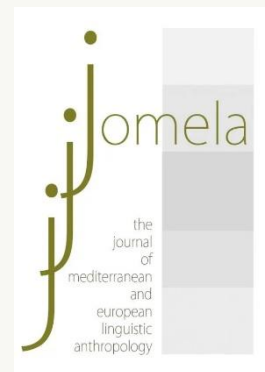


# Feasts and Ancient Greek Dance: Live Texts and Key Symbols

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## Abstract

Feasts and ancient Greek dance, as well as their language, are key elements of the ancient world that can be studied through an anthropological lens. These elements are strictly connected to the ancient Greek culture. In previous studies, I have attempted to focus on the dialectal elements of feast in Southern Italian romance and Greek dialects, to illustrate the persistence of the feast as linguistic and cultural elements that symbolize the memory of a community (Bekakos 2009).

In this paper, feasts and ancient Greek dance are discussed as linguistic, social, and cultural phenomena, which I analyze through a case study. I have selected the island of Salamina, near Piraeus, Athens, for its rich undiscovered ancient Greek cultural heritage. I have illustrated and observed the term feast and its relation to other terms of ancient Greek by drawing on archeological evidence and the theory of 'deep play' and 'thick description' (Geertz 1973), as well as the work of the language philosopher Gilbert Ryle. I thus also draw on an ethnographic method that privileges sensitivity to detail and the multiple significations that an activity, event, or symbol may bear. I have attempted in this study to record, in detail, context through archival records and artefacts, so as to extrapolate the meanings, feelings, and world views that shaped and informed classical and Hellenistic Greece, as exhibited in their dance, festivities, and related language. In these contexts, the feast and dance are phenomena through which to express emotions.

To illustrate the interpretative challenges posed by this way of understanding the relationship

between context and text, I specify two Athenian examples, and an inscription from the Athenian Agora, where the epebes are praised for their participation in the Aianteia feast of Salamina, and a dithyrambs of Pindar.

**Keywords:** *Salamina, feast, ancient Greek dance, symbol, text*

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## Introduction

Feasts have long constituted a significant aspect of Greece, and hence since its antiquity. These feasts have served as a platform for factors such as community-building, religious worship, and political gatherings, to name a few. These feasts were characterized by food, music, dance, and several other other forms of entertainment, within which, dance essential contributed to the festivities. Here, the ancient Greeks were of the belief that dance profoundly impacted on the human psyche. Socially, dance constituted a method through which to strengthen society, while individuals would obtain social coherence and so forth, while also celebrating events and cultural and traditions. Simialrly, feasts also provided many an opportunity for people to gather and to ance together and thus to connect with other individuals in society. Entertainment Significance: Dance was also a form of entertainment in ancient Greece. These feasts mediated an alleviation of focus on more serious issues such as politics and academic work, while dance allowed for entertainment, while also mediating the connection among people, and between the people and the panoply of gods.

The ancient Greeks had several dance forms, each with its unique style, rhythm, and cultural significance. The following are the most popular forms of dance in ancient Greece. Several dances performed at the feasts included the following: The Pyrrhic dance, a war dance mainly performed by the solidiers of the region immediately prior to going into battle. The Pyrrhic dance involved intricate displays of leg and footwork, complex and stylish hand movements, and together with these, the soldiers would also perform acrobatics. The dance was intended as a symbol of bravery and courage, where the ideologies of soldiers were such that performing this dance would assist the soldiers to overcome fears of the upcoming battle. The Choral dance, as a group dance performed by both men and women, mediated group worship, within which, the dance performers would in unison sing and dance, yet in in honor of the gods at the time, and hence as a form of intensified worship. The Choral dance, performed during events and also during particular festials and social events, purported to entertain onlookers, and to allow for a particular socialization for those attending the events. The Comic dance constituted a form of performance during which dancers would also include extensive comedy and satirical action. This dance form gained popularity during festivals and social events, as did the Choral dance, yet allowed the performaers to mock and satirize well known social and political figures of the time. Other dances such as the

tragic dance were performed during unpleasant events, and hence events such as tragedies and events signifying loss and detriment. The dance style was lethargic and somber and intended to facilitate the reflection of the tragic events of life and play performances.

In this article, I discuss and explore the relationships between feasts and dance in ancient Greece, and I particularly focus and expand on the various types of dance forms and their significance on the island of Salamis. For this, I employ a historical descriptive approach to feasts and dance in the region, while elaborating on discourses of these performances, as integral to the current, or at least, the subsequent discourses that made up a later post Hellenistic language stream.

For this, I develop the paper as follows: In the second section, I provide a literature review, and which I extend on historically for the island of Salamis. In the third section, I describe, albeit briefly, the methodical framework for the paper, and the data set. In the fourth section, I discuss the data and extend on the historical description in a critical manner. In the fifth section, I then conclude the paper which suggestions for moving forward and with a discussion of the contribution of the paper and the analysis to larger society and to the world of research on history and the classics, with particular relevance to anthropological investigation.

Each of the dance forms of ancient Greece, and the language associated with and subsequent to the dances and festivals, while uniquely contributing to the evolving culture of the region, allowed for a description of the lifestyles and socializations of the time. Each of the dances and their connecting festivals or celebrations, such as the Pyrrhic dance, the choral dance, the Comic dance, and the Tragic dance, exhibited a unique style, rhythm, and cultural significance, each as an essential component of ancient Greek culture.

## Literature Review

Feasts and ancient Greek dance, as well as their languages, are key elements of the ancient world that can be studied through an anthropological lens. These two elements are strictly connected in ancient Greek culture, and emerge subsequently in its language. In previous studies, I have attempted to focus on the dialectal elements of feast in Southern Italian romance and in various Greek dialects, so as to illustrate the persistence of the feast as linguistic and cultural elements that symbolize the memory of a community (Bekakos 2009, pp. 29 – 51). In this paper, however, I discuss feasts and ancient Greek dance as linguistic, social, and cultural phenomena.

In addition to the above, I argue that feasts and ancient Greek dance, as artistic forms and as language of the body language, have coexisted with the spoken, and at times written, Greek language through time and space. At times when spoken or written language is limited and is also limiting, the human body can emerge as the ideal vehicle for the transfer of ideologies and of subjectic realities. Throughout, I adhere to the notion and argument that the capacity for body language inherent to the person provides affordances and a level of symbolic exposure not available

in oral speech. Since dance emerges as an exaggerated and manipulated form of this language, such performance-oriented movement places the body's intentions and authenticity in the public setting of the stage. Here, audiences are content to accept dance as this authentic art form, without the demand for verbal language to enter the dance's narrative (or lack thereof) (Ellis 2015, p. 2).

Feasts, together with dances and their theatre performances are strictly connected to the history of Salamis. According to Lambert (1997, p. 95), Robertson (1992, p. 128) sought to undermine a further link with Salamis, suggesting the Salaminians were so named not from the island of Salamis but from their association with beaches, salt-flats and so forth, that is, directly from the root stem *sal*. These feasts and ancient Greek dance have evolved through time, that is over the centuries. For example, the dance 'attic steles' (gr. *στήλαι*) symbolize in the case of Salamis Island (an island adjacent to Athens), the relationship between feasts and dance.

Pindar (fr. 75 Snell – Maehler) describes an ancient Greek dance in Athens, in honor of Dionysus. It is probably that the same dance was performed and practiced in Salamis, in the ancient Greek theatre of the time, as Salamis constituted an important center for the worship of Dionysus (cf. altar of Dionysus near Euripide's cave, in Peristeria).

No.	Content
	Δεῦτ' ἐν χορόν, Ὀλύμπιοι, ἐπὶ τε κλυτὰν πέμπετε χάριν, θεοί, πολύβατον οἳ τ' ἄστεος ὀμφαλὸν θυόεντ' ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς Ἀθάναις οἰχνεῖτε πανδαίδαλόν τ' εὐκλέ' ἀγοράν·
5	ἰοδέτων λάχετε στεφάνων τᾶν τ' ἔαρι- δρόπων ἀοιδᾶν, Διόθεν τέ με σὺν ἀγλαΐᾳ ἴδετε πορευθέντ' ἀοιδᾶν δεύτερον ἐπὶ τὸν κισσοδαῆ θεόν, τὸν Βρόμιον, τὸν Ἐριβόαν τε βροτοὶ καλέομεν,
10	γόνον ὑπάτων μὲν πατέρων μελπόμεν<οι> γυναικῶν τε Καδμεϊᾶν {Σεμέλην}. ἐναργέα τ' ἔμ' ὅτε μάντιν οὐ λανθάνει. φοινικοεᾶνων ὀπότ' οἰχθέντος Ὠρᾶν θαλάμου εὐοδμον ἐπάγοισιν ἔαρ φυτὰ νεκτάρεια.
15	τότε βάλλεται, τότ' ἐπ' ἀμβρόταν χθόν' ἐραταί ἴων φόβαι, ρόδα τε κόμαισι μείγνυται, ἀχεῖ τ' ὀμφαὶ μελέων σὺν ἀλύοις, οἰχνεῖ τε Σεμέλαν ἐλικάμπυκα χοροί.

(This fragment is also cited by Race (1997: 319): [Come] here to the chorus and send glorious grace upon it, Olympian gods, you who approach the much-trodden fragrant with-incense navel-stone of the city in holy Athens and the all decorated, famous agora. Receive a share of crowns bound with violets and songs culled in the spring, and look [with favor] upon me as I go from Zeus with the radiance of songs secondly to the ivy-knowing god, whom we mortals call Roarer (Bromios), whom we call Loud-shouter (Eriboas), singing and dancing in celebration of the offspring of the highest fathers and Kadmeian women. And clear [signs] do not escape my notice, as if I were a seer, when,

with the chamber of the red-robed Horai opened, nectareous plants lead on the spring so that it is [even more] fragrant. Then, then the lovely locks of violets are cast upon the ambrosial earth, and roses are mixed with hair, and voices of songs resound with the accompaniment of pipes, and choruses approach Semele with her circular headband.)

Salamis,<sup>1</sup> gen. ἴνος, an island and town of the same name, between Athens and Megara, Il.2.557, etc.,<sup>2</sup> was originally named as *Cychrea* after the snake god Cychreus, worshipped there from Mycenaean times, and also Pityussa (Str. 9,1,9-11) and Sciras (Eust. on Dionys. Per. 506). Salamis had been settled from the early Helladic Period (pottery at Camaterum).<sup>3</sup> According to Hom. Il. 2,557, it was the home of Ajax, and was taken and occupied by Megara, which then fought vigorously with Athens for the island. More likely conquered by Athens under Peisistratus (6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E.) than under Solon, c. 600 B.C.E., it was under Athenian administrative control from that time on and was settled by Attic farmers [1. 355-362]. Inhabitants of Salamis were settled at Sunium and were then granted Attic citizenship (SEG 23,1). Salamis was made known following the naval battles of the Persian Wars fought in the sound below the city in September 480 BC (tropaeum and polyandrion on Cynosura; literary treatment: Aesch. Pers.). In the Peloponnesian War, Budorum on the Perama peninsula, southwest of the byzantine monastery of Phaneromeni (remains of walls), was an important Athenian base. In 405 B.C.E., the island was devastated by Lysander. In 318 B.C.E., the island was besieged by Cassander without success (Diod. Sic. 18,69,1 f.), but later conquered by Casander in 305/4 B.C.E., and then regained by Demetrius for Athens. In 262 B.E.C., Antigonus conquered Salamis, which until 229 B.C.E., remained Macedonian. After the death of Demetrius II, the Macedonian commander Diogenes and his garrison abandoned Attica and the island for the sum of 150 talents. From that point on, the island was again a constituency of the Athenian state (Plut. Aratus 34, 6; cf. IG II2 5080).

During the expansion of the Eastern Roman Empire, the significance of Salamis somewhat receded, however, the island managed to retain its inhabitants. During the Ottoman occupation of Greece, Salamis was colonized by a population of Arvanites, who preserved their dialect (arvanitika / gr. *αρβανίτικα*) for a time. From at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and until the 19<sup>th</sup> century C.E., the town, the island, and the bay of Salamis, were all named Koulouri (gr. *Κούλουρη*), owing to its circular shape (gr. *κόλουρο*) (Miller 1908, p. 18). Koulouri or Salamina, thus became the capital of the island. As such, the current inhabitants of the island are named 'Koulouriototes' (gr. *Κουλουριώτες*) or 'Salaminioi' (*Σαλαμίνιοι*). Yet, the ancient name was revived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century C.E.. Similarly, the folk dance of Salamis Island (koulouriotikos / gr. *κουλουριώτικος*) is circular, and appears to reflect the form of the island.<sup>45</sup>

Near Salamis exists another island named Psyttaleia (gr. *Ψυττάλεια*). The island is rocky and lies in the strait between Salamis and Piraeus Bay (1,5 km long, 400 m wide, 51 m high), as modern Psyttalia. This uninhabited island was consecrated to Pan (Aesch. Pers. 447 ff.; Paus. 1,36,2), and

at which, on the eve of the battle of Salamis in 480 B.C.E., Xerxes disembarked troops, but who were defeated by the Greeks (under Aristides). The foundation remains of a triumphal monument are still extant on the island.<sup>678</sup>

## Methodical Framework

In articles dealing with the dance and heritage, and the linguistic practices connected to naming these fields, a historical descriptive approach is effective in that it allows for a chronological approach to both the development and the description of the field. Yet, such a framework would also require somewhat of a discourse analysis, and an analysis of toponymy, particularly as these festivals, dances, and their language emerge across several modes and in multiple sectors, such as the religious, the festive, the filial, the polemic, and the funeral processive. As such, the methodical framework for this would do well to include multiple frameworks, all centred on one overarching framework.

Linguistic and anthropological studies with a focus on dance and festivity in the Hellenic and classical periods, for example, encounter several challenges. These include deciphering the role and function of dance and language in these festivities. Dance is a living text, and as with any language, cannot be standardized, but rather, evolves. As such, tabilizing the naming of dance, the positioning of dance, and the performance of dance are all difficult. Furthermore, it is significant to know that dance and its language have frequently if not almost always been created for the purpose of human security vis-à-vis deities and hence religion (Redemption: How Medieval Dance Became Sacred, Dickason 2020). Here, I argue that dance mediates conceptions of theology, that is, it emerges from designs of the theological construct, and also emanates into conceptions of the theological construct, yet facilitated by the language created to describe dance, festivity, time, place, and social context. Here, I must interpolate all materials, and current knowledge, in order to begin to make assumptions, which I will at a later time extrapolate from, to further triangulate my conjectures.

Finally, I noted that, at times when discussing the historical emanation o construct of dance in its respective festivities, and the language through which to construct such a performance, we are drawing on archives and historical records of these performances and their discursive constructions, which is a close to impossible task. Here, these archives are simply, at times, poorly documented practices, and hence provide very little in way of an ethnography of language and performance.

## Feasts and Dance in Salamis

In ancient Greece, a feast or festival<sup>9</sup> represented a time set aside for the worship of the gods. Although festivals were always in some aspect religious and never purely secular, no rigid distinction was made between religious and secular activities, and they were frequently occasions of general merry making. Feasting, athletics, play-acting, and bawdiness, were all considered appropriate constituents of certain festivals (Howatson and Chilvers 1993, p. 226).

Dance constituted a significant part of the festivals of the ancient Greeks. Salamis was in classical times a place for the performance of theatrical choruses and dances. Such choreutic activities constituted a significant presence in the everyday life of the ancient Greeks. The ancient Greeks would include in these dance rituals and performances other non-performative activities, such as ball games (gr. *ἐπίσκυρος*) and rhythmic gymnastics exercises, which were somewhat affiliated with the dance rituals. As such, the ancient Greeks attributed dance to the fundamentally physiological, mental, and spiritual context that significantly characterized the person. As such, a fair assumption would be the fact that such performance is a living text, and hence a text in process, which narrates life stories, worship practices, and so forth. Both individuals and groups of people would at times spontaneously engage in dance at occasions such as weddings and symposia, or would perform pre-established choreographies as exemplified by coordinated dances and movements ascribed to the choirs (gr. *χορός*) of classical theater.

Dance appears in ancient Greek literature as ascribed to *μουσική* (term encompassing all categories of the performing arts; making music, dancing, singing, acting). A wide range of testimonies have appeared that attest to dances which were also practiced as an independent activity. Choreutic education (gr. *γυμνοπαιδία*) was a fundamental subject of education, and a conspicuous vascular iconography which depicts boys and girls dancing under the supervision of male and female tutors. Authors such as Plato, Lucian of Samosata, and Athenaeus of Naucratis recommended dance as an essential part in the development of good citizens of both sexes, largely owing to the constructive effects of dance on the mind and body. As with other traditions and heriages of the ancient world, dance played a pivotal role in ancient Greek society for centuries.<sup>10</sup>

Dance told a story, showcased martial strength or athletic dexterity, entertained guests, or set and cadenced processions and other key elements of worship. In Salamis, dance constituted a key element of worship and of narration of stories (e.g. the life of Aias, the naval battle of Salamis etc.). Furthermore, in Salamis, archaeological and epigraphic evidence evidences the fact that a relationship between feasts and dance clearly existed. For example, the connection and co occurrence of feasts and dance is presented on funerary steles through illustrated images and inscriptions. In the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus (near Salamina), one part of a funerary stele from Salamis Island indicates a dancer (Csapo 2010, p. 22) holding a masque and who may be performing a theatre dance (a dance of a comedy - MS 74/M.Π. 4229). According to Chairetakis (2018, p. 247), the funerary stele is dated from 410 to 400 B.C.E.

Peponi (2015, p. 214) notes that the movements of dance are far from attached to a singular mimetic referent, where the orchestric imaginary encourages a creatively mutual process, a model of active perceptiveness, while a spectator contemplates dance. The many versions of dance are operative in a wide range of Greek texts and can embrace, as one of its subsets, the trope of choral projection, namely the tendency of Greek choruses (and especially of tragic ones) to verbally project their present dancing onto an alternative spatial temporal coordinate or other, usually, mythical, choruses. It is my suggestion that the Greek choruses also project their dance attributes through images, symbols, words, decorative elements, postures, and gestures, all of which constitute the key symbols for the interpretation of the epigraphic texts and the illustrations of the attic steles. All of these artefacts, I argue, become live texts, largely owing to the fact that they have survived until the present day.

In the classical era, Salamis was an important cultural and commercial center. There are three groups of feasts that relate to the population of the island.

**First Group:** Feasts celebrated in Salamis with the participation of the inhabitants of the island. These feasts are the Anthesteria (gr. *Ανθεστήρια*) (The Anthesteria festival was an important festival, lasting three days, for the god Dionysus, which gave the name to the month Anthesterion (February – March), signifying the time of year when the flowers begin to appear) and the Dionysia (*Διονύσια*). The Dionysia festival was the name of a festival of the god Dionysus, which included also dramatic performances.

**Second Group:** Feasts that are celebrated in Attica with the participation of the inhabitants of Salamis, probably of the Athenian Clerouchoi (*Κληρούχοι*). The cleruches were Athenian citizens who held an allotment of land in a foreign country, in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Here, in Salamis, in the classical era, there was a great production of cereals, which were sent to the Sanctuary of Demetra at Eleusis.

**Third Group:** Feasts that are imposed by the Athenian citizens on the people of Salamis, without the necessary participation of the inhabitants. A feast of this type is the Thargelia (gr. *Θαργήλια*). The festival 'Θαργήλια' is the principal festival of Apollo at Athens and throughout Ionia, celebrated on the 7<sup>th</sup> Thargelion (May – June), a pre – harvest festival with first fruit offerings from the still unripe crops of many types of corn and vegetables cooked together in a pot (the offering being called thargelos) (Howatson and Chilvers 1993, p. 530).

In the archaic and in the classical eras, some feasts were in honor of Athena Skiras (*Ἀθηνά Σκιράς*). The ruins of this sanctuary remain in Salamina, near Arapis Mountain, in the area of the Naval Base (*Ναύσταθμος*) of the Hellenic Military Marine (*Ελληνικό Πολεμικό Ναυτικό*), with the aim of symbolizing the Athenian hegemony. During the Hellenistic era, some festivals and



ceremonies were held for Zeus Tropaïos, for Hermes, for Asclepius, for the Great Gods (*Μεγάλοι Θεοί*), and finally for the two heroes of Salamis, Cychreus and Aias (Ajax), with symbolisms connected to the anniversary of the Naval Battle of Salamis (480 B.C.E.) and to the Athenian presence in the island. In all festivals, there were dances and theatrical performances by dancers, actors, and poets. The lines 34 - 35 of the Greek inscription from a decree pertaining to the restoration of sacred and sacred properties in Attica (SEG 33. 136, text in Chairetakis 2018, pp. 329 - 330) mentions a place (probably a theatre orchestra for dance performances or a place or a temple dedicated to Athena, and probably in reference to a temple of Athena Polias, where this decree is dated the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. C.E. or the 10/9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. (Chairetakis 2018, p. 329).

In the ancient Greek city of Salamis, imitative, popular dances (*ὄρχησις*) and sacred dances (Choreia, *χορεία*, round dances, e.g., performed in honor of Dionysus) were held.

No.	Content
34	[έν τῆι μάχηι τελευτησάντων' _— _— _— _—]ένοις καὶ προθυσαμένο[ις] εν τῶι Μ[εγαρέας] πρὸ τῆς νήσου πολέμωι· ν κῆπον έν κρ [— —]
35	_ _[_— _— _— _— _— _— _—]_δπου ὄρχήσεις <sup>11</sup> ἔδρω [ντο..]ενπλευ [...c_9...]πόλει τὸ λεγόμενον ὑπὸ Σόλωνο[ς]

Tracy (1979, p. 174) notes an upper part of a pedimented stele of white marble found face up over a Hellenistic channel (section Br) on August 9, 1974. Mended from two pieces, the left part of the inscribed surface has been worn smooth by foot traffic. The original sides, top, and back are all preserved. The pediment of the stele is unusually elaborate. Underneath the tympanum there are a cyma recta decorated with alternating acanthus and lotus leaves and, below that, dentils. In the pediment are carved three acanthus leaves flanked by flowers; the acroteria consist of palmettes with tendrils. The whole is remarkably ornate and does not find a close parallel in contemporary inscriptions. In fact, a perusal of the plates published in Kirchner-Klaffenbach, *Imagines Inscriptionum Atticarum*; Dow, *Prytaneis, Hesperia, Suppl. I*; and *Hesperica*, volumes 1-46 reveals no near parallel. Height, 0.77 m.; width, 0.55 m. Thickness of inscribed surface, 0.145 m.; of pediment, 0.194 m. Height of letters, ca. 0.006 m. Inv. no. I 7484. In this inscription, on lines 16 - 17:

No.	Content
16	ἀκολούθως τοῖς νόμοις καὶ τοῖς ψηφίσμασι
17	καθηκούσης έν Σαλαμῖνι [...] <sup>12</sup>

In the text the ephebes are praised for their deportment in the gymnasia and obedience to their instructors (lines 7-10); for their participation in the Mysteries and in other games and sacrifices (lines 10-16); for their activities on Salamis presumably in the Aianteia festival (lines 17-20); for acting as an honor guard at meetings of the Ecclesia (lines 21-22); and for dress parades which they presented before the Boule, probably at the close of their year of service (lines 22-23). According to Pelosi (2014), the ancient Greek dance has a social and anthropological function and the dance in classical Salamis is a way to express personal feelings, thoughts, and beliefs, but also is a way for the community to worship Dionysus, Apollo, Aias, Telamonius and Cychreus.

The representation of this anonymous Salaminian dancer or poet (Slater, 1985: 340 – 343) or actor (Neer, 2010: 206 – 207) shows a moment from the work of this anonymous Greek, probably a moment of joy or an image that depicts his best performance in the Dionysia festival, in the ancient Greek theatre of Salamis, where are the ruins of the city of Salamis, of the Classical times, at Ampelakia (The archaeological site of the city of Salamis of the classical era is abandoned, ship relicts and garbage are everywhere, due to the presence of shipyards and boat repair shops in the archaeological area, and there are no road signals, panels, brochures or guidebooks in Greek or in English, that can help the visitor – researcher to understand the history of ancient Salamis. From the year 2019 up to now, the Ephorate of antiquities of Piraeus (Εφορεία Αρχαιοτήτων Πειραιά) and the Municipality of Salamina (Δήμος Σαλαμίνας), with its archaeologists and researchers, are trying to preserve and promote the history of ancient Salamis. In Salamina, there is also the “Commission of citizens for the protection of the archaeological sites of Salamina” (Επιτροπή Διάσωσης Αρχαιολογικών χώρων της Σαλαμίνας), that is very active, and whose intention is to protect the archaeological sites of the island, from the abandon and the nonchalance). This is also an example of deep play, the dramatization of status concerns, that creates significant meaning (the image of a dancer or actor, performing his dance in the mind of the spectator or scholar) <https://salamina-press.blogspot.com/2015/10/i-cosco.html>.<sup>13</sup>



**Image 1:** An abandoned sanctuary in the ancient city of Salamis (<http://www.arxeion-politismou.gr/2019/06/arxaio-iero-xortolivado-stin-Salamina.html>, (Credits: Giorgos Lekakis – Photo by Giorgos Lekakis)

Image 1 presents a funerary stele in marble, from the Salamis settlement of the classical era. The structure represents a section of the Dionysus sanctuary or the Greek theatre. The stele also indicates the presence of the cult of Dionysus in Salamis and perhaps the custom of celebrating the birth of Dionysus with solemn rites and dances. Within this, we see an actor, a poet or a dancer holding a mask is depicted on the stele theater. Here, we see the representation of a public show, linked to a Greek cultural practice ancient which is dance or theatre. The public spectacle comprises three levels of description which express various meanings. These are:

No.	Content
1	Theater – Performance – Dance (Tragedy – Comedy)
2	Group of Spectators
3	Ostentation - Manifestation

These three levels form meanings of a ritual or festival and play a role significant in the representation of meanings through gestures or words. The context of the show also includes three levels: historical (Ancient Greece), social (artist) and behavioral (expression of love, joy, sadness, or faith through gestures, of devotion to the divinity or to another man), who understands meanings, gods cultural symbols, organized into systems of meaning.

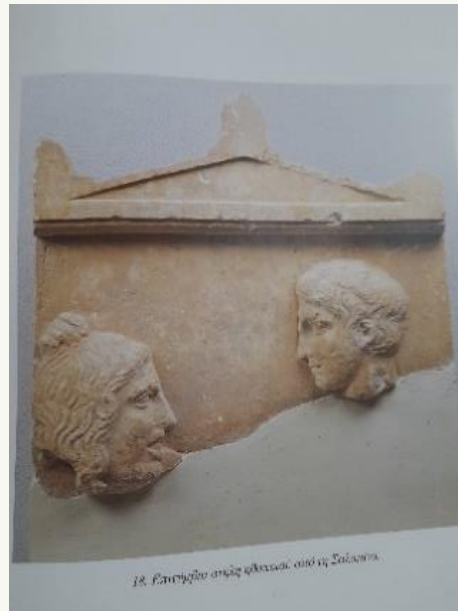


Image 2: The funeral stele of the actor or dancer from Salamina – Archaeological Museum of Piraeus – Greece (Photo: Giorgos Steinhauer, 2021)

## Conclusion

Festivals and dance are two poles that in classical antiquity with the help of literature and music were the expression of a social and cultural context that helps to shape the human soul. Feasts and dance in ancient Greece are two central experiences, in which the values of the community are defined, shared, handed down, were the community expresses its soul through various linguistic and symbolic elements. Through a socio-anthropological analysis of ancient sources, it is possible to grasp the role that the rhythmic movement of the body assumes in relation to fundamental experiences such as war, the cult of divinities, the formation of character, the expression of feelings (joy, happiness, sadness) and understand the significance of gestures and symbols, through the ancient Greek reliefs of the funerary steles, that can be considered not only as an archaeological evidence, but also as live image, a speaking image, that is an anthropological evidence.

The picture of ancient Greek dance is outlined by numerous testimonies - literary, epigraphic, iconographic - which fix, in the stasis of a written text or an image, what once was movement and action. Bringing ancient dance and festivals back to its dynamic dimension is the specific goal of studies that attempted to reconstruct the succession of movements based on iconographic evidence, interpreting individual images as frames of a continuous movement, and classifying them according to the categories of modern dance. On the other hand, by widening the gaze to include as many testimonies as possible and always paying extreme attention to the social and cultural context, an attempt has been made to restore depth to ancient Greek dance by reconstructing the meanings and values expressed by the movements. From this socio-anthropological perspective, dance is analyzed as a tool for creating, sharing, and transmitting collective values (Pelosi, Fr. *Storia della civiltà europea a cura di Umberto Eco* (2014), e -book: [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/funzione-socio-antropologica-della-choreia-danze-di-guerra-danze-di-pace\\_%28Storia-della-civilt%C3%A0-europea-a-cura-di-Umberto-Eco%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/funzione-socio-antropologica-della-choreia-danze-di-guerra-danze-di-pace_%28Storia-della-civilt%C3%A0-europea-a-cura-di-Umberto-Eco%29/)).

The archeological - anthropological role of the Salamis ancient Greek inscriptions and funeral steles can help us, finally, reconstruct this type of dance or festival, in order to make our approach to study the classical world an occasion to make a revival of the past, a new way of viewing the past, not only as an evidence or as a historical fact, but as live anthropological expression of happiness, of the memory of the ancient Greeks. This expression can be used today to overcome the difficulties of our times and to create an alternative way of amusement, for the young people or for the people of a community, to help them understand the value of the past.

Finally, Salamis (Salamina) as a case study indicates that many linguistic and archaeological elements of its history are unknown or completely ignored by the researchers. For example, in Salamina, there are two important archaeological sites: The Tomb of the Soldiers of the Naval Battle of Salamis (gr. Τύμβος Σαλαμινομάχων), near Ampelakia, and the ancient Greek city of Salamis, near Ampelakia, with the ancient Greek port of the classical era, that is partially excavated (gr. Αρχαία πόλη Σαλαμίνας/ Αρχαία Σαλαμίνα). The Tomb of Soldiers of the Naval Battle of

Salamis with the ancient Greek city of Salamis can be in the future a pole of attraction for young students of Archaeology, Philology, Philosophy and Anthropology, but also for young researchers of all disciplines, who want to discover classical antiquity, with a wider view (connecting the ancient history, for example, with the protection of the environment, the ecology etc.) (The cultural association of Salamina "AIANTIS" and the International Foundation "Salamis" of Christos Maridakis contributed to the rescue and global promotion of the Historic Sites of the Naval Battle, that really, if there is an ancient Salamis, ancient port, and Tomb, we owe it to these people who dedicated all these years, without any support. On the contrary, at the risk of their own lives, they "fought" not only the private interests but also the criminal indifference of the local government and the apathy of the Ministry of Culture.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Evidence: Eur. Tro. 799; EM 707,42; Hdt. 7,90; 141-143; 166; 168; 8,11; 40-42; 9,3-6; 19; Thuc. 2,94; Plut. Aratus 34,4; Paus. 1,35,2-36,1; 2,8,6; Soph. Aj. 596; Steph. Byz. s.v. Σαλαμίς. ) (Ancient Greek: Σαλαμίς, Latin, Salamis, modern Greek, Σαλαμίνα) (Cfr. LSJ: Σαλαμίς (also in Gramm. Σαλαμίν, Hsch., Eust.ad D.P.498)
- <sup>2</sup> II. a town of Cyprus founded by Teucer of Salamis, h.Hom.10.4, Hdt.4.162, etc.; Σαλαμίνη, Suid. s.v. Ἐπιφάνιος.) is an island situated in the Saronic Gulf, near Piraeus. According to Külzer (2006), Salamis is the largest island (93 km<sup>2</sup>) in the Saronic Gulf (Cfr. BNP, s.v. Σαρωνικός κόλπος/Sarōnikòs kólpos, πέλαγος/ρέλαγος, πόντος/ρόντος, or πόρος/ρόρος; also κόλπος Αργείας/κόλπος Argeías, Ptol. 3,16,12, or Σαλαμινιακὸν πέλαγος/Salaminiaikòn pélagos, Str. 8,2,2, modern 'Gulf of Aegina'. Named after the mythical king Saron of Troezen, a generally shallow gulf of the Aegean Sea (Paus. 2,30,7; 2,32,10, cf. 2,34,2; Str. 2,5,21) between Attica in the northeast, Argolis in the southwest and the Isthmus of Corinth in the northwest, with many islands (e.g., Aegina, Salamis, Calaurea). Külzer, Andreas (Vienna), "Saronikos Kolpos", in: Brill's New Pauly, Antiquity volumes edited by: Hubert Cancik and , Helmuth Schneider, English Edition by: Christine F. Salazar, Classical Tradition volumes edited by: Manfred Landfester, English Edition by: Francis G. Gentry. Consulted online on 31 May 2022 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347\\_bnp\\_e1101780](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1101780). First published online: 2006) (Saronikos Kolpos), with a deeply punctuated coastline, 0.5 km from the coast of Attica at the nearest point; three main mountainous massifs with hilly valleys between them. three main mountainous massifs with hilly valleys between them; the highest elevations (366 m) are on the central massif (modern Mavrovouni).
- <sup>3</sup> The ancient city of Salamis, formerly also called Cychrea, was in the east on the Punta peninsula near modern Ampelakia (grave finds from the Mycenaean Period); Strabo's account of an earlier city in the south is probably erroneous. A late Mycenaean and Geometric necropolis is indicated at the bay of Arapi, and to the north of it in the Arapis mountains (ancient Sciradium) there are the remains of terracing (sanctuary of Athena Sciras).
- <sup>4</sup> For a complete presentation of the dances of Salamis Island, with audio registrations, cf. Drandakis, L. 1991. *Τραγούδια και Χοροί της Σαλαμίνας*. Αθήνα, Λύκειο των Ελληνίδων, p. 9 – 11.
- <sup>5</sup> Lambert (1997: 95) and the Greek scholar Chatzis (1930: 59 – 60) do not find this etymology persuasive. I don't agree with Lambert's, Chatzis and Oberhammer's view, because in Greek we have words that contain the prefix sal - (σαλεύω, fut. A. "σαλεύσω" LXX Wi.4.19: aor. "ἔσάλευσα" Isoc.8.95, AP11.83:— Pass., fut. "σαλευθήσομαι" LXX Si.16.18, Ev.Luc.21.26: aor. "ἔσαλεύθη" LXX 1 Ma.9.13, Act.Ap.4.31, 2 Ep.Thess.2.2, v.l. in Isoc. l.c.: pf. σεσάλευσμαι (v. infr.): (σάλος):—cause to rock, make to vibrate or oscillate, c. acc., ["τὰς ἀγκύρας] οὐδεις χειμῶν σαλεύει" Pythag. ap. Stob.3.1.29; ζ. τρικυμῖα πέδον, of the sea, Lyc.475; of an earthquake, AP11.83 (Lucill.), cf. 259 (Id.): metaph., δόξαν ζ. Plu.2.1123f, cf. S.E.M. 8.56, 337, etc.; "ζ. τινὰ ἐκ θεμελίων" LXX Wi.4.19; "ἐπιστολαὶ δυνάμεναι λίθον σαλεῦσαι" heartrending, POxy.528.12 (ii A.D.); ζ. τοὺς ὄχλους stir them up, Act.Ap.17.13, cf. LXX Si.28.14:—Pass., to be shaken to and fro, waver, totter, reel, "χθῶν σεσάλευσται" A.Pr.1081; "κύκλος σαλευόμενος" Pl.Ti.79e, cf. Arist.Mech.857a7, Thphr.Lass.11; of teeth or nails, to be loosened, Gal.12.871, Dsc.5.3; of persons, "ἐκ Βρομίου γυῖα σαλευόμενον" AP11.26 (Marc.Arg.), cf. 12.31 (Phan.); ὑφ' ἠδονῆς σαλευομένη κορώνη Sch.Arat.1009 (wrongly attributed to Archil., Fr. 102); later simply, stir, move, "κατεσχέθη νόσῳ . . ὡς μὴ δύνασθαι μηδὲ σαλεύεσθαι" PSI4.299.4 (iii A.D.)) According to Lambert (1997: 95), the etymology deriving the words Salamis and Salaminioi from - \*Sal - \ - \*Hal - etc. is very uncertain (cf. Oberhammer, RE 1920, cols. 1826-27, who notes an alternative possible derivation from Semitic "shalom", "peace") and observes that other Attic names that clearly do derive from it are not in Sal-, but Hal-, e.g. Halimous ('Αλιμοῦς), Halai ('Αλαί) (Cf. Lohmann, Hans, BNP, s.v. Ἀλίπεδον, Ἀλαί; Halípedon, Halaí. Swampy plain (Hsch. s.v. Ἀ.) North of the main harbour of the Piraeus, in 403 BC scene of a defeat of Thrasybulus by the Spartan king Pausanias (Xen. Hell. 2,4,30-34).). Moreover, Lambert thinks that the theory sits uneasily with the connection with the island implicit in the location and character of genos cult.
- <sup>6</sup> (For the island of Psyttaleia, cf. Külzer, Andreas, "Psyttalea", in: Brill's New Pauly, Antiquity volumes edited by: Hubert Cancik and , Helmuth Schneider, English Edition by: Christine F. Salazar, Classical Tradition volumes edited

by: Manfred Landfester, English Edition by: Francis G. Gentry. Consulted online on 31 May 2022  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347\\_bnp\\_e1012720](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1012720).

<sup>7</sup> Salamis is an ancient Greek toponym that indicates an island – fortress or an island in the sea that is a sacred place, and for that reason a place to be safe, secure.

<sup>8</sup> Etymological Reconstruction

\*Sal - > Prefix: Sal - + amia (LSJ, ἀμία (B): φυλακία, Hsch. φυλακία, ἦ, = foreg., PRyl.90.13 (iii A. D.);

A. “ἱεροῦ” POxy.1627.12 (iv A. D.) + local suffix – is > Salamis, Σαλαμίς, - ἶνος > Σαλαμίνα

In the structure of the name, is noted the natural element, the sea, that is united with the human presence and interpretation of the island, as an island – fortress, because it is located near the port of Piraeus, and it seems that protects the city and the port of Piraeus.

<sup>9</sup> (gr. ἑορτή) (Cf. LSJ, ἑορτή, in Ion. Prose ὄρτή (so Schwyzer726.21 (Milet, v B.C.), prob. in Ion Trag.21, but A. “ἑορτή” Schwyzer725.12 (Milet, vi B. C.)), ἦ, feast, festival, holiday, “ἐπεὶ καὶ πᾶσιν ἐ.” Od.20.156; “ἐ. τοῖο θεοῖο” 21.258; “ἑούσης ὄρτης τῆ Ἥρη τοῖσι Ἀργείοισι” Hdt.1.31; ὄρτην ἄγειν keep a feast, ib.147, cf. Th.4.5, etc.; “ἄξεις τότε ἀμελιτῆτιν ὄρτην ἐξ ὄρτης” Herod.5.85; “ὄρτην ποιευμένους” Hdt.1.150; “ὄρτην ἀνάγειν” Id.2.40,48, al.; “ἑορτὰς ἑορτάσαι” X.Ath.3.2; “ἑορτὴν τῆ θεῶ ποιεῖν” Th.2.15; “ἡ τῶν Παναθηναίων ἐ.” D.4.35: metaph., οἷας ἑορτῆς ἔστ’ ἀπόπτυστοι θεοῖς στέργηθρ’ ἔχουσαι, of the Eumenides, A.Eu. 191; “ἑορτὴ ὄψεως” Ael.VH13.1.2. generally, holiday-making, amusement, pastime, “παιδιᾶς καὶ ἑορτῆς χάριν” Pl.Phdr.276b, etc.; so “ἑορτὴν ἠγεῖσθαι τὸ τὰ δέοντα πράξαι” Th.1.70.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. <https://www.worldhistory.org/trans/it/1-19269/la-danza-nellantica-grecia/>

<sup>11</sup> (Cf. LSJ, ὄρχησις, εως, ἦ, A.dancing, the dance, Epich. 171 ; “ἔς ὄρχησιν ἀνίστασθαι” Hdt.1.202 ; esp. pantomimic dancing, Id.6.129 ; “δεινὰ ἐποιοῦντο πάσας τὰς ὀ. ἐν ὄπλοις εἶναι” X.An.6.1.11 ; “ἐκπονεῖν” Plb.4.20.12 : a part of ἡ γυμναστική, acc. to Pl.Lg.795e ; “ἡ ἐν τοῖς ὄπλοις ὀ.” Id.Cra.406d ; ὀ. ἐνόπλιος, ἐναγώνιος ὀ., Luc.Salt.8,32, POxy. 1241 v 27 (ii A. D.), etc.; περὶ Ὀρχήσεως, title of work by Lucian ; cf. Ath.1.14dsq., 14.630bsqq., Poll.4.95 sq.) \_καὶ \_χορε[ῖ]ται(χορεία, ἦ, A.dance, esp. choral dance with music, E.Ph.1265 (pl., nowhere else in Trag., exc. Chaerem.14.3), Ar.Ra.336 (lyr.); “ῥυθμὸν χορείας ὑπαγε” Id.Th.956 (lyr.); εὔκυκλος χ. ib.968 (troch.); “χ . . . ὄρχησις τε καὶ ὠδὴ τὸ σύνολόν ἐστιν” Pl.Lg.654b; ὄλη . . χ. ὄλη παιδείσεις ἦν ἡμῖν ib.672e; μιμήματα τρόπων ἐστὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς χ. ib. 655d; θυσίαι τε καὶ χ. ib.772b; ἐπάρχεσθαι ... τοὺς χοροὺς χορείας τῶ Διονύσῳ dub. in IG12(9).192.11 (Eretria).)

<sup>12</sup> Transl. “According to the laws and the decrees that are into force in Salamis”. For the text of the inscription, cf. Tracy, St.V., “Greek Inscriptions from the Athenian Agora”, *Hesperia* 48 (1979), p. 174 – 176.

<sup>13</sup> Giorgos Lekakis, also, a Greek journalist and author, has published many articles online ([www.arxeiopolitismou.gr](http://www.arxeiopolitismou.gr)) on the history of ancient Salamis and on the abandoned monuments. I would like to thank him for his work and for his photos.).