

8. Tiziano Presutti

A Fragmented Voice: Praxilla as an Author of Dithyramps

Amidst the vast and uneven debris of early and classical dithyrambic production, Praxilla stands out as the only female author. The Sicyonian poetess, active in the 5th century BC, authored a dithyramb entitled *Achilles* (fr. 748 Page). The source of this fragment, in referring to multiple dithyramps (Heph. *Ench.* 2.3 ἐν διθυράμβοις), seems to imply that the poetess wrote other poems of this genre: it is not unlikely to include in this list also – and at least – fr. 752 Page, concerning Dionysus and Aphrodite.

The contribution, crossing philological and historical-religious research, focuses on the exegetical possibilities offered by these fragments. The aim is to shed light on an aspect that has practically never been explored, namely the interaction between Praxilla's dithyrambic production and the public contexts in which these compositions were performed and circulated.

There are in fact several problems that, due to the scanty sources and the poor attention of the scholarship, remain unanswered to this day: the content of the praxillean dithyramps, their religious framework, the composition of the choruses in charge of the performance, and, last but not least, the problematic connection between these poems and the historical-religious sources. These issues will be addressed through new interpretations: fr. 752, potentially centred on Dionysus, seems to present a strong compatibility with the Dionysian ritual practices at Sicyon, while fr. 748, with its hypothetical catabatic implications, may have been composed for a Spartan festival. A comprehensive analysis of these and other elements uncovers novel and original insights into what we may term a *unicum*: a female authorial voice within the Dithyrambic genre.

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