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IV.—The Dance of the Ancient Mariners

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There is specific evidence for a mariners' dance performed on Delos by all merchant sailors whose course lay near that sacred island. The sailors' dances were certainly performed for the safety of their ships, and were probably accompanied by offerings of *σκάφαι* full of "good things." The dances were not associated with any particular festival. They were of remote antiquity. The mariners seem to have done not one dance, but two, or even three. One, performed around the horned altar, is confused with the *γέρανος* by Greek writers. I believe that it was a form of the original Cretan "labyrinth" dance or "wandering" dance of men, as it was before fusion with a "crane" dance to form the *γέρανος*. A second of the mariners' dances was performed "under blows." This would obviously be a ritual beating dance, of a well-known primitive type, used to induce fertility or to ward off evil. It may have been associated with the ritual theft of fruit from a sacred tree. Prehistoric rings from Isopata, Vaphio, Mycenae, etc., are significant in the interpretation of this dance. A third of the mariners' dances includes "biting the trunk" of the sacred olive tree, with the dancers' hands held behind the back. This is a familiar rite among ancient and modern peoples; its purpose is to transfer evil influences to the tree, and to secure protection from it. There are Minoan elements in all these dances. Other known mariners' dances are then considered briefly. Of these the *μύθων* seems to have been a descendant of an old mariners' dance which the ancestors of the Helots had learned from the Cretans. It may originally have been identical with the biting dance performed on Delos.

The little island of Delos, in the middle of the Aegean Sea, was throughout antiquity a very sacred spot. During the classical period it was noted for its magnificent festivals; and, as Lucian tells us (*Salt.* 16), there was no sacrifice there that was not accompanied with dancing. Nor did this splendor necessarily begin with the Greeks; for there is some evidence that even in the pre-Greek period Delos was noted for distinctive cult observances and for spectacular dances.

Prominent among our sources for the Delian ceremonies and dances are the Homeric *Hymn to the Delian Apollo* (146–64), Callimachus' *Hymn IV, To Delos* (270, 304–24), and Thucydides (3.104).¹ In a previous paper² I classified the dances mentioned in the two

¹ Cf. Irene R. Arnold, "Local Festivals at Delos," *AJA* 37 (1933) 452–8; Th. Homolle, "Comptes et Inventaires des Temples Déliens en l'Année 279," *BCH* 14 (1890) 389–511.

² Lillian B. Lawler, "Orchesis Ionike," *TAPhA* 74 (1943) 60–71.

hymns, as follows: (1) dances of mariners; (2) the γέρανος or crane dance; (3) the dance of the Delian maidens; and (4) the dances of the Ionian people assembled on Delos for various festivals. In the same paper I discussed the dances of the second, third, and fourth groups. In this paper I should like to consider those of the first group, which we may call "dances of the ancient mariners."

Callimachus says (*Del.* 316–24):

Ἄστερή πολύβωμε, πολύλλιτε, τίς δέ σε ναύτης
 ἔμπορος Αἰγαίοιο παρήλυθε νηὶ θεούσῃ;
 οὐχ οὕτω μεγάλοι μιν ἐπιπνεῖουσιν αἴηται,
 χρεῖώ δ' ὅττι τάχιστον ἄγει πλόν, ἀλλὰ τὰ λαΐφῃ
 ὥκέες ἐστείλαντο καὶ οὐ πάλιν αὖτις ἔβησαν,
 πρὶν μέγαν ἢ σέο βωμόν ὑπὸ πληγῆς ἐλελῖξαι
 ῥησσομένους καὶ πρέμνον ὀδακτάσαι ἄγνον ἐλαίης
 χεῖρας ἀποστρέψαντας· ἃ Δηλιάς εὗρετο νύμφῃ
 παίγνια κουρίζοντι καὶ Ἀπόλλωνι γελαστύν.

There are many corruptions in this passage, and it has aroused much discussion.³ I have followed Schneider in reading ὑπὸ πληγῆς ἐλελῖξαι in line 321, and Ernesti in reading ῥησσομένους in line 322. I should translate the lines as follows:

"Asteria, abounding in altars and in suppliants, what merchant mariner of the Aegean has passed thee by in his speeding ship? No matter how great gales blow upon it, even when necessity urges the speediest voyage possible, yet they quickly furl their sails, and do not go aboard again until, buffeted with blows, they have whirled in a dance around thine altar, and bitten the sacred trunk of the olive, holding their hands behind their backs; these ceremonies the Deliad nymph invented (to furnish) amusement and laughter to the young Apollo."

Along with this must be considered a gloss of Hesychius:

* Δηλκαὸς βωμός· τὸ περιτρέχειν κύκλῳ τῶν ἐν Δήλῳ βωμῶν καὶ τύπτεσθαι· ἤρξατο τοῦτο Θησεύς, * χαριστήτης ἀπάτης λαβύρινθος.

Various emendations for the obvious corruptions have been suggested, notably those of M. Schmidt's *editio maior*: Δηλιακὸς for Δηλκαὸς, τὸν . . . βωμόν for τῶν . . . βωμῶν, τοῦτου for τοῦτο, and

³ See Mauricius Schmidt, *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon* (Jena, 1858–1862) s.v. * Δηλκαὸς βωμός; A. Meineke, *Callimachus* (1861) 213; Otto Schneider, *Callimachea* (Lipsiae, 1870–1873) 2.741; 1.130, 331; Émile Cahen, *Les Hymnes de Callimaque* (Paris, 1930) 213–15; *Idem*, "L'Autel de Cornes et l'Hymne à Délos de Callimaque," *REG* 36 (1923) 14–25.

χάριτι (or χαριστήρια) τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ λαβυρίνθου φυγῆς for the concluding words. These emendations seem entirely satisfying; but, not stopping there, Schmidt changed τύπτεσθαι to τύπτειν. In this he was influenced by a scholium on Callimachus' line 321:

ἐν Δήλῳ περὶ τὸν βωμὸν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ἔθος ἦν τρέχειν καὶ τύπτειν τὸν βωμὸν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος μάστιγι καὶ ἀποδάκνειν ἐξηγκωνισμένους ἐκ τῆς ἐλαίας.

Evidently the scholiast, following some of the Callimachus manuscripts, had read ῥησόμενον in line 322, and had referred it to βωμὸν in line 321. This has led several commentators to posit a beating of the altar or its base—an apparently unparalleled rite.⁴ Meineke, Schneider, and others (correctly, in my opinion), have disagreed with Schmidt in this particular change, have preferred the τύπτεσθαι of the Hesychius manuscripts, have held the scholiast in error, and have interpreted the mariners, not the altar, as receivers of the blows.

The question now arises as to why all merchant mariners passing Delos took the pains to land and to go through these particular ceremonies. The explanation is, I believe, furnished by a remark of Semus of Delos, quoted by Athenaeus (8.335a). At Delos, says Semus, "they offer to Brizo σκάφας full of all good things except fish, *for the safety of ships*." Here we may recall, parenthetically, Lucian's statement that all offerings at Delos were accompanied by dancing. The σκάφαι were probably trays or dishes filled with offerings of food; some or all of them may have been in the shape of small ships. The omission of fish from the offering to a divinity of the sea is, of course, understandable. The small ships found in shrines of the "Lady of the Sea" in Crete at once come to mind,⁵ and also the rudder of Agamemnon's ship, which legend says he dedicated in the shrine of Artemis as a charm against bad weather (Call. *Dian.* 228–32). Latte,⁶ following Duebner, compares the ship models offered to Isis by the Egyptians, for the safety of ships. Brizo is probably a pre-Greek goddess, or an *epiklesis* of the great Cretan mother goddess, who is also Lady of the Sea. And we recall that ships were always prominent in the cults at Delos—cf. the great ship in the sanctuary of Apollo (Paus. 1.29.1), the ship of

⁴ Cahen, *Les Hymnes de Callimaque* (see note 3) 214.

⁵ Gustave Glotz, *Aegean Civilization* (New York, 1925) 273.

⁶ Kurt Latte, "De Saltationibus Graecorum Capita Quinque," *Religionsgesch. Versuche und Vorarbeiten* XIII, 3. Heft (1913) 84.

Theseus, the sacred ship upon which representatives of the Athenians went annually to Delos (Call. *Del.* 314–5), and the boat races which were a feature of some of the Delian festivals.⁷

I believe, then, that the ceremonies described so briefly by Callimachus were dances of sailors, accompanying offerings to a divinity powerful over the sea, and performed for the safety of ships. Let us examine our sources closely to see if we can learn anything more of the nature of the dances.

First of all, it seems fairly clear that the dances were not associated with any particular festival, numerous as festivals were on Delos; for Callimachus implies that all merchant mariners passing the island stopped for the express purpose of performing the rite, even in bad weather—perhaps *especially* in bad weather. Their stop was evidently very brief.⁸

Also, it seems evident from the language of Callimachus (*Del.* 323–4) that the dances were of remote antiquity; they were invented by “the Deliad nymph,” the very spirit of the shrine herself, away back when Apollo was young—that is, in prehistoric times. Obviously we are dealing with dances handed down for countless generations, the origin of which had become mythical in the mind of the Greeks. It is interesting in this connection to note that Eustathius, in the twelfth century of our era, says (1186.17ff., *in Il.* 18.590ff.) that even in his time, presumably on Delos, many people, especially *ναυτικοί*, performed a dance which was *ποικιλόστροφον* and *πολυκαμπή*, and imitated the *ελικας* of the Labyrinth. This dance, he says, was done by both men and women. Like Hesychius, Eustathius identifies this dance of mariners with the Delian *γέρανος*, or crane dance. The use of *ελελίξει* in Callimachus would tend to confirm this, recalling, as it does, the *περιελίξεις* and *ἀνελίξεις* of Plutarch’s account of the *γέρανος* (*Thes.* 21).

Again, the general effect of some of the mariners’ dances, at least, even in the time of Callimachus, was amusing. The mirth-provoking features of the dances would seem to be the blows inflicted upon the dancers, their twisting antics, and their biting of the sacred olive tree, with their hands held behind them. These elements would certainly not have been humorous at the time of the invention of the dances; but as their specific significance was lost or blurred with the passing of the centuries, they came to be re-

⁷ Arnold, *op. cit.* (see note 1) 456.

⁸ Cahen, *Les Hymnes*, etc., (see note 3) 213–14.

garded purely as amusing—a phenomenon common enough in the history of the dance.

A close examination of our sources would seem to indicate that the mariners performed not one distinctive dance, but two, or even three. One of these dances was done around the horned altar, as Callimachus, Hesychius, and the scholiast on Callimachus all imply. Similar information is given us of the γέπωνος dance. Now there is considerable uncertainty⁹ as to the location of this horned altar, so reminiscent of Cretan shrines. One theory has it that the altar stood, from the third century B.C. on, at one end of a long, narrow hall which was built to protect the dancers of the γέπωνος, who previous to that date had been performing for centuries in the open air.¹⁰ If this hall was built specifically for the dance, obviously the γέπωνος dancers moved in a linear or elliptical or labyrinthine pattern, but *not* in a circle. Some modern writers speak of the γέπωνος as taking place *before*, not *around* the altar. If our mariners went around an altar at the end of a long, narrow hall, they probably moved in a single file, and their progress was probably along a non-circular pattern. Be that as it may, one of two conclusions seems inevitable: either (1) the mariners took part in the γέπωνος as one of their distinctive dances; or (2) their dance was confused with the γέπωνος by some of the later Greek writers because of the fact that it was performed in the same place as the γέπωνος, and with somewhat similar choreography. If the first is the true explanation of the dance, one wonders who the women were who joined them—for most sources agree that the γέπωνος was performed by both men and women, together. There is mention (*h.Hom.h.Ap.* 157–64) of trained women dancers attached to the temple; but there is nowhere any specific evidence that these women joined with the mariners in the γέπωνος dance. Nilsson¹¹ thinks the mariners performed the γέπωνος, and that it was a part of a festival to Aphrodite; Cahen and others think the dance was the γέπωνος, but deny the connection with Aphrodite, and associate it with Apollo.

In a former paper,¹² I set forth my conviction that the Delian γέπωνος was a fusion of two earlier dances, both of Cretan origin

⁹ Cahen, "L'Autel, etc." (see note 3) 14–25.

¹⁰ *RE s.v.* "Delos."

¹¹ Martin P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste von Religiöser Bedeutung* (Leipzig, 1906) 380–2.

¹² Lillian B. Lawler, "The Dance of the Holy Birds," *CJ* 37 (March, 1942) 355.

and both performed in honor of the great Cretan goddess—one a mimetic bird dance of women, the other a “labyrinth” or “wandering” dance of men. Greek writers tell us that the dance portrayed the windings of the Cretan Labyrinth (Plut. *Thes.* 21; Eustathius in *Il.* 1166.17), or (apparently) the escape from the Labyrinth, or the wanderings of Leto over sea and land. It might also have suggested, by its “wandering” choreography, the difficult progress of a ship over a stormy sea. In that case, our sailors may actually have danced at Delos a form of the original “labyrinth” or “wandering” dance of men, as it was before fusion with a “crane” dance to form the γέρανος.

But Callimachus, in spite of textual difficulties, seems to say that the mariners danced *under blows*. This would not be a feature of the γέρανος or a labyrinth dance; and if Hesychius and Eustathius are correct in associating the mariners with a labyrinth dance, then the mariners must have taken part in more than one dance on Delos.

Some scholars think that the mariners may have beaten *themselves* as they circled the altar. Credence may be lent to this view by the fact that ῥησσομένους of the Callimachus passage and τύπτεσθαι of the Hesychius gloss could be taken as middle voice. Others think that the sailors beat *one another*; still others, that they were beaten by attendants at the shrine. We cannot be sure which type of flagellation is indicated; but there are a few known facts which may be helpful in interpreting the nature of the ceremony.

A ritual or dance in which performers are beaten (διαμαστίγωσις) is very common among all primitive peoples, and is usually of great antiquity. It is performed to induce fertility, to stimulate the magic powers of life, to drive out sin or hunger, and to ward off evil.¹³ Among both Greeks and Romans, beating dances were resorted to (Pollux 4.100; Paus. 8.23.1; X. *An.* 6.8). They were used extensively in tragedy, comedy, and the satyr play. The Romans used them in connection with the Lupercalia and other festivals; and one is portrayed in the “mystery” frescoes of the Villa Igem, near Pompeii.¹⁴ As time went on, the writhing of a dancer or an actor pretending to be flogged became conventionalized. We find Quintilian (11.3.90) warning the prospective orator not to

¹³ Lillian B. Lawler, “Beating Motifs in the Greek Dance,” *Class. Outlook* 21 (1944) 59–61; “‘Flat Hand’ in the Greek Dance,” *Class. Outlook* 19 (1942) 58–60; M. P. Nilsson, *op. cit.* (see note 11) 192–4, 466.

¹⁴ Wilhelm Engelmann, *New Guide to Pompeii* (Leipzig, 1925) 104–5.

make use of gestures which are typical of the dance or the drama. In connection with a sentence like: "He was scourged in the middle of the market place," Quintilian says the orator must avoid a twisting, writhing movement of the body, like that of a man being flogged. Evidently such a movement was well known in the dance or the drama, or both. Conversely, the writhings of a tortured person were often grimly called a "dance." In fact, on one occasion the meaning of an oracle turned upon such a use of the word (D.H. 7.68.3 to 69.2).

In ancient Sparta, a flogging dance is authenticated in connection with the cult of Artemis Orthia—evidently a fertility charm. In this cult and in others it often takes the form of a food-stealing dance, in which young men try to snatch from an altar, cheese, meat, wine, or cakes sacred to a divinity, and are ceremonially beaten with clubs or whips by attendants at the shrine.¹⁵ Remnants of a primitive food-stealing ritual, with accompanying beating, survive in Old Comedy (Ar. *Eq.* 54-7, 97-101, 417-26, 822; *Ra.* 549-78; *V.* 60; *Pax* 739-51; Epich. fr. 239, Kaibel). Such ceremonial stealing and beating is usually regarded as powerful magic, and is closely associated with purificatory rites among many peoples. It soon transforms itself, by a natural transition, into entertainment for the onlookers. I am inclined to think that the dance of our mariners was a food-stealing and beating dance of this type. The word *τρέχειν*, used by Hesychius and the scholiast on Callimachus, would suit the rapid step characteristic of such a dance.

In this connection, several gold rings of the prehistoric period, from Cnossus, Phaestus, Isopata, Mycenae, and Vaphio, may be of considerable interest. Persson¹⁶ has republished them recently,

¹⁵ Pollux 4.105; Athenaeus 14.621d, e; Hdt. 3.48.2; Hesychius, s.v. κλωπεῖα; Plut. *Arist.* 17; Pl. *Lg.* 633b; X. *Lac.* 2.9. See also R. C. Bosanquet, "Excavations at Sparta, 1906," *ABSA* 12 (1905-06) 338-43; H. J. Rose, in R. M. Dawkins, "The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta," *Soc. for Promot. of Hellen. Stud.*, Suppl. Papers No. 5 (London, 1929) 405; *Idem*, "Greek Rites of Stealing," *HThR* 34 (1941), 1-5; Lillian B. Lawler, "Four Dancers in the *Birds* of Aristophanes," *TAPhA* 73 (1942) 61-3; M. A. Hincks, "Le kordax dans le cult de Dionysos," *RA* 17 (1911) 5; Charlotte Fränkel, "Korinthische Posse," *RhM* N.F. 67 (1912) 94-106; Heinz Schnabel, *Kordax* (Munich, 1910) 49-53, 63. Schnabel notes (p. 63) that the stealing of food and drink which was a part of the Spartan training had a religious origin.

¹⁶ Axel W. Persson, *The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times* (University of California [Sather Classical Lectures, Vol. 17], 1942). See also Arthur Evans, *Palace of Minos* (London, 1921-1935) 1.161 and fig. 116, 432 and fig. 310c; 3.140-3 and figs. 91-3; *Idem*, "Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult," *JHS* 21 (1901) 177 and fig. 53; M. P. Nilsson, *Minoan-Mycenaean Religion* (Lund, 1927) 229-45, 352, figs. 73 and 74, Pl. I, 2; Fritz Weege, *Der Tanz in der Antike* (Halle, 1926) 161-2 and Abb. 37-9.

in support of his theory of a vegetation cycle in Cretan cult practices. On seven of these rings a man or a woman is depicted as pulling down a branch or the trunk of what is obviously a sacred tree, growing in an enclosure. In most cases the tree is laden with fruit; and Evans¹⁷ has conjectured that in such representations a votary is offering sacred sustenance to the mother goddess, whom he recognizes in the large female figure seen on most of the rings, usually in the center of the composition. However, it is noteworthy that on at least three of the rings (Nos. 3, 4, and 17 in Persson) the large female figure (whether goddess or attendant of the shrine) definitely looks as if she might be striking, or threatening to strike, the man or woman seizing the sacred branch. In most of these representations the figure grasping the tree is evidently moving stealthily or cautiously; and in one in particular (No. 4 in Persson) he looks back fearfully over his shoulder to see if his act is observed. Frequently the scene looks very much like an attempted theft of sacred fruit. Many scholars¹⁸ have expressed their feeling that various figures on the rings seem to be taking part in a dance; but interpretations of the nature of the dance have varied widely—"mourning," "joy," "frenzy," "sacred communion," "hunger," etc. It seems not unreasonable to see in the rings a Cretan prototype for the food-stealing and beating dances performed at the shrine of Artemis Orthia; Persson himself,¹⁹ although he does not interpret the dances of the rings in this manner, points out the great importance of ritualistic scourging in the cult of the Great Mother.

On one of the rings (No. 4 in Persson), interestingly enough, the female figure in the center has her arms markedly akimbo, in a gesture which Evans²⁰ interpreted as symbolizing hunger. I believe, however, that it looks more like a raising of the arms in a threatening gesture against the real or ritualistic intruder.²¹

It is probable that in connection with the worship of the Cretan goddess there was a pulling down of sacred branches by one who was not an intruder—by a votary, perhaps, or an attendant of the

¹⁷ *Palace of Minos* (see note 16) 1.162; 3.142-3.

¹⁸ Jane Harrison, *Themis* (Cambridge, 1912) 165-6; Glotz, *op. cit.* (see note 5) 237-8, 274; Evans, *Pal. of Min.* (see note 16) 3.142; Persson, *op. cit.* (see note 16) 39 and *passim*.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.* (see note 16) 110, 122.

²⁰ *Pal. of Min.* (see note 16) 3.143.

²¹ Cf. Lillian B. Lawler, "Dancing with the Elbows," *CJ* 38 (1942) 161-3.

shrine. At times this may have been thought of as having been done by the goddess herself—for there seems to be some justification for the belief that an attendant on occasion impersonated the goddess. A few of the rings depicted in Persson may show this particular rite. It is an odd fact in this connection that even in Roman times goddesses and empresses are depicted on coins and medallions in the act of pulling down branches of trees.²² Cook points out that Faustina Junior and her daughter Lucilla, when shown in this pose, are portrayed as Venus. He thinks the motif is an echo of the Aphrodite in the Gardens of Alcamenes, a statue associated with the Arrhephoroi; and he further connects the Arrhephoroi with the handmaidens of the great mother goddess of Cretan times!

Persson, in his discussion of rings showing scenes of the vegetation cycle, as he believes, includes four rings depicting boats in connection with sacred trees and branches. He stresses the association between divinities of fertility and of the sea, in general, and especially in Crete and Asia Minor (pp. 86, 99, 122, 159). This association would render credible a mariners' dance as a part of the worship of the great Cretan goddess.

Quite in harmony with the Cretan scenes involving a sacred fruit tree are the concluding lines of Callimachus. The mariners, he says, bite the trunk of the sacred olive tree, holding their hands behind their backs. The scholiast on Callimachus, similarly, seems to indicate that the mariners bite *off* some of the bark of the sacred olive tree, jostling one another with their elbows in so doing. This rite would seem to have been a sequel to the beating dance at the horned altar; and most writers agree that the sacred olive tree was not far away from the altar.

At first glance the biting ritual seems surprising. However, it is by no means unparalleled. Whether the "biting contest" mentioned by the chorus of satyrs in a fragment of a satyr play preserved on a second-century papyrus²³ refers to something similar or not, we cannot be sure; but four lines farther on the satyrs speak of their skill in the dance. Much more striking is a passage in Pliny the Elder (27.4.11.45). To cure toothache he recommends

²² Persson, *op. cit.* (see note 16) 107; A. B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge, 1914-1940) 3.172-3, and figs. 75-7.

²³ D. L. Page, *Greek Literary Papyri* (Loeb ed., London, 1942) 1.168.

that the sufferer, holding his hands behind his back, bite off a piece from a tree that has been struck by lightning:

Et ligno fulgure icto reiectis post terga manibus demorderi aliquid et ad dentem qui doleat admoveri remedio esse produnt.

The striking by lightning would consecrate the tree, of course; and at Delos the tree that is bitten is a sacred tree. Bächtold-Stäubli,²⁴ Mannhardt,²⁵ and Frazer²⁶ give several modern instances of persons biting trees to rid themselves of an illness, an evil omen, or bad luck in general, or to ward off potential danger, or to secure protection; and in many of them the individual performing the rite holds his hands behind his back—presumably to avoid touching the sacred tree with his hands. One is reminded here of the degenerated ritual of “bobbing for apples” or “apple on a string,” still used in Hallowe’en “magic.”

The mariners, I believe, bit the trunk of the sacred tree to rid themselves of any evil influences which might bring disaster to them or to their ships out upon the sea. Undertaken originally in deadly earnest, and adhered to with continuing belief in its efficacy, the rite must inevitably have been a source of amusement to on-lookers, as the mariners elbowed one another, jockeyed for position, and struggled to bite the tree, their hands behind their backs. It is just possible that this rite, too, was attended with ceremonial beating, administered to the mariners by an attendant at the shrine—the “Deliad nymph,” perhaps; for frequent biting would certainly be most insalubrious for the sacred olive tree! The gold rings which we have considered might have some significance here, also; for although none of the rings shows the biting of a tree, yet the motif of the intruder touching or molesting the sacred tree is apparently present on several of the rings.

I believe, then, that on the island of Delos Greek merchant mariners offered sacrifices for the safety of their ships, and performed ritual dances, but that these dances were not homogeneous. I believe that one of the dances probably resembled the *γέπαρος* in choreography, and may actually have been the labyrinth or wandering dance from which the *γέπαρος* was in part derived; that another

²⁴ Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927) 1.957, 1016–22.

²⁵ Wilhelm Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feldkulte* (Berlin, 1875) 1.21–2.

²⁶ Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, 1907–1918) Pt. vi, Vol. ix, 54–6; Vol. i, 98–101, 176–82.

was a fertility or apotropaic dance accompanied with ritual beating; and that a third was a ceremonial transfer of evil influences to a sacred tree by means of biting, perhaps also with ritual beating. I believe that all of these dances show elements that can be linked with the Minoan civilization; and I believe that in the record of this interesting dance ritual of the Greek mariners we see a survival of some of the cult practices of the great prehistoric sea power, Crete.

It remains to consider briefly other mariners' dances attested in Greek literature, and to determine, if possible, their relation to the ritual of the mariners on Delos.

In a papyrus of the time of Athenaeus,²⁷ there is a fragment of a song evidently composed for a contest in singing and dancing, in which sailors of the Nile and of the open sea are to compete. The fragment is so brief that all the information it can give us is metrical. The verse form is enoplic, but the lines end in an iambus instead of a spondee or a trochee. Such a meter would suit a dance of comparatively slow movement, with marked rhythm. More than that we cannot safely conjecture.

Another mariners' dance appears to be the one known as *κελευστής*. Athenaeus (14.629f.) says of this:

μετ' αὐλῶν δ' ὠρχοῦντο τὴν τοῦ κελευστοῦ καὶ τὴν καλουμένην πινακίδα.

The *κελευστής*, or boatswain, was the officer whose duty it was to keep the rowers pulling together in rhythm. He did this by playing on a form of αὐλός, or by gesturing to the playing of another (Athenaeus 12.535c, d); by a rhythmic call (Ar. *Ach.* 554; *Ra.* 180, 206–8; *Av.* 1395) of ὦπ or ὦπ δπ, to which the rowers replied with the call ῥυπαπαί or a chant of their own (*Ra.* 1073; *V.* 909); by clapping his hands; or by using a wooden hammer, or even two stones, to mark the beat (X. *HG* 5.1.8). Poetically, Apollo or Pan might act as *κελευστής* by playing the syrinx or the lyre (E. *IT* 1124–31). That the activities of the *κελευστής* were not too simple or purely formal is attested by a story told by Athenaeus (12.535c, d): When Alcibiades returned to Athens, victorious after a naval battle, in a ship with purple sails, his *κελευστής* was Callipides, one of the most famous of Greek tragic actors; and for him the great musician Chrysogonus, winner at the Pythian games, played the αὐλός.

²⁷ Page, *op. cit.* (see note 23) 1.428–30.

Elsewhere ²⁸ I have set forth my belief that the *πινakis* or *πινάκιδες* was a dance or figure performed to the beating of flat pieces of wood, held one in each hand of the dancer or an accompanist. Obviously the *κελευστής* must also have been a dance or figure with marked rhythm. It may have been characterized by mimetic rowing motions of the arms; we think in this connection of the "rowing dance" of the chorus in Aeschylus' *Septem*, 854–60, and *Persae*, 1046. As a matter of fact, the actual motion of rowing must in itself have seemed a sort of dance to the Greeks; for they regarded any rhythmical movement as a dance. One might conjecture that a dance called *κελευστής* could consist of choral "rowing" by several dancers, accompanying a solo, miming or burlesquing the varied activities of the boatswain. Given a versatile and energetic soloist, with the instincts of a modern cheer-leader, the dance could be exciting and riotously funny. On the other hand, with a dignified actor-dancer in the leading role, it could be a symphony of harmonious and rhythmical gestures. It probably made use of the cries *ώοπ* and *ρὺπαπαί*. But, unfortunately, we really know nothing of the dance, and can only conjecture as to its nature. Translators and commentators who have translated it as "boatswain's jig," "hornpipe," etc., are probably unconsciously misleading.

Pollux does not mention the dance of the *κελευστής*; but he does say (4.101):

ὁ δὲ μόθων φορτικὸν ὄρχημα καὶ ναυτικόν.

Here the question is obviously: Is *ναυτικόν* the name of a dance, or another modifier of *ὄρχημα*, referring to the *μόθων*? Practically all writers who have considered the matter have adopted the latter explanation. It may be that they are correct. Nevertheless, Libanius (*On the Dancers* 14) does speak of an *ὄρχησις ναυτική*, performed to Dionysus; and it may be that Pollux has the same thing in mind. It is interesting to note that the next sentence in Pollux deals with the *γέρανος* dance.

The word *μόθων* is mentioned by Athenaeus (14.618d), quoting Tryphon, as a kind of flute music which is accompanied with dancing. In Aristophanes (*Pl.* 279), *μόθων* is used of a person, and is a term of opprobrium; but the scholiast on the passage says the

²⁸ Lillian B. Lawler, "The Dance of the *πινάκιδες*," *TAPhA* 71 (1940) 230–8.

word also denotes a dance:

εἶδος αἰσχροῦ καὶ δουλοπρεποῦς ὀρχήσεως.

This bears out the φορτικόν of Pollux. The scholiast goes on to say that the dance is named ἀπὸ Μόθωνός τινος αἰσχροποιούντος (the conventional explanation when the origin of a dance is shrouded in the mists of antiquity), and that it is always performed ἐν τοῖς πότοις. Suidas, *s.v.* μόθων, says:

ὁ φορτικός, καὶ ἄτιμος. καὶ εἶδος αἰσχροῦ καὶ δουλοπρεποῦς ὀρχήσεως, καὶ φορτικῆς.

In Aristophanes (*Eg.* 697) occurs the expression ἀπεπνδάρισα μόθωνα; the verb is explained by the scholiast as denoting a kicking of the buttocks with the soles of the feet—a motif common in the κόρδαξ, the characteristic dance of Old Comedy.²⁹ Photius (*s.v.*) says the μόθων is an ὄρχημα φορτικόν καὶ κορδακῶδες. The Townley Scholiast on *Il.* 10.391 calls the dance ἀπάλη ὄρχησις, and associates it with the βαυκισμός and the σχεδισμός, both lascivious dances. The compiler of the *Etymologicum Magnum*, *s.v.* μοθωνία, gives us a hint that a characteristic of the dance may have been a swashbuckling strut; his gloss is:

ἀλαζονεία τις τοῦ σώματος κινητικῆ· ὅθεν καὶ μόθος καὶ μόθων παρακτικός.

Meursius (*Orchestra*, *s.v.* μόθων) summarizes well the ancient sources for the dance. He terms it "turpis et servilis." Musonius (*De Lux. Graec.* 2503a) says, "Mothon vero molesta ac nautica saltatio." Scaliger (*De Com. et Trag.* 1533f) says the dance was "laboriosa et nautica," and that it resembled the Persian dance in "motionis crebritate et flexu corporis," and in being described as ὑγρός, "fluid." Art representations which have been thought by some scholars to show the μόθων dance are characterized by sharply bent elbows.³⁰

Hesychius practically equates the words μόθωνας and μόθακες. He identifies them as servants (i.e., Helots) reared by the Spartans as companions to their sons. It is interesting that he adds to his definition of μόθωνας the words καὶ σπερμολόγους. The compiler of the *Etymologicum Magnum* defines μόθων as a house-born slave among the Spartans. Boisacq³¹ affirms the etymological connection

²⁹ Schnabel, *op. cit.* (see note 15) 16–9; Latte, *op. cit.* (see note 6) 21.

³⁰ Schnabel, *op. cit.* (see note 15) 19 and Plate I.

³¹ Émile Boisacq, *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue grecque* (Heidelberg and Paris, 1923) *s.v.*

of *μόθων* and *μόθαξ*, although Latte ³² sought to dissociate the words. Athenaeus (6.271e), on the authority of Phylarchus, tells us that the *μόθακες* were slaves, but that they were treated as “foster brothers” of the Spartans, that they shared Spartan training, and that they were often set free when they grew up. They were sometimes called “master seamen,” he says—*δεσποινοναῦται*; he does not tell us why. (The word *μόθουρα*, incidentally, denotes the handle of an oar.) Plutarch (*Lyc.* 28) tells how the Laconians annually forced the Helots to become intoxicated, to sing lewd songs, and to dance low dances, as a horrible example to the young Spartans. He describes their dances as *ἀγεννεῖς καὶ κατεγελάστους*.

As Schnabel points out,³³ the dances of the Helots were certainly pre-Dorian, and were not understood by the Spartans. It is intriguing to conjecture, in view of all the evidence, that the *μόθων* dance may have been a descendant of an old mariners’ dance which the ancestors of the Helots had learned from the Cretans. It may be merely a coincidence, but it is a fact that several of the Minoan-Mycenaean rings which we have considered in connection with the dance at the sacred tree were found at Mycenae, Vaphio, and other sites not too far from Sparta. In its “fluid” movements the *μόθων* may originally have been identical with the dance around the sacred tree on the island of Delos; and as its early significance became obscured it may have been regarded, and subsequently may have become, a lascivious, contorted, writhing dance which sometimes amused, but more commonly shocked, the rigorously disciplined Spartans of the classical period.

³² *Op. cit.* (see note 6) 21, note 1.

³³ *Op. cit.* (see note 15) 62.