

DE GRUYTER

Giulio Colesanti, Laura Lulli (Eds.)

SUBMERGED LITERATURE IN ANCIENT GREEK CULTURE

VOLUME 2: CASE STUDIES



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Edited by Giulio Colesanti
and Laura Lulli

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Dance in Attic and Argive Geometric Pottery: Figurative Imagery and Ritual Contexts

For Giovanni Cerri, my mentor in Greek Literature

1 Dance in the Shield of Achilles

‘With few pictures Homer made his shield an epitome of all that was happening in the world’ (Lessing 2005, 232; see Schadewaldt 1959, 352: ‘Mit wenigen Gemälden machte Homer seinen Schild zu einem Inbegriff von allem, was in der Welt vorgeht’). With these words G. E. Lessing in 1766 defined the Shield of Achilles as a true synopsis of the world, as it is recounted in the famous passage in Book 18 of the *Iliad* (vv. 468–608) describing how it was produced by the god Hephaestus (fig. 1). More recently M. Menichetti, M. Torelli and L. Cerchiai have demonstrated, to my mind convincingly, that the inter-relations between the



Fig. 1: Graphic reconstruction of the Shield of Achilles by L. Weniger (from Fittschen 1973, pl. VIIb)

scenes and characters that populate the bands of the Shield are such that we may see in it a genuinely iconographic programme: this is made clear in the city at war but especially the city at peace, with its institutions, spatial articulation, work activities and age classes (Menichetti 2006; Torelli 2006; Cerchiai 2009). In the realia it cites, the Shield constantly references iconographies that derive from Greece of the Geometric period, creating a powerful imagery out of the past, though these realia are transfigured through the poetic design which overcomes the fixity of the image and brings the characters in the scenes to life (D'Acunto 2009).

Significantly, there are three images of dance in the Shield (Wegner 1968, 29–44; Fittschen 1973, 15–17; Edwards 1991, 200–233; D'Acunto 2009, 179–188). This is the only theme that recurs a number of times in the various episodes represented by the craftsman god and this is done, evidently, *pour cause*: if we bear in mind the Shield's iconographic programme, the reiteration of the theme of dance is not in fact a repetition, but rather enshrines dance's centrality to the key occasions in the life of the community. That is to say, already in the microcosm of the Shield, as will be the case constantly in the Greek world, dance is a social mechanism that intervenes in many occasions and aspects of society, including marriage, work in the fields, rites of passage and civic cults (Lonsdale 1993).

Thus the first episode of the Shield of Achilles (at vv. 491–496) presents the scene of a *gamos*. The *nymphai* go from their maiden chambers to the citadel accompanied by the song of the *hymenaion* and by the dances performed by *kouroi* to the sound of *phorminges* and *auloi*. Significantly, the episode closes with the image of the women, *gynaikes*, who watch the scene, each standing at the door of her house, which defines their status as married women associated with the *oikos*.

Il. 18. 491–496

... ἐν τῇ μὲν ῥα γάμοι τ' ἔσαν εἰλαπίνας τε,
 νύμφας δ' ἐκ θαλάμων δαΐδων ὕπο λαμπομενάων
 ἠγίνεον ἀνά ἄστυ, πολὺς δ' ὑμέναιος ὀρώρει·
 κούροι δ' ὄρχηστῆρες ἐδίεον, ἐν δ' ἄρα τοῖσιν
 αὐλοὶ φόρμιγγές τε βοήν ἔχον· αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες
 ἰστάμεναι θαύμαζον ἐπὶ προθύροισιν ἑκάστη.

... And there were marriages in one [sc. city], and festivals.
 They were leading the brides along the city from their maiden chambers
 under the flaring of torches, and the loud bride song was arising.
 The young men followed the circles of the dance, and among them
 the flutes and lyres kept up their clamor as in the meantime
 the women standing each at the door of her court admired them.
 (transl. after R. Lattimore)

The second dance of the Shield (vv. 567–572) celebrates the completion of the farming season, represented by the vintage: a *pais* accompanies on the *phorminx* the choral dance of the adolescents, both *parthenikaî* and *eitheoi*. The poet emphasizes that their performance is done in time with the stamping of feet, which matches the acoustic accompaniment of the song and shouts:

Il. 18. 567–572

παρθενικαὶ δὲ καὶ ἡῖθεοι ἀταλά φρονέοντες
 πλεκτοῖς ἐν ταλάροισι φέρον μελιηδέα καρπόν.
 τοῖσιν δ' ἐν μέσσοισι πάϊς φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ
 ἱμερόεν κιθάριζε, λίνον δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ᾄειδε
 λεπταλέῃ φωνῇ· τοὶ δὲ ῥήσσοντες ἀμαρτῆ
 μολπῆ τ' ἰυγμῶ τε ποσὶ σκαίροντες ἔποντο.

Young girls and young men, in all their light-hearted innocence,
 carried the kind, sweet fruit away in their woven baskets,
 and in their midst a youth with a singing lyre played charmingly
 upon it for them, and sang the beautiful song for Linos
 in a light voice, and they followed him, and with singing and whistling
 and light dance-steps of their feet kept time to the music.
 (transl. after R. Lattimore)

Finally, dance is the protagonist, this time alone, of the final scene of the Shield of Achilles (vv. 590–606), the choral character of which prompts the listener to extend it to fill the entire outer circular band of the Shield, surrounded only by the stream of Oceanus.

Il. 18. 590–606

ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις,
 τῷ ἴκελον οἶόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ εὐρείῃ
 Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.
 ἔνθα μὲν ἡῖθεοι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεισίβοιοι
 ὠρχεῦντ', ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χεῖρας ἔχοντες.
 τῶν δ' αἰ μὲν λεπτάς ὀθόνας ἔχον, οἱ δὲ χιτῶνας
 εἴατ' εὐννήτους, ἦκα στίλβοντας ἐλαίῳ·
 καὶ ῥ' αἰ μὲν καλὰς στεφάνας ἔχον, οἱ δὲ μαχαίρας
 εἶχον χρυσείας ἐξ ἄργυρέων τελαμώνων.
 οἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν θρέξασκον ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσι
 ῥεῖα μάλ', ὡς ὅτε τις τροχὸν ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμῃσιν
 ἐζόμενος κεραμεὺς πειρήσεται, αἶ κε θέρσιν·
 ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ θρέξασκον ἐπὶ στίχας ἀλλήλοισι.
 πολλὸς δ' ἱμερόεντα χορὸν περίσταθ' ὄμιλος
 τερπόμενοι· δοιῶ δὲ κυβιστητῆρε κατ' αὐτοὺς
 μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες ἐδίδνεον κατὰ μέσσοις.

And the renowned smith of the strong arms made elaborate on it
 a dancing floor, like that which once in the wide spaces of Knosos
 Daidalos built for Ariadne of the lovely tresses.
 And there were young men on it and young girls, sought for their beauty
 with gifts of oxen, dancing, and holding hands at the wrist. These
 wore, the maidens long light robes, but the men wore tunics
 of finespun work and shining softly, touched with olive oil.
 And the girls wore fair garlands on their heads, while the young men
 carried golden knives that hung from sword-belts of silver.
 At whiles on their understanding feet they would run very lightly,
 as when a potter crouching makes trial of his wheel, holding
 it close in his hands, to see if it will run smooth. At another
 time they would form rows, and run, rows crossing each other.
 And around the lovely chorus of dancers stood a great multitude
 happily watching, while among the dancers two acrobats
 led the measures of song and dance revolving among them.
 (transl. after R. Lattimore)

The characters are once again adolescents, *eitheoi* and *parthenoi*, who in this context seem to be heading already towards the matrimonial sphere (Menichetti 2006, 13–14; D'Acunto 2009, 179–188). In fact, the text specifies that the boys hold the girls by the wrist: it is thus a mixed, alternating dance, in which the gesture of the *cheir epì karpò* evokes the nuptial abduction from the dance and the dominion exercised by the future husband over his wife. Further, the *parthenoi* have soft garments of linen, which bestows *charis* on them, as well as wreaths, which could also represent their heading towards the *gamos*. The young men wear not only well worked chitons but also short swords/daggers (*machairai*), which demonstrates that their age class is an immediate prelude to that of the adult and warrior. The poet's famous simile of the potter's wheel specifies the circular form of the *choròs* formed by the *parthenoi* and the *eitheoi*. In alternation with this, a dance develops that consists of lines that meet each other. To them are added two acrobats, *kybistetere*, who open the dance by pirouetting in the middle.

Already in the ancient world commentators in the scholia on the passage (schol. *ad Il.* 18. 591. T. 565–566 Erbse) had linked this final dance to the circular, initiatory dance of the *geranos* which the youths of Athens, led by Theseus, staged around the altar of Delos on their return journey from Crete after abducting Ariadne. The initiatory, pre-matrimonial character of this dance has been elucidated by scholars a number of times (e.g. Menichetti 2006, 13–14; D'Acunto 2009, 179–188), an aspect that is anyway made explicit by the comparison in the same section of the Shield between this dance and the one that Daedalus made at Knossos for Ariadne 'of the beautiful hair'.

Therefore the Shield restores to us an image of dance as one of the community's central social mechanisms, the expression of the age classes, and in particular that of the adolescents both male and female. The dance is organized in choruses that move in unison to the sound of music and song and in which there is room for acrobats who give the performance a distinctive character.

2 The representations of dance in Geometric pottery: the *geranos*

Aspects and themes that are closely similar to these three episodes recur in the representations of dance in Geometric art, especially on pottery, which brings us to the heart of one of the central questions raised by the Shield of Achilles: that is, which world and which realia are evoked and transfigured in this poetic-figurative sphere? On this issue, Fittschen's 1973 observation remains valid today, namely that, both in the dance scenes and in others in the Shield, the figurative prototypes evoked and transfigured in it are those of Geometric Greece, because in Minoan-Mycenean art there are never 'mixed' dances in which both men and women meet (Fittschen 1973, 15–16; D'Acunto 2009, 179–188).

The mythical prototype of the initiatory dance, the *geranos* staged at Delos by Theseus and the Athenian youths freed by him, was identified by Nicolas Coldstream in an image painted on the neck of an oinochoe in the British Museum from southern Italy (London, British Museum, Inv. 1849,0518.18: Coldstream 1968; Langdon 2008, 177–178, fig. 3. 24) (fig. 2). It is the work of a vase painter of Euboean training, dated to the second half of the 8th century. On it we find already the male-female alternation that characterizes the scene as a dance of initiatory character, such as that in the famous image on the François Vase (Torelli 2007, 19–24, 88–91; Hedreen 2011; Shapiro, Iozzo, and Lezzi 2013, pls. 10–15). On the London oinochoe the identification as the *geranos* is suggested above all by the particular garment worn by the two female figures, which is a type that in the period of Euboean colonization would appear to be intentionally 'archaizing'. This garment recalls Minoan dress, characterized by the flounced skirt and bodice open at the centre to reveal the breasts, which are precisely indicated in our image. The presumed figure of Theseus, at the centre, has his right hand on the breast of the presumed Ariadne: she holds a wreath, identified by Coldstream with the 'crown of light' traditionally associated with this heroine, or to be identified simply with a courtship or wedding wreath (see Langdon 2008, 27, 156, 192–193; D'Acunto 2013, 113–121). The Athenian youths

freed by Theseus, represented as they engage in a dance movement, are identified by the oar that they are holding propped up on the ground. This 'Crane Dance' would be further evoked by the fact that a water bird appears between two of the figures and water birds return insistently in the other two friezes on the shoulders and belly of the vase.

It should be recalled that an analogous bird appears also on the scene on a Late Geometric krater in London (British Museum, Inv. 1899,0219.1) (fig. 3) for which the usually preferred identification, among many possibilities, is the abduction of Ariadne by Theseus: the heroine holds a wreath and has unbound hair, a sign of *charis*, like the presumed Ariadne of the British Museum oinochoe and the *kalliplokamos* in the passage of the Shield of Achilles (Snodgrass 1998, 33–34, fig. 13; Coldstream 2003, 353–357, fig. 112b).



Fig. 2: London, British Museum, Inv. 1849,0518.18: oinochoe, frieze painted on the neck, Theseus and Ariadne (drawing from Walters 1912, pl. 25)

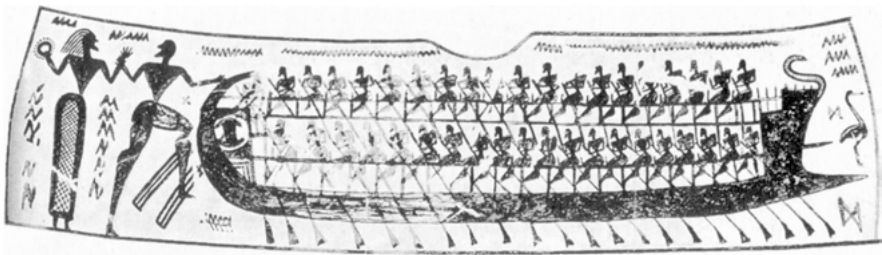


Fig. 3: London, British Museum, Inv. 1899,0219.1, said to be from Thebes: late Geometric Attic krater, prob. Theseus and Ariadne (drawing from *JHS* 19, 1899, pl. VIII)

3 The first representations on Attic Geometric pottery (750–720 BCE): the nuptial abduction and the agonistic component of dance

The centrality and paradigmatic value that is assumed by the theme of dance in the figurative imagery of Geometric Greece is immediately evident even just from the high numerical incidence of its representations on vases in the whole of the Greek world. Taking as starting-point the reference works on this topic – those of R. Tölle-Kastenbein, M. Wegner and, most recently, the fundamental work by S. Langdon – a quick survey allowed me to count 125 occurrences. These consist both of entire vases and of fragments and cover a chronological span from ca. 750 to 675 BCE. Among these, the corpora of dance images that are by a long way the largest are those of Attic pottery, comprising 50 occurrences, and Argive pottery, comprising 54 instances, in both cases calculated on the basis of Langdon's catalogue (Wegner 1968; Tölle-Kastenbein 1964; Langdon 2008, 114–233, tables 3. 2, 3. 3). This motivated the decision to concentrate in the present contribution on the Attic and Argive corpora, as the most significant ones, and to test the affinities and differences between the two settings, which are distinct both in their production and their contexts.

In the Attic pottery, the theme of dance recurs on vases found in securely established contexts in Athens (tombs, the sanctuary on the Acropolis, wells in the Agora) and in its territory, at Anavyssos (a tomb), at Eleusis, at Marathon, at Merenda (a tomb), at Mounichia (the sanctuary of Artemis), at Trachones (a tomb), at Vouliagmeni and, further, at Aegina (Langdon 2008, 170–171, table 3.3). The circulation of these vases almost exclusively within Athens and its territory substantially confirms the close connection between these dance scenes and the Athenian context, thus confirming also that they are a direct expression of the city's figurative world.

The theme of dance is introduced into Attic pottery in LG Ib, i. e. on the traditional chronology between 750 and 735 BCE. Here it appears in images that refer not to funerary scenes but to festive ones (Langdon 2008, 166–174). The practice of narration through images had been introduced into Geometric pottery only a few decades previously, at the end of MG II. At the start of LG Ia, the Dipylon Painter, followed a little later by other major Athenian workshops, had made a decisive contribution to giving voice to the demands of the hegemonic aristocratic groups, through the development of a pottery language of images centred on the paradigmatic themes of the funeral, the duel and combat of heroic character, and episodes from myth (Ahlberg 1971; Ahlberg-Cornell 1971;



Figs. 4–5:Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Institut für Klassische Archäologie, Inv. 2657: Attic oinochoe, LG Ib; h. 32,8 cm. (courtesy of the Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Institut für Klassische Archäologie; photo: Thomas Zachmann)

Snodgrass 1998; Coldstream 2008, 29–41; D’Agostino 2008; Coulié 2013, 61–94; Giuliani 2013, 19–52).

As regards the theme of dance, one of the first images of LG Ib is that painted on the Tübingen oinochoe (University, Institute of Classical Archaeology, Inv. 2657) attributed to the Burly Workshop (Tölle-Kastenbein 1964, 11–12, no. 1, pls. 1–2; Langdon 2008, 144–145, fig. 3. 10) (figs. 4–5). A *choròs* of youths, both male and female, led by a player of the *phorminx* winds around the circumference of the vase, evoking the circularity of the dance, which moves as the vase is turned, as in the image of the potter in the third episode of the Shield of Achilles. The figures, who hold each other’s hands, assume a repetitive position, which reflects the image of the *choròs* whose members execute the same steps and movements in unison, as is made explicit in the second episode of the Shield of Achilles and is described in the third. The males are grouped together, as are the females. Most of the former have their arms raised, while the latter have their hands lowered and also hold a garland. Within this arrangement the first two figures on each side of the male *choròs* are distinguished by the fact that they hold the hand of the first two female ones, evoking the gesture of abduction from the dance that is the prelude to the *gamos*. The fact that the penis and breasts are made visible shows that the participants are nude, making evi-



Figs. 6–7: Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Inv. 874, from the Kerameikos: Attic skyphos, LG Ib; h. 7 cm., dm. 16 cm. (courtesy of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens; photographer: G. Patrikianos)

dent the erotic potential. Therefore, this image, even if it is less explicit than the mixed dance formations of the *geranos* and of the third passage in the Shield of Achilles, seems likewise to suggest an initiatory character, especially in the case of the two female characters, who are grabbed by the two male ones and are located approximately in line with the ideal centre of the vase.

In a skyphos from the Kerameikos (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Inv. 874) belonging to the same circle of the Burly Workshop, the internal frieze bears another scene of choral dance, the segments of which are constituted respectively by: a line of girls; two girls; and a line of youths who precede another line of girls (Borell 1978, 18, no. 62, pl. 14; Rombos 1988, 498–499, no. 304, pl. 68b; Langdon 2008, 166–168, fig. 3.20) (figs. 6–7). The figures hold each other's hands, except a group of girls who dance alone. Each of the three segments is led by a player of the *phorminx*. Some of the youths bear a sword. The girls wear an elaborate garment and a girdle, the ends of which are visible at the waist, an attribute which projects them ideally into the nuptial sphere (Langdon 2008, 151–152, *passim*). A line of tripods on the band around the outside of the vessel could be connected to the internal scene: it would represent the prizes in an *agôn* in music and choral dance (Langdon 2008, 167). B. Borell has proposed that this scene could be connected to the Attic festival of the Thargelia, in which the victors in dithyrambic choruses dedicated to Apollo Patroos the tripods won as prizes (Borell 1978, 65, n. 168). Whether it concerns this or another festival is impossible to say. However that may be, the interpretation of the tripods as prizes in the agons is supported by the famous episode described by Hesiod in the *Works and Days* (vv. 651–659): the poet's hymn wins him a tripod on the occasion of the funeral games instituted for Amphidamas in Chalcis.



Figs. 8–9: Copenhagen, National Museum of Denmark, Inv. 727: Attic kantharos, ca. 720 BCE; h. 17 cm. (courtesy of the National Museum of Denmark)

On a well known kantharos in Copenhagen (National Museum, Inv. 727), dated around 720 BCE, the various scenes arranged on two panels have agons as their guiding thread, at least in part: this is demonstrated on the one hand by the scene of boxing and on the other by the duel with swords, the non-warlike character of which is suggested by the fact that the two contenders bear neither helmets nor shields (Ahlberg-Cornell 1987; Langdon 2008, 197–200, fig. 4.1–3) (figs. 8–9). The scenes of dance present on both panels could therefore belong in the same agonistic sphere. This is especially true of the acrobatic dance in armour of the two warriors, whose heroic connotations are made clear by the shield of Dipylon type and double spear; their dance is taking place in the presence of a possible judge to the left. In the same panel the dance of an acrobat appears, accompanied by a player of the phorminx and by two individuals who simultaneously clap their hands and perhaps stamp the ground by one foot, as is suggested by their joined hands and raised foot: this scene recalls the acrobatic dance of the Shield of Achilles. The other panel shows at the centre a group constituted by two lions devouring a person, the significance of which within the iconographic programme of the kantharos has been much discussed by the critics: according to some, this is supposed to represent a real combat; according to others, it is a fight with a tame lion (a kind of circus scene); or, according to yet others, a symbolic scene of death of the heroic type (this last is the hypothesis that I tend to prefer: see Langdon 2008, 197).

To the right of this group appear two dancers, identified as such by the garlands they are holding in their clasped hands and by the presence facing them of a male youth who plays the phorminx. The women hold on their head a hydria, and so are engaged in, so to speak, an equilibristic dance. In the same panel, the interpretation of the group on the left has been much discussed. It

consists of a nude male figure armed with a sword who with one hand grabs both the hands of a female figure: I tend to share the identification, proposed by S. Langdon, that this is an episode of abduction from the same dance that is represented on the right of the panel; this is demonstrated by the garland held by the girl, as well as by the visibility of her breast (attributes that recur also in the two figures on the right).

Thus, the skyphos from the Kerameikos and the kantharos in Copenhagen, which stage performances in music and dance, as well as reflecting courtship or the nuptial abduction, also seem to refer to agonistic contexts. In the same period the existence of dance *agônes* is attested by the famous Dipylon oinochoe (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Inv. 192), dated around 740 BCE, the inscription on which makes explicit that the vase had gone as a prize to the victor in such a contest (Guarducci 1987, 41–42, pl. 2; Powell 1988; Jeffery 1990, 76, no. 1, pl. 1):

ἢος νῦν ὀρχεστῶν πάντων ἀταλότατα παίζει τῷ τόδε καλμιν

Whoever now out of all the dancers plays most graciously, his (is) this...
(transl. after M. Guarducci)

On the Dipylon oinochoe, it is worth citing the authoritative opinion of B. Powell: ‘I suggest that the occasion when the aoidos, whose words are partly preserved on the jug, sang, was an athletic contest in the form of an acrobatic dance ... I suggest that in Athens ... in c. 740–730, an aoidos was present at such an eristic dance [*scil. Od. 8, 266–366*], and composed the Dipylon verse. Perhaps he played for the dancers too. Certainly he announced the prize for the dance in hexametric verse, and some of his very words survive, inscribed on the prize’ (Powell 1988, 76–77).

As regards the agonistic character of the dance, with reference to the three Attic Geometric vases just discussed, it is worth recalling another famous scene of Homeric dance: that on the island of the Phaeacians in Book 8 of the *Odyssey* (see Powell 1988, 76–77; Palmisciano 2012). In this episode, set at the court of Alcinous and watched by Odysseus, the dance follows the *athla* and takes place in two stages: in the first (at vv. 258–265) a *choròs* of *kouroi prothebai*, that is ‘those in the first flower of youth’, in a dance beat out by their footsteps, surrounds the bard Demodocus, who with the *phorminx* and with his song begins to narrate the love affair of Ares and Aphrodite:

Od. 8. 258–265
αἰσμνήται δὲ κριτοὶ ἐννέα πάντες ἀνέσταν
δῆμοι, οἳ κατ’ ἀγῶνας εὐὲ πρήσσεσκον ἕκαστα,

λείηναν δὲ χορόν, καλὸν δ' εὖρυναν ἀγῶνα.
 κήρυξ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἦλθε φέρων φόρμιγγα λίγειαν
 Δημοδόκῳ· ὁ δ' ἔπειτα κί' ἐς μέσον· ἀμφὶ δὲ κοῦροι
 πρωθῆβαι ἴσταντο, δαήμονες ὄρχηθμοῖο,
 πέπληγον δὲ χορόν θεῖον ποσίν· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
 μαρμαρυγὰς θηγεῖτο ποδῶν, θαύμαζε δὲ θυμῷ.

And stewards rose, nine in all, picked from the realm
 to set the stage for contests: masters-at-arms who
 leveled the dancing-floor to make a fine broad ring.
 The herald returned and placed the vibrant lyre now
 in Demodocus' hands, and the bard moved toward the center,
 flanked by boys in the flush of youth, skilled dancers
 who stamped the ground with marvelous pulsing steps
 as Odysseus gazed at their flying, flashing feet,
 his heart aglow with wonder.
 (transl. after R. Fagles)

In this context, the presence of judges associated with the contests, who mark out a space for a dance defined as an *agon*, makes clear the agonistic character of the dance, even if the specific episode does not give rise to a true judgement.

In the dance that follows the performance of Demodocus (at vv. 370–380), the protagonists are two solo acrobatic dancers, who at first spin with a ball, then do so singly in turns, surrounded by the other *kouroi* who beat the time, evidently by clapping and/or stamping the ground:

Od. 8. 370–380
 Ἀλκίνοος δ' Ἄλιον καὶ Λαοδάμαντα κέλευσε
 μουνὰξ ὀρχήσασθαι, ἐπεὶ σφισιν οὐ τις ἔριζεν.
 οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν σφαῖραν καλήν μετὰ χερσίν ἔλοντο,
 πορφυρέην, τήν σφιν Πόλυβος ποίησε δαΐφρων,
 τήν ἕτερος ῥίπτασκε ποτὶ νέφεα σκιδέντα
 ἰδνωθεὶς ὀπίσω· ὁ δ' ἀπὸ χθονὸς ὑψόσ' ἀερθεὶς
 ῥηϊδίως μεθέλεσκε, πάρος ποσὶν οὐδας ἰκέσθαι.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ σφαῖρην ἂν ἰθὺν πειρήσαντο,
 ὠρχεῖσθην δὴ ἔπειτα ποτὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ
 ταρφέ' ἀμειβομένῳ· κοῦροι δ' ἐπελήκεον ἄλλοι
 ἑσταότες κατ' ἀγῶνα, πολὺς δ' ὑπὸ κόμπος ὀρώρει.

Next the king asked Halius and Laodamas to dance,
 the two alone, since none could match that pair.
 So taking in hand a gleaming sea-blue ball,
 made by the craftsman Polybus—arching back,
 one prince would hurl it toward the shadowy clouds
 as the other leaping high into the air would catch it
 quickly, nimbly, before his feet hit ground again.

Once they'd vied at throwing the ball straight up,
 they tossed it back and forth in a blur of hands
 as they danced across the earth that feeds us all,
 while boys around the ring stamped out the beat
 and a splendid rhythmic drumming sound arose
 (transl. after R. Fagles)

This scene of beating time recalls that on the right of one of the panels of the Copenhagen kantharos.

4 The Attic representations between 720 and 675 BCE: a 'female' iconographic system centred on choruses of adolescent women

In Attic pottery down to LG IIA (735–720 BCE), that is, down to around 720 BCE, the dance scenes are prevalently associated with vessel forms whose primary function is that of the consumption of wine (skyphoi, kantharoi and above all oinochoai) (Langdon 2008, 166–171, table 3. 3). To the contrary, between LG IIB (720–700 BCE) and the Early Protoattic (700–675 BCE) such scenes are predominantly represented on vase forms associated in their strict use with the female gender: above all the hydria, but also in the Early Protoattic the monumental types of hydria and amphora with elongated neck, which form the prototype of the loutrophoroi, the vases intended to contain water for the nuptial bath (Langdon 2008, 126–174, esp. 171–174; Rocco 2008). The dance scene turns around the neck of the vase, playing once more on the analogy between the vase form and the circular form of the *choròs*. The figures in them are as follows:

1. either exclusively girls (e.g. Roma, National Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia, Inv. 1212, hydria: Langdon 2008, 128–130, figs. 3. 1 and 11; Coldstream 2008, 60, 141 note 1) (figs. 10–11);
2. or girls and boys.

In the second case the girls and boys are:

- a. either alternating (e.g. Paris, Louvre Museum, Inv. CA 2985, Analatos Painter: Boardman 1998, 98, fig. 189; Rocco 2008, 27, no. An 2, pl. 2. 1) (fig. 12);



Figs. 10-11: Rome, National Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia, Inv. 1212: Attic hydria, early 7th century BCE; h. 45,6 cm (© National Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia; drawing from Blech 1982, fig. 39)



Fig. 12: Paris, Louvre Museum, Inv. CA 2985: Protoattic hydria-amphora, Analatos Painter; h. 80 cm. (drawing M. D'Acunto, from Kübler 1950, fig. 30)



Fig. 13: Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Inv.313: hydria, Analatos Painter; h. 55 cm. (courtesy of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens; photographer: G. Patrikianos)

- b. or arranged in groups that divide the girls from the boys (e.g. Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Inv. 313, hydria, Analatos Painter: Tölle-Kastenbein 1964, 20, no. 47, pl. 17; Boardman 1998, 98–99, fig. 188. 1–3; Rocco 2008, 28, no. An 11, pl. 1. 4) (fig. 13).

The male and female figures in this system of images of LG IIB – Early Protoattic are connoted as homogeneous from the point of view both of age class and social class through the repetition of the iconographic attributes that characterize them. The repetitive poses of the dancers mark it as a choral performance in unison. In some cases the musician is represented, who is always male.

The musicians that appear play the following instruments:

- a. *phorminx* (see the survey of the instruments in Tölle-Kastenbein 1964, Beil. V; Wegner 1968, 15, fig. 3);
- b. or lyre (e.g. on the hydria, Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Inv. 313; see Tölle-Kastenbein 1964, Beil. V; Wegner 1968, 15, fig. 3);
- c. or *aulòs* (e.g. on the amphora in Düsseldorf, Private Collection: Wegner 1968, 77, no. 75, pl. 5b; see Tölle-Kastenbein 1964, Beil. V) (fig. 14).

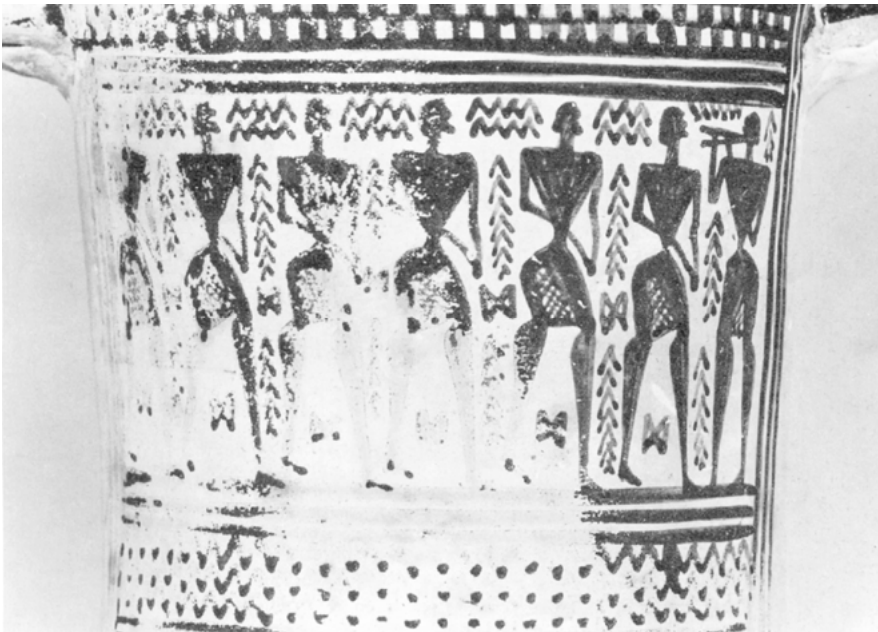


Fig. 14: Düsseldorf, Private Collection: Attic Late Geometric amphora, detail of the neck (from Wegner 1968, pl. 5b)

The music leads the chorus, whether it be a female or a male chorus. One may observe how the often central position of the musician evokes his position at the centre of a circular chorus and, at the same time, the guiding role that he assumes as a choregos.

The group of female dancers is the constant, and hence essential, element of this iconographic system of LG IIB – Early Protoattic, since the male dancers and the musician may be absent. That is to say, the female dancers are the minimal element of this system of images, the *condicio sine qua non*. This goes hand in hand with the fact that this iconographic system centred on the theme of the dance from 720 to 675 BCE is used on vessel forms that are specific to the feminine gender (the hydria and the amphora-loutrophoros). This makes clear that it is oriented to the feminine gender: it is conceived for the use and consumption of the female imaginary, of the Athenian woman at the turn of the 8th to the 7th century BCE (Langdon 2008, 126–196).

The specific meaning of this iconography of the dance is defined through attributes that identify the girls in terms of *age class*, *role* and *rank*: unbound long hair, dress, girdle, wreath and branch (Langdon 2008, 166–174, table 3. 3).

The long unbound hair, rendered with care by the painters with parallel strokes, is above all an indicator of gender: it distinguishes women from men, in whom such indications are absent. But, in the specific case of the iconography of the dance, it also identifies these dancing girls further as *parthenoi*, as maidens (Langdon 2008, 145–149). As in the Homeric epithet *kalliplokamos*, referring to Ariadne in the third dance episode of the Shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18. 592), the long unbound hair of these adolescents at the same time signals sexuality, fertility and availability for marriage.

Their *charis* is made clear also by their dress, the elaborate character of which is easier to understand if we consider it in relation to the opposite tendency towards stylization of the figure in Geometric pottery and, obviously to a lesser degree, in Protoattic pottery: the elaborate dress of these girls is, thus, a precise iconographic indicator, introduced by the painters *pour cause* into the dance scenes (see e.g. the *hydria* in Cambridge, Museum of Classical Archaeology, Inv. 345, LG IIB: Tölle-Kastenbein 1964, 21, pl. 18; the *hydria* in Rome, National Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia, Inv. 1212, Subgeometric; see Tölle-Kastenbein 1964, Beil. VI). In this iconographic system, the attribute of richly decorated dress can be a contextual identifier of the rank of the girls in the *choròs*.

It should, further, be emphasized that the girdle is indicated only in a small percentage of Attic images of dance from the late 8th to the early 7th century BCE (e.g. in the *hydria* of Villa Giulia, Inv. 1212). This is of a particular type, distinguished by one or more strands that hang down from the waist. The *zone* is an indicator of the age class and status of the girls, since it is worn from adolescent

years and is unbound at the moment of marriage (Bennett 1997, 125–160; Langdon 2008, esp. 151–152, 167–170, table 3. 3; cf Pandora in Hes. *Op.* 72; *Theog.* 573). In the *Odyssey*, in the episode of the union of Poseidon with the nymph Tyro, the god, immediately before uniting with her, undoes the *parthenikè zone* (*Od.* 11. 241–245). Therefore, in these representations of female dancers in Geometric pottery, the *zone*, or more particularly the *parthenikè zone*, marks the immediately pre-nuptial status of the *parthenos*. In this sense, it seems to me that the relative rarity with which this attribute is represented in the girls of the Attic Geometric *choroi* between 720 and 675 BCE limits them to an adolescent state and age class, that is, they are still *parthenoi/maidens tout court*, even though the other attributes show the emergence of sexuality and *charis*. In sum, in most cases these are not girls whose immediately pre-nuptial position is being emphasized. To the contrary, however, in the Kerameikos skyphos, from the phase preceding 720 BCE, the indication of the girdle, together with the recurrence in a pair of the dancers of the *cheir epi karpò* gesture, evokes specifically the nuptial abduction from the dance, as is suggested also in the final scene of the Shield of Achilles.

As regards the attributes held by the girls in their interlinked hands, that is, the wreath and the branch, they would fit many different readings, as the image should not be read in a simplistic way as a photographic reproduction of reality but as a symbolic construction of it (Vernant *et al.* 1984; D’Agostino and Cerchiai 1999). Thus the wreath can be a polysemic iconographic element: it may refer to wreaths really borne by female choruses; it may allude to the ritual context in which the performance takes place; and it may be, at the same time, a means by which the girls express their own *charis*; and, as a final potential sense, it may show aheading towards marriage, given that in the *gamos* wreaths are an attribute that connote the bride (Blech 1982; Oakley and Sinos 1993, 7–8, *passim*; Langdon 2008, 27–28, 156, 192–193; D’Acunto 2013, 114–120). Of course, more than one of these meanings may be in play at the same time in the reading of a single image.

Another recurring attribute in this system of dance images is the branch held in the hand of the *choroi* of dancers, both male and female, sometimes together with the wreath: the linked hands of the girls and boys hold a branch. The branch is normally represented by a stick from which twigs sprout, rendered with little parallel strokes; often the stick ends in a round element (Langdon 2008, 98–99, 153–156). In particular, it has been suggested that these are branches of laurel, myrtle, pine or olive. As Langdon has observed, the branch recurs in the Attic and Argive representations of dances with protagonists that are either exclusively feminine or mixed, but it is never certainly shown in dances that are exclusively male. In this iconographic system the branch is thus



Fig. 15: Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Institut für Klassische Archäologie, Inv. 1086: Attic pedestalled bowl, detail (courtesy of the Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Institut für Klassische Archäologie; photo: Thomas Zachmann)

an attribute that refers to performances and to figurative imagery in which it is the girl who occupies the central role (Langdon 2008, 154).

As with the wreath, the branch, too, could have been a real attribute held by the girls and youths on the occasion of these performances of musical-choral character. It is in fact a recurring attribute in ritual/processional contexts and choral performances of diverse character and dedicated to diverse divinities, such as: the Boeotian festival of the Daphnephoria, which took place every eight years to celebrate Apollo Ismenios and Galaxios (Procl. *Chrest. ap. Phot. Bibl.* 321b. 12–32; Paus. 9. 10. 4; cf Pind. fr. 94b Sn.–M.; see Lehnus 1984; Calame 1977a, 115–124; Langdon 2008, 182–183, fig. 3. 26); and the Attic *eiresione*, on the occasion of the festival of Apollo of the Pyanopsia (Eustath. *ad Il.* 22. 495; Plut. *Thes.* 18. 1; 22. 6–7; see Deubner 1932, 198–201; Parke 1977, 75–77; Parker 2005, 180, 204–206). At the same time and parallel to this sense, the branch could also have designated the context in which the performances took place, namely in the countryside, probably in an extra-urban sanctuary, as in the case of the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios at Thebes (Calame 1977a, 118–124). This may reflect the spatial mechanism by which, in the Greek world as in other societies, the rite of passage of the youth included their removal from the city in order to return to it in the new status (Brellich 1969; Calame 1977a, 169–357; Giuman 1999; Gentili and Perusino 2002; Parker 2005, 218–252).

Finally, as Langdon has shown, the branch can designate the momentarily liminal state of the *parthenos* as ‘wild’, not yet tamed. It is not by chance that the branch is an iconographic connotation shared with the centaurs, already from the earliest representations: when the centaur is peaceful, it holds the branch with the prey hung from it, while in fight it becomes its weapon (Lang-

don 2008, 95–110, 154, figs. 2. 14–19, 21). In this sense, the iconographic parallelism which, we could say, underpins both the female dancing with the branch and the centaur is a telling one, making evident the liminality, both territorial and in status, for which these *choroi* are preparing. An explicit case of this symbolic accord between girl and centaur is represented by a pedestalled high-rimmed bowl in Tübingen (University, Institute of Classical Archaeology, Inv. 1086), of the early 7th century (Tölle-Kastenbein 1964, pls. 20–21; Coldstream 2008, 63, note 2; Langdon 2008, 154–156, fig. 3.14) (fig. 15). Three figured panels are arranged around the rim. The central one, which is the principal one, represents two female dancers who hold each other's hand, look at each other and carry a branch in each of their hands. The two side panels present a centaur who holds in his hands two branches and has between his front legs a sapling or bush. The extra-urban setting is further emphasized by the presence of another two panels showing a volute tree, placed beside one of the centaur panels. Therefore in these images the dancers, like the centaurs, are connected to a setting in the countryside and to a liminal state, which for centaurs is normal, whereas for girls it is temporary, being linked to their age class. They are still presented in their status as *parthenoi tout court*, but, through the stages of initiation, they will be able to reach the age class of the adult married woman (parallel to the male youths who dance with them). The figure of the centaur has been shown to hold in the Greek imaginary a meaning that is both pedagogical (through the figure of Chiron) and initiatory (Lebessi 1996). Therefore, in the Tübingen cup the centaur is a kind of mythological *alter ego* of the girls' momentary condition of marginality and it hints at their initiatory progress. Their status as *parthenoi* is fixed through the image of the dance.

As regards the male dancers, when present, they dance in unison like the girls and are characterized as *eitheoi*: they usually hold hands; in some cases they wear a garment, in others they are nude; in some cases long hair is expressly represented, in others it seems rather to be short hair, while in yet others it is impossible to establish whether the hair is long or short, given the stylization in silhouette of Geometric vase painting. In the images prior to 720 BCE some of these young men bear a sword: as with the *eitheoi* in the third dance of the Shield of Achilles, this attribute foreshadows the status of warriors that they will assume as adults and full citizens (Menichetti 2006, 13–14; D'Acunto 2009, 180). This is consistent with the picture that has been reconstructed above: the earliest Attic representations, including those on the feminine side, focalize in a more targeted way the initiatory character of the dance, which is the immediate prelude to the transition to the status of adults.



Fig. 16: Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Inv. 784, from the Dipylon necropolis: Attic skyphos; dm. 12,5 cm. (courtesy of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens; photographer: G. Fafalis)

The fact that these *parthenoi* are part of the elite is emphasized at the iconographic level by the association that is introduced on some of these vases between the frieze with the dance/musical performance and another of warrior-heroic character: the theme of chariots and warriors on foot, armed in the heroic manner (e.g. fig. 10). This iconography is normally used as a form of self-representation by adults. Evidently, the *parthenoi* who dance delicately to the sound of song and music have at their back the Athenian aristocratic groups, who are acknowledged in the warlike model of the heroes, and the girls potentially have a splendid *gamos* with an *aristos*-warrior in their near future.

But in which contexts should we imagine that these choral and dance performances, accompanied by music and song, took place? We should see them as predominantly set in the context of sanctuaries in the countryside and on the occasion of civic festivals dedicated to the principal divinities with responsibilities toward the world of women and to their growing up and rites of passage: in Attica we should think primarily of Artemis, with her sanctuaries of initiatory

character at Brauron and Mounichia (Palaiokrassa 1991; Giuman 1999; Montepaone 1999; Gentili and Perusino 2002; Parker 2005, 218–252), but certainly not only her, since the dances are relevant to many festive occasions dedicated also to other divinities of the pantheon.

The image of a ritual-festive context of dance is restored to us in an explicit manner by a skyphos discovered in a female tomb of the Dipylon necropolis (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Inv. 784: Borell 1978, 8, no. 24, pl. 20; Langdon 2008, 170–171, fig. 3. 21) (fig. 16). Converging towards a seated divine figure or cult statue is a *choròs* of girls with unbound hair: the three on the left hold a branch, while the one facing the divinity holds in her right hand a branch and in her left a wreath, which she is evidently in the process of offering to the divinity. In the frieze there also appear two facing sphinxes and a figure that holds a lyre and a branch. At the sides of this last figure are represented two warriors armed in the heroic manner with double spear and shield of the Dipylon type: the hypothesis that these two persons are engaged in a dance in armour remains possible, given their association with the musician and the ritual context of the scene, but it is not clearly demonstrated by their actions. It has been shown that this image may have been influenced by depictions of processions/dances in Near Eastern art (Carter 1972, 46–47, pl. 11b–c). However, even if such influences are certainly possible, this image clearly reflects, in some ways, a Greek ritual context, as is demonstrated both by the feminine figures with their characteristic attributes and by the two warriors, armed according to Geometric iconography (see Langdon 2008, 171, fig. 3. 22).

5 The representations on Attic pottery of 720–675 BCE as testimony to choral performances by *parthenoi*

What can these representations tell us in terms of ‘submerged literature’? And, that is, turning to that range of aspects and situations that lie behind the definition of L. E. Rossi and the present volumes on ‘submerged literature’, to what extent are these images illustrative of poetic performances / choral performances that have not been preserved by the transmitted literature?

The question becomes clear in all its significance for literary history if we bear in mind that these images refer to the same chronological moment as an important phase in the redaction of the Homeric poems and the activity of Hesiod: we are, therefore, at the origins of Greek literature or a few decades before

it, as regards the earliest compositions of choral lyric that have come down to us.

In this specific question, the issue is whether these images reflect in a fairly realistic way contemporary performances formed by dancing choruses led by a musician and accompanied by song. Or, to the contrary, whether they present symbolic elaborations that construct a virtual reality by transmitting a certain system of values that have force in relation to a primarily female perspective on a world that is otherwise dominated by the reference to 'heroic' values.

In all probability, both of these answers contain elements of truth. On this topic it is worth recalling, as illustration, the famous question of the 'irrealist' (because anachronistic) appearance of the shield of the Dipylon type in Geometric images that relate to 'reality', such as those of the funeral. From this we can see clearly how these Geometric iconographies are in some cases constructed out of segments of reality that are in part virtual, and so live an ideal life projected into a distant past that pervaded the imagery of the Geometric elites (Snodgrass 1964, 58–60; Snodgrass 1998; Dakoronia 2006, 173; D'Agostino 2008).

Yet in our specific case our knowledge of the subsequent literary genres of Greek lyric, including lyric choral performances, must lead us to acknowledge that, while we are certainly dealing with iconographic constructions, they also clearly draw on real performances, choral in character and accompanied by music and of course by poetic song, reflecting in the relation between the chorus of adolescents and the musician, at least in part, the ways in which these really occurred. In this perspective, these Athenian images, especially those from 720–675 BCE, should be interpreted as reflecting an initial phase of choral lyric: that is to say, as reflecting those choral compositions subsequently termed *partheneia*, of which the earliest fragments available to us are by the Spartan poet Alcman, active towards the end of the 7th century BCE (Calame 1977a, 81–84, 128–140; Calame 1977b; Lonsdale 1993, 193–205). It is worth recalling the conclusions of C. Calame's book in his own words, on the subject of the structure of these compositions for choral performances by adolescents, with special reference to two poems by Alcman, including the famous work transmitted in the Mariette papyrus in the Louvre (Alcm. *PMG* fr. 1 and 3):

... la recherche morphologique ... a permis d'identifier un certain nombre de traits sémantiques décrivant dans leur activité et dans leur fonction respectives les participantes à la représentation chorale. C'est ainsi que *le groupe des choreutes, en général des jeunes filles*, dont le nombre peut varier des trois à cinquante avec une moyenne d'une dizaine de participantes, est caractérisé par les traits de 'contemporain', d' 'appartenance familiale ou géographique' et de 'compagnonnage'; au cours de l'exécution chorale, il assume *une forme généralement circulaire*, articulée autour d'un point central (d'où les traits constitu-

tifs de ‘circularité’ et de ‘centre’) et il est organisé selon un ‘ordre’ déterminé. Face à ce groupe, en général *en son centre, on trouve le personnage du ou de la chorège dont la fonction se définit en termes essentiellement musicaux*; ayant institué le groupe choral, le ou la chorège introduit pour les choreutes *le chant et la danse* et, par l’intermédiaire d’un accompagnement musical sur *la lyre ou la flûte*, il ou elle conduit les jeunes danseuses. Ensemble, les choreutes et leur chef prennent donc en charge, selon de modalités qui peuvent varier d’une interprétation musicale à l’autre, les éléments constitutifs de la musique grecque: la ‘danse’, le ‘chant’, et l’ ‘accompagnement musical’. C’est dans l’unité de cette activité que se réalise la cohésion du groupe formé par chorège et choreutes. On notera qu’en plus de sa fonction de direction, la chorège se distingue par des qualités de beauté et de vertu supérieures ... ces rites choraux consacrent essentiellement les différents moments marquant *le passage de la jeune Grecque de l’adolescence à l’âge adulte* ... Artémis, Apollon, Héra et Aphrodite, pour ne citer que les plus importantes, apparaissent comme les divinités chargées de protéger dans ses phases successives ce processus d’intégration de l’adolescente à la société des adultes ... enfin, le choeur féminin s’est révélé être, par analogie, avec d’autres associations de même type, *un groupe à fondement institutionnelle* (Calame 1977b, 10–11; italics were introduced by myself).

No one will fail to note the clear analogies with the Attic representations just discussed, especially with those datable between 720 and 675 BCE, analogies which we can summarize in the following points:

1. the group of *choreutai* identified as equals among themselves and constituted essentially by adolescent girls;
2. the circular form of the chorus, alluded to by the circular form of the vase;
3. the movement of the dance, evoked by the possibility that the vase could be rotated, as in the simile of the potter’s wheel in the third dance of the Shield of Achilles;
4. the choregos’ position at the centre of the chorus;
5. the choregos as musician who leads the song and dance of the *choreutai* to the accompaniment of the lyre or *aulòs*;
6. that the performances are carried out under the aegis of the gods, including Artemis, in the context of civic festivals and in the setting of sanctuaries;
7. the role played by these choral rites in the context of the transition from the adolescent state to that of the adult married woman;
8. the anchoring of the choral rite within the institutions on which the city’s system of female age classes is founded.

These two final points, which emerge from the analysis of the literary compositions, allow us to establish the meaning of the motif of adolescent choruses facing a musician in Attic iconography, especially between 720 and 675 BCE. The introduction of this theme into the figurative imagery of this period evidently reflects various aspects of society: above all, the institutional centrality

that is assumed by the organization of the adolescents in Athenian society of the period; then, clearly, the central role played by music and song in this process of approaching adulthood and the married state; also a focus on the female world, in an iconographic system otherwise with an imbalance towards characteristically male themes, such as war on a heroic basis. On this topic, it should be recalled, as we have shown above, that the Attic images of dance between 720 and 675 BCE recur predominantly on vase forms associated strictly with the feminine gender. It is clear, then, that *these representations of choral performances by parthenoi should be understood essentially as a function of an imagery conceived 'in the feminine', and directed in particular at adolescents*. These Geometric images provide evidence for how the *parthenoi* were anchored within the civic institutions of the system of age classes, based on mechanisms of education and rituals that would allow them to proceed to the *gamos* within the system of the aristocratic families of the polis.

Allowing myself a little interpretive licence, I would like to argue that in the poems of Alcman under discussion we find the same grace that pervades our representations of women, music and dance: this because both of them – the Geometric images and the works of the Spartan poet – express a point of view that is at least partly female, within the rigidly aristocratic structures of politics and society of their time, as was the case in Athens and Sparta.

In this general framework, however, the variety of the Attic images should be emphasized: choruses only of women and mixed choruses, the latter either alternating or in groups; the presence or absence of a musician, who, in his turn, may be an *auletes* or a player of the cithara or lyre; figures that are nude or clothed; differences in attributes (wreath, branch, garment, hair, girdle). These variables within the iconographic system suggest that the images could reflect a plurality of festive occasions, a plurality of ritual forms and performances, though still based on a common denominator, which is the fact of being centred on the relation between the chorus of adolescents and the music. In this sense, the present study should be developed further, through the construction of a more elaborate interpretive system that would correlate the images to their specific find-contexts, when these are known, of sanctuary or tomb: in the case of sanctuary finds by addressing the question of a possible relation between the dance and the specific cult, with corresponding forms of ritual; and in the case of funerary finds, correlating the vase to the anthropological data and the grave goods, with all the indications that can come from that in terms of indications of gender, age and social status.

Finally, an important aspect of our analysis should be problematized: what we have until now defined as representations of dance could also simply be processions. The choruses of girls and boys could reflect variables that include

both choruses of dance in the strict sense, such as those of the Shield of Achilles and Alcman's works, and also choruses that are rather 'processional', as in the case of the Theban Daphnephoria. Of course, it is in some cases difficult for us modern interpreters to apply a distinction between these two cases within the Attic iconographic corpus. We may continue to use the term 'dance' for our images, provided that we are conscious that it is used in a broad sense: these Geometric representations of 'dance' may conceal a dual presentation of the performance of the chorus, namely that of the dance proper and that of the procession. In particular it seems to me that an instance like that of the *choròs* that takes place in the presence of a divinity on the Dipylon skyphos (fig. 16) may rather refer to the processional sphere. On the other hand, the greater part of the other representations in the corpus, which are articulated in the relation set up between the predominantly female *choròs* and the musician, by introducing a rhythmic-musical component are rather referring to performances of dance proper, linked to choral lyric and centred on the theme of the age classes of the *parthenoi*.

At the end of this part of my study dedicated to the Athenian iconographic system, I would like to return to the possible, thought-provoking forms of parallelism between literature and images. To abbreviate drastically (and hence with unavoidable simplifications), it seems to me that, on the one hand, the images that can be ascribed to the first chronological horizon, between 750 and 720 BCE, reflect more closely the contexts of dance described in the Homeric poems, signally those of the Shield of Achilles and of the 8th book of the *Odyssey*, on account of the following factors: the dynamic that sets in play a relation between chorus and male acrobatic dancers; the more clearly initiatory character of the dance, linked to nuptial abduction; and, finally, the introduction of agonistic components. In contrast, the Attic corpus between 720 and 675 BCE seems, rather, to find close parallels in those compositions articulated between the *choregos* and the chorus of adolescents that were destined to become the *partheneia* and which we know from the transmitted literature beginning with Alcman: they connote the age classes of the *parthenoi*, distinguishing their status and their progressive entry into the system of the polis. In this direction, it should be asked whether the introduction of this 'female' iconographic system into Attic pottery of the last 20 years of the 8th century BCE might not reflect specifically a significant moment in the process of structuring this literary genre, even if, of course, it would necessarily have been building on previous forms, which were, analogously, centred on the relation between poetic-musical performance and dance.

6 The Argive images of dance: the prelude to marriage and the festivals of Hera

Argive pottery represents the other complex of material well suited to the study of the iconography of dance in the Geometric period, since it offers a corpus of depictions that is equally large in number to the Attic corpus, namely more than 50 (Tölle-Kastenbein 1964; Wegner 1968; Langdon 2008, 146–147, 160–166, 180–196, tables 3. 2, 3. 4). These Argive depictions of dance fall into a relatively short chronological span, between 750 and 690 BCE, and are correspondingly repetitive in their syntax and attributes, which confers on this corpus a systemic character and reflects the exemplary value assigned to dance in the Argive figurative world.

The vases with dance scenes have been found in the city of Argos: in the sanctuary of the acropolis on the Larissa (Athena/Hera), in that of the Aspis (Apollo/Athena), in domestic contexts and in one funerary context. Or they were found in the territory of the Argive state: in the Heraion of Argos, at Prosymna, at Tiryns (in a sanctuary context dedicated to Hera and in a domestic context), and at Mycenae (Hera) (Langdon 2008, 161–162 table 3. 2, 181 table 3. 4). The only vase found outside Argive territory is a krater from Corinth (Corinth, Archaeological Museum, Inv. T 2545). This distribution of the finds demonstrates that these images of dance circulated within the polis of Argos: they



Fig. 17: Athens, National Archaeological Museum, from the Heraion of Argos: fragment of Argive krater (Ecole française d'Athènes / Émile Sérafis)



Figs. 18–19: Fragments of Argive kraters from the Heraion of Argos (Ecole française d’Athènes / Émile Sérafis)

evidently reflect the coherently Argive character both of the ritual mechanisms and performances and of the political and social imaginary proposed by this iconographic system. The sacred contexts, with the exception of the *Aspis*, demonstrate their specific link to the cult of Hera, the central deity of the Argive pantheon.

We should begin from the analysis of three fragments found in the Heraion of Argos, the famous extra-urban sanctuary that constitutes a symbolic projection of the city in its territory by signalling its control of the Argive plain and so of the agricultural resources of the *chora* (de Polignac 1996, 51–78; Billot 1997). This sanctuary is in fact located on a terrace above the plain and is linked visually with the acropolis of the Larissa at Argos on the other side of the plain. The three fragments belong either to the same vase or to two vases of large size: probably a krater (or, alternatively, a large pyxis). One of them is from the rim of the vessel and represents a female *choròs*, in which recur the attributes of the decorated garment, long girdle with three strands that hang in front of the waist and branches held in the linked hands (Athens, National Archaeological Museum: Wegner 1968, 74, no. 53, pl. 6d; Langdon 2008, 185–187, fig. 3. 27) (fig. 17). At the head of one side of the procession stands a young male acrobatic dancer who precedes a male figure striding, though the latter is largely lost: it seems likely that it is a musician who led the female chorus (as in the Attic images analysed above). The procession consists of *parthenoi*, as emerges from the attributes already discussed, but two specific ones are added: the branch, which could be interpreted as a pomegranate branch, held downwards by some of the

girls; and the *polos* worn on their heads. The presence of an aquatic bird interposed between the two male figures probably does not constitute a simple space-filler but specifies the scene's setting as outside the city (Langdon 2008, 185–187). The other two fragments, belonging to the belly of the vase, present respectively: a young nude male and a girl who hold hands, carrying a simple branch and a pomegranate branch; and another two female dancers who have the same iconography as the fragment from the lip (Langdon 2008, 186–187, fig. 3.28) (figs. 18–19). The *polos* connotes the young women as participants in a rite and is an attribute of Hera; the same attribute of the *polos* among the female dancers is found, for example, on a fragment from Tiryns. The powerful Argive deity is associated in the sources and iconography also with the pomegranate, which reveals her character as goddess *kourotrophos*, of fertility and of the *gamos*: this last role is reflected here in the *parthenoi*, on account above all of their long *zone* with hanging strands that distinguish its pre-nuptial character (Langdon 2008, 184–195). The smallest fragment makes it possible to be certain that the lines painted behind the head of the girls are not unbound hair, but ribbons hanging from the *polos*. This distinguishes, at least partially, the girls of this fragment from those of the Attic iconographic system of 720–675 BCE: the bound hair projects these Argive girls into a sphere that immediately precedes marriage or which belongs in an ideal sense to the context of marriage. These considerations have led Susan Langdon to advance the convincing hypothesis that the scene represents the ritual contexts of the processions/dances of the Heraia, the annual festival that took place in the extra-urban sanctuary of the Argives in honour of the goddess. These festivals, through the mechanism of ritual removal from and return to the city, exercised an initiatory force both on the male side, in the transition from the state of ephebe to adulthood, and on the female side, being associated with the *gamos*, which in its turn reflected the *hieròs gamos* of the goddess (Langdon 2008, 184–196, with extensive bibliography). We may recall in this connection as a term of comparison the initial image of the Shield of Achilles, in which the procession of the brides moves from their homes to the citadel and is followed by *kouroi* who dance, accompanied by players of the *aulòs* and cithara.

Among the Argive depictions of dance we may note another on a krater from Argos, which is among the earliest, being datable to the beginning of Argive LG I (750–730 BCE) and so more-or-less contemporary to the first Attic scenes (Argos, Archaeological Museum, Inv. C 240: Coldstream 2008, 126, 129–130, 218 note 1; Langdon 2008, 165–167, fig. 3. 19) (fig. 20). The iconographic interpretation of this image has been much discussed. In the figured panel there is a line of female dancers at the top, nude and holding a branch and on whom the girdle with short strand hanging in front of the waist is marked out (*contra*



Fig. 20: Argos, Archaeological Museum, Inv. C 240, from Argos: fragment of Argive krater; h. 25,7 cm. (Ecole française d'Athènes / Émile Sérafis)

Courbin 1966, 492, according to whom they are male figures: this hypothesis is belied by the female attribute of the girdle). The scene is dominated by a male figure of clearly larger dimensions who holds a horse by the reins. Entirely exceptional is the transformation of the background fillers in an apparent attempt at 'scene setting': at the bottom a series of zigzag lines seems to represent water, perhaps a river, given its course; above this there is a group of dots that seem to depict pebbles and which could therefore indicate the shingle of the riverbank; the picture is completed by two fish and an aquatic bird, which evidently are not background fill but rather specify the setting of the scene as in the country. Does this refer to a specific place in the Argive landscape? If so, it could suggest that the watercourse represents the river Asterion, which borders the Argive Heraion at Prosymna: on the banks of the river grew the homonymous herb *asterion*, which was offered to Hera and whose leaves were used to make garlands (Paus. 2. 17. 1–2; 15. 5). The idea that the setting is the landscape around the Argive Heraion is tempting, because it would reflect the same context as the dances that have been proposed on the basis of the three fragments discussed above. This hypothesis is obviously impossible to demonstrate. However, it is in any case undoubtedly true that the scene of female dance represented here has been given a setting in the country, an aspect that is yet further emphasized by the branches held by the dancers: the dance is associated with the initiatory ritual mechanism by which the transition from the state of *parthenos* to that of



Fig. 21: Cambridge, MA, Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Museum Collection, Inv. 1954.33: fragment of Late Geometric Argive krater (Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College)



Fig. 22: Corinth, Archaeological Museum, Inv. T 2545, from Corinth: Late Geometric Argive krater; h. 31,1 cm. (from Coldstream 2008, pl. 30a)

married woman takes place through symbolic removal from the city and re-entry in the new condition.

Beyond these fairly distinctive representations, the system of Late Geometric Argive images of dance is very homogeneous in terms of its iconographic syntax and the figures' attributes (figs. 21–22). In fact, 38 of the 54 Argive images present the same iconographic scheme within a single panel: it consists of a line of matching female dancers who hold hands while carrying a branch and have a fairly elaborate garment, almost always bound at the waist by a girdle with several long strands hanging down in front (Langdon 2008, 160–167, figs. 3. 17–19, table 3. 2). Unlike the Attic representations, in which this attribute is found only in a small percentage, the constant presence of the *zone* in the Argive ones defines these figures in a more clearly pre-nuptial key. Another evident difference from the Attic images, and specifically from those dated between 720 and 675 BCE, is that the hair in the Argive images is never represented as unbound: in some cases it is even clear that the Argive image intends to depict bound hair. This too is an attribute that distinguishes the Argive *parthenoi* in a way that is more explicitly oriented to the matrimonial sphere. This aspect is rendered even more obvious in some depictions of female *choroi* that form the greater part of the vases found at Tiryns and Mycenae, and also in the Argive Heraion: in these images the hair and part of the head are covered by the veil (Langdon 2008, 146–147, fig. 3. 12) (fig. 23). As is well known, the veil is a matrimonial attribute and connotes the same status of wife



Fig. 23: From Tiryns: two Argive LG fragments (photograph: D-DAI-ATH-Tiryns 1294, photographer: H. Wagner; courtesy of the DAI in Athens)

as is held by Hera, who in the usual iconography is shown with a veil and in her unveiling in the presence of Zeus (Kossatz-Deissmann 1988).

It should be stressed that of these 38 vases, characterized by a fairly repetitive iconography of female dancers, a significant part come from the Argive Heraion itself and from the acropolis of the Larissa, thus reflecting the two topographic poles between which ideally the initiatory procession of the Argive *nymphai* would wend its way: on the occasion of the Heraia they left the city as *parthenoi*, crossed the plain and went to the Heraion – from where they would return to the city as married women or ready for marriage (Langdon 2008, 187–196). I therefore propose to interpret these Argive female *choroi* as paradigmatic representations that offer an image of woman oriented towards the *gamos*, which was associated with the festivals of Hera, through the practical ritual of the dance and thanks to the attributes that connote these figures as *nymphai* preparing for marriage. In this sense, while the Attic images of female choral dance between 720 and 675 BCE focalize the component of *charis* and of the ‘untamed’ character of the *parthenoi*, the Argive representations shift the focus in a clearer way towards their matrimonial dimension, which undergoes ritualization on the occasion of the festivals of Hera.

Langdon proposes, instead, to interpret these Argive female *choroi* as *Sagenbild* and hypothesizes that they represent the Danaids (Langdon 2008, 160–166): according to tradition, the daughters of Danaus, king of Argos, had refused to marry the men to whom they were betrothed, each killing their husband on the wedding night, with the exception of Hypermestra and her husband Linceus. Langdon emphasizes that this myth turns on the institution of marriage: that is not in doubt, but, in my opinion, it turns it upside down, something that is not reflected in our images. They seem to me to be rather projected into the paradigmatic dimension of *Lebensbild*: the image of the Argive woman

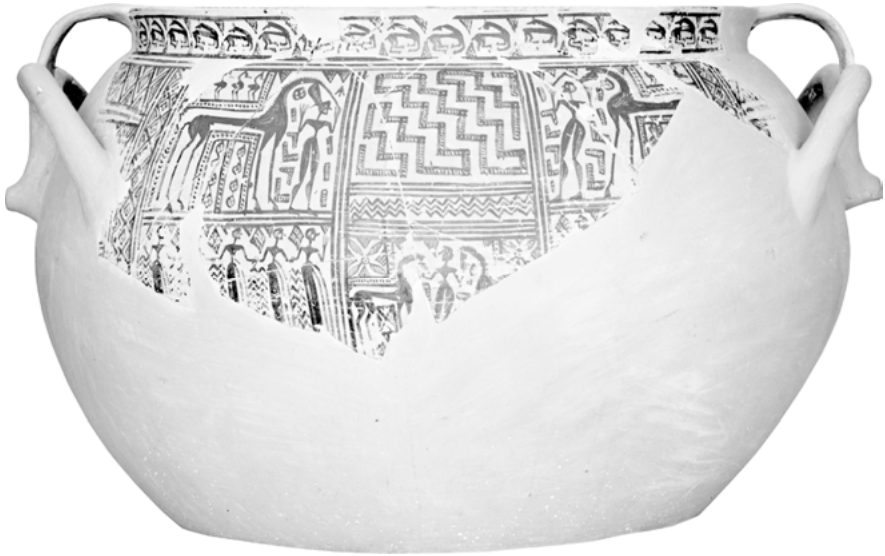


Fig. 24: Argos, Archaeological Museum, Inv. C 210, from Argos: Argive krater; h. 39,1 cm. (Ecole française d'Athènes / Émile Sérafis)

is thus fixed, one could even say crystallized, in her condition as the *nymphe* who proceeds ritually to the *gamos* under the aegis of Argive Hera.

In most of the identifiable cases, the vessel form that at Argos receives this iconography of the dance is the krater: its centrality in the symposium generally sets it in the adult male sphere, though women could play a role in this sphere through ritual and through the role they played in the world of the *oikos* (Langdon 2008, 162–163, table 3. 2). The Argive corpus is thus very different from the Attic one of 720 to 675 BC, in which the vase form on which the image of the dance of the *parthenoi* was preferentially adopted is the hydria or the protoloutrophoros, which are clearly oriented to the female gender. This aspect, too, clearly marks the difference between the Argive iconographic system and the Attic one, ideally projecting the dancers, the Argive *nymphai*, towards a new dimension in the near future, the dimension of the world of the *oikos*, that is, the new *oikos* to which they will progress through the *gamos*.

Another distinctive aspect of Argive pottery is the recurring association between the scene of the female *choròs* and themes drawn from the equestrian world: either a 'horse leader', that is, a male figure who holds by the reins one or two horses; or isolated horses. The dance and the 'horse leader' are associated on Argive pottery, predominantly on kraters, either within a single figured panel or in distinct panels on the same vase, in which these two scenes seem to



Fig. 25: Cambridge, MA, Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of B. J. Kahnweiler, Inv. 1935.35.17: Argive fragment with female dancers and a male dancer holding a horse (Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College)

be intentionally – and so symbolically – linked to each other (fig. 24). The symbolic relation between these two themes is made explicit by the representation on an Argive fragment of a male figure who holds on one side a horse and on the other holds the hand of the first girl of a female *choròs* (Cambridge, MA, Fogg Museum: Tölle-Kastenbein 1964, no. 114, 45, pl. 24b) (fig. 25). This association seems to construct a symbolic equation between taming the horse and abduction/subjectation of the girl, the future wife. On the other hand, the horse is also associated with fertility and, in the world of this early archaic aristocracy, with *hippotrophìa*, the aristocratic practice of horsebreeding (Simon and Verdan 2014). That the two components of human fertility and reproduction/breeding of horses could be seen as linked in archaic aristocratic societies is made clear in particular by the representations on the two faces of an extraordinary Euboean krater from the beginning of Late Geometric, recently found at Eretria (Eretria, Archaeological Museum, Inv. 19565: Psalti 2011; Simon and Verdan 2014, 4–8, fig. 1a–b). Here on a panel of smaller dimensions and in a lateral position is represented a scene of human copulation, while on the other two larger panels located at the centre of the two faces are depicted two scenes of equine copulation, at two different moments: ‘... la proximité des chevaux et des êtres humains, qui se livrent au même acte, invite à faire le rapprochement entre l’élevage équin contrôlé et les stratégies de reproduction dans la société des hommes’ (Simon and Verdan 2014, 8). At the political-social level, the horse is a specific status symbol for this early archaic aristocracy (D’Acunto 1995, 44–53). Thus the scenes of Argive dance are revealed as, at the same time, a paradig-

matic theme of the female condition as a *nymphe* ritually oriented towards the matrimonial sphere under the aegis of Hera and also the reflection of the complex symbolic relations that the woman is going to establish with the *oikos*, in which horsebreeding stands out as a symbol of political and social distinction.

The comparison undertaken between the Attic and Argive scenes of dance thus offers us a key to understanding them which, on the one hand, encompasses the centrality that the choral performances had in both Athens and Argos as a social mechanism that permeates many aspects of community life. But on the other hand the comparison casts light on how these scenes present the differences between the two cities, differences that reflect the specificity of the two contexts and their figurative worlds.

7 Concluding observations: dance at the dawn of images in Geometric pottery

We may conclude by recalling, again in relation to the Geometric dance scenes, the question posed by Bruno D'Agostino a few years ago: *Aube de la cité, aube des images?* This question led him to address the question of the relation at Athens between the process by which the polis came to be structured and its endowment with an iconographical repertoire, of a language of images, that operated among the city's forms of self-representation (D'Agostino 2009; see Snodgrass 1998; and Giuliani 2013, 19–52).

At the birth of this new figurative Geometric language, dance or, to put it better, *the staging through images of lyrical performances of choral type* occupies a primary position. The female point of view, upon which the imagery of these Geometric representations is in part constructed, recalls that of the dances of the Shield of Achilles: here the *parthenoi*, who dance together with the *eitheoi* in the final scene, are destined to be 'abducted' in order to be assigned to the *gamos* and the *oikos*, images on which the first scene of the Shield of Achilles dwells. On the other hand, the agonistic element linked to the performance of dance is a phenomenon both male and female: on the female side it is manifested especially through the *choroi*, on the male side especially through individual acrobatic and armed dance.

In general, the festive and religious contexts of these performances of dance and the agonistic dynamics that pervade them function as mechanisms that regulate two aspects that are at the same time complementary and antithetical: that of social cohesion, on the one hand, and that of competition between groups or individuals on the other. In Greek society at the dawn of the polis

social cohesion and competition among groups or members of the community lived side by side. Dance is one more testimony to this.

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Addendum

After the text had been delivered, have been published important works concerning dance and music in early Greek iconography:

Mikrakis, M., ‘Pots, Early Iron Age Athenian Society and the Near East: The Evidence of the Rattle Group’, in Vlachou, V., ed., *Pots, Workshops and Early Iron Age Society: Function and Role of Ceramics in Early Greece*, Bruxelles 2015, 277-289: the author analyzes the iconography of the Attic LG II Rattle Group and the importance of music in the creation of a system of images to represent the values of the *polis*.

Soar, K., and Aamodt, C., eds, *Archaeological Approaches to Dance Performance*, BAR Intern. Ser. 2622, Oxford 2014. See esp. D’Agata, A. L., ‘Warrior Dance, Social Ordering and the Process of Polis Formation in Early Iron Age Crete’, 75-83: she deals with a crater found in Sybrita on Crete (11th – beginning of the 10th cent. BC), which represents a dance of armed men to the presence of a lyre on the background, and speaks of ‘paradigm shift in the social ideals connected with manhood’. See also Thomas, H., ‘The Dance of Death. Dancing in Athenian funerary Rituals’, 59-65: the author suggests that dance scenes on Attic Late Geometric and Protoattic funerary vases might represent some form of dancing occurring during the funerary rituals of the Athenians. However I maintain that these images represent dances referring to important moments and activities of the life of the individual and thus they are painted on funerary vases as a marker of her/his age class and social position.

