

***Männerbund* and *pistos hetairos*. Well-being of the Epic Warrior (draft paper)**

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(1)

The term “*andrapodismós*”, as Gaca has demonstrated, does not mean "to enslave", but rather refers to the very process by which an individual or a group is being enslaved: where there used to be a person, now there is a thing, and this thing is at the victorious warrior's disposal, used and enjoyed by them at their convenience.

(2)

First of all, I shall focus on the concept of *pistos hetairos* as a type of relationship (between men, of course, and only between men) that can provide well-being to the warrior (in *The Iliad*).

In Homer, the expression *pistos hetairos* (πιστὸς ἑταῖρος), “faithful friend” is reserved for a male friendship, indicating a very specific type of relationship and personal feeling that goes beyond that of battlefield camaraderie (*hetaireia*).

Scholars have pointed out the necessity of offering some concrete evidence of reliability in order for someone to deserve to be called *pistos*. Some scholars have even claimed that this quality is only recognized once the subject qualified as *pistos* has died: and it is, indeed, true that Patroclus is said to be *pistos hetairos* three times in *Iliad* (17.557, 18.235, 18.460), always after his death.

However, using this logic, we forget that another way of evoking Patroclus, *philos hetairos* (beloved friend), used on nine occasions, is only used, again, after his death.

Therefore, I find it debatable to affirm, on such a weak basis, that "*pistos* in the meaning of 'loyal' is always used of a dead hero". What does seem clear is that,

after the death of Patroclus, Achilles invokes him insistently in emotional terms, remembering the relationship that used to unite them.

I'd like to quote now what David Konstan, one of the scholars who have dedicated most attention to the idea of friendship in the ancient world, has stated with regard to *pistos hetairos*. Namely, he says: "Taken together, the terminological complex constituted by *hetairos* and the markers *philos* and *pistos* embraces the essential elements associated with friendship: a select relationship between non-kin grounded in mutual affection ("dearness") and loyalty or trust".

I absolutely share Konstan's description of friendship in the ancient world; nevertheless, I also understand that the specific kind of friend, the *pistos hetairos* has its own peculiarities and implications. Specifically, I share the idea that friendship in the classical world has to be understood as a personal relationship predicated on affection and generosity, rather than on obligatory reciprocity; however, I think that the reciprocity that the figure of *pistos hetairos* demands, goes beyond what is expected from the mere or simple generosity.

After all, this is clearly not a category with precise contours and limits. Therefore, my intention here is modest: to focus on the specific case of Achilles and Patroclus and the special bond that unites them.

(3)

The relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is one of the great topics of the ancient Greek world in general, and of *Iliad* in particular.

My aim now is to focus on what I see as a distinguishing feature of this relationship: they are friends who advise each other.

Männerbund, male solidarity between comrades in arms, has a vital importance, but the bond that unites Achilles and Patroclus has an additional component, that of the friend as counsellor and confidant. It is a key aspect of the relationship

between the two heroes (Achilles and Patroclus) whose importance, in my opinion, the poet evidences through the almost deranged reaction Achilles presents when he loses his friend.

When Patroclus appears in Achilles's dreams, he laments that the two of them will never again be able to converse alone or give each other counsel, away from everybody else.

Another distinctive and important feature of Achilles' and Patroclus' relationship is its exclusive nature.

The exclusive nature of this relationship is very clearly expressed in the following verses that Zenodotus attests: Il. 16.97-100:

In this specific case, the real problem is not the one Zenodotus saw, that is, the insinuation of the erotic character of this relationship, but the conflict between the personal and the collective.

The bond between men fighting beside one another, whose lives depend on their companion's presence and support, is a clearly valuable resource for the survival of the group, and Achilles is not always attentive to this. The theory proposed by the biologist Edward O. Wilson, according to which the human condition entails a constant struggle between selection at an individual level, which manifests itself in the pursuit of personal success, and selection at a group level, is patent in this, the first monument of Western literature. It is foreshadowed but not developed further in the *Iliad*, and becomes the driving force of the plot of *Myrmidons*. However, it would be a mistake to see some kind of evolution from Homer to Aeschylus in this respect. It is a recurrent conflict that seems to swing now in one direction and then in another, but whose nature is irresolvable.

(4)

A well-being with harsh consequences for women

The erotic component of their relationship, at least in the Homeric version of *The Iliad*, has been denied based on the passage in which, after the failed embassy, each one of them retires to rest accompanied by a girl.

I'm interested in now is in putting the focus on those girls (*Il* 9.663-668):

But Achilles slept in the inward corner of the strong-built shelter, and **a woman lay beside him**, one he had taken from Lesbos, Phorbos' daughter, Diomedes of the fair colouring. In the other corner Patroklos went to bed; **with him also was a girl**, Iphis the fair-girdled, whom brilliant Achilles gave him, when he took sheer Skyros, Enyeus' citadel.

αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς εὔδε μυχῷ κλισίης εὐπήκτου·
τῷ δ' ἄρα παρκατέλεκτο γυνή, τὴν Λεσβόθεν ἦγε,
Φόρβαντος θυγάτηρ Διομήδη καλλιπάρηος.
Πάτροκλος δ' ἐτέρωθεν ἐλέξατο· παρ δ' ἄρα καὶ τῷ
Ἴφιδι εὐζώνος, τὴν οἱ πόρε δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς
Σκυῖρον ἐλὼν αἰπεῖαν Ἐνυῆος πτολίεθρον

Kathy L. Gaca (2015) has cast light on these verses, taking on the perspective of these women. The first one is a young girl captured and brought from Lesbos by Achilles (the hero has made reference to the capture of Lesbos in various passages of *The Iliad*); the other one is a gift from Achilles to Patroclus, taken as booty from Scyros.

They are, obviously, enslaved women whose only function is to satisfy the sexual, and purely sexual, desires of men and, we have to assume, to take charge of other tasks in equally slavish conditions. Achilles and Patroclus appeared at the beginning of the episode, entertaining themselves with music: Achilles plays the lyre while Patroclus listens to him. As night falls, they use the enslaved bodies of these girls.

In the verse 664, we find the verb *ago*, as usually in this kind of contexts:

When speaking of war, we cannot continue to focus solely on the aspects related to armament and military strategy, or on what the victory of one or the other side in each of the clashes entails in historical, political, economic or geostrategic terms. There is this continuum – the use of systematic and massive rape of girls

and women in war conflicts, and there are abundant references to this in the writings of the Greco-Latin classical authors (Gaca, *passim*).

As night falls, the warrior (the Homeric hero in this case) "sleeps with" a girl. We have to be aware that this expression is deceptive and hides the horror of war for non-combatants.