

Dancing at the Cotyora Symposium in Xenophon's Anabasis

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Abstract

This paper presents the dances that are mentioned in Xenophon's work *Anabasis*. These dances were performed by men, who were soldiers in the Greek army and had various ethnic origins, and a girl, after a banquet held at Cotyora, on the territory of Paphlagonia. Greek and Paphlagonian ambassadors ate and enjoyed themselves together in this banquet, listening to songs and music and watching the dance performances. The author describes different dances accompanied by aulos music: war dances with weapons (e.g. Pyrrhic), agricultural mimetic dances and an oriental one. We aim to identify and classify the dances combining the text with similar representations in the contemporary Classical art, focusing on Xenophon's times (430/25 - 354 BCE). Selected examples are shown, especially from vase-paintings and figurines, which represent these dances performed at symposia. Another purpose of this paper is to show and emphasize the peaceful coexistence of people through common banquets, songs and dances and common entertainment and the peaceful resolution of problems.

Keywords: *Symposion, ancient Greek dances, war dances, pyrrhic, oklasma, ancient Greek music, Anabasis.*

1. Introduction

This article presents dances, which were performed by soldiers and a young woman during a symposium in Cotyora, a location in Paphlagonia, a region to the east of Bithynia, in the year 401 BCE. They are mentioned by Xenophon in his work *Anabasis*.

Xenophon (fig. 1) (c. 430-355/354 BCE) was an Athenian disciple of Socrates, writer, philosopher, historian, and military leader. He came from an aristocratic family and belonged to the equestrian class/τάξη των Ιππέων. After the fall of the Thirty Tyrants and the restoration of democracy, Xenophon, accepting the proposal of his Boeotian guest-friend Proxenus, decided to enlist in the mercenary army of Cyrus the Younger, who was planning to dethrone his older brother Artaxerxes II', the Great King of the Achaemenid Empire. The death of Cyrus, however, at the battle of Cunaxa¹, near Babylon, in 401 BCE and the assassination of the Greek generals by Tissaphernes forced the mercenaries to retreat through Asia to Byzantium. Xenophon, who was chosen at the age of 30 with others officials to lead the *Long March of the Ten Thousand* (fig. 2), successfully led the Greek mercenaries to the shores of the Pontos and then to Thrace.

In 396 BCE he accompanied the Spartan King Agesilaus in his campaign against Persia. Xenophon's admiration for the Spartan king was so great that two years later (394 BCE), at the battle of Coroneia, he fought on his side against the Athenian army. His compatriots exiled him for this act (although ancient accounts mention his participation in the campaign of Cyrus as the reason for his exile). Agesilaus, however, compensated him by granting him an estate in Scillous, where he retired for the next twenty years. Xenophon abandoned the estate in 370 BCE, when the Ilia captured Scillous, after the defeat of Sparta by Thebes at the battle of Leuctra (371 BCE) and fled to Corinth. Although his exile was revoked (after under increasing pressure from Thebes a rapprochement was made

between Athens and Sparta), we are unable to say with certainty, whether Xenophon ever returned to Athens. But we do know that his two sons were deployed in the Athenian cavalry at the Battle of Mantinea in 362 BCE, and one of them, Gryllus, was killed. Xenophon's death is placed around 355 BCE, perhaps in Corinth.

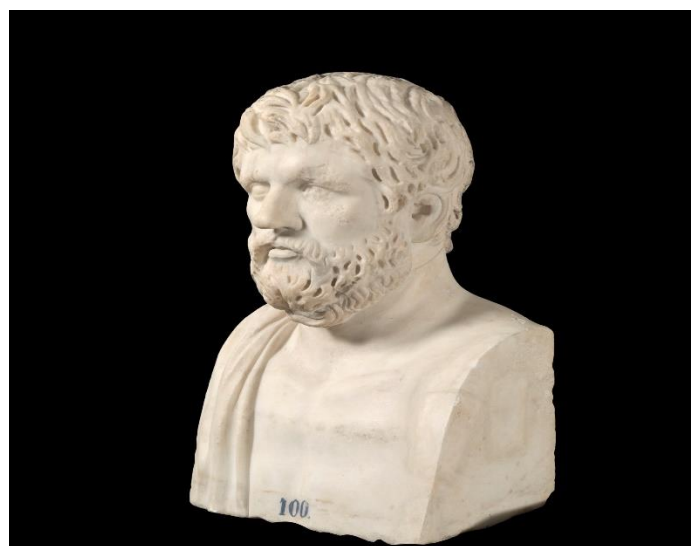


Fig 1. Bust of Xenophon, white marble, made by a Roman sculptor (c. 150 CE). (H.: 58 cm; W.: 34 cm; Base/bottom: 30 cm; Weight: 74.6 Kg.) Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, inv. no. E000100. Image Courtesy of the Museum. © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.

¹ Wylie, 1992.



Fig. 2. The Expedition of the Ten Thousand, Map. (Photo after Wikimedia commons).

Xenophon was a prolific writer of the Greek Antiquity; some of their works are *Hellenica*, *Anabasis*, *Symposion* etc. *Anabasis* (*H Káthodos τῶν Μυρίων/Ē Kathodos tōn Myriōn*) recounts his adventures with the *Ten Thousand*, one of the larger Greek mercenary contingents serving an Achaemenid scion². The *Anabasis* was composed c. 370 BCE in Scillous. *Anabasis* is a unique first-hand, and self-reflective account of a military leader's experience in antiquity. It is certainly a special case of a historical composition, which combines typical features of war memoirs, travelogues and biographies. The *Anabasis* is divided in 7 books: the first six chapters narrate the advance of Cyrus's army as far as Cunaxa in 401 BCE. The narrative then presents the decisive battle, in which Cyrus is killed, the assassination of the Greek generals by Tissaphernes, the desperate situation of the mercenaries, the election of new generals (one of whom is Xenophon), their retreat to the Black Sea, as well as their subsequent adventures in Asia Minor until the survivors were incorporated into the Spartan army of Thibron.

2. The Symposium at Cotyora/or Kotyora

In the 6th book of *Anabasis* (6.1.4-13) Xenophon offers a detailed description of a symposium, which was held in Cotyora (Κοτύωρα) in 401 BCE. Cotyora, the modern Turkish town Ordu, is situated in Paphlagonia, eastern of Bithynia³. It founded by Milesian colony, Sinope, in the late 7th century (c. 630 BCE)⁴.

The banquet is offered by the Greek generals to the Paphlagonian ambassadors of the local leader Korylas and to selected citizens of Cotyora and Sinope. The event is divided in two parts: First, there was a sacrificial ceremony, which turned into a rich feast (4). The actual part of the symposium began with the libation of wine and the Paian, which was sang all together and during which several weapon dances were performed by various soldiers-dancers (5-12). Six ethnic war/armed dances are mentioned. Five were performed by soldiers and the last one by a woman; all were accompanied by aulos music. Two Thracians started the dance, followed by Aianian-

ians and Magnesians who performed together, in pairs, a common dance, the carpaia (καρπαία), a Mysian who performed two different dances, a Mantinean- Arcadian team and finally a dancing girl, who accompanied one Arcadian. These dances replaced the dance, song and pantomime performances or the acrobatic shows of professional artists, which were usual in civil symposia⁵. - Let's see Xenophon's description of the Cotyora symposium in details, showing corresponding representations.

2.1. The Thracian Pyrrhic (Xen., *An.*, 6.1.5-6)

[5] ἐπεὶ δὲ σπονδαὶ τε ἐγένοντο καὶ ἐπαιάνισαν, ἀνέστησαν πρῶτον μὲν Θρᾷκες καὶ πρὸς αὐλὸν ὠρχήσαντο σὺν τοῖς ὄπλοις καὶ ἡλλοντο ὑψηλὰ τε καὶ κούφως καὶ ταῖς μαχαίραις ἐχρῶντο: τέλος δὲ ὁ ἕτερος τὸν ἕτερον παῖει, ὡς πᾶσιν ἐδόκει πεπληγῆναι τὸν ἄνδρα: ὁ δ' ἔπεσε τεχνικῶς πως. [6] καὶ ἀνέκραγον οἱ Παφλαγόνες. καὶ ὁ μὲν σκυλεύσας τὰ ὅπλα τοῦ ἐτέρου ἐξῆι ἄδων τὸν Σιτάλκαν: ἄλλοι δὲ τῶν Θρακῶν τὸν ἕτερον ἐξέφερον ὡς τεθνηκότα: ἦν δὲ οὐδὲν πεπονθώς.

[5] After they had made libations and sung the paeon, two Thracians rose up first and began a dance in full armour to the music of a flute, leaping high and lightly and using their sabres; finally, one struck the other, as everybody thought, and the second man fell, in a rather skilful way. [6] And the Paphlagonians set up a cry. Then the first man despoiled the other of his arms and marched out singing the Sitalcas, while other Thracians carried off the fallen dancer, as though he were dead; in fact, he had not been hurt at all.

The Thracian pyrrhic was performed by two men, accompanied by aulos music, ending singing an old Thracian war song, the Sitalcas, composed in honour of the King Sitalcas/-es. Perhaps, we can imagine, how the two Thracians danced, looking these examples on vase paintings: The first one is on a black-figure skyphos in Paris, attributed to Ure's class of skyphoi A2 (550-500 BCE)⁶;

² Numerous editions on *Anabasis* in various languages are published: e.g. Lendle, 1995; Lane Fox, 2004; Waterfield, 2006; Flower, 2012; see also in <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.

³ On Cotyora (Κοτύωρα) see: Britannica, s.v. Ordu; DNP, 1999, s.v. Kotyora, 783; Avram et al., 2004, 959.

⁴ For the colonization of the Black Sea coast by Greeks see: Tsatskheladze, 1998; Avram et al., 2004; Tsatskheladze, 2006; Greaves, 2007; cf. the

contributions in Gabrielsen and Lund, 2007; Summerer, 2007; contributions in Erkut and Mitchell, 2007; Avram et al., 2021; Koromila, 2022.

⁵ Xenophon describes the Attic symposium in more details in his work *Symposium* (Symp. 2.1-2 and 9).

⁶ Paris, market: BAPD, no. 350987; Ceccarelli, 1998, pl. 6.6.



Fig. 3. An alulos player and one of the two pyrrhic dancers. Attic black-figure alabastron. Athens, National Archaeological Museum, no. 512, 470 BCE: Credit line: Athens, National Archaeological Museum, photograph by I. Miari © Hellenic Ministry of Culture / Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.).

b) the second scene appears on an Attic black-figure alabastron in Athens (fig. 3), attributed to the Emporion Painter (470)⁷; the third dance is depicted on an Attic black-figure lekythos in Athens (figs. 4a, b), attributed also to the Emporion Painter (470 BCE)⁸; and the fourth pyrrhic performed by two armed men decorates the shoulder of a red-figure hydria in New York (figs. 5a, b), attributed to the workshop of the Dikaio Painter or to the Pioneer Group (c. 500 BCE)⁹. On the skyphos the dance-musical scene is placed in the centre, flanked by two parallel depicted anthemia/palmettes. The two dancers move vividly to the right each holding a spear and a shield and wearing a short chiton, high helmet, breastplate/thorax and shins. Opposite them to the right a standing alulos player dressed in chiton and wrapped in himation/mantle accompanying with music their movements.

The alabastron and the lekythos is decorated by the same painter, the so-called Emporion Painter, who uses almost the same pattern with small differences: Here, the musician stands on the left and the pyrrhic dancers on the right; they performed to the right looking to the left. In both vases the movements are almost similar; the dancers wear similar dresses and equipment (short chitons, helmets, thorax, shins, spears), as in the first example. However, we observe that the dresses on the alabastron are more patterned than on the lekythos; similarly the style is more elaborate. It seems that the Emporion Painter repeated the same pattern on another vase with a simpler design in the figures, and small differences in the frame of each scene. Exceptionally, in our last example, on the kalpis in New York, the figures arrangement is different: the crowned alulos player stands in the middle, looking to the right, while he is surrounded by two nude pyrrhic dancers, who wear only a helmet and hold a javelin and a round shield.

We suppose that the soldiers in the Cotyora symposium wore their ethnic garments, although Xenophon does not describe them or mention that they danced naked.



Figs. 4a, b. An alulos player and one of the two pyrrhic dancers. Attic black-figure lekythos (c. 470 BCE). Athens, National Archaeological Museum, no. 16253. Credit line: Athens, National Archaeological Museum, photo by the Museum's Photo Archive. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture / Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.).

2.2. The Macedonian –Thessalian Pyrrhic, the Carpaia (Xen., An., 6.1.7-9)

[7] μετὰ τοῦτο Αἰνιᾶνες καὶ Μάγνητες ἀνέστησαν, οἱ ὠρχοῦντο τὴν καρπαίαν καλουμένην ἐν τοῖς ὅπλοις. 8] ὁ δὲ τρόπος τῆς ὀρχήσεως ἦν, ὁ μὲν παραθέμενος τὰ ὅπλα σπείρει καὶ ζευγηλατεῖ, πυκνὰ δὲ στρεφόμενος ὡς φοβούμενος, ληστής δὲ προσέρχεται: ὁ δ' ἐπειδὴν προΐδεται, ἀπαντᾷ ἀρπάσας τὰ ὅπλα καὶ μάχεται πρὸ τοῦ ζεύγους: καὶ οὗτοι ταῦτ' ἐποιοῦν ἐν ῥυθμῷ πρὸς τὸν αὐλόν: καὶ τέλος ὁ ληστής δῆσας τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τὸ ζεῦγος ἀπάγει: ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ ὁ ζευγηλάτης τὸν ληστήν: εἴτα παρὰ τοὺς βοῦς ζεύξας ὀπίσω τῷ χεῖρε δεδεμένον ἐλαύνει.

(6.1.7-8) 7 After this some Aenianians and Magnesians arose and danced under arms the so-called carpaia, (8) The manner of the dance was this: a man is sowing and driving a yoke of oxen, his arms laid at one side, and he turns about frequently as one in fear; a robber approaches; as soon as the sower sees him coming, he snatches up his arms, goes to meet him, and fights with him to save his oxen. The two men do all this in rhythm to the music of the flute. Finally, the robber binds the man and drives off the oxen; or sometimes the master of the oxen binds the robber, and then he yokes him alongside the oxen, his hands tied behind him and drives off.

The Thracian pyrrhic was followed by a Greek one, performed by the Aenianians and Magnesians. This henoplios/armed dance, called by Xenophon Carpaia, is a dance known to us from this passage only. It is a mimetic performance, also an agricultural and fertility dance similar to the Cretan Courtes dance. "It is associated with plowing and sowing. It was performed by two dancers accompanied by alulos music. The performers represented or reconstructed the fight between a farmer and a robber, where the farmer imitates the movements of his activities, i.e. of plowing and sowing. Winner is once the farmer, once the robber."¹⁰ Representations of it are not preserved. Hesychios of Alexandria

⁷ Athens, National Archaeological Museum, no. 512: Poursat 1968, 560, 564–65, figs. 12–13, no. 6; Ceccarelli 1998, pl. 22, nos. 1–2; Liveri, 2021, 33; Liveri, 2024, 92, fig. 4.5 with more references.

⁸ Athens, National Archaeological Museum, no. 16253: BAPD, no. 331200; Ceccarelli, 1998, pl. 22.3; Delavaud-Roux, 1993, 85, no. 14.

⁹ New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, AN 21.88.2: BAPD, no. 200196; Delavaud-Roux, 1993, no. 18; Bundrick, 2005, 79, fig. 48; Osborne, 2018, 163–164, fig. 6.12; Liveri, 2021, 33, fig. 5.

¹⁰ For Carpaia or Karpaia see Liveri, 2023a, 53–54.

mentioned Carpaia orchesis Macedonian (ὄρχησις μακεδονική)¹¹. Both tribes (Ainianians and Magnesians) shared a few deities (e.g. Zeus Akreos at Pliasisi, Zeus Hetaireios) and feasts (e.g. Hetairideia, which is mentioned by Athenaios in *Deipnosophistai*, XIII, 31)¹².

2.3. The Mysian Pyrrhic (Xen., *An.*, 6.1.9)

[9] μετὰ τοῦτο Μυσὸς εἰσῆλθεν ἐν ἑκατέρᾳ τῇ χειρὶ ἔχων πέλτην, καὶ τότε μὲν ὡς δύο ἀντιπαττομένων μιμούμενος ὠρχεῖτο, τότε δὲ ὡς πρὸς ἓνα ἐχρήτο ταῖς πέλταις, τότε δ' ἐδινεῖτο καὶ ἐξεκυβίστα ἔχων τὰς πέλτας, ὥστε ὄψιν καλὴν φαίνεσθαι.

(6.1.9) After this a Mysian came in carrying a light shield in each hand, and at one moment in his dance he would go through a pantomime as though two men were arrayed against him, again he would use his shields as though against one antagonist, and again he would whirl and throw somersaults while holding the shields in his hands, so that the spectacle was a fine one.

The 3rd and 4th dances are solo male armed dances, performed both by a Mysian (i.e. a man from Mysia, a region western of Bithynia), who carried a light shield in each hand. It was a pantomime. Numerous representations in a great variety of movements and style appear on vase-paintings with one pyrrhic dancer, holding only one shield and not two as in Xenophon's description. For instance in three red-figure cups (kylikes) and in a black-figure oinochoe. The first example in Vatican was unearthed in Vulci and it is attributed to Epiktetos (520/10 BCE)¹³. It bears the inscription ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ (EPOIESEN, i.e. MADE), but without name. The pyrrhic dancer moves vividly to the right looking to the left, where a youth

aulos player stands accompanying his performance. The dancer is naked; he wears only his helmet and holds a spear with his right hand and a round shield decorated with a horse, from which only the back part is preserved. The Late Archaic eye-cup (kylix) in Boston was also found in Vulci and it is attributed to the Oltos Painter or to Standard Eye-Cups (520-510 BCE)¹⁴. Between the eyes of the cup's back side a young armed warrior is depicted in profile to the left jumping or dancing. He holds a spear and a crescent shaped shield, called peltē/πέλτη, decorated with three black balls. Although the figure is not well preserved, we can make out the headdress/helmet, a short, tight and decorated tunic, shins and boots¹⁵. However, the musician is omitted. Therefore, it is not certain, that it is a pyrrhic movement or a simple warrior's representation, as numerous similar (e.g. the peltast on the interior medaillon of the kylix in the British Museum, which is mentioned below).

In the Attic black-figure oinochoe from Camiros/Rhodes in London, which is attributed to the Athena Painter (c. 490 BCE), the naked dancer, equipped like the first dancer is depicted on the right, as in the Vatican kylix, but he moves to the left, towards the piper who has a beard and is older than the first musician¹⁶. Additionally, behind him, is visible a stool (diphros), on which his clothes are placed. The pyrrhic in the Louvre cup is attributed to the Eucharides Painter (c. 490 BCE) and it is depicted on its interior medaillon¹⁷. The scene is surrounded by a maeander ornament. The performers stand on a platform; here, the juth musician is on the right, while the naked dancer on the left, but in a different position than earlier: his body is almost rendered/represented frontally, but he is looking to the left.



Figs. 5a, b. Pyrrhic performed by two men. Attic red-figure terracotta hydria (kalpis)/water jar (around 500 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, AN 21.88.2 (Phot. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Public Domain).

¹¹ Schmidt, 1867, 815.

¹² “οἶδα δὲ καὶ ἐορτὴν τιν’ Ἑταιρίδεια ἀγομένην ἐν Μαγνησίᾳ οὐ διὰ τὰς ἐταίρας, ἀλλὰ δι’ ἐτέραν αἰτίαν, ἧς μνημονεύει Ἡγήσανδρος ἐν Ὑπομνήμασι γράφων ὧδε ‘FHG IV 418!’: ‘τὴν τῶν Ἑταιρίδων ἐορτὴν συντελοῦσι Μάγνητες. ἰστοροῦσι δὲ πρῶτον Ἰάσονα τὸν Αἰσονος συναγαγόντα τοὺς Ἀργοναύτας Ἑταιρεῖω Διὶ θύσαι καὶ τὴν ἐορτὴν Ἑταιρίδεια προσαγορεύσαι. θύουσι δὲ καὶ οἱ Μακεδόνων βασιλεῖς τὰ Ἑταιρίδεια.” (transl. I know, too, that there in a festival called the Heteridia, which is celebrated in Magnesia, not owing to the courtesans, but to another cause, which is mentioned by Hegesander in his Commentaries, who writes thus:—“The Magnesians celebrate a festival called Heteridia; and they give this account of it: that originally Jason, the son of Aeson, when he had collected the Argonauts, sacrificed to Jupiter Hetaeias, and called the festival Heteridia. And the Macedonian kings also celebrated the Heteridia.”)

¹³ Vatican, Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, no. 506 (previous 16575): BAPD, no. 200471; Delavaud-Roux, 1993, 97, no. 23; Steinhart, 2004, 15, pl.4.1; Meyer, 2017, 335, fig. 352.

¹⁴ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, no. 13.83; a missing fragment was in Florence, National Archaeological Museum: BAPD, no. 200362; Delavaud-

Roux, 1993, 93, no. 20; Steinhart, 2004, 15, pl. 4.2; see photos in:

<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/153737/fragment-of-an-eyecup-kylix?ctx=4fd30bc9-3f98-4152-80fa-9779877d1d7a&idx=1> (accessed 05.10.2024).

¹⁵ Xenophon, in the *Anabasis* (*An.* 1.7.10), describes 2500 peltasts in action against Achaemenid cavalry at the Battle of Cunaxa in 401 BCE (*An.* 1.7.11), where they were serving as part of the mercenary force of Cyrus the Younger. for the battle of Cunaxa see e.g. Wylie, 1992, 119-134, for the armies esp. 123-129.

¹⁶ London, British Museum, no. 1864.1007.237:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1864-1007-237 (accessed 09.10. 2024); BAPD, no. 330883; Delavaud-Roux, 1993, 100; Ceccarelli, 1998, pl. 3.3.

¹⁷ Paris, Musée du Louvre, no. G136: BAPD, no. 202280; Lissarrague et al., 1984, 37, fig. 54; cf. P. 39, figs. 55-58 (armed dances in religious association); Delavaud-Roux, 1993, 80, no. 9; Ceccarelli, 1998, pl. 8.1; Oakley, 2020, 168, fig. 8.3.

2.4. Persian armed dance performed by the Mysian (Xen., *An.*, 6.1.10)

[10] τέλος δὲ τὸ περσικὸν ὥρχεῖτο κρούων τὰς πέλτας καὶ ὤκλαζε καὶ ἐξανίστατο: καὶ ταῦτα πάντα ἐν ῥυθμῷ ἐποίει πρὸς τὸν αὐλόν.

[10] Lastly, he danced the Persian dance, clashing his shields together and crouching down and then rising up again; and all this he did, keeping time to the music of the flute.

Obviously the Mysian was a very skillful dancer. He offered a second mimetic weapon dance, called by Xenophon Persian dance. This performance can be identified with the oklasma dance, which had Persian origin¹⁸. Mysia in that period was part of the Achaemenid Empire. Therefore, this dance was known in Asia Minor and was diffused in Greece and in Greek colonies of the Black Sea, South Italy and Sicily. This is confirmed by representations in various artworks; nevertheless, without shields. In symposia it was performed usually by women, but also by men, as in our two examples. The first one appears on an Attic red-figure bell crater from Al Mina, attributed to the Nostell Painter (c. 390-380 BCE) in Oxford¹⁹. Here, a woman dances on the table in the middle of the scene in front of symposiasts. She is accompanied by aulos music performed by a satyr, who sits on a bed-couch/ klinē on the left, while another satyr stands on the right. In the centre of the scene are placed two symposiasts who sit on their bed-couches observing and enjoying the spectacle.

In the second example a naked youth dances on the street, accompanied by an aulos player and two spectators, after the symposium, during the komos. (Fig. 6) The scene decorates the second register of a red-figure calyx crater in Tarquinia, attributed to the Polygnotos Group (475-425 BCE), while the upper register includes the symposium²⁰. Perhaps, a variation of oklasma or a simple pyrrhic performance, but without musician, is represented on the exterior surface of a red-figure kylix, attributed to the Colmar Painter (510-500 BCE) in London²¹. Three naked and armed men are depicted in three quarter view and in different positions between the vases handles. Each wears only an Attic helmet and holds a long spear and a round shield, which is decorated with various devices/motifs: on the first side are from left to right visible a wheel, a horse/only the rear part seen and the name LEAGR[OS]; on the other side the devices are different (a bull's head, a tripod and the inscription KALOS. The warriors perform various movements to the left, e.g. crouching or squatting. The interior of the kylix is decorated with a young Thracian warrior/or a warrior in Thracian garments, i.e. in chiton (dilute glaze folds and two line-border) and Thracian cloak who runs quickly/rapidly to the left, wearing an Attic helmet, a spear and a shield (peltē/pelta), decorated by a pair of eyes separated by a strip of continuous maeander²². The inscription ΑΘΕΝΔΟΤΟΣ (Athenodotos) names him.

-We return to Xenophon's description-

2.5. The Mantinean and Arcadian processional armed march-dance/Pyrrhic (Xen., *An.*, 6.1.11)

[11] ἐπὶ δὲ τούτῳ ἐπιόντες οἱ Μαντινεῖς καὶ ἄλλοι τινὲς τῶν Ἀρκάδων ἀναστάντες ἐξοπλισάμενοι ὥς ἐδύναντο κάλλιστα ἦσαν τε ἐν ῥυθμῷ πρὸς τὸν ἐνόπλιον ῥυθμὸν αὐλούμενοι καὶ ἐπαιάνισαν καὶ ὥρχησαντο ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς προσόδοις ὀρῶντες δὲ οἱ Παφλαγόνες δεινὰ ἐποιοῦντο πάσας τὰς ὀρχήσεις ἐν ὅπλοις εἶναι.



Figure 6. A young man dances oklasma in the street accompanied by an aulos player and two symposiasts after the banquet. Red-figure calyx crater, attributed to the Polygnotos Group (475-425 BCE). Image: Courtesy "foto archivio Parco Archeologico di Cerveteri e Tarquinia – Museo archeologico nazionale di Tarquinia". © The previous institutions.

[11] After him the Mantineans and some of the other Arcadians arose, arrayed in the finest arms and accoutrements they could command, and marched in time to the accompaniment of a flute playing the martial rhythm and sang the paeon and danced, just as the Arcadians do in their festal processions in honour of the gods. And the Paphlagonians, as they looked on, thought it most strange that all the dances were under arms.

The Mysian's oklasma weapon dance followed a processional team pyrrhic, performed by soldiers from Mantinea and Arcadia, who marched rhythmically singing the paeon, under aulos music. Both tribes had a tradition in hoplomachia and armed dances²³. In Mantinea they were associated with the cult of Zeus Hoplosmios or with Dioskuri, who are perhaps depicted on the reverse of

¹⁸ About oklasma see Liveri, 2023b, 129-139, figs. 1-5.

¹⁹ Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, no.1954.230: <https://www.ashmolean.org/collections-online/#/item/ash-object-461194>; (accessed 09.10.2024); Liveri, 2023b, 131 with references.

²⁰ Liveri, 2023b, 131-132.

²¹ London, British Museum, no. 1897.10-28.1:

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/735917001> (accessed

09.10.2024); (BAPD, no. 203706; Williams, 1993, 27-28, no. 13, pls. (794-795) 18a-b, 19a-b.

²² Tsiafaki, 2021, 251, fig. 3; (here also see on Thracian warriors and their relation to Greeks).

²³ On Hoplomachia and its difference with pyrrhic dances see Wheeler, 1982, 223-233.

Mantinean coins of the 4th century BCE²⁴, while on the obverse a pyrrhichistes is visible²⁵. Polybius (Polyb., 4.20.12) mentions “the annual displays of marching to the flute and dances performed by the Arcadian youth”. It must be emphasized that the pyrrhic was very popular in Crete and Sparta, since it goes back to the Kouretes and the Dioskouri, as also Plato mentions²⁶:

οὐδ’ ὅσα ἐν τοῖς χοροῖς ἐστὶν αὐτῶν μιμήματα προσήκοντα μιμῆσθαι παρετέον, κατὰ μὲν τὸν τόπον τόνδε Κουρήτων ἐνόπλια παίγνια, κατὰ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνα Διοσκόρων.

[Nor should we omit such mimic dances as are fitting for use by our choirs,—for instance, the sword-dance of the Curetes here in Crete, and that of the Dioskouri in Lacedaemon.]

This version of armed march-dances appears in a funeral on two Attic black-figure *cantharoi*, attributed both to the One-handled kantharoi class, in Paris (c. 510-500 BCE): on the one side is shown an ekphora (funeral procession to the necropolis) of the deceased, on the other side warriors following an aulos player marched dancing: In the first example that was found in Vulci, the four participants wear additionally perizomata (loincloths)²⁷; in the second cantharos the five warriors perform different movements crouching, suggesting a sort of dance steps²⁸. In both cases they move to the right, accompanying the deceased to the tomb.

It is known that a group pyrrhic was performed during the Panathenaia in Athens as well. A pyrrhic competition was included in the festival’s program, involved chorus dancers from all Athenian tribes and the three ages (boys, un-bearded youths and men) participated²⁹. The pyrrhic in Athens associated with Athena commemorated her battles against the giants (the goddess danced the pyrrhic twice: the first one after her birth and the second during the gigantomachia)³⁰. She, as the city’s protector, was the warrior par excellence³¹. Representations on vase-paintings confirm that such processional pyrrhic was imported in Athens by the Peisistratids and performed in the religious ceremonies and feasts: e.g. in Panathenaia on the fragmentary red figure skyphos of Nikosthenes in Thasos (520-510 BCE)³². Pyrrhic victorious dancers after the competition are visible on a marble relief base of a monument dedicated by the choregos Atarbos according to the inscription in the Acropolis Museum (figs. 7a, b)³³.

Atarbos was the winning choregos at the Panathenaic festival of the year 329 or 323 BCE. The image shows two groups each of four naked pyrrhic dancers, followed by a female figure, who may be interpreted as a Muse or the personification of a concept related to the festival. The dancers hold their shield with their left arm evenly/in the same way according to the rhythm of the dance.



Figs. 7a, b. Pyrrhic victorious dancers on the right. Marble relief base of a monument, dedicated by Atarbos. Athens, Acropolis Museum, no. 1338. Photos courtesy of the Acropolis Museum © Acropolis Museum: a. 2018, photo Yiannis Koulelis; b. 2009, photo N. Daniilidis.

2.6. Female Pyrrhic (Xen., An., 6.1.12-13)

[12] ἐπὶ τούτοις ὁρῶν ὁ Μυσὸς ἐκπεπληγμένους αὐτούς, πείσας τῶν Ἀρκάδων τινὰ πεπαμένον ὀρχηστρίδα εἰσάγει σκευάσας ὡς ἐδύνατο κάλλιστα καὶ ἀσπίδα δοῦς κούφην αὐτῇ. ἡ δὲ ὠρχήσατο πυρρίχην ἐλαφρῶς. [

[12] Thereupon the Mysian, seeing how astounded they were, persuaded one of the Arcadians who had a dancing girl to let him bring her in, after dressing her up in the finest way he could and giving her a light shield.

The last dance in the Cotyora symposium was performed by a young woman, who belonged to an Arcadian, *after dressing her up in the finest way he could and giving her a light shield. And she danced the Pyrrhic with grace*. Female pyrrhic at symposia belongs to a common spectacle. The dancers were hetairai who were trained in the so-called dance or hetairai schools in pyrrhic and other dances³⁴.

²⁴ Lacroix, 1967, 306-311, figs. 1.1, 2, 4; Wheeler, 1982, 226-228; cf. Steinhart, 2004, 12, pl. 6.2.

²⁵ See the figure who could identify with an armed dancer holding spears in other Mantinean coins as well: Lacroix, 1967, figs. 1.2; 3.5 with another motif on the reverse.

²⁶ Pl., Leg., 7.796b, 3ff; cf. 7.815.

²⁷ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des médailles, no. 353: BAPD, no. 301934; Delavaud-Roux, 1993, 116-118, no. 32; Laxander, 2000, 117-120, no. EZ4, pl. 64.1-4, esp. 1-2 (the musician and the dancers); Stampolidis and Oikonomou, 2014, 83, fig. 24 (C. Colonna); Oakley, 2020, 218-219, fig. 10.5, pl. 32.

²⁸ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des médailles, no. 355: BAPD, no. 301935; Delavaud-Roux, 1993, 115, no. 31; Ceccarelli, 1998, 239, no. 4; Laxander, 2000, 117-120 EZ5, pl. 66.1-3, esp. 1-2 (the musician and the dancers); cf. similar representations on another kyathos, no. EZ3,

p. 117-120, pl. 65.1-4, esp. 3-4 (the aulos player and four pyrrhic dancers; the musician stands in front of the dancers who move to the left); Stampolidis and Oikonomou, 2014, 82, fig. 23.

²⁹ Liveri, 2021, 33-34

³⁰ Meyer, 2017, 335f.

³¹ See a unusual representation of an armed owl, the sacred bird Athena’s, on a red-figure oinochoe, which is perhaps an Epiphany of the goddess with shield and spear: Lissarague, 1984, 40, fig. 60.

³² Thasos, Archaeological Museum: 84.135.5 (275059 after Steinhart): BAPD, no. 44608; Poursat, 1968, 553, 555, 557-559, figs. 1-4; Steinhart, 2004, 18, pl. 4.3.

³³ Athens, Acropolis Museum, no. 1338: Steinhart, 2004, 15, pl. 7.2; Liveri, 2021, 33-34 with more examples and references.

³⁴ Goulaki-Voutira, 1996, 5-9, figs. 2-9; Schäfer, 1997, 64-68; 76-, pl. 40.1, 41.2, 42.1, 44.2 (pyrrhic); cf. 41.1, 42.2, 43.1-2, 44.1 (training in other dances).



Fig. 8. A naked woman dances pyrrhic in a symposium accompanied by aulos music. Red-figure bell crater (c. 425-375 BCE). Thebes, Archaeological Museum, no. 46284. Photo courtesy of the Thebes Archaeological Museum. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports (N. 4858/2021). Ephorate of Antiquities of Boeotia.

Sometimes, names are written in mentioned, e.g. Selenike, Dorkas³⁵. This is confirmed by literary sources; for instance, in Xenophon's *Symposion*, which took place on an August day in 421 BCE, in the house of a rich Athenian Kallias, Socrates (Xen., *Symp.* 2.2), as one of the participants, expressed his preference for an armed dance and he highly praised the skilful dance of a young girl. ("On my word, Callias, you are giving us a perfect dinner; for not only have you set before us a feast that is above criticism, but you are also offering us very delightful sights and sounds." The dancer, an aulos player girl and a boy playing cithara and dancing were brought in symposium by a man from Syracuse who hired such artists offering a spectacle and he made money (Xen., *Symp.* 2.1). Representations in vase-painting show similar events as well. We selected four examples with this subject: e.g. a naked female dancer performs on the red-figure bell crater in Thebes, with helmet, shield and spear³⁶ (fig. 8) She moves quickly and briskly to the right, but looking back, in front of two beds where are reclining three male symposium's participants (one on the left and two on the right) observing and enjoying her spectacle; two small tables for placing food and drinks are in front of the bed-couches. The dancer is depicted in the centre of the scene, while on her right and behind of the small table stands a naked woman playing her aulos and accompanying the pyrrhic dance.

Another half naked dancer runs before four symposiasts to the right on a red-figure bell crater in Naples (fig. 9a), attributed to Lycaon Painter or to the Polygnotos Group (440 BCE)³⁷. She performs wearing a cross band over her bare chest, shorts, the *perizoma*, and an Attic helmet on her head, while holding a round shield with her left arm and a spear with the right. A reclined symposiast on the right accompanies her movements playing aulos music. The back side of the vessel is decorated with a *komos* scene, consisting of three young men (fig. 9b). In our third and fourth examples the female pyrrhic dancers seem to be waiting their turn: On the fragments of a red-figure chous, in Oxford (450-400 BCE or

420-400 after Schäfer) a woman with long chiton and helmet, holding two shields (one in each hand) stands on the right of a symposium's scene³⁸. On a red-figure crater's fragment, attributed to the Talos Painter (c. 400 BCE) in Würzburg the armed woman stands on the left behind Dionysus or the main symposiast who is dressed as Dionysus³⁹. On the right, two satyrs play music: next to Dionysus a standing kithara player and below him another, whom only the head is preserved, aulos. All figure wear richly patterned garments, while the luxurious bed of Dionysus is impressive⁴⁰.



Fig. 9a. A female pyrrhic dancer performs in a symposium. Attic red-figure bell crater (c. 440 BCE). Naples, National Archaeological Museum, no. STG 281.



Fig. 9b. Komos of three men. Back side of the same vessel. Photos courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura –Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. Photos by Giorgio Albano.

³⁵ Schäfer, 1997, 76.

³⁶ Thebes, Archaeological Museum: no. 46284 BAPD, no. 3830; Poursat, 1968, 603, fig. 58; Delavaud-Roux, 1993, 135, no. 35.

³⁷ Naples, National Archaeological Museum, no. Stg 281: BAPD, no. 213564; Ceccarelli, 1998, pl. 8.4; Poursat, 1968, 599, no. 50, fig. 53; Delavaud-Roux, 1993, 146, no. 46; Matheson, 1995, 90, 92, 433, pl.

70. L9; Schäfer, 1997, 76, 110, pl. 39.2; Filser, 2017, 262-263, fig. 125; Oakley, 2020, 34, fig. 1.38.

³⁸ Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, no. 1966.877: BAPD, no. 15332; Delavaud-Roux, 1993, 158, no. 56; Schäfer, 1997, 76, 110, pl. 40.2.

³⁹ Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum, no. H5708a-c: BAPD, no. 217527; Filser, 2017, 266-268, fig. 130.

⁴⁰ For bed-couches/klinai see: Liveri, forthcoming.

2.7. Symposium's end (Xen., An., 6.1.13)

[13] ἐνταῦθα κρότος ἦν πολὺς, καὶ οἱ Παφλαγόνες ἦροντο εἰ καὶ γυναῖκες συνεμάχοντο αὐτοῖς. οἱ δ' ἔλεγον ὅτι αὗται καὶ αἱ τρεψάμεναι εἶεν βασιλέα ἐκ τοῦ στρατοπέδου. τῇ μὲν νυκτὶ ταύτῃ τοῦτο τὸ τέλος ἐγένετο.

[13] And she danced the Pyrrhic with grace. Then there was great applause, and the Paphlagonians asked whether women also fought by their side. And the Greeks replied that these women were precisely the ones who put the King to flight from his camp. Such was the end of that evening.

[14] τῇ δὲ ὑστεραίᾳ προσῆγον αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ στράτευμα: καὶ ἔδοξε τοῖς στρατιώταις μήτε ἀδικεῖν Παφλαγόνας μήτε ἀδικεῖσθαι. μετὰ τοῦτο οἱ μὲν πρέσβεις ὥχοντο: οἱ δὲ Ἕλληνες, ἐπειδὴ πλοῖα ἱκανὰ ἐδόκει παρεῖναι, ἀναβάντες ἔπλεον ἡμέραν καὶ νύκτα πνεύματι καλῷ ἐν ἀριστερᾷ ἔχοντες τὴν Παφλαγονίαν.

[14] On the next day they introduced the ambassadors to the army, and the soldiers passed a resolution to do the Paphlagonians no wrong and to suffer no wrong at their hands. After this the ambassadors departed, and the Greeks, inasmuch as it seemed that vessels enough were at hand, embarked and sailed for a day and a night with a fair wind, keeping Paphlagonia on the left.

The Paphlagonians were very impressed by the celebration and the dances. They promised the Greeks that they would help them return home and advised them to follow the sea route through the Herakleia Pontike in Bithynia.

3. Conclusions

In conclusion the aforementioned dances replaced the dance, song and pantomime performances or acrobatic shows of professional artists, which were common in civic Attic symposia. Xenophon mentions selected variations of armed dances. However, it is strange that he does not include in his description the Cretan and Spartan armed dances, which were very famous and invented by the Couretes and Dioskuri respectively, according to the Greek mythology and religion. It is to emphasize that in Ancient Greece the armed or pyrrhic dances were very popular and varied by locality and the deity with which they were associated. The dances described by Xenophon appear to have little practical military value.

They are pantomimes, processional marches, or simple entertainment. It is uncertain, whether the pyrrhic was used for military training, or if there was a connection between tactics and dancing. Therefore, the pyrrhic dancing does not totally prepare an individual for a phalanx warfare. However, such dances might have increased physical fitness, agility, and dexterity in handling a shield and a spear. The Pyrrhic performance at a symposium, especially the female one, must have been of great importance, perhaps the most interesting point of entertainment, along with other mimic dances. In any case the banquet in Cotyora and the performed spectacular dances had positive results for the Greeks, since the local officials decided to help them and let them leave in peace through Paphlagonia.

Résumé - Danser au Symposion Cotyora dans l'Anabase de Xénophon : Cet article présente les danses mentionnées dans l'œuvre Anabasis de Xénophon. Ces danses étaient exécutées par des hommes, soldats de l'armée grecque et d'origines ethniques diverses, et une fille, après un banquet organisé à Cotyora, sur le territoire de Paphlagonie. Les ambassadeurs grecs et paphlagoniens ont mangé et se sont régalés ensemble à ce banquet, écoutant des chants et de la musique et regardant les spectacles de danse. L'auteur décrit différentes danses accompagnées de musique aulos : danses de guerre avec des armes (par exemple à la Pyrrhus), danses mimétiques agricoles et un oriental. Notre objectif est d'identifier et de classer les danses combinant le texte avec des représentations similaires dans l'art classique contemporain, axé sur l'époque de Xénophon (430/25 - 354 avant notre ère). Des exemples sélectionnés seront montrés, notamment à partir de peintures sur vases et de figurines, qui représentent ces danses exécutées lors de colloques. Un autre objectif de cet article est de montrer et de souligner la coexistence pacifique des peuples à travers des banquets, des chants et des danses, des divertissements communs et la résolution pacifique des problèmes.

Mots-clés : *Symposion, danses grecques antiques, danses de guerre, pyrrhique, oklasma, musique grecque antique, Anabase.*

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