

A Marble Head of Ares in the Old Archaeological Museum of Chalkis in Euboea, Greece¹

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Abstract. This study engages with a marble head of Ares, currently on exhibition at the Old Archaeological Museum of Chalkis in Euboea, Greece. The head has been executed according to the finest tradition of Classical-Hellenistic Greek sculpture, creating a figure with theatrical and pathetic expressions, recalling the Skopadic trend. The lack of pupils may indicate that the head of the god is a pre-Hadrianic Roman copy of a Greek original from the 4th-2nd centuries BCE.

Keywords: Ática; Pre-Hadrianic; Pupils; *Sfumato*; Skopas; Skopadic.

[es] Una cabeza de mármol de Ares en el Antiguo Museo Arqueológico de Calcis, Eubea (Grecia)

Resumen. Este estudio se ocupa de una cabeza de mármol de Ares, actualmente exhibida en el Antiguo Museo Arqueológico de Calcis, en Eubea (Grecia). La cabeza fue ejecutada de acuerdo con la mejor tradición de la escultura griega clásico-helenística, creando una figura con expresiones teatrales y patéticas que recuerdan el estilo de Escopas. La ausencia de pupilas puede indicar que la cabeza del dios corresponde a una copia romana, pre-adriana, de una obra griega original de los siglos IV-II a.C.

Palabras clave: Ática; pre-adriano; pupilas; *sfumato*; Escopas; estilo de Escopas.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Iconography and discussion. 3. Dating. 4. References.

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*Ares, exceeding in strength, chariot-rider, golden-helmeted, doughty in heart, shield-bearer, Saviour of cities, harnessed in bronze, strong of arm, unwearing, mighty with the spear.*⁴

1. Introduction

The marble head of a Greek deity, discovered in Chalkis (in a field once owned by the Zerva family and today occupied by social housing), is currently on exhibition in the old archaeological museum of the city (**Fig. 1**).⁵ The provenance of the marble is probably Attica (if correct, the quarries would have been those of Mount Pentelicon).

The high artistic quality, visible in the treatment of the facial features, indicates that the head was sculpted in a workshop by a skilled artist, either in Chalkis or in its vicinity.

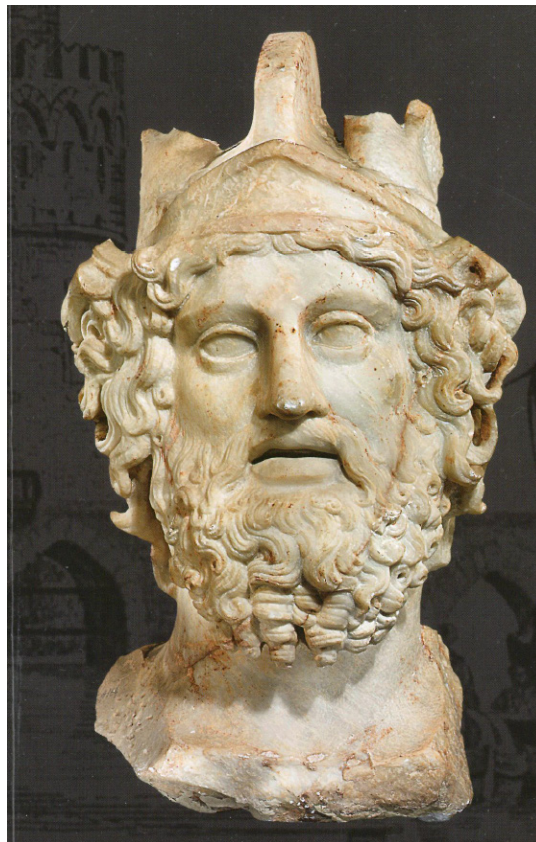


Fig. 1. Front view of the head (Kalamara *et alii* 2015, cover image)

⁴ *The Homeric Hymns*, VIII.1-3: *To Ares*.

⁵ This sculpted marble head is published here for the first time. Its photograph appears in Kalamara – Kosma – Boukaras – Chairetakis 2015, 51 (Fig. 54 and illustration on front cover) without any discussion. Height - *ca.* 60 cm; inventory number: MX 4164.

2. Iconography and discussion (Figs. 2-5)

From the iconographic aspect, the following facial characteristics are prominent: the mouth is slightly open, creating an optical illusion of the oral cavity, while the teeth in the upper row are depicted in a hazy (*sfumato*) form; the mustachioed upper lip is slightly arched, and the lower lip is wide, thick and fleshy; the chin is hidden beneath the full, heavy beard; the cheeks are full and rather wide and the cheekbones are subtle; the almond-shaped eyes, lacking pupils, are not deeply set in their sockets and their contour is pronounced; the arched eyelids are emphasized with a groove, establishing a transition to the smooth and rather stylized eyebrows, rendered through an arched line; the forehead is smooth and broad; the bridge of the nose forms a continuous, straight line from the forehead, as is usual in Classical Greek sculpture of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE;⁶ drill marks are discernible in the beard, the locks of hair and the nostrils of the figure.

The head is executed according to the finest tradition of Classical-Hellenistic Greek sculpture. The artist has rendered the face as a man of intermediate age, with a facial expression transmitting a sense of tranquility and fulfilment. The artistic execution of the head reflects the hallmarks of a realistic tendency, as if representing an ordinary warrior, despite certain Classical idealistic features, such as the lack of pupils⁷ and the continuous, straight line of the bridge of the nose from the forehead. The face receives emphasis through its surfaces, which create light and shade, resulting in a three-dimensional expression that contributes to enhancing the realistic character of the head.

The enlarged opening of the eyes (the wide ‘Skopadic eye’), the ‘baroque’ execution of the locks of hair and the slightly open mouth, with the wide lower lip and the *sfumato* depiction of the upper row of teeth, together create an image with a pathetic expression that recalls the works of Skopas.⁸ Furthermore, the Skopadic technical-stylistic approach to rendering the eyes is intended to enhance the dramatic and pathetic character of the face. The locks of hair in disarray, the facial features,⁹ as well as the slightly raised head, by means of which the artist achieved a theatrical effect of the image, typical of the ‘baroque’ trend of the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE, strengthen the impression that the sculptor was influenced by the Skopadic-pathetic school. The lack of pupils¹⁰ creates the impression of an unfocused gaze of a daydreamer. This particular feature constitutes a chronological criterion, possibly indicating that the *terminus ante quem* of the head is pre-Hadrianic.

⁶ Cf. de Ridder – Deonna 1927 (1968), Pl. XIV; Lullies – Hirmer 1960, Pls. 117, 123, 132, 135, 137, 138, 141, 152, 153, 186, 225; Lawrence 1972, 280.

⁷ See, for example, Müller 1973, *passim*; Richter 1984, *passim*; Johansen 1992, *passim*.

⁸ Cf. Bieber 1967, 24-29, Figs. 54-57, 58-60, 62-63, 66-73; Avi-Yonah 1969, 150f.; Stewart 1977, 73-74, Pls. 24a (head), 25d (Leda), 30a-b (herm), 52 (lips: 2-5, eyes: 1, 4-6).

⁹ For similar facial features in the Greek sculpture, see: Bieber 1967, Figs. 531 (Laocoon), 581 (old centaur), 666 (head of Anytos), 771-773, 775-776 (heads of Zeus); Müller 1973, Ills. 20-21, 26 (the Great Altar of Pergamon, 2nd century BCE); Smith 1991, Ills. 35 (Homer, copy after an original of ca. 200 BCE), 37 (Unidentified philosopher, copy after an original of 3rd century BCE), 64 (Zeus from Otricoli, 1st century CE, based on an early Hellenistic type), 133/2 (Menelaus, copy after an original of ca. 250-200 BCE), 143 (Laocoon, copy after an original of ca. 200 BCE), 161 (old centaur, copy after an original of late 3rd or 2nd century BCE); Ridgway 2001, Pls. 57 (colossal Sarapis), 69c (head of Zeus, 3rd-2nd century BCE, but probably Roman).

¹⁰ See above, n. 7.

The triangular brim of a crested helmet, an attribute of the god Ares, is prominent above the forehead, partially covering the locks of hair. The brim rises up the sides of the forehead in straight lines, gradually narrowing. The temples are adorned with curls on both sides. Two broken sphinxes or griffins are symmetrically sculpted on either side of the crested helmet. Based mainly on the triangular brim of the crested helmet, and perhaps also on the two broken sphinxes or griffins that decorate it, the head can be identified with the figure of Ares/Mars,¹¹ whose image was quite frequent in both Greek¹² and Roman¹³ sculpture. Furthermore, the literary sources relating to Skopas reveal that the sculptor had created a colossal seated statue of the god,¹⁴ but this has not survived.

An examination of the head rises several problems concerning its form and original location. However, since the head is broken off below the neck, it is difficult to determine whether it was once part of a larger-than-life statue or, alternatively, it is simply a broken bust. In addition, the back of the head is rough, barely treated, which may indicate that it was placed in a niche, either as a statue or a bust.

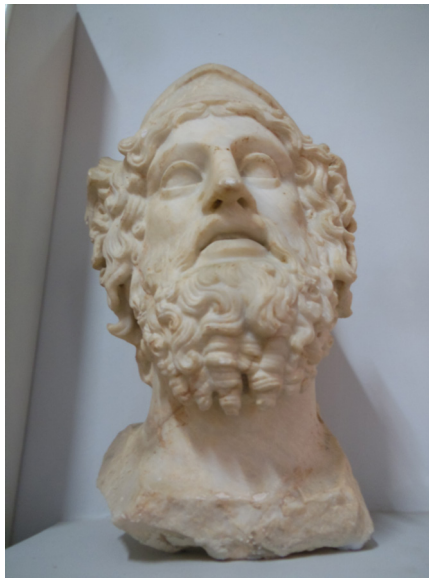


Fig. 2. Front view of the head at a different angle of photography (Asher Ovadiah; courtesy of the Superintendency of Antiquities of Euboea, Greece)

¹¹ Cf. Roscher I/1, 1884-1886, cols. 477-493, s.v. 'Ares'; Roscher II/2, 1894-1897, cols. 2385-2438, s.v. 'Mars'; Baumeister I, 1889, 116-121, s.v. 'Ares'; Baumeister II, 1889, 885f., s.v. 'Mars'; Daremberg – Saglio 1904, 1607-1623, s.v. 'Mars'; Seyffert 1964, 60-61, s.v. 'Ares'; Tripp 1972, 70-72, s.v. 'Ares'; Hammond – Scullard 1978, 103f., s.v. 'Ares'.

¹² See, for example, Boardman – Dörig – Fuchs – Hirmer 1967, Pl. 208 (above: from east frieze of the Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis); Bieber 1967, Figs. 103-105; Stewart 1977, Pl. 48 (a, b, c).

¹³ See, for example, Reinach 1903, 67, Pls. 81-82; Reinach 1908, 179 (1, 2); Reinach 1920, 55 (1- top, first from the left); Brilliant 1974, 177 (Fig. IV.17); Hanfmann n.d., Fig. 112.

¹⁴ See Plin. *HN* 36.26: *nunc vero praeter supra dicta quaeque nescimus Mars etiamnum est sedens colossiaeus eiusdem manu in templo Bruti Callaeci apud circum eundem* (...). "As it is, apart from the works mentioned above and those unknown to us, there is furthermore the colossal seated statue of Mars by the same artist [i.e.: Skopas] in the temple built by Brutus Callaecus, also in the Circus (...)" (Trans. D. E. Eichholz, Loeb Classical Library, No. 419, X, London-Cambridge [Mass.] 1962).

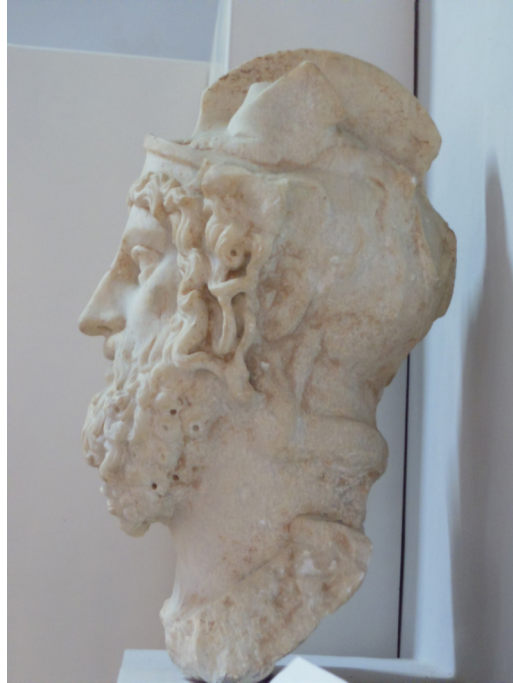


Fig. 3. Profile view of the head - left side (Asher Ovadiah; courtesy of the Superintendency of Antiquities of Euboea, Greece)



Fig. 4. Profile view of the head - right side (Asher Ovadiah; courtesy of the Superintendency of Antiquities of Euboea, Greece)



Fig. 5. Facial details (Asher Ovadiah; courtesy of the Superintendency of Antiquities of Euboea, Greece)

3. Dating

The head in question thus seems to be a Roman copy of the god Ares,¹⁵ whose artistic treatment was inspired by Classical-Hellenistic Greek sculpture. The anonymous Roman sculptor, who displays a high degree of technical ability, adopted artistic and stylistic elements of the 4th-2nd centuries BCE, especially those close to the Skopadic trend. The head appears to be a pre-Hadrianic copy of a Greek original from the 4th-2nd centuries BCE, featuring the theatrical-pathetic characteristics of the Skopadic approach.

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¹⁵ For the image of Ares/Mars in general and that in Greek and Roman sculpture in particular, see also *LIMC* II/1-2, 1984: s.v. 'Ares/Mars', 479-580, Figs. 5-542.

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