

THE CULT OF ACHILLES IN THE EUXINE

OF ALL THE DIFFERENCES between hero-worship and divine worship in ancient Greece, possibly the most fundamental is the difference in the geographical limits of the two types of cult.¹ A hero-cult was most often restricted to a particular locale, whereas the worship of an Olympian god or goddess was usually widespread.² The site of a hero-cult requires some connection with the hero, the physical remains of the body being the most direct.³ With respect to this general distinction between heroic and divine worship the cult of Achilles is problematic. On the one hand, there was a cult near Troy at the site identified as the burial mound of Achilles. We hear in the *Odyssey* that a great tumulus was heaped up by the Achaeans on a promontory at the mouth of the Hellespont, "so that it may be conspicuous to men travelling by sea, those living now as well as those to come" (Homer, *Odyssey* 24.80–84). The little we know about the cult at the tumulus of Achilles is from literary sources. It is as early as the 5th century B.C., if not earlier, and it was regularly patronized by

¹ This paper was first publicly presented at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens in March of 1986 as an After Tea Talk; for the opportunity to participate in this lecture series I wish to thank the former Director of the School, Stephen G. Miller. I am grateful to Gloria F. Pinney for suggesting the cult of Achilles as a potentially fruitful topic for research and for supervising the writing of an M. A. thesis on the subject. Translations of important Russian articles were provided by Arkadia X. Kocybala, for which I am very grateful. For reading this paper at its various stages and making helpful suggestions and improvements to the text I also wish to thank J. B. Carter, G. R. Edwards, A. J. Graham, R. Hamilton, M. L. Lang, E. P. McGowan, M. J. Mellink, B. S. Ridgway, and J. S. Ruston.

Works frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

- Bravo = B. Bravo, "Une lettre sur plomb de Berezan': colonisation et modes de contact dans le Pont," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 1, 1974, pp. 111–187
- Diehl, "Tolstoi" = E. Diehl, "Ivan Tolstoi, *Ostrov Belyi i Tavrika na Jevksinskom Ponte*," *Gnomon* 3, 1927, pp. 633–643
- Diehl, "Pontarches" = E. Diehl, *s.v.* Pontarches, *RE* XXII, 1953, cols. 1–18
- Heidel = A. Heidel, *The Frame of Ancient Greek Maps*, New York 1937
- Hommel = H. Hommel, *Der Gott Achilleus (SBHeid 1)*, Heidelberg 1980
- Kocybala = A. X. Kocybala, *Greek Colonization on the North Shore of the Black Sea in the Archaic Period*, diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1978 (U.M.I. no. AAD79-08760)
- Latyshev = V. V. Latyshev, *Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini*, Petrograd, I, 2nd ed., 1916; IV, 1901
- Nagy = G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*, Baltimore/London 1979
- Pinney = G. F. Pinney, "Achilles Lord of Scythia," in *Ancient Greek Art and Iconography*, W. G. Moon, ed., Madison 1983, pp. 127–146
- Rohde = E. Rohde, *Psyche*, W. B. Hills, trans., London/New York 1925
- Rusyaeva, 1971 = A. S. Rusyaeva, "Kul'tovi predmety z poselennia Beikush poblyzu o-va Berezan'," *Arkhelohiia* (Kiev), 1971, fasc. 2, pp. 22–28
- Rusyaeva, 1975 = A. S. Rusyaeva, "Voprosy razvitiia kul'ta Akhilla v Severnom Prichernomor'e," in *Skifskii mir*, Kiev 1975, pp. 174–185

² H. Abramson, *Greek Hero-shrines*, diss. University of California, Berkeley 1978 (U.M.I. no. AAD79-14523), pp. 40–41.

³ Rohde, p. 121; Abramson, *op. cit.*, p. 41, note 159 with further bibliography.

the Thessalians.⁴ Occasionally other notables worshipped the hero there, including the Persian expeditionary force, Alexander the Great, and the emperor Caracalla.⁵

On the other hand, Achilles was also worshipped at a number of other places in the ancient world, including Kroton in South Italy, Lakonia and Elis in the Peloponnese, Astypalaia in the Cyclades, and Erythrai in Asia Minor.⁶ We know very little about these cults, which are mentioned in passing in the ancient sources, but their existence shows that the worship of Achilles was not confined to one place or to the immediate vicinity of his tomb. What is most puzzling is the popularity of the cult of Achilles among the Greeks who settled along the northern coast of the Euxine and among the sailors who traveled in this area. The evidence for the cult in this region is considerable and far outweighs the evidence for the worship of Achilles in other parts of Greece, including the Troad.⁷ The cult appears to have originated in the 6th century B.C. and was still in existence in the 3rd century after Christ. Achilles was worshipped at the Milesian colony of Olbia as well as on an island in the middle of the Euxine from the Archaic period on. A third location of cult activity in honor of the hero was a long strandlike land formation southeast of Olbia. The evidence for the cult of Achilles in the Euxine is not very well known, partly because some of it has been published only in Russian. A very useful summary of the material was written by Diehl in 1953,⁸ but since then interesting new material has appeared. The more recent study of Hommel touches on some of the new archaeological material but is primarily concerned with theological questions.⁹ I will review the evidence for the worship of Achilles in the Euxine and then consider one of the pressing questions surrounding the cult.

A series of inscribed dedicatory stelae to Achilles Pontarches dates from the 2nd and 3rd centuries after Christ.¹⁰ These are public dedications made by the archons, generals, and

⁴ The earliest reference to the grave of Achilles is Herodotos' reference to the battle between Athens and Mytilene at the town of Achilleion (Herodotos, 5.94): later writers tell us that Achilleion was a town founded at the site of the hero's grave (Pliny, *HN* 5.125; Strabo, 13.1.32 [C595]; Diogenes Laertius, 1.74). The yearly Thessalian expedition to the grave of Achilles for worship is described by Philostratos (*Her.* 53.8–18). If Philostratos is correct, the rites began considerably earlier than the 5th century B.C. On the difficult matter of the location of the tumulus of Achilles, see J. M. Cook, *The Troad*, Oxford 1973, pp. 159–164, 173–174, and 185–186.

⁵ Persians: Herodotos, 7.43. Alexander: Diodorus Siculus, 17.17.3; Arrianus, *Anab.* 1.12.1; Cicero, *Arch.* 24; Plutarch, *Alex.* 72. Caracalla: Dio Cassius, 77.7.

⁶ See J. Escher, *s.v.* Achilleus, *RE* I, 1894 (cols. 221–245), cols. 222–223 for references.

⁷ There are even late literary sources which suggest that some who worshipped Achilles at his tumulus in the Troad recognized that the hero's chief center of worship was not there but in the Euxine. The hymn which Philostratos asserts the Thessalians sang upon their arrival at Troy explains that "however much [of Achilles] is mortal Troy retains, but however much he drew of your [*sc.* Thetis'] divine nature, the Pontos holds" (Philostratos, *Her.* 53.10). See Hommel, p. 42.

⁸ Diehl, "Pontarches," cols. 1–18.

⁹ Hommel. See also the discussions of the cult in Bravo, pp. 134–149; Rusyaeva, 1975, pp. 174–185.

¹⁰ Latyshev, I, nos. 53 and 130–144; IV, nos. 17 and 18. Probably also belonging to the series are I, nos. 145, 146, 149, 155, 156, 158, and 685. Additions to the series since Latyshev include *Inscriptiones Olbiae*, T. N. Knipovich and E. I. Levi, edd. (Akademia Scientiarum URSS), Lenigrad 1968, nos. 85–90. On the inscriptions in general see, in addition to Latyshev's commentary: G. M. Hirst, "The Cults of Olbia," *JHS* 23, 1903 (pp. 24–53), pp. 45–47; E. H. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, Cambridge 1913, pp. 473 and 481; N. Dzikowski, "The Olbian Inscription CIG 2080 Rediscovered," *JHS* 59, 1939, pp. 84–91; Diehl, "Pontarches," cols. 1–2 and 12–16; Bravo, pp. 145–147.

priests of Olbia, thank-offerings to Achilles for the well-being of the city and of the dedicants themselves. Achilles' status was never higher than in the Roman period at Olbia. We learn from the inscriptions that he was the patron of the college of archons, and as such he presumably was endowed with powers approaching those of a god; there are few significant differences between the inscribed dedications to Achilles Pontarches and those to Apollo Prostates and Hermes Agoraeus, the patrons of the Olbian generals and the agoranomoi.¹¹ This accords well with what Dio Chrysostomos reports after his visit to Olbia around the end of the 1st century after Christ. He writes that the Olbians honor Achilles as their god and that they had established two temples in the hero's honor, one in Olbia itself and another on "Achilles' island."¹²

For many years the earliest evidence for the cult at Olbia dated to the Classical period. Recently published graffiti, however, from the city and the surrounding area indicate that the cult began at least as early as the second half of the 6th century B.C. The most interesting class of Achilles-related graffiti consists of short inscriptions and crude drawings on clay disks made from pottery fragments. The disks are more or less carefully worked into the shape of a circle, ranging in diameter from three to six centimeters. The largest number of inscribed disks comes from the late 6th-century site of Beikush located at the confluence of the Berezan and Beikush inlets, approximately forty kilometers west of Olbia.¹³ Thirty-nine disks from the site bear graffiti, most including the name of Achilles or an abbreviation of the name: A, AXI, AXIΛΛ, AXIΛΛE, or AXIΛΛEI. In addition to the letters, many of the disks have depictions of objects, including snakes, human figures, and perhaps boats, swords, and daggers.¹⁴ The excavator of the Beikush disks also published eight similar disks

¹¹ Diehl, "Tolstoi," pp. 641–642; Bravo, p. 146; Hommel, p. 10, note 13. On the great importance of Achilles at Olbia in the Roman period see A. S. Rusyaeva, "Les cultes agraires à Olbia pontique," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 9, 1983 (pp. 185–195), p. 193. One of the 'Pontarches' inscriptions discovered since Latyshev (*Inscriptiones Olbiae*, no. 90) shows that Achilles' original nature as a hero was never forgotten at Olbia. This inscription differs in no way from the rest of the series except that it is addressed to the "hero Achilles" rather than to Achilles Pontarches. See Bravo, pp. 146–147.

¹² Dio Chrysostomos, *Or.* 36.9 and 14. On Dio's visit to Olbia see C. P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, Cambridge, Mass./London 1978, pp. 61–62. There is some question as to what island Dio is describing. There is abundant evidence for an island sacred to Achilles, Leuke, located opposite the mouth of the Istros river. Several late geographical sources also refer to an island sacred to Achilles before the mouth of the Borysthenis river, in the vicinity of Olbia (Mela, 2.98; Dionysios Periegeta, 542; Solinus, 19.1). There is in fact an island in the mouth of the Borysthenis river, now called Berezan, although it is not certain that it was an island throughout antiquity (cf. J. G. F. Hind, "Greek and Barbarian Peoples on the Shores of the Black Sea," *AR* 30, 1983/1984 [pp. 71–97], p. 79). The question is whether Berezan really was a second island in the Euxine sacred to Achilles or simply a misidentification on the part of one or more geographers. For the former view see Bravo, pp. 137–140; the latter view, however, seems more likely. See Pliny, *HN* 4.82–83 together with 4.93: the distances cited by Pliny in no way apply to Berezan. Ptolemy (3.10.17) also distinguishes Berezan from the island of Achilles.

¹³ The graffiti from the site were published by A. S. Rusyaeva, 1971. The small settlement of Beikush is made up of fifteen houses all dating to the second half of the 6th century B.C. See Kocybala, pp. 219–220; A. Wasowicz, *Olbia pontique et son territoire* (Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon: Les belles-lettres 168), Besançon 1975, p. 149, no. 58.

¹⁴ Rusyaeva, 1971 (p. 25) argues that the interconnections between the various disks in terms of drawing show that the entire series is connected with Achilles, and that the isolated letter A or the letter combination AXI are abbreviations of the name of the hero. For the practice of using an abbreviation for the name of the

from Olbia.¹⁵ These disks, formed out of black-glazed pottery fragments, are characterized by more careful workmanship than the Beikush examples. Six of them are incised with figures or letters, but only one, bearing a solitary letter A, is exactly comparable to the Beikush series. Three other inscribed pottery disks from Olbia were published by Yailenko.¹⁶ One bears the letters AXIAE plus an obscure drawing. The other two have drawings and the letter A. Since Beikush is the most fully excavated of some three dozen late Archaic Greek settlements in the vicinity of Berezan, there is hope that other, as yet unexplored settlements will yield further Achilles-related disks.

The meaning and function of the clay disks associated with Achilles are uncertain. The contexts in which the disks were found at Beikush are domestic and not, as far as one can tell, religious.¹⁷ Two of the disks, however, preserve the name of Achilles in the dative case, indicating that they, at least, were votive offerings to the hero.¹⁸ The use of the clay disk as a votive offering to a hero is attested elsewhere in the Greek world. Twelve uninscribed clay disks cut from Late Geometric and Proto-Attic pottery were found in the triangular hero-shrine in the Athenian Agora.¹⁹ One hundred and nineteen disks fashioned from Geometric and Proto-Attic pottery fragments were among the finds from a 7th-century votive deposit

recipient of a dedication, cf. K. Lehmann, *Samothrace*, II, ii, *The Inscriptions on Ceramics and Minor Objects*, New York 1960, pp. 29–32. It should be noted that an additional 34 disks, similar in material and workmanship to the inscribed disks but bearing no graffiti, were also recovered from Beikush. See Rusaeva, p. 26, Group VI. According to V. P. Yailenko (“Graffiti Levki, Berezani i Ol’vii,” *VDI* 1980, fasc. 3 [pp. 75–116], p. 84, note 21), the objects represented on the disks are thought by U. M. Otreshko to depict either offerings brought to Achilles or objects solicited from the hero. The character of the identifiable objects, however, does not entirely suit this hypothesis.

¹⁵ Rusaeva, 1971, pp. 26–27. No dates or contexts are given for these disks.

¹⁶ Yailenko (footnote 14 above), pp. 84–87, nos. 84, 87a, and 88 (= *SEG XXX*, p. 260, no. 927, and p. 261, nos. 931 and 932). All three are said to be of 5th-century B.C. date. Cf. also the graffiti on a 4th-century black-glazed fragment (Yailenko, p. 86, no. 86 = *SEG XXX*, p. 261, no. 929), which include the representation of what appears to be a horse’s head and the letter A or the combination AX.

¹⁷ Rusaeva, 1971, p. 22, note 3: the disks were found in groups in various subterranean earth houses. A very few disks were accidental finds. V. M. Otreshko (“Pozdnearkhaicheskie Poseleniia Berezanskogo Limana,” *Otkrytiia molodykh arkheologiv Ukrainy* I, Kiev 1976 [pp. 31–33], p. 32) states without elaborating that one of the pits uncovered at Beikush is connected with offerings brought to Achilles. There is no mention in Rusaeva’s publication, however, of any non-domestic context in connection with the disks.

¹⁸ One is larger than average and not quite circular, measuring 7.5 × 9.5 cm. (Rusaeva, 1971, p. 25). It bears the inscription AXIΛΛEI bounded by wavy lines, a drawing of a snake, and a drawing of what may be a sword. Near one edge it is pierced by a small hole. The other disk includes a longer inscription consisting of three rows of letters. Rusaeva (1971, p. 26) identified the following letters: ΙΗΑΓΡΟΤΟΣΣΤΕΛ/ΛΗΙΑΧΙΑΛΕΙ/ΟΙΚΟΘΕΝΤ and interprets the inscription thus: “May Agrotas send to Achilles from home.” Below the inscription three branches or trees are represented.

¹⁹ G. V. Lalonde, “A Fifth Century Hieron Southwest of the Athenian Agora,” *Hesperia* 37, 1968 (pp. 123–133), p. 131. Found *in situ* at one corner of the triangular structure was a boundary stone inscribed ΤΟ ΗΙΕΠΟ, indicating that the structure was a hero-shrine. A shallow circular depression in the bedrock on the line of the restored west wall of the structure is quite similar to the depressions into which bronze burial cauldrons were placed in the Late Geometric period at Eretria; over these a triangular structure was erected in the 4th century B.C. (C. Bérard, *Eretria*, III, *L’Heroön à la porte de l’ouest*, Bern 1970). As Lalonde suggested (p. 126), perhaps the triangular structure in the Athenian Agora marked the place where offerings were made at an early grave. Cf. H. A. Thompson, “Some Hero Shrines in Early Athens,” in *Athens Comes of Age: From Solon to Salamis; Papers of a Symposium Sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America, Princeton Society, and the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University*, Princeton 1978 (pp. 96–108), pp. 96 and 98.

on the north slope of the Areiopagos at Athens.²⁰ Burr suggested that the material in the votive deposit came from a near-by shrine of the chthonic Semnai, but the character of the deposit (consisting of small terracotta shields, terracotta figurines of warriors, horsemen and horses, and painted plaques) would be equally appropriate at a hero-shrine.²¹ One clay disk was found by Schliemann in the fill above the shaft graves at Mycenae.²² Insofar as heroes are numbered among the deceased, it may be significant that disks were also appropriate grave gifts.²³

In short, clay disks appear to have been appropriate offerings for heroes. As for their function or meaning, they have been called stoppers for vessels or gaming pieces.²⁴ In favor of the latter interpretation is the fact that gaming boards and dice have been found in Archaic graves in Greece.²⁵ The gaming boards are small clay models, made especially for burial. Heroes enjoyed playing games and at least occasionally are represented as playing games in the afterlife.²⁶ Achilles in particular seems to have been well known as a player of board games, to judge from the series of Attic black-figured vases showing him engaged in

²⁰ D. Burr, "A Geometric House and a Proto-Attic Votive Deposit," *Hesperia* 2, 1933 (pp. 542–640), pp. 564 and 603–604. The deposit was situated on top of the collapsed walls of an apsidal house of Geometric date, in the immediate vicinity of Geometric graves. See *ibid.*, pp. 549–550 and 636–637. For the graves see T. L. Shear, "The Campaign of 1932," *Hesperia* 2, 1933 (pp. 451–474), pp. 468–470; H. A. Thompson, "The Excavation of the Athenian Agora. Twelfth Season: 1947," *Hesperia* 17, 1948 (pp. 149–196), pp. 158–159.

²¹ Burr, *op. cit.*, pp. 604–621 and 636 for the deposit in general. Burr (p. 637) compared the Late Geometric and Archaic material from the dromos of the tholos at Menidi. See N. Coldstream, "Hero-cults in the Age of Homer," *JHS* 96, 1976 (pp. 8–17), p. 11. Compare also the deposits from the Agamemnoneion at Mycenae: J. M. Cook, "Mycenae 1939–1953, Part III. The Agamemnoneion," *BSA* 48, 1953, pp. 30–68; *idem*, "The Cult of Agamemnon at Mycenae," in Γέρας Ἀντώνιου Κεραμόπουλλου, Athens 1953, pp. 112–118; the Menelaion in Lakonia: A. J. B. Wace *et al.*, "The Menelaion," *BSA* 15, 1908–1909, pp. 108–157; H. W. Catling, "Archaeology in Greece, 1975–76," *AR* 22, 1975/1976 (pp. 3–33), p. 14; H. W. Catling and H. Cavanaugh, "Two Inscribed Bronzes from the Menelaion, Sparta," *Kadmos* 15, 1976, pp. 145–157; and the votive pit at Sounion tentatively identified as a shrine to Phrontis: H. Abramson, "A Hero Shrine for Phrontis at Sounion?" *CSCA* 12, 1979, pp. 1–19. Abramson's study of the Sounion deposit includes a discussion of the type of offerings appropriate to hero-worship. Thompson ([footnote 19 above] pp. 98–99) emphasized how appropriate the Areiopagos finds would be for a hero-shrine.

²² H. Schliemann, *Mycenae*, New York 1878, p. 115. Included in the same discussion, but not clearly from the same archaeological context, is the 5th-century black-glazed fragment with the graffito "to the hero". For the graffito see L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, Oxford 1961, p. 174, no. 6.

²³ One disk was found in a grave adjacent to the tholos in the Agora: R. S. Young, *Late Geometric Graves and a Seventh Century Well in the Agora* (*Hesperia* Suppl. 2), Athens 1939, p. 86. Twenty-seven other disks cut from pottery fragments were found in a 7th-century B.C. well deposit on Kolonos Agoraios at Athens: *ibid.*, pp. 191–192. The origin of the material in the deposit is uncertain. It may have come from a shrine or from graves destroyed during the leveling of a near-by hilltop. Four disks come from one of the Late Geometric graves at Eretria marked by the triangular heroon: Bérard (footnote 19 above), p. 33.

²⁴ See Burr (footnote 20 above), p. 603; Young (footnote 23 above), p. 191; Lalonde (footnote 19 above), p. 131; G. Davidson, *Corinth*, XIII, *The Minor Objects*, Princeton 1952, p. 217 (gaming pieces); Bérard (footnote 19 above), p. 33; E. Brann, "Protoattic Well Groups from the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia* 30, 1961 (pp. 305–379), p. 342, no. F65, concerning a disk cut from the body of a coarse pithos, found in a Proto-Attic well.

²⁵ E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1979, p. 80 with bibliography.

²⁶ Palamedes is said to have invented a board game in order to while away the time at Troy: see H. Lewy, "Palamedes," in *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* III, i, W. H. Roscher, ed., Leipzig 1897–1902 (cols. 1264–1274), cols. 1270–1271. According to Pausanias (10.31.1), Polygnotos depicted Aias, Palamedes, and another shooting dice in his picture of the underworld at Delphi.

play with Aias; it has even been suggested that the setting of the scenes may have been the underworld and not Troy.²⁷ Thus it seems plausible that the disks from Beikush and Olbia might have been intended as gaming pieces for Achilles, although the obscure little drawings on some of the pieces, as well as the contexts in which they were found, remain problematic.²⁸

In addition to the inscribed disks, numerous graffiti with the name of Achilles have been found in the vicinity of Olbia. Many have been reported from a late 6th-century site just east of Beikush called Bol'shaia Chernomorka.²⁹ Twelve graffiti containing the name of Achilles are also reported to have been found on the island of Berezan, the earliest dating to the 6th century B.C.³⁰ Fifteen graffiti containing the name of Achilles or an abbreviation of the name are said to have been found in the Tauric Chersonese.³¹ From Olbia itself some twenty to thirty pottery fragments incised with the name of Achilles have been reported.³²

In the Classical and later periods, the worship of Achilles also encompassed the area southeast of Olbia. At the east end of the extremely narrow spit of land called the Tendra, a low mound of earth and ash was found to contain many coins and several fragmentary inscriptions dedicated to Achilles.³³ The Tendra itself was known in antiquity as the "Race Course of Achilles" (Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος). The toponym first appears in Herodotos; later writers include dimensions for the remarkable land formation and possible explanations as

²⁷ For the series see S. Woodford, "Ajax and Achilles Playing a Game on an Olpe in Oxford," *JHS* 102, 1982, pp. 173–185. On the setting, and on the playing of board games by the dead, see Vermeule (footnote 25 above), pp. 77–82.

²⁸ Of the identifiable images on the disks from Beikush two, snakes and ships, may be particularly appropriate for Achilles. Heroes and snakes are closely associated: snakes appear on reliefs depicting heroes, e.g., O. Broneer, "Hero Cults in the Corinthian Agora," *Hesperia* 11, 1942 (pp. 128–161), pp. 130–133 with fig. 1. Heroes can take the form of snakes, e.g., Kychreus during the battle of Salamis (Pausanias, 1.36.1). On snakes and heroes generally see K. A. Rhomaios, "Tegeatische Reliefs," *AM* 39, 1914 (pp. 189–235), pp. 213–221; M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* I, Munich 1941, pp. 183–184. The representations on disks possibly depicting ships may symbolize Achilles' importance to sailors (on which see p. 322 below).

²⁹ Otreshko (footnote 17 above), p. 32. On the site generally see Kocybala, pp. 221–222. The graffiti were incised on black-glazed vessels and coarse amphoras, which were found in pits in the floors of several semisubterranean houses.

³⁰ Hommel, pp. 8–9, note 7, based on a list of Achilles-related graffiti compiled by J. G. Vinogradov. Six graffiti on pottery and one fragmentary stone inscription are published by V. P. Yailenko (*Greceskaja kolonizatsija, VII–III vv. do N. E.*, Moscow 1982, p. 290, nos. 101–103, and p. 294, nos. 124–127, which I have not seen). See *SEG* XXXII, p. 213, nos. 742–744, and p. 215, nos. 765–768. The graffiti include the name of Achilles in the dative or genitive cases; two include merely the letters A and X, presumably an abbreviation of the hero's name. The earliest graffito, Yailenko, no. 101, occurs on a black-glazed vessel dated to the 6th century B.C. The limestone fragment, Yailenko, no. 124, includes little more than the name of Achilles and is dated to the 5th century B.C.

³¹ Hommel, pp. 8–9, note 7. A series of graffiti with the name, or an abbreviation of the name, of Achilles was found at the colony of Chersonesos. See E. I. Solomonik, "Nekotore gruppi graffiti iz antichnykh Chersonesa," *VDI* 1976, fasc. 3 (pp. 121–141), pp. 135–136 with fig. 12; *SEG* XXVI, p. 196, no. 812. The graffiti occur on pots dating from the 5th to the 2nd centuries B.C.

³² Yailenko (footnote 14 above), p. 85; Rusaeva (1971, p. 28) mentions eight unpublished graffiti with the full name of Achilles from Olbia. No dates are given.

³³ The coins were published by A. N. Zograf ("Nakhodki monet v mestakh predpolagaemykh antichnykh sviatilishch na Chernom More," *SovArch* 7, 1941, pp. 152–161, which I have not been able to consult). A list of cities represented by the coins may be found in Diehl, "Tolstoi," p. 639, note 3. The inscriptions: Latyshev, I, nos. 328–332. Two of the five inscriptions (nos. 328 and 329) preserve enough letters of the name of Achilles to secure the identification. On the inscriptions see also Diehl, "Pontarches," cols. 13–14.

to how it came to be called the race course of Achilles.³⁴ The most likely explanation of the name, one which was not considered in the ancient sources, is that it was connected with athletic games held in honor of Achilles by the Olbians. We know of the existence of the games from an Olbian inscription of the 1st century B.C.³⁵ There is evidence in the inscription, though not conclusive evidence, to suggest that the games were held outside the city of Olbia, alongside or even on the race course of Achilles.³⁶ Later Olbian officials inscribed their names at the bottom of Achilles Pontarches inscriptions as victors in various athletic events, presumably also part of the games in honor of Achilles.³⁷ The antiquity of the games in honor of Achilles is uncertain. They may be referred to in a 4th-century inscription from Miletos, and if the explanation of the name of the land formation is correct, the games should be at least as old as Herodotos, who first mentions the race course of Achilles.³⁸

There are other places along the north coast of the Euxine which were sites of Achilles worship. On the Asiatic side of the Cimmerian Bosphoros, near the entrance to the Maiotis, there was a town called Achilleion with a temple of Achilles.³⁹ Farther west, in the mouth of the Borysthenis river just off the Kinburn spit, a cylindrical limestone altar was found. The altar bears an inscribed dedication to Achilles.⁴⁰ By far the most famous site of Achilles worship in antiquity, however, was Leuke, the "white island". An island located in the northern Euxine, 50 kilometers southeast of the Istros river delta, is identified by a variety of sources as the ancient white island. The early Hellenistic geographer Demetrios located the white island of Achilles 400 stadia off the mouth of the Istros, which is approximately one and one-third the present distance.⁴¹ Several inscriptions from the island itself include its ancient name. The most famous of these was inscribed on a black-glazed lekythos sometime in the 5th century B.C. and reads: "Glaukos, son of Posideios, dedicated me to Achilles, lord of Leuke."⁴²

³⁴ Herodotos, 4.55 and 76; Strabo, 7.3.19 (C307); Anonymous, *Peripl.* 58; Lykophron, *Alex.* 192 and 200; Pliny, *HN* 4.83; Mela, 2.5.

³⁵ Latyshev, I, no. 34. The significant passage is in line 30: "... in the contest of the chariot race in honor of Achilles [*sc.* established] according to the order of the oracle at Delphi."

³⁶ There is no certainty in this matter: see Diehl, "Tolstoi," pp. 640–641; Bravo, pp. 142–144.

³⁷ Latyshev, I, nos. 130, 138, 155, 685, and probably also nos. 156 and 158. The events include javelin, discus, jumping, wrestling, and running. See also Diehl, "Pontarches," col. 15.

³⁸ Inscription at Miletos: A. Rehm in *Milet*, I, iii, *Das Delphinion in Milet*, Berlin 1914, pp. 289–291, no. 136. The inscription allows for the attendance of Milesian citizens at Olbian games of some kind. See Bravo, pp. 141–142.

³⁹ Strabo, 7.4.5 (C310) and 11.2.6 (C494); Anonymous, *Peripl.* 25 and 28.

⁴⁰ Latyshev, I, no. 327. The inscription reads: "[so-and-so dedicated] to Achilles the altar and the *kedros*." The place whence this altar came, presumably on the near-by Kinburn spit, may be the "grove of Achilles" mentioned by Strabo (7.3.19 [C307]): see Diehl, "Pontarches," cols. 4–5. One difficulty with the inscription on the altar is the word *κέδρος*, which means cedar tree or cedar "fruit" (LSJ, *s.v.* *κέδρος/κέδρον*). Diehl ("Τὸ κέδρον," *Acta Universitatis Latviensis* 10, 1924, pp. 299–302) takes the word to mean cedar cone, but perhaps it refers to a tree dedicated in the grove of Achilles.

⁴¹ Demetrios in [Scymnus], 786–792. See also Lykophron, *Alex.* 188–189; Arrianus, *Peripl. M. Euxine.* 21; Anonymous, *Peripl.* 64; Maximus Tyrius, 9.7; Pausanias, 3.19.11. About its distance from the coast, Hind ([footnote 12 above] p. 78) has written: "Part of the island's significance may have been that it is the only such island out in the deep of the Pontos, but it also lay on the direct route from Istros to the W part of the Crimea. . . ."

⁴² Γλαῦκός με ἀνέθηκεν Ἀχιλλῆϊ Λευκῇ μεδέοντι παῖ<ε>ς Ποσειδῆο. The inscription was recently re-edited by V. D. Yailenko ("Graffiti Levki, Berezani i Ol'vii," *VDI* 1980, fasc. 2 [pp. 72–99], pp. 84–86, no. 3 [= *SEG* XXX, p. 254, no. 869]). See also Diehl, "Tolstoi," p. 638. The dedicatory inscription is inscribed

The reason for the importance of the white island as a cult center was the belief that Achilles dwelt on the island as an immortal. The earliest literary account of this was in the lost epic poem entitled the *Aithiopsis*, if we can trust the summary of the epic by Proklos.⁴³ According to the summary, the *Aithiopsis* narrated the death and funeral of Achilles. Prior to the cremation of the body, "Thetis snatched her son from the funeral pyre and carried it to the white island." This is all that the summary tells us, but we know that Achilles was made immortal there, since many ancient writers speak of the immortal Achilles on the white island. The white island is often compared with the Islands of the Blest in the *Works and Days* and the Elysian Fields in the *Odyssey*.⁴⁴ These are places which in early Greek poetry were reserved for select heroes who were allowed to elude death and become immortal. These places were located on the earth-encircling river Okeanos, far from the inhabited portions of the earth. The one difference between the white island and the Islands of the Blest or the Elysian Fields lies in the conception of the latter as outside the mortal sphere: they remained beyond the range of normal human travel throughout antiquity.⁴⁵ The white island, however, lay within the limits of the Greek world from the 6th century B.C. on.

References to the white island in 5th-century authors tend to be brief.⁴⁶ The accounts of the island by later writers, especially by the geographers, are more interesting. The name Leuke refers to the color of the cliffs or to the color of the many snakes and birds dwelling there.⁴⁷ The birds were the servants of Achilles, keeping his precinct clean with their wings.⁴⁸ There was a temple on the island and a statue of Achilles in the temple: one writer described the statue as a xoanon, another as Achilles and Helen making love.⁴⁹ The types of offerings left for the hero according to the literary sources include precious stones, rings, phialai, coins, and inscriptions.⁵⁰ One point which is emphasized in the sources is the belief that Achilles was present on the white island. There are many reports of sailors who claimed to have seen Achilles darting around the island in his armor or heard the hero singing or riding horses, as they approached the island.⁵¹

around the inside of the foot of the vessel. On the outside of the foot there is a shorter, less legible inscription, which is interpreted by Yailenko as "Glaukos, be careful sailing in!" There are minor difficulties with the interpretation of part of the longer inscription as well. Four other 5th-century graffiti from the island (Yailenko, *op. cit.*, p. 86, nos. 4–7 = *SEG XXX*, p. 254, nos. 870–871), as well as one 3rd-century graffito (*ibid.*, no. 8 = *SEG XXX*, p. 254, no. 872), include part of the name of Achilles in the dative case.

⁴³ Proklos, *Chrest.* 2.

⁴⁴ Hesiod, *Op.* 167–173; Homer, *Od.* 4.564–569. See Rohde, pp. 65–66; Escher (footnote 6 above), cols. 223–224; Hommel, p. 18; Nagy, pp. 167–168.

⁴⁵ Rohde, p. 537. For attempts to find them see Rohde, p. 565, note 101.

⁴⁶ Pindar, *Nem.* 4.49; Euripides, *IT* 435–438; Euripides, *Andr.* 1260–1262.

⁴⁷ Arrianus, *Peripl. M. Eux.* 21; schol. Pindar, *Nem.* 4.79; Dionysius Periegeta, 541–545.

⁴⁸ Philostratos, *Her.* 54.9; Arrianus, *Peripl. M. Eux.* 21. Cf. also [Scymnus], 793–794.

⁴⁹ Arrianus, *Peripl. M. Eux.* 21; Philostratos, *Her.* 54.3; Pausanias, 3.19.11; Anonymous, *Peripl.* 66; Maximus Tyrius, 9.7. According to Antoninus Liberalis (27), Iphigeneia dwelt on Leuke with Achilles, as his wife.

⁵⁰ Arrianus, *Peripl. M. Eux.* 21–22. According to Arrian, the coins are left as part of an unusual ritual: those who planned to land at Leuke brought their own sacrificial victims, some of which they turned loose on the island, while the others they sacrificed. Those who unexpectedly landed due to bad weather paid for one of the victims already on the island; when enough money had been paid out Achilles would drive a victim to the visitor. Cf. also Maximus Tyrius, 9.7, Philostratos, *Her.* 56.4–5, and, for the ritual, I. Tolstoi, "Une miracle d'Achille dans l'île blanche," *RA*, 5th ser., 25–26, 1927, pp. 201–206.

⁵¹ Arrianus, *Peripl. M. Eux.* 23; Philostratos, *Her.* 55.2–3, 56.2–4, and 56.6–9; Maximus Tyrius, 9.6–7.

The first modern scholarly description of the island was written in 1824.⁵² At that time, walls of large, roughly finished limestone blocks, believed to belong to the temple of Achilles, were still standing.⁵³ The island itself is described as a solid mass of limestone rising steeply out of the sea to a height of some thirty meters. It is small, now measuring only about one-quarter of a square kilometer.⁵⁴ Vegetation is sparse, but there are many sea-birds nesting on the island; there are also many snakes, hence the modern name of the island, Zmeinyi (Russian), Ophidonis (Greek), and Yılanada (Turkish), which mean “snake-island”.⁵⁵ The island was explored in the 1840’s, when it was discovered that the construction of a lighthouse had obliterated all traces of the temple of Achilles. During this expedition the Glaukos inscription was found and presumably also at this time, an Attic red-figured fragment now in Odessa.⁵⁶ The fragment includes the signatures of the vase-painter Epiktetos and the potter Nikosthenes; it thus dates to the last quarter of the 6th century B.C. and is the earliest closely datable find from the island.⁵⁷ The island was also explored in the 1960’s by Piatysheva; the explorations reportedly yielded a small amount of Greek pottery dating to the early or middle 6th century.⁵⁸

The only finds of any size on the island are two inscriptions in stone. One is of the 5th or 4th century on a base for a statue dedicated to Achilles lord of Leuke from an Olbian citizen.⁵⁹ The other inscription, dating to the 4th century B.C., includes the text of a public

An Attic black-figured neck-amphora in London (B.M. B 240), which shows a warrior with wings flying from a white rock over a ship at sea, has been thought perhaps to show the *psyche* of Achilles: see D. Kemp-Lindemann, *Darstellungen des Achilleus in griechischer und römischer Kunst*, Bern 1975, p. 229; J. Pouiloux and G. Roux, *Énigmes à Delphes*, Paris 1963, p. 118, note 1.

⁵² H. Koehler, “Mémoire sur les îles et la course consacrées à Achille dans le Pont-Euxin,” *Mémoires de l’académie impériale des sciences de St. Petersbourg* 10, 1826 (pp. 531–819), pp. 600–602. This is the only detailed description of the island in a language other than Russian known to me. A detailed account is provided by I. Tolstoi (*Ostrov Belyi i Tarrika na Jerksinskom Ponte*, Leningrad 1918, which I have not seen). See the review of Tolstoi by Diehl (“Tolstoi,” pp. 633–643).

⁵³ Koehler, *op. cit.*, pp. 602–605. The remains of the walls indicated a square plan 30 meters on each side, divided into two parts by a central north–south wall. The western part was further subdivided into three rooms. The architectural remains consisted of large limestone blocks roughly cut; fragments of a marble cornice and a column capital, not clearly belonging to the same building, were also reported. If the building described by Koehler actually was the temple of Achilles, one might compare, for the general plan, the shrine of Agamemnon at Mycenae: see Abramson (footnote 2 above), pp. 115–118.

⁵⁴ The dimensions given by Pausanias (3.19.11) and Philostratos (*Her.* 54.2) are somewhat greater.

⁵⁵ Pausanias (3.19.11) maintained that Leuke was wooded. Philostratos (*Her.* 54.2) says that there was a grove of trees around the temple and relates the story (57.11–17) of an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the Amazons to invade the island and cut down the trees.

⁵⁶ Kantharos fragment, J. D. Beazley, *ARV*², p. 77, no. 87.

⁵⁷ Two graffiti from Leuke, published by Yailenko ([footnote 42 above] p. 84, nos. 1 and 2 [= *SEG* XXX, p. 254, nos. 867 and 868]), are dated 550–500 B.C.

⁵⁸ N. V. Piatysheva, “Arkheologicheskoe obsledovanie o-va Levki (o-v Zmeinyi) osen’iu 1964 g,” in *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Muzeia Izobrazitel’nykh Iskussty im A. S.*, Moscow 1966, pp. 58–70, which I have not seen. See K. S. Gorbunova, “Archaeological Investigations on the Northern Shore of the Black Sea in the Territory of the Soviet Union, 1965–70,” *AR* 18, 1971/1972 (pp. 48–59), p. 49; Rusyaeva, 1975, p. 175. Other finds apparently made during these explorations include a terracotta seated figurine, a fragmentary male figurine, a terracotta rooster, a terracotta cedar cone, as well as bronze seals with representations of snakes. See Rusyaeva, 1975, p. 180; Rusyaeva, 1971, p. 27, note 14.

⁵⁹ Latyshev, I, no. 326. Cf. Bravo, p. 141.

decree of Olbia to erect a statue in honor of a person who had defeated a band of pirates.⁶⁰ A noteworthy part of this inscription is the statement that an additional purpose of the dedication is to show to the Greeks that Olbia continued to look after the white island as was its custom according to tradition. The statement suggests that Leuke was of Panhellenic importance, and this is confirmed by the heterogeneous character of the coins recovered from the island.⁶¹

As a hero, Achilles' powers were limited. This point is emphasized in a passage of Arrian: "Some say that Achilles appeared to them on their ships as they approached the white island, just as the Dioskouroi are wont to do. But Achilles is less powerful than the Dioskouroi, for they appear to sailors everywhere, and can assist them in a crisis, while Achilles only appears to those who are approaching the white island."⁶² The cult of Achilles and the belief in his continued presence after death revolved around a particular island in the northern Euxine. The question is, why was this particular island, rather than some other, identified in antiquity as the white island of Achilles? Some scholars have suggested that a non-Greek god worshipped in this area was identified with Achilles by the earliest Greek explorers.⁶³ While this explanation is conceivable, it is yet to be demonstrated. Others have stressed Achilles' association with the sea. His chief connection with the sea was, of course, his mother Thetis.⁶⁴ Achilles was worshipped together with Thetis and the Nereids at Erythrai, and one of the Achilles Pontarches inscriptions was addressed to Thetis as well as to Achilles.⁶⁵ Many of the votive offerings to Achilles on the white island and elsewhere in the Euxine were made by sailors, as the dedicatory inscriptions and the literary sources indicate.⁶⁶ Fleischer suggested that the popularity of Achilles among sailors led to the establishment of a cult in his honor on an island in the Euxine when the colonization movement brought them frequently into that area.⁶⁷

The popularity of the cult of Achilles among sailors seems undeniable, but it is an insufficient explanation for the cult in the northern Euxine as a whole. It does not explain,

⁶⁰ Latyshev, I, no. 325. See also E. Egger, "Inscription de l'île de Leucé," *BCH* 9, 1885, pp. 375–379; L. Robert, "Epigramme votive d'Olbia," *Hellenica* 11–12, 1960 (pp. 267–276), p. 274; Bravo, p. 141. It is assumed that the pirates were using the white island as a base of operations, but this is not certain.

⁶¹ See the list in Diehl, "Tolstoi," p. 638, note 2 and the map in Rusyaeva, 1975, p. 181, fig. 2. The coins from Leuke are discussed by S. A. Bulatovich ("Monetnye nakhodi na o. Levke," *Materialy po Arkheologii Severnogo Prichernomor'ia* 7, 1971, pp. 212–226, which I have not seen).

⁶² Arrianus, *Peripl. M. Eux.* 23.

⁶³ M. Rostovzev, quoted by E. Belin de Ballu, *Olbia: cité antique du littoral nord de la Mer Noire*, Leiden 1972, p. 79; Rusyaeva (footnote 11 above), p. 193; I. Malkin, *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece*, Leiden 1987, pp. 162–163.

⁶⁴ Cf. Nagy, pp. 343–344.

⁶⁵ Cult at Erythrai: *SIG*⁴, 1014, lines 50 and 75; Pontarches inscription: Latyshev, I, no. 142.

⁶⁶ The inscribed dedications from sailors include a 3rd-century graffito from Leuke (Yailenko [footnote 42 above] pp. 86–87, no. 9 = *SEG* XXX, p. 254, no. 873); Latyshev, I, nos. 330 and 332 from the Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος; and probably the Glaukos inscription. See also Arrianus, *Peripl. M. Eux.* 23; Maximus Tyrius, 9.6–7; Philostratos, *Her.* 55.2–3, 56.2–4, and 56.6–9. For Achilles' connection with the sea, see also Pausanias (2.1.8), who speaks generally of precincts of Achilles by the sea.

⁶⁷ C. Fleischer, "Achilleus," in *Ausführliche Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* I, i, W. H. Roscher, ed., Leipzig 1884–1890 (cols. 11–66), col. 58. Cf. Diehl, "Pontarches," cols. 16–17; Bravo, p. 135 with further bibliography.

for instance, why the worship of Achilles was concentrated along the northern coast of the Euxine and is not attested on the southern and western coasts. The recent discoveries summarized above have shown that the cult of Achilles arose in the Olbia area very soon after the foundation of the colony. The Archaic settlements along the Berezan inlet which have yielded Achilles-related material, Beikush, Bol'shaia Chernomorka, and Berezan, have been plausibly identified as the settlements of Milesian colonists.⁶⁸ The 4th-century inscription from Leuke suggests that the Olbians also had a traditional role in the cult of Achilles on the white island.⁶⁹ Achilles was one of the most important deities at Olbia during the Roman period, judging from the Pontarches inscriptions, and according to Quintus Smyrnaeus, many of the worshipers who visited the white island were inhabitants of the near-by mainland (Quintus Smyrnaeus, 3.777–779). Thus one has to explain the importance of Achilles to Milesian colonists and citizens of Olbia as well as to sailors in the northern Euxine. Farnell perceived the importance of the role of Milesian colonization in the cult: he explained the cult of Achilles in the Euxine by way of an obscure legend which told of the capture of Miletos by Achilles.⁷⁰ The Milesians could have come to worship Achilles as an important figure in their early history. Thus when Milesians settled in the northern Euxine they would have brought the cult with them, according to Farnell. The theory has difficulties, however, among them the fact that there is no evidence for a cult of Achilles at Miletos or in any area of Milesian colonization outside the northern Pontos.⁷¹

Farnell numbered Achilles among those heroes who received cult offerings at least in part because of their great fame and popularity in poetry.⁷² This approach to hero-cults has been criticized and is not applicable in all cases in which heroes of poetry are also heroes of cult.⁷³ But the cult of Achilles in the Euxine recommends itself to this approach, because its origins can be confidently dated to the post-epic period. In fact, a recent suggestion along these lines points the way toward a plausible explanation of the prominence of the cult of Achilles in the northern Euxine. In a study of the representation of Scythian archers on Attic vases, Pinney raised the possibility that there existed in ancient poetry and legend a connection between Achilles and Scythia.⁷⁴ She suggested that Scythian archers were the

⁶⁸ Rusyaeva, 1975, pp. 175–176; Kocybala, pp. 180–181 and 219–222; Wasowicz (footnote 13 above), pp. 56–59. According to Eusebius (*Chron.* 33.4), Borysthenis (more or less an alternative name for Olbia) was founded in 645 B.C. Archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest Greek settlement in the area was actually located on Berezan and that it dates nearly as early as Eusebius' foundation date. Olbia itself seems to have been founded a generation later, at the beginning of the 6th century. See Kocybala, pp. 204–205 and 228–229; Hind (footnote 12 above), pp. 79–82. That Olbia was a Milesian colony is attested by numerous writers: see esp. Herodotos, 4.78; Dio Chrysostomos, *Or.* 36. On the importance of Miletos generally in the Greek colonization of the north shore of the Euxine see Kocybala, pp. 130–131; J. Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas*, London 1980, pp. 242–243.

⁶⁹ Cf. Bravo, pp. 135–136.

⁷⁰ L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality*, Oxford 1921, pp. 286–287.

⁷¹ In Athenaios (2.43D) there is mention of a spring of Achilles at Miletos but not of a cult.

⁷² Farnell (footnote 70 above), pp. 284 and 340–342. Farnell's objections to the "faded-deity" theory of heroes might apply to Hommel's study of Achilles, in which it is suggested that Achilles was originally a god of the dead presiding over a realm of deceased souls in the Euxine. For a recent critique of Hommel's theory see J. T. Hooker, "The Cults of Achilles," *RhM* 131, 1988, pp. 1–7.

⁷³ Cf. Nagy, pp. 114–116.

⁷⁴ Pinney, pp. 127–146.

followers of Achilles in some versions of the tale of the Trojan War: A fragment of a poem by Alkaios is the one piece of direct evidence for the connection: “Achilles lord of Scythia.”⁷⁵ The phrasing of the line is similar to certain of the previously mentioned dedicatory inscriptions to Achilles “lord of Leuke.”⁷⁶ The latter epithet presumably means that Achilles was lord of Leuke because he was worshipped on the island, and the line of Alkaios has been understood in the same way: Achilles was lord of Scythia because he was honored in that geographical region in cult.⁷⁷

Pinney understands the line of Alkaios in a more literal way, as a reference to a tradition, very likely included in the *Aithiopsis* in her view, whereby Achilles was the leader of the Scythians in the Trojan War.⁷⁸ The difficulty with this hypothesis lies in the fact that no other ancient writer mentions Achilles in such connection with the Scythians. The line of Alkaios itself is weakened as evidence in favor of the hypothesis by its brevity: it allows for more than one interpretation. Indeed, Eustathios, who quotes this line of Alkaios, gives a third interpretation: he says that some argued in favor of the existence of two Achilles, one who fought at Troy and another who was king of Scythia.⁷⁹ It is difficult to imagine how such an important and interesting detail as the Scythian followers of Achilles could have escaped repetition or comment in the summary of the *Aithiopsis* by Proklos, not to mention ancient literature in general.⁸⁰ And yet it would fit the evidence that Scythia is somehow the key to understanding the geographical significance of the cult of Achilles in the Euxine: all the known sites of cult activity in honor of the hero in the Euxine fall within the boundaries of Scythia, which stretched from the Istros river to the Cimmerian Bosphoros.

The significance of Scythia lies, I think, in a different aspect of the story of Achilles: in the relationship between Achilles and his archenemy, Memnon of Ethiopia. Just as the translation of Achilles to the white island was narrated in the *Aithiopsis*, so too the story of Memnon was included in the epic according to the summary by Proklos.⁸¹ Memnon, king of the Ethiopians, came to Troy to fight on the side of the Trojans. After slaying Antilochos, the companion of Achilles, Memnon was slain by Achilles. Eos, the mother of Memnon, obtained immortality for her son from Zeus. It is not stated in the summary, but it is known from other sources that Eos brought her son back to Ethiopia.⁸² There are several similarities between the stories of Achilles and Memnon in the *Aithiopsis*. Both warriors came to

⁷⁵ Ἀχιλλεύς ὁ τὰς Σκυθίας μέδεις. D. Page, *Lyrical Graeca Selecta*, Oxford 1968, p. 89, no. 166. Pinney’s argument is also based on visual evidence, for which see footnote 108 below.

⁷⁶ E.g. the Glaukos inscription. See Hommel, pp. 9–12.

⁷⁷ Rohde, p. 139, note 3; D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, Oxford 1955, p. 283.

⁷⁸ Pinney, pp. 134 and 139.

⁷⁹ Eustathios commenting on Dionysius Periegeta, 306.

⁸⁰ Pinney (p. 139) suspected that the connection may have been suppressed in antiquity, for it would not do to have the premier Greek hero at Troy turn out to be a barbarian.

⁸¹ *Chrest.* 2. Memnon is mentioned in passing in Homer, *Od.* 11.522; cf. also Hesiod, *Theog.* 984–985: “king of the Ethiopians”. The death of Memnon at the hand of Achilles is mentioned by Pindar (*Ol.* 2.83, *Isth.* 5.40–41, and *Nem.* 3.63–64).

⁸² See G. E. Lung, *Memnon*, Bonn 1912, pp. 48–54. According to a variant version of the story Memnon was carried off the battlefield by Sleep and Death rather than by his mother. See Lung, pp. 55–77 and, for a more recent discussion of the iconographical evidence, M. E. Clark and W. D. E. Coulson, “Memnon and Sarpedon,” *MusHelv* 35, 1978, pp. 65–78.

Troy with Hephaistian armor but were killed in battle.⁸³ Their mothers, who were goddesses, carried the heroes away from Troy and arranged for them to be immortalized.⁸⁴ Memnon was returned to the land of the Ethiopians, literally “burnt faces”, and Achilles was taken to the white island.⁸⁵

Achilles and Memnon seem to be conceived of as pendants to, or mirror images of, one another.⁸⁶ In this respect the localization of the white island within the region of Scythia seems significant, because Scythia was the opposite of Ethiopia on the ancient Greek map. The two countries were thought of as the most extreme northern and southern countries of the world, as Strabo tells us: “The north extends to the remote confines of Scythia and Celtica, and the south to the remote confines of Ethiopia, and the difference between these two extremes is very great . . . indeed, they are, in a sense, the antipodes of each other.”⁸⁷ Strabo also wrote: “[Ephoros] says that if we divide the regions of the heavens and of the earth into four parts, the Indians will occupy that part from which Apeliotes blows, the Ethiopians the part from which Notos blows, the Celts the part on the west, and the Scythians the part from which the north wind blows.”⁸⁸

The location of the white island within the Euxine appears to be particularly significant, for Herodotos tells us that the Istros and Nile rivers were thought to be identical in length and in their courses but on opposite sides of the equator, the mouths of the rivers lying on the same north–south axis. The two rivers were envisioned as mirror images of each other, forming a kind of prime meridian.⁸⁹ The significance of the location of the white

⁸³ Memnon’s armor: Proklos, *Chrest.* 2. Achilles’ Hephaistian armor is known to us from Homer, *Il.* 18.368–617.

⁸⁴ Cf. schol. Apollonios Rhodios, *Argon.* 4.814, which tells us that the gods made Achilles immortal out of sympathy for Thetis.

⁸⁵ For the black/white opposition compare the myth told in connection with the cult of Dionysos Melanai-gis at Eleutherai about a duel between two warriors whose names were *Melanthos* and *Xanthos*, “black man” and “blond man”. For the sources see P. Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, A. Szegedy-Maszak, trans., Baltimore/London 1986, pp. 109–110. I wish to thank Froma Zeitlin for pointing out this myth to me. For another view of the poetic significance of the name Leuke see G. Nagy, “Phaethon, Sappho’s Phaon, and the White Rock of Leukas,” *HSCP* 77, 1973 (pp. 137–177), pp. 137–148.

⁸⁶ Cf. Rohde, p. 65; A. Dihle, *Homer-Probleme*, Opladen 1970, pp. 17–18.

⁸⁷ Strabo, 1.1.13 (C7). The word antipodes specifically refers to India and Iberia, but the sense of the passage suggests that it applies also to Ethiopia and Scythia. Cf. also Strabo, 1.2.27 (C33): “just as [the ancient Greeks] embraced the inhabitants of the known countries of the north under the single designation ‘Scythians’ . . . just so, in accordance with the opinion of the ancient Greeks, all the countries in the south which lie on Okeanos were called ‘Ethiopia’.” (Trans. Jones.)

⁸⁸ Strabo, 1.2.28 (C33). Ethiopia and Scythia were considered to be opposites of each other in many ways and in this respect as well may have seemed appropriate for archrivals. See F. Hartog, *Le miroir d’Hérodote*, Paris 1980, pp. 33–38, who is concerned to show that the opposition of Scythia and Egypt, including Ethiopia, underlies Herodotos’ Scythian *logos*. The opposition of Scythia and the south, including Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia, is extended to climate and even to the physiques of the inhabitants in the Hippocratic text *On Airs, Waters, and Places* 18–19. See G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*, Cambridge 1966, p. 22; F. M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, Cambridge, Mass. 1970, pp. 171–175.

⁸⁹ Herodotos, 2.33–34. Herodotos reconstructs the unknown upper reaches of the Nile on the assumption that they are identical to the upper reaches of the Istros. Cf. also Herodotos, 4.48–53. See Hartog, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–35; Heidel, p. 21. The opposition of the Nile and Istros appears to underlie Pindar, *Isthm.* 6.23, where the springs of the Nile and the land of the Hyperboreans are spoken of in one breath as among the farthest reaches of the earth. We know from *Ol.* 3.14–18 that in Pindar’s mind the Hyperboreans are to be found at the springs of the Istros.

island is that it lies before the mouth of the Istros, whereas Ethiopia was located along the upper Nile.⁹⁰

Judging from these geographical beliefs, Achilles was associated, in the afterlife, with the opposite end of the earth from Memnon.⁹¹ This seems unlikely to be a coincidence and quite possibly was part of the conception of the two figures in the *Aithiopsis*. In the epic Achilles and Memnon both received immortality, but instead of retiring to a common place for immortal heroes such as the Elysian Fields, they ended up in different places. This makes sense when one recalls how touchy the dead can be: the soul of Aias in the *Odyssey*, for example, still bitter over the loss of Achilles' armor, will not speak to Odysseus.⁹² One assumes that an epic poet would not allow two mortal enemies to frequent the same place in the afterlife; but how far apart need they be separated? The most suggestive parallel comes from the description of the battles between the Olympians and the Titans and between Zeus and Typhon in the *Theogony*.⁹³ The protagonists of the *Theogony* are immortal and thus cannot be obliterated in battle and thereby rendered harmless, a problem which also faced the poet of the *Aithiopsis* as soon as Achilles and Memnon were made immortal. What happens to the combatants in the *Theogony* at the end of the battles? Zeus takes his seat on the top of Mt. Olympos, while Typhon and the Titans are cast down into Tartaros, "as far below the surface of the earth as heaven is above."⁹⁴ The archrivals of Zeus are so repugnant to him that they are forced to reside at the opposite end of the cosmos. If Achilles and Memnon were removed to the opposite ends of the earth for immortalization in the *Aithiopsis*, it would be apparent how the white island came to be discovered in the vicinity of Scythia, for the land of Scythia was thought to be further away from Ethiopia than any other land.

This geographical belief may be the key to understanding the localization of the white island. How old is the belief? There is no doubt that it was current by the 5th century B.C.⁹⁵ But it is possible to identify its point of origin even more precisely. The observations of Herodotos about the symmetry of the Nile and the Istros were without a doubt formed from maps and not from direct observation of the two rivers, which actually differ significantly in their courses.⁹⁶ The maps used by Herodotos were those developed in Ionia in the 6th

⁹⁰ For the relationship between Ethiopia and the Nile see Aischylos, *Pr.* 807–812; Aischylos, fr. 300 Nauck. In Herodotos Ethiopia is located immediately to the south of Egypt and Libya and extends to the limits of the earth (Herodotos, 2.13, 29; 3.16, 114; 4.197). See Heidel, pp. 27–28.

⁹¹ Memnon was not only associated with Ethiopia in poetry: Greek writers seem to have thought that there was cult activity in honor of Memnon in Egypt and in Ethiopia. At Thebes there was a Memnoneion (Strabo, 17.1.42 [C813]) and the famous Colossus of Memnon (Pausanias, 1.42.2, etc. See J. Pley, *s.v.* Memnon, *RE* XV, 1931 [cols. 638–652], cols. 648–649). The Egyptians and the Ethiopians sacrificed to Memnon at Memphis and Meroë (Philostratos, *Her.* 4.6). At Meroë, the capital of Ethiopia, there was a tribe called the Memnonnes (Pliny, *HN* 6.190).

⁹² Homer, *Od.* 11.543–567. It is also a fact that in neither of the two scenes of Hades in the *Odyssey* is there a Trojan, although this omission need not be a deliberate one.

⁹³ Hesiod, *Theog.* 629–735 and 820–869.

⁹⁴ Hesiod, *Theog.* 717–725. Cf. 731: "at the ends of the huge earth." Compare also the extreme distance between the abodes of Zeus and the Titans in Homer, *Il.* 8.13–16.

⁹⁵ The conception of Scythia and Ethiopia as the most northerly and southerly lands can be found, for example, in Aischylos, *Pr.*: see Heidel, pp. 14–16.

⁹⁶ Heidel, pp. 20–25; Hartog (footnote 88 above), pp. 33–34.

century B.C.⁹⁷ In particular, Herodotos seems to have acquired much information about Scythia, Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia from the map and book of the 6th-century Milesian geographer Hekataios, who is believed to have written the first *Periplous*, or “Tour of the Earth”.⁹⁸ That Scythia and Ethiopia formed the northern and southern edges of the world on the map of Hekataios seems almost certain.⁹⁹ Hekataios in turn relied to an unknown extent on the map of his elder fellow Milesian, Anaximander, who made the first map of the world, according to the ancient sources.¹⁰⁰ That symmetry played an important role in Anaximander’s conception of the world is suggested by the following description of it said to go back to the philosopher: “Its shape is curved, round, similar to the drum of a column; of its flat surfaces we walk on one, and the other is on the opposite side.”¹⁰¹ In sum, it is highly likely that the geographical beliefs in question were current at Miletos by the second half of the 6th century B.C. at the latest, a time when Milesian colonists were settling in the northern Euxine and the period to which the earliest evidence for the cult of Achilles in the Euxine dates.¹⁰²

The belief that Scythia occupied the opposite fringe of the earth from Ethiopia may be earlier than the first Greek map of the world. A fragment of Hesiod, the earliest extant occurrence of the name Scythia, speaks of “Ethiopians and Libyans and mare-milking Scythians.”¹⁰³ The context of the fragment suggests that the opposition between the north and the south may underlie this line, since Pygmies, Negroes, and Hyperboreans, all peoples of the extreme north and south, are also mentioned. Ethiopia, however, appears elsewhere in early Greek poetry not strictly as the most southerly land: in the *Odyssey* we hear of the “Ethiopians, most distant of men, who live divided, some at the setting of Hyperion,

⁹⁷ See J. L. Myres, “An Attempt to Reconstruct the Maps used by Herodotus,” *Geographical Journal* 8, 1896, pp. 605–631.

⁹⁸ On Hekataios see L. Pearson, *Early Ionian Historians*, Oxford 1939, pp. 25–96. On the debt of Herodotos to Hekataios see F. Jacoby, *s.v.* Hekataios, *RE* VII, 1912 (cols. 2666–2769), cols. 2676–2686; A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotos: Book II I*, Leiden 1975, pp. 127–139, esp. pp. 129–130.

⁹⁹ Jacoby, *op. cit.*, col. 2708; Heidel, pp. 17–18 and 33–34.

¹⁰⁰ Pearson (footnote 98 above), p. 28; Anaximander as first to publish a map of the world: Strabo, 1.1.11 (C7), citing Eratosthenes as his source for this information. For other sources on Anaximander’s map, and on the Archaic Milesian world map generally, see E. H. Bunbury, *A History of Ancient Geography*, London 1883, p. 122, note 4; W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy I*, Cambridge 1962, pp. 73–74; G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1983, pp. 104–105; O. A. W. Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps*, Ithaca 1985, pp. 23–24. Heidel (“Anaximander’s Book, the Earliest Known Geographical Treatise,” in *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 56, 1921, pp. 239–288) went so far as to argue that Anaximander’s work in general might have concerned geography as much as philosophy.

¹⁰¹ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 1.6.3, trans. Kirk *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 133, no. 122B. Cf. C. H. Kahn (*Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, New York 1960, pp. 82–84), who suggests that the same “geometric spirit” informed early Milesian mapmaking. On symmetry in early Greek mapmaking see also Myres (footnote 97 above), pp. 608–609.

¹⁰² Anaximander seems to have lived during the first half of the 6th century B.C. See Guthrie (footnote 100 above), p. 72; Kirk *et al.* (footnote 100 above), p. 101. Hekataios was active in the last quarter of the 6th century. See Pearson (footnote 98 above), pp. 25–28.

¹⁰³ Hesiod, fr. 150 line 15, Merkelbach-West (= P. Oxy. 1358, fr. 2, col. i). It is unclear why Strabo, who quotes this line (7.3.7 [C300]), substitutes Ligurians for Libyans.

some at his rising.”¹⁰⁴ Thus it may be that the opposition of Scythia and Ethiopia was implicit in the early Greek poetic conception of the world but only became really explicit in the geographical and ethnographical writing of the Milesian philosophers.

Memnon’s association with the lands nearest the sun seems to have been part of the earliest conception of the hero, to judge from the nature of his mother, Eos. It is less clear that Achilles was associated with the far north prior to the foundation of his cult in the northern Euxine, which at present seems to have occurred sometime in the 6th century B.C. For one thing, Achilles was associated with Thessaly in Homer and many later writers. Thus, while the polar opposition of Achilles and Memnon may be the key to understanding the localization of the cult of Achilles in the Euxine, it remains uncertain at what point in time Achilles came to be associated with Scythia. There are two possibilities: on the one hand, the white island to which Thetis brought her son in the *Aithiopsis* may have been specifically stated in the epic to lie somewhere in the vicinity of Scythia.¹⁰⁵ Milesian colonists and sailors, familiar with the *Aithiopsis*, may have believed that they had discovered the white island of Achilles when they came upon the island off the mouth of the Istros river, one of the frontiers of Scythia. It is worth noting here that the poet to whom the *Aithiopsis* is attributed, Arktinos, was also a Milesian:¹⁰⁶ it seems fair to say, at the very least, that there is nothing improbable about Milesian colonists being familiar with the contents of the epic.

On the other hand, Ethiopia did not have the same geographical specificity in early Greek poetry as it did in later geographical writing, as we have seen. *Odyssey* 1.23–24, in particular, suggests that Ethiopia need not have been limited geographically to the extreme south in the *Aithiopsis*.¹⁰⁷ This is not an argument against the hypothesis advanced here, since what is really important is not the association of Achilles with a specific cardinal point but rather the separation of Achilles from Memnon. There is another possible reconstruction of the origin of the cult in the Euxine: that in the *Aithiopsis* the white island was located

¹⁰⁴ Homer, *Od.* 1.23–24 (trans. Lattimore). Cf. Homer, *Il.* 1.423 and 23.206, where the land of the Ethiopians is simply said to lie on the banks of the earth-encircling Okeanos. Only in Homer, *Od.* 4.83–85 does Ethiopia have a definite southerly location.

¹⁰⁵ Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that the precise location of the white island off the mouth of the Istros was included in the *Aithiopsis*: see G. L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry*, Cambridge, Mass. 1969, p. 149; Hommel, pp. 12–13; Nagy, p. 167, note 1; V. P. Blavatski, “Borysthenis,” *VDI* 1968, fasc. 4 (pp. 119–122), p. 122. The date attributed to the poet of the *Aithiopsis* in antiquity, around 750 B.C. (Artemon, *FGrHist* 443 F2), is approximately one hundred years earlier than the earliest known Greek activity in the Euxine, which begins in the second half of the 7th century to judge from archaeological evidence: see Kocybala, pp. 107–118 and 122–125. There are isolated references, however, to Pontic rivers and populations in earlier Greek poetry, which suggest that Greek explorers might have reached this region by the middle of the 8th century: see R. Drews, “The Earliest Greek Settlements on the Black Sea,” *JHS* 96, 1976, pp. 18–31. Whether or not the white island was precisely localized in the *Aithiopsis*, the question remains why the Greeks came to associate Achilles with this part of the world. In view of the existence of other places in early Greek poetry for immortalized heroes which are truly mythical (see p. 320 above), it seems reasonable to suppose that the white island was originally a mythical place: see Rohde, pp. 65 and 565, note 102. It does not seem impossible that the white island could have been a mythical place within Scythia in the *Aithiopsis*, since at that early date Scythia itself must have been largely a mythical land.

¹⁰⁶ Proklos, *Chrest.* 2.

¹⁰⁷ Indeed, in his article “Aithiopica” (*Hermes* 87, 1959, pp. 26–38), A. Lesky argued that in epic poetry Memnon would have been thought to have come from the far east.

somewhere on the opposite edge of the earth from Memnon's homeland in Ethiopia, without any specific reference in the poem to Scythia. Milesian colonists along the northern shore of the Euxine, familiar with maps and geography as well as with the *Aithiopsis*, may have reached the conclusion themselves that, if Memnon was associated with Ethiopia and the Nile, the white island of Achilles ought to be located in the vicinity of the Istros river in Scythia. This reconstruction has the merit of explaining not only why the worship of Achilles was widespread among the Greeks along the north shore of the Euxine but also why the explanation of this fact is not readily forthcoming in the ancient sources. The characterization of the white island as a place at the opposite end of the earth from the land of Memnon is a detail which, if it was included in the *Aithiopsis*, could plausibly have escaped repetition in Proklos' summary of the epic, and in the ancient sources in general.¹⁰⁸

One may object that this hypothesis makes the founding of the cult of Achilles in the Euxine appear to have been a kind of treasure hunt, in which one has a map and several clues to the location of the cult. There are accounts in the literary record, however, which bear some resemblance to this way of thinking. Plutarch repeats a sailor's story about certain Atlantic islands on which the soil was so rich that fruit was produced year round. It came to be believed that the islands were the abode of the blest because they matched so closely the description of the Elysian Fields in the *Odyssey* (Plutarch, *Sertorius* 8–9). A story in Herodotos also shows that the legendary animosity between two heroes could actually affect the locations of their cults (Herodotos, 5.67). According to this account, Kleisthenes introduced the cult of Melanippos of Thebes to Sikyon in order to drive out the hero Adrastos and his cult. He chose this cult because Melanippos had been the archenemy of Adrastos during the Theban war. It should also be kept in mind that the cult of Achilles in the Euxine was a product of Greek colonization: as Graham has pointed out, there was a desire on the part of Greek colonists "to possess some title to the land that they settled, for which they frequently made use of mythical stories, showing, for instance, that the land had belonged in the past to some Greek hero."¹⁰⁹

Certain aspects of the intellectual activity at Miletos itself during the 6th century suggest that founding a cult on the basis of an obscure detail in poetry or legend would not have been impossible. The range of interests of the Milesian thinkers, including natural science, philosophy, theology, history, geography, and mythology, to use modern terminology, was largely undifferentiated, as Heidel has emphasized.¹¹⁰ The objection that mythology,

¹⁰⁸ Pinney's identification (p. 134) of the scene on the Boston relief pithos as Achilles' funeral cortege, if correct, would suit the hypothesis presented here: the row of archers on the shoulder of the vase would represent not the followers of Achilles but the destination of the procession, an indication of place. The date of the piece, third quarter of the 7th century, is earlier than the earliest evidence both for the cult of Achilles in the Euxine and for the Milesian world map, but it is no earlier than the foundation of the Milesian settlement at Berezan and does not present a major difficulty. Pinney's other argument (pp. 134–136), that the beard and mustache of Patroklos on the Sosias cup prove that Achilles' followers were Scythians, cannot easily be reconciled with the hypothesis presented in this paper.

¹⁰⁹ A. J. Graham, *CAH* III, iii, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1982, p. 145. See also his list of examples, "The Foundation of Thasos," *BSA* 73, 1978 (pp. 61–98), p. 94, note 317.

¹¹⁰ A. Heidel, "Peri physeos: A Study of the Conception of Nature among the Pre-Socratics," in *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 45, 1910, pp. 79–133. Cf. Herakleitos, fr. 22 B40 Diels (preserved in Athenaios, 13.610B), who characterizes Hekataios as a "polymath".

geography, and a religious belief would not make likely bedfellows is thus perhaps not a valid one. There is also a tone of rationalism in some of the fragments of the Milesians, especially Hekataios, an interest not in eliminating myth and legend from historical inquiry but in adapting the old stories to fit a new, more rigorous way of looking at things. For example, Hekataios expressed the view that Danaos could hardly have had more than 20 daughters, and not 50.¹¹¹ More relevant is Hekataios' view that Geryon did not dwell on a mythical island at the edge of the earth but in northwestern Greece: his reasoning was that the task of driving Geryon's cattle from Aitolia to the Argolid would have been difficult enough for Herakles.¹¹² This way of thinking is not so far removed from that which would locate in Scythia a mythical island of Achilles at the opposite edge of the earth from the land of Memnon.

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¹¹¹ Hekataios, fr. 1 F19 Jacoby, preserved in schol. Euripides, *Or.* 872.

¹¹² Hekataios, fr. 1 F26 Jacoby, quoted by Arrian, *Anab.* 2.16.5.