

# BILD, MYTHOS, AND RITUAL

## CHORAL DANCE IN THESEUS'S CRETAN ADVENTURE ON THE FRANÇOIS VASE

### ABSTRACT

Although the François vase clearly depicts Theseus leading a dance upon his arrival on Crete, most commentators have argued, on the basis of literary accounts, that Kleitias intended to depict a later moment in the story. The dance upon arrival, however, has several discursive functions within the image: by characterizing Theseus as the *choregos* of a dance traditionally performed by marriageable young people, it presents him as a promising husband for Ariadne; and by evoking the triumphal ritual arrival of Dionysos, the image anticipates that Theseus will be victorious. In this image, mythical narrative, spectacle, and the socialization of adolescence are carefully woven together.

Scholarly writing about ancient Greek narrative art tends to focus on two areas of investigation.<sup>1</sup> First, much attention has been paid to the relationships between pictorial representations and the underlying stories familiar from literary sources. The similarities and differences between pictorial and verbal narration were a subject of debate even before Lessing put his lasting stamp on the question.<sup>2</sup> Second, there is considerable archaeological and art-historical interest in the relationships between pictorial narratives and the conventions governing the media in which they are represented. The distinctions between narrative and nonnarrative vase painting have been well analyzed,<sup>3</sup> but less thoroughly explored is the manner in which pictorial narrative may be constructed out of elements of visual spectacle. By visual spectacle, I mean cultural practices outside of pictorial art, practices that rely in part on visual impact for their efficacy. Pictorial representations of rituals have been thoroughly examined for the evidence they provide about the realities of ancient religious and social life. What remains to be explored

1. For useful comments, I thank Elizabeth McGowan, Jenifer Neils, the two anonymous reviewers for *Hesperia*, and the participants of the 2010 Boston University Graduate Student Conference, where the paper was first presented. For images, I thank

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2. On Lessing's *Laokoön*, published in 1766, see now the insightful analysis of Giuliani (2003, pp. 21–37).

3. For a recent study, see Ferrari 2003a.



is the deployment of ritual in pictorial narration for the connotations that the ritual may contribute to the narrative intelligibility of the image itself. What I have in mind is not a vase painting that depicts a ritual event for its own sake, but a vase painting that depicts ritual in order to express something about a myth.

Among the very early visual representations to contextualize ritual within a mythological narrative is an image on a well-known Athenian volute krater of ca. 570 B.C., signed by Kleitias as painter and Ergotimos as potter and now known as the François vase (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> The image is dominated by a dance led by Theseus and performed by 14 Athenian boys and girls (Fig. 2). As we know from ancient literature, the Athenian children were sent to Crete as offerings to an elusive and freakish creature, the part-man, part-bull Minotaur, which was confined within a special enclosure at Knossos known as the Labyrinth.

**Figure 1.** François vase, ca. 570 B.C., signed by Kleitias and Ergotimos. Florence, Museo archeologico 4209. Photo courtesy Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana

4. Florence, Museo archeologico 4209: *ABV* 76, no. 1; Beazley Archive Database (hereafter BAD) 300000; Cristofani et al. 1980.





Figure 2. François vase: details of Theseus's Cretan adventure. Photo courtesy Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana

In the literary sources, a dance led by Theseus upon his triumph over the monster is associated etiologically with a dance performed in historical times on Delos. The Delian dance was called the *geranos*, or crane dance. The literary descriptions lead one to expect a dance that takes place after the victory over the monster, and one that is primarily circular and secondarily labyrinthine in form. In the vase painting, however, the dance is processional and takes place, it appears, immediately upon the arrival of the Athenians on Crete. The discrepancies between the image and the literary sources in respect to the setting and choreography of the *geranos* have resulted in widely divergent answers to basic questions of time and space in the image. Although the recent discussion by Luca Giuliani has persuasively clarified the moment chosen for representation, I hope to show in this article that his interpretation has obscured the full narrative function of dance within the image.<sup>5</sup>

5. Giuliani 2003, pp. 153–157, 294–296.





### DELOS OR CRETE? BEFORE OR AFTER?

On the François vase, seven boys and seven girls hold hands, boy-girl-boy-girl, in a line proceeding from a beached ship toward a pair of girls who greet them (Figs. 1, 2). The image includes a point of departure and a destination for the procession, which is stretched out between them like a necklace.

That the 14 boys and girls are engaged in a dance is suggested in part by the similarities between their poses and those of figures engaged in dance in earlier Greek art. On a Protoattic neck amphora of ca. 690 B.C. attributed to the Analatos Painter, for example, boys hold hands with girls and dance to the music of an aulos player (Fig. 3).<sup>6</sup> The identification of the action on the François vase, however, is suggested primarily by the fact that the leader, identified by an inscription as Theseus, conducts the chorus with the help of a lyre, which he does not merely carry but plays as he leads the dance. Alan Shapiro questioned the identification of the action as dance, arguing that the children hold hands out of fear.<sup>7</sup> The earlier representations of youths and maidens holding hands, however, which correspond closely to Kleitias's vase painting typologically, do not make sense as representations of anything but dance.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Giuliani has questioned whether children of noble Athenian families would be depicted as visibly expressing fear.<sup>9</sup>

The smaller of the two female figures waiting at the head of the procession, identified by an inscription as a nurse (θροφός), greets the arriving chorus with her raised right hand. Behind her, the more prominent and elegantly dressed figure, labeled Ariadne (Ἀριά[v]ῃ or [Ἀρ]ιῳδ[v]ῃ), offers to Theseus on her outstretched palm a round object, presumably the ball of

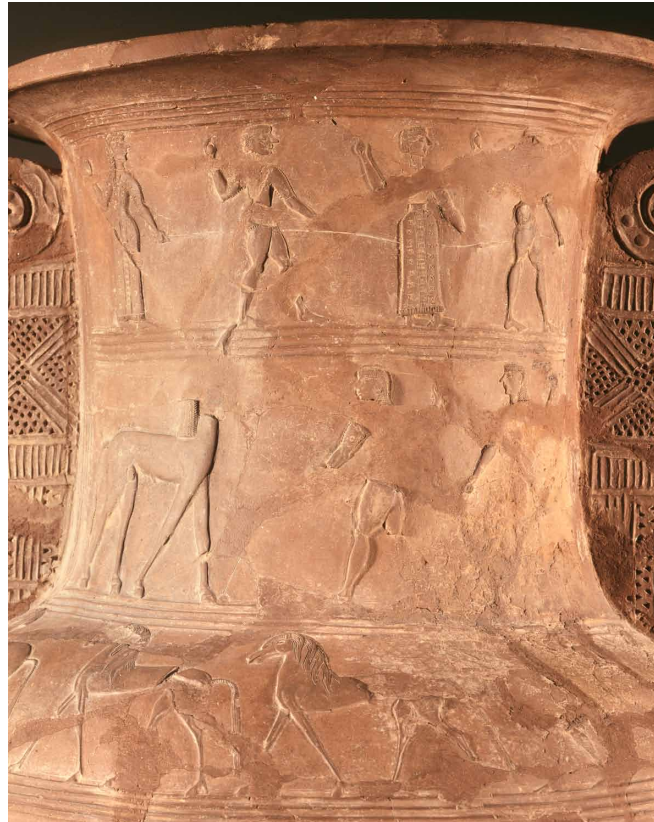
Figure 3. Mixed dance of youths and maidens. Protoattic neck amphora, ca. 690 B.C., Analatos Painter. Paris, Musée du Louvre CA 2985. Photo courtesy Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, N.Y.

6. Paris, Louvre CA 2985: Simon, Hirmer, and Hirmer 1981, pl. 111. For lists of early vase paintings of mixed dances, see Crowhurst 1963, p. 219; Langdon 2008, pp. 161–162, 169–170.

7. Shapiro 1989, pp. 146–147; 1991, pp. 124–126.

8. See also Crowhurst 1963, pp. 169–173, 219.

9. Giuliani 2003, pp. 155, 295.



**Figure 4.** Theseus and the Athenian children in the Labyrinth. Cycladic relief pithos, ca. 650 B.C. Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, BS 617 (Kä 601). Photo courtesy Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig. Photo A. F. Voegelin.

thread that will guide him safely out of the Labyrinth.<sup>10</sup> She also appears to have held a crown.<sup>11</sup>

In the visual arts, the thread already appears in the earliest known representation of the encounter between Theseus and the Minotaur, on the neck of a Cycladic relief pithos of ca. 650 B.C. in Basel (Fig. 4).<sup>12</sup> Here Theseus and five companions, two boys and three girls, confront a monster that is part quadruped, part human. Theseus and his companions hold rocks in one raised hand and a thread in the other hand. Like mountaineers on a sheer ice wall, whose means of survival is the rope linking them together, the Athenian boys and girls cling to the thread, which will ensure their escape from the Labyrinth if they defeat the monster with their stones. The representation on the pithos indicates that, in the 7th century, the Minotaur was already to be found in the dark and disorienting Labyrinth, from which there was to be no escape, and that Ariadne's thread was the key to survival in the maze.<sup>13</sup>

10. For the reading of the name of Ariadne, see Cristofani et al. 1980, pp. 177, 183, no. 45, fig. 175; Wachter 1991, p. 88, no. 45, n. 18.

11. According to Gantz (1993, pp. 264–265), in some later sources the crown is said to have emitted a light that allowed Theseus to see in the darkness of the Labyrinth. If that idea was familiar to Kleitias and his viewers,

then the crown might have been understood as another gift from Ariadne to aid Theseus.

12. Basel, Antikenmuseum BS 617 (Kä 601): *LIMC* VI, 1992, p. 577, no. 33, pl. 321, s.v. Minotauros (S. Woodford); Schefold 1993, p. 117, fig. 103.

13. For Ariadne's thread in early Greek art, see also London, British Museum H 228 (GR 1850.2-27.50),

an Etruscan polychrome hydria, ca. 570 B.C. (*LIMC* III, 1986, p. 1070, no. 1, s.v. Ariadne/Ariatha [F. Jurgeit]; VII, 1994, pp. 952–953, no. 15, pl. 668, s.v. Theseus/These [C. Weber-Lehmann]); Paris, Louvre MNC 675, a Boiotian black-figure skyphos, mid-6th century B.C. (*LIMC* III, 1986, p. 1055, no. 35, pl. 729, s.v. Ariadne [M.-L. Bernhard]).

Although the Minotaur is not present in the representation on the François vase, several aspects of the image link it to the story of Theseus's triumph over the Cretan monster as it is known from literature.<sup>14</sup> These elements include travel by sea, the presence of seven boys and seven girls, an encounter between Theseus and Ariadne, a ball of thread, and, not least, the idea of Theseus conducting a choral performance.

At least four ancient literary sources refer to a dance performed by Theseus in the course of his Cretan adventure. In Callimachus's Delian hymn (4.307–315), Theseus leads a chorus on Delos of the children who escaped with him from the Labyrinth: "Around the altar to the sound of the kithara they danced in a circle." Plutarch provides further detail in his biography of the hero (*Thes.* 21): "He danced a chorus with the youths that they say is still executed today among the Delians, an imitation of the wanderings in and escape from the Labyrinth, in which the rhythms include alternations and circulations. This type of dance is called the *geranos* by the Delians, according to Dikaiarchos. Theseus danced it around the *Keraton* altar." A scholion on the *Iliad* (18.591–592) says simply that "having been saved by Theseus from the Labyrinth, the youths and maidens danced together," and that this was the first time boys and girls had ever danced with each other.<sup>15</sup>

In the literary sources, the dance led by Theseus and performed by the Athenian children occurs long after they emerge from the Cretan Labyrinth. It is first performed on Delos (when the location is mentioned at all), it is partly circular in form, and it imitates the path taken by the children while they were inside the Labyrinth. The image on the François vase does not correspond closely with this description in any respect. The dance on the vase is emphatically linear. Moreover, if the setting were Delos, it would be difficult to explain the encounter between Theseus and Ariadne (Fig. 2, top). The difficulty is not just that the ancient literary sources claim that Theseus had already abandoned Ariadne on Naxos.<sup>16</sup> A more compelling argument against the identification of the setting as Delos is the manner in which the two figures interact. Theseus approaches Ariadne, who stands facing him as if he has just arrived at her home, while her nurse holds up a hand in greeting. Kleitias depicts the arrival of the gods and goddesses at the home of Peleus in a similar way on the same vase.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the moment represented appears to be not only that of Theseus's arrival, but also that in which he first wins Ariadne's affections. The transfer of her allegiance from her father, Minos, and half-brother, the Minotaur, to Theseus is signaled by her offer to the hero of a means of survival within the Labyrinth, a ball of thread. These pictorial elements encourage one to envision the scene as unfolding on Crete, not Delos.

The condition of the ship and its crew also suggests that the image represents the arrival on Crete (Fig. 2, bottom). The ship's mast is down and

14. For the early sources of the story, see Gantz 1993, pp. 262–270.

15. In addition to Callimachus and Plutarch, see Poll. 4.101. For the Homeric scholion, see Erbse 1969–1988, 4, pp. 565–566. The literary sources as well as modern scholarship

on the dance are considered by Delavaud-Roux 1994, pp. 74–81; Calame 1997, pp. 53–58.

16. Friis Johansen (1945, pp. 4–11) offers the fullest account of the difficulties inherent in the idea that Ariadne was present on Delos at

the performance of the *geranos*. Some of the objections, such as the expectation of geographical precision, were called into question by de La Coste-Messelière (1947, pp. 145–149).

17. Cristofani et al. 1980, pp. 132–136, figs. 74–83.

stowed, so it is not preparing for departure. It is close enough to the beach that one of the sailors has jumped into the sea and is swimming ashore. Several sailors have risen from their seats and thrown their arms into the air, relieved and happy, it would seem, to have arrived at their destination after a long journey.<sup>18</sup> These details make the best sense if one assumes that the ship has just arrived from Athens. One figure in particular links the ship, spatially and temporally, with the dance: the last of the 14 dancers, labeled Phaidimos, is shown running from the direction of the ship toward the thirteenth dancer, Hippodameia, in order to take her hand and complete the chorus. It is difficult to imagine where Phaidimos is coming from, if not from the ship itself.

It is true that the image includes no boarding ladder or plank that Phaidimos and the other dancers might have used to disembark, although such ladders appear in some other depictions of beached ships. The absence of a ladder prompted Heberdey, Friis Johansen, Beazley, and others to envision the ship as moored off the beach near Crete, or as having just returned from its mooring to the island. They imagine that, having put Theseus and the 14 boys and girls ashore at some earlier point in time, the sailors then moved the ship away for safety, and are now approaching the beach at a prearranged pickup time. Not expecting to see the young Athenians again, they are surprised to find them celebrating a dance after their victory over the Minotaur, and in response they throw their arms into the air with joy.<sup>19</sup>

That ingenious interpretation rightly acknowledges that the gestures of the crew seem to express triumph and not merely relief at the conclusion of an arduous journey. Nevertheless, it fails to convince, because it cannot account for the manner in which Phaidimos is depicted (running to join the dance, and from where, if not the ship?), nor for the fact that Ariadne and her nurse appear to be greeting Theseus and the dancers as if they have just arrived. Furthermore, such a reading of the image requires the creation of an elaborate narrative digression about the disposition of the ship during Theseus's time on Crete. There are not enough moored ships with boarding ladders in Greek art to make one confident that the absence of such equipment here indicates a significant spatial separation between the ship and the dancers. On the contrary, many details of the picture—the furlled sail and stowed mast, the celebration and relaxed demeanor of the crew, the joining-up of the dance, the movement of the dancers from the direction of the ship toward a reception by Ariadne, the greeting of the dancers by the nurse, and the presentation to Theseus of an object that he must have before he enters the Labyrinth—all point to more or less the same moment in the story: the moment when Theseus has disembarked with the Athenian boys and girls but has not yet encountered the Minotaur, and when he first meets Ariadne and receives her offer of help.<sup>20</sup>

18. Giuliani (2003, pp. 154–155) suggests that the gestures of the crew might be interpreted alternatively as terror at the prospect of being near the Minotaur. That reading of the gesture accords with his view that the Athenian children, being of noble birth, are shown to be courageous, in contrast to

the crew members, who, not being of noble birth, express their fear visibly.

19. Heberdey 1890, pp. 78–82; Friis Johansen 1945, pp. 20–26; Arias, Shefton, and Hirmer 1962, p. 288; Beazley 1986, p. 31.

20. This interpretation corresponds in many details with that of Dugas

(1943, pp. 9–11); see now also Giuliani 2003, pp. 153–157, 294–296. Shapiro (1989, pp. 146–147) also argues that the image represents the moment after Theseus and the Athenian children have disembarked on Crete, but he denies that they are engaged in a dance.





Figure 5. Theseus and Ariadne. Attic red-figure cup, ca. 510 B.C., attributed to Euphronios. London, British Museum E 41 (GR 1837.6-9.58). Photo © Trustees of the British Museum

## THE ROLE OF MUSIC

The interpretation of the scene on the François vase as a representation of Theseus's arrival on Crete, proposed long ago by Dugas, is less popular than either of the other proposed interpretations, which set the scene either on Crete immediately after the escape from the Labyrinth, or on Delos during the journey back to Athens. The lack of support for Dugas's view among recent scholars is a reflection of a general preference for the authority of the literary accounts over the iconographic testimony. It has seemed inexplicable that Theseus would have performed the *geranos*, a dance that imitates the path through the Labyrinth, prior to his escape from the maze.<sup>21</sup> This objection is the subject of an important recent discussion by Giuliani, who questions the virtually universal assumption that the dance depicted is a victory dance, and argues that the presence of dance in the image was motivated by the manner in which Theseus is characterized.<sup>22</sup> The survival of the Athenian children depends on Theseus's ability to escape from the Labyrinth, and whether he can persuade Ariadne to help him do this is one of two crucial turning points in the story (the defeat of the Minotaur in hand-to-hand combat being the other). What Kleitias has chosen to depict, Giuliani argues, is the way in which Theseus seduced Ariadne.

21. See, e.g., Gantz 1993, pp. 267–268. That the scene depicts the inauguration of the *geranos* on Delos has recently been argued anew by Torelli

(2007, pp. 19–24).

22. Giuliani 2003, pp. 155–157, 195–196.



By employing a traditional image of the suitor as a seductive, richly dressed, lyre-playing singer, Kleitias has given visual form to the idea that Theseus was irresistible to the Cretan princess. Theseus is also the leader of the Athenian youths and maidens, so if he is depicted as a lyre player, then it is natural, Giuliani suggests, to depict his young followers as dancing to his music in a chorus.

Giuliani's discussion focuses on the relationship of music to a logical turning point in the story. The resulting interpretation is characterized above all by a satisfying sense of narrative unity: virtually all of the elements in the image can be seen as meaningful in relation to the particular moment when Theseus persuaded Ariadne to help him in his quest. Yet while Giuliani has persuasively identified the moment chosen for representation and, at least in a general sense, the manner in which Theseus is shown to have seduced Ariadne, there remain two difficulties with his discussion of the scene: one with the assumptions that underlie the argument, the other with the interpretation itself.

Giuliani's argument—that a representation of a man seducing a woman by playing a lyre is a traditional, generic image—is problematic. The problem lies in one of the fundamental premises of his book: that figures depicted in Archaic Greek art should be understood as generic, unless they are explicitly identified as specific mythological characters. This is not the place to address fully the difficulties implicit in this premise; suffice it to say that Giuliani interprets images of a young man playing a lyre before a girl as generic scenes if they lack identifying inscriptions, while other scholars, on the basis of contextual information, interpret the same images as representations of Theseus and Ariadne.<sup>23</sup>

Jenifer Neils, for example, identifies as Theseus and Ariadne the figures in the tondo of a red-figure cup attributed to Euphronios (Fig. 5), which Giuliani considers generic.<sup>24</sup> She does so because the exterior of the cup depicts Theseus certainly with one, and likely with two, other lovers. The figures on one side can be positively identified as Theseus and Antiope on the basis of an inscription naming the latter, and Neils has persuasively argued that the other side shows Theseus with Helen. The cup, which dates to ca. 510 B.C., was created at the moment and in the milieu in which Athenian artists were beginning to employ all three available surfaces of a cup to address a single theme. Also supporting Neils's interpretation of the figures in the tondo is Pausanias's description of the late-7th-century chest of Kypselos. The importance of the chest lies partly in the fact that the figures were identified by inscriptions. According to Pausanias (5.19.1), one panel depicted "Theseus holding a lyre and, near him, Ariadne holding a crown"—a fair description of the image in the tondo of the cup. It seems possible, in fact, that the image of a young man playing a lyre before a girl originated in the representation of a particular story, that of Theseus and Ariadne, before it became a generic type.

23. Giuliani 2003, pp. 155–156, with n. 145.

24. London, British Museum E 41 (GR 1837.6-9.58): *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 58, no. 51, attributed to Oltos; BAD 200441;

Neils 1981, pls. 40, 41, figs. 1, 3, 4.

For the attribution to Euphronios, see Pasquier et al. 1990, pp. 174–176; Robertson 1992, p. 22.

## THE ROLE OF DANCE IN KLEITIAS'S NARRATIVE

The other principal difficulty with Giuliani's interpretation is that it leaves dance poorly accounted for. Giuliani sees lyre playing as merely a visual means of expressing an idea that was conveyed in a different way in poetry, as for example in a dithyramb by Bacchylides (17.112–116), where, he suggests, Theseus's irresistibility to Ariadne is implicitly explained by his possession of a crown with Aphrodisiac power. The implication is that dance is merely a second-order attribute in Kleitias's visual narrative: it is an attribute of Theseus's musical skill, which, in turn, is an attribute of his sex appeal. The important place held by dance in later accounts of the story is, in Giuliani's reading, nothing more than a coincidence.

Such an interpretation is difficult to accept without significant modification. It is not an exaggeration to say that, visually, the central and most extensive part of the representation of the Cretan adventure on the François vase is the chain of boys and girls holding hands in dance. In this image, Theseus is seducing Ariadne not through solo singing and playing, but as a *choregos*, or chorus leader, of a very special type of chorus. The nature of the chorus is arguably the primary visual means of explaining to the viewer why Ariadne decided to elope with Theseus.

Mixed dances of boys and girls are associated in ancient testimonia specifically with marriageable age or marriageability. The description of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* contains a famous image of a mixed dance (18.590–605):

There youths and maidens worthy of cattle danced, holding on to the wrists of each other with their hands. . . . At times, they would run on practiced feet quite nimbly, as when a potter sitting at his balanced wheel tries it with his hands. At other times, they would run in lines toward each other. And a great crowd stood around the dance and enjoyed it.

In this description the mixed dance of boys and girls is associated with the moment in the girls' lives when they are ready for marriage, an association made clear by the epithet ἀλφεσίβοιαι, "worthy of cattle," which almost certainly refers to the giving of cattle as a bride-price or dowry. It is also shown by the manner in which the dancers hold each other by the wrists, a gesture closely associated with the marriage ritual.<sup>25</sup> In a well-known description of a mixed dance called the *hormos* (Lucian *Salt.* 12), young men and women dance together, displaying the courage or restraint prized for their respective genders.<sup>26</sup> The role of mixed dances as a way for boys and girls of marriageable age to see, and take the measure of, potential spouses is emphasized by Plato (*Leg.* 771e–772a).<sup>27</sup> As Giuliani suggests, the way in which Kleitias has chosen to represent Theseus on the François vase provides an answer to a question of fundamental importance: how did this young man, an Athenian captive, mere tribute, destined for death in the Labyrinth, manage to seduce Ariadne away from her family, given his unpromising status as a suitor? Unlike Giuliani, however, I believe that Theseus does this primarily by demonstrating his mastery of the mixed dance of boys and girls of marriageable age.<sup>28</sup>

25. Edwards 1991, p. 229; Lonsdale 1993, p. 214; Oakley and Sinos 1993, p. 32; Langdon 2008, p. 27.

26. Compare Polyb. 4.21: "And it was with a view to softening and tempering this natural ruggedness and rusticity, that [the Arkadians introduced] the custom of holding assemblies and frequently offering sacrifices, in both of which women took part equally with men, and having mixed dances of boys and girls" (trans. after Kowalzig 2007, pp. 4–5).

27. For further discussion of mixed dances, see Lonsdale 1993, pp. 210–212; Calame 1997, pp. 56–57.

28. Calame (1990, pp. 119–202) also emphasizes Theseus's role as a *choregos*. An anonymous reviewer pointed out that the crown held by Ariadne might be understood as a gift to Theseus in this role, since crowns were historically awarded as prizes for choral performance.

The idea that Theseus won Ariadne's affection while leading a chorus may have been given form in an earlier image as well. A fragmentary relief pithos of the early 7th century from Tenos appears to depict a young man leading a dance and approaching a woman.<sup>29</sup> In the top register of the vase, at the left end of the frieze, a female figure stands before a beardless male figure. Five parallel, incised lines running perpendicularly from his thigh to his left wrist most likely represent the strings of a lyre. What appeared immediately behind the lyre player is uncertain, due to the incomplete preservation of the vase. In the second, third, and fourth registers, however, there are rows of dancers holding hands: boys, it appears, in one row, and girls in another. An aulos player provides additional accompaniment.

The semantic value of dance in Kleitias's vase painting goes beyond a mere explanation of how Theseus seduced Ariadne, or why Ariadne decided to help him. Visually, the dance calls to mind not only a mixed dance of adolescents of marriageable age, but also a triumphal procession. As the presence of the ship emphasizes, the dance takes the form of a procession arriving at a destination from somewhere else, and such processions often carry connotations of triumph. Moreover, the Roman triumphal procession, in which context alone a general and his army were permitted to enter the city of Rome, has important formal similarities with earlier Greek Dionysiac processions, and there is reason to believe that those similarities were recognized in antiquity, perhaps at an early date.<sup>30</sup>

In Athens two processions in honor of Dionysos entered the city from outside. In preparation for the so-called *eisagoge*, or entrance procession, the statue of Dionysos Eleuthereus was transported from the god's sanctuary beside the Acropolis to the Academy on the periphery of the city. The myth associated with the foundation of the festival explains that the Athenians initially rejected the statue when it was brought to Athens by a missionary named Pegasos, then expiated the offense by reenacting the statue's arrival and giving it a positive reception. This they did annually with a procession of arrival or epiphany, which, as Sourvinou-Inwood has shown, emphasized the hospitality shown to the god.<sup>31</sup>

In the second Athenian procession featuring a Dionysiac epiphany, the god was carried in a ship on wheels accompanied by music and dance. The evidence for the ship-car procession, which probably took place during the Anthesteria, consists in part of Late Archaic Athenian vase paintings.<sup>32</sup> The nautical imagery indicates that the procession symbolized the arrival or epiphany of Dionysos from the sea. The myth of the encounter between Dionysos and the Tyrrhenian pirates suggests that the procession may have symbolized the triumph of Dionysos over those who, like the pirates, denied his divinity.<sup>33</sup>

The ship-car procession is of particular relevance for an understanding of the connotations of the processional, choral form of Theseus's arrival as depicted on the François vase. Both the mythical procession of Athenian children and the ritual Dionysiac procession emphasize arrival by sea. In addition, the ship-car procession is associated, directly or indirectly, with another ritual that most likely occurred during the Anthesteria: the marriage of Dionysos to the wife of the Athenian Archon Basileus.<sup>34</sup> The sacred marriage was understood in relation to the mythical union of Dionysos and Ariadne. This is shown, for example, by a fragment of a Classical Athenian

29. Tenos, Archaeological Museum: *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 1061, no. 104, s.v. Ariadne (M.-L. Bernhard). Kontoleon (1969, p. 227, pls. 48–50) suggested that the dance is the *geranos*. See also Schefold 1993, p. 119, fig. 108.

30. Versnel 1970, pp. 16–48.

31. Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, pp. 69–89.

32. See Hedreen 2004, pp. 45–46, for the vases and other evidence pertaining to the ritual.

33. Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 2005, pp. 151–156.

34. On the association of the ritual marriage with the Anthesteria, see Parker 2005, pp. 303–305.



krater depicting the discovery of Ariadne by Dionysos on Naxos, where Theseus abandoned her while she slept.<sup>35</sup> The figures are identified by inscriptions. The link between the myth underlying the vase painting and the ritual marriage to which it is compared is the form of the oinochoe carried by a henchman of Dionysos: it is a *chous*, a shape widely if not exclusively associated, in imagery as well as ritual, with the Anthesteria.

The chain of argument linking the god's processional arrival from the sea, a ritual marriage between the newly arrived god and the wife of the Archon Basileus, and the mythical marriage of Dionysos and Ariadne rests partly on implication. The connections are not explicitly attested until the last quarter of the 6th century B.C.<sup>36</sup> If, however, such ideas were familiar to Athenians of the early 6th century, they would have contributed significantly to contemporary understanding of Kleitias's vase painting. Theseus arrives triumphantly on Crete from the sea and demonstrates his mastery of the situation by taking for his bride the daughter of the king. Just so, Dionysos arrives by ship at Athens for his festival, where his power is made manifest by his marriage to the wife of the so-called King Archon, the heir of Theseus. The two scenarios are linked by the common figure of Ariadne, taken by Theseus only to be given over by him to Dionysos.<sup>37</sup> They are also linked by the presence of choral song and dance in both mythical and ritual processions.

Kleitias employed elements of Dionysiac processional spectacle elsewhere on the François vase. On the same side of the krater as the representation of Theseus's Cretan adventure, in the fourth register from the top, a depiction of the return of Hephaistos gives visual form to a myth about the achievement of stability within the hierarchy of the Olympian gods (Fig. 1). The myth recounts the expulsion of the imperfect god Hephaistos from Olympos, the disruption of the community of immortals caused by his binding of Hera, and the restoration of order through the acceptance of Hephaistos and Dionysos into the pantheon. The myth is closely related to a series of tales about intergenerational struggles among the gods. Those myths often involve the confinement of a parent by a child.<sup>38</sup> The visual representation, however, employs a different metaphor: it depicts the return of Hephaistos as a Dionysiac procession in which the god is escorted into a city. Like Dionysiac processions at Athens, the journey of Hephaistos and his entourage to Olympos is marked by drunkenness, ostentatious display of the phallus, and obscene, insulting behavior, as well as song and dance. If, as argued above, the mythology associated with Athenian Dionysiac processions suggests that they symbolized the triumph of the god over those who would deny his divine status, then Kleitias's vase painting takes advantage of this symbolism to convey visually the idea that Hephaistos has triumphed over the gods who rejected or slighted him.<sup>39</sup>

35. Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Universität 5439: *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1057, no. 97, Group of Polygnotos; BAD 213727; *CVA* Tübingen 4, pl. 18. For the interpretation of the fragment, see Hedreen 1992, pp. 47, 80–81. On the association of choes with the

Anthesteria, see Simon 1983, pp. 94–97.

36. See ex-New York SL 1990.1.107 (BAD 43275, formerly in the collection of Leon Levy and Shelby White), a black-figure neck-amphora related to the Medea Group, as interpreted by Carpenter (1995, pp. 155–157) and

Hedreen (2007, pp. 179–180).

37. Simon 1983, p. 97.

38. See, e.g., the allusions to the tale of the binding of Zeus assembled by Lang (1983).

39. For the full argument, see Hedreen 2004.

The representation of the processional dance conducted by Theseus lacks the unruliness of many Dionysiac processions, but retains, in view of the outcome of the story, their connotations of triumph. The atmosphere is enhanced by the gestures of the sailors, which seem to express not only relief at the end of a long journey, but also celebration of a victory.

## DANCE AS A TRADITIONAL FEATURE OF THESEUS'S CRETAN ADVENTURE

The discussion so far has focused on the way in which dance contributes to Kleitias's painting in a purely discursive manner. Dance tells us something about the underlying story thanks to the connotations it brings (marital fitness or triumph), rather than as a cardinal function of the narrative itself. Yet there is some evidence to suggest that choral dance was part of the story of Theseus's Cretan adventure as represented by other early Greek artists. The 7th-century relief pithos from Tenos, for example, may depict the same moment in the story as the François vase a century later, the moment when Theseus first encounters Ariadne. Here too, if the identification is correct, the hero is conducting a chorus of youths and maidens with a lyre.

Of greater significance, because it was produced at approximately the same time and in the same artistic milieu as the François vase, and because the figures are securely identified by inscriptions, is an Athenian band cup signed by Archikles and Glaukytes as potters (Fig. 6).<sup>40</sup> Here Theseus grasps the Minotaur by the horn and prepares to kill it with a sword, while Ariadne stands behind the monster and holds out the ball of thread that will make it possible for Theseus to find his way out of the Labyrinth. Behind Ariadne is her nurse, dancing in joy at the imminent destruction of the monster (or visibly shaking in fear of it?). Behind Theseus stands Athena, and to either side of the central group, alternating boy-girl-boy-girl, are 12 of the Athenian children, standing quietly. Athena holds a lyre, which must belong to Theseus. Many scholars have suspected that the lyre is a proleptic element in this image, pointing ahead in the narrative to the moment when Theseus will celebrate or commemorate his escape from the Labyrinth with the first *geranos* dance.<sup>41</sup> It is less unnatural, however, to understand the musical instrument as an analeptic element, pointing back to a dance led by Theseus upon his arrival on Crete.<sup>42</sup> After leading the dance, Theseus has handed the lyre to Athena, so that he can have both hands free to tackle the monster. The arrangement of the Athenian children in a line of alternating boys and girls also evokes the idea of a mixed dance. The ball of thread, which rests unwound on the palm of Ariadne's hand, is another analeptic narrative element: by this point in the story, Theseus will have already unrolled the thread, so that he can find his way out of the Labyrinth by rolling it back up again. In this image, then, it is difficult

40. Munich, Antikensammlungen 2243: *ABV* 163, no. 2; BAD 310552; *CVA* Munich 11, pls. 3–6. Cf. a black-figure hydria on which a girl

holds a lyre while Theseus slays the monster: Copenhagen, National Museum 13536: *ABV* 714 (Painter of London B76); BAD 306980;

*CVA* Copenhagen 8, pls. 319–321.

41. See esp. Himmelmann 1998, pp. 71–73.

42. Cf. Dugas 1943, p. 10.



to follow the interpretation proposed by Giuliani for the lyre in Kleitias's vase painting: that the instrument plays a purely attributive role in the visual narrative, as the sort of thing that any attractive young hero would have. The fact that the lyre is still present in the scene on the band cup, which depicts a moment when Theseus has no need of it, long after his seduction of Ariadne, suggests that it is understood to play an important role in the underlying story.

In the passage of the *Iliad* quoted earlier, the mixed dance of youths and maidens depicted on the shield of Achilles is compared to a dance (or dance floor) created by Daidalos for Ariadne: "such as one that Daidalos at one time created for Ariadne of the lovely locks in broad Knossos" (*Il.* 18.591–592). The poet does not say explicitly why the dance is like the one invented for Ariadne. There is a striking similarity between the alternation of movements, first in circles and then back and forth, described in the Homeric passage, and Plutarch's description of circular and alternating movements in the *geranos* (*Thes.* 21, quoted above).<sup>43</sup> I shall return to this point below; for the moment, it is enough to note that the connection is another piece of evidence suggesting that a mixed dance had become part of the mythology of Ariadne already in the Archaic period.

Finally, one structural feature of the myth suggests that choral song and dance was a traditional element of the story. The number and genders of the Athenian children sent to the Labyrinth were not variable but fixed: Sappho, Bacchylides, Euripides, and Plato, like Kleitias, all describe the victims of the Minotaur as seven boys and seven girls.<sup>44</sup> The nature of the tribute cannot have been determined by any real alimentary need of the Minotaur, so it must have been a product of some other factor. The number

Figure 6. Theseus fighting the Minotaur. Attic black-figure band cup, ca. 540 B.C., signed by Archikles and Glaukytes. Munich, Antikensammlungen 2243. Photo courtesy Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, Munich

43. Calame 1990, pp. 118–119; 1997, pp. 53, 56; Postlethwaite 1998, pp. 98–99.

44. Sappho fr. 206 L–P; Bacchyl. 17.2; Eur. *HF* 1327; Pl. *Phd.* 58a–b. See also Louvre MNC 675 (n. 13, above).



is very like the number of dancers attested for a variety of ancient choruses (the choruses of Athenian tragedy, for example, typically included 12 or 15 members), and the equal numbers of boys and girls correspond well to the needs of a mixed-gender dance. The invariability of the δις ἑπτά, or "twice seven," is most easily accounted for if one assumes that the myth was shaped from an early point in its development by the role of choral song and dance involving boys and girls. The date of the establishment of the Athenian custom of dancing the *geranos* on Delos is uncertain and conceivably later than the decoration of the François vase.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the Homeric passage, the 7th-century pithos, the cup in Munich, and the structure of the myth itself, when taken together, suggest that a mixed dance of adolescents of marriageable age was a traditional part of the mythology of Ariadne. It appears that choral dance had an established role in the story that Kleitias was trying tell.

### THE *GERANOS* AS ARIADNE'S SECRET

If a mixed dance was part of the story underlying the representation on the François vase, then how can one reconcile the moment chosen for the representation with the extant literary tradition? The image depicts a point in the story before the encounter with the Minotaur, whereas the literary sources describe the *geranos* as a victory dance celebrated after the defeat of the monster. In part, the answer is that the dance points ahead in the story to what every viewer should know, that Theseus will be triumphant. There is, however, another, more subtle way of understanding the relationship between myth and ritual in this image, if one is willing to consider that the dance in the narrative is much more than just a victory dance.

Consider the ambiguity of the word *choros*, which can mean both "dance" and "dance floor." In the description of the shield of Achilles, the mixed dance of marriageable boys and girls is compared to a *choros* created by Daidalos for Ariadne (*Il.* 18.591–592). Daidalos was traditionally associated with the creation of the Labyrinth, and Ariadne knew the secret of escape from the maze, so any reference to a dance or dancing place constructed for Ariadne by Daidalos is likely to call to mind the Labyrinth.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the Homeric passage implicitly links the dance of youths and maidens with the layout of the Labyrinth itself. Both meanings of the word *choros* are relevant, because the edifice that Daidalos erected at Knossos and the dance that he invented for Ariadne are the same.<sup>47</sup> This idea is implicit in the later literary sources: since the dance created by Theseus, the *geranos*, faithfully preserved the memory of the correct path through the Labyrinth, the dance was essentially the same thing as a plan of the path through the maze. The difference between the Homeric passage and the story told by later authors is that in the later accounts, the dance-mimesis of the Labyrinth is understood as having been created retrospectively, on the basis of Theseus's actual experience in the maze. The Homeric passage suggests a different scenario: that Daidalos created the Labyrinth dance long before Theseus came to Crete, and that Ariadne knew in advance the steps of the dance that would set him free.

45. Calame (1990, p. 428) argues that the idea that the *geranos* originated on Delos is likely to be an Athenian invention of the early 5th century. Shapiro (1989, pp. 144–145) suggests that the innovation is more likely to have occurred during the time of Peisistratos (still long after the creation of the François vase). Simon, Hirmer, and Hirmer (1981, p. 73) favor an earlier, Solonian date for the connection.

46. For Daidalos as the builder of the Labyrinth, see Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.1.4.

47. Arguments for and against both meanings can be found in Morris 1992, pp. 13–15; Lonsdale 1995, p. 273, n. 3. The latter includes references to Bronze Age structures at Knossos that have been associated with the Homeric reference to a "dancing floor." The argument that the word refers to both place and dance was well formulated by Schadewaldt (1944, p. 442, n. 1).

In many accounts, both written and visual, the secret to successful navigation of the Labyrinth takes the concrete form of a ball of thread. Significantly, in a few later literary sources, the two seemingly independent means of escape—the use of a thread and the possession of knowledge of the layout of the maze—are intertwined, so to speak. In a fragment of Pherekydes, for example, the ball of thread is given to Ariadne by Daïdalos himself, while a Hellenistic inscription from Delos suggests that the *geranos* may have been performed with the aid of a rope.<sup>48</sup> Several fragmentary Late Geometric vases appear to depict figures dancing with the aid of a rope, suggesting that the practice may be of considerable antiquity.<sup>49</sup>

If one reads the scene on the François vase along the lines suggested by the Homeric passage, Ariadne, seeing the youth from Athens giving the musical beat and playing the role of *choregos* to the other tribute-victims, recognizes that he is fully capable of dancing the steps of the Labyrinth dance that Daïdalos taught her. In a sense, Theseus offers Ariadne the one thing she needs to experience the Labyrinth dance of marriageable youths and maidens completely and personally, namely, a suitable man to dance with. She in turn provides Theseus with the one thing he lacks to master the Labyrinth and survive his ordeal, namely, the choreography of the dance. This secret is contained, or embodied, in the ball of thread that she offers the youth.

## CONCLUSIONS

On the level of the narrative logic that governs the tale of the Cretan adventure, it would be premature to celebrate a victory dance before the victory has occurred. On the discursive level, however, Greek pictorial art often takes advantage of the possibilities of analeptic or proleptic allusion. Narrative art relies on the viewer to relate the elements of an image to the appropriate actions, characters, or logic in the underlying story, reformulating the story when necessary to account for the pictorial features.<sup>50</sup> Many scholars have rightly connected the triumphant gestures of the sailors on the François vase with Theseus's impending triumph over the Minotaur. It does not follow from the gestures, however, that the triumph has already occurred.

Of greater interest are the ways in which the particular characterization of the dance contributes to the narrative intelligibility of the image. First, by depicting Theseus, at the moment when he first meets Ariadne, as the leader of a mixed dance of adolescent boys and girls, Kleitias offers an explanation of Ariadne's decision to help him. The explanation operates at the level of the narrative as well as that of the discourse: putting ourselves in Ariadne's place, we can appreciate why she might have decided that Theseus was an attractive (if risky) candidate for marriage. Kleitias conveys this idea by characterizing the choral dance on the vase as the sort of dance performed at a particular point in Greek life, the moment when adolescents begin to identify themselves as potential spouses, and "focalizes" it through Ariadne by making her a spectator of Theseus's performance.<sup>51</sup> By depicting the dance in this way, Kleitias has effectively imported into his visual narrative connotations of fitness for marriage.

48. Pherekydes, *FGrH* 3 F148 (schol. Hom. *Od.* 12.322). For ropes, see *ID* 442, line 189, ῥυμοί, as interpreted by Nilsson (1906, pp. 380–382) and Lawler (1946, pp. 125–127).

49. Langdon 2008, p. 176, fig. 3.23.

50. A fuller account of this dynamic model of visual narration may be found in Hedreen 2001, pp. 3–18.

51. For the term "focalize," see, e.g., de Jong 1987, p. 31.

Second, the dance takes the form of a procession arriving from outside the community, a kind of procession that often bears connotations of triumph. On the discursive level, by characterizing the dance in this way, Kleitias adds to the other elements of the picture, such as the gestures of the sailors, which may be understood as allusions to Theseus's forthcoming victory. On the level of the narrative, an arrival on Crete is a given, and the moment of triumph lies beyond the moment chosen for representation.

More speculative are possible associations between the processional arrival from the sea depicted on the vase and the ritual ship-car procession that formed part of the Athenian festival of the Anthesteria. If the ship-car procession and the sacred marriage between Dionysos and the wife of the Archon Basileus were already well-known features of the festival by the time of Kleitias, the possible connotations of this image are significant. Theseus arrives on Crete in a triumphal, choral procession from his ship, and takes for a bride the daughter of the king. Just so, Dionysos arrives in Athens in a ship drawn in a triumphal procession, accompanied by song and dance, and receives as a bride the wife of the King Archon. Ariadne is the link between the myth and the ritual, for she was taken by Theseus but then given over to Dionysos, much as the Archon Basileus gives his wife to the same god.

Kleitias represented the arrival of Theseus on Crete as a triumphal, mixed-gender dance for the sake of the connotations that those forms of dance contribute to the narrative potential or intelligibility of the image. Although it is possible that Kleitias was the first person to introduce choral dance into this heroic legend, there are good reasons to think that he has taken an existing element of the underlying story, the creation of the *geranos* by Theseus, and reconfigured it in the manner described here. In either case, the resulting image sets up a relationship between Theseus's Cretan adventure as a myth and one particular form of ritual associated with marriage as a rite of passage.

Some scholars believe that the myth of Theseus's Cretan adventure reflects, or originated in, ritual, although the form of ritual usually connected with the myth is an age-grade initiation rite.<sup>52</sup> The myth admittedly corresponds well to the tripartite scheme of ritual action first formalized by van Gennep, consisting of removal of the initiate to a liminal space, the transformation of the initiate, and reintegration of the initiate into society with new responsibilities.<sup>53</sup> The problem is that no corresponding age-grade initiation ritual for boys is securely attested at Athens during the Archaic period. The Oschophoria featured a procession from Athens to the harbor at Phaleron, led by two boys dressed in women's clothing. All the features of the festival, which some scholars interpret as an initiatory rite for boys, were mapped onto the myth of Theseus's Cretan adventure by Plutarch (*Thes.* 23). There is, however, no way to know whether the connection between the myth and the ritual predates the time of the Late Classical historian Demosthenes, who is cited by Plutarch as his source. Furthermore, in the Early Classical period, the ritual seems primarily to have served the needs of a particular *genos*, the Salaminioi, whose involvement in the festival, together with the ritual movement from the center of Athens toward the island of Salamis, suggests that it functioned, at least in part, to reinforce the Athenian political claim to the island.<sup>54</sup>

52. Graf 2003, p. 17.

53. Van Gennep 1960. For a summary of the scheme, see Lincoln 2003, pp. 243–244.

54. For the festival, its interpretation, and the etiological mythology, see Parker 2005, pp. 211–217.



In the Hellenistic period, the heroic career of Theseus was adduced as a model for the Athenian institution that prepared adolescent boys for adult military responsibilities, the *ephebeia*.<sup>55</sup> This institution, however, at least in its Hellenistic form, may not be any earlier than the 4th century. Moreover, the validity of Vidal-Naquet's well-known initiatory interpretation of the *ephebeia* has recently been challenged.<sup>56</sup> In his analysis of Bacchylides 17, Calame has also resisted interpreting the story of the Cretan adventure strictly along the lines of age-grade initiations.<sup>57</sup> He points instead to the many instances in the poem in which themes of erotic attraction and marriage are addressed. To be sure, marriage is also a rite of passage, but it is not the same thing as an age-grade initiation.<sup>58</sup>

A thorough examination of the relationship between ritual and myth in Theseus's Cretan adventure is beyond the scope of this article. I merely suggest that the representation of the story on the François vase, in its particular configuration of narrative action and ritual spectacle, is itself, in part, a meditation on that relationship. In this depiction of the Cretan story the viewer sees dance intricately intertwined with heroic action, rather than as a supplement to it. Furthermore, dance appears to be an integral, inextricable part of the narrative, rather than a later addition. Finally, the image highlights the role of marriage in the thematic matrix of the tale.<sup>59</sup> It says, in effect, that if you can't hold hands with a girl in a dance, you aren't ready to face a Minotaur.

55. See Graf 2003, pp. 18–19.

56. Vidal-Naquet 1986. For the critique, see Polinskaya 2003.

57. Calame 2009, pp. 119–123.

58. On this point, see Ferrari 2003b.

59. It has often been observed that marriage is a significant theme within the overall decorative program of the

François vase (see, e.g., Stewart 1983, pp. 66–70). It is the explicit occasion of the visit of the gods and goddesses to the house of Peleus and Thetis, and it is arguably implicit in the representations of the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs and the return of Hesphaistos.

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