

Orchesis

Une approche philologique et
lexicale de la danse chez Homère¹

*A philological and lexical
approach to dance in Homer¹*

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Résumé

Nous présentons dans cet article un lexique de la danse chez Homère, avec pour chaque terme, sa définition et ses références dans l'*Illiade* et l'*Odyssée*. Ce lexique nous mène ensuite à une étude détaillée de l'emploi de ces termes dans leur contexte et en confrontation les uns avec les autres. Nous dégageons de cette façon les caractéristiques essentielles de la danse chez Homère et nous remettons en question certaines traductions traditionnelles qui peuvent induire le chercheur en erreur. C'est le cas en particulier de la traduction du terme χορός au chant XVIII de l'*Illiade* (590). Nous prouvons ainsi l'importance d'une approche philologique et lexicale de la danse chez Homère.

Mots clés: Danse, Homère, Iliade, Odyssée, Épopée, Lexique, Vocabulaire, Chœur, Dédale, Ariane, Danse traditionnelle grecque, Philologie classique.

Abstract

In this article, we present a lexicon of dance in Homer. We give the definition of each term and its references in the Iliad and the Odyssey. We also study the occurrence context and bring out the essential characteristics of dance in Homer. Then, we question some traditional translations such as the translation of the term χορός in book 18 of the Iliad (590). That way, we prove the importance of a philological and lexical approach to dance in Homer.

Keywords: Dance, Homer, Iliad, Odyssey, Epic poems, Lexicon, Vocabulary, Chorus, Daedalus, Ariadne, Greek dance, Classical philology.¹

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Introduction

La danse chez Homère ne reçoit pas l'attention qu'elle mérite. Elle n'est malheureusement jamais étudiée pour elle-même. Les chercheurs considèrent plutôt la danse homérique dans une perspective historique et diachronique. S'ils sont régulièrement amenés à relire *l'Iliade* et *l'Odyssée*, c'est pour y chercher les traces des chœurs virginaux, des péans, des hyménées ou d'une mystérieuse danse crétoise. Ce faisant, ils manquent cependant l'occasion de s'intéresser au texte d'Homère dans son ensemble et de comprendre quelles étaient les caractéristiques générales de la danse à l'époque homérique. En 2015, dans notre mémoire (KABARAKIS), nous avons comblé ce vide en étudiant tous les contextes d'apparition de la danse et de la musique dans les épopées mais nous n'avions pas suffisamment observé les mots d'Homère... Nous n'avions pas cherché le sens profond de certains termes, nous ne les avons pas comparés les uns aux autres, nous n'avions pas remis en question non plus l'une ou l'autre traduction traditionnelle.

Aujourd'hui, nous remédions à notre propre manquement et proposons une toute nouvelle approche de la danse chez Homère fondée sur une méthode philologique et lexicale. Celle-ci consiste d'abord à rassembler dans un lexique tous les termes qui renvoient à la danse homérique et à donner pour chaque terme, sa définition et ses références dans *l'Iliade* et *l'Odyssée*. Ce lexique nous livre une vue d'ensemble du champ lexical de la danse chez Homère et suscite de nombreuses questions.

Que signifie ὁ χορός, le mot le plus employé chez Homère pour parler de la danse? Comment choisir entre ses deux sens possibles de *piste de danse* et de *chœur*? Et le χορός de Dédale au chant XVIII de *l'Iliade* (590) est-il vraiment une piste de danse? Quelle différence présente le terme ὁ χορός avec les autres mots qui signifient *la danse*, ἡ μολπή, ὁ ὄρχηθμός et ἡ ὄρχηστύς? Quand apparaissent les verbes μέλπω et ὀρχέομαι d'où ces mots dérivent? Et le verbe παίζω, quel rapport présente-t-il avec la danse? Ne signifie-t-il pas habituellement *jouer*? Qui sont les danseurs homériques aussi? Et enfin, quelles sont les

caractéristiques principales de la danse? Quelle est l'ambiance chorale chez Homère? Que nous apprend le vocabulaire sur la façon dont la danse était perçue dans les épopées homériques?

Partie I: Le lexique de la danse

Nous avons rassemblé dans ce lexique tous les mots qui concernent la danse chez Homère². Pour l'établir, nous avons relu en français *l'Illiade* et *l'Odyssée* à la recherche des scènes de danse. Au cours de notre lecture, nous avons relevé tous les passages qui se référaient à la danse. Nous les avons ensuite lus en grec et même traduits pour mieux observer le vocabulaire employé par Homère et pour réfléchir sur le véritable sens de ses vers. Dans cette perspective, nous avons comparé les éditions de P. Mazon pour *l'Illiade* et d'A. Ludwich pour *l'Odyssée* à celles de G. Dindorf, d'A. T. Murray et de V. Bérard afin de vérifier qu'il n'y avait pas de différences significatives entre elles. Les textes concordent dans l'ensemble.

Après cette étape importante, nous avons construit un tableau avec tous les mots de vocabulaire de la danse que nous avons rencontrés. Une recherche de ces termes dans le *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*³ nous permet de nous assurer que nous n'avons oublié aucune occurrence. Le dictionnaire étymologique de P. Chantraine (1999) d'où sont tirées les traductions ci-dessous, nous fut aussi d'une grande aide pour comprendre en profondeur le sens de ces mots et leur origine. Nous avons classé les lemmes par ordre alphabétique afin d'en faciliter la recherche. Ils sont cependant regroupés par thème dans l'étude du vocabulaire de la danse qui suit ce lexique.

Terme	Sens	Occurrence
ὁ βητάρμων, ονος	le danseur	<i>Od.</i> VIII, 250, 383
δινεύω, δινέω	faire tourner, tourner, tourbillonner	<i>Il.</i> XVIII, 494, 606 <i>Od.</i> IV, 19
θαυμάζω	admirer, s'étonner, s'émerveiller	<i>Od.</i> VIII, 265 <i>Il.</i> XVIII, 496
ὁ κυβιστητήρ, ἦρος	celui qui saute la tête la première, qui fait une culbute	<i>Il.</i> XVIII, 605 <i>Od.</i> IV, 18
ἡ μαρμαρυγή, ἦς	le scintillement des pieds à cause de la rapidité du mouvement.	<i>Od.</i> VIII, 265

2 Pour un lexique de la musique et du chant, voir KABARAKIS 2015: 57-61

3 Pantelia, M. C. (éd.) *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. Digital Library, University of California, Irvine. <http://www.tlg.uci.edu> (consulté le 10 avril 2021)

Terme	Sens	Occurrence
μέλπω	chanter et danser, chanter	<i>Il.</i> I, 474 <i>Il.</i> VII, 241 <i>Il.</i> XVI, 182 <i>Od.</i> IV, 17 <i>Od.</i> XIII, 27
ἡ μολπή, ἦς	chant accompagné de danse	<i>Il.</i> I, 472 <i>Il.</i> XIII, 637 <i>Il.</i> XVIII, 572, 606 <i>Od.</i> I, 152 <i>Od.</i> IV, 19 <i>Od.</i> VI, 101 <i>Od.</i> XXI, 430 <i>Od.</i> XXIII, 145
ὀρχέομαι	danser en groupe généralement; à différencier de χορεύω (former un chœur) et de σκιρτάω (sauter)	<i>Il.</i> XVIII, 594 <i>Od.</i> VIII, 371, 378 <i>Od.</i> XIV, 465
ὁ ὀρχηθμός, οὔ	la danse	<i>Il.</i> XIII, 637 <i>Od.</i> VIII, 263 <i>Od.</i> XXIII, 134, 145, 298
ὁ ὀρχηστής, οὔ	le danseur	<i>Il.</i> XVI, 617 <i>Il.</i> XXIV, 261
ὁ ὀρχηστήρ, ἦρος	le danseur	<i>Il.</i> XVIII, 494
ἡ ὀρχηστύς, ὕος	la danse en tant qu'art	<i>Il.</i> XIII, 731 <i>Od.</i> I, 152, 421 <i>Od.</i> VIII, 253 <i>Od.</i> XVII, 605 <i>Od.</i> XVIII, 304
παίζω	jouer, jouer d'un instrument, danser, plaisanter, railler	<i>Od.</i> VI, 100, 106 <i>Od.</i> VII, 291 <i>Od.</i> VIII, 251 <i>Od.</i> XXIII, 147
περιστεναχίζομαι	retentir tout autour, de tout côté, renvoyer le bruit de	<i>Od.</i> VIII, 264
πλήσσω	frapper, donner un coup, piquer	<i>Od.</i> VIII, 264
ῥήγνυμι	frapper, briser	<i>Il.</i> XVIII, 571
σκαίρω	sauter en tous sens, danser	<i>Il.</i> XVIII, 572
τέρπομαι	éprouver un plaisir physique ou psychique	<i>Il.</i> XVIII, 604 <i>Od.</i> I, 422-423 <i>Od.</i> XVII, 606 <i>Od.</i> XVIII, 305-306

Terme	Sens	Occurrence
τρέχω	courir	<i>Il.</i> XVIII, 599, 602
φιλοπαίγμων, ονος	qui aime le jeu	<i>Od.</i> XXIII, 134
ὁ χορός, οὔ	la danse en chœur, la danse en groupe, le chœur de danse, la piste de danse	<i>Il.</i> III, 393, 394 <i>Il.</i> XV, 508 <i>Il.</i> XVI, 180, 183 <i>Il.</i> XVIII, 590, 603 <i>Od.</i> VI, 65, 157 <i>Od.</i> VIII, 248, 260, 264 <i>Od.</i> XII, 4, 318 <i>Od.</i> XVIII, 194
ἡ χοροῦπιτία, ας	action de frapper le sol en dansant	<i>Il.</i> XXIV, 261

Partie II: Le vocabulaire de la danse

Ce lexique nous permet d'avoir une vision globale de la danse chez Homère et d'apercevoir en un coup d'œil la plupart de ses caractéristiques mais il révèle aussi l'emploi de mots différents pour le même concept. La danse, en effet, se traduit en grec par ὁ χορός, ἡ μολπή, ὁ ὄρχηθμός, et ἡ ὄρχηστύς; danser par μέλπω, ὀρχέομαι et παίζω et les danseurs par ὁ βητάρμων, ὁ κυβιστητήρ et ὁ ὄρχηστής. Tous ces mots signifient-ils vraiment la même chose? Sont-ils utilisés dans des contextes semblables? Quelles nuances renferment-ils? Ces questions constituent le fil conducteur de la deuxième partie de cet article où nous étudions les occurrences de chaque mot de vocabulaire.

Notre méthode consiste à comparer les différents usages des termes entre eux et de les confronter parfois à d'autres contextes d'apparition, au sein des épopées mais aussi dans d'autres œuvres archaïques comme les *Hymnes homériques*. Notre analyse passe aussi dans certains cas par la traduction qui est volontairement littérale. Nous évitons ainsi d'interpréter le texte grec et de nous éloigner de son sens premier que nous devons absolument comprendre si nous voulons brosser un portrait fidèle de la danse chez Homère.

Nous commençons notre étude par les mots qui évoquent la danse ou l'acte de danser. Nous nous intéressons en particulier au terme ὁ χορός qui est le plus fréquent mais aussi le plus ambigu. Nous avons l'ambition ici de lever cette ambiguïté et de distinguer pour chacune de ses occurrences entre ses deux sens possibles, *la piste de danse et le chœur*. Nous poursuivons ensuite avec les termes ἡ μολπή et ὁ ὄρχηθμός ou ἡ ὄρχηστύς, dérivés des verbes μέλπω et ὀρχέομαι dont nous analysons aussi les occurrences, afin de bien comprendre ce qui différencie tous ces mots entre eux. Le verbe παίζω, quant à lui, occupe une place particulière dans notre étude étant donné son lien

surprenant mais étroit avec la danse. Nous terminons par l'analyse des danseurs qui sont nommés de trois façons différentes (ὁ βητάρμων, ὁ κυβιστητήρ, ὁ ὄρχηστής) dans les épopées homériques.

A. Evoquer la danse

1. Le χορός

Ὁ χορός est le terme le plus utilisé pour se référer à la danse dans les épopées homériques. Il apparaît quinze fois au total, sept dans *Illiade* et huit dans *Odyssée*.

Le mot χορός n'a pas d'équivalent en français. Il englobe en effet deux réalités: il renvoie tantôt à *un lieu consacré à la danse* et tantôt au *groupe de danseurs*. Dans ce dernier cas, les spécialistes le traduisent par *chœur*. En général en français, le terme *chœur* correspond à un groupe de chanteurs ou à l'emplacement du chant choral dans une église. Nous ne l'utiliserons cependant pas dans ce sens ici parce que, même si le chœur grec chantait, son essence était la danse, à tel point que les Grecs encore aujourd'hui emploient ce terme pour parler de cet art.

Le terme χορός porte donc deux sens proches mais distincts: *la piste de danse* et *le groupe de danseurs*. Lequel des deux est le premier? Est-ce le groupe de danseurs qui a donné son nom à l'aire de danse ou bien est-ce l'inverse? Nous ne pouvons pas l'affirmer avec certitude. P. Chantraine (1999: s.v. χορός) avance néanmoins plusieurs arguments en faveur de la deuxième hypothèse. Tout d'abord, le sens de *piste de danse* est ancien. Il est propre à Homère et se perd par la suite. De plus, Pausanias (III, 11, 9) nous apprend que le χορός était à Sparte l'équivalent d'une place publique. La notion spatiale de χορός est donc confirmée dialectalement. Enfin, χορός dans les composés homériques renvoie à un lieu. Le composé καλλιχορος est une épithète de grandes villes qui signifie «aux belles danses» ou plus probablement «aux belles places pour les danses». L'adjectif εύρυχορος qualifie aussi des villes et des pays et pourrait signifier «aux larges places (de danse?)» (BAILLY 2010: s.v. εύρυχορος). Enfin, dans le composé χοροιτυπία (*action de frapper le sol en dansant*), il n'y a pas de doute pour le sens locatif de χορός attesté par la terminaison -οι et par le verbe τύπτω (*frapper*). Le sens de *piste de danse* semble donc bien précéder celui de *chœur*.

Ce double sens du terme χορός complique la compréhension du texte d'Homère et mène à des interprétations erronées de la part des traducteurs. Afin de remédier à cette confusion et de distinguer entre le sens de *piste de danse* et de *chœur*, nous avons analysé toutes les occurrences du mot χορός dans leur contexte. Les verbes qu'Homère emploie ou le sens général du passage constituent en effet des indices précieux du sens du mot χορός, surtout s'ils sont comparés à d'autres contextes d'apparition.

A. Le χορός, une piste de danse

Commençons par les extraits où le terme χορός signifie *la piste de danse*. Il en est certains, comme au chant VIII de l'*Odyssée*, où le sens de *piste de danse* nous apparaît clairement.

262	κοῦροι (...)	Les jeunes gens (...)
264	πέπληγον δὲ χορὸν θεῖον ποσίν. ⁴	frappèrent la divine <i>piste de danse de leurs pieds</i> .

Χορός dans cet extrait, comme dans le dérivé χοροίτυπια, porte selon nous le sens de *piste de danse*. Nous ne comprenons donc pas le vers comme Sarah Olsen (2017: 7) qui préfère l'interprétation selon laquelle les danseurs martèlent de leurs pieds une danse divine. D'une part, le verbe πλήσσω (*frapper*) dont χορός est le complément d'objet direct se comprend plus aisément si ὁ χορός renvoie au sol. D'autre part, ὁ χορός apparaît un peu plus haut au vers 260 mais cette fois comme complément du verbe λειάνω (*aplanir; rendre lisse*). Vu le sens de ce verbe, il est impossible dans ce cas-ci que χορός ait le sens de *chœur*, d'autant plus que la danse n'a pas encore démarré et ce sont neuf juges et non des danseurs, qui font l'action.

259	αἰσυμνήται (...) ἐννέα (...)	Les neuf juges aplanirent la
260	λείηναν δὲ χορὸν, καλὸν δ' εὐρύναν ἀγῶνα.	<i>piste de danse</i> et dégagèrent un bel espace de concours.

Nous pensons donc que χορός signifie *piste de danse* dans les deux passages précédents. Il n'est cependant pas toujours aussi aisé de savoir si χορός doit être compris comme *une piste de danse* ou comme *un chœur*. Il y a en fait plusieurs passages où le traducteur est en droit d'hésiter. Le premier est le vers 393 du chant III de l'*Iliade*.

392	οὐδέ κε φαίης	Tu ne dirais pas qu'il rentre
393	ἀνδρὶ μαχεσσάμενον τὸν γ' ἐλθέμεν, ἀλλὰ χορὸνδε	d'un combat avec un homme, mais plutôt qu'il se rend à la piste de danse / qu'il se joint à un chœur ou qu'il
394	ἔρχεσθ', ἥ ἐ χοροῖο νέον λήγοντα καθίζειν.	s'assied, tout juste après avoir mis fin au chœur.

4 Les textes sont tirés de l'édition de P. Mazon pour l'*Iliade* et d'A. Ludwich pour l'*Odyssée*.

5 Sauf indication contraire, les traductions des passages cités sont personnelles.

Contrairement aux passages précédents, le sens global de la phrase ne nous permet pas de trancher entre les deux traductions possibles. C'est pourquoi, il nous faut observer le texte d'Homère de plus près et plus particulièrement le verbe qu'il emploie, ἔρχομαι (*venir*). Ce dernier se construit ici avec un accusatif de but qui n'est autre que χορόν (CHANTRAINE 1999: s.v. χορός). Le choix d'un verbe de déplacement donne l'idée d'un lieu auquel on se rend. De plus, cette tournure en rappelle une autre au chant XIX de l'*Odyssée* (313) où Ulysse se rend dans une maison (οἶκον ἐλεύσεται). Dans les deux expressions, ἔρχομαι se construit avec un accusatif de but et dans les deux cas, cet accusatif correspond à un espace qui implique la présence de personnes. Nous pensons donc que, comme οἶκον, le mot χορός au vers 393 doit être compris comme un lieu, de rencontre certes, mais comme un lieu avant tout. Nous traduirions donc le vers par: *mais plutôt qu'il se rend là où l'on danse*.

Notre idée que le χορός est ici plutôt un lieu est renforcée par deux autres vers où le verbe ἔρχομαι ne se construit pas avec un accusatif de direction ambigu mais avec la préposition εἰς (*vers*) qui a clairement une dimension spatiale.

Au chant XV de l'*Iliade*, Ajax exhorte ses compagnons au combat.

508 οὐ μὰν ἔς γε χορόν κέλετ' ἐλθέμεν,
ἀλλὰ μάχεσθαι.

Il (Hector) ne leur ordonne pas **d'aller à la piste de danse** mais de se battre.

Au chant VI de l'*Odyssée*, Nausicaa pense à ses frères qui ont besoin de vêtements propres pour aller à la danse.

64 οἱ δ' αἰεὶ ἐθέλουσι νεόπλυτα
65 εἴματ' ἔχοντες ἔς χορόν ἔρχεσθαι

Eux veulent toujours **aller à la piste de danse** vêtus de vêtements fraîchement lavés.

Il est encore une occurrence du mot χορός au chant VI de l'*Odyssée*. Elle est légèrement différente des précédentes parce que χορόν est cette fois le complément du verbe εἰσοιχνέω (*aller dans, entrer*) et non de ἔρχομαι mais la même préposition εἰς est présente puisqu'elle compose le verbe. La présence de cette préposition induit encore une fois que le χορός est un lieu.

157 λευσσόντων τοιόνδε θάλος χορόν
εἰσοιχνεῦσαν.

(...) quand ils voient un tel enfant **pénétrer la piste de danse**.

Nous avons donc relevé six passages où χορός signifie *la piste de danse* plutôt que *le chœur*. Il est en un dernier où le sens de *piste de danse* est généralement choisi. Celui-ci mérite qu'on s'y attarde plus longuement, vu sa célébrité. Il s'agit du χορός qu'Héphaïstos a ciselé sur le bouclier d'Achille et qui ressemble à celui que Dédale avait fabriqué pour Ariane.

B. Le χορός sur le bouclier d'Achille, une piste de danse?

- 590 ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς
Ἀμφιγυήεις
591 τῷ ἴκελον, οἶόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ
εὐρείῃ
592 Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ
Ἀριάδνῃ.

L'illustre Boiteux y ciselait aussi **une piste de danse/un chœur** semblable à celui que, dans la vaste Cnosso, Dédale **avait travaillé** autrefois pour Ariane aux belles boucles.

Quel est ce χορός au chant XVIII de l'*Illiade* que Dédale aurait fabriqué pour Ariane? Les traducteurs supposent souvent qu'il s'agit d'une piste de danse réelle que Dédale aurait construite à Cnosso. Paul Mazon par exemple traduit ainsi: *L'illustre Boiteux y modèle encore une place de danse (χορὸν) toute pareille à celle que jadis, dans la vaste Cnosse, l'art de Dédale a bâtie (ἤσκησεν) pour Ariane aux belles tresses* (1946). Plus récemment (2010), Philippe Brunet comprend aussi le χορός comme une piste de danse: *Et l'illustre Boiteux fit briller une piste de danse, semblable à celle où (οἶόν) jadis, dans Cnosso la ville spacieuse, Dédale avait œuvré pour Ariane boucles-splendides*. Sa compréhension du χορός comme un espace est tellement solide qu'elle le pousse à traduire οἶόν (591) par où, alors que c'est un accusatif – l'équivalent en français d'un complément d'objet direct. Comme nous le verrons cependant, sa traduction du verbe ἤσκησεν par *avait œuvré* respecte davantage le sens premier du terme que celle de Paul Mazon. Le terme χορός (vers 590) doit-il bien être compris comme un espace dédié à la danse? Rien n'est moins sûr. Il se pourrait aussi que le χορός que Dédale a fabriqué pour Ariane soit un chœur de danse sculpté.

Le vers 592 constitue la plus ancienne référence littéraire à Dédale. Il s'agit de sa seule apparition dans toute l'œuvre homérique. Dédale y est présenté comme l'artisan par excellence, puisque son œuvre est digne de comparaison avec celle du dieu Héphaïstos. Mais Dédale est-il ici le sculpteur ou l'architecte? Et le χορός est-il un chœur sculpté ou une piste de danse construite?

Les anciens penchent davantage pour une sculpture (FRONTISI-DUCROUX 1975: 136). Callistrate croit, à voir l'Eros de Praxitèle, qu'il est possible que Dédale ait sculpté un chœur en mouvement (Stat., III, 5):

ἐμοὶ μὲν δὴ θεασαμένῳ τὴν τέχνην ἐπήει
πιστεύειν, ὅτι καὶ χορὸν ἤσκησε
κινούμενον Δαίδαλος καὶ χρυσῷ
παρεῖχεν αἰσθήσεις, ὅπου καὶ Πραξιτέλης
εἰς τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἔρωτος ἐνέθηκε
μικροῦ καὶ νοήματα καὶ πτέρυγι τὸν ἀέρα
τέμνειν ἐμηχανήσατο.

A contempler cette œuvre, j'en suis venu à croire **et que Dédale a travaillé un chœur en mouvement et qu'il a donné à l'or des sentiments**, puisque Praxitèle a même mis de la pensée dans sa représentation du petit Eros et qu'il l'a façonnée de manière à lui faire fendre l'air de ses ailes.

Pausanias, quant à lui, énumère les sculptures faites par Dédale dans les différentes régions de Grèce et cite parmi celles-ci le χορός d'Ariane (IX, 40, 3):

τοσαῦτα δὲ ἕτερα ζόανα ἐν Κρήτη,
Βριτόμαρτις ἐν Ὀλοῦντι καὶ Ἀθηνᾶ παρὰ
Κνωσσίοις· παρὰ τούτοις δὲ καὶ ὁ τῆς
Ἀριάδνης χορός, οὗ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἐν Ἰλιάδι
μνήμην ἐποίησατο, ἐπειργασμένος ἐστὶν
ἐπὶ λευκοῦ λίθου.

D'autres xoana de ce type se trouvent en Crète, Britomartis est à Olonte, et Athéna est chez les Cnossiens; **il y a aussi chez ces derniers le chœur de danse d'Ariane**, dont Homère rappelle le souvenir dans *l'Iliade* et qui a été travaillé **dans de la pierre blanche**.

Les deux auteurs pensent donc que le χορός fabriqué par Dédale était bien une sculpture. Ils ne sont toutefois pas d'accord sur la matière. Callistrate pense que c'était une statue en or – sauf s'il fait référence à une autre œuvre – et Pausanias en pierre blanche. D'autres se réfèrent aussi au χορός offert par Dédale mais leurs témoignages ne permettent pas de comprendre s'ils l'imaginent comme une œuvre d'art ou comme un espace construit.

Ainsi, Lucien passe rapidement sur cette scène du bouclier et emploie le même verbe qu'Homère, ἤσκησεν, pour décrire le travail de Dédale (*De saltatio*, 13). Il n'est donc pas possible de comprendre comment il perçoit le χορός. Même chose pour Philostrate le Jeune qui, dans ses *Imagines* (X, 18), décrit un bas-relief représentant le bouclier d'Achille. Il compare la piste de danse des jeunes gens avec celle que Dédale avait donnée à Ariane mais ne prend pas parti non plus. Enfin, Grégoire de Nazianze admire la capacité du monde animal et humain à créer de la beauté (*Orationes theologicae* 2, 25). Il cite alors le χορός et le labyrinthe de Dédale comme des œuvres d'exception. L'association du χορός au labyrinthe peut suggérer que Grégoire de Nazianze pense à un édifice. Toutefois, ce dernier cite juste avant le nom de Dédale ceux de sculpteurs et de peintres renommés tels que Phidias, Zeuxis, et Parrhasios. Il est dès lors impossible de savoir s'il n' imagine pas plutôt le χορός comme une sculpture. Quoi qu'il en soit, tous ces témoignages antiques sont ceux d'auteurs des II^{ème} (Pausanias et Lucien), III^{ème} (Philostrate le Jeune) et IV^{ème} siècles après J.-C. (Grégoire de Nazianze). Le témoignage le plus ancien date du II^{ème} siècle avant J.C. (Callistrate). Ils sont donc à prendre avec précaution. Aucune conclusion certaine ne peut être tirée de ceux-ci.

Si l'on s'intéresse en revanche au texte d'Homère en lui-même, il devient possible de trancher entre l'édifice construit ou l'objet d'art, entre la piste de danse et le chœur de danseurs. Notre méthode consiste à observer les autres contextes d'apparition du verbe ἀσκέω employé par Homère pour décrire le travail de Dédale. *L'Iliade* présente six occurrences de ce verbe (en plus de celle du chant XVIII) et *l'Odyssée* trois.

Au chant III de *l'Iliade* (388), Aphrodite se présente à Hélène sous les traits d'une femme spécialisée dans le travail de la laine (εἰροκόμος), qui lui confectionnait (ἤσκειν) de beaux vêtements. Au chant IV (110), Pandaros s'apprête

à tirer sur Ménélas de son arc. Celui-ci lui fut fabriqué (ἀσκήσας) par un artisan habile (κεραξόος) avec les cornes d'un bouquetin sauvage. Au chant X (438), le roi thrace Rhésos impressionne par ses beaux et grands chevaux blancs, son char bien travaillé (ἤσκηται) d'or et d'argent et ses armes si flamboyantes qu'elles semblent indignes d'un mortel. Au chant XIV (179), Héra, dans le but de séduire Zeus, revêt une robe divine qu'Athéna avait tissée (ἀσκήσασα) pour elle. Au vers 240, elle promet aussi à Sommeil un trône d'or indestructible qu'Héphaïstos lui fabriquera (ἀσκήσας), s'il endort son mari, pour qu'elle puisse se mêler à la bataille. Au chant XXIII (743), Achille offre comme prix aux jeux funéraires en l'honneur de Patrocle un cratère magnifique, le plus beau qui soit sur la terre parce qu'il avait été façonné avec soin (εὖ ἤσκησαν) par les Sidoniens. Dans l'*Odyssée*, au chant I (439), Euryclée, nourrice d'Ulysse et de son fils, fidèle à la maison de Laërte, prend soin de la tunique de Télémaque. Elle la plie et la lisse (πτύξασα καὶ ἀσκήσασα), comme si elle en travaillait le tissu. Au chant III (438), Nestor demande à un orfèvre (χρυσοχόος) du nom de Laërce d'orner les cornes d'une génisse avec de l'or travaillé (ἀσκήσας). Enfin, au chant XXIII (198), Pénélope tend un piège à Ulysse qu'il déjoue habilement en racontant comment il a façonné (ἀσκήσας) leur lit. Chacun de ces passages montre que le verbe ἀσκέω est utilisé pour désigner le travail d'un matériau par un artisan.

Celui-ci peut même être un dieu mais il est alors un dieu technicien comme Athéna ou Héphaïstos. Leur œuvre surpasse évidemment toute production humaine. Tous les objets décrits par Homère dans ce contexte sont suffisamment riches et rares pour mériter l'attention et ils sont présentés comme le fruit du talent des artisans. Ces derniers sont souvent mentionnés soit par leur nom (Athéna, Héphaïstos, Laërce, Euryclée, Ulysse) soit par leur domaine d'activité (εἰροκόμος, κεραξόος, χρυσοχόος) soit par leur origine (les Sidoniens). Leur travail est ainsi mis en valeur. Dans le premier cas, en effet, l'artisan est assez connu pour pouvoir être nommé ou bien est assez talentueux pour mériter de l'être. Dans la deuxième situation, il se distingue par sa maîtrise d'un domaine précis et dans la troisième, il est à la hauteur de la réputation d'un peuple.

Dédale, si l'on considère tous ces éléments, serait donc plutôt l'artisan que l'architecte dans le contexte homérique. Il serait l'homme qui travaille un matériau pour produire un objet d'une beauté exceptionnelle capable de supporter la comparaison avec l'œuvre d'un dieu. Il est le seul à pouvoir prétendre à un tel honneur, sans doute parce qu'il constitue pour les artisans eux-mêmes un modèle d'habileté et d'inventivité. Dédale ne semble donc pas encore posséder la qualité d'architecte à l'époque homérique. Le χορός de Dédale serait plutôt une statuette qui représente un chœur dansant, un peu comme celle d'époque pré-archaïque exposée au Musée archéologique d'Olympie⁶.

6 Pour une image, voir le site de John Pappayiorgas: <http://www.greekfolkmusicanddance.com/folkdances.php> (consulté le 10 avril 2021)

Vient ensuite à partir du vers 593 une description très détaillée d'une scène de danse chorale. S'agit-il de la danse représentée par Héphestos sur le bouclier d'Achille? De la danse sculptée par Dédale? Ou bien d'une véritable danse dansée à Cnossos? Tout dépend de l'interprétation que l'on fait de l'adverbe ἔνθα (là) au vers 593. A quoi se rapporte-t-il vraiment? Intéressons-nous une fois de plus au texte d'Homère:

<p>590 ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις 591 τῶι ἴκελον, οἷόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῶι εὐρείῃ 592 Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ. 593 ἔνθα μὲν ἠΐθεοι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεισίβοιοι 594 ὠρχέοντ', ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῶι χεῖρας ἔχοντες</p>	<p>Et dessus (sur le bouclier), l'illustre Boiteux ciselait un chœur semblable à celui qu'un jour dans la vaste Cnossos, Dédale avait habilement travaillé pour Ariane aux belles boucles. Là, des jeunes hommes et des jeunes filles, pour lesquelles on donnerait beaucoup de bœufs, dansaient, se tenant les uns les autres par le poignet.</p>
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Quel lien pouvons-nous établir entre Κνωσῶι et ἔνθα? Le lien grammatical est à exclure selon nous. En effet, si ἔνθα avait été un pronom relatif, il aurait été plus proche de Κνωσῶι. Or, ici il se trouve deux vers plus bas. Nous considérons donc bien ἔνθα comme un adverbe. Le lien sémantique est quant à lui plus difficile à exclure. Néanmoins, si – comme nous le pensons – le χορὸς de Dédale est une sculpture, alors Cnossos a beaucoup plus de chances d'être simplement le site de production de l'œuvre que l'emplacement d'une véritable piste de danse. Il n'y aurait donc pas de lien, ni grammatical ni sémantique, entre Κνωσῶι et ἔνθα.

Nous défendons donc que l'adverbe ἔνθα ne renvoie pas à Cnossos mais au bouclier d'Achille et qu'il est une sorte de répétition de l'expression ἐν δὲ (*et dessus*) employée par Homère au vers 590. Cette expression, toujours en début de vers, correspond à un emplacement: le bouclier. Elle rythme toute l'*ekphrasis* et revient presque à chaque fois qu'Homère change de scène (*Il.* XVIII 490, 494, 541, 550, 561, 573, 587, 590, 607). De plus, cette même répétition ἐν δὲ/ ἔνθα se produit aux vers 490 et 497 mais aussi au vers 550.

<p>490 ἐν δὲ δύω ποιήσῃ πόλεις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων 491 καλὰς. (...) 497 (...) ἔνθα δὲ νεῖκος 498 ὠρώρει</p>	<p>Là-dessus, il a façonné deux belles villes d'hommes diserts. (...) Là, une querelle éclate.</p>
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Dans ce passage, ἐν δὲ indique la transition vers une nouvelle scène du bouclier, tandis que ἐνθα sert à introduire la description de la deuxième ville.

550 ἐν δ' ἐτίθει τέμενος βασιλῆιον· ἐνθα δ' ἔριθοι | Là-dessus, il plaçait un
domaine royal; là des
ouvriers (...)

A nouveau, ἐν δὲ marque le passage d'une scène à l'autre et ἐνθα introduit plus de détails sur cette dernière. L'adverbe ἐνθα renvoie donc bien au bouclier. Mais le chœur sur le bouclier ressemblait-il à une danse crétoise? Et Dédale s'en est-il inspiré pour sa sculpture? C'est tout à fait possible mais il se pourrait aussi que Dédale ait imaginé la scène.

Par ailleurs, si Dédale n'a pas construit de piste de danse pour Ariane, il est douteux qu'il lui ait appris à danser avec Thésée, comme le suggèrent Eustathe (*Com. ad Hom. Il.*, XVIII, 590) et les scholies du Venetus A (*ad Il.*, XVIII, 590). Il est en fait plus probable que les commentateurs d'Homère aient simplement essayé de trouver un lien logique pour unir le χορός de Dédale aux danses qui font partie de la légende de Thésée⁷. Eux comprenaient donc le χορός comme un espace réel et non comme une sculpture. Cependant, comme l'indique notre étude du verbe ὀσκέω, il n'y a pas de piste de danse à Cnossos dans les vers d'Homère. Le χορός de Dédale est plutôt un chœur de danseurs sculpté, comme le pensaient déjà Callistrate et Pausanias. De plus, la scène chorale dépeinte par Homère à partir du vers 593 est celle ciselée par Héphaïstos sur le bouclier d'Achille et non une danse exécutée sur une piste à Cnossos. Homère nous dit que les chœurs ouvragés par Héphaïstos et Dédale sont semblables mais il ne nous dit pas si Dédale s'est inspiré d'une danse crétoise pour le fabriquer. Il faut donc être prudent avant de voir dans ce passage une danse exécutée en Crète. Pour savoir si une telle danse a existé, il faudrait plutôt en chercher les traces dans les données archéologiques et interroger le mythe de Thésée mais ce serait l'objet d'une autre étude.

C. Le χορός, un groupe de danseurs

Le terme χορός n'a donc pas que le sens de *piste de danse*. Il désigne aussi les *chœurs* de danseurs. Nous comptons neuf occurrences du terme en ce sens. Une d'entre elles (*Od.* VIII, 248) a le sens général de groupe de danseurs. Dans ce vers, Alcinoos explique que les banquets, la cithare et les chœurs sont chers aux Phéaciens. Les autres apparitions du mot χορός sont légèrement plus détaillées. Elles sont souvent accompagnées d'un adjectif ou d'un complément qui nomme le danseur.

7 Pour plus de détails sur le rapport entre Thésée et la danse, voir KABARAKIS 2015

La plupart de ces chœurs sont féminins. Nous comptons néanmoins deux exceptions aux chants III et XVIII de l'*Illiade*. Au chant III, Aphrodite suggère à Hélène de rejoindre Pâris qui, malgré son combat singulier avec Ménélas, est tout frais comme s'il allait danser (393) ou comme s'il s'asseyait après avoir mis fin au chœur (394). Homère ne donne pas d'autres détails et ne spécifie pas si Aphrodite pense à un chœur masculin ou à un chœur mixte comme celui du chant XVIII (603). Les autres chœurs de l'*Illiade* et de l'*Odyssée* sont exclusivement féminins.

Les danseuses sont des divinités (les Nymphes, Aurore, Aphrodite) ou des mortelles mais qui se rapprochent des dieux comme Polymèle. Les chœurs dégagent aussi une beauté et un charme qui ne laissent pas indifférent. Ainsi, Polymèle fait partie d'un chœur qui chante et qui danse en l'honneur d'Artémis mais sa grâce est telle qu'Hermès ne peut lui résister (*Il.* XVI, 179- 183). Dans l'*Hymne à Aphrodite* aussi, la déesse est ravie par Hermès alors qu'elle danse avec Artémis et les Nymphes (v. 117-125). Ceci est en fait un trait général des chœurs d'Artémis d'où les déesses et les jeunes filles sont souvent enlevées. Ces enlèvements donnent lieu à des cultes aux endroits où ils auraient eu lieu, comme à Limnae et à Caryae en Laconie (DELAVALD-ROUX 1994: 24-25).

Les autres chœurs aussi ont un côté séducteur. Aphrodite a enlevé Pâris de la guerre et l'a rendu séduisant pour charmer Hélène (*Il.* III, 393-394). Dans l'*Odyssée*, Athéna sublime Pénélope et elle la couvre du parfum qu'Aphrodite porte quand elle se joint au chœur des Grâces (*Od.* XVIII, 194). Elle la rend particulièrement belle pour que les prétendants soient impressionnés et désirent plus que jamais l'épouser. Sur le bouclier d'Achille aussi, le chœur mixte semble faire partie d'un rite de mariage dont le but est la rencontre des jeunes gens et peut-être le choix de la future épouse. Le terme παρθένοι (*jeune fille, vierge*) indique que les jeunes filles sont en âge de se marier, et ἀλφειβοίαι (*qui procurent des bœufs*) confirme qu'elles sont perçues dans ce sens. Les jeunes hommes, de même, sont appelés ἡῖθεοι. Ceci signifie aussi qu'ils ne sont pas encore mariés.

Ce caractère désirable des chœurs se traduit aussi dans le vocabulaire employé par Homère. Polymèle est belle à la danse (χορῶ **καλή** - *Il.* XVI, 180), tout comme les chœurs des Nymphes sont beaux (Νυμφέων **καλοὶ** χοροὶ - *Od.* XII, 318). Dans le même esprit, le chœur des Grâces auquel se joint Aphrodite éveille le désir (Χαρίτων χορὸν **ἡμερόντα** - *Od.* XVIII, 194). Le même adjectif ἡμερόεις est aussi utilisé pour décrire le chœur sur le bouclier d'Achille (**ἡμερόντα** χορὸν). Seuls les chœurs d'Aurore qui se situent sur l'île de Circé n'ont pas de qualificatif (*Od.* XII, 4).

Les chœurs (χοροὶ) chez Homère dans le sens de groupe de danseurs sont tous suffisamment exceptionnels pour mériter d'être évoqués. Ils sont souvent divins (Nymphes, Aurore, Aphrodite, Grâces) et féminins mais peuvent aussi être masculins ou mixtes. Ils ont aussi une dimension charmante visible dans les adjectifs utilisés, καλός et ἡμερόεις. Le contexte d'apparition du terme est aussi souvent celui du désir et de la séduction, en vue du mariage ou d'une relation érotique.

2. Μέλπω et ἡ μολπή

Avec ses neuf occurrences, le terme μολπή est le deuxième mot du champ lexical de la danse le plus fréquent dans les épopées homériques. C'est un substantif dérivé du verbe μέλπω (*chanter et danser*) qui signifie *le chant mêlé de danse* (CHANTRAINE: s. v. μέλπω). Tant le verbe μέλπω que le nom μολπή combinent donc en une seule forme deux arts intimement liés, le chant et la danse.

Entre les deux disciplines cependant, le chant prime parfois puisqu'il peut exister sans la danse. Ainsi, au chant IV de l'*Odyssée* (17), Homère dit qu'un divin aède chantait (ἐμελπέτο) en jouant de la phorminx (φορμίζων) et au chant XIII (27-28), que Démodocos chantait (ἐμελπέτο) parmi les Phéaciens. Il est difficile d'imaginer l'aède danser en même temps qu'il joue de son instrument. Non seulement c'est techniquement compliqué pour lui mais en plus ce n'est pas son rôle. Μέλπω aurait donc uniquement le sens de *chanter* dans ces cas-ci. De même, μολπή figure à plusieurs reprises à côté des mots ὄρχηθμός ou ὄρχηστύς qui renvoient simplement à la danse et qui ont forcément un sens différent du sien (*Il.* XIII, 637; *Od.* I, 152; XXIII, 145). Nous pensons que le chant incarne cette différence.

Dans d'autres passages néanmoins, μολπή renverrait davantage à l'art de la danse qu'au chant. Comment deux acrobates par exemple pourraient-ils signaler le début du chant et de la danse (μολπῆς ἐξαρχοντές) au reste du chœur si un aède est déjà en train de chanter (*Il.* XVIII, 605-606; *Od.* IV, 17-19)? Ce n'est possible qu'en l'absence de l'aède, comme au chant VI (101) de l'*Odyssée* où Nausicaa donne le ton et le rythme à ses compagnes (ἤρχετο μολπῆς). Μολπή, accompagné des verbes ἄρχομαι ou ἐξάρχω, sert donc à indiquer qui est le chorège. Le verbe μέλπω quant à lui peut avoir le sens de *chanter et danser* dans le cadre d'une scène chorale (XVI, 182-183) mais il peut aussi signifier plutôt *danser*, comme au chant VII de l'*Illiade* où Hector dit à Ajax qu'il sait *danser* (μέλπεσθαι) le combat rapproché d'Arès (241).

Il n'est donc pas toujours évident de comprendre si μέλπω et μολπή renvoient plutôt au chant, à la danse ou aux deux. C'est souvent une question d'interprétation. Un cas est intéressant à cet égard. Au chant I de l'*Illiade*, les Achéens chantent (ἀείδοντες) pour le dieu Apollon un réan (καλὸν παιήονα) qu'il écoute (ἀκούων) et dont il se réjouit (τέρπετο). Homère semble donc insister sur la dimension musicale du réan.

472 οἱ δὲ πανημέριοι μολπῆ θεὸν ἰλάσκοντο
473 καλὸν ἀείδοντες παιήονα κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν
474 μέλποντες ἐκάεργον· ὃ δὲ φρένα τέρπειτ'
ἀκούων.

Les fils des Achéens apaisaient toute la journée le dieu avec leur chant et avec leur danse, chantant un beau réan (et) **chantant et dansant** celui qui repousse au loin; celui-ci se réjouissait en les entendant.

Néanmoins, l'emploi de μέλω en parallèle de αἶδω (chanter) ainsi que l'emploi de μολπή suggère qu'une forme de danse accompagne le chant. Les spécialistes considèrent aussi le péan comme un chant accompagné de danse (RUTHERFORD 1994: 113). Mais quelle est cette danse? C'est difficile à dire, d'autant plus que l'invitation au péan par Achille au chant XXII de l'*Iliade* (391) ne mentionne pas de danse (αἰδόντες παιήονα). Néanmoins, nous sommes en droit de chercher un indice dans la référence au péan dans l'*Hymne homérique à Apollon* (516).

<p>514 (...) Ἀπόλλων, 515 φόρμιγγ' ἐν χεῖρεσσιν ἔχων, ἐρατὸν κιθαρίζων 516 (...): οἱ δὲ ῥήσσοντες ἔποντο 517 Κρήτες πρὸς Πυθῶ καὶ Ἰηπαιήον' αἶδον</p>	<p>Apollon, tenant sa phorminx en main, jouant de façon charmante: les Crétois tapant (leurs mains? le sol?) le suivaient à Delphes et chantaient lè Paeôn.</p>
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Le participe ῥήσσοντες est particulièrement intéressant dans cette description. Il illustre la manière dont les Crétois suivent Apollon en chantant un péan en son honneur. Il s'agit d'une forme épique du verbe ῥήγνυμι qui signifie *frapper, briser* (BAILLY, s.v. ῥήγνυμι). Mais que seraient-ils en train de frapper? Leurs mains? Le sol avec leurs pieds? Pour comprendre ce que signifie ῥήσσοντες, nous avons recherché une fois de plus les autres occurrences de ce terme dans d'autres contextes (TLG). Nous en avons trouvé une seule au chant XVIII de l'*Iliade* (571). Les vers sont étonnamment semblables à ceux de l'*Hymne*.

<p>569 (...) πάϊς φόρμιγγι λιγείη 570 ἱμερόεν κιθάριζε(...) 571 (...) τοῖ δὲ ῥήσσοντες ἀμαρτῆ 572 μολπή τ' ἰυγμῶ τε ποσὶ σκαίροντες ἔποντο.</p>	<p>Un enfant jouait délicieusement de sa phorminx au son aigu: eux, tapant (leurs mains? le sol?) tous ensemble, ils le suivaient avec des chants, des danses et des cris, en sautant sur leurs pieds.</p>
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Le participe ῥήσσοντες accompagne en effet le verbe ἔποντο dans les deux extraits et, de part et d'autre, un musicien (Ἀπόλλων; πάϊς) joue (κιθαρίζω) de façon charmante (ἐρατὸν; ἱμερόεν) sur sa phorminx (φόρμιγγι). Le contexte de ces réjouissances n'est cependant pas celui du péan dans l'*Iliade* mais celui de la vengeance. Homère ajoute également un détail inexistant dans l'*Hymne homérique à Apollon*: les jeunes gens sautent sur leurs pieds. Ce détail et les nombreux points communs des deux textes nous poussent à penser que ῥήσσοντες signifie *frapper* ou *briser le sol* de ses pas. Le verbe πλήσσω (*frapper*) est d'ailleurs utilisé dans le même sens au chant VIII de l'*Odyssée* (264). Nous imaginons donc la danse du péan comme une procession rythmée par des pas sautillants.

Toutefois, cette conclusion n'est qu'une hypothèse. Le péan en effet est un chant particulièrement difficile à définir (ANDREW 2006). Il apparaît dans des contextes très différents: propitiation, reconnaissance, victoire guerrière, sacrifice, libation, mariage, symposium. De la même façon, les dieux auxquels il s'adresse sont nombreux: Apollon, Péan, Asclépios, Zeus, Héra, Poséidon, Athéna, Dionysos. Le péan ne possède pas non plus de mode de performance propre. Il est parfois accompagné d'un instrument (la cithare, l'aulos ou les deux). Il est aussi agrémenté quelquefois de danses mais sans que nous sachions vraiment à quoi elles ressemblent. Deux traits seulement sont à peu près constants: le péan est chanté par des hommes – parfois ponctué de l'όλολυγή, un cri rituel poussé par des femmes – et présente le refrain ίή παιήων.

3. Όρχεομαι, ό όρχηθμός et ή όρχηστύς

Si le substantif χορός est le plus usité dans le contexte de la danse, le verbe χορεύω (*former un chœur*) n'apparaît pas dans les épopées homériques. Les verbes employés le plus souvent sont μέλπω et όρχεομαι. Comme nous venons de l'expliquer, μέλπω signifie *chanter et danser*. Όρχεομαι quant à lui a un sens moins spécifique et signifie plus généralement *danser*. Ce sens apparaît clairement au chant XIV de l'*Odyssée* où Ulysse dit à Eumée que le vin pousse les hommes à chanter, à rire, à danser (όρχήσασθαι) et à parler sans retenue. Pour ses autres occurrences, le verbe όρχεομαι sert à décrire l'action des danseurs comme au chant XVIII de l'*Iliade* (594) où les jeunes gens forment un chœur et au chant VIII de l'*Odyssée* (371 et 378) où Halios et Laodamas dansent. Χορός et όρχεομαι ne sont donc pas incompatibles, même si χορός a un sens plus spécifique et visuel que όρχεομαι.

Le χορός, comme nous l'avons déjà vu, signifie la *piste de danse* ou la *danse en chœur*. La différence de ό χορός avec ό όρχηθμός et ή όρχηστύς apparaît clairement lorsque nous comparons toutes les occurrences de ces mots. Les mots ό όρχηθμός et ή όρχηστύς renvoient en fait au concept de la danse ou à la danse en tant qu'art, alors que le χορός est plus concret. Plusieurs fois, Homère utilise le terme όρχηθμός ou όρχηστύς pour comparer la danse à d'autres domaines de la vie et surtout pour l'opposer à l'art de la guerre. C'est deux fois le cas au chant XIII de l'*Iliade* (137 et 731).

La différence est encore plus évidente au chant VIII de l'*Odyssée* où Homère emploie à quelques vers d'intervalle χορός, όρχηθμός et όρχηστύς. Alcinoos dit que les Phéaciens préfèrent le banquet, la cithare (κίθαρις), les chœurs (χοροί), les vêtements propres, les bains et la couche à la lutte et au pugilat (246-249). Un peu plus loin cependant, au vers 253, lorsqu'Alcinoos encourage les jeunes Phéaciens à montrer à Ulysse combien leur peuple est supérieur à la navigation, à la course, à la danse et au chant, il choisit les termes όρχηστύς et άοιδή. Pourquoi ce changement? En fait, aux vers 248-249, Alcinoos donne

des exemples concrets d'activités qui plaisent aux Phéaciens alors qu'au vers 253, il parle de domaines généraux. Il emploie donc logiquement les termes particuliers χορός et κίθαρις au vers 248 et passe ensuite aux termes généraux ὄρχηστὺς et ἀοιδή au vers 253 pour désigner leurs domaines respectifs.

La même idée de la danse comme art se retrouve aussi au vers 263 du même chant où Alcinoos qualifie les jeunes danseurs d'experts en danse (δαήμονες ὄρχηθμοῖο). Les quatre autres occurrences du terme ὄρχηστὺς concernent toutes le plaisir que procurent la danse et le chant (ἀοιδή) après un repas (*Od.* I, 152, 421; XVII, 605; XVIII, 304). A nouveau, la danse a ici un sens générique et elle est présentée comme un agréable accompagnement des banquets.

Les trois derniers emplois du substantif ὄρχηθμός ne sont pas aussi clairement génériques que dans les autres passages. Ils interviennent tous en rapport avec le camouflage du meurtre des prétendants au chant XXIII de l'*Odyssée*. En effet, au vers 134, Ulysse ordonne à Phémios de mener la danse (ἡγείσθω φιλοπαίγμονος ὄρχηθμοῖο) des partisans d'Ulysse afin de simuler un mariage et d'éviter tout soupçon. Au vers 145, Phémios suscite en eux le désir de la danse (ὄρχηθμός) et au vers 298, leurs pieds cessent de danser (ὄρχηθμός).

Nous avons donc relevé quatre substantifs qui expriment dans les épopées homériques l'idée de danse: ὁ χορός, ἡ μολπή – dérivé du verbe μέλπω –, ὁ ὄρχηθμός et ἡ ὄρχηστὺς – tous deux descendants de ὀρχέομαι. Chaque terme a un sens qui lui est propre. Ὁ ὄρχηθμός et ἡ ὄρχηστὺς présentent l'emploi le plus générique d'*art de la danse* tandis que le χορός qui signifie la *piste de danse* ou le *chœur* est plus concret. Μολπή quant à lui combine en un seul mot deux arts intimement liés puisqu'il signifie *le chant accompagné de danse*. Les verbes d'où dérivent ces mots, μέλπω et ὀρχέομαι, ont assez logiquement un sens semblable à leurs dérivés. L'interprétation de tous ces termes n'est cependant pas toujours évidente. Elle exige de porter une attention particulière au texte d'Homère et de comparer les différentes occurrences de chaque vocable entre elles mais aussi avec leurs apparitions dans d'autres contextes. C'est la démarche que nous suivons aussi pour comprendre le sens particulier d'un dernier verbe qui exprime l'acte de danser, παίζω.

4. Παίζω

Le verbe παίζω apparaît cinq fois dans l'*Odyssée* mais aucune dans l'*Iliade*. Chacune de ses occurrences présente un lien avec la danse et la musique. Ceci paraît étonnant de prime abord puisque que παίζω dérive du substantif παῖς, l'*enfant*, et porte généralement le sens de *jouer comme un enfant* (CHANTRAINE, s.v. παῖς).

Les trois premières occurrences du verbe παίζω se rapportent toutes au jeu de balle de Nausicaa et de ses compagnes (*Od.* VI, 100, 106; VII, 291). Celles-ci, adolescentes encore, se divertissent avec une balle en attendant que leur linge sèche.

99	αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ σίτου τάρφθεν δμῳαὶ τε καὶ αὐτή,	Une fois rassasiées, servantes et maîtresse jouaient à la balle, voiles défaits. Nausicaa aux bras blancs menait le chant et la danse.
100	σφαίρη ταὶ δ' ἄρ' ἔπαιζον, ἀπὸ κρήδεμνα βαλοῦσαι,	
101	τῆσι δὲ Ναυσικάα λευκώλενος ἤρχετο μολπῆς.	

L'idée inhérente au mot παίζω de jeu et de jeunesse est donc bien présente dans cet extrait. De fait, si nous ne prenions en considération que le vers 100, nous penserions que les jeunes filles s'amuse simplement à un jeu après leurs repas. Toutefois, l'expression ἤρχετο μολπῆς au vers suivant nous indique que ce n'est pas juste un jeu de balle mais une danse rythmée par les chants du chœur. Μολπή a ici tout son sens de *chant accompagné de danse*.

Les jeunes filles exécutent des mouvements orchestrés auxquels s'ajoute la difficulté de la coordination avec la balle. La danse montre donc l'habileté de la jeune fille qui l'exécute. Homère ne décrit pas le principe du jeu mais nous en donne un indice. Quelques vers plus loin, Nausicaa lance la balle avec force à l'une de ses compagnes mais elle rate son lancer. Leur jeu implique donc de se lancer la balle l'une à l'autre. Les jeux de balle sur les vases attiques et italiotes revêtent souvent une dimension érotique, surtout si un homme fait partie de la scène, et facilitent les rencontres entre jeunes gens (DASEN 2016). C'est bien souvent le cas dans la littérature aussi, comme ici où le jeu de balle permet à Ulysse de rencontrer Nausicaa. Celle-ci est séduite par le charme du héros et, comme elle est en âge de se marier, elle aspire à l'épouser. Son père Alcinoos en fait même la proposition à Ulysse mais ce dernier refuse.

Homère compare ensuite Nausicaa à Artémis qui, elle aussi, *joue* (παίζω) avec ses compagnes les Nymphes, sous le regard attendri de sa mère.

102	οἷη δ' Ἄρτεμις (...)	Telle est Artémis... Les Nymphes agrestes, les filles de Zeus qui tient l'égide, jouent avec elle et Létéo a la joie au cœur.
105	τῆ δέ θ' ἄμα Νύμφαι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο, ἀγρονόμοι παίζουσι · γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα Λητώ·	

Comme l'explique Ph. Borgeaud (1979: 126-127), les jeunes filles, au moment du mariage, sont comme des Nymphes qui s'arrachent au chœur d'Artémis. Elles intègrent la société et quittent le monde sauvage de la déesse et de ses compagnes qui vivent loin des cités, dans les bois et les forêts où elles chassent. Par cette activité et par leur virginité, Artémis et les Nymphes refusent leur féminité et s'opposent au rôle de mère et d'épouse. L'institution du mariage assure donc le passage à l'état de femme. Cette position ambiguë entre virginité et mariage est très claire dans cet extrait. Les jeunes filles sont définies tant par leur virginité (παρθένοι) que par leur ouverture au mariage (ἀλφειοίβοιαι). Le verbe παίζω quant

à lui est explicitement associé à la danse dans cet extrait-ci, contrairement au précédent. Le terme χορός et la foule qui s'amasse autour des jeunes filles l'indiquent.

Dans d'autres *Hymnes homériques* aussi, le verbe παίζω présente un lien tantôt avec la danse (*Hymne à Apollon*, 200 et 206⁸), tantôt avec l'insouciance des jeunes filles (*Hymne à Cérès*, 425⁹) et parfois avec les jeux (*Hymne à la Terre*, 14-15¹⁰). Dans le même esprit, dans le *Bouclier d'Héraclès* du Pseudo-Hésiode (277, 282), a lieu une fête de mariage et des jeunes gens dansent (παίζω) au son des flûtes et des chants. Le verbe παίζω induit donc généralement de la légèreté et de la séduction. Il semble être le terme privilégié pour évoquer les chœurs virginaux d'où sont enlevées les jeunes filles, même s'il renvoie aussi à des chœurs mixtes comme dans l'*Hymne homérique à Apollon* ou à des chœurs de jeunes hommes comme au chant VIII de l'*Odyssée* (250-265).

Dans ce chant, Alcinoos invite les meilleurs Phéaciens à danser (παίσατε; 251) pour Ulysse. Neuf juges populaires s'occupent du concours et aménagent une piste (ἀγών; 258-260). Les jeunes danseurs (κοῦροι), en cercle autour de Démodocos, frappent le sol de leurs pieds (262-264). Ulysse admire leur rapidité éclatante (μαρμαρυγή; 265). Les danseurs, comme dans les autres apparitions du verbe παίζω, sont jeunes et ne sont pas encore mariés. Au chant VI, Nausicaa se soucie de ses trois frères encore célibataires qui veulent toujours aller danser avec des vêtements propres (62-65). Cette réflexion nous laisse penser que pour les jeunes hommes aussi la danse est un lieu privilégié de séduction.

Le verbe παίζω apparaît une dernière fois au chant XXIII de l'*Odyssée* dans un contexte de mariage cette fois-ci (129-147; 296-298). Ulysse vient de tuer les prétendants et demande à son fils et à ceux qui lui sont restés fidèles de se laver et de danser comme s'ils célébraient un mariage (γάμος) afin d'éviter tout soupçon du voisinage. Il demande aussi à Phémios de mener leur danse enjouée (ἡγείσθω φιλοπαιγμονος ὄρχηθμοῖο; 134). L'adjectif φιλοπαιγμων (qui aime le jeu) annonce l'occurrence du verbe παίζω au vers 147. Leur danse est mixte, hommes (ἀνήρ) et femmes (γυνή) dansent ensemble. Même si Télémaque est en âge de se marier, le vocabulaire n'est plus celui de la jeunesse ni de la séduction. Le jeu se situe ailleurs; peut-être comme bien souvent avec Ulysse, dans le fait que le mariage est un leurre mais il est probable aussi que le jeu se produise entre Ulysse et Pénélope qui s'apprivoisent en parallèle de la danse. La danse de Télémaque et des autres partisans (129-147) encadre en effet les retrouvailles des deux époux (148-288), comme si elle célébrait leurs noces. Juste quand la danse s'arrête (296-299), Ulysse et Pénélope goûtent d'ailleurs au plaisir de l'amour (φιλότητος ἔταρπήτην ἔρατεινῆς -300).

8 Les dieux olympiens dansent au son de la lyre d'Apollon.

9 Artémis et Perséphone jouent avec d'autres jeunes filles à cueillir des fleurs dans la prairie. A nouveau, même sans danse, l'attraction sexuelle des jeunes filles est puissante. Perséphone est enlevée par Hadès pendant le jeu.

10 Des chœurs de jeunes filles jouent en sautillant.

Le verbe παίζω présente donc habituellement un lien étroit avec la jeunesse et la séduction. Les jeunes filles sont particulièrement attirantes quand elles dansent et jouent entre elles. Leur enlèvement est fréquent dans ces contextes, qu'elles soient mortelles ou immortelles. Ces rapt symbolisent le passage du statut de jeune fille à celui de femme et d'épouse. Les jeunes hommes aussi, comme les Phéaciens, trouvent dans la danse un moyen de mettre leurs qualités en avant en vue du mariage. En conclusion, le verbe παίζω sert souvent à caractériser une danse dont l'essence est un jeu de séduction entre des jeunes gens de sexe opposé. Toutefois, il arrive que le verbe ὀρχέομαι soit préféré au verbe παίζω ou que ce dernier soit plutôt utilisé dans des contextes de légèreté et d'insouciance.

5. Les danseurs

Pour désigner les danseurs, Homère emploie trois termes: ὁ ὀρχηστής ou ὀρχηστήρ, ὁ βητάρμων et ὁ κυβιστητήρ. Les premiers dérivent du verbe ὀρχέομαι et ont aussi un sens général. Le substantif ὁ ὀρχηστής apparaît deux fois dans l'*Illiade* (XVI, 617; XXIV, 261) où se retrouve la même opposition entre la guerre et la danse que nous avons remarquée à propos de ὀρχηθμός et de ὀρχηστύς. Au chant XVI, Enée dit à Mérion que son talent de danseur ne l'aurait pas épargné s'il l'avait touché et au chant XXIV, Priam gronde ses fils, ces danseurs et ces menteurs, qu'il aurait préféré voir morts à la place d'Hector. Le danseur est donc bien opposé au guerrier. Le terme ὁ ὀρχηστήρ apparaît quant à lui une seule fois dans une scène d'hyménée sur le bouclier d'Achille (*Il.* XVIII, 494).

Ces deux termes, ὁ ὀρχηστής et ὁ ὀρχηστήρ sont absents de l'*Odyssée* où l'on trouve cependant un autre mot, ὁ βητάρμων (*Od.* VIII, 250 et 383). Ce dernier est étymologiquement très intéressant parce qu'il révèle une caractéristique essentielle de la danse. Ὁ βητάρμων dérive en fait de deux verbes: βαίνω et ἀραρίσκω (CHANTRAINE 1999: s.v. βητάρμων). Βαίνω signifie marcher ou faire des pas et ἀραρίσκω – qui a aussi donné ἀρμονία (l'harmonie) – signifie *être bien ajusté, agréable ou plaisant*. Hésychius glose d'ailleurs ainsi (*Lexique*, s.v. βητάρμων): ὀρχησταί, παρὰ τὸ ἐν ἀρμονίᾳ βαίνειν (PONTANI, 2020) (*des danseurs, pour le fait de marcher en harmonie*). Étymologiquement, ὁ βητάρμων représente donc *celui qui fait des pas de façon bien ajustée/harmonieuse*. Ce trait de la danse est essentiel. Tout danseur de danses collectives sait à quel point il est important d'ajuster son pas à la musique et aux autres danseurs pour former un tout harmonieux.

Homère met en scène encore une dernière forme de danseurs aux mouvements plus spectaculaires, étant donné qu'il s'agit d'acrobates (κυβιστητήρ). Leur performance apparaît deux fois – une dans l'*Illiade* et une dans l'*Odyssée* – en des termes identiques et dans un contexte semblable. Ils interviennent en effet lors de fêtes au public nombreux où des hommes et des femmes se

rencontrent. Dans l'*Illiade*, les acrobates exécutent leur figure dans le cadre de la danse mixte représentée sur le bouclier d'Achille (XVIII, 605-606) et dans l'*Odyssée*, ils offrent leur spectacle aux convives rassemblés pour célébrer le mariage de Néoptolème et d'Hermione au palais de Ménélas (*Od.* IV, 18-19).

<i>Il.</i> XVIII	<i>Od.</i> IV		
605	18	δοιῶ δὲ κυβιστητῆρε κατ' αὐτούς, μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες, ἐδίνευσον κατὰ μέσσοις.	Deux acrobates qui menaient la danse et le chant tournoyaient chacun à son tour vers le milieu.
606	19		

Le terme κυβιστητήρ implique l'idée d'un mouvement vers le bas, la tête la première (CHANTRAINE 1999: s.v. κυβιστητήρ). La seule autre occurrence de ce terme dans les épopées concerne un ennemi que Patrocle renverse de son char et qui tombe à terre (*Il.* XVI, 750). Dans cette perspective, selon M. Emmanuel (1984: 276), le terme κυβιστητήρ s'applique à des danseurs qui avancent sur leurs mains et font des roues ou des sauts carpés. Néanmoins, Homère emploie le verbe δινέω pour décrire leur mouvement. Δινέω qui vient de δίνη (*le tourbillon*) a le sens de *tourner sur soi-même, tournoyer, tourbillonner* (CHANTRAINE 1999: s.v. δίνη). Le mouvement des acrobates est donc plongeant et circulaire. Il peut s'agir alors de roues, de culbutes ou de saltos mais pas de marche sur les mains ni de sauts carpés.

Homère dit aussi qu'ils mènent la danse et le chant (μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες). Ce seraient donc les chorèges. Dans une danse, le chorège peut être un musicien, un chanteur ou un danseur¹¹. Si c'est un danseur, c'est celui qui mène la danse et donne l'impulsion aux autres. Chez Homère, le sexe du chorège est identique à celui des choreutes et son âge est généralement proche. Il se différencie néanmoins des autres danseurs par sa beauté et sa stature remarquables et par sa position sociale élevée. Il se trouve souvent aussi au milieu du chœur ou bien est le sujet de verbes tels que ἄγομαι, ἄρχομαι ou ἐξάρχω. Un exemple typique de chorégie est celui de Nausicaa dans l'*Odyssée* qui dirige le chœur de ses servantes (*Od.* VI, 100-101). Sa fonction de chorège est confirmée par l'expression ἤρχετο μολπῆς (*elle commençait/menait la danse et le chant* - *Od.* VI, 101) qui vient s'ajouter à un statut social élevé et à une grande beauté. Homère dit même que Nausicaa est comme Artémis parmi les Nymphes (*Od.* VI, 102-109).

Le chorège est donc le premier des danseurs. Le double sens du verbe ἄρχομαι, *commencer* et *diriger*, vaut encore aujourd'hui pour la danse

11 Pour plus d'informations sur les chorèges dans les épopées homériques, surtout quand ce sont des musiciens ou des aèdes, voir KABARAKIS 2015: 68-71.

traditionnelle grecque. Le rôle du premier danseur en effet consiste à démarrer la danse pour le reste du groupe mais également à lui en communiquer le tempo et à en diriger le tracé. Il exécute aussi souvent les figures les plus impressionnantes, comme des sauts verticaux ou des pirouettes, dans le même esprit que les acrobates antiques. Le chorège actuel est généralement le meilleur danseur ou bien le personnage le plus haut placé dans la société, comme le bourgmestre, le pope ou la personne la plus âgée. Enfin, tous les danseurs ont à cœur de former un ensemble harmonieux comme le montre leur opposition aux guerriers, ainsi que le nom-même du danseur, ὁ βητάρμων.

B. Les caractéristiques de la danse

A côté des mots qui ont un lien sémantique étroit avec la danse et que nous venons d'analyser, nous avons aussi relevé dans notre lexique toute une série de mots dont l'usage n'est pas réservé à la danse mais qui nous donnent une idée des caractéristiques générales de la danse chez Homère. L'étude de ces mots constitue la troisième et dernière étape de cet article. Notre méthode consiste une fois de plus à comprendre le sens premier de ces mots et à en recueillir les occurrences pour les comparer entre elles. A partir de cette analyse, nous tirons des conclusions sur les caractéristiques typiques de la danse chez Homère. Nous dépeignons ainsi l'ambiance joyeuse et harmonieuse qui règne dans les scènes chorales, loin de la guerre et de la violence. Pour la première fois aussi, nous nous intéressons à tous les indices qu'Homère dissémine dans son œuvre à propos de la manière dont les danseurs se positionnent entre eux, se tiennent ou évoluent dans la danse.

1. La joie et l'harmonie

La conception pacifique, harmonieuse et joyeuse de la danse dans les épopées homériques est souvent exprimée par le verbe *τέρπω*. Ce dernier sert dans *l'Iliade* et dans *l'Odyssée* à exprimer le plaisir que provoquent la musique, la danse et les banquets (PERCEAU 2006: 43-62). A la voix active, il se construit avec le génitif et signifie *comblé de quelque chose*. A la voix médio-passive, il se construit avec le datif et a le sens d'*être comblé de quelque chose*. Employé sans complément, il pourrait être traduit par *comblé de joie ou être comblé de joie* (CHANTRAINE 1999: s. v. *τέρπω*). Le chant, la danse et le banquet procurent donc un sentiment de satiété et de plénitude spirituelles et corporelles.

Τέρπω est moins fréquent que *τέρπομαι* et définit essentiellement le but premier de l'aède, à savoir de combler son auditoire de joie (*Il.* IX, 189; *Od.* I, 346 et XVII, 385). *Τέρπομαι*, quant à lui, s'utilise souvent pour exprimer le plaisir ressenti à l'écoute d'un chant (*Il.* I, 474; IX, 186; *Od.* I, 422-423; IV, 160; VIII, 91, 368;

XII, 52; XVII, 606; XVIII, 305-306), à la vue d'une danse (*Il.* XVIII, 604; *Od.* I, 422-423; XVII, 606; XVIII, 305-306) ou à la consommation d'un banquet (*Od.* I, 369; VIII, 429, 542; XIII, 27). Ce type de plaisir est toujours consommé quand le sujet est assis ou immobile et donc enclin à s'adonner entièrement à lui ou bien quand il se livre à une activité commune.

La musique, la danse et le banquet comblent donc de joie quiconque y participe, puisque ce sont des lieux de χαρίς et d'εὐφροσύνη, comme l'affirme Ulysse au tout début du chant IX de *l'Odyssée* (vers 5-6). Dans ce type de réjouissances, en effet, l'harmonie règne et il n'y a pas de place pour le désordre, la violence ou la ruse. Cette incompatibilité entre les activités pacifiques et guerrières apparaît très clairement dans *l'Illiade*. Hector dit bien à Pâris que sa cithare et sa beauté reçue d'Aphrodite ne lui serviront à rien face à Ménélas chéri d'Arès (III, 53-55). Aphrodite oppose, quant à elle, la danse et le combat. Elle sauve Pâris du duel avec Ménélas et le rend aussi beau et frais que s'il entrait ou sortait d'une piste de danse (III, 390-394). Ménélas déclare que les Grecs finissent par se rassasier de tout, même de ce qu'ils désirent le plus, le sommeil, l'amour, le chant et la danse alors que les Troyens sont incapables d'assouvir leur besoin de lutte (XIII, 636-639). Les Grecs préfèrent donc les joies de la paix, à l'inverse des Troyens qui profitent sans fin de celles de la guerre. Polydamas explique bien aussi que l'on ne peut pas être doué pour tout: l'un a un don pour l'art de la guerre, l'autre pour la danse et un autre encore pour la cithare et le chant (XIII, 726-734). Ajax rappelle à ses compagnons qu'Hector n'est pas là pour danser, mais bien pour se battre (XV, 502-508). Pâris subit une dernière fois le courroux de ses proches pour son incapacité à combattre. Priam le traite de danseur et de voleur (XXIV, 260-262). La danse, chez Homère, n'a donc pas sa place à la guerre.

Au contraire, elle apparaît toujours dans des contextes pacifiques: chant d'un péan et danses en l'honneur d'Apollon pour l'apaiser sur l'île de Chrysé, loin du champ de bataille (I, 472-474); chant d'Achille alors qu'il s'est retiré du combat (IX, 185-194); chants et danses sur le bouclier d'Achille dans des contextes d'hyménée (XVIII, 490-496), de paissance (XVIII, 520-526), de vengeance (XVIII, 567-572) et de vie prospère à Cnossos (XVIII, 590-606); enfin, chant d'un thrène en l'honneur d'Hector pendant une trêve de douze jours (XXIV, 719-722).

Dans *l'Odyssée* aussi, guerre et danse sont incompatibles. Les Phéaciens excellent à la navigation, à la course et à la danse mais pas à la lutte ni au pugilat (VIII, 246-249). Ulysse, homme de ruse, ne chante jamais (PERCEAU 2007: 17-38): la lyre dans sa main se transforme en arc (XXI, 407-411). Ulysse parvient aussi, grâce à sa ruse, à tourner le chant de l'aède à son avantage. Il demande habilement à l'aède Démodocos de chanter l'épisode du cheval de Troie pour amener l'auditoire à l'admirer et à être plus généreux envers lui. Semblablement, il commande à Phémios un chant d'hyménée pour couvrir les traces du meurtre des prétendants. Il ne respecte donc pas la valeur propre du chant qui est de donner de la joie de façon désintéressée.

Ainsi, lorsque Pénélope est attristée par Phémios qui chante le retour des Achéens, Télémaque gronde sa mère. Ce n'est pas la faute de l'aède si Ulysse n'est pas encore de retour (*Od.* I, 337-359). Ensuite, lorsqu'Ulysse sanglote en entendant sa propre destinée de la bouche de Démodocos, Alcinoos propose de passer à des jeux pour divertir son hôte (*Od.* VIII, 536-543). Il n'est en tout cas pas question que le chant de Démodocos continue à provoquer de la tristesse. De plus, le chant et la danse sont souvent liés au plaisir de banqueter (*Od.* I, 369; VIII, 429, 542; XIII, 27) et de boire du vin tous ensemble (*Od.* IX, 7-11; XIII, 8-9; XIV, 463-466). Il existe néanmoins un chant qui soit inévitablement associé à la souffrance, puisqu'il accompagne les funérailles: le thrène. Ce dernier permet néanmoins d'extérioriser la douleur et d'adoucir les peines.

La joie qui est ressentie lors des banquets, à l'écoute d'un chant ou à la vue d'une danse, s'exprime donc par les verbes *τέρπω* ou *τέρπομαι*, selon que le sujet la suscite ou la reçoit. Cette joie, purement sensible, est incompatible avec les activités guerrières qui regorgent de violence et de ruse et qui cherchent à diviser plutôt qu'à rassembler. Deux passages de *l'Iliade* cependant comparent la guerre à une danse: Hector dit qu'il sait danser le corps à corps du cruel Arès (VII, 240-241) et Enée dit à Mérion que si elle l'avait atteint, sa flèche l'aurait arrêté, malgré son talent de danseur (XVI, 617-618). Cependant, associer danse et combat revient à dire que la seule danse possible pour un guerrier est celle de la mort (MONSACRE: 66-67). Cette incompatibilité très nette entre la danse et le chant et les combats est propre aux œuvres homériques, puisqu'apparaît, dès le VII^{ème} siècle, une danse guerrière et en armes, la pyrrhique (DELAVAUD-ROUX 1993: 53-55; 67-73).

Si la danse et le chant sont clairement séparés des activités guerrières chez Homère, ils sont en revanche intrinsèquement liés à l'ordre et à l'harmonie. Effectivement, ils sont beaux. L'adjectif *καλός* qualifie très souvent les scènes de danse (*Il.* XVI, 179; *Od.* VIII, 260; XII, 318) ou de chant (*Il.* I, 473, IX, 187; XVIII, 570; *Od.* I, 153, 155, 370; V, 61; VIII, 266; IX, 3; X, 227; XXI, 411; XXIV, 60). Le chant accompagné de danse (*μολπή*) est aussi qualifié de *γλυκερός*, de doux (*Il.* XIII, 637; *Od.* XXIII, 145). Et surtout, la danse est ordonnée. Chacun ajuste ses pas à celui de l'autre pour former un groupe harmonieux. Le terme *βητάρμων* exprime cette idée (*Od.* VIII, 250 et 383). La danse exige donc de la coordination, comme le prouvent parfaitement la scène de jeu de balle de Nausicaa et des fils d'Alcinoos (*Od.* VIII, 367-384) ou la danse des jeunes hommes sur le bouclier d'Achille (*Il.* XVIII, 599-602).

Quand la danse atteint son objectif d'harmonie, elle suscite l'émerveillement du spectateur qui se traduit par le verbe *θαυμάζω*. Ainsi, des jeunes femmes admirent sur le seuil de leur porte un groupe de danseurs qui danse au son de l'hyménée (*Il.* XVIII, 496) et Ulysse s'émerveille des pas des jeunes Phéaciens (*Od.* VIII, 265). Celui qui pratique aujourd'hui la danse traditionnelle grecque ressent le même besoin d'ajustement au rythme de ses compagnons de danse. Si l'un d'eux va trop vite ou trop lentement, la danse devient inconfortable et

la chaîne risque d'être rompue, alors que si tous s'emboitent le pas, la danse est un vrai plaisir, pour le danseur et le spectateur.

2. L'allure de la danse

Homère ne nous donne finalement que peu d'informations sur les danses. Il ne nous dit pas comment se tenaient les danseurs, quels pas ils exécutaient, sur quel rythme ou sous quelle forme... Il préfère nous donner le nom des danseurs principaux ou le contexte dans lequel ils dansent. C'est ce qui semble le plus important à ses yeux. Nous supposons donc que l'image des chœurs était suffisamment ancrée dans l'esprit des Grecs pour qu'Homère ne dût pas la décrire. Une exception cependant nous permet à nous aussi d'imaginer à quoi pouvait ressembler un chœur. Il s'agit de la scène chorale sur le bouclier d'Achille (*Il.* XVIII, 593-606).

Cette danse fait figure d'exception dans l'œuvre d'Homère à plusieurs égards. Tout d'abord, elle est extrêmement détaillée. Treize vers y sont consacrés. Seule la danse d'Haliot et de Laodamas au chant VIII de l'*Odyssée* lui fait concurrence (370-380)¹². Comme nous l'avons déjà vu, les jeunes danseurs sont prêts à se marier. Ils portent aussi des vêtements particulièrement riches et beaux, ce qui nous laisse penser qu'ils font partie de la haute société. Les jeunes filles portent de fines toiles de lin et les hommes des tuniques bien tissées où brille l'éclat de l'huile. Leurs accessoires contribuent également à la sensation d'opulence: de belles couronnes pour les femmes et des épées d'or tirées de baudriers d'argent pour les hommes.

En ce qui concerne les caractéristiques formelles de leur danse, Homère nous dit que les jeunes gens se tiennent les mains par le poignet (καρπός; 594). Il décrit aussi les mouvements des hommes dont il qualifie les pieds de compétents (ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσι; 599). Ils courent d'abord en cercle, comme le tour du potier, et puis en ligne (599 et 602). Homère emploie la forme θρέξασκον du verbe τρέχω (*courir*) qui est un itératif. Ceci signifie que l'action se répète. Un large public admire la beauté et la dextérité de cette jeunesse (603).

Cette description nous évoque la danse folklorique actuelle du *zonaradikos koulouristas*¹³. C'est une danse de Thrace mixte où les hommes sont tous rassemblés à l'avant du cercle et où les femmes les suivent à l'arrière. Ils portent de riches costumes colorés. Les femmes couvrent leur tête d'un voile épinglé de fleurs. Elles ne portent pas de couronnes mais ça arrive dans d'autres costumes traditionnels comme ceux de Corfou. De même, les hommes n'ont

12 Pour une analyse détaillée de cette danse, voir KABARAKIS 2015: 79-80.

13 Archives du Théâtre Dora Stratou: <http://www.dance-pandect.gr/en/archive/> (s. v. zonaradikos; kerkyraikos pour les costumes de Corfou; Crète et Pontos pour les couteaux à la ceinture) (20 avril 2021)

pas de couteau à leur ceinture en Thrace mais c'est une pratique courante en Crète et dans la région du Pont. Sur la partie rapide de la musique, sans lâcher les autres danseurs, les premiers hommes courent en six pas vers l'intérieur du cercle puis reviennent légèrement en arrière les six suivants. Ce mouvement est répété plusieurs fois. Il donne l'impression que le cercle s'enroule sur lui-même avant de se rouvrir et de s'étendre en ligne face aux femmes. Même si aucun lien historique ne lie les deux danses, nous pouvons ainsi avoir une idée de ce à quoi le mouvement en cercle puis en ligne pouvait ressembler.

Ce chœur sur le bouclier d'Achille, d'une rare beauté, est à l'image du talent d'Héphaïstos. Il ne faut pas le considérer comme une scène de danse ordinaire et en tirer des conclusions générales sur les danses homériques. Certains traits sont uniques dans l'œuvre d'Homère, comme la position des mains ou la course en cercle puis en ligne. D'autres en revanche reviennent régulièrement, comme l'importance des pieds et la formation en cercle.

Dans la plupart des scènes représentées en effet, Homère insiste sur le mouvement des pieds qui exécutent des sauts ou frappent le sol. Au chant XVIII de l'*Illiade*, sur le bouclier d'Achille, Héphaïstos représente une scène de vendanges. Des jeunes gens en âge de se marier (παρθενικαί καὶ ἡῖθεοί) portent le raisin dans leur panier (567). Au milieu d'eux, un enfant (παῖς) joue de la phorminx (569). Les jeunes gens se mettent alors tous ensemble à fendre le sol et à sauter sur leurs pieds (ῥήσσοντες ἀμαρτῆ τε ποσὶν σκαίροντες - 571 et 572). Un mot composé existe même pour exprimer cette idée de frapper le sol, ἡ χοροτυπία (*Il.* XXIV, 261). Au vers 264 du chant VIII de l'*Odyssée*, les jeunes hommes (κοῦροι) frappent aussi le sol de leurs pieds (πέπληγον ποσὶν). Un peu plus loin, aux vers 375-376, les fils d'Alcinoos jouent à la balle et sautent pour l'attraper avant de retrouver le sol avec leurs pieds (ποσὶν οὔδας ἰκέσθαι). Au chant XXIII, les partisans d'Ulysse, des hommes et des femmes (ἀνδρῶν τε γυναικῶν), font retentir dans la maison le bruit de leurs pieds (δῶμα περιστεναχίζετο ποσσὶν - vers 146) jusqu'au vers 298 où ils les reposent de la danse (παῦσαν ὄρχηθμοῖο πόδας).

Les pieds sont donc les moteurs essentiels de la danse homérique. Ils la caractérisent. Leur mouvement consiste généralement à frapper le sol et à faire du bruit avec des sauts. Une seule fois, Homère dit des danseurs qu'ils courent (*Il.* XVIII, 599 et 602). La position des mains quant à elle importe peu. La seule indication que nous avons est au chant XVIII de l'*Illiade* où Homère dit que les jeunes gens se tiennent les mains par le poignet (ἐπὶ καρπῷ χειρὰς ἔχοντες; 594). Aujourd'hui encore dans la danse traditionnelle grecque, c'est en observant les pas des danseurs qu'un œil aguerri peut identifier la danse exécutée, même sans musique. Les mouvements des mains quant à eux sont secondaires et rarement significatifs.

Comme chez Homère aussi (*Il.* XVIII, 600-601), les danseurs d'aujourd'hui forment un cercle. Parfois, les plus talentueux des danseurs s'élancent au centre pour exécuter des figures improvisées, tout comme dans les épopées, des

acrobates tourbillonnent au milieu de leurs compagnons de danse (*Il.* XVIII, 606 et *Od.* IV, 19). Dans certaines régions, en particulier en Épire par exemple, ce sont les musiciens qui sont au milieu du cercle afin d'être entendus par tous. Dans les épopées homériques de même, les musiciens ou les aèdes se placent au milieu des danseurs ou des convives (*Il.* XVIII, 569; *Od.* VIII, 66, 262, 473). Enfin, dans bien des circonstances, hier comme aujourd'hui, la danse attire un public nombreux qui se réjouit du spectacle (*Il.* XVIII, 603 et *Od.* VIII, 379-380).

Il n'est donc pas toujours évident de s'imaginer la danse homérique mais l'observation attentive du vocabulaire employé livre certaines caractéristiques importantes, pour la plupart encore valables dans la danse grecque actuelle.

Conclusion

Nous espérons avoir montré à quel point l'étude philologique et lexicale de la danse chez Homère est importante. Elle permet en effet de remettre en question certaines interprétations traditionnelles du texte homérique, comme le fameux χορός du chant XVIII de l'*Illiade* (590) que l'on traduit habituellement par *piste de danse* mais qui serait en réalité un *chœur sculpté*. L'approche philologique permet aussi de révéler toutes les nuances de la danse chez Homère qui restent autrement cachées.

Grâce à notre étude, nous comprenons maintenant la différence de termes qui nous paraissaient jusqu'ici semblables. Le terme ὁ χορός a chez Homère un sens très concret de *piste de danse* ou de *chœur* qui le distingue de celui de ὀρχέομαι et de ses dérivés ὀρχηθμός ou ἡ ὀρχηστύς. Ces derniers renvoient en effet plutôt à la *danse* en tant qu'art. A ces termes s'ajoutent μέλπω et μολπή qui révèlent le lien intime de la danse avec le chant. Παίζω quant à lui caractérise généralement les danses de jeunes gens entre eux dans un contexte d'insouciance et de légèreté. Il dévoile ainsi le jeu de séduction dont la danse est bien souvent le prétexte. Les chœurs présentent ce même attrait érotique que souligne l'emploi d'adjectifs tels que καλός (*beau*) ou ἡμερόεις (*désirable*). Les jeunes vierges (παρθένοι) sont aussi souvent enlevées quand elles participent au chœur d'Artémis et des Nymphes. Elles passent ainsi du statut de jeune fille à femme.

Les chœurs sont habituellement menés par un premier danseur qui se distingue des autres par sa beauté et sa position sociale élevée comme Nausicaa. Leur rôle se traduit dans le lexique par les expressions ἄρχομαι ou ἐξάρχω μολπῆς ou bien encore ἄγομαι ὀρχηθμοῖο. Ces danseurs sont aussi parfois des acrobates (κυβιστήτηρ) qui tournoient (δινεύω) au milieu de leurs compagnons de danse. D'autres termes spécifiques existent aussi pour nommer les danseurs, tous au masculin, ὀρχηστής ou ὀρχηστήρ et ὀ βητάρμων. Ce dernier mot est particulièrement intéressant parce qu'il recèle l'idée d'harmonie inhérente à la danse chez Homère.

Incompatible avec la guerre et la violence, elle se doit d'être une source de joie. L'emploi du verbe τέρπομαι (*être comblé*) dans le contexte de banquets, de danses et de chants le prouve. Les chœurs, qu'ils soient virginaux, masculins ou mixtes, suscitent donc l'admiration (θαυμάζω) d'un public qui se réunit autour de leur cercle pour les regarder battre (ῥηγνυμι, πλήσσω, χοροιτυπία) bruyamment (περιστεναχιζομαι) le sol de leurs pieds. Toutes ces caractéristiques de la danse homérique semblent avoir traversé le temps jusqu'à nous pour se retrouver dans la danse traditionnelle grecque d'aujourd'hui.

Au terme de notre analyse du lexique de la danse chez Homère, notre seul regret est de ne pas avoir pu intégrer toute la dimension musicale de la danse qui est pourtant, elle aussi, essentielle mais qui nous aurait emmené trop loin. Peut-être fera-t-elle l'objet d'une prochaine étude.

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Orchesis

Female ball-dance in
ancient Greece

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Further the Greek could, and often did, describe as a dance what we could distinguish as a march or a procession, a child's rhythmic game, a ball game, an exhibition of juggling, tumbling or tightrope walking, or even the gesturing of a tragic chorus. He could indeed designate (and not always metaphorically) the rhythmic movements of animals, of fish, of birds, of trees and flowers in the winds, of rivers of boats on the waters. "All the earth will dance" says Euripides (Ba.114) and to a Greek it really could (Lawler 1964, 11).

Abstract

An interesting Red-figure Pyxis from Boeotia, which is now kept in a private collection in Athens, preserves, among scenes from the woman's everyday life with nuptial significance, a vivid representation of a ritual that can best be described as a female ball game. In Greek antiquity some ball games were considered to be dance rituals as well and the ball-playing scene on the pyxis preserves intriguing details that could identify the depicted ritual as a ball-playing dance. Starting from the female ball-play scene depicted on the pyxis, the article considers the evidence in ancient sources on ancient ball-playing and especially female ball-dancing and tries to shed some light on this almost forgotten aspect of ancient orchesis.

Keywords: Ancient dance, Ball-dance, Ball games.

Resumo

Um interessante Píxide de figuras vermelhas da Beócia, que agora é mantida em uma coleção particular em Atenas, preserva, entre cenas da vida cotidiana da mulher com significado nupcial, uma representação vívida de um ritual que pode ser melhor descrito como um jogo de bola feminino. Na antiguidade grega, alguns jogos de bola também eram considerados rituais de dança e a cena do jogo de bola na píxide preserva detalhes intrigantes que poderiam identificar o ritual retratado como uma dança de bola. Partindo da cena de jogo de bola feminino retratado na píxide, este artigo considera as evidências em fontes antigas sobre o jogo de bola antigo e, especialmente, a dança de bola feminina e tenta lançar alguma luz sobre este aspecto quase esquecido da orquesis antiga.

Palavras-chave: Dança antiga, Dança com bola, Jogos de bola.

While working in 2010 at the Ephorate of Antique Shops and Private Archaeological Collections (Greek Ministry of Culture & Sports, Greece), I came across with an interesting Red-figure Pyxis dating in the late 5th century BC, which is in the Moutoussi private collection.¹ The ceramic vessel is of Boeotian origin, attributed to the Painter of the Great Athenian Kantharos and is decorated on its body with ten female figures arranged into four groups and participating in scenes with great nuptial significance. Among these there is a vivid scene that can best be described as a female ball game (AVRONIDAKI 2014: 85ff.; on the origin and development of the concave pyxis, RUTHERFORD ROBERTS 1978: 9ff.).² The playful character of the gaming scene is contrasted with the gentle rendering of the participants' movements, which are possibly accompanied by music, as it is evident by the appearance of a musician on the other side of the ceramic body. Inevitably, a simple question crossed my mind: is this a nuptial ball-play scene or some sort of a ball-dance ritual of antiquity?

One of the main concerns of the researcher of dance in antiquity is the way in which he will approach his subject, as well as the selection of the appropriate methodology, in order to draw reliable conclusions. Dance images are not mere iconographic motifs to decorate a surface spawn of the artistic imagination,

1 A small photograph of the Pyxis was first published by YIOUTSOS 2010: 51, fig. 1. For a more thorough publication of the Pyxis see AVRONIDAKI 2014.

2 Red-figure Pyxis: Hybrid shape combining traits of Attic type A and C pyxides with elements that are purely Boeotian. Height: 0.103-0.104m; mouth diam. 0.13m; keel diam. 0.016m, foot diam. 0.14m., underside diam. 0.11m. Body with concave walls, broad mouth, keel and a tripartite foot. Well preserved, but for a small fragment from one of the feet together with part of the concave moulding above it. Chips and scratches at keel and the interior. Lid is missing. Orange buff clay with white incrustations partially remaining on the vase. The upper surface of the keel is decorated with an ivy branch. 430-410 BC. Moutoussi collection, Athens, AVRONIDAKI 2014: 82.

but instead conventional representations of actual ancient rites performed by real people in a religious (temples, shrines, sacred caves) or even non-religious context (private houses, courts, town squares, plains etc). According to Lawler all dance representations are a quick glance of the artist in the movement of the dancer and she concludes that what the artist made was depicted deliberately unrealistic and is mostly related to ideal beauty, design, balance and style rather than an accurate representation of what the artist actually saw in reality (Lawler in PERKINS 1990: 72-73; LÖWY 1907: 10-11; WEBSTER 1970: XII; SOURVINOU INWOOD 1988: 31; VESTERINEN 2007: 21: *relative accuracy*).³

A combination of science and knowledge, even from research fields that may look at first unrelated, can sometimes aid the researcher to comprehend and even to interpret dance representations that have survived from antiquity in a deeper way. As opposed to the simple classification and iconographical analysis, the inclusion of possible social, anthropological or any other data in the investigation of ancient dance practice can lead to a more integrated and thorough presentation of ancient dance material. Ethnological observations, historical and mythological data, ancient inscriptions and testimonies, human kinetics, psychological mechanisms, even behavioral and cognitive research techniques, all these are nothing but different viewpoints of the same subject. All the above combined to the ancient iconographic evidence could add more to our knowledge of ancient dance rituals, no matter how distant they are from our society (NAEREBOUT 1997: 293ff.: *eclectic method*; LAMBROPOULOU 1986; GARTZIOU TATTI 1994; RAFTIS & LAZOU n.d.; COLONAS 2003; LAZOU et al. 2004; on the contribution of various scientific disciplines in ancient dance research, KURATH 1960: 240-242).⁴

Dance is recognized as a non-verbal mode of communication, through which messages are transferred. Carrier of these messages is the human body. That is the gestures, the steps and the clothing of the performing dancers (KURATH 1960: 242; on dance as a non-verbal mode of communication, HANNA 1987: 26). In order to decipher these hidden codes and understand their hidden messages the researcher should first gather all representations and references that have

3 Dance representations are full of conventions and they do not always represent reality, due to limitations deriving from the nature of the materials used and the manner in which movement is displayed in sculpture, relief, metalwork, painting etc. Barthes (1977: 2-51) wonders whether images contain messages and tries to understand the ways, in which these messages are converted into images. By referring to examples from the field of advertising he explains that the elements of an image (linguistic message-denoted image- connoted image) create a comprehensive whole and he concludes, that, in order to be able to “read” the message behind the image, one should have general knowledge of the culture, to which it belongs (*cultural knowledge*). According to Barthes any drawing or piece of art is not an actual photographic representation, but an image that contains codified messages.

4 Naerebout (1997) gives also a brief description of the history of ancient dance research, discusses various methodological issues and offers an extensive categorized bibliographical list.

survived from antiquity and offer us a glimpse of the dance ritual (NAEREBOUT 1997: 149-274 passim). The necessary data may be hidden in the ritual space, in dancing movements, clothing, sex or age of the participants etc (NAEREBOUT 1997: 377-381). On a second level dance is treated as a *framed event* that took place in a limited period of time and certain social context, characterized by periodicity and social participation. Its performative character required social interaction and the messages conveyed in these ritual actions were understood mainly by those who participated in these social activities. Finally, another determining factor that should be taken into consideration is the motive that leads the community to participate in such a ritual performance (*mobilization*). Dancing or any other ritual act is a social phenomenon, which within its social context (religious or not), covers the needs of different social groups, providing them with the proper motives that surely encourage participation. These social demands could derive from either the need for communication, personal prestige, financial transaction and change in status or could be described as an opportunity to socialize within the community with a view to marriage etc (NAEREBOUT 1997: 355-375).

The pyxis (*πυξίς*, pl. *πυξίδες*) is a small round box, probably used in ancient Greece already from the Geometric period for storing trinkets, ointments or cosmetics [on the Geometric pyxis, YOUNG (1939) 1975: 80-85, nos. XVII 7-17, 90-92, nos. XVIII 3-7, 200ff.; on Geometric lid decoration, BRANN 1961: nos. I.17-18, pl. 17, no. I.24, pl. 18, no. I.61, pl. 21; BANOÛ & BOURNIAS 2014: 54-55, inv. no. 1310, 775, 1312, 1313, 776, 257]. Similar small containers were known in Classical and Hellenistic periods with more than one name, although we do not know for sure whether the ancient Athenians saw all these round boxes as a consistent group of vases with identical function (on shapes and names of these vessels, RICHTER & MILNE 1935; MILNE 1939; TRÉHEUX 1951; SCHMIDT 2009). During the 6th and early 5th century BC a great variety of images was used to decorate pyxides and the repertoire did not differ fundamentally from other shapes that circulated during that period. Preferred themes were scenes of a symposium, komast dancers and chariot races, which were probably selected because of their endless repetition and their circular movement that suited to the cylindrical body of the vessel. They also mirrored the main interests of the Archaic society, which was shaped by the values of the aristocratic elites.⁵ The situation changed significantly in the first half of the 5th century, when most pyxides were almost exclusively decorated with female themes (RUTHERFURD ROBERTS 1978: 178). Red-figure pyxides in particular were regularly decorated on their body and lid with domestic or sometimes outdoor scenes of female activity and everyday life, as well as

5 .g. Black-figure Pyxis with symposium scene, inv. no. P 24555, Ancient Agora Museum, Athens, MOORE & PHILIPPIDES 1986: 256, no. 1286, pl. 90; Black-figure Pyxis with komasts, inv. no. F 2035, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, MOMMSEN 1991: pl. 45, 1-3; Red-figure Pyxis with chariot race, inv. no. F 4008, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, FURTWÄNGLER 1885: 1016, no. 4008; SCHMIDT 2009: note 29.

mythological scenes related to the women's world. Such a trend corresponds to the fact that these ceramic objects were mostly used by women (on pyxis' iconography, RUTHERFURD ROBERTS 1978: 177ff.; SCHMIDT 2009: notes 27-28, 34-35; on different types of Attic pyxides, SPARKES & TALCOTT 1970: 173-178).

Corresponding to the cultural trends of the period the concave walls of the pyxis are decorated with a multi-figured composition of women in various postures organized in four groups, who are probably participating in some sort of ball game in an open-air scenery, as well as ordinary female activities with nuptial significance (Figs. 1-4). On a large rocky boulder sit two female figures with their backs turned to one another. The maiden seated on the right, wearing a chiton and wrapped with her himation, holds in her raised right arm a small spherical object, most likely a ball, which she proposes to a group of three dancing maidens in front of her. The three dancers are dressed in peploi that allow them to move comfortably, especially their hands. They are depicted moving backwards to the right, one behind the other, with their arms outstretched in the opposite direction, in an attempt to catch the ball that the seated female figure is about to throw. The outreached arms of the dancing maidens are in contrast to the antithetic movement of the lower body in the opposite direction and the wavy folds of the garments intensify the vivacity of the scene (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Maidens engaging in a ball-game, Red Figure Pyxis, Moutoussi, Private Collection, Athens (©Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports (L.3028/ 2002)/ Photo archive: Ephorate of Antiquities of Athens).

Next to the right a female figure in chiton and himation sits on a rocky boulder in profile to the right. With her left hand she holds a mirror (*katoptron*), which reflects the image of her face, while she raises her right hand to the forehead in an attempt to arrange her hair (on the motif of the actual reflection in the mirror AVRONIDAKI 2014: 88). In front of her, a swan hovers slightly above the ground with open wings in an aggressive pose (on the swan as a symbol of Aphrodite, TURNER 2005: 83-84, notes 125-129).⁶ Next follows a woman wearing chiton and himation, who is bending over a *louterion* with a twisted column and trapezoid foot dipping her hands in the water (Figs. 2-3).⁷ On the other side, another standing peplophoros holds a *katoptron* with her lowered left hand, which also reflects her face image. Her right hand is raised towards her face, but any object she might have been holding cannot be discerned. The scene ends with a female musician sitting on a rocky boulder profiled to the right. She is dressed in peplos and possibly himation and is depicted plucking with both hands an irregular triangular polychord instrument, probably a *trigonon* (SCHLESINGER 1911: 282; HERBIG 1929; MICHAILIDIS 1982; MATHIESEN 1999; PSAROUDAKĒS & TERZĒS 2013: 98-124; TERZĒS 2013; AVRONIDAKI 2014: 92).⁸ The musician sits opposite one more maiden dressed in peplos and with a himation laying over her legs; it is she who shares the same rocky seat with the woman holding the ball and sits peacefully probably listening to the music played by her companion, one hand leaning on the rock, the other loosely resting on her legs (Fig. 4). Apart from the musician all maidens are wearing chitones and himatia

6 The swan symbolizes grace and beauty and in Greek mythology the bird was sacred to Aphrodite and Apollo, Thompson 1895, 105-108. However, despite the considerable body of iconographic evidence connecting Aphrodite with the swan, there is no extant literary evidence for such a connection before later Roman writers, Sappho, Hymn to Venus 10, sparrows: ἄρμ' ὑποζεύξαια, κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον/ ὤκεες στροῦθοι; Aelianus, De Natura Animalium X.34, swallow: τιμᾶται δὲ ἡ χελιδῶν θεοῖς μυχίοις καὶ Ἀφροδίτῃ; Ovid, Metamorphose, 10.717-19, swans: Vecta levi curru medias Cytherea per auras/ Cypron olorinis nondum pervenerat alis (in RAEBURN 2004: 418). Abundant iconographic and literary evidence from the 5th c. BC onwards connect the swan with Apollo, as well as with the myths of Leda, Hyacinthus and Ganymede EVANS & DAWNAY 1972; BRAZIL 2003: 74; TURNER 2005: 83, note 124-125. On the swan of the Moutoussi pyxis as a *spatial indicator complementing the outdoor setting and as an embodiment of manliness*, AVRONIDAKI 2014: 90.

7 On the connection of the louterion scene to prenuptial bathing rituals prior to the ancient Greek wedding ceremony, AVRONIDAKI 2014: 91-92.

8 A triangular harp of the same type has been discovered in 1981 at the so-called Tomb of the Poet (430 BC) in Daphne in Attica along with parts of an aulos and a chelys-lyre. In ancient Greek vase painting it is usually depicted with a rectangular or irregular triangular frame and a horizontal narrow base, to which one end of the string was fixed. In place of the hypotenuse, in position away from the musician's body and not in contact to it was a wide and slightly curved sound-board, on which the strings were attached along with the tuners (κόλλοπες). The other parts were the vertical section in position close to the musician body and the string-stretcher (χορδότονον) placed parallel to the base and slightly over it, PSARIOUDAKĒS & TERZĒS 2013: 98-124, 105-108, figs. 4-9; TERZĒS 2013; AVRONIDAKI 2014:92. Similar type of trigonon on a Red-figure Pelike, inv. no. 37.11.23 (420-410 BC), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, MAAS & MCINTOSH SNYDER 1989: 145, 152, 160, 164, figs. 10, 16.

decorated with black selvages. They are also depicted with elaborate hair styles, wearing all sorts of headgears, such as headbands, opisthosphendone, fillets (*tainia*) and diadems. It is noteworthy that the leader of the ball-playing dance has loose braided hair and wears the most elaborate headgear of all, a high polos, adorned with dots and a wavy line (AVRONIDAKI 2014: 84-85).



Fig. 2: Maiden self-mirroring and a hovering swan, Red Figure Pyxis, Moutoussi, Private Collection, Athens (©Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports (L.3028/ 2002)/ Photo archive: Ephorate of Antiquities of Athens).



Fig. 3: Maiden dipping her hands in a louterion, Red Figure Pyxis, Moutoussi, Private Collection, Athens (©Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports (L.3028/ 2002)/ Photo archive: Ephorate of Antiquities of Athens)



Fig. 4: Maiden plucking with both hands a trigonon, Red Figure Pyxis, Moutoussi, Private Collection, Athens (©Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports (L.3028/ 2002)/ Photo archive: Ephorate of Antiquities of Athens)

The first description of a ball-play dance ritual in Greek literature can be found in Book 6 of the *Odyssey* (6.99-109), where Odysseus is shipwrecked on the coast of the island of Phaeacia. There, at the seashore, arrive Nausicaa, daughter of the king Alcinous, and her handmaidens, in order to wash their clothes. After washing the clothes, bathing, rubbing themselves with oil and eating their meal on the riverbank, the maidens engage in a ball-throwing game (*σφαίρη ταιδ' ἄρ' ἔπαιζον*), while they wait their garments to dry. The joyful ball game of the maids is accompanied by a song lead by white-armed Nausicaa (*ἤρχετο μολπῆς*), who is recognized as the leader of the dance, the choregos (on the choregos, CALAME 1997: 43ff.; on the connection of the verb *παίζειν* to *μέλπειν*, CALAME 1997: 87-88). Furthermore, the poet compares the maidens with the Nymphs playing and dancing with Artemis on the high mountain ridges of Taygetus and Erymanthus in honour of Leto, thus connecting the playful ball-throwing game of the Phaeacian maidens to a well-known divine dance archetype (SPEARS 1984: 34).⁹ The same archetypal scene is described in the *Homeric Hymn to*

⁹ Spears (1984: 34) states that this ball game is not an actual sport performed, but mostly an informal game. The archetypal character of Nausicaa's ball game scene can be seen in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* (I.25-26), where he mentions that that the princess from Corfu (Phaeacia) was believed to be the inventor of ball games (*αἱ δὲ διὰ τῆς σφαίρας ἦς τὴν εὕρεσιν Ἀγαλλίς ἢ Κερκυραία γραμματικῆ Ναυσικάα ἀνατίθησιν ὡς πολίτιδι χαριζομένη*).

Artemis (13-20) where the goddess visits the house of her brother, Phoebus Apollo, at Delphi, to lead the dance of the Muses and Graces.¹⁰ It is interesting that in both cases the poet prefers to use the verb *παίζειν*, in order to describe not only Nausicaa's ball-throwing game at the beach with her companions, but also the dance of the Nymphs (*ἀγρονόμοι παίζουνσι*; on the connection of the verb *παίζειν* to dance, HENRICKS 1996: 35). As Calame explains (1997: 87): *this particular use of the verb παίζω in a choral context allows us to interpret as a choral scene the passage where Nausicaa plays ball with her attendants.*

The same preference can also be seen in Book 8, when Alcinous urges the celebrants in his palace to start the party with a dance (8.251: *ἀλλ' ἄγε, Φαιήκων βητάρμονες ὄσσοι ἄριστοι, / παίσατε*) and summons the divine bard Demodocus to perform (8.254: *Δημοδόκω δέ τις αἴψα κιῶν φόρμιγγα λίγειαν οἰσέτω*). Next the Phaeacian king orders Halius and Laodamas to perform a solo dance (*μουνάξ ὀρχήσασθαι*), since no one else could compete with them (8.370-380). Having taken a lovely purple ball (*σφαῖραν καλήν... πορφυρέην*) one of them leant back and threw it high (*ρίππασκε*), while the other leapt and caught it again (*μεθέλεσκε*) before his feet touched the ground. During their ball-throwing performance the other youths stood round the dancing arena (*ἔσταότες κατ' ἀγῶνα*) beating time amidst loud clapping in applause (*κοῦροι δ' ἐπελήκεον*; on the verb *ἐπελήκεον*, NUSSBAUM 1987; EVANS 2001: 78, 96; on representations of acrobatic dancing, WEGNER 1968: 65-68; on Halius and Laodamas' ball game, GARDINER 1930: 19).¹¹ The ballgame scene resonates the similar ball game played by Nausicaa and her accompanying maidens at the beach earlier in the epic poem, but it also recalls the acrobatic dancers' song-and-dance performing with the bard at the double wedding at Menelaus' palace in Sparta (Od. 4.17-19: *κυβιστητῆρε... μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες ἐδίνευον κατὰ μέσσοις*; WEBSTER 1970: 51).¹²

There seems to be confusion between the concepts of playing with a ball and of dancing with a ball in antiquity, already from the age of Homer. Ball games are connected to dance performances in various ways and so it should not sound strange that Athenaeus in late antiquity lists all ball-throwing games in Homer, including the ball game of Nausicaa with her handmaidens, to dancing (Athenaeus 1.14d-e in KAIBEL 1887-1892: *ὀρχήσεις δ' εἰσὶ παρ' Ὀμήρω αἰ μὲν τινες*

10 According to Evans (2001: 97) the ball-throwing can also be interpreted as a fertility game, similar to that of throwing apples or pomegranates evidenced in both Greek and Near Eastern rituals. He also compares the act to the throwing of nuts or the dedication of a 'mixture of many seeds' (*πανσπερμία*) at agrarian festivals.

11 The display of acrobatic skill in which both men engage betrays elements of more serious combat and a strong competitive character, thus the performance area is called arena (*κατ' ἀγῶνα*). See also note 30.

12 Also in *Odyssey* (23.146-147) Odysseus gives the order after the murder of the suitors to dress all in clean clothes and to dance as if they were at a wedding so that the murder would not be noticed: *τοῖσιν δὲ μέγα δῶμα περιστεναχίζετο ποσσίν/ ἀνδρῶν παιζόντων καλλιζώνων τε γυναικῶν.*

τῶν κυβιστητήρων, αἱ δὲ διὰ τῆς σφαίρας).¹³ Furthermore, in ancient sources the verb *παίζειν* (to play) –which is greatly connected with ‘game’, because of its derivation from the word *παῖς*–is not only paralleled to *μέλπειν* (to sing), but it is also greatly connected to playing music and dancing as well (Od. 6.100: *σφαίρη παίζειν*; Homeric Hymn to Apollo, 206). In the same tradition Eustathius in the 12th century AD while commenting on Homer’s *Odyssey*, explains that *σφαίρας παιδιά* is a type of orchesis and he who plays with a sphere is a type of dancer (*σφαιριστῆς ἦν ὄρχηστής*, Eustathius in WEIGEL 1825: 1601-1602).

The description in the text of Pseudo Hesiod’s *Shield of Heracles* (277-283) of a dance at a marriage ceremony confirms that the verb was used not only to describe the act of playing, but also the activity of dancing and singing too (*χοροὶ παίζοντες... παίζοντες ὑπ’ ὄρχηθμῶ καὶ ἀοιδῆ*). In the myth of Anchises described in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (119-120) Hermes snatched Aphrodite from a group of Nymphs and marriageable maidens who were dancing together (*παίζομεν*). Similarly in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (425), Hades, the god of the dead, pulls Persephone into his chariot from the group of maidens who were playing and gathering sweet flowers in their hands (*παίζομεν ἡδ’ ἄνθεα δρέπομεν*) and takes her to the underworld with him. Also, in the description of the divine choruses of the Graces, the Seasons, Harmonia, Hebe and Aphrodite in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (194-203) the poet uses the word *μεταμέλω* (to sing) for the lead-singer, who is no other than Artemis, the sister of Apollo. The poet mentions also Ares and Hermes who play (*παίζουσ’*), while Phoebus plucks the guitar (*ἐγκιθαρίζει*). Once again music, dance, singing and playing are set together in the same scene (the verbs *μέλπεσθαι*, *παίζειν* and *ὑμνεῖν* are sometimes synonymous, BIELOHLAWEK 1924-1925: 125ff.; on *μολπή* as a type of song that accompanied dance ensembles, Homer, *Iliad* 18.571; WEGNER 1968: 42ff.; TÖLLE 1964: 66; CALAME 1997: 86-87).¹⁴

Similar uses of the verb ‘to play’ can also be traced in ancient lyric poetry, in tragedy and in comedy. Pindar in his 13th *Olympionicus*, in order to describe the armed dance of Bellerophon, uses the word ‘to play’ (*ἐνόπλια χαλκωθεὶς ἔπαιζεν*).¹⁵ In Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* (1104-1109) the chorus wonders if the hero

13 Athenaeus (1.18f-19a) also connects ball gaming, dicing and dancing in the *Odyssey* to peacetime: *σχολαζόντων γὰρ βίος ὁ ἐν Ὀδυσσεΐα καὶ διὰ τὴν εἰρήνην τρυφώντων· διὸ οἱ ἐνταῦθα ἐθεράπευον τὸ σῶμα διὰ λουτρῶν καὶ καταनिμμάτων. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀστραγαλίζουσιν ἐνταῦτη τῇ πολιτείᾳ καὶ ὄρχονται καὶ σφαιρίζουσιν.*

14 In *Ion* by Euripides (494-501) the daughters of Kekrops, the Aglavrides, dance and sing to the sound of the horned god’s *syrix* (Pan’s pipes). The dance of the Naiad Nymphs is also accompanied by singing, Pratinas fr. 708.3-5. The word *μολπή* is closely associated with the goat-legged god Pan and his song as well as with the sound of the *syrix*. In Arcadia, the area of Mount Lykaion is referred to in Pausanias as *Melpēia*, because according to tradition the god invented there the *μολπή* by playing his pipes, Pausanias VIII.38.11; Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 212.

15 The ancient Theban poet used the word also to describe the act of playing music (230): *Πάν, ὁ καλαμόφθογγα παίζων.*

is a child of a god who played with the Nymphs in the mountains (*Νυμφᾶν Ἐλικωνίδων... συμπαίζει*) and in Euripides' *Bacchae* (862-867) the chorus associates the overnight dancing activities of the Bacchae with the playful games of a deer (*ὡς νεβρός χλοεραῖς ἐμπαιζουσα*; Henricks 1996: 37). In Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* (880-882) an old woman is swaying playfully to attract a passerby (*παίζουσ'*), while in *Lysistrata* (700) the Coryphaeus describes a feast in honour of Hecate as 'a game' (*παιγνίαν*).¹⁶ In *Ranae* (408, 387) the chorus of Initiates enters the scene calling the name of Iacchus (the Eleusinian cult name of Dionysus) and during his ritual invocation, he repeatedly refers to play and dance rituals in honour of the Eleusinian deities (*παίζειν τε καὶ χορεύειν and παῖσαι τε καὶ χορεῦσαι*). In the same comedy play the slave Xanthias (415) tells Dionysus that he wants to dance and play (*παίζων χορεύειν βούλομαι*) and later (440-443, 440-452) the chorus suggests the celebrants to enter the sacred grove of Demeter in a playful dancing manner (*χωρεῖτέ... παίζοντες and χωρῶμεν... παίζοντες*).¹⁷ It should be noted that the chorus (411) refers to the participants in such rituals as co-players (*σμπαιστρίας*; the verb also in Anacreon 358 PMG connected to ball-playing, PRFEIJFFER 2000: 168).¹⁸

Another intriguing testimony that connects the verb *παίζω* to dance has been scratched on a late geometric oinochoe (ca. 740 BC), which was found in 1871 near the Dipylon (Two-Gated) at the area of Kerameikos in Athens. The text is famous for being the oldest (or one of the oldest) known samples of the use of the Greek alphabet. It is part of a two verse inscription (*δίστιχον*) written from right to left in capital letters:

ΗΟΣΝΥΝΟΡΧΕΣΤΟΝΠΑΝΤΟΝΑΤΑΛΟΤΑΤΑΠΑΙΖΕΙΤΟΤΟΔΕΚΛ[?]ΜΙ[?]Ν

and marks the vessel as a prize in a dancing competition. This corresponds to the following in the later classical orthography in Ionian Greek:

ὄς νῦν | ὄρχη|στῶν πάν|των ἀτα|λώτατα | παίζει
τῷ τόδε ...

16 Plato in *Leges* (764e, 796b) refers to dance as a 'game of dance', *χορῶν παιδιάν...*, *τόν δε Κουρήτων ἐνόπλια παίγνια... χορείας παιδιᾶ*. Herodotus (*Histories*, 1.94.3) describes all ball games as games (*παίγνια*).

17 See also Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae* 1227: *ἀλλὰ πέπαισται μετρίως ἡμῖν* (but our play has reached its measure). Also Herodotus (*Histories*, 9.11.1) when referring to the celebrations at the Hyacinthia in Sparta uses the word *παίζειν* to denote the dancing rituals at the festival: *Υακίνθιά τε ἄγετε καὶ παίζετε*. Plutarch in *Moralia* (249d-e) while referring to the maidens from Kea Island he mentions that their suitors could see them in public sanctuaries playing and dancing (*παιζούσας καὶ χορευούσας*).

18 For the participants of a dancing ritual the ancient sources preserve also the terms *χοροπαίγμων* and *χοροπαίκτης* (he who is sporting in the choral dance), Orphic Hymn to the Nereids 23.2; *Anthologia Palatina* 6.108: *χοροπαίκτης*.

which is translated as ‘whoever of the dancers now dances most lightly...’ The second line is conjectured to have said something to the effect of ‘...he shall get this [vessel as his prize]’ (inv. no. 192, National Archaeological Museum of Athens; IG II² 2919; FURTWÄNGLER 1881; STUDNICZKA 1983; POWELL 1988; KONTOGIANNIS 1999; BINEK 2017).

Plato in *Leges* (655d) underlines the playful character of dance and its connection to the verb *παίζειν*. According to the Greek philosopher orchesis along with song have a strong mimetic character (*μιμήματα τρόπων ἐστὶ*), which originates in the leaping and wailing of infants (803c).¹⁹ When these unstrained tendencies are subjugated to rigorous training, singing and dancing become the highest form of human play. For we all are children in ritual worship and the Gods regards us as something to play with (*θεοῦ τι παίγιον*; ADDLEY 1967: 235; LONSDALE 1993: 33ff.). Moreover, he refers (673c-d, 803c-e) to the pleasurable and playful aspects of dance in etymological puns, by connecting the word *χορός* (dance) to *χαρά* (joy) and the verb *παίζειν* (to play) to *παιδεία* (education) and *παιδία* (playing; on the role of play in Plato’s philosophy, ADDLEY 1967: 223-224).²⁰ The mimetic character of dance is strongly emphasized also by Lucian, who in his treatise *De saltatione* (19), while describing the mimetic abilities of Proteus, explains that the same abilities to shape and change into everything (*πρὸς πάντα σχηματίζεσθαι καὶ μεταβάλλεσθαι δυνάμενον*) possess all dancers, who are imitative persons (*ὄρχηστὴν τινα γενέσθαι λέγειν, μιμητικὸν ἄνθρωπον*; LONSDALE 1993: 31).

The ritual aspect of play in connection to children and ancient cult can be traced in Choes, the second day of the festival Anthesteria celebrated in March (*ἐν μηνὶ ἀνθεστηριῶνι*) in Attica. The festivities revolved around the maturing of the wine stored at the previous vintage and during the Choes children who reached their third birthday (*παῖδες... τρίτῳ ἀπὸ γενεᾶς ἔτει*) were crowned with flowers (*στεφανοῦνται τῶν ἀνθέων*), bowls of wine were set up and sacrifices were made to the Gods (*κρατῆράς τε τοὺς ἐκεῖθεν ἐστήσατο καὶ ἔθυσεν*, Flavius Philostratus, *Heroicus* 187.9 in KAYSER 1871). Although not much information survives on how these festivities were actually performed, a great amount of

19 The mimetic aspect of dance can also be verified in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (162-163), where the poem describes the extraordinary mimetic abilities of the Delian Maidens during their dancing performance; they could mimic the tongues of all men and their cluttering speech (*πάντων δ’ ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ βαμβαλιαστὴν/ μιμῆσθ’*). See also Homer, *Odyssey* 4.278-79.

20 Linguistic support for considering dance within the anthropological concept of play is also provided by the verb *ἐψιάσθαι* which seems to imply a group movement involving song and dance, Homer, *Odyssey* 21.429-430: *ἐψιάσθαι μολπῇ καὶ φόρμιγγι* (amuse yourselves with song and the phorminx). The verb derives from the word *ἐψιά* which can mean ‘amusement’ or ‘toy’, CRAMER 1835: 437: *ἐψιά: τὰ ἀπὸ λόγων παίγνια, καὶ φιλέψιος ὁ φιλοπαίγμων*. Hesychius mentions an ancient dance called *strobilus*, which resembles greatly to a spinning toy: *στρόβιλος... εἶδος τι ὄρχησεως*. See also Aristophanes, *Pax* 864; Athenaeus, 630a: *καλαθίσκος, στρόβιλος, καὶ τελεσιὰς δ’ ἐστὶν ὄρχησις καλουμένη*; LONSDALE 1993: 33, note 45.

details can be found on miniature choes that is ritual pitchers found in abundance in Attic 5th-4th century graves. Some bear fantastical scenes with Satyrs, Maenads and wild beasts, but they also depict children of early age engaging in toy playing, athletic or musical contests that mimic the ritual play of adolescents. According to Lonsdale (1993: 122, 129-132) these ritual acts were some sort of informal children's initiation rite, through which children, who were no longer infants, were presented to the phratry (family clan) and admitted to the religious community at the same time (on the festival of Anthesteria and Choes, VAN HOOM 1951; SABETAI 2009: 290). In other words, the festival of Anthesteria provided an occasion for children through ritual play *to exhibit the human propensity towards rhythm and harmony for the first time in a larger, communal setting* (LONSDALE 1993: 131).

Similar connections of dance and ritual performance to the verbs *παίζειν* and *προσπαίζειν* can be traced in Arkteia (Bear Festival), the festival in honour of Artemis at Brauron in Attica (LONSDALE 1993: 176, 180-181, 183).²¹ According to Lysistrata (641-647) young women from Attica were expected to participate in a number of festivities that were connected to different age limits, which seem to have been some sort of unofficial female rites of passage (CALAME 1997: 28-29). These rites were a way for maidens to pass through childhood and adolescence to motherhood. During the Brauronian festivities (*Βραυρωνίοις*) young girls would gather to celebrate Artemis, the Great-she-bear. They were expected to honour the Goddess of wild animals by performing various ritual activities, including dancing and running. They did this by assuming the image of bears themselves by wearing a short, saffron-yellow dress called *κροκωτόν* and by performing certain ritual movements (on the *κροκωτόν*, HAMILTON 1989: 461-462). Among these performances young girls were expected to perform a ritual play with the bear, by executing inappropriate moves and thus provoking the wild beast. Little is known about exactly what each stage of the ritual actually meant, but it is understood that they each symbolized a gesture of devotion to Artemis in return for her protection over the young and guidance on their way to maturity (on Arkteia in general, PERLMAN 1978; WALLBANK 1981; SOURVINOU INWOOD 1990; COLE 1998; SABETAI 2009: 291-292).²²

21 The verb *προσπαίζειν* in Plato, Phaedrus 265c: *Ἐμοί μὲν φαίνεται τὰ μὲν ἄλλα τῷ ὄντι παιδιᾷ πεπαῖσθαι*; Epinomis 980b: *θεοὺς προσπαίσαντι*. The verb appears also in Aelianus (De Natura Animalium 4.45) connected with the arktos, while describing a dog tantalizing a bear (*τὸν κύνα προσπαίζοντα τὴν ἄρκτον*).

22 A series of miniature craters with a high pedestal foot and double handles called 'krateriskoi' have been found at sanctuaries linked to Artemis throughout Attica like the Artemis sanctuaries at Brauron, on the Acropolis in Athens and on the Mounichia Hill in Piraeus. These depict girls, both nude and in short chitones, dancing or running. The scenes of running appear to show girls chasing one another, possibly in a contest, symbolic of their change of status from 'wild' to 'tame'. Probably the vase depictions at the krateriskoi show some of the rituals that were performed at the sanctuaries, SOURVINOU INWOOD 1988; HAMILTON 1989; LONSDALE 1993: 186-192.

A great number of artefacts, as well as images in relief and wall painting from various parts of the world, indicate that ball games played an important part in everyday life already from early antiquity (on ancient ball games in general, ROBERTS 2011).²³ These games seem to be connected not only to child play, but also to important festivals or religious rituals, sometimes serving as a medium to develop strength, stamina and team spirit within the society. One of the earliest depictions of a ball ceremony can be seen on the north wall of the main chamber of Tomb 15 at Beni-Hassan in Egypt, built before 2000 BC. It shows women in pairs, one mounted on the back of the other, throwing balls at each other (GARDINER 1930: 4-5, figs. 1d-f; HENDERSON 1947: 19 and fig. reproduced in p. 28). Another wall painting from the tomb of Khety at Beni-Hassan dating to the 12th Dynasty (1991-1802 BC) depicts two men with sticks and a ball engaged in what looks like a form of hockey (DECKER 1992: 115). One of the oldest known toy-balls has been found in a child's tomb at the Tarkhan necropolis (grave 518) on the west bank of the Nile, 50km south of Cairo, dating ca. 2500 BC; it was made of linen rags, which were rolled into a ball, and tied together with a string (MENDOZA 2017: 180; on sport images in ancient Egypt in general, DECKER & HERB 1997). Ball games in a ritual context can also be recognized in Mesoamerican cultures already from 1700 BC. The Mesoamerican ballgame was a sport with ritual associations played by the pre-Columbian people in special ball courts that have been discovered throughout Mesoamerica. These ball courts vary considerably in size, but all have long narrow alleys with slanted side-walls, against which the balls could bounce. Although the rules of the game are not known, the players struck a rubber ball possibly with their hips or other parts of their body in conjunction to certain ritual events (SCARBOROUGH & WILCOX 1991; STEVENSON 2001; FILLOY NADAL 2001; BLOMSTER 2012; BLOMSTER & CHAVÉZ 2020). Furthermore, the recent discovery of three leather balls, ten curved wooden sticks, and horse gear in graves of the late 2nd millennium-early 1st millennium BC in the Yanghai cemetery, located in the north-eastern part of the Turfan depression in China, connect possibly ball games with horseback riding (WERTMALL et al. 2020).

Ball games were highly regarded in Greek antiquity. The grace and rhythm needed during their performance appealed particularly to the Greek audience (for balls and ball games, GRÜNDEL 1925; GARDINER 1930: 228-238; KLEIN 1932: 18-20, 40; HARRIS 1972: 75-111; BECK 1975: 51-52; SCHMIDT 1977: 19-31, 129-130, 133-135, 136-138; DURAND 1991: 92-99; FITTÀ 1998: 98-107; CROWTHER 2004: 352-356, 361-372 and passim; 2007: 154-159; MILLER 2004: 171-175; O' SULLIVAN 2012;). Athenaeus in his *Deipnosophistae* among various athletes who were well known for their ball-playing abilities (1.14d-e: *διαβόητοι δὲ ἐπὶ σφαιρικῇ Δημοτέλης ὁ*

23 Roberts (2011) lists a number of ancient ball games from around the world, e.g. China (*cuju*) 34ff., Korea (*chukguk*) 39, Japan (*kemari*, *kenatt*) 40, India (*yubilakpi*) 99ff., Near East (*pukku-mikku*) etc.

Θεοκρίτου τοῦ Χίου σοφιστοῦ ἀδελφὸς καὶ τις Χαιρεφάνης) he mentions a member of Alexander's entourage, Aristonikos of Karystos, who was also a famous ball-player (1.19a: Ἀριστόνικον τὸν Καρύστιον, τὸν Ἀλεξάνδρου σφαιριστὴν) and was for that reason honored at Athens; he was made an Athenian citizen and granted state dining rights (DOW 1963: 86ff., 91-92; on ball games and σφαιριστική, GUHL & KONER 1889: 228-231; HARRIS 1972: 84, 89; O' SULLIVAN 2012: 17-18).²⁴ With the word σφαιρισμός ancient Greeks named all games executed with a σφαῖρα, a ball, made of different materials and in different sizes. Plato in his dialogue Phaedrus (110b-c) compares the globe to inflated toy 'balls which have leather coverings in twelve pieces and are multicolored' (δωδεκά σκυῖτοι σφαῖραι, ποικίλη, χρώμασιν διειλημμένη).²⁵ Homer in *Odyssey* (8.372-380) also mentions a purple ball (σφαῖραν... πορφυρέην) made by Polyvos. These balls, probably made of leather stripes, had an opening to insert an animal bladder, in order to fill it with air (on ancient balls made of inflated animal bladder and covered with leather stripes, IMMERWAHR 1967: 256; HARRIS 1972: 79).²⁶ However, not many references survive in ancient texts, only a handful of vase depictions combined with late testimonia confirm that ball games were widespread and highly regarded (Pollux in DINDORF 1824: IX.103ff.; Eustathius 1601-1602; O' SULLIVAN 2012: 19).

Ball games were suitable for all age groups, not only for small children or young boys and girls around the age of marriage, but also for grown-ups and professional athletes or dancers. Aristotle (*Ethica Nicomachea* 4.1123) regards a well-made ball (σφαῖρα μὲν γὰρ ἡ καλλίστη) as a proper gift for a child

24 Plutarch (*Alexander* 39.5) mentions another ball-player in Alexander's army named Serapion: Σεραπίωνι δὲ τῶν ἀπὸ σφαιράς τινι νεανίσκων; SLOWIKOWSKI 1989: 75, note 31. Athenaeus informs us that a Timokrates from Laconia wrote a book on ball games (1.26.35: Περὶ σφαιριστικῆς).

25 Hippocrates (*De articulis* 3) explains that a small hard ball made of leather stripes sewn together (οἷαι πολλὰ ἐκ τῶν πολλῶν σκυτέων ῥάπτονται) was put in an armpit to assist a dislocated shoulder.

26 Compare with the miniature terracotta rattle in shape of a sphere discovered in a 3rd c. BC inhumation burial inside a pithos tomb in Samothrace. The object imitates an air-inflated ball, with markings that suggest polygonal sections, probably of leather, sewn together. Along one of the lines a raised ridge flanked by little black dots must represent the laced opening, through which a bladder would have been inserted, Archaeological Museum of Samothrace, DUSENBERY 1959: 168-169; 1998: 199-208. See also the clay ball from a Thasian burial dating to the 2nd c. BC, which preserves the incisions imitating the joins of leather patches, GHALI-KAHIL 1954: 242-244, fig. 27. Compare with a similar miniature terracotta rattle in the shape of a sphere decorated with athletic scenes and inscriptions from Athens, which was offered as a gift to Myrrhine, HOFFMANN 1963: no. 323, 20-22, figs. 1-3; IMMERWAHR 1967: 255-257; SALMINEN & KAJAVA 2013. Immerwahr (1967: 255) suggests that Myrrhine's ball imitates a playing ball made of three leather strips, one rectangular, one circular sewn together and stuffed with wool or similar material. In a riddle in *Anthologia Palatina* (14.62) the ball is described as 'very hairy' (λίην ἔντριχός εἰμι) and with leaves that cover the hairs (τὰ φύλλα δέ μου κατακρύπτει/ τὰς τρίχας) and with an invisible hole (εἰτρύπη φαίνεται οὐδαμόθεν). On Egyptian balls made of papyrus and leather, PETRIE 1927: 58ff., pl. 51: 361-367; balls made of leather and wood, DAVID 1979: 12, pl. 3.

(μεγαλοπρέπειαν ἔχει παιδικοῦ δώρου) and in *Anthologia Palatina* (6.280) a ball is listed among offerings to the goddess Artemis by Timareta, who was a girl near the age of marriage (Τιμαρέτα πρὸ γάμοιο... τὴν τ' ἔρατεινὴν σφαῖραν; CARSON 1990: 151, note 34; CALAME 1997: 145).²⁷ Anacreon in a poem inspired by the incident with Nausicaa described by Homer, speaks of the poetic narrator who struck by golden-haired Eros (βάλλων χρυσοκόμης Ἔρωσ) with a purple ball (σφαῖρη πορφυρῆ), was challenged to play ball (συμπάζειν προκαλεῖται) with a girl with fancy shoes (νήνι ποικιλοσαμβάλω), and thus fell in love with her (Anacreon 358 PMG-Poetae Melici Graeci in PFEIJFFER 2000: 164-184; RENEHAN 1984; on the erotic significance of female ball games, IMMERWAHR 1967: 260, and note 12; on the erotic symbolism of balls and the connection of ball games with love and wedding connotations, MANGEL 1999: 218ff.; AVRONIDAKI 2014: 89-90, notes 50-51). Athenaeus (1.37), while referring to the dancing skills of Sophocles, writes that the poet in his youth was distinguished for his grace and skill at ball-play, while performing as a woman, taking the part of Nausicaa on stage (Σοφοκλῆς... ἄκρωσ δὲ ἔσφαιρίσεν, ὅτε τὴν Ναυσικάαν καθῆκε; see also Eustathius 381.8 and 1553.63).

Naturally, in the life of the palaestra and the army, ball-play occupied an important place for young boys. Most ancient Greek palaestrae were equipped with special rooms that were used to exercise in ball games (Theophrastus, *Characteres* V.9-10: παλαιστρίδιον κονίστραν ἔχον καὶ σφαιριστήριον; on special rooms designated for ball games connected to the palaestra, GARDINER 1910: 485ff.; in Delos and Delphi, DELORME 1982; in Olympia MALLWITZ 1972: 278-284; in ancient Messene, THEMELIS 2018: 14; on Greek Gymnasia and Palaestrae in general, GLASS 1988; ROMANO 2016: 320-324). A militaristic aspect is evident in the Spartan education where the ball-players were called σφαιρεῖς and the games played σφαιρομαχίαι (Xenophon, *De republica Lacedaemoniorum* 9.5:

27 Apollonius of Rhodes (3rd c. BC) mentions in *Argonautica* (3.131-6) that to Zeus, when he was a child, was given by Adrasteia a 'well-made ball' as a present (σφαῖραν εὐτρόχαλον) manufactured by Hephaestus. Timareta's ball offering (σφαῖραν) is described in *Anthologia Palatina* 6.280 as ἔρατεινὴν, an adjective usually translated 'lovely', which according to Carson (1990: 151, note 34) is a quasi-technical term referring to the ball's conventional use as a mechanism of seduction and flirtation. The ball is especially useful on love-play as a means of challenging another person's boundaries, without incurring the risk and responsibility of personal contact by hand or gift. A touch or a proffered gift demands response; a tossed ball may be missed or ignored without dishonor. After marriage the girl has no use for such tools of erotic play. On a list of spherical objects found in tombs and sanctuaries, which were not simple toys, but had a ritual significance, IMMERWAHR 1967: 258, note 8. A fragment of a clay pinax from Lokroi Epizephyrioi in Calabria, Italy, inv. no. 1917, Allard Pierson Museum Amsterdam, depicts in low relief a maiden dressed in a sleeved chiton holding with her right hand a round object, possibly a ball, which seems to dedicate in a sanctuary, RICHTER 1959: 246, no. 71, pl. 59. See also AVRONIDAKI 2014: 91, note 50. Leonidas of Tarentum in *Anthologia Palatina* 6.309 mentions a noiseless ball (εὐφημόν τοι σφαῖραν), which along with other toys were dedicated to Hermes by young Philokles.

δαιρουμένων τούς ἀντισφαιριοῦντας; Pollux III.150; Pausanias in PAPAXATZIS 1992: III.14.6; Athenaeus 1.14d-e; Eustathius 1601-1602).²⁸ Ball games proved to be useful in the development of military skills and were very popular not only in Sparta, but also in Alexander's army during his campaign against the Persians (GARTINER 1930: 231; O' SULLIVAN 2012: 26ff.; on athletics and Alexander, HARRIS 1972: 83ff.; on Alexander and ball athletes, SLOWIKOWSKI 1989: 73-75). That is also reflected in the writings of the physician Galen in late Roman period, especially in his treatise *On exercise with a small ball, where he states that ball games have the capacity to sharpen hand skills and train the eye and concludes that ball games do not only train the body, but also bring joy to the soul* (μὴ μόνον τὸ σῶμα διαπνεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τέρπειν δυνάμενα, Galen in MARQUARDT 1879).²⁹

Ball games were not only suitable activities for children or soldiers, but also pleasurable spectacles for the gods. The ancient sources sometime refer to female ball performances that were some sort of ritual act in honour of the gods. It is interesting that the House of the Arrephoroi (*Arrephorion*), situated on the north side of the Acropolis, east and north of the Erechtheion (ca. 500-400 BC), was equipped at its eastern side with a small open space that according to Plutarch was called 'ball court of the Arrephoroi' (*Moralia* 839c: *σφαιρίστρα τῶν Ἀρρηφόρων*; STEVENS 1936: 489-490; IMMERSWAHR 1967: 259). The area appears smooth and broad enough to serve as a ball court suitable to host ball rituals performed by a small group of women.³⁰ It is the first time we hear of a special court reserved for ball games in a ritual context with religious significance, but unfortunately, we do not know the rules and the actual purpose of the game (on Arrephoria, DEUBNER 1932: 15, no. 3; BURKERT 1966).³¹

Pollux in *Onomastikon* (IX.103-107) mentions various ball games and gives a brief description of them: ἡ δὲ τῆς σφαίρας παιδιὰ ὀνόματα εἶχεν, ἐπίκουρος,

28 The term *σφαιρεῖς* (ball-players) was used to designate young Spartans in their first year of manhood, GARDINER 1910: 184ff.; 1930: 231; KENNEL 2007: 59-63; O' SULLIVAN 2012: 22, 24.

29 Soranus of Ephesus in his treatise *Gynaeciorum* (2.24.4.4 in Ilberg 1927) states that though ball games (*διὰ σφαίρας παιγνία*) women can exercise well the upper part of the body (*τὰ τε γὰρ ἄνω μέρη γυμνάζεται μᾶλλον*).

30 Homer (*Odyssey*, 8.260) mentions a dancing place (*ἀγῶνα*) that was smoothed and properly prepared leaving a broad space in the middle, in order to host a dance around the bard Demodocus: *λείηναν δὲ χορόν, καλὸν δ' εὖρυναν ἀγῶνα* (they leveled a place for the dance, and marked out a fair wide ring). Alkman (fr. 3.7-9 Page) also refers to the dancing place as *ἀγῶνα: πεδ' ἀγῶν' ἴμεν*.

31 Deubner (1932: 12) assumes that in Panathenaic years there were as many as four Arrephoroi, something that would make group games possible. For a possible representation of the Arrephoroi playing ball and Aphrodite on fragments of a hydria by the Kleophon Painter, inv. no. S./10 1632a+b, *Antikensammlung des Archäologischen Instituts der Universität in Tübingen, Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum/ CVA Tübingen* 4, pl. 32.3-4; the scene could also be interpreted as *representing a girlhood game endowed with erotic and wedding implications*, AVRONIDAKI 2014: 90, note 53.

φαινίνδα, ἀπόρραξις, ούρανία. (on ball games in general, DAREMBERG & SAGLIO 1877: IV.I, 475-478, s.v. *pila*; GARTINER 1910: 185, 485; 1930: 230-238; GRÜNDEL 1925: 80-95; KLEIN 1932: 18-20; DEUBNER 1932: 240-241; VAN HOOM 1951: 44-45). Episkyros (ἐπίσκυρος or ἐπίκοινος or ἐφηβική) was a foot-ball game played by a great number of persons divided into two equal numbered parties opposed to one another. The game arena was divided in two by a line drawn on the ground with a stone (σκῦρος). The objective was to pass the ball across the goal-line without being intercepted by the other team (Pollux IX.104; ELMER 2008; on the connection of episkyros to the Spartan ephebic game, CROWTHER 1997: 5-6). Faininda (φαινίνδα or ἐφετίνδα) was performed by a number of persons, who threw the ball from one to another; its distinguishing feature was in the person who had the ball pretending to throw it to a certain individual, and while the latter was expecting it, suddenly turning, and throwing it to another (Pollux IX.105; Hesychius: ἐφετίνδα).³² Aporraxis (ἀπόρραξις) was a game in which the player threw the ball to the ground with such force, as to cause it to rebound, then he struck it down again with the palm of his hand and so went on doing this many times; the number of times was counted (Pollux IX.105). Unfortunately, we do not know much about the rules of these ball games and some of them cannot be distinguished from one another.³³

Furthermore, we do not know which of these ball games were suitable for girls (IMMERWAHR 1967: 259; on women and sports in antiquity, HARRIS 1964: 179-186; EISEN 1976; LAEMMER 1981: 16-23). However, Pollux' game list ends with ourania (ούρανία), a game which was performed by many players and which according to his account resembles the ball-throwing game of the Phaeacians in *Odyssey* (ὄπερ ἔοικεν Ὀμηρος ἐν Φαίαιξιν ὑποδηλοῦν). During the game one of the participants had to lean backwards and throw the ball into the air (ἀπερρίπτει τὴν σφαίραν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν), while the rest tried to catch it before

32 Athenaeus (I.15) connects the game to ἀρπαστόν (from ἀρπαζω, 'to snatch'); ἀρπαστόν or *harpastum* was a ball game played with a small hard ball and was popular alike among Greeks and Romans, Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae* 5.17.7 (in DALTON 1915); MITCHELL 1938-1939: 103; GARDINER 1930: 232-235; MENDNER 1959; WAGNER 1963.

33 Aporraxis on a Red-figure Chous, Metropolitan Museum New York, inv. no. 25.78.48, (ca. 425 BC), NEILS & OAKLEY 2003: 271. In 1920s Philadelphiaeus (1922a, 1922b, 1923) discovered two late Archaic marble bases of funerary kouros-statues in Kerameikos built into Themistoclean wall; the so called Ball-Players statue base (NM 3476) and the Hockey Players statue base (NM 3477, National Archaeological Museum of Athens) all decorated with relief scenes depicting youthful aristocratic pursuits. One of the scenes in the Ball-Players base shows youth males divided into two teams playing a ball game, possibly episkyros. On the Hockey-Players base one of the scenes represents young men playing with curved sticks and a small ball. Some scholars connect this last game to κερητίζειν, a ball game with curved sticks in form of a horn (κέρας = κερητίζειν), BOARDMAN 1978: 82-83, figs. 241 (Hockey Players), 242, (Ball-Players); BANOU & BOURNIAS 2014: 176-177. It is noteworthy, that Plutarch in his *Moralia* (839c), describes a bronze statue at the ball court of the Arrephorion on the Acropolis at Athens representing a boy κερητίζων, that is a boy using a horn or a horn-shaped implement, OIKONOMOU 1920-1921; GARTINER 1930: 237-238.

it fell down (*πρίνεις γῆν πεσεῖν, ἀρπάσει*). A variant involved throwing the ball against a wall (*πρὸς τὸν τοῖχον τὴν σφαιραῖραν ἀντιπέμπειν*) and counting how many times it bounces (*τὸ πλῆθος τῶν πηδημάτων διελογίζοντο*; Pollux IX.106; Athenaeus 1.25-26; Eustathius 1601-1602). Another game which required a ball played by both boys and girls was ephedrismos (*ἐφεδρισμος* or *ἐφεδριασμός*). The name derives from the verb *ἐφεδρίζω* (to sit upon) and refers to a game during which the players tried to hit a stone called the 'limit' (*δίωρος*) that has been placed upright on the ground at a distance with balls or pebbles. The loser had to carry the winner, who covered the loser's eyes, on his back until he touched the target with his foot. [Pollux IX.118-119; GARDINER 1930: 6; DEUBNER (1930) 1982: 176, fig. 27 and pl. 20; ZAZOFF 1962; IMMERWAHR 1967: 259, note 11; SCHEFFER 1996; MANGEL 1999; KARANIKΑ 2014: 166-167, notes 17, 22].³⁴ Pollux also states that the participants in these games were called *σφαιρίζοντας*, and lists various verbs used to describe the manipulation of a ball (*σφαιρῆ παίζειν, σφαιραῖραν ῥίπτειν, βάλλειν, ἀφιέναι, πέμπειν, προπέμπειν, ἐκπέμπειν, ἀντιπέμπειν, ἀνταφιέναι, ἀνταποφέρειν*). Moreover, he mentions adjectives suitable to describe a ball game (*εὐρρυθμον, εὐσχήμονα, εὐσκοπον, ἐπίσκοπον, εὐτονον*) and it noteworthy that all of them are connected to sound, harmony and rhythm and could apply to dance performances as well (see also Athenaeus 1.26: *ἐφρόντιζον δὲ εὐρυθμίας οἱ σφαιρίζοντες*; Eustathius 1601-1602).

An intriguing ball game that was performed by girls can be seen on the body of a Red-figure Pyxis at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This is a pyxis whose finial on the lid is in the shape of an *astragalus* (knucklebone). Its body is decorated with two scenes from everyday women's life; on one side two women playing knucklebones and on the other side two women playing a ball game. In the ball game scene one woman standing on the left advances with her left foot forward and with her raising right hand is about to through to her playmate a small ball. Here too the artist preferred to represent the beginning of the ball game, as in the case of the Moutoussi pyxis. On the right another maiden is stretching her hands, in an attempt to grab the ball. An interesting detail is a small vertical stick in the middle, which was probably used as barrier or wicket of some sort. The painter appears to insinuate that

34 In Classical and Hellenistic periods the game was a very popular scene depicted on vases and terracotta figurines; see e.g. terracotta group of two girls playing the game (late 4th-early 3rd c. BC), inv. no. 07.286.4, Metropolitan Museum of New York, NEILS & OAKLEY 2003: 275, no. 83; see also terracotta ephedrismos groups (3rd-2nd c. BC), MOLLARD-BESQUES 1971: D 159, pl. 36:b, D 301, pl. 62:c and Red-figure Skyphos from Apulia attributed to the Ilioupersis painter (375-350 BC), inv. no. 25.089, Risd Museum, Rhode Island, HARNWELL ASCHMEAD & PHILLIPS 1976: 50 ff., no. 59. See also a variation of the game ephedrismos on a black-figure Lekythos by the Painter of Edinburgh (505-485 BC), inv. no. AN1890.27, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, where a bearded man is on the point of throwing a ball towards a line-out of three youths, each mounted on a companion's shoulders; in the field the graffito *κέλευσον* (call for it), BOARDMAN 1974: 147, 246, no. 239, 151, no. 239.

the female “pitcher” had to through the ball over the barrier, while her playmate was expected to grasp the ball possibly before it fell. Nonetheless, these scenes are greatly connected to the concept of child play, indicated greatly by the knucklebone-knob, and don’t seem to be connected to a dance ritual (on ball games with a “wicket”, KLEIN 1932: 19; list of vessels depicting the “wicket” game, IMMERWAHR 1967: 259, note 11).³⁵

Another game suitable for maidens, in which a number of balls, fruits or skeins of wool were juggled in the air, is also depicted on ancient Greek vases, mostly pyxides and lekythoi (PAPARPYRIDIS KAROUZOU 1945: 42 and pl. 6a-b; GUHL & KONER 1989: 190; MILLS 1994: 5). An excellent example can be seen on an Attic white-ground Pyxis attributed to the Painter of London D12, now at the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio (ca. 470-460 BC), where a pair of women is engaging in a ball game: the seated one is juggling with three apples, while her standing companion holds out an extra apple (IMMERWAHR 1967: 259, note 11; GOLDEN 1990: 76-77, fig. 13). Apples were well known love-gifts in antiquity and were connected to female sexuality prior to marriage; thus the depiction of female juggling on vases belonging to the women’s realm seems appropriate (on love and wedding connotations of female juggling PFISTERER-HAAS 2003: 149-150, note 37, 168-174; AVRONIDAKI 2014: 90; DASEN 2016: 78ff., esp. figs. 2-6).³⁶ Moreover, juggling skills were also expected by more professional women, such as dancers performing at a banquet. In his description of a dinner set in 421 BC and presided over by Socrates, the Greek historian Xenophon (Symposium 2.8) refers to a juggling performance of a female dancer (*ὄρχηστρίς*) playing with twelve hoops (*τροχαούς μέχρι δώδεκα*), which she flung into the air (*ἀνερρίπτει δονουμένους*) and, while dancing (*ὠρχεῖτο*), caught them, as they fell, in perfect time (*ἐν ῥυθμῷ δέχεσθαι αὐτούς*).

Now returning back to our pyxis, one still wonders whether the artist wanted to portray an actual ball game or a dance scene with a ball (on the difficulties in distinguishing dance from other types of movement in ancient Greek imagery NAEREBOUT 1997: 209-226). We should not forget that a ball game consists of a sequence of successive movements and the artist could depict only one scene on the ceramic body, probably the most characteristic one, in order to be easily

35 Red-figure Pyxis (ca. 425-400 BC), inv. no. 06.1021.119a, b, Metropolitan Museum of Art, MCCLEES & ALEXANDER 1933: 48, 74, 76, figs. 58, 94. The authors (1933: 48) recognize in the vertical barrier some sort of wicket (as in cricket).

36 White-ground Pyxis, inv. no. 1963.29 Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, BEAZLEY 1963: 1675, no. 94; TRUITT 1969: 81, 84, fig. 11. See also a) Red-figure Pyxis attributed to the Pisto Xenos painter (480-470 BC), Bibliothèque Royal, Brussels, where a seated woman is depicted playing with three balls-like objects, probably apples, FEYTMANS 1948: 49-54, pl. XXI-XXII; TRUITT 1969: 78, 80, fig. 9, c) Red-figure Lekythos attributed to the Karlsruhe Painter (2nd quarter of 5th c. BC), inv. no. 41.162.147, Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York, BEAZLEY 1963: 733, no. 62, d) Red-figure Lekythos attributed to the Karlsruhe Painter (2nd quarter of 5th c. BC), inv. no. 41.162.145, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, BEAZLEY 1963: 733, no. 66; SPEARS 1984: 39, 41.

recognized by his contemporary viewers. This is possibly the beginning of the game, which needed one participant to throw the ball on the air, some sort of “pitcher”, and the rest who would try to catch it. These roles can easily be recognized in the scene: the seated female “pitcher” is about to throw the ball in the air towards her companions, who with their outstretched arms are moving backwards, as if to catch it before it falls. This type of movement could also indicate a change in the direction of the dance. Striking looks the difference in the posture of the last dancer, a movement that could be interpreted as a difficulty of her coping with the rest, or a better attempt to catch the ball. However, according to Avronidaki *the rhythmic movement of the maidens, combined with the seated posture and different dress of the woman solemnly holding out the ball towards them, adds a ceremonial dimension to the scene that is lacking in the Homeric description* (of Nausicaa’s ball game; AVRONIDAKI 2014: 90). In any case we could never know what action followed next and our evidence is too little, in order to be conclusive on the artist’s actual intentions.

One detail that could indicate a dancing scene on an ancient vessel is the representation of the musician. Dance, as well as ball-play, demanded the execution of movements and gestures in a skillful manner. The appearance of a female musician playing the trigonon in the scene, who with her music accompanies the ritual, seems proper and would have helped the participants have better rhythmic flow in their movements. However, the pyxis depicts a variety of scenes connected to the women’s world, but that does not mean that they all occurred simultaneously. Moreover, one could easily disconnect the musician from the ball-playing scene, as it appears almost at the other side of the ceramic body, separated by groups of figures that are not connected to the ball ritual whatsoever. Furthermore, dance scenes in antiquity could easily stand alone in iconography without being accompanied by a musician.³⁷

Another significant detail that probably connects the ball ritual to ancient orchesis is the slightly differentiated appearance of the leader of the ball-players.³⁸ The ball-playing ritual has four participants: one seated figure, the “pitcher” who is about to throw the ball and three maidens who try to catch it. (on examples of dancing triads in relief, EDWARDS 1985; on dancing triads, HARISSON 1986: 196-219; on trinities in ancient Greek and Roman art, USENER 1903). The dance leader – the first of the dancing triad with the outstretched arms– is the only female figure on the pyxis with loose braided hair and polos

37 E.g. Red-figure Pyxis with female pyrrhichist, inv. no. H 3010, National Archaeological Museum, Naples, LONSLADE 1993: 146, fig. 20; votive relief to the Graces, no inv. number, Kos Archaeological Museum; votive relief to the Nymphs, inv. no. 25.78.59, Metropolitan Museum of New York, EDWARDS 1985: nos. 98, 62.

38 In Attic vase-painting the leaders of female choruses are usually not distinguished in dress and hairstyle from their companions. An exception is the black-figure kylix (ca. 570 BC), inv. no. 1906.12-15.1, British Museum, DELAUAUD-ROUX 1994: 32-33.

in striking contrast to the others. This is a choice corresponding to the custom of the period to dance in a particular arrangement and order (τάξις; Alkman, fr. 200 in CALAME 1983: 38-39: *τάς εντάξει χορευούσας παρθένους*; Xenophon, De Anthia et Habrocome Ephesiacorum 1.2.3: *ἦρχε δὲ τῆς τῶν παρθένων τάξεως Ἀνθία*). When dancing in order the principal dancer (*choregos*) was expected to be distinguished from the other members of the chorus, not only in appearance and physical beauty, but also in social status, origin and dancing skills.³⁹ As Lonsdale states, while referring to the role of the choregos, *being like the goddess means becoming the first dancer* (LONSDALE 1993: 232; 57-58, 66-67, 193-205; DELAUAUD-ROUX 1994: 22-23, 26-29 passim; on the choregos in general, CALAME 1997: 42-48, 66-73; AVRONIDAKI 2014: 88, notes 35-36). One of the oldest references to dance scenes that describe the principal dancer can be found in the above mentioned description in the *Odyssey* (6.99-109) of the ball-throwing game of Nausicaa and her handmaidens. Here the leader of the dance is no other than the princess of the Phaeacians and in his description of the ball game the poet compares the dance of the maidens to the dance of the Nymphs as well as Nausicaa to the goddess Artemis.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the fact that the leader of the chorus has her long hair unveiled, hanging loose and drawn together at the back in contrast to the rest, could denote that she is still an unmarried maiden (Archilochos 31, West: *ἡ δὲ οἱ κόμη/ ὤμους κατεσκιάζει καὶ μετὰφρενα*). According to Avronidaki *the first of the three dancing ball-players is clearly a bride*, evident by her long flowing hair and polos, which are recognized as *iconographic traits of brides-to-be in scenes of prenuptial offerings or wedding preparations* (AVRONIDAKI 2014: 88 and note 37). Furthermore, the pyxis comes from Boeotia where the use of the polos as a wedding crown is already attested in the 6th century BC (for paradigms in Boeotian iconography AVRONIDAKI 2014: 88, notes 39-44). In Classical Greece married women and unmarried girls were always expected to be veiled and wear their hair bounded, when appearing in public. Loose or tossed hair was a sign of the bacchante, of the slave and the prostitute (Euripides, *Bacchae* 695: *καθεῖσαν εἰς ὤμους κόμας*; CARSON 1990: 152). As Lloyd (2003: 173) writes: *the sight of a married woman or an unmarried daughter or sister was (ideally) for the eyes of the family alone and that no strange man should be allowed to*

39 In the Hymn to Artemis Orthia (44, 51-59, 96-98) Alkman becomes more specific; the chorus leader is described as a glorious dance leader (*κλεννά χοραγός*), radiantly outstanding, with golden locks of hair (*ἀ δὲ χαίτα... ἐπανθεῖ χρυσὸς [ὦ]ς ἀκήρατος*) and a silver look on her face (*τότ' ἀργύριον πρόσωπον*). The poet also compares her to a well built, prize-winner horse, with thundering hooves (*ἵππον παγὸν ἀεθλοφόρον καναχάποδα*). See also Theocritus, *Bucolica* XVIII, 2-4, 28, 38, where the choregos of the dance of the twelve of the most beautiful maidens of Laconia is Helen of Troy, who is described as golden Helen (*χρυσέα Ἑλένα*), and as maid of beauty and grace (*καλά... χαρίεσσα κόρα*).

40 See also Hymn to Artemis Orthia (57), where the leader of the chorus is called *Ἀγησιχόρα*, a name that translates as “the one that leads the dance”.

view the women of another man's *oikos*.⁴¹ In the second stasimon of Iphigenia in Tauris by Euripides (1143-1152) the chorus of women, who are Greek slave women, maids of Iphigenia at the temple of Artemis in the land of the Taurians, remembers its participation in dance-choruses at weddings (*χοροῖς δ' ἔσταιν... εὐδοκίμων γάμων*); during these 'contests of the Graces' (*χαρίτων εἰς ἀμίλλας*) young maidens of the same age (*ἡλικῶν θιάσους*) danced with their rich and soft hair probably uncovered (*χαίτας ἀβρόπλουτον ἔριν*), while the bride shadowed her face with the veil (*ὄρνυμένα, πολυποίκιλα φάρεα/ καὶ πλοκάμους περιβαλλομένα/ γένυσιν ἐσκίαζον*). In the same manner in Odyssey princess Nausicaa and her maids had been discreetly veiled for their journey through the city and into the countryside. It is noteworthy that afterwards all maidens throw off their veils (6.100: *ἀπὸ κρήδεμνα βαλοῦσαι*), in order to play the ball-throwing game unhindered by cumbersome head-dresses (LLOYD 2003: 127; on nuptial references in the scene of Nausicaa and her maids PFEIJFFER 2000: 182-183). Indeed, unconfined and unveiled hair could also be expected by young maidens in special occasions (TARBEL 1911: 479-481; LLOYD 2003: 122; on the veil and domestic life, LLOYD 2007).

Various religious, private and public ceremonies may have provided women with unique opportunities to display their personal adornments, despite their limited access to public life. In Alkman's first partheneion (fr. 1.36-77 Page, 51-54) the chorus leader Hagesichora is described as a glorious choregos (*κλενὰ χοραγός*), radiantly outstanding, with golden locks of hair (*ἀ δὲ χαίτα/ τᾶς ἐμᾶς ἀνεπιᾶς/ Ἀγησιχόρας ἐπανθεῖ/ χρυσός [ὦ]ς ἀκήρατος*). Similarly in another partheneion (fr. 3.7-9 και 61-75 Page) we hear of the chorus being led by passion (*πόσο]ς δέ μ' ἄγει*) to the dance place (*πεδ' ἀγῶν' ἴμεν*), where young maidens shake their uncovered yellow hair (*κόμ[αν ξ]ανθὰν τινάξω*). These were rituals that took place outside the standard everyday experience and allowed maidens to perform unveiled. As Lonsdale explains (1993: 193-194), *the event (wedding) was anticipated by preliminary rehearsals acted out in status transition rites,*

41 Wedding ceremonies in Classical Greece consisted of various ritual acts that *dramatized the tamedness of the virgin's 'wildness' and her transition to civilized wifehood*, CARSON 1990: 152. As evidenced in the writings of Euripides (Hippolytus 1425-1426) one of these rituals demanded from unmarried girls (*κόραι γὰρ ἄζυγες γάμων*) the day before their marriage to dedicate locks of their hair to the gods (*κόμας κεροῦνται σοι*). See also Anthologia Palatina 6.274-275; 276: *ἡ πολύθριξ οὐλας... παρθένος Ἰππη/ χαίτας, εὐώδη σμηχομένα κρόταφον/ ἦδη γὰρ οἱ ἐπήλθε γάμου τέλος*; 277: *Ἄρτεμι... σοὶ πλόκον οἰκείας τὸν δε λέλοιπε κόμης*; 280: *τὴν τ' ἔρατεινήν σφαιραν, τὸν τε κόμας ρύτορα κεκρύφαλον... Ἄρτεμιδι*; 281: *παρὰ βωμῶ/ παρθενικὴν ἐτίνας' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα κόμην*; Pausanias, II.32.1 (Troezen, temple of Hippolytus): *ἐκάστη παρθένος πλόκαμον ἀποκείρεται οἱ πρό γάμου, κειραμένη δὲ ἀνέθηκεν ἐς τὸν ναὸν φέρουσα*; I.43.4 (Megara, tomb of Iphigoe): *καθέστηκε δὲ ταῖς κόραις χοὰς πρὸς τὸ τῆς Ἰφινόης μνήμα προσφέρειν πρό γάμου καὶ ἀπάρχεσθαι τῶν τριχῶν*; Herodotus, IV.34.3-35.1 (Delos, tomb of the Hyperborean maidens): *πρὸ γάμου πλόκαμον ἀποταμόμεναι καὶ περὶ ἄτρακτον εἰλιξασαι... ὅσοι δὲ παῖδες τῶν Δηλίων περὶ χλόην τινὰ εἰλίζαντες τῶν τριχῶν προτιθεῖται καὶ οὗτοι ἐπὶ τὸ σῆμα*. On ancient Greek weddings in general, OAKLEY & SINOS 1993; MARGARITI 2017: 330-331.

during which coiffure, costume and adornment were important elements of dancing and were displayed, in an attempt to draw attention of the spectators. He also notes that along with an *urge to blend harmoniously with the chorus*, there existed some sort of *desire to distinguish oneself*. Loose and flowing hair could also be a mark of fertility and sexuality, characteristics that during special occasions a young maiden near the age of marriage was expected to possess and even advertise. (LLOYD 2003: 263-264).⁴² However, in all the scenes depicted on the pyxis there is no indication that the represented maidens are promiscuous females or maidens attending some sort of religious festival, rather than respected married women occupied with tasks that society was expecting from them to perform (grooming, playing music, ball-playing). These actions could occur indoors, that is in the private women's chambers of the oikos, or even outdoors as denoted by the rocky boulders in the scene. Undoubtedly, outdoor unveiled appearances by respected maidens, if not in a religious context, were always expected to be hidden from the male eyesight, as in the case of Nausicaa and her maids. Nevertheless, the selection of the artist to portray the choregos as an unveiled leader of a ball-playing dancing ensemble with confined hairstyles can be justified by her possible unmarried status. The identification of the leading dancer as a bride places inevitably the ball-play ritual in a nuptial or prenuptial context, connected to various transitional rites that marked the journey of young girls from childhood to maturity and adulthood (on prenuptial transitional rites for women SABETAI 2009: 291; for a probable representation of dancing in a prenuptial context OAKLEY & SINOS 1993: 14, figs. 6-8; on wedding dances OAKLEY 2004: 312-314 with bibliography; LONSDALE 1993: 206-233; DELAVALD-ROUX 1994: 91-113).

In conclusion, the obscurity in which ancient texts describe ball games is also reflected on the Boeotian pyxis of the Moutoussi collection. The question whether the ceramic vessel depicts an actual ball game or some sort of ball-throwing dance, will probably remain unanswered. Nonetheless, ball games and ball-dances required certain skills and grace, in order to be executed, and people were expecting the participants to possess them. That is why ancient texts commemorate the skills and performance of ball-players and ball-dancers, both from the mythical realm (Nausicaa), as well as from real life (Aristonikos of Karystos). These skills were an advantage for a young woman of the period and would certainly not have passed unnoticed by potential suitors. The pyxis probably displays a number of activities that a young maiden near the age of marriage was expected to engage in. And these are all activities connected to

42 In most cases the epithet for fair or rich hair in ancient texts is used in contexts that stress the maternity or sexuality of the female subject, Iliad 1.36 (*ῥύκομος Λητώ*), 7.355, 8.82 (*Ἑλένης πόσις ῥύκομοιο*); Homeric Hymn to Dionysus 26.3 (*ῥύκομοι νύμφαι*). According to Artemidorus (Oneirocritica 1.18) for a woman to dream of having long and beautiful hair is a good thing. See also LONSDALE 1993: 209-210.

various aspects of beauty, youth and ideal femininity, such as grooming (maidens self-mirroring), cleanness (maiden bathing in front of a *louterion*), music playing (maiden playing the *trigonon*) and grace in movement (maidens ball-playing or ball-dancing). These characteristics and skills were expected by a young woman in the society of the Classical period to possess, in order to be desirable and suitable for marriage. And the pyxis as a proper gift for a young maiden becomes a reminder and reflector of these great expectations.

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Orchesis

Dancing around temples: Choroï in Greek sacred buildings

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Abstract

The goal of this contribution is to analyse the evidence for a notable number of images of dance performances attested by the decoration of Greek temple architecture. Taking into account their role within the sacred sphere, these images of dance performances will be explored in order to discover the interactive relationship between human ritual participants and dance ritual context.

Keywords: Dancescape, Performances, Rituals, Hera.

Abstract

O objetivo desta contribuição é analisar as evidências para um número notável de imagens de apresentações de dança atestadas pela decoração da arquitetura de templos gregos. Levando em consideração seu papel dentro da esfera sagrada, essas imagens de performances de dança serão exploradas a fim de descobrir a relação interativa entre os participantes de rituais humanos e o contexto ritual construído.

Palavras-chave: Decorações de templos, Performances, Rituais, Hera.

1. Introduction

Research on dance performances in the sacred sphere has provided extensive documentation of human behaviour and commentary on the practices of ritual, relying on images, votive objects, inscriptions, and literary sources, but rarely including much about Greek temple decoration. Indeed, studies on dance in ritual and religious behaviour only occasionally provide details about figural representation of dance performances in sacred architecture (CONNELLY 2011: 313-346; MARCONI 2013: 425-431). By analysing images of dance performances depicted in the decoration of Greek sacred architecture, the purpose of this contribution is to fill a gap in the scholarship on material evidence for dance and to highlight how this evidence could contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural and social meanings (as well as the functions) of dance and music within activities of ritual. Using an archaeological approach to dance performance (SOAR-AAMODT 2014: 1-4; BELLIA 2020: 29-44), the study of these depictions on Greek temples could allow us not only to explore the significance of representations of dance from a social perspective, but also to highlight the contribution of this evidence in forming a deeper understanding of the cultural and social meanings and functions of dance and ritualised movements within ritual activities, reconstructing the many different ways and contexts in which they were experienced. Moreover, figural representation in sacred architecture

could enhance our knowledge of how dance may have contributed to achieving the goal of ritual performances, and how choral and musical performances could be considered a favourite language of communication with the gods and an offering to the deities completed in the framework of the ritual ceremony. Ritual actions included performances in the form of processions, dances, banquets, dedications, sacrifices, and libations; if marching along the processional route expressed control of the urban and extraurban space, dances and ritualised movements could have played an important role in strengthening the sense of belonging in the participants' communities.

2. Images of Choral Dancing in the Archaic Period: An Overview of Temple Decoration

Whilst for the Hellenistic period we have only one instance of choral dancing depicted on the frieze of the Hall of Choral Dancers at Samothrace, dated to 350-325 B.C., for the Archaic period we have several examples of dance performances represented in temple decorations (MARCONI 2010: 119-131). Indeed, as Clemente Marconi has argued, until the second quarter of the sixth century B.C., the practice of decorating sacred architecture with figures was still limited (MARCONI 2013: 425-431). This then changed drastically in the years around 560-550 B.C., as there was a surge of interest in the depictions of figures in architectural structures; this was as a global phenomenon in the process of building temples in many regions of Greek world, including Mainland Greece, East Greece, and West Greece. Moreover, during the second quarter of the sixth century and especially in southern Italy and in Sicily, the use of figural representation in sacred architecture increased due to several factors, one of which was the rise of votive activity.

Greek sacred architecture across twenty buildings bore decoration which may well be interpreted as representations of ritual actions, often performed by female and male worshippers. One of the most recognised examples is the Parthenon frieze in Athens, where the Panathenaea, the civic festival in honour of the city's patron Athena, was celebrated every year in midsummer (NEILS 2001: 125-201).

It is not surprising that one of the largest groups of images of ritual actions in Greek temple decoration depicts dance performances, considering that dances were regularly included in annual rituals and seasonal festivals in honour of the gods as an essential component of Greek sacred practice. Most major festivals held in sanctuaries of the gods included some kind of dance: choral activities were part of rituals and included a multiplicity of choral performances, which were often organised as a competition between several choruses.

Especially during the Archaic period, this figurative subject was of particular significance. As Marconi has pointed out, the most interesting example was the

Throne of Apollo at Amyklai, unfortunately lost to us. This monument featured, along with the dance of the Phaiakins at the song of Demodokos, the dance of the Magnesians, who helped Bathykles make the throne (FAUSTOFERRI 1996: 100-101, 211, 264). On the parapet sima, dated to 540-530 B.C. and belonging to an unattributed building in Karaköi (Turkey), a group of women and girls dance in lively movements towards the right (Fig. 1) (MARCONI 2013: 432, fig. 17.9). Moreover, in a column base of an unattributed architectural structure found in Kyzikos (Turkey), dated to 540 B.C., three girls holding hands and performing a circular dance are depicted (Fig. 2) (MARCONI 2013: 432, fig. 17.10).

The best preserved example is in Poseidonia, where groups of dancing girls are depicted on the metopes carved on the front of the Temple of Hera II at 'Foce del Sele', dated to the end of the 6th c. B.C.; it is highly likely that these ran all the way around the building (Fig. 3) (MARCONI 2013: 432, fig. 17.3). This subject was experimented with a few years earlier in Sybaris, another Greek city in Magna Graecia and mother colony of Poseidonia (Fig. 4) (MERTENS 2006: 136, fig. 230). This is an interesting example in which a ritual dance accompanied by a musician is depicted on the frieze of an unattributed sacred building, dated to 530 B.C. These friezes featuring choral dances could be considered as an allusion to the spectacle of the festivals in honour of the deities. Given that, in these Greek *poleis* in the West, the most important forms of worship were related to the Argive-Peloponnesian religious tradition, it is possible that these dance performances were an aspect of the wide recognition of the prestige of these sanctuaries since early times, as suggested by the archaistic style of the sculpture and the dances carved in decoration.

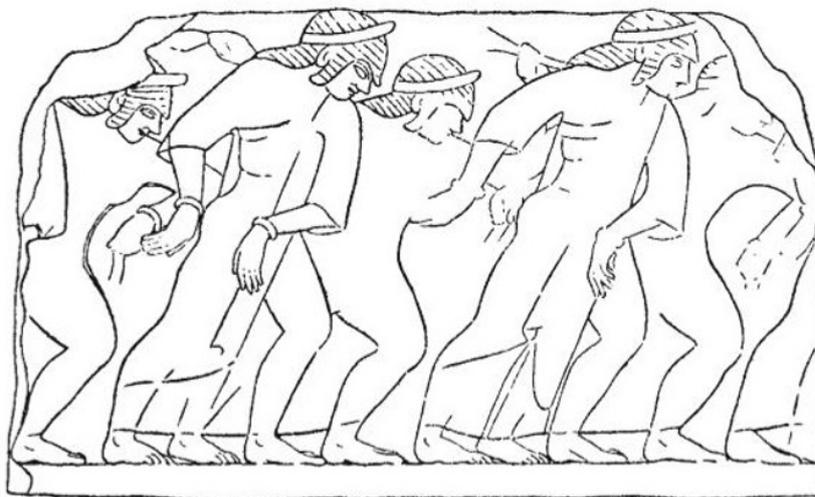


Fig. 1: Karaköy, parapet sima depiction of a dance. 540-530 B.C. From MARCONI 2013: 439, fig. 17.9.



Fig. 2: Kyzikos, column base depicting a dance. 540 B.C. From MARCONI 2013: 440, fig. 17.10.

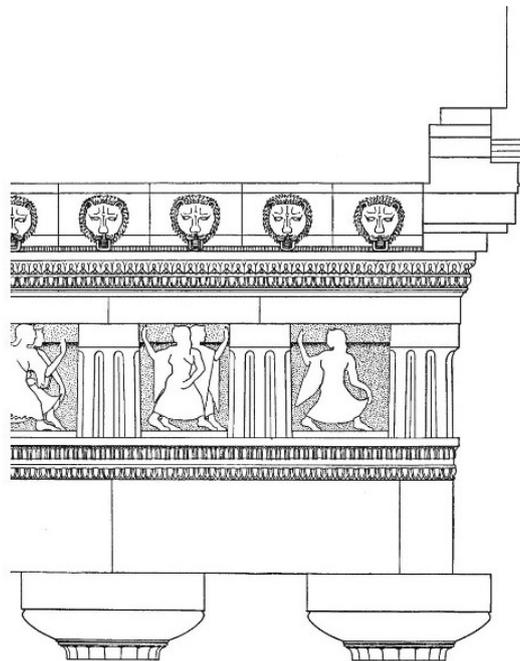


Fig. 3: Poseidonia, Foce del Sele, Temple of Hera II. From MARCONI 2013: 436, fig. 17.3.

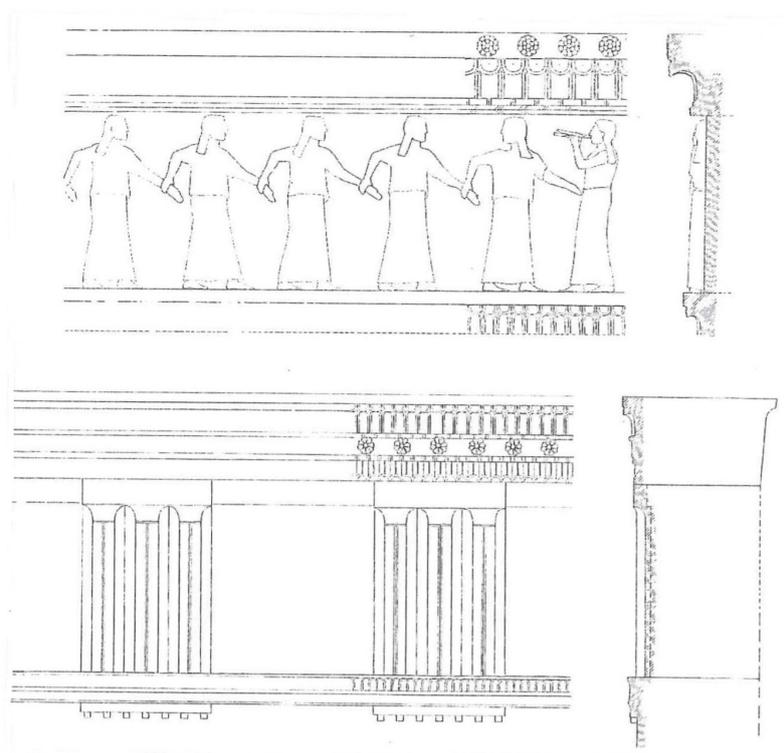


Fig. 4: Sybaris, archaic architectural structure with the representation of a choral dance accompanied by an aulos player. 530 B.C. From MERTENS 2006: 136, fig. 230.

3. Dance on the Metopes: The Case of Poseidonia

The *Heraion* at the ‘Foce del Sele’ is located about 8.5 kilometres north of the ancient city of Poseidonia (GRECO 2012: 171-254), a Greek colony founded at the end of the VII c. B.C. in the southern half of an extended fertile plain near the bay of Salerno in South Italy (Fig. 5). In contrast to the urban *Heraion*, which might have already had a temple from around 580 to 570 B.C., the earliest temple at ‘Foce del Sele’ is the building to which the metopes with choral dancing belonged, and is dated 510-500 B.C. They are five metopes representing female figures proceeding towards the right in a similar pose (Fig. 6) (ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954: 141-146, tavv. XLI-XLIV). Only a few details are different, creating certain variants to the iconographic schemes. Indeed, the female figures are moving in pairs on four metopes (Fig. 7) (ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954; 147-150, tavv. XLV-XLIX), while a single figure is depicted just on a metope. Although this female figure is moving in the same direction, she is turning her head to the side (Fig. 8) (ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954: 151-153, tavv. L-LII). With this gesture she seems to recall the other figures in a common performance, establishing

a relationship between her and the pair depicted in the frieze when the reliefs on this temple are in the original position. Only one of the figures in the pair looks the other way. All the figures dance by moving their left foot and left hand, which seem to mark the rhythm of the dance, whilst also performing special gestures, one of which is the right hand raising one edge of their ionic dress to accompany the movement of the dance (Fig. 9) (ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954: 154-156, tavv. LIII-LIV). On their heads, all the female figures wear a diadem (Fig. 10) (ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954: 141-161, tav. XLIV).



Fig. 5: *Heraia* in Magna Graecia



Fig. 6: Poseidonia, Foce del Sele, Temple of Hera II. Metope with female dancers. 510-500 B.C. From ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954, tav. XLI.



Fig. 7: Poseidonia, Foce del Sele, Temple of Hera II. Metope with female dancers. 510-500 B.C. From ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954, tav. XLV.

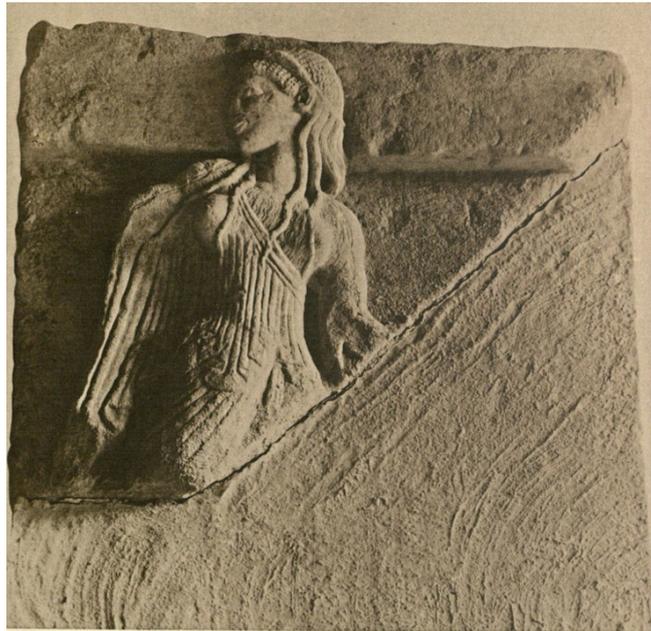


Fig. 8: Poseidonia, Foce del Sele, Temple of Hera II. Metope with a female dancer. 510-500 B.C. From ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954, tav. L.



Fig. 9: Poseidonia, Foce del Sele, Temple of Hera II. Metope with female dancers. 510-500 B.C. From ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954: tav. LV.



Fig. 10: Poseidonia, Foce del Sele, Temple of Hera II. Metope with female dancers wearing a diadem. 510-500 B.C. From ZANCANI MONTUORO-ZANOTTI BIANCO 1951-1954: tav. LIV.

This dancing procession was developed in a sequence in the metopes, alternating with the triglyphs as if the sacred dance was performed inside the colonnade of the temple. Considering the regularity of the dance and the solemn movement of its dancers, the female figures depicted on the metopes of the *Heraion* in Poseidonia seem to perform a sacred dance forming a *choros*, most likely recalling a processional route performed in a ceremony related to the cult of the temple: as a space for choral performance, this sanctuary can be considered a dancescape, a ritual space used as a dance venue and mapped across the sacred place under the protection of Hera (NAEREBOUT 2017: 39-40).

Indeed, similarly to the other great *Heraia* in Magna Graecia, especially those of Metaponto and Crotona, and most likely that of Sybaris, the sanctuary at the 'Foce del Sele' was located outside the polis and was devoted to the Hera cult, one of the most important forms of worship in the Argive-Peloponnesian religious tradition, which played an important role in the Achaean colonies in the West: the extra-urban location of the sanctuary and its connection with a large surrounding territory could be considered very similar to the sanctuaries devoted to the great goddess Hera, especially with regard to the sanctuary at Argos. Archaeological research has allowed us to

locate a large area between the architectural space and the surrounding landscape devoted to the *alsos*, the sacred grove: the sanctuary at Poseidonia is comparable not only with the *Heraion* in Argos, but also with the Hera sanctuaries in Corinth and in Samos, where music and dance performances were performed.

The study of architectural structures of the sanctuary at the 'Foce del Sele' provides the overall framework of its spaces suitable for ceremonies and festivals. As Dieter Mertens has argued (MERTENS 2006: 167-168), it cannot be discounted that the *Heraion* was the place of arrival of solemn processions related to the hecatomb devoted to the goddess, like the one celebrated at Prosymna in Argos:¹ taking into consideration that a wide sacred path crosses the sanctuary, processions could be performed in the *Heraion* at Poseidonia, which, as it is well known, was one of the most important events in celebrations for Hera. In a *scholium* to Pindaros,² the festival celebrated in Argos is described as a 'great procession' during which a sacrifice of oxen was performed. According to Mario Torelli, the maintenance of this magnificent festival in all the Achaean colonies in Magna Graecia could explain the *extra moenia* placement of the *Heraia* in Metaponto, Croton and Poseidonia (TORELLI 2011: 59-68): this preserved the traditional solemn processions performed in the homeland, which, as in Argos, could have included games and dances of maidens who praised the goddess in the songs of their country.³ Moreover, girls carrying flowers performed the *Hierakion*, a dance for Hera in Argos,⁴ while male *auloi* players performed music. Pausanias⁵ states that sixteen women participated in arranged dances in two choruses at the festival of Hera in Olympia. To these testimonies, we can add the later references to the processions in honour of Argive Juno in Falerii⁶ and of Juno Regina in Rome,⁷ where maidens led the idol of the goddess and sang accompanied by the *aulos* players.

These festivals were occasions for young girls to perform ritual dances, exposing themselves to the admiration of young boys during the processions and under the goddess's protection. Dancing performances in Poseidonia could be an integral part of the rituals, marking many stages and transitional phases in Greek life, such as the initiation of boys and girls into puberty or adult maturity. It is worth noting that in the *Heraion* at the 'Foce del Sele', three handmade terracottas, which depict groups of women on round bases, were discovered at the sanctuary (Fig. 11) (ALBERTOCCHI 2014: 247, fig. 4). Each

1 Plinius, *Naturalis historia*, 3,70; Strabon, 6, 252.

2 Scholia Pindaros, *Olympia*, 7, 152.

3 Dionysios Halikarnasseus, *Antiquitates Romanae*, 1, 21, 2.

4 Pollux, 4, 78.

5 Pausanias, 5, 16, 6.

6 Ovidius, *Amores*, 3, 13.

7 Livius, 27, 37, 7-15.

of them originally comprised of five figurines, which were arranged in a circle. Four figures hold hands while the fifth plays the *aulos*. The terracottas were made by a local workshop and stylistically date to the beginning of the 6th c. B.C. As suggested by Giovanna Greco, the figurines represent female dancers in a ritual devoted to Hera (GRECO 2012: 237-238). The clay female groups could be related to the circular dances performed in the sanctuaries devoted to Hera not only in Magna Graecia – where groups of female dancers in a circle dating to the 6th c. B.C. were found in the *Heraion* in Croton (LA ROCCA 2008: 219) – but also in Tiryns, where some clay groups of dancers were found (GRECO 2012: 238). The latter seem as though they were made and modelled at Argos. Moreover, a further clay group was found in Corinth (ALBERTOCCHI 2014: 239): four dancing female figures holding hands are represented around a female *aulos* player. This terracotta group, dating to the 6th c. B.C., is most likely the reference model for the production of the Poseidonia dancing groups.

It is worth noting that, among the *auloi* related to the Hera sacred sphere, the first example dating to the 7th c. B.C. was found in the *Heraion* in Samos (MOUSTAKA 2001: fig. 1, tav. XIII, 1), where an annual festival named *Tonaia* was celebrated (NILSSON 1957: 46-49). During the celebration, the statue of the goddess was carried in procession from the sanctuary to the sea and then returned (BURKERT 2003: 275-276). This festival was focused on the search for the idol, the ritual bath, the procession, and dressing. Despite the fact that written sources related to the origin of the *Tonaia* (CALAME 2001: 163-164) do not explicitly refer to choral performances, according to Andreas Furtwängler (FURTWÄNGLER 1980: 196), competitions and choral dances might have been performed during this Samian festival given that the event appears very similar to the *Heraia* in Argos, where music and gymnastics competitions were held. Archaeological evidence seems to confirm this hypothesis. Indeed, in a Samian *hydria* fragment dating to the 7th c. B.C., two groups of dancing girls holding hands are represented on two registers. Their dance in a circle is accompanied by a female *aulos* player (FURTWÄNGLER 1980: 188-197, tav. 54). We do not know if the Samian festival was also celebrated in Poseidonia, however, we can assume that dances served to bond the worshipping group closely together, as well as heighten collective feelings of euphoria and enthusiasm in the sacred spaces of the sanctuary. The architecture of the *Heraion* at the 'Foce del Sele' surrounded with metopes contributed to a sense of the sacred, but the most powerful key to the creation of a sacred environment was the performance of music and dance. As Marconi has argued, this figural decoration contributed to the effort of ritual performance, which would have included various acts of worship in the sacred space, like processions, hymns, dramas, sacrifices, and especially dance and music performances, to induce a sense of the numinous in the participants (MARCONI 2016: 81-82).



Fig. 11: Poseidonia, Foce del Sele, Temple of Hera II. Terracotta figurines representing female dancers performing a circular dance. From ALBERTOCCHI 2014: p. 247, fig. 4.

4. Dancing Women on the Frieze of Sybaris

The *aulos*, the instrument that embodied the true festival spirit (PAPADOPUOLOU 2004: 347),⁸ accompanied the processional approach to the shrine since it was

⁸ According to Plutarchos (*Epic.* 1102b) «remove the *aulos*, and worship becomes a dismal affair, lacking the true festival spirit».

the instrument of the *prosodion*, a choral lyric sung for the procession which often reinforced the celebratory solidarity of the *pompe*: the singing of hymns or paeans were a customary part of the ceremony (PRETAGOSTINI 2004, 365-369). Given that the *aulos* accompanied the dances in sacred spaces, it is not surprising that a dance of women accompanied by an *aulos* player is depicted in the frieze dating to 530 B.C. which has been found in Sybaris (Fig. 12a-c) (ZANCANI MOUNTUORO 1974, p. 65, fig. 5). Belonging to an unattributed building, the ionic frieze may have been located in a sacred architectural structure in this Greek *polis* in the West.

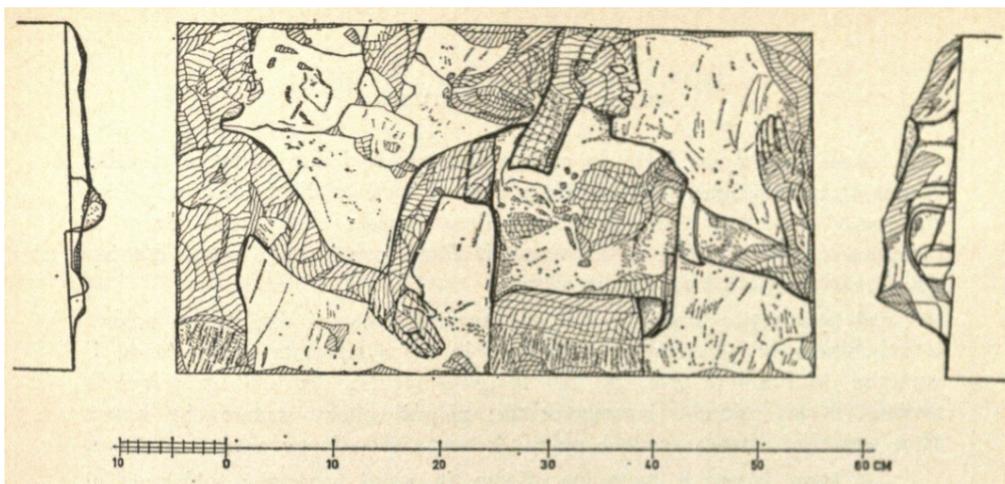


Fig. 12.a

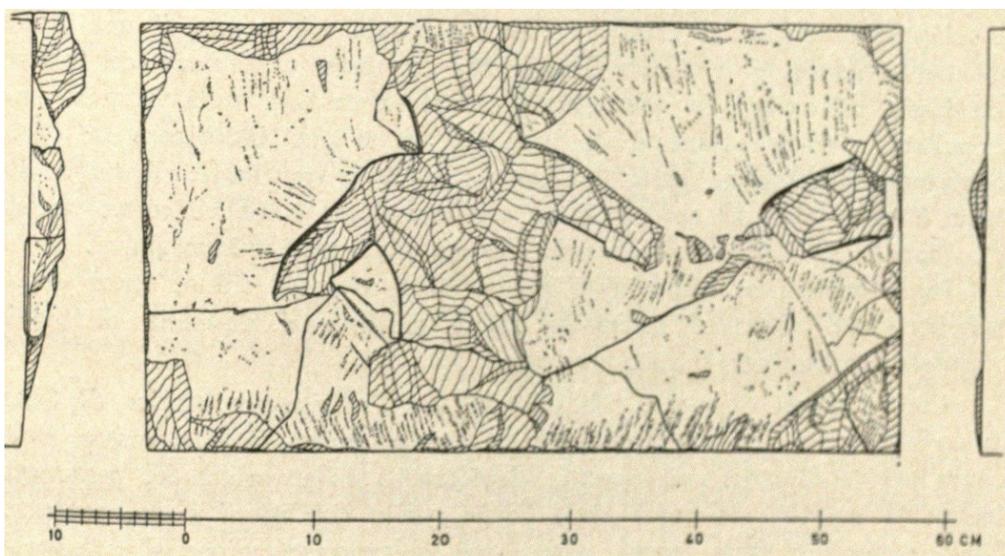


Fig. 12.b

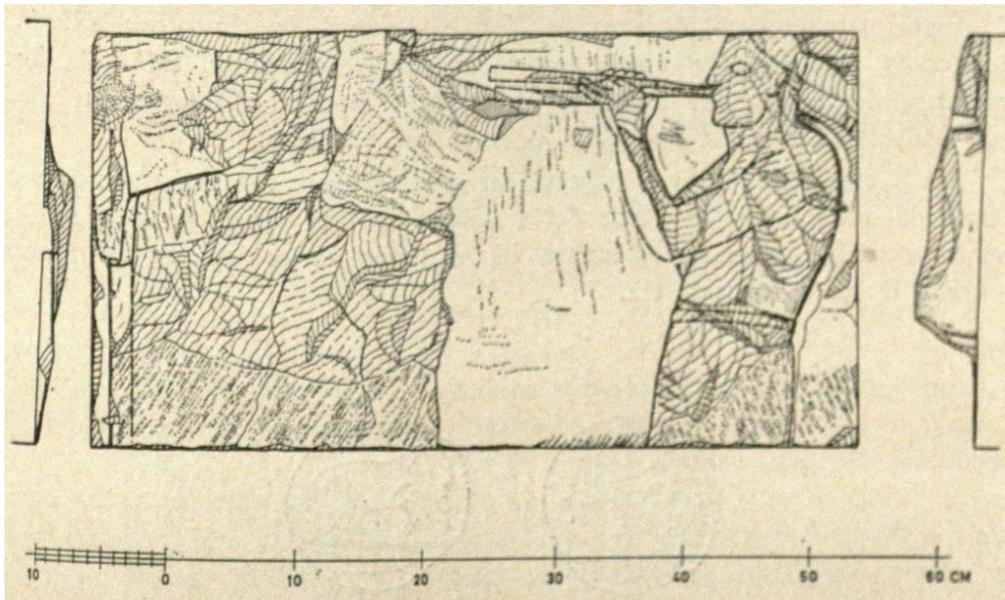


Fig. 12.c | Fig. 12a-c: Sybaris, Frieze representing an aulos player followed by a dancing group. 530 B.C. From ZANCANI MOUNTUORO 1974: p. 65, fig. 5a-c.

This poorly preserved frieze consists of a musician followed by a group of girls who are wearing long dresses extending to the top of the feet: they are dancing in a *choros* holding one another's wrist and shaping their movements in a "V" (Fig. 13a-b) (HEIDEN 1996, p. 187, figg. 3.2a; 3.2c). Indeed, their movement seems to suggest that the girls are moving in an uninterrupted flow of dancers around the temple in the direction of the corner of the frieze, proceeding toward the *aulos* player. Given the placement at the head of the dancing group, the male or female musician should be identified as the *choregos*, or chorus leader, who is often represented in literary and visual sources as holding and playing a musical instrument (CALAME 2001: 43-73). A solemn dance seems to be being performed in the frieze: it could be a circular dance, closed or unclosed, in a sacred space recalling the dancing posture and gesture mentioned by Homeros,⁹ where a dance performed by girls and boys holding one another's wrists is described. As Calame has argued, this dance is sometimes performed in a circle, as the image of the potter's wheel indicates, sometimes in lines that moved towards each other (CALAME 2001: 39). It's most likely that the chorus was separated in two lines, which performed the circular dance in opposite directions. This mixed dance performed by adolescents in a row could be interpreted as a mimetic image of civic texture of young people ready for marriage. This event could be celebrated during solemn rituals in the "presence" of the deities.

9 Homeros, *Ilias*, 18, 593-594.



Fig. 13.a



Fig. 13.b | Fig. 13a-b: Sybaris, Frieze representing a dancing group. 530 B.C. From HEIDEN 1996: p. 187, figg. 3.2a; 3.2c.

In this regard, it is interesting to note that in the fragments of terracotta *pinakes* dating from 650-640 B.C. with the representation of the so-called “Sybaris Goddess” reflecting a cult statue, two lines of dancers are depicted (Fig. 14a-b) (KLEIBRINK-PACE 2018: 128, fig. 9; ZANCANI MONTUORO 1971: p. 68, fig. 1). As Fabienne Colas has highlighted, this cult statue represents a goddess standing dressed in a ‘shingled’ blouse and a skirt decorated with figural bands in three

levels, standing frontally (COLAS 2002: 227-232). The top of the skirt is decorated with Ajax carrying the dead body of Achilles; in the middle, five girls are dancing holding one another's wrists in the same gesture of the four boys and two sphinxes at the bottom. Similar figures representing this goddess have also been found in the sanctuary of Francavilla Marittima, near Sybaris. On these images, the cult statue of Athena *Eilenia* or of Argive Hera has been identified, who – as it has been highlighted – was worshipped in the Achaean colonies in Magna Graecia (PAOLETTI 2014: 17-20). As Anne Jaquemin has argued (JAQUEMIN 2007: 393-394), the figure's sumptuous garment seems to recall the expensive cloak which was made for Alcimenes, the Sybarite mentioned by the Pseudo-Aristoteles in *On Marvellous Things Heard*.¹⁰ As an expression of Sybaritic luxury, his garment was so expensive that it was exhibited at Lacinium at the festival of Hera, to which all Italiots came, and was admired more than anything else displayed there. The so-called "Sybaris Goddess" could be the cult image of the patron city goddess, around which dance and music were performed. These performances could be related to music events performed in honour of Hera in Sybaris during a *panegyris*, when a chorus of young men and maidens may have performed ritual dances and songs. Aelianus¹¹ mentions this festival during which musical competitions were performed and probably involved priestesses who were engaged in sacrifices. These Sybaritic *gynaiques* were chosen each year thanks to a law which required that priestesses were selected a year in advance in order to give them the time to properly prepare their cloaks and garments. It is not to be discounted that, as in the Achaean city of Pellene where an important *agon* in a festival including a cloak as a prize was performed (DE SENSI SESTITO 2013: 489-490), a similar contest took place in Sybaris also. Taking into consideration that, according to the written sources,¹² this Achaean Greek city in the West was known all over the ancient world not only for the richness of its costumes and lifestyle, but also as a rich centre of production of precious wool cloaks in Milesian fashion, the festival could have been a sort of celebration that also included the carrying of the goddess's garment, taking place in the sacred places devoted to Hera. Moreover, as Timaeus mentioned,¹³ in the Sybaritic festival a solemn parade of five thousand knights wearing crocus cloaks was performed during public ceremonies. On these occasions, sacrifices and banquets were celebrated along with agones where winners were awarded not only for their *eunoia*, but also for their engagement in the financing of performances and communal banquets. Given the well-known competitive spirit of Sybaris in the ancient world,¹⁴ it cannot be excluded that dance and music performances

10 Pseudo-Aristoteles, *Mirabilia*, 96, 838a.

11 Aelianus, *Varia Historia*, 3, 43.

12 Philarch, *FGrHist* 81 F 45 = Athenaios, 12 421c; Plutarchos, *Moralia*, 147e.

13 Timaios, *FGrHist* 566 F 50 = Athenaios, 12 519b-520c.

14 Herakleides Pontikos, Fr. 57 Werhli = Athenaios, 12 526a.

were an essential aspect of these celebrations as an expression of the aristocratic society of Greek communities, as well as a manifestation of the willingness to excel in this *polis*.



Fig. 14a

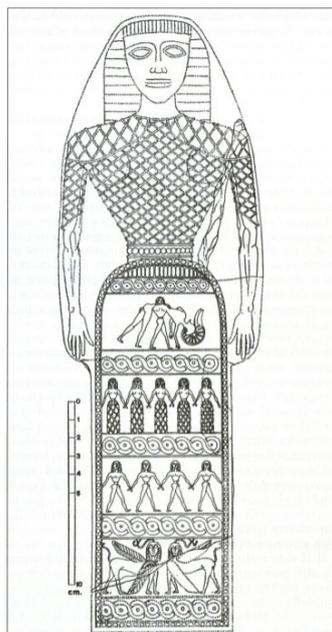


Fig. 14.b | Fig. 14a-b: Terracotta figurines representing with two lines of dancers depicted on the cult statue of the so-called “Sybaris Goddess” and its reconstruction. 650-640 B.C. From KLEIBRINK AND PACE 2018: 128, fig. 9; ZANCANI MONTUORO 1971: p. 68, fig. 1 (reconstruction).

5. Conclusion

Dance performances depicted or carved in Greek temple decoration are choral dances executed by a chorus of female dancers or, less often, by a mixed chorus. They were characterised by moving in unison, as if the rhythm and music of the performance allowed a temporal synchronisation among the dancers. In applying an archaeological approach to dance, it should be taken into account that no amount of inference will ever recreate the dance exactly as it was practiced. As Kathryn Soar has highlighted, the depictions which remain are ultimately only a “picture” of the actual dance, a single moment in a larger event that is forever fixed in time (SOAR 2010: 150). However, the uniformity of such ritualised movements required a degree of co-ordination: it meant that the community had to gather at a specific time and specific place, and that young members of the community in particular would have to perform the choral dances at the same time and in the same direction in a special place devoted to a particular goddess or, less often, to a god. Moreover, it is necessary to take into account that representations of dance in Greek temple decorations may involve elements of idealised notions of the dance performances, which may hinder our access to the reality of actual dancing events and, as Frederick Naerebout has argued, we should not expect too much in terms of being able to name a dance at a specific sanctuary, or in establishing which dance genre was preferred in particular areas and periods (NAEREBOUT 2019: 36-40).

Taking into account that dance and music were among the most common and essential aspects which constructed religious practices, the emphasis on dance in Greek temple decoration not only reminds us that sanctuaries were important places for dance and music performances as well as for contests and poetic activities on the occasion of festivals and celebrations, but also that cult places had a strong public character. With regard to the selection of the scenes of dance performances, one must remember that these representations are not the direct products of dance activity, but are depictions intended to communicate messages to be clearly understandable to the contemporary viewer and the community to which they belonged. As in the case of the dancers depicted on the terracotta bas-relief from a sanctuary in Rhegion (6th-5th c. B.C.), most likely devoted to Demeter and Kore-Persephone, where young female figures with long braids (probably a mark of their unmarried status) are dancing in a lively fashion and keeping one hand on the shoulder of the other (fig. 15) (CARANDO 2000: p. 213, fig. 19), it is likely that the architect and sculptors selected dancing scenes in order to shape the religious experiences of community through the memory of performances, given that dance is a physical act and an action that is encoded into bodily memory. Taking into consideration that images of dance in architectural structures delineated the space for ritual movements not only in front of temples, but also around cult statues and altars, their impact was simultaneously visual, kinetic, and religious. By doing so at

sanctuaries, the creation and maintenance of collective identity could have been emphasised as a way of integrating the individual into the community and as a form of connection with the place, enhancing the symbolic aspect of the heritage and memory of the community.



Fig. 15: Rhegion. Terracotta bas-relief representing dancers. 6th-5th c. B.C. From CARANDO 2000, p. 213, fig. 19.

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Orchesis

Movement in Etruscan Iconography: What is Dance?

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Abstract

The study of movement and dance in Ancient iconography means their visual definition. However, this usually presents difficulties, as the boundaries for the definition of dance in visual representations are not precisely set. Moreover, the terms used in Antiquity to define what we call today “dance” are not of great help. In consequence, this article proposes to establish criteria in order to define the visual representation of dance, based on Etruscan iconography.

Keywords: Movement, Dance, Etruria, Iconography.

Resumo

O estudo do movimento e da dança na iconografia antiga significa sua definição visual. No entanto, isso geralmente apresenta dificuldades, uma vez que os limites para a definição da dança nas representações visuais não são definidos com precisão. Além disso, os termos usados na Antiguidade para definir o que hoje chamamos de “dança” não ajudam muito. Em consequência, este artigo se propõe a estabelecer critérios para definir a representação visual da dança, a partir da iconografia etrusca.

Palavras-chave: Movimento, Dança, Etrúria, Iconografia.

The study of movement and dance in iconography means their visual definition. However, it collides with the terms used in Antiquity to define them. Indeed, the terms used by Greek authors,¹ which today are translated as “dance”, had a specific meaning.² The first commonly used term, *choreuô* (“to form a choir”),³ referred to the movements of choral dances, both mixed, or exclusively male or female. *Choreuô* evokes a ritual that is punctuated by several characters who stand together or simply follow each other, and that move from one point to another in a circle.⁴ *Orcheomai / orchoumai*, which is also translated as “to dance”, would more accurately mean “to move in rhythm”. It is also used in sports contexts. It thus emphasizes the rhythm, the know-how and the grace of the athletes. Used in a warlike context, it highlights the beauty of the fight and its good execution.⁵ While contemporary translations interpret this Greek term in different ways depending on its context of use, the use of *orcheomai / orchoumai* by ancient authors provides us with information on the amalgam between dance, sports and warlike practices. This amalgam is

1 See in particular Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, I, 37.

2 Cf. Garelli 2007: 93 and following.

3 Chantraine 1970: 830.

4 On choral dances, cf. Calame 1977 and Delavaud-Roux 1994.

5 Athenaeus, I, 25 = 14d (with the word *orchesis*, dance, used in the plural)

consequently found in iconography, at least between the 7th century BCE and the first half of the 5th century BCE, and is found also in Etruscan iconography. The antefixes discovered at Pyrgi (fig. 01), dated to the extreme end of the 6th century BCE, illustrate how the boundaries between fighting, sporting and dancing postures are blurred. Françoise-Hélène Massa-Pairault has interpreted the scene as an episode of the Goddess Uni's myth. The haloed figures would be: Memnon and his companions represented in full metamorphosis in front of his tomb; Aurora, in reference to the cycle of time; and a *pótnia híppon*.⁶ According to the author, the movement of the figures must be dance. However, the space between the legs and the ample layout of the arms on either side of the figures would rather invite to see a representation of race, and thus to interpret the scene as a solar course.

1. A look back at the first representations of dance movement in pre-Roman Italy: from cognitive experience to visual transcription.

When the absence of direct writings on Etruscan dance invites to revalue visual productions, the study of aliteral societies contributes to better understand the process of movement imaging.⁷ The analysis of the first visual representations from pre-Roman Italy, mainly in Valcamonica where there are nearly 300,000 figures dated from the Chalcolithic,⁸ has highlighted the codes and visual mechanisms used, and in consequence how prehistoric iconography was formalized. Three styles have been determined: the linear geometric style with elementary structures, the complex geometric style with juxtaposed elements, and the naturalistic style.⁹ The first style is characterized by simple figures whose coarse assemblage of incised lines permits to identify the subject of this basic representation. The design is elementary, the body parts are schematic and inorganic. The movement is suggested by the large space between the legs and the asymmetrical position of the arms that are placed on either side of the figures. The second style, called complex geometric with juxtaposed elements, still presents a schematic style. However, the human and animal figures are represented from a bi-angular perspective, namely the bust and the arms are represented frontally while the head and the legs are represented in profile. The representation of movement is reduced to the essential in order to make

6 Massa-Pairault 1992: 70.

7 Cf. Francfort *et al.* 2010.

8 The first traces of iconography seem to be dated around 4500 a.C. They developed considerably during the Chalcolithic, and lasted until the second century a.C. On those first traces, cf. De Marinis & Fossati 2012 and the bibliography indicated.

9 De Marinis & Fossati 2012: 15-21.

it understandable, and possibly narrative. In consequence, two distinctive elements for the representation of movement are to be noted: (1) the legs apart, and (2) the arms raised. These basic patterns do not change through time, despite the stylistic evolution. In these representations reduced to the essential, a fine vision of the body in movement is expressed. According to Günter Dux and Georg Kossack,¹⁰ which Christoph Huth quotes, the movements could be considered as emanations of a vital force. In this regard, the visual choices made for the representation of movements responded to the need to transcribe this force. The movement is perceived and reduced to its fundamental components, and expressed following the rules of “aspective”.¹¹

The study of the first visual representations of movements in pre-Roman Italy and the visual choices made by the artists of that time contribute to give a first definition of the visual representations of dance. And it will constitute an initial point of reference in this article. Three fundamental criteria are to be noted, namely: (1) the arms raised, (2) the legs apart, possibly raised and flexed, and (3) the choreographic action, which is expressed by the number and the redundancy of figures engaged in a same action (i.e. same figures repeated in a similar posture). The first representations present human figures arranged anarchically and in a carpet-like disposition, on a flat surface, this is on the walls of a tomb or on rocky boulders. Gradually, and over time, the figures tend to be organized in straight and horizontal lines, and to be bounded by the hands. In other cases, the figures are arranged in a circular way, around an object or not, which invites to identify the actions depicted as choreographed performances, collective and circular manifestations, namely dances.

2. Determination of the Etruscan iconography of dance:¹² from performative actions to representations' visuality.

From the 8th century BCE, the Etruscan iconography of dance continues to exploit the visual characteristics already in use in prehistoric iconography. The *olla* of Bisenzio, that is kept in Florence (inv. 85629), illustrates this point.¹³ Discovered in the Buccacce necropolis, the object presents a row of anthropomorphic figures, of which the lower part of the body is represented in silhouette. The arms are oblique, directed downwards and outwards. They all appear linked to each other, by holding hands. As previously argued, there are characteristic visual elements that invite to define the scene as a dance

10 Dux 1990, Kossack 1999 and Francfort *et al.* 2010: 205.

11 Brunner-Traut 1996.

12 For a historiography of Etruscan dance, cf. Gouy 2012 and Gouy 2017.

13 On the object, cf. Martelli 2000: 75 and the bibliography indicated.

performance: the repetition of human-shaped figures in a same attitude, the connection between the characters (in the present case, they hold each other's hands) and the presentation of the arms.

The study of a large chronological period, namely from the 8th century BCE to the end of the 5th century BCE, allows to shed light on the different strategies implemented in Etruscan visual representations of dance performances. Three distinctive visual elements can be differentiated: the construction of the body, the presence of musicians and the appearance of the actors.

2.a. Body building

There are four characteristics: (1) the presentation of the arms, (2) the turning movement of the body, (3) the repetition of the figures, and / or (4) their rotation. The body movements suggested in pictures refer to bodily actions that are different from ordinary motor actions, such as walking and running. The movement of the arms is characterized by four positions: (1) raised, (2) down, (3) in a median and symmetrical position, (4) in an asymmetrical position. The legs are usually depicted in a movement of (1) walking, (2) brisk walking, or (3) leaping.¹⁴

2.a.1. Characteristics of the arms.

2.a.1.a. The raised position of the arms: worshipers or dancers?

The raised position of the arms is the most common visual characteristic to express dance movements. The upper limbs are arranged symmetrically on either side of the figures. The arms are horizontal, the forearms oblique and upwards, and the hands are open. The palms are facing upwards as a sign of prayer. However, the dancers are to be distinguished from worshipers whose arms are also raised. On the right wall of the Tomb of the Jugglers in Tarquinia, the presence of a musician constitutes the visual element that contributes to identify the representation as a scene of dance. In this particular tomb, a static dance scene is composed of two female figures placed around a syrinx player. The raised position of the arms are also depicted on jumping dancers, as illustrated on the walls of the first chamber of the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing in Tarquinia. In this case, it indicates an extreme impulse in the body. In representations of *ekphora*, around the lying dead body, this gesture of raising

14 See a presentation of the problem and a study of the Tomb of the Triclinium in Tarquinia, in Gouy 2012: 100-101.

the arms is part of the characteristic movement of funerary lament. It consists of hitting one's chest, and it is to be understood with the gesture that consists of putting both hands on the chest. In representations of lament, those two specific gestures correspond to two crucial moments: the momentum, represented by the raised fists, and the moment of impact, represented by the fists placed on the chest.¹⁵

2.a.1.b. The asymmetrical position of the arms: dance or race?

The asymmetrical position of the arms is also one of the most common positions to express movement in iconography. However, while the raised arms would express spontaneous physical and emotional impulses in the body, during dance and lament for example, the asymmetrical position of the arms more generally refers to a rhythmic and controlled movement. This would explain why it is frequently used in racing scenes. In those sports representations, the forearms are usually pushed strongly outward and the hands are placed in line with them. When the hand placed backwards appears sometimes placed obliquely, it is shifted upwards in comparison to the forearm. The legs are wide apart, clearly represented in a lively and very rapid action. Runners often form a group and are therefore rarely isolated in the picture. The typology of these images of sportsmen gives a helpful repertoire and helps to define the visual representation of running postures. It also contributes to understand the action of figures in pictures, which are visually isolated and separated from other figures, as on the antefixes of Pyrgi (fig. 01).

The asymmetrical body posture is commonly used in dance performances, as illustrated on a funerary urn kept in Florence (fig. 02).¹⁶ In the urn's representation of dance, five female figures present the same body posture: the arms are asymmetrical. The arm placed backward is raised. The hand is open, facing inward. The palm is facing up. The arm placed frontward is flexed and folded over the bust. The hand is open, facing upwards and the palm is facing down. The legs, which are in profile, are spaced and present a lively, leaping movement. Unlike the racing scenes in which the figures are represented in a same movement and in a same direction, the dancers studied here, on this funerary urn, are distinguished by the varied directions they seem to take in the picture, creating thus opposition, isolations or encounters. The turn of the figures, as well as their visual opposition to each other, make clear that it is a choreographic sequence, and thus a representation of dance.

15 Cf. Gouy 2012: 96-99.

16 Jannot 1984: 19-21, fig. 93-94.



Fig. 01: Antefixes from Pyrgi. Dated from ca. 510 BCE. Kept in Santa Severa, Antiquarium of Pyrgi. After Massa-Pairault 1996: 117.



Fig. 02: Cinerary urn. Detail of one of the faces. *Pietra fetifa*. From Chiusi. 36 cm high. End of 6th cent. BCE. Kept in Florence, Museo archeologico (inv. 5501). After Jannot 1984, fig. 94.

2.a.1.c. Dance or race? Some border cases.

There are scenes in which the body representations meet the criteria defined for the race scenes, but which still raise uncertainties. An amphora kept in Chianciano Terme and discovered in the necropolis of Tolle gives such an example (fig. 03). On the object, several figures follow each other and move

towards the left in identical postures. The arms are flexed and positioned asymmetrically. The hand placed frontward is oblique and shifted compared to the forearm. The hand placed backward is positioned horizontally. The treatment of the hands differs from what has been observed previously. However, the symmetry of the figures, the speed expressed through the important space between the legs, as well as the oblique or horizontal position of the hair indicate the high body performance that might have come from running.

The exaggerated and redundant treatment of the hands and that of the figures lead to qualify this interpretation. Indeed, the figures are dressed in a long tunic, and a mantle that covers the shoulders and that falls in the back forming an arc. This mantle is maintained on the shoulders by two pieces pulled over the chest. This outer piece is very common among female figures. However, the racing scenes are usually made up of male figures. In consequence, is this a female racing scene? Or, as the end of the 6th century BCE (the object's supposed production date) showed strong similarities between sports and dancing postures, is this a particularly lively dance scene? Both hypotheses are plausible.

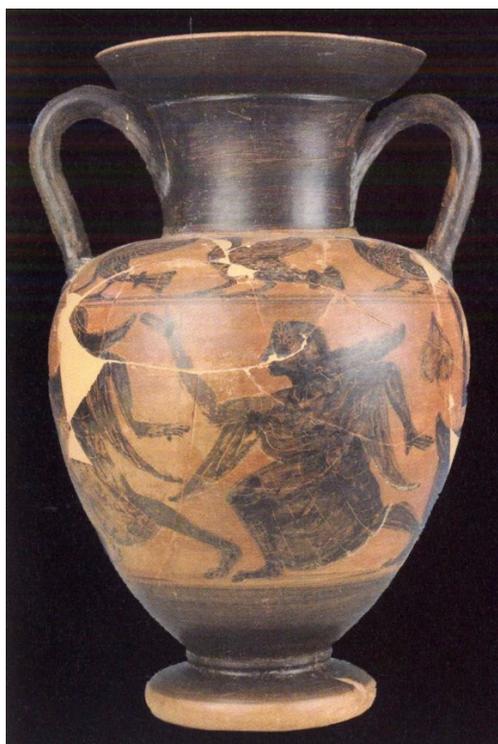


Fig. 03: Black-figure amphora. From the necropolis of Tolle in Chianciano Terme. Produced in Vulci. From the Micali Painter. Dated from the end of 6th cent. BCE. Kept in Chianciano Terme, Museo Civico Archeologico (without number). After Paolucci 2007:19-20, ill. 11.

2.a.2. Turning postures

In some scenes of running competition, the body of some runners turns. When it does, the head is positioned in an opposite direction to that of the legs. The aim of this visual reversal is to highlight the competitive nature of the scene. Indeed, the fact that athletes turn their head backward could be interpreted as a way to control the distance at which their opponents are. This specific aspect invites to resume the identification of some visual representations. On a series of oenochoe in *bucchero* distributed between the museums of Milan, Tarquinia, Chicago and Edinburgh (fig. 04), the depicted scenes on the main body of the objects are composed of naked male figures engaged in the same posture. And, they follow each other. The legs, flexed and in profile, are engaged in a walking action. The feet are on the tip. The arms are raised and arranged asymmetrically on either side of the figures. The repetition of those figures could lead to identify a running scene. However, the turn showed on all the bodies invites to consider it as a dance scene. In running scenes, not all athletes turn their head backward. Moreover, the muscular tension leads to represent the hands strictly in alignment with the forearms while in dance scenes the hands regularly shift. If a hand possibly presents a shift in sports scenes, it will be the one placed frontward, and it will put the accent on the runner's direction.



Fig. 04: Oenochoe in *bucchero pesante*. Produced in the area of Chiusi. Dated from 6th cent. BCE. Kept in Milan, Museo archeologico (inv. A 0.9.296). Personal photograph.

As Jean-René Jannot and Paul Fontaine have pointed out,¹⁷ the turn is a frequent iconographic characteristic in Etruscan dance iconography. While the torso is frontal, the head and legs are side view and facing different directions. This characteristic appears in various contexts and its function is diverse. On the right side of the entrance wall in the Monkey Tomb in Chiusi, it draws the attention from a point to another in the picture. Three figures present a turning posture: they turn their heads towards a seat on the floor, on which a piece of clothing is placed, at far left on the picture. This attention, and therefore the importance given to the turns and games of look between the figures, have led modern authors to see, in this seat and the garment, an evocation of the deceased or of the presence, real or symbolic, of magistrates.¹⁸

The second visual benefit of the turning postures in pictures is the creation of a link between the different human figures. On the cinerary urn kept in Florence (fig. 02), the direction of the heads, the looks and the symmetry of the legs create visual arrangements and give an overall unity to the scene. The turning postures also give an impression of cadence, rhythm and particularly lively turning movement. In the iconography of dance, this point is particularly present. The figures that look at each other, form couples among the dancers. Turning positions make sense in the pictures when given to several human figures and when they are accompanied by other bodily characteristics such as (1) curvature, (2) arms position and / or (3) gestures. On their own, turning positions don't necessarily imply dancing. But they will always increase the expression of movement in pictures.

2.a.3. Body curvature

On the right wall of the Cardarelli tomb in Tarquinia (fig. 05), the male figure placed at far left ostensibly turns back towards three male figures depicted on the same wall. His eyes are attracted to the male who is lifting a cup. The arms are asymmetrical. The curvature of the body is very important. It is amplified by the flexed position of the legs and the arms, that are also bent backwards.¹⁹

17 Jannot 1984, 258 and following, and Fontaine 2016:14.

18 Cf. Jannot 1998.

19 Marie-Hélène Delavaud-Roux notes the curvature of the body in Corinthian representations, and Germaine Prudhommeau describes it as "saddled". It is often joined with a movement backwards of the buttocks in order to increase the curvature of the body. Cf. Delavaud-Roux 1995: 56 and Prudhommeau 1965: 45 et pl. 15.



2.a.4. Position of the legs

The same figure from the Cardarelli tomb (fig. 05) is also remarkable for the appearance of its legs, which are strongly flexed. In iconography, the flexion of the legs can be more or less important, and it contributes greatly to suggest the type of movement of the dancer. The simple flexion of the legs, with the feet grounded on the floor, is used to express motion and an active state in figures. Walking is indeed expressed through legs slightly interspaced and tense. If there is also a flexion in the legs, it introduces a more accentuated movement through the body. When the legs are bent at a right angle, or when one of the two is lifted either frontward or backward, the movement expressed is brisker. More specifically, the position implies a leap. To this leap is often added indications of brisk movements through the arms, that are thus represented raised, or asymmetrical.

On the B 59 hydria kept in London (fig. 06), four armed male figures form two opposing groups. Raffaella Bonaudo has interpreted the scene as dance due to the impulse given to the legs through the four different figures.²⁰ The jumping legs, as well as the body postures that present no variation from a figure to another (with the exception of the arms placed backwards that vary slightly – raised or lowered), rather invite to interpret the scene as a fight. Indeed, the legs underline the high performance of the opposition between the two groups of fighters. The rotation created with the arms provokes some rhythm that can not be compared to that of dance, but rather to that of fight. The aim is rather to emphasize and express, through the visual rhythm, the

20 Bonaudo 2004: cat. 1.

grace and beauty of the fight. The legs of those armed figures echo the legs of the horses depicted on the backside of the object. Indeed, two horses are represented rearing up. The visual alignment between the warlike leap of the armed figures and the prancing horses, from a side to another, underlines the impulse, almost animal, of the four fighters. This further reinforces the hypothesis of a warlike scene.



Fig. 06: Black-figure hydria. Discovered and produced in Cerveteri. Dimensions: 42,8 cm high, max. 38,5 cm large. Dated from 540-530 BCE. Kept in London, British Museum (inv. B 59). After Bonaudo 2004, cat. 1.

While dance iconography is regularly characterized by dancers that show flexed legs, a funerary base kept in Perugia (inv. 529),²¹ shows human figures that have, on the contrary, their legs apart but straight. They seem to be engaged in walking. However, the turning position of several figures, as well as the gestures, invite to identify the representation as a dance scene.

2.a.5. Characteristic gestures

On this relief from Perugia, the position of the hands is both very heterogeneous and expressive. Thus, the figures seem to gesticulate.²² Their bodies show

21 Jannot 1984: 133-134, fig. 460-463.

22 Garelli 2007: 38-39. For a first study of Etruscan gestures in pictures: Jannot 2006.

consistency from a figure to another, and rigidity. This is due to their legs that are straight and little spaced, their feet that are grounded and flat on the floor, and their arms that are placed close to the body. However, the asymmetry of the arms, the turning postures in some figures, and above all the convoluted position of the hands as well as their apparent obsolete functionality, invite to interpret the representation as a dance scene. In consequence, gestures are here decisive elements to define the Etruscan representation of dance, also as pointed out by Paul Fontaine.²³

This specific criterion has invited to revisit the interpretation of many scenes involving body movement, and especially to specify the difference between scenes of dance and scenes of procession. In this regard, a more precise definition for processions in Etruscan iconography can be proposed, and it is based on four criteria that are the following: (1) representation of several human figures following each other and creating thus a group or a row, (2) those figures move towards the same direction, (3) they are engaged in similar gestures and postures, and (4) they carry various objects (sticks, objects related to the consumption of wine, plants).

2.b. The presence of musicians

The representation of musicians in pictures gives a rhythmic framework to the scenes depicted, and it is particularly meaningful in dance scenes.²⁴ When the musicians are represented in dance scenes, five types of instruments can appear: the *aulos*, the lyre, the cithara, the syrinx and the rattles.²⁵ The musicians are engaged in the dance scenes in three different ways: (1) at the heart of the dance, so they play their instrument among the dancers,²⁶ (2) they stop playing and dance with the dancers,²⁷ (3) two musicians, one playing the *aulos* and the other playing the lyre or the cithara, face each other and are placed on either side of a monumental element, such as a door,²⁸ or a container, such as a crater.²⁹

23 Fontaine 2016: 16: «La gestuelle expressive des mains ou chironomie constitue un élément essentiel de la danse antique et son importance dans la danse étrusque, admirablement illustrée à travers la peinture funéraire de Tarquinia et les reliefs de Chiusi, n'est plus à démontrer.»

24 As Jean-René Jannot recalls it: Jannot 1988.

25 On Etruscan musicians: Jannot 1974, Jannot 1979 and Jannot 1988.

26 As illustrated on the side walls of the Triclinium tomb in Tarquinia. Cf. Steingraber 1984: 355-356, fig. 166-171.

27 Cf. the back wall of the Bacchants' tomb on which a cithara player is engaged in a dance posture and is leaving his instrument to dance: Steingraber 1984: 290, pl. 23-26.

28 Cf. the back wall of the Cardarelli tomb in Tarquinia: Steingraber 1984: 302-303, pl. 54-58.

29 Cf. the back wall of the lioness tomb: Steingraber 1984: 322, pl. 97-104.

However, musicians do not always appear in representations of dance, as illustrated on one of the faces of the urn n° inv. 1237 kept in Berlin.³⁰ In this case, the convoluted gestures performed by the human figures constitute a crucial criterion for the identification of the dance scene. These gestures are coupled with a series of specific postures. Indeed, two figures are engaged in movements that respond to each other: while the bodies oppose each other symmetrically, the hands tend to converge and tune.

2.c. Clothing or nudity. The appearance of the dancers.

The appearance of human figures in Etruscan iconography contributes greatly to identify the action that is depicted, and in particular whether it is a scene of dance, war or fictitious duels.

For example, runners and other gymnasts are usually naked. Indeed, the absence of clothing and the reduced wearing of clothes, such as loincloths, refer to an athletic context. However, a series of dance scenes presents armed human figures, either alone or engaged in a physical confrontation, that are completely naked. Jean-Claude Poursat has pointed out that nudity can contribute to identify scenes of pyrrhic.³¹ In this particular case, it then refers to a context of competition and to the palestra. In this regard, wearing a breastplate would be, on the contrary, linked to a clear context of war.

This point contributes to clarify the definition of armed dance and performances in Etruscan iconography. More precisely, the decisive criteria would be the following: (1) the nudity of the dancers, (2) the performative nature of the act – through the construction of the body, the use of defensive postures and / or offensive – and (3) the possible presence of musicians.

Regarding women's clothing, it does not constitute a particular determining element insofar as it is found in very diverse contexts.³²

3. Conclusion on the definition of the Etruscan iconography of dance.

3.a. Criteria.

30 Cf. Jannot 1984: 35-36, fig. 143-145.

31 Poursat 1968.

32 However, we note a regular and specific alternation and rotation of figures in the image, according to their clothing. A crucial study is currently undertaken: *TEXDANCE project. Textiles in Etruscan Dance* (European Programme MSCA IF Horizon 2020. Grant agreement ID: 839799).

Three criteria can contribute to define the Etruscan iconography of dance. These are the following: (1) the construction of the body, (2) the presence of musicians, and (3) the appearance of the human figures.

The first criterion is particularly determined by the distinctive position of the arms. While the raised position of the arms is limited to physical and emotional impulses of the body, such as dancing or lament, the asymmetrical position of the arms refers to a rhythmic movement, and that can also be running. In consequence, dance representations and running representations have been delimited and distinguished. The body postures of running have been defined. More specifically in dance iconography, the human figures are characterized by turning postures, rotation, oppositions, isolation or encounters. The turning postures, in particular, constitute distinctive criteria. Their function is to create visual connections between the different figures, and a visual link from one to another dancer. An isolated figure in iconography, represented in a turning posture, does not necessarily involve dancing. The posture must be complemented with other visual characteristics and body criteria, such as the raised or asymmetrical position of the arms, the flexed and spaced position of the legs, the convoluted hand gestures, the curvature of the body. Finally, the repetition of the actors in the pictures constitutes an important element.

The presence of musicians in iconography gives a rhythmic framework to the scenes, and it takes on its full meaning in the representations of dance. However, the musicians are not constantly represented in dance scenes. Five types of instruments appear to be used by the musicians, and there are three modes of appearance in the pictures.

Finally, in armed scenes, the absence of clothing and the reduced wearing of clothes by male figures refer to a performative context. In this regard, the definition of armed dance scenes is possible with the combination of specific criteria, which are nudity, the performative aspect of the action and the presence of musicians.

3.b. Combination of criteria and interpretation grid.

Therefore, as the definition of Etruscan iconography of dance is determined by a conjunction of visual criteria, I propose an interpretation grid (see table). It appears that, in order to define a representation of dance as such, it is necessary to find in pictures at least two of the criteria I have defined, among which at least one must be considered a basic or recurrent criterion (such as the asymmetrical or raised position of the arms, for example).

The combinations are the following:

- The combination A is characterized by the raised or asymmetric arms with the convoluted gestures. Those two criteria may however, and in certain cases, not be decisive (border cases).

- The combination B is illustrated by the asymmetrical or raised position of the arms with the presence of musicians.
- The combination C combines the raised position of the arms with the expression of motion through the legs. In this regard, the legs are spaced and / or flexed. The presence of musicians in pictures is decisive.
- The combination D is characterized by the arms that are raised or positioned asymmetrically, and by the regular alternation and rotation of the human figures.
- The combination E includes the arms positioned asymmetrically and the frequent turning of the human figures in pictures. The figures can be nude, and the image can feature musicians.
- The combination F is composed with the turning posture and the convoluted gestures, sometimes also with the presence of musicians.
- The combination G is characterized by the arms that are raised symmetrically on either side of the figures and the legs that are flexed. To those criteria must be added those of nudity and of musicians that appear sometimes in pictures.
- The combination H involves convoluted hand gestures and active legs, that is to say, which present signs of movement such as flexions.

	Basic and Recurring Combinations	Auxiliary Criteria
A	Arms asymmetrical/raised + Gestures	Musicians (rarely nudity)
B	Arms asymmetrical/raised + Musicians	
C	Arms raised + active legs	Musicians
D	Arms asymmetrical/raised + Alternation of figures	
E	Arms asymmetrical + Recurrent turning posture	Nudity and/or Musicians
F	Turning posture + Gestures	Musicians
G	Arms raised + legs flexed	Nudity and/or Musicians
H	Gestures + active legs	

Table. Interpretation grid of Etruscan representations of dance

Not all the criteria identified can be considered alone as distinctive visual elements for the Etruscan iconography of dance. It is their combination in pictures that makes sense and that contributes to define dance movement in Etruscan iconography.

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Orchesis

La chironomia e la danza etrusca

The Chironomy and Etruscan Dance

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Astratta

Musica e danza non mancavano mai nella vita etrusca e numerose sono le testimonianze iconografiche esistenti. Nelle immagini a noi pervenute, i caratteri principali che attirano la nostra attenzione sono la geometria delle figure - un parallelismo può essere ravvisato nelle danze dell'Antico Egitto - nonché l'uso delle mani. Si parla a tal proposito di chironomia. Con questo termine si indicano diversi valori che possono essere assunti dalle mani: mimare, dunque comunicare / parlare con il gesto, fino a dare chiari segni musicali. Partendo da una disamina di questo fenomeno riscontrabile in diverse civiltà dell'antichità, si vuole porre l'attenzione su questo aspetto della danza etrusca, indagando le influenze, le eventuali contaminazioni e le evoluzioni che ha subito questa arte.

Parole-chiave: Danza, Etruschi, Chironomia, Gesto.

Abstract

Music and dance were never lacking in Etruscan life and there are numerous iconographic evidences. In the survival images, the main characters that attract our attention are the geometry of the figures - a parallelism can be seen in the dances of Ancient Egypt - as well as the use of the hands. There is talk of chironomy. This term indicates different values that can be assumed by the hands: miming, therefore communicating / speaking with the gesture, until giving clear musical signs. Starting from an examination of this phenomenon found in various civilizations of antiquity, we want to focus on this aspect of the Etruscan dance, investigating the influences, possible contamination and the evolution of this art.

Keywords: Dance, Etruscan, Chironomy, Gesture.

Resumo

Música e dança nunca faltaram na vida etrusca e existem inúmeras evidências iconográficas. Nas imagens restantes, os principais personagens que chamam a atenção são a geometria das figuras - um paralelismo pode ser visto nas danças do Egito Antigo - bem como o uso das mãos. Fala-se de quironomia. Este termo indica diferentes valores que podem ser assumidos pelas mãos: mímica, portanto comunicar / falar com o gesto, até dar sinais musicais claros. A partir de um exame desse fenômeno encontrado em várias civilizações da antiguidade, queremos nos concentrar neste aspecto da dança etrusca, investigando as influências, possíveis contaminações e a evolução dessa arte.

Palavras-chave: Dança, Etrusco, Quironomia, Gesto.

Musica e danza non mancavano mai nella vita etrusca e numerose sono le testimonianze iconografiche esistenti. Quest'ultime sono la fonte principale perché i documenti scritti sono scarsissimi. Altre notizie si possono ricavare indirettamente facendo delle comparazioni, studiando attentamente i reperti, provando ad addentrarci nella cultura di un popolo. In questo modo si possono avanzare delle ipotesi riguardanti queste arti che, nonostante effimere, lasciano pur sempre delle tracce. L'individuazione di quest'ultime è alla base del lavoro non solo di archeologi, studiosi, ma anche di artisti che cercano di capire e rielaborare quanto nell'antichità è stato fatto, forse anche con la finalità di riscoprire le proprie radici e origini (pensiamo a Isadora Duncan e alle sue ispirazioni al passato, a Carlo Blasis quando affermò che per costruire l'identità italiana si poteva attingere anche alle danze etrusche¹, nonché ai *reenactment*² che oggi stanno assumendo un ruolo sempre maggiore nell'avvicinare il pubblico alla storia in modo nuovo, spesso da protagonista).

Proprio dai tentativi di sperimentazione di rimettere in azione quelle testimonianze coreutiche e musicali che ancora oggi dialogano con noi, sono nati degli interrogativi e un particolare interesse per determinati aspetti della danza etrusca, come l'uso delle mani.

Premessa necessaria è che il punto di vista di chi scrive è ibrido perché alla formazione di studiosa di storia dell'arte e di beni culturali si sovrappone quella di danzatrice. L'aver un rapporto diretto con l'arte coreutica aiuta sotto molteplici punti di vista. La conoscenza di diversi stili di danza permette di rintracciare come un sottile filo di DNA che si è tramandato, evolvendosi, fino ad oggi. Inoltre cercare di reinterpretare quelle immagini e tentare di riportarle al movimento fa sì che si giunga a sperimentazioni molto interessanti, che ci spingono anche ad indagare quanto l'iconografia fosse idealizzata o frutto di un'attenta osservazione della realtà.

Appare ovvio già da questa breve premessa che il discorso possa estendersi e diramarsi a dismisura in vari campi della cultura, tuttavia occorre fare delle scelte e in questa sede si è deciso di porre l'attenzione su un argomento poco studiato all'interno delle ricerche sulla danza etrusca, vale a dire la chironomia. L'altra delimitazione che si deve dare è quella temporale e geografica, pertanto l'analisi di questo scritto sarà concentrata principalmente sul lasso temporale tra il VI - IV secolo a.C. con particolare attenzione a Tarquinia e dintorni.

1 BLASIS 1870: 149; cfr. FALCONE 2016.

2 Sul *Reenactment* e il suo valore nella ricostruzione si veda anche ANZELLOTTI 2018a.

Danza etrusca

Status quaestionis

Prima di entrare nel vivo della discussione si ritiene opportuno fare un rapido excursus sull'attuale situazione degli studi in materia di danza etrusca. È noto a tutti quello che possiamo definire il primo studio d'insieme, il testo di Mary Anderson Johnstone - *The Dance in Etruria* - ormai datato (risale infatti al 1956) che prendeva in esame soprattutto le tombe di Tarquinia e che ha costituito per anni una base da cui partire, nonostante le limitazioni. Seguono poi altri studi più circoscritti a determinate tematiche come per le danze funerarie quello di Jean-René Jannoten del 1984, *Les Reliefs archaïques de Chiusi*, o per le danze armate per cui fondamentali sono gli scritti di Giovannangelo Camporeale. Ovviamente, in relazione a quale era il tema centrale, diversi sono stati i reperti analizzati con una netta prevalenza dei dipinti, cippi, talvolta vasi e infine i bronzi (che sembrano essere quelli più trascurati).

L'argomento danza è stato poi trattato spesso all'interno di contesti più ampi - generalmente inerenti la musica - come si evince dai fondamentali testi di Massimo Pallottino, Jacques Heurgon e numerosi altri³.

Facendo un salto temporale e concentrandoci sugli studi di questi decenni del XXI secolo, segnaliamo la recente tesi di dottorato di Audrey Gouy (2017) che fa un mastodontico lavoro di catalogazione delle movenze etrusche, con approfondimenti anche sull'abbigliamento⁴, ornamenti e acconciature, che può essere molto utile come strumento di ricerca⁵.

Si nota invece, negli ultimi anni, un moltiplicarsi degli studi in materia di musica antica⁶ e, come detto poc'anzi, non di rado accade di trovare cenni sulla danza. Effettivamente le due cose non vanno scisse a maggior ragione per il fatto che nell'antichità musica, danza e poesia erano un tutt'uno, la *Mousikè*. Affrontare gli argomenti in parallelo è dunque molto utile.

A tal proposito è necessario citare l'importante progetto europeo EMAP (European Music Archaeology Project) svoltosi tra il 2013-2018⁷ che ha coinvolto

3 HEURGON, 2000, PALLOTTINO 2006.

4 Oggi i vestiti e gli accessori dei danzatori etruschi sono oggetto di una ricerca approfondita nel progetto "Sound of Etruscan dress", cfr. <https://texdance.eu>

5 Si rimanda a questo testo anche per lo *status quaestionis* in materia di danza etrusca, GOUY 2017: 17 e ss.

6 Sulla musica e danza antica oggi sono tanti gli studi, si vedano anche le ricerche del progetto MOISA e non solo.

7 <http://www.emaproject.eu> (comune capofila: Tarquinia, direttore artistico: Emiliano Licastro). Le mostre dell'EMAP sono state concepite con la finalità di ricostruire gli antichi strumenti con lo scopo di poterli "ri-suonare" e non lasciarli semplicemente nelle vetrine. A conclusione del progetto è stato presentato anche il catalogo dove sono raccolti i risultati di 5 anni di ricerche: DE ANGELI S.- ADJE BOTH A. *et alii* 2018.

diversi Paesi europei coprendo un lasso temporale molto vasto. Si andava dal Paleolitico superiore (circa 40.000 a.C.) all'Età del Ferro, dalle grandi civiltà classiche al Medioevo e oltre. Sono state prese in considerazione diverse culture europee, tuttavia una grande importanza l'ha avuta la musica etrusco-romana, non fosse altro perché l'idea di questo progetto affonda le sue radici nei "Notturmi etruschi" (iniziativa risalente ai primi anni Novanta del secolo scorso, che prevedeva ambientazioni musicali presso siti archeologici con l'intento di avvicinarsi il più possibile alla musica degli antichi⁸).

Aulos, cornua, lire ecc. sono stati fedelmente ricostruiti grazie alla collaborazione di studiosi, musicisti, artigiani, artisti, mossi tutti dalla finalità di far risuonare quegli strumenti i cui resti custoditi nei musei spesso sono stati confusi con altro a causa della scarsità delle informazioni e delle ricerche. Sentire ciò che molto probabilmente era stato ascoltato più di 2000 anni fa - spesso anche grazie a delle "protonotazioni" per il mondo greco o altre importanti testimonianze scritte sull'armonia - oltre ad essere emozionante, è molto utile dal punto di vista di una danzatrice perché è come se, metaforicamente parlando, si sapessero tutti i colori della tavolozza usati dai nostri antenati per dipingere un determinato quadro e ipotizzare danze su quelle note rende il lavoro ancora più pertinente e calzante.

Proprio per danzare con ipotesi di ricostruzioni più verosimili possibili, chi scrive ha condotto delle ricerche, confluite in un libro⁹, dove centrali sono state le scoperte in campo musicale, il confronto con le fonti greche e romane e l'ispirazione alle tradizioni tuttora esistenti.

L'unire pratica e teoria ha permesso di dare delle risposte a determinati aspetti, ad es. dalle fonti sappiamo che spesso la figura di musicista e danzatore coincideva, ma praticando si è potuto constatare che per taluni balli più saltati la cosa sia estremamente complessa, per non dire impossibile. Alcuni movimenti (giri e testa indietro, che si trovano in tante culture) creano fisiologicamente stati di alterazione percettiva, che possiamo definire estasi; talune posizioni non sono assumibili se la danza è troppo frenetica. Le mani se usate in modo magistrale vengono percepite dagli spettatori molto più lunghe e più snodate del dovuto¹⁰. I vestiti hanno una forte influenza sul ballo, sia per la loro pesantezza o meno, che per gli accessori, elementi questi che possono essere sfruttati "artisticamente" dal danzatore.

8 CARRESE - LI CASTRO - MARTINELLI 2010.

9 ANZELLOTTI 2018b.

10 Interessante è sottolineare come nelle raffigurazioni spesso le dita sembrano sproporzionate, molto lunghe, ma se pensiamo all'attenzione che veniva posta nel rappresentare ciò che gli artisti vedevano e li suggestionava, se un danzatore è molto abile nell'uso delle mani, queste possono apparire allo sguardo assai lunghe. A questo proposito (realismo nella raffigurazione) dobbiamo certamente non trascurare lo studio degli *schemata* (cfr. *infra*) utile per capire quanto questi atteggiamenti che andremo ad analizzare siano frutto di un'osservazione della realtà o idealizzazione dell'artista, con relativa codificazione e simbolismo di determinati gesti.

Tutte queste osservazioni - e non solo - conducono a stilare i caratteri salienti della danza etrusca che ora andremo ad analizzare.

Caratteristiche della danza

Nelle immagini a noi pervenute i caratteri principali della danza etrusca che attirano la nostra attenzione sono l'angolosità e la geometria delle figure che portano a ravvisare un parallelismo con le danze dell'Antico Egitto¹¹. Una vicinanza al mondo orientale in realtà è stata in vario modo riscontrata da diversi studiosi, ognuno dei quali notava delle somiglianze con specifici Paesi, spesso proprio in relazione al particolare utilizzo delle mani, che è l'altro elemento centrale.

Werner Keller, nel suo libro *La civiltà etrusca*, nel descrivere delle immagini di danzatori pone più volte l'accento sulle mani sostenendo essere una caratteristica della danza etrusca che ricorda le danze dell'estremo oriente "soprattutto di Bali"¹². La particolarità delle mani dei danzatori non sfuggì neanche a John Beazley¹³ nella sua analisi di alcuni vasi, tanto più che per lui le mani (ma anche orecchie e panneggi) erano dei caratteri distintivi per individuare il pittore/maestranza.

Spostandosi su libri prettamente coreutici in uno del 1911 viene evidenziata una somiglianza della danza giapponese di Mme Sada Yacco (geisha vissuta agli inizi del Novecento) con quella etrusca proprio per l'utilizzo delle mani ed è lasciata aperta la questione se ciò sia frutto di un revival o un'antica tradizione¹⁴; e ancora in un testo di Eugenio Barba, dedicato all'arte dell'attore - dove, tra l'altro, vi è una sezione proprio dedicata all'uso delle mani - diversi sono i parallelismi tra la danza etrusca e quella cinese (in particolare per quest'ultima, dalle immagini proposte a raffronto (fig.1), sembra trattarsi della danza tradizionale - registrata almeno fin dalla dinastia Zhou 1045-256 a.C. - eseguita con lunghe maniche, dunque dobbiamo leggere quelle estensioni non come mani ma la suggestione del parallelismo della posizione è notevole).

Molte altre sono poi le similitudini che possono essere riscontrate con le mudra¹⁵ in India. Effettivamente in tutte le espressioni artistiche etrusche, dipinti, vasi, bronzi, bassorilievi è evidente il dettaglio con cui venivano raffigurate le mani

11 Cfr. ANZELLOTTI, 2018b =. 55 e ss.

12 KELLER 1980: 223, ma anche 275 dove ribadisce il significato rituale ignoto di queste mani.

13 BEAZLEY 1947: 114.

14 THE DANCE Historic Illustrations of Dancing from 3300 B.C. to 1911 A.D. Londra: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson, LTD., 1911.

15 Uno dei luoghi dove il gesto è stato maggiormente sviluppato e codificato è sicuramente l'India. Qui nascono quei gesti che vengono chiamati Mudra e costituiscono una vera e propria scienza segreta. Ne sono fondamento il trattato drammaturgico *Natya sastra* o Quinto Veda (i Veda sono i Testi Sacri dell'India più antica, composti forse tra il 1800 e l'800 a.C.) e l'*Abhinaya Darpana* (specchio dei gesti). Sull'importanza del gesto e delle mani nelle danze, con specifico riferimento alle Mudra cfr. SACHS: 1980: 265 e ss.

e il numero di diversi atteggiamenti in cui sono ritratte. A grandi linee possiamo individuare una serie di posizioni che sono: palmi rivolti verso l'alto o il basso (probabilmente ad indicare le divinità del cielo o quelle degli inferi) oppure avanti o dietro; le dita poche volte sono tutte aperte, molto spesso chiuse con il pollice perpendicolare rispetto al palmo della mano. Quest'ultima caratteristica potrebbe indicare una certa forza/tensione nelle mani che dunque avrebbero parte attiva, altrimenti se fossero rilassate il pollice assumerebbe un'altra angolazione rispetto al palmo - come nel caso del vaso della collezione privata Pomerance (fig.2). Occorre inoltre analizzare la posizione delle mani rispetto agli altri danzatori da cui emerge una sorta di dialogo, conferendo un forte senso ritmico (fig. 3). Non dobbiamo tralasciare poi la postura generale del danzatore, dove anche le braccia presentano delle caratteristiche interessanti. Queste infatti sono generalmente a chiasmo, con la linea delle mani che tende ad opporsi ad esse, spezzandola anziché seguirla. La linea delle spalle sovente parallela (talvolta probabilmente influenzata anche dallo scialle appoggiato sulle spalle stesse), per danze più frenetiche con maggiore frequenza si riscontra inclinata. Tutti questi indizi, oltre a fornire ulteriori elementi per individuare la tipologia di ballo eseguito, fanno sì che sia lecito pensare che ci fosse un "linguaggio" ben strutturato nella danza, dove i gesti con le mani giocano un ruolo centrale¹⁶.

L'abilità nell'uso delle mani prende il nome di chironomia, tuttavia a questo termine non è facile far corrispondere una sola definizione¹⁷. Sicuramente quest'arte era attestata anche in Grecia, ma sembra che nel mondo etrusco avesse una valenza molto importante e su questo che, in questa sede, si vuole concentrare l'attenzione.

Chironomia

Il termine chironomia - dal greco χείρ "mano" e νόμος "legge" - ha diversi significati come si evince facendo una rapida ricerca su un vocabolario o un'enciclopedia. Principalmente si trovano queste due definizioni: 1. "l'arte del gestire, del muovere le mani, nel discorrere in pubblico e nella recitazione. 2. Nella musica antica, modo di indicare le flessioni della linea melodica, o anche i singoli suoi gradi, mediante movimenti e segni di mano"¹⁸.

16 Maria Luisa Catoni, nel suo studio sugli *schemata* (cfr. *Infra*), ha evidenziato come i movimenti delle mani rivestissero un'importanza particolare, ma comunque il corpo intero era implicato (cfr. anche MANCINI 2004-2005).

17 La chironomia è un "soggetto" molto complesso, basti pensare, solo a titolo di esempio, che la stessa *deixis* di Plutarco è riferita ad una serie di gesti appartenenti alla chironomia da intendere come mimo di un oggetto che non c'è, ma ha una sfumatura ancora più sottile, forse uno spostamento, una sospensione (cfr. GARELLI 2007: 330 e ss.).

18 <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/chironomia/>.

Interessante è constatare come in dizionari dell'Ottocento - per es. nel *Dizionario d'ogni mitologia e antichità* (1826) - la definizione che viene data è la seguente: "atteggiamento o movimento del corpo, specialmente delle mani, usato soprattutto nei teatri antichi, per cui disegnavano essi agli spettatori, senza l'aiuto della parola, gli esseri pensanti dei o uomini sia che si trattasse di materie giocose che azioni serie" (POZZOLI 1826: 543). Viene poi specificato che "ad oggi ciò è definito pantomima" e che la chironomia era un segno usato anche con i bambini per educarli (per indicare posizioni più degne o contegno). Esisteva inoltre un esercizio di ginnastica con questo nome. Segue la definizione di "chironomonti", con il significato di abilità nel tagliare le carni, e "chirotonia" come forma di espressione di voto con la mano.

Quanto appena detto è riportato in modo molto simile in un testo del 1832, *Il costume degli etruschi descritto dall'abate Carlo Magnetti*, dove inoltre si afferma che i romani portarono all'ultimo grado di perfezione una danza chiamata chironomia "usata principalmente dagli ufficiali che servivano alle mense", torna dunque la definizione di chironomonte, attribuita a Giovenale nella V satira, per indicare il servo che danza nel servire i commensali e taglia le vivande, specialmente le carni, con abile destrezza (MAGNETTI 1832: 693)¹⁹.

In entrambi i casi appena citati vi è dunque un riferimento alla danza e alla comunicazione sia teatrale che attribuibile ad altri campi della vita quotidiana. Proprio in relazione all'aspetto comunicativo, degno di nota è il fatto che in un libro dedicato ai monumenti cristiani di Carlo Zardetti - *Monumenti cristiani nuovamente illustrati* (Milano, 1843) - per dare la lettura dei gesti dei soggetti religiosi, ci sia un richiamo alla chironomia definita come un'arte che permetteva di esprimere con le mani ciò che era proferito a parole. Viene poi sottolineato come questo termine sia menzionato da Quintiliano e Cicerone e che servisse "per esprimere meglio il soggetto rappresentato", di cui - come continua Carlo Zardetti - spesso sono riscontrabili molti esempi nell'arte di diverse epoche e culture, tra le quali vengono citati nello specifico vasi e bassorilievi etruschi, greci e romani (ZARDETTI 1843: 12-13).

Da questi esempi si evince che un ambito prevalente di applicazione della parola chironomia è quello teatrale, tant'è che diversi mimi vengono appellati come coloro che parlano con le mani²⁰. Ricordiamo, tra le altre cose, come il termine 'istrione' derivi dall'etrusco e significa attore professionista che però

19 Esistono varie edizioni del testo sul costume antico a cura di Giulio Ferrario, all'interno del quale è contenuto questo del Magnetti; da una prima ricognizione sembra che la più antica sia del 1820 (Milano), esiste poi una del 1828 (Firenze), nonché un tomo con aggiunte e rettificazioni del 1834 (Milano).

20 Diversi esempi in cui ballerini o mimi vengono definiti come coloro che parlano con le mani sono riscontrabili nel testo di REQUENO 1797: 58 e ss.; tra questi viene citato anche il famoso mimo Pilade, definito da Cassio Dione o *orchestes*, e nella satira VI di Giovenale Batillio (omonimo del grande e primo Batillio), è *chironomon Ledam saltans* (Iuv. 6, 63), cfr. SCHIMMENTI 2011: 152.

affida la comunicazione, anziché alla parola, principalmente al gesto e alla danza anche per il fatto che spesso doveva comunicare con persone di altre lingue²¹.

Connessa dunque alla pantomima e al comunicare, di importanza tale che senza di essa non sarebbero comprensibili appieno le opere di Cicerone, Plutarco e Quintiliano, la chironomia in Italia²² si dice riscoperta nel 1797, come riportato nel testo dal titolo significativo *“Scoperta della chironomia, o sia dell’arte di gestir con le mani”*. Lo scrittore, l’abate Vincenzo Requeno, nel descrivere questa arte sostiene essere stata molto importante sia per i Greci che per i Romani (non cita gli etruschi) poiché serviva per lo sviluppo dell’intelletto nonché per il perfezionamento della moderna pantomima. Non si sbilancia invece circa l’inventore della chironomia sostenendo non vi siano fonti di scrittori antichi che aiutino in tal senso, tuttavia elenca una serie di supposizioni - che si confondono però tra la mitologia - su come questa sia nata. Colui grazie al quale non si è persa la memoria della chironomia è individuato nel Monaco Beda del VII sec. che nel libro intitolato *De loquela per gestum digitorum* - o come altri lo intitolarono *De indigitatione* - riporta i gesti delle mani con cui i Greci ed i Romani parlavano, indicandoli rispettivamente con le lettere dell’alfabeto Greco e Romano. L’abate Requeno fa poi una divisione tra chironomia per contare (“conteggio richiesto nel foro, e ne’ pubblici tribunali”), con tanto di illustrazioni delle posizioni delle dita della mano destra e sinistra, e quella per esprimersi nella pantomima e in generale nell’oratoria. “Gli oratori usarono le figure de’ gesti, come gli Egizi le figure de’ geroglifici, delle quali ognuna corrispondeva almeno ad una parola” (REQUENO 1797: 9). Dopodiché si passa all’uso delle mani in musica, introdotta da questa citazione: *“Hanc partem musicae disciplinae mutam appellavere majores: scilicet quae, ore clauso, manibus loquitur etc.* (Cassiod. I)”); (I nostri antenati chiamarono questa parte dell’arte musica mutola, perciocché senza aprire la bocca parlavasi con le mani etc.).

Un’altra definizione della chironomia è infatti legata alla musica ed è la seguente: “insieme dei segni che i cantori (sempre a gruppi) fanno con la mano alzata”. Attestata già in immagini egiziane, fino dal 4° millennio a. C., doveva

21 Teniamo ben a mente la vivacità culturale ad es. di Tarquinia e il porto Gravisca aperto a tutte le culture e religioni, così come Pyrgi. A Roma però l’istrione era considerato al pari di una prostituta perché vendeva il suo corpo, inoltre non si specializzava perché era aperto alle molteplicità e costretto a vagare per lavorare.

Rimanendo nel campo linguistico, ricordiamo anche la questione della lingua etrusca, la sua origine, la non appartenenza al ceppo indoeuropeo, ecc. che dovrebbe essere approfondita poiché potrebbe fornire interessanti indizi anche in campo coreutico.

22 Altre ricerche individuano il pioniere dello studio della chironomia nel medico e filosofo vissuto nel XVII secolo John Bulwer e gli studi del gesto nella vita quotidiana sono in particolare riferiti all’italiano Andrea De Jorio (DE JORIO, A. La mimica degli antichi investigata nel gestire napoletano. Napoli: Stamperia del Fibreno, 1832) - quest’ultimo fu ripreso anche da Diego Carpitella per il suo studio sulla cinesica per indagare quanto degli antichi gesti fosse sopravvissuto, CARPITELLA 1981.

essere talmente legata all'idea stessa del canto, che cantare si diceva *hsjt m drt* ossia "far musica con la mano"²³.

Proprio nell'antico Egitto si ha la maggiore documentazione iconografica di gesti chironomici e partendo da questi Hans Hickmann negli anni Sessanta (HICKMANN 1958: 96-127; 1963: 103-107) sostenne di aver individuato una sorta di notazione basata sul gesto delle mani e la posizione del braccio, in particolare l'angolo che forma²⁴. L'idea suscitò un grande interesse, ma fu messa in discussione poiché tale linguaggio del corpo non era realmente codificato (DOMINICUS 1994: 165-167; EMERIT 2013). È pur vero che l'uso delle mani per insegnare musica non è scomparso, poiché ancora oggi esistono dei metodi, come il Kodaly²⁵, nel quale vengono notate delle similitudini con i gesti dall'antico Egitto. Non è tuttavia questa la sede per sviscerare l'argomento che proprio in ambito musicale ha visto il suo campo di applicazione più attivo, ma è opportuno tenerlo a mente poiché sono molto interessanti le conclusioni a cui si addivene. Si pensi allo studio di Suzanne Haik Vantoura che, partendo dal Te-amin ebraico (trascrizione di serie di gesti delle mani o dita, ciascuno dei quali rappresentava un valore musicale), fa una disamina delle popolazioni antiche da cui emergono suggestivi parallelismi²⁶. Nello specifico per gli etruschi porta l'esempio del sarcofago degli sposi (VI sec a.C.): "The couple is performing a gesture with the right hand: the index finger extended, the fourth and fifth fingers curled back (the position of the wife's hand is equally characteristic). There is no doubt that this is a scene of musical chironomy; the "inward" look of the two deceased suggests the reminiscence of a sweet melody" (HAIK VANTOURA 1991: 76).

Sappiamo bene che la maggior parte delle interpretazioni di questa opera affermino trattarsi di mani colte nell'atto di tenere oggetti conviviali in quanto presiedenti un banchetto, tuttavia, visti i parallelismi con il mondo orientale, si comprende come sia facile la nascita di tali suggestioni²⁷ che hanno portato a leggere questi gesti come segnalazione musicale.

23 s.v. *Chironomia*, enciclopedia Treccani on line: http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/chironomia_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/ (u.v. 07/08/2020)

24 Tutto ciò viene riportato e analizzato da MANNICHE 1991.

25 CHOKSY 1974: 20-21.

26 Simili rappresentazioni vengono riscontrate anche nei Sumeri (3200 a.C.) e in Babilonia, nonché in Etruria e con alcune differenze su dei rotoli di papiro del mar Morto, i quali risultano curiosamente vicini a dei segni di testi bizantini e Slavi. I gesti chironomici di questa tipologia sarebbero attestati fino al Medioevo, sia in Asia che in Europa, quando cominciarono a divenire inefficienti a causa delle strutture musicali sempre più complesse, per cui si sono pian piano persi. <http://www.rakkav.com/biblemusic/pages/chironomy.htm>; HAIK VANTOURA 1991.

27 Per far comprendere quanto sia forte questa suggestione, si segnala l'organizzazione di un evento "Il linguaggio segreto di un gesto", per una lettura particolare del sarcofago degli sposi e la posizione delle mani interpretate come delle mudra. Si trattava di un progetto artistico itinerante realizzato da Paola Marzano in collaborazione con la Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Etruria Meridionale, presentato per la prima volta presso il Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia di Roma, dal 10 al 19 ottobre 2014 ed inserito nel calendario della *X Giornata del Contemporaneo* (10 Ottobre 2014) promossa da AMACI e riproposto a Cerveteri, Museo Nazionale Cervete, Necropoli della Banditaccia (15 gennaio - 1 febbraio 2015); cfr. <http://www.cerveteri.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/197/archivio-eventi/48/il-linguaggio-segreto-di-un-gesto-opere-di-paola-marzano>.

Effettivamente nel mondo etrusco l'attenzione nella raffigurazione delle mani non è solo per i danzatori, ma anche per i banchettanti, i quali stavano forse partecipando al ritmo delle danze o comunicavano aspetti musicali o altro (ricordiamo che il banchetto aveva una forte valenza anche simbolica). Per uno studio corretto della chironomia si dovrebbe estendere l'attenzione a tutte le figure presenti nella scena.

Focalizzandosi sulla danza, in relazione ad essa, la chironomia può essere interpretata come un aspetto della sua evoluzione poiché grazie ai gesti riusciva ad esteriorizzare gli stati d'animo e le emozioni al punto di sostituirsi al linguaggio²⁸. In tal modo diverrebbe un elemento estremamente significativo e comunicativo, fondamentale nella produzione dei c.d. *schemata*²⁹.

Alcuni esempi

Nell'analisi delle immagini finalizzata alla comprensione della valenza che la chironomia potesse rivestire nel mondo etrusco, non passa inosservato il fatto che spesso ci si trovi di fronte a pose innaturali, tali da venir definite "manieristiche"³⁰ - ad es. nella Tomba delle Leonesse (fig.4), la danzatrice riccamente abbigliata sulla sinistra con la mano piegata oltre i 180 gradi - ma ciò potrebbe avere più significati: dal voler sottolineare la bravura del danzatore al punto di andare oltre i limiti del proprio corpo, a una valenza simbolica. Sulla valenza simbolica tantissime potrebbero essere le interpretazioni che ancora oggi non hanno un'univoca risposta. A tal proposito una delle pose più discusse è quella della mano sinistra della danzatrice di destra della Tomba delle Leonesse con il "gesto delle corna". È aperto il dibattito se abbia o meno i crotali e qualora non si fosse d'accordo con l'interpretazione che vuole che sia andata perduta la raffigurazione dello strumento, ci si dovrebbe concentrare sulla particolarità del gesto, infatti la danzatrice fa sì le "corni", ma in modo diverso da quello scaramantico che tutti conosciamo, poiché il pollice è aperto³¹. La

28 Per un approfondimento sulla chironomia e in generale l'utilizzo delle mani nella danza, cfr. SACHS 1980: 57-58, 277 e ss., 283, 384.

29 "La chironomia gioca un ruolo capitale nella produzione degli *schemata*, che caratterizzano l'arte perfetta della danza completamente slegata dalla ginnastica e divenuta capace di imitare, secondo l'espressione di Platone, i discorsi delle Muse" (SÉCHAN: 1930: 65 e ss.); MOUTSOPOULOS 2002: 159.

30 "Il va de soi que cette attitude n'a rien ni de spontané ni de naturel. Elle peut être mise en parallèle avec celle que T.J. Smith relève, en la qualifiant de « unusual manierist pose », sur une coupe attique (Syracuse, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 6028: coupe de Siana, attribuée au Peintre Omobono)" FONTAINE, 2016.

31 Personalmente non escludo il fatto che la raffigurazione del crotalo sia andata perduta, tuttavia se si dovesse dare un'altra interpretazione, si potrebbe leggere questo gesto come un aver rappresentato l'attimo dello schiacciare le dita (usando sia il medio che l'anulare quindi doppio schiocco). Ciò nasce dall'esperienza personale nel ballo dove, se non si hanno le castagnette, ma il ritmo ne richiederebbe l'uso, è istintivo schiacciare le dita per accompagnarsi.

raffigurazione delle corna torna in altre opere etrusche, ma con il pollice chiuso, ne sono testimonianza diversi reperti tra cui spiccano le urne cinerarie del museo Guarnacci di Volterra, ad es. l'urna degli sposi I sec. a.C. (anche in questo campo le interpretazioni sono le più disparate)³². Indice e mignolo eretti, ma senza il pollice aperto, si riscontrano in altre suonatrici di crotali - tuttavia diversi sono i modi di impugnare lo strumento - poiché sono un soggetto assai frequente nelle tombe etrusche di Tarquinia. Ad esse si susseguono danzatrici raffigurate con mani lunghe e una posizione alternata del corpo e dei visi³³; ricordiamo, ad esempio, la tomba del Citaredo (perduta), quella delle Bighe o quella del Triclinio (fig.3). In quest'ultima notiamo dei particolari interessanti come il piede *en dehors* della danzatrice sulla destra che presenta anche il braccio inarcato sopra la testa - come nella tomba Querciola - posizione del braccio che può dare quella sensazione visiva solo se slanciato con una certa intensità. Date queste posizioni degli arti si ha l'impressione che la danza, pur nel suo dinamismo che si evince dai vestiti e dalla ritmicità della composizione, non fosse sfrenata, ma più "controllata" in modo da poter assumere determinati atteggiamenti come quello del piede *en dehors* poc'anzi citato, nonché delle altre danzatrici in mezzapunta conferendo così un'idea di leggerezza ma anche di compostezza data l'eleganza delle posizioni.

Una stilizzazione più accentuata delle mani si nota invece nei candelabri come quelli presi ad esempio da Eugenio Barba per fare il parallelismo con le danze cinesi poiché le mani sono molto allungate (cfr. *infra* - fig.1). Sproporzioni interessanti si riscontrano nella mano sinistra della danzatrice del bronzetto oggi conservato nel museo di Cleveland, forse intenta nel tenere/suonare un oggetto (fig.5). Il fatto di raffigurarle così grandi e sproporzionate può indicare l'importanza che gli era attribuita.

In altri candelabri in bronzo - probabilmente rinvenuti a Vulci ed oggi esposti in diversi musei europei - le mani forniscono ulteriori dettagli per capire il senso del movimento delle braccia stesse, facendone intuire la dinamica e dando la sensazione di slancio, così come la muscolatura evidente delle gambe, che richiama quella dei danzatori della tomba della Caccia e pesca, fa supporre che si tratti di una danza ricca di salti.

Un dinamismo totalmente opposto a quello ora citato è individuabile nella tomba dei Giocolieri dove l'atto danzato si evince solo dai gesti chironomici, esaltati dalla posizione delle danzatrici quasi ieratiche, solenni ed estremamente

32 Sono state avanzate ipotesi di influenze di culti orientali, ma in assenza di prove evidenti è più plausibile parlare di gesti apotropici. A proposito di suddetti culti (per i quali si rimanda all'articolo di Nicola LUCIANI 2016), vorrei aprire una parentesi su quello di Sabazio in relazione al quale sono state rinvenute diverse mani votive in bronzo molto interessanti, meritevoli di approfondimento in un contesto di studio sulla valenza simbolica delle mani.

33 Questo "schema" di composizione è riscontrabile in diversi cippi chiusini, dove anche le mani presentano la medesima attenzione nonché posizione molto simile.

comunicative. Forza gestuale molto significativa si ha in diversi bronzetti della collezione del museo archeologico di Chiusi, fra cui quelli che compongono il Lebete in bronzo 2128³⁴ (fig.6) dove si riscontra una ricchezza di atteggiamenti alla quale molto probabilmente avrà corrisposto una ricchezza di danze, ma anche di significati trasmessi.

Gli studi su questo oggetto sono ancora in fase di approfondimento, tuttavia vediamo come, escludendo l'auleta, le mani sono nella classica posizione ad angolo retto col palmo verso l'alto e il basso, in più, in due figurine, lo scialle a coda di rondine arricchisce il movimento, probabilmente influenzandolo. Altre danzatrici tengono la gonna con una mano, gesto che ritorna in altri bronzi sia del museo chiusino, ma anche di altri musei (Firenze, Siena, ecc.) catalogati talvolta come offerenti. Fra la collezione di bronzi della collezione chiusina, oltre quelle componenti il lebete suddetto, sono individuate come danzatrici: la figura, purtroppo mancante di un braccio, il cui busto è piegato di lato (fig. 7a); quella con le braccia alzate lateralmente, la mano con il palmo verso l'alto ed un pollice evidente, accennante un passo in avanti (fig. 7b) e un altro bronzetto (fig. 7c), citato per dei paragoni stilistici e cronologici, in cui la donna porta una mano al fianco e l'altra alla testa (gesto quest'ultimo oggetto di diverse riflessioni che ancora non hanno una risposta univoca³⁵, ciò sottolinea ulteriormente come il discorso debba essere esteso all'insieme della gestualità e non limitarsi alla sola osservazione delle mani).

Quello che è certo è che in ogni espressione artistica non è mai stata trascurata la raffigurazione delle mani che, pur se stilizzate, non hanno in nessun caso perso la forza comunicativa. Inoltre analizzandole dal punto di vista della dinamica corporea ci danno importanti informazioni sulle caratteristiche della danza stessa. Gli esempi potrebbero essere numerosi e legati ad ogni specifica danza, ma è evidente come il discorso sia estendibile quasi a dismisura.

Conclusioni

L'importanza dell'uso delle mani nella danza etrusca è un particolare appurato da tutti³⁶. Sebbene alcuni studiosi ritengano che parlare di chironomia nel campo della danza etrusca possa, giustamente, indurre confusioni vista la problematicità del significato stesso che poteva rivestire questo termine³⁷, si ritiene di contro di poterlo usare per una serie di motivazioni. Innanzitutto partendo dal fatto che la

34 L'articolata storia di questo manufatto è ben descritta in MAETZKE 1957: 511 e ss. Ivi sono presenti informazioni anche sugli altri bronzi di seguito citati.

35 Cfr. HUET, 2006. La posizione della mano alla testa fa correre la mente anche agli adoranti minoici dell' XI a.C., si comprende dunque quante sfumature di significato questo gesto possa avere.

36 Cfr. HUET, 2006. La posizione della mano alla testa fa correre la mente anche agli adoranti minoici dell' XI a.C., si comprende dunque quante sfumature di significato questo gesto possa avere.

37 Cfr. FONTAINE 2016.

parola chironomia ha avuto e ha ancora molteplici significati - dal mimo alla musica, passando per gli esercizi ginnici - è pur vero che alcuni di questi nell'antichità erano sotto un'unica egida, la *mousikè*. Inoltre la danza etrusca è un argomento ancora da sviscerare, tuttavia al punto in cui si trovano gli studi sembra comunque evidente l'accezione comunicativa delle mani con diverse finalità a seconda del contesto: teatrale, musicale, coreutico, educativo ecc. Dunque qualunque sia l'ambito di applicazione del termine chironomia emerge sempre il significato di comunicazione ed è questa l'accezione che si vuole fortemente sottolineare.

La chironomia è una parte essenziale di quel discorso che avviene senza parole, usando il proprio corpo; se ci soffermiamo solo per un attimo a pensare ciò che istintivamente faremmo per descrivere una cosa o per farci capire dall'altro senza parole, emerge che ricorremmo in primo luogo al gesto delle braccia e delle mani. Esse costituiscono gli elementi base della comunicazione.

In campo coreutico la chironomia potrebbe essere interpretata come un sintomo di perfezionamento della danza, così da poter comunicare concetti e dare voce alle emozioni umane in modo ancora più esplicito e articolato. Ricordiamo come Cicerone (I sec. a.C.) scrive nel *De Oratore*: «La natura ha assegnato a ogni emozione un'espressione, un tono di voce e gesti specifici»³⁸. Il grado di "artisticità" raggiunto è testimoniato anche da una ricerca estetico sensoriale nella danza perché l'abbigliamento è molto curato, ampio è l'utilizzo di vesti trasparenti - elemento questo che connotava una ricchezza notevole - bracciali, orecchini, talvolta collane, scarpe, tutulus, scialli che sono posizionati in un modo molto particolare e che danno un senso aggiunto alla danza. Inoltre ciò potrebbe sottolineare anche l'importanza dell'atto danzato al punto di necessitare di tali abbigliamento.

Nasce spontaneo chiedersi quanto siano idealizzate queste immagini, a tal proposito esistono diversi studi che sottolineano l'esistenza di una codificazione delle danze antiche in modo che anche per le raffigurazioni ci fosse una comunicazione diretta, dunque esse sarebbero il risultato di un processo di formalizzazione che crea un'identificazione comunitaria nei modelli di comportamento, nella tradizione tecnica, nella norma sociale, nel dogma religioso su cui si fondano la convivenza civile e le regole di interazione con il Cosmo³⁹. Come afferma Gaudenzio Ragazzi "Ogni gesto, ogni elemento della rappresentazione, non risponde più ad un criterio di verosimiglianza con l'azione quotidiana ma a quello di conformità con l'archetipo a cui la struttura dell'immagine deve uniformarsi" (RAGAZZI 2012: 233).

38 Cfr. ANZELLOTTI, 2018b: 27-29. Vale la pena riprendere qui le osservazioni di Roland Barthes a proposito del ruolo delle danze nel teatro: "Ancora una volta, ciò che conta è l'espressività, cioè la costituzione di un vero sistema semantico, di cui ogni spettatore conosceva perfettamente gli elementi. Si 'leggeva' una danza: la sua funzione intellettuale era importante almeno quanto la sua funzione plastica o emotiva" (BARTHES 1985: 81).

39 RAGAZZI 2012: 231; cfr. anche SACHS 1980: 23. Sempre del parere di una codificazione della raffigurazione della danza è Audry Gouy, la quale appunto conclude lasciando aperta la questione di come nasca questa codificazione cfr. GOUY 2012: 95-103.

È pure vero che i gesti di molte danze tradizionali traggono origine dal lavoro domestico o nei campi o in altri ambiti, da gesti apotropaici con forte valore simbolico, si può dunque ipotizzare che anche nel caso degli etruschi questi gesti fossero tratti ad esempio da dei rituali o da altre “esperienze” del vivere quotidiano. In fondo fin dal mondo primitivo le scene di danza avevano una connessione con la società, l’individuo, l’identità e il culto⁴⁰. Inoltre, rispetto ad oggi dove siamo bombardati dalle immagini, la capacità d’osservazione degli antichi era maggiore, quindi possiamo concludere che sì, vi era una componente di codificazione, ma essa derivava da un’osservazione della realtà, di cui è stato preso un elemento talmente identificativo da richiamare subito alla mente quella danza o quello specifico significato. È naturale pertanto citare lo studio di Maria Luisa Catoni sugli *schemata* dove afferma che sia “tramite la mediazione della danza che il termine *schema/schemata* poté [...] assumere il significato di ‘gesto’”, ma, cosa ancor più importante, che gli *schemata* svolgano una funzione “cristallizzante”, servano a “fissare visualmente i modi del corpo” e a saldare ad essi “determinati valori” (CATONI 2005: 133 e ss.).

Le mani possono avere un ruolo importante nella costituzione degli *schemata*, facendo capire immediatamente il tipo di ballo. Certamente danno indizi sul tipo di movimento (saltato, rilassato, frenetico, ecc.), sulla forza e sulla comunicazione (da intendere ovviamente nel senso più ampio del termine, ossia non solo raccontare qualcosa, mimare azioni/oggetti, ma dare anche delle emozioni, comunicare una certa vitalità e molto altro).

Alla luce di tutte queste considerazioni possiamo affermare che l’attenzione nella raffigurazione delle mani può esser frutto in parte di una scelta artistica, che spesso coincide anche con la tipologia di oggetto (quale atteggiamento esteticamente si adatta meglio), ma è strettamente connessa a una simbologia e rispondenza ai codici comunicativi del tempo, al punto da costituire un vero e proprio linguaggio. A tal proposito gesti innaturali o proporzioni sfalsate potrebbero essere sintomatiche di un’ulteriore valenza simbolica.

Viste le numerose analogie col mondo orientale si ipotizza un qualcosa di molto vicino alle odierne mudra. In questo caso infatti ci si trova di fronte a una pantomima dove tutto il corpo è coinvolto, compreso lo sguardo e le posizioni delle mani corrispondono a oggetti o significati specifici. Nelle danze orientali ancora oggi molte di queste tradizioni (mani nella danza che assumono posizioni corrispondenti a oggetti/parole, comunicazione mimetica ecc.) sono sopravvissute, a differenza del mondo occidentale.

Ovviamente tutti i gesti raffigurati andrebbero analizzati, non solo quelli dei danzatori. Occorrerebbe vedere quando e quanto sono presenti, se fosse possibile ipotizzare un significato in base al contesto, la codificazione eventuale che un determinato gesto ha subito e molto altro.

40 Come suggerito da Walter Burkert, il reiterato movimento ritmico collettivo organizzato è la forma pura cristallizzata del rito; quindi la danza riflette l’attività svolta nella comunità e l’interazione sociale, cfr. BURKERT 2003: 223.

Appare evidente come ci sia ancora tanto da indagare e con non poche problematiche data l'esiguità di fonti scritte e l'alea artistica che lascia aperte numerose interpretazioni.

È importante dunque allargare lo sguardo, dare spazio all'ibridazione e alla multidisciplinarietà (guardare ad es. alle questioni linguistiche, agli indizi che emergono dall'abbigliamento, ecc.) e fare attenzione a tutti i particolari che potrebbero fornirci la chiave di lettura di diverse opere. Questa è la strada che dobbiamo percorrere seguendo quelle tracce effimere che però ancora possono indicarci una via.

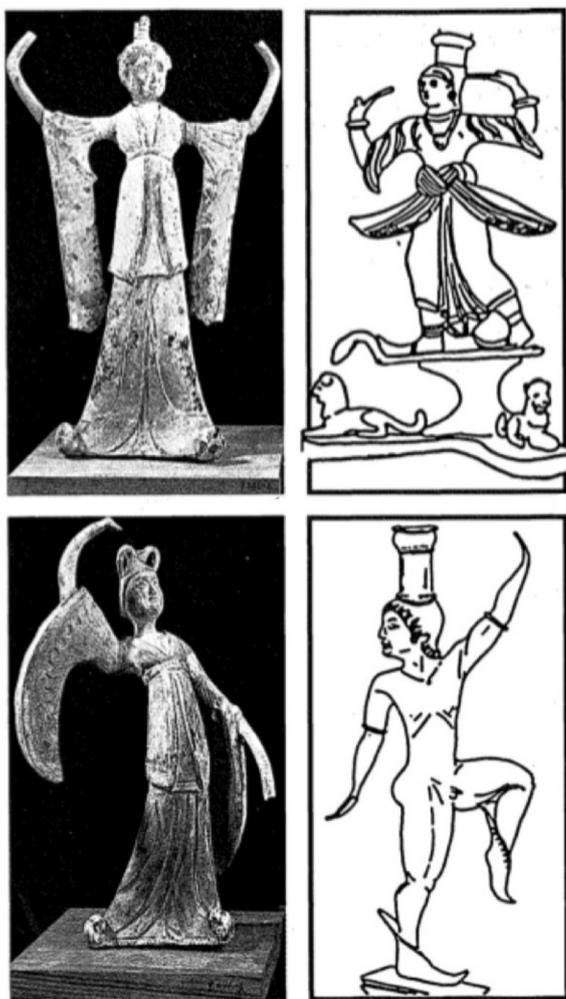


Fig. 1: A sinistra: danzatrici Cinesi, terracotta dipinta (dinastia del Nord, 386-581 d.C.; Museo di Taipei). A destra: in alto Danzatrice Etrusca, candelabro di bronzo, Vulci?, VI sec. a.C. British Museum London; in basso danzatore Etrusco, base di un candelabro di bronzo, inizio del VI sec. a.C. museo di Karlsruhe Landesmuseum (dal testo di E. BARBA, *L'arte dell'attore*).



Fig. 2: Vaso attribuito al “pittore della danzatrice con i crotali”, V sec. a.C., collezione privata Leon Pomerance, New York (Sotheby’s, New York, November 24th-25th, 1987, no. 114A).

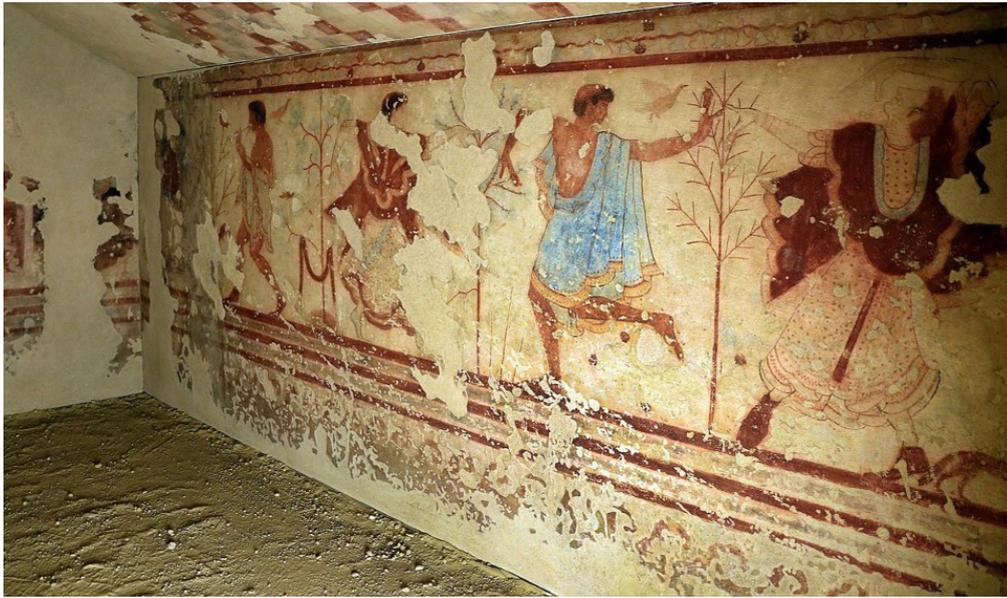


Fig. 3: Tomba del Triclinio, 470 a.C., Tarquinia (dal catalogo di STEINGRÄBER).



Fig. 4: Tomba delle Leonesse, 520 a.C., Tarquinia (dal catalogo di STEINGRÄBER)



Fig. 5: Danzatrice, Candelabro Cleveland Museum, 600-580 a.C.



Fig. 6: Danzatrici e auleta, Lebeti 2128, fine VI e inizi V a.C.?, museo Archeologico Nazionale di Chiusi. (da Studi etruschi, vol. XXV, 1957)

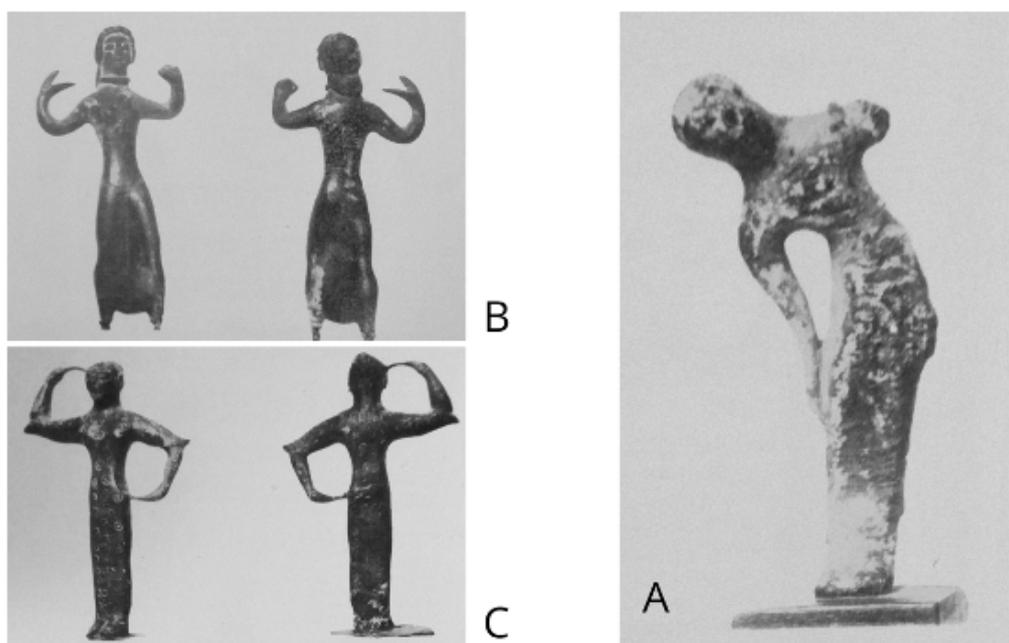


Fig. 7: Danzatrici, fine VI e inizio V a.C.?, museo Archeologico Nazionale di Chiusi. (da Studi etruschi, vol. XXV, 1957)

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