the sanctuary of Achilles is a very strong argument. Third, when Byzas from the ancient city of Megara, near Attica, founded Byzantium which after centuries took the name Constantinople, he built the “*Bath of Achilles*”.<sup>104</sup> Fourth, altars dedicated to Achilles and his first cousin, Ajax the Great, were standing at Stratigio, above the harbors of Neorion and Phosphorion, in the gulf of the Golden Horn.<sup>105</sup> Fifth, the “*Achilles Stadium*” (road) which was mentioned before. Sixth, at the mouth of the Dnieper River near Kinburn, a cylindrical altar was discovered whose inscription is devoted to the demigod hero<sup>106</sup> and there, an island of Achilles was supposed to exist too.<sup>107</sup> Seventh, at the mouth of Danube River there is the Byzantine place named “*Killia*” which is a linguistic evolution of the name “*Achillia*”.<sup>108</sup> It is more than obvious that Aeacus’ grandson is the one who adheres to anyone who approaches the land or a delta river with a ship, in order to explore the area and ensure safe trade. The great difference of this cult in relation to Thessaly was that the latter was indeed his birthplace but it neither possessed his body, like the land of Troy nor his soul, like Leuke.<sup>109</sup> Still, his march from his birth until his death at a very young age cannot be a coincidence. So, his particular

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<sup>100</sup> G. Nagy (1979) 343-344

<sup>101</sup> A. Rizos (1993-1994) 77-78

<sup>102</sup> S. Gouloulis (2019) 56

<sup>103</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 733

<sup>104</sup> R. Janin (1964) 216

<sup>105</sup> G. Dagron (2000) 422, 424, 614

<sup>106</sup> G. Hedreen (1991) 319

<sup>107</sup> I. Kakridis (1986) 126

<sup>108</sup> A. Gouloulis (2019) 57

<sup>109</sup> A. Gouloulis (2019) 58

homeland Phthia, whose etymology means “*land of the dead*” is the one who highlighted and shaped him,<sup>110</sup> answering thus with a smile to Charon’s invitation.

The symbolism of Leuke does not end here because the archaeological findings declare something massive in terms of Greek nation. Many objects well-known to the Greeks were discovered; amphorae, amforiskoi, lekythoi, kylikes, bowls, kantharoi, pitchers, kraters etc. Fragility did not prevent the knowledge about their construction places which among others were<sup>111</sup> Histria, Tyras, Olbia, Thasos, Chersonesos, Rhodes, Kos, Pantikapaion, Samos, Chios, Lesbos, Delos, Attica, Clazomenae, Miletus, Heraclea, Corinth, Megara and Sinope.<sup>112</sup> The huge significance of the island can be proved also from the coins that were found on it. Though it is certain that many of them were subtracted and removed, the total number reached 3,000 coins for sure.<sup>113</sup> Turcanu carries out a holistic mapping of the coins that arrived on the island<sup>114</sup> based on the existing literature. Coins from cities and regions like Tyras, Olbia, Chersonesos, Pantikapaion, Theodosia, Phanagoria, Tomis, Histria, Odessos, Mesembria, Dionysopolis, Dioscurias, Abydos, Kyzikos, Heraclea, Pontica, Pergamon, Ephesus, Chios, Rhodes, Patara, Phaselis, Bruttium, Naples, Messene, Syracuse, Cumae, Lacedaemon, Athens, Megara, Delos, Kythnos, Thera, Mende, Ainos, Macedonia (Greek kings Philip II and his son, Alexander the Great), Thrace, Scythia (rulers Kanites and Gaeles), Pergamon (Philiteros) were brought there, during the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC. During the following two centuries, cities such as Apollonia, Pylos, Sicyon, Locris, Tanagra, Adramyttion, Ios, Naxos, Tenos, Itanos, Knossos, Sestos, Thasos, Amastris, Prusa, Alexandria (Moesia), Alexandria (Troas), Alexandria (Egypt), Paros, Tenedos, Eresos, Clazomenae, Teos, Erythrea, Antiocheia, Pisidias, Knidos, Cesarea and the region of Syria were included too. Even during the period of the Roman Empire, money arrived at Leuke from all the provinces.<sup>115</sup> The geographical scale of the various currencies, from Levant to Mesopotamia, proves that the fame of Achilles and his island was enormous. This is reinforced by relatively recent researches which demonstrate that up to 202 Greek city states were sending coins to Leuke.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> H. Hommel (1980) 38

<sup>111</sup> I. Turcanu (2015) 54

<sup>112</sup> V. Piatyseva (1964) 62

<sup>113</sup> A. Bulatovic (1971) 213

<sup>114</sup> I. Turcanu (2015) 54-55

<sup>115</sup> A. Bulatovic (1971) 214-225; A. Bulatovic (1979) 95-98

<sup>116</sup> M. Abramzon and I. Tunkina (2021) 193

*Achilles in the context of Hellas*

This PanHellenic god cult of Achilles – already from the time of the colonization of the Euxine Pontus by the Milesians<sup>117</sup> – could not be in any way arbitrary or naive. Through it, the essence and impact of the epic poem “*Aithiopsis*” are depicted since Homer makes reference only to a cult in the land of Troy.<sup>118</sup> The comprehension of Leuke entails full understanding of Achilles, the greatest hero and the role model for every man in ancient Greece whose universal geophilosophical entity exists even nowadays.<sup>119</sup> His influence can be tracked in poetry, art<sup>120</sup> and philosophy (Plato, Aristotle etc.).<sup>121</sup> Sappho for example, characterizes Achilles as a bridegroom equal to Apollo and Ares, comparing the glory of war to that of marriage.<sup>122</sup> The ancient Greek reality has not dealt more with any other mythological figure. Indicatively, he is presented in at least twenty five works and mentioned in fifty more while when it comes to ancient tragedy, he is taken into consideration more than Heracles (from whom the Spartans were descended) and Theseus (from whom the Athenians were descended).<sup>123</sup> So, it turns out that Achilles is on the top and represents all the Greeks and not only the two strongest city states. This is observed in many aspects of the ancient Greek world.

The term “*PanHellenes*” which means “*all the Greeks*” derives from the kingdom of Achilles and the name “*Hellas*”. Even though Homer does refer to Achaeans, Danaans and Argives as the people who went to fight in Troy, he mentions “*Hellenes*” only those who used to live in Phthia, the kingdom of Achilles’ father, Peleus and records the term “*PanHellenes*”.<sup>124</sup> The name was also used by Hesiod<sup>125</sup> and Archilochus<sup>126</sup> as declarative for all Greeks. Thucydides confirms the origin of the name from the territory of Achilles, where years before Hellen, son of Deucalion, used to rule.<sup>127</sup> Taking into account that before the Trojan War there was no common – war – operation in such scale,<sup>128</sup> the role of Hellas and Phthia (although the latter is not clear yet whether it is a city or a region or both) are too important. Moreover, even

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<sup>117</sup> A. Rusyaeva (2003) 12

<sup>118</sup> J. Larson (2007) 206

<sup>119</sup> G. Stamkos (2002)

<sup>120</sup> L. Farnell (1921) 284

<sup>121</sup> P. Michelakis (2002) 8-13

<sup>122</sup> G. Nagy (2013) 97-100

<sup>123</sup> P. Michelakis (2002) 14

<sup>124</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 112

<sup>125</sup> S. Skartsis (1993) 132

<sup>126</sup> Cactus Philological Team (2002a) 124

<sup>127</sup> A. Giagopoulos (2005) 83

<sup>128</sup> A. Giagopoulos (2005) 85

though the name “*Greek*” is older than that of “*Hellene*”, the first was used only for a Greek tribe in the region of Epirus while at the same time, the Greek nation never used this name for its self-definition,<sup>129</sup> as proved above.

Another example is the ancient Olympic Games which were characterized by the participation of all the Greeks and truce was a basic feature all over Greece. On the eve of the Olympics, during the sunset, women from Elis made rituals in order to mourn and honor Achilles.<sup>130</sup> This primary common Greek sport event is related to Greeks’ primary hero and apart from that, there is also a strong symbolism; sun’s death at sunset is metaphorically correlated with the death of the demigod with the auburn – blond and red – hair.<sup>131</sup> This shimmering quality of Achilles and his identification with the light and solar symbolism, lies in another fact; the gleam of his divine armor and sword from his tomb in Sigeion, is a beacon to the sailors.<sup>132</sup> His cult was recorded in many other places in ancient Greece such as Boeotia, Astypalaia Island, Erythrea, Taranto, Crotona, Epizephyrioi Locroi etc.<sup>133</sup> The respect for him was so great that on the road from Sparta to Arcadia there was his sanctuary which according to tradition, was always closed<sup>134</sup> and in the region of Epirus (northwest of Greece) he was considered the progenitor of Aiakidai and the tribe of the Molossians (Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great belongs to it) while people identified him with the name “*Aspetus*” which means “*the name which cannot be said*”.<sup>135</sup>

The bond between Achilles and Greece had not to do only with places in the Greek territory. When the Spartan Eurybiades announced his decision for sea battle against the Persians in Salamis in 480 BC, all the Greeks bearing in mind the sacrifice in Thermopylae and the following danger, decided to pray to the gods on the one hand and on the other hand, to the sons of Aeacus, Achilles’ grandfather, asking them to assist in the naval battle.<sup>136</sup> Another proof of the Panhellenic appeal of the hero is Simonides of Ceos, whose poem was recited during the Plataea festivals because of the battle there against the Persians, in 479 BC. The importance of the victorious outcome was such that the Persian danger was definitely eliminated

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<sup>129</sup> V. Spanos (2018) 9-10

<sup>130</sup> A. Tataraki (1992b) 305

<sup>131</sup> G. Nagy (2020)

<sup>132</sup> E. Aston (2009) 87

<sup>133</sup> I. Kakridis (1986) 126

<sup>134</sup> A. Tataraki (1992a) 143

<sup>135</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1993a) 27

<sup>136</sup> B. Anastasopoulou and X. Tsaka (1992d) 85

to Greece and for this reason, Simonides equates the bravery of the dead Greeks with that of Achilles.<sup>137</sup>

All the above testify and strengthen the importance of the Panhellenic cult in Leuke but Achilles is distinguished also by a feature that is not highlighted in international bibliography regarding the island and his enormous caliber. From the four points of the horizon, West belongs to Heracles<sup>138</sup> and South belongs to Achilles' alter ego, Memnon, where he lives as an immortal after his death by Achilles and at his mother's request to Zeus.<sup>139</sup> The similarities are obvious since both have divine mothers and an armor constructed by Hephaestus.<sup>140</sup> The identification between Thetis-Eos and Achilles-Memnon was also seen in ancient Olympia.<sup>141</sup> So, Achilles defines the identity of the Greeks in the East<sup>142</sup> but in the North as well, defining thus not only one but two horizon directions.

### *Olympus' potential as an afterlife place for Achilles*

The suitability of Leuke as the most appropriate afterlife place for Achilles can be documented from some other factors as well that have not been discussed on the level of international literature and the paper is going to extend this notion. Another question that must be answered is the potential of Olympus (as was for Heracles)<sup>143</sup> as an afterlife place for Achilles due to his range. The first aspect of this extension links Leuke with the indirect power of Achilles which in turn, derives from his mother. Homer does not predicate this immense power of Thetis but omits it constantly, although he makes some hints. The Nereid goddess was able to give birth to a son more powerful than his father. Taking into account that Zeus and Poseidon were attracted to her, Achilles as an immortal could be the next ruler of the universe and this could have happened, if Zeus had not intervened via Themis<sup>144</sup> (or due to Prometheus),<sup>145</sup> forcing Thetis to marry a mortal man and thus, preserving the cosmic equilibrium, the goddess pays the highest price; the mortality of her son and ultimately, his death.

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<sup>137</sup> P. Michelakis (2002) 5

<sup>138</sup> J. Larson (2007) 206

<sup>139</sup> M. West (2003) 112

<sup>140</sup> M. West (2003) 110-112

<sup>141</sup> A. Tataraki (1992b) 143

<sup>142</sup> J. Larson (2007) 206

<sup>143</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2005) 341

<sup>144</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2008a) 501

<sup>145</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2007) 251-252

Her cosmic force is not to be silenced in any case because she was probably a divine entity who, over the years, was relegated. It is no coincidence that she, a Nereid goddess, nurtures the infant god Hephaestus not with one of her sisters but with the Oceanid Eurynome.<sup>146</sup> According to Pelasgian myths, Eurynome, the goddess of entirety, emerged from Chaos itself and from her, came all that exists; the sun, the moon, the planets, the stars, the earth, the mountains, the rivers, the trees, the herbs and the living creatures.<sup>147</sup> The etymology of her name means “*she who defines the broad laws of the universe*”. Additionally, when the universe was created and the arrangement of the matter began, some type of channel (something like a road or passage) was created too. The matter of everything was in anarchy and then, a divide entity was born, capable of arranging anything and forming a resource which reached an edge. This divine entity was Thetis, arranging the beginning and the end of everything since the etymology of her name means “*she who sets universal laws*”. This notion about Thetis is a theogenic cosmology described from the ancient lyric poet, Alcman.<sup>148</sup> Consequently, Homer preserves intentionally a low profile for Thetis and is not in parallel with Demeter for example, who demonstrates fully her power.<sup>149</sup> Her wrath, when she denies to join Olympus while she looks for Persephone, means a permanent winter; the death of all the humans and therefore, the deprivation of honors to the gods by them.<sup>150</sup> Zeus, by his decision, has condemned both Thetis and Achilles and concerning all the above, Achilles could not accept an invitation – if there was any – to live as an immortal on Olympus. A decision was taken for him but without him. He did not have the chance to defend himself in the war succession for the throne of the universe, just like Zeus did with Cronus,<sup>151</sup> Cronus with Uranus<sup>152</sup> and even Ophion with Cronus.<sup>153</sup> The fact that Zeus does not say anything about Achilles’ death, as all the other gods do,<sup>154</sup> happens of course not by accident. So, the ideal hero<sup>155</sup> of this potential could not live on Olympus. If he did, it would be as if he was declaring his submission and thus, Leuke is more suitable for him.

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<sup>146</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 602

<sup>147</sup> R. Gravers (1979) 3

<sup>148</sup> E. Danezis et al. (2002) 25

<sup>149</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2005) 61

<sup>150</sup> L. Slatkin (2011)

<sup>151</sup> S. Skartsis (1993) 61

<sup>152</sup> S. Skartsis (1993) 41

<sup>153</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1993c) 61

<sup>154</sup> J. Burgess (2009) 46

<sup>155</sup> F. Horn (2021) 25



The previous argument for Leuke and Olympus is also strengthened by the problematic coexistence of Achilles and Apollo which in order to be fully understood, the complete profile and power of Achilles must be formed. The conflict between the demigod and the god is huge and distinct throughout the Iliad.<sup>156</sup> On a theoretical level, it seems that there is no appreciation for the god. Thetis herself does not forget the mismatch of words and works of Apollo who while praising her and singing the good fortune of her son, he ended up killing him cowardly.<sup>157</sup> Hera addresses that Apollo is generally untrustworthy and not only in the case of Thetis' betrayal.<sup>158</sup>

On a practical level, the true power of Achilles should be examined since Homer insists on putting him constantly on the mortal basis, decreasing what he really is, as he does exactly with his mother. The poet uses the word “*ώκύμορος*” for him to emphasize consecutively his short life and human mortality.<sup>159</sup> For example, Homer's notion that no mortal is above god is depicted in the fight between Achilles and the river god Scamander, in which the hero could lose his life due to drowning. Still, there is a representation – Archilochean – that stems from a tradition which is independent of Homer<sup>160</sup> and deserves careful examination. To clarify this, a contrast analysis is going to be made. Herakles, is a demigod that manages to confront gods like Hades (with bow and arrow),<sup>161</sup> Ares,<sup>162</sup> Nereus<sup>163</sup> and Achelous but at the same time, he is not able to defeat common mortals like Antagoras and Chalkodon (the latter wounded the hero and Zeus was forced to take him away).<sup>164</sup> This seems quite weird but ancient Greek literature in general, had no problem in enlarging the status of a hero. More specifically, Achelous was beaten by Heracles fighting as a bull and one of his two horns broke off during the battle.<sup>165</sup> The different treatment of the combat is profound. Achilles as strong as he is, cannot fight an opponent with a liquid form and after all, no mortal can. In terms of normal rules, it can be alluded what it could happen since the feats of both, from their very early age, do not leave any margin for further thought. Based on a common feat of

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<sup>156</sup> R. Rabel (1990) 429

<sup>157</sup> D. Colocontes and Z. Groumouti (1992) 217

<sup>158</sup> J. Burgess (2004) 23-30

<sup>159</sup> J. Burgess (2009) 54

<sup>160</sup> G. Nagy (2016)

<sup>161</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 196

<sup>162</sup> S Skartsis (1993) 185

<sup>163</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999a) 153

<sup>164</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999a) 165

<sup>165</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999a) 171

theirs, Achilles was hunting and killing lions from the age of six<sup>166</sup> while Herakles killed the lion of Cithaeron at the age of eighteen.<sup>167</sup>

This incident is not the only one; there are quite few others which make Homer negate himself. First, he presents Achilles to tremble if it comes to face Hector<sup>168</sup> while when the battle begins, finally the Trojan hero runs around the castle three times due to his fear of the demigod.<sup>169</sup> Second, when Ares is on the battlefield and kills mortal Achaeans, he happens to face Diomedes. The third greatest Achaean hero – only behind Achilles and Ajax the Great<sup>170</sup> – manages to defeat the god with the help of Athena and send him back on Olympus.<sup>171</sup> Although Diomedes wounded a god, he was not able to hold back the Trojans when they set fire to Protesilaus' ship. On the contrary, it was Ajax the Great who wounded Hector and secured the defense of the Achaeans. The bravery of Tydeus' son of course, does not decrease but the question about what Achilles could do in such a case, comparing to Diomedes and fighting a god like Ares, is more than rhetorical.

The indirect power of Thetis takes place now as the direct power of Achilles, even though he is only a mortal demigod. The supremacy of Achilles in everything is so great that the world order can be disrupted. For instance, he is the only mortal who is characterized by "*menis*", a wrath divine in scope, able to transform events according only to his will.<sup>172</sup> *Menis* elevates Achilles from the normal human condition to the divine sphere.<sup>173</sup> He is ready to go against the three Fates – something that even Zeus cannot do – and on the verge of conquering Troy,<sup>174</sup> making Apollo and Priam fear. Continuing on, no opponent god dares to fight Achilles face to face and Apollo is no exception. The god of light has confronted mortals like Heracles<sup>175</sup> and Idas<sup>176</sup> but did not manage to succeed in both cases. Though Achilles seems to say that he would take vengeance on the god if he had the power,<sup>177</sup> his power of destruction is declared as equal to the gods<sup>178</sup> and this is something that even

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<sup>166</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2008b) 405

<sup>167</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1993a) 129

<sup>168</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 258

<sup>169</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 709

<sup>170</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2008b) 485

<sup>171</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 209

<sup>172</sup> L. Slatkin (2011)

<sup>173</sup> C. Watkins (1977) 690

<sup>174</sup> Cactus Philological Team (2001) 83

<sup>175</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999a) 161

<sup>176</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1999a) 53

<sup>177</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 705

<sup>178</sup> C. Segal (1971) 58

Apollo cannot isolate. Achilles is something between demigod and god. There are a few examples which can testify this argument. Apollo boasts without content and he does not dare to confront Poseidon<sup>179</sup> while he leads the Trojan army only when Achilles is absent.<sup>180</sup> He also takes the form of Agenor to distract Achilles, so that the Trojans can enter the walls and do not face him on the battlefield.<sup>181</sup> In the case of Patroclus, he undresses him from his armor within a cloud and then, his fist from behind takes his breath away.<sup>182</sup>

Even when things are pushed to the limit, Apollo uses an indirect way of defeating him. Pindar claims that Apollo takes the form of Paris and killed Achilles,<sup>183</sup> Apollodorus suggests that the hero was killed by an arrow from Paris and Apollo,<sup>184</sup> Sophocles<sup>185</sup> and Euripides<sup>186</sup> argue that only Apollo killed him, Proclus considers that both Apollo and Paris killed him,<sup>187</sup> Ovid<sup>188</sup> and Virgil<sup>189</sup> believe that Apollo directed the arrow, Hyginus records that Apollo took the form of Alexander Paris striking him with an arrow on his heel<sup>190</sup> and Quintus suggests that Apollo shot an arrow to Achilles' ankle, vanished into a cloud with a mortal sight.<sup>191</sup> In the Iliad, Achilles refers to his mother saying to him that he is going to die by the arrow of Apollo<sup>192</sup> and his immortal horse, Xanthus, notices that responsible for the dark death of Achilles is a great god<sup>193</sup> and he shall fall by a god and mortal.<sup>194</sup>

Two conclusions are taken for granted; the presence of Apollo in every version of this kind of his death under the walls of Troy and the use of the arrow, as the means of Achilles' death. The bow and the arrow was a foreign, unknown and coward war ideology for the Greeks and that makes Apollo quite problematic since

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<sup>179</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 688

<sup>180</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 489-491

<sup>181</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 692

<sup>182</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 539-540

<sup>183</sup> Cactus Philological Team (2001) 81

<sup>184</sup> Cactus Philological Team (199b) 155

<sup>185</sup> T. Roussos (1991) 53

<sup>186</sup> T. Roussos (1993) 127

<sup>187</sup> M. West (2003) 112

<sup>188</sup> M. Papathomopoulos and I. Tsavari (2002) 461

<sup>189</sup> T. Tasopoulos (1964) 122-123

<sup>190</sup> M. Schmidt (1872) 97

<sup>191</sup> A. Way (1913) 121

<sup>192</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 683

<sup>193</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 634

<sup>194</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 635

Achilles and Athena normally wear helmet, breastplate and carry a shield,<sup>195</sup> always ready for a face to face combat. This kind of poltroonery is also criticized by Diomedes against Paris.<sup>196</sup> The aristocratic notion formed by Achilles who tends to be the best in every aspect of life, cannot show respect to the arrow; even Odysseus leaves his bow to Ithaca when he sails at Troy.<sup>197</sup>

Yet, their antagonism does not end on the battlefield. Achilles does not appear himself in the paean dedicated to Apollo,<sup>198</sup> he refuses the god via the non-acceptance of the gifts from the Delphi oracle<sup>199</sup> and makes an invocation to Zeus from the oracle of Dodona<sup>200</sup> and not to Apollo. So, in mythological terms, these two figures could not coexist on Olympus because of their big enmity and this is another argument about why Leuke is more suitable for Achilles.

### *The far north symbolism of Leuke*

In symbolic terms, it is again Apollo who enhances Leuke as the right afterlife place for Achilles because the claim that Achilles is the hypostasis of Apollo is not an exaggeration.<sup>201</sup> Achilles is antagonistic to Apollo, to whom he bears an uncanny resemblance,<sup>202</sup> beginning with the physical similarities of both of them since they are depicted with ephebic bodies.<sup>203</sup> The anger of both of them derives from Agamemnon<sup>204</sup> while Achilles and Apollo are the only ones in the Iliad who play the lyre.<sup>205</sup> The demigod's poetic and music skill was given from the Muse Calliope and Achilles was so skilled at playing music that he laid sufferings to rest.<sup>206</sup> Apollo stops the blood flow from Glaucus' wound and "*achillea millefolium*" was used also during the Trojan War due to its hemocoagulative properties<sup>207</sup> since Achilles utilized his medical knowledge from centaur Chiron. Apollo transforms himself into

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<sup>195</sup> F. Graf (2009) 374

<sup>196</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 374

<sup>197</sup> J. Mackie (1997) 7

<sup>198</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 76

<sup>199</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 316

<sup>200</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 233-238

<sup>201</sup> G. Smoot (2007) 6

<sup>202</sup> G. Nagy (2005) 88

<sup>203</sup> W. Burkert (1975) 11

<sup>204</sup> G. Nagy (1999) 75

<sup>205</sup> F. Nieto (1997) 31

<sup>206</sup> J. Maclean and E. Aitken (2001) 68

<sup>207</sup> M. Roberts (2003) 88

a dolphin when he guides Cretan priests to the Delphi oracle<sup>208</sup> while Achilles is likened to a dolphin at the coast of the river Scamander.<sup>209</sup>

The strongest parallelism between them though is the land of Hyperboreans, in the frozen North<sup>210</sup> and Leuke belongs to the far north of the known world. In the Iliad and in Theogony, the northernmost rivers Axios and Istros respectively, have the greatest affinity with beauty.<sup>211</sup> Apollo had lusty northern links, travelling on his chariot with white swans and furthermore, the Delphic calendar was based on the Sirius year, regarding the shining star in the northern hemisphere.<sup>212</sup> Achilles is identified with Sirius or “*The Star of Orion*”, the brightest star and a sign of evil as well.<sup>213</sup> The summer sun and destructiveness of Sirius are associated with Achilles after Patroclus has died.<sup>214</sup>

Another link between Achilles and the land of Hyperboreans is Asteropaios whose fight takes place at the coast of Scamander River. He is the only one who manages to wound even slightly Achilles, using two spears.<sup>215</sup> First, his country is called Paionia which was located far north of Greece, north of Macedonia, east of Thrace, within the latitudes Apollo migrated every year.<sup>216</sup> It was a land in which the northernmost and most beautiful river in the Iliad<sup>217</sup> was flowing and where Boreas took Orethya; to the gardens of Phoibos and the unfoldings of the heaven.<sup>218</sup> Thus, it could be easily argued that Asteropaios is Hyperborean and Paionia is the country of the healer god Paion, the ancient garden of Apollo.<sup>219</sup> Besides, the name “*Asteropaios*” could mean “*the star of Paionia*”<sup>220</sup> and ultimately, the star of Paion Apollo.<sup>221</sup> A third similarity between these two figures is Astesopaios’ origin because he calls himself “*Pelegonos*”<sup>222</sup>. This name means “*the son of Peleus*”;

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<sup>208</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2005) 125

<sup>209</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 675

<sup>210</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2008a) 135

<sup>211</sup> G. Smoot (2007) 43

<sup>212</sup> C. Kerenyi (1996) 205

<sup>213</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 705

<sup>214</sup> G. Smoot (2007) 58

<sup>215</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 679-680

<sup>216</sup> G. Smoot (2007) 57

<sup>217</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 679

<sup>218</sup> G. Smoot (2007) 18

<sup>219</sup> T. Bridgman (2005) 33

<sup>220</sup> G. Smoot (2007) 56

<sup>221</sup> G. Macurdy (1912) 249-251.

<sup>222</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 679

is the son of Peleus too and it is like Achilles is killing himself. Fourthly, the etymology of Asteropaios' name could be "*the man of lightning*"<sup>223</sup> while Heliodorus calls Achilles "*Ελλάδος αστεροπών*"<sup>224</sup> which means "*the lightning of Hellas*" and so does Pindar,<sup>225</sup> elevating the overall appeal of both Achilles and Leuke.

### *Epilogue*

From the very beginning of his existence, Thetis tried to secure her son an eternal life in many ways and in the end, she made it, despite Homer's one-dimensional view. Leuke is his paradise where he enjoys immortality, together with people who earned their place in eternity like Ajax the Great, Patroclus and Antilochus<sup>226</sup>, living by his code, the "*Achillean Code*", away from notions which Homer intentionally hides like the case of Palamedes.<sup>227</sup> The island means the cancellation of the hero's return but his glory is forever because he is the diachronic expression and personification of the ultimate heroic ideology.<sup>228</sup>

The location of Leuke in the Euxinus is imposing and its choice as the eternal afterlife place for Achilles has been made not by chance. The demigod hero through his life attitude, banished the perishable elements of his mortal nature and acquired the maximum property; the property of the winner against death, knowing already his fate.<sup>229</sup> His entire existence from the beginning till the end, though he was almost always alone (even the Achaean army knew he was right about his confrontation with Agamemnon but they did not support him),<sup>230</sup> gives meaning to life, death and deification.<sup>231</sup> Besides, he who he cannot live in a society or does not need anything because he is self-sufficient, is either a beast or a god.<sup>232</sup> Achilles guards as god for the Greeks the northeast borders in Leuke regarding the ancient known world, close to the land of the Hyperboreans, in a continuous reality full of light. The sun of justice<sup>233</sup> luxuriates not the partial but the total justice that – using

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<sup>223</sup> G. Smoot (2007) 45

<sup>224</sup> Cactus Philological Team (2002b) 215

<sup>225</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2008b) 503

<sup>226</sup> A. Tataraki (1992a) 137-138

<sup>227</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1994) 39

<sup>228</sup> M. Mares (2016) 70

<sup>229</sup> A. Karachalios and V. Noula (2019) 370

<sup>230</sup> T. Mavropoulos (2004) 69

<sup>231</sup> A. Karachalios and V. Noula (2019) 371

<sup>232</sup> Cactus Philological Team (1993d) 57

<sup>233</sup> N. Lygeros (2012)

a metaphor – Themis, the Titaness of justice finally served and the lament of the Nereid goddess Thetis has been eliminated once and for all.

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