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Processions and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece: Some Iconographical Considerations

Summary

This paper draws attention to the development of processions and pilgrimages in ancient Greece which originated from so-called delegations (*pompé*) which originally had no religious meanings. However, since the 6th century the term *pompé* meant a 'sacrificial procession' which included animals and gifts presented to the Gods. Besides the official processions which were organized by the cultural and/ or political elite, private processions existed as well. Many of the official state processions were regular events in which incense, beautiful garments and musical instruments played an important role. The paper analyses their different representations on vase paintings but also on ceramics. It stresses the many different functions of these events which transcended the religious sphere due the important social and political roles they had for the Greek polis and the Panhellenic communities.

Keywords: Processions; sacrifices; music; vase paintings; pictorial representations

Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit der Entstehung von Prozessionen und Pilgerfahrten im antiken Griechenland, welche ihren Ursprung in sogenannten Delegationen (*pompé*) zunächst ohne religiöse Bedeutung hatten. Ab dem sechsten Jahrhundert wird der Begriff *pompé* für ‚Opferprozession‘ genutzt, also für Veranstaltungen, bei denen Göttern Geschenke dargeboten wurden. Neben den offiziellen, von der kulturellen und/oder politischen Elite organisierten Prozessionen existierten auch private. Viele der staatlichen Prozessionen waren regelmäßige Veranstaltungen, bei denen Weihrauch, prunkvolle Kleider und Musikinstrumente eine wichtige Rolle spielten. Im Beitrag wird deren unterschiedliche Darstellung in der Vasenmalerei und auf Töpferware analysiert. Dabei wird hingewiesen auf verschiedene Funktionen der Prozessionen, die aufgrund ihrer wichtigen gesellschaftlichen und politischen Rolle innerhalb der Polis und panhellenistischen Gemeinden über die religiöse Sphäre hinausgingen.

Keywords: Prozessionen; Opfer; Musik; Vasenmalerei; bildliche Darstellung

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1 Introduction: procession, pilgrimages, delegations

Linked by streets that were hardly fit for traffic, reliant on slow means of transportation such as horses, wagons, and ships and with only a few scribes, the ancient cultures of Egypt, Persia, Mesopotamia, and Greece were nevertheless able to create a cultural unity in language, myth, and education. Greek mobility was predominantly based on the travels of merchants, traders, philosophers, and cultural observers fond of traveling, such as Pausanias. Besides these commercial and individual travels there was a large group of religiously inspired journeys such as processions and pilgrimages, which are the focus of this article. These religious voyages were common and occurred with great frequency in Greek life. As Philip Harland points out, they “account for much of our evidence for mobility and religion.”¹ Although the two kinds of travel share many similarities, they differ in their motivation, organization, and function, which I will describe in the following.

Processions are parades of groups who move towards a sanctuary or altar in order to perform a ritual act.² In ancient Greece this kind of solemn walk was named *pomp*³ from the sixth century BCE onwards. Processions were festivities, marked by dance, music, and incense. The participants, clad in their best clothes and adorned with jewellery, marched in a given order with the aim of offering gifts and sacrifices to the gods in the *temenos* (sacred area).

In contrast pilgrimages do not exhibit a festive atmosphere and may be less clearly defined than processions: they are predominantly religious travels to places of worship. They belong to the “extraterritorial religious activities”, in the words of Rutherford.⁴ In Greek antiquity this kind of travel was not necessarily done in groups or in a specific order, as was usual for processions. Pilgrims travelled to places such as Olympia, Delos, Epidauros, Athens, Delphi, and Miletos in order to attend the celebrations as spectators, to consult an oracle, be healed of a disease in a specific sanctuary, or to do politics or business in the cult area.⁵ The difference between a traveller and a pilgrim was marked by a wreath worn in the hair (*stephanos*), which was meant to protect the pilgrim against enemy attacks.⁶ Perhaps it is because of this great variety that the Greeks did not invent a special term for pilgrimage.⁷

There is a long and rich research tradition regarding Greek processions which goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century. However, pilgrimages in Greek antiquity came into the orbit of researchers much later and accordingly the literature dealing with

1 Harland 2011, 5.

2 For definitions of Greek processions see Nilsson 1951, 310; Eitrem 1917, 56; Bömer 1952, 1886–1887; True et al. 2004, 1–2; Tsochos 2002, 21.

3 The etymology of *pompé* is discussed in Tsochos 2002, 21–31.

4 Rutherford 2013, 2.

5 See Rutherford 2013, 2.

6 About the sacred truces of the pilgrims see Dillon 1997, 1–5, and below, section 5.

7 Dillon 1997, xv.

it is scarce.⁸ Moreover there is no special term for pilgrimage, such as *theoria*, before the sixth century BCE.⁹

The two types of travel were seldom compared until recently, although the kind of journey and the aim of reaching the temenos indicate structural similarities.¹⁰ Because of this there are no clear-cut demarcations between the two terms in classical studies. It is the aim of this article to stress the structural differences between the two in order to show that processions and pilgrimages differed in their political, social, and ritual functions.

The two religious movement-types were the fabric which held Greek culture together. They linked the cities with their hinterland, but also the cities with one another over smaller or greater distances, sometimes even across the sea. The performance of cults included the movement of people, objects, and gods.¹¹ My hypothesis is that pilgrimages were much more responsible for the political cohesion between the many Greek cities (*poleis*), whereas processions served much more to strengthen the ties between humans and gods. They enabled many people to participate in the sacrifices as worshippers or spectators, though only a small group of special cult servants were selected to attend the celebrations.

2 Archaeological sources

The reconstruction of processions and pilgrimages is possible with the help of different sources, such as images on ceramics, reliefs, coinage, testimonies such as texts, inscriptions, and architectural remains of procession streets as well as the locations for assembling. Images from vase paintings and ancient texts are the richest sources and the basis of my research.¹² The sources that are available to us are not easy to interpret since they can have different meanings which are difficult to decipher.

Since processions are rituals and not artefacts, it is quite difficult to assign archaeological data to them. We can try to connect processions with architecture, such as *horoi* (boundary stones), *temene* (areas of the temple, including the altar), and *agorai* (marketplaces) in order to figure out the processional routes. Indeed, from the Hellenistic period (third century BCE) onwards there are architectural manifestations, especially the so-called processional streets. Kristoph Hammerschmied in this volume presents

8 See below, section 1.

9 Rutherford 2013, 1–2.

10 In her detailed article Schlesier mentions religious journeys and discusses processions but does not make any reference to pilgrimages (Schlesier 2000, 129–158).

11 See Schlesier 2000, 130.

12 I refer to the results of my doctoral dissertation about the role of music in antique Greek processions: Kubatzki 2015.

the example of Magnesia-on-the-Meander and explains how the processional street can be read in the order in which it was experienced by the participants.¹³

Written sources give information about the order, outlook, and performances, including picturesque descriptions of festivals and the accompanying procession and sacrificial rituals.¹⁴

Visual reflections are provided by votive reliefs, marble reliefs (best known is the Parthenon frieze, with the longest image of a procession), seals, some less well known paintings, and of course vase depictions, which can be regarded as the richest source.¹⁵

Using these iconographical data, the archaeologist Charalampos Tsochos¹⁶ has tried to trace back processions to Minoan times and to draw a line from then up to the Hellenistic age. He stresses the hypothesis that there was a basic consistency in the processional rituals through the ages.¹⁷ Although this may be acceptable from an iconographical point of view, the fact that these pictures only convey a glimpse of the past limits their explanatory value. In fact, they tell us more about the perception of ancient craftsmen and artists than of ‘real’ daily life.¹⁸ And since these data are few and scattered, they must be seen as mere hints of the processional route and the places that were passed.¹⁹

3 Greek Processions

3.1 Etymology

The Greek term *pompé*, which is translated here as ‘procession’, has undergone several changes of meaning. When the term was first mentioned, in the *Iliad* of Homer,²⁰ it meant to *escort* or *conduct*, but also to *send away* in the sense of a *mission*.²¹ It had no religious connotation at the time. As Fritz Graf suggests, a *pompé* was in this earlier sense a “protecting escort,” especially from gods for humans.²² This brings back to mind the many passages in Greek texts that describe the difficulties of traveling, especially

13 Hammerschmied, this volume.

14 For a brief list of ancient texts concerning processions see True et al. 2004, 2–20 and Bömer 1952, 1878–1993.

15 For a general overview and literature on the archaeological sources see the catalogs of True et al. 2004, 1–20; Bömer 1952, 1878–1993; Tsochos 2002; Brand 2000; Lehnstaedt 1970.

16 Tsochos 2002, 243–261.

17 “Over a time span of more than ten centuries one cannot expect otherwise than that rituals undergo changes and variations. However, their basic characteristics remain the same.” – Originally: “Über

eine Zeitdauer von mehr als zehn Jahrhunderten hinweg ist es nicht anders zu erwarten, dass Rituale Änderungen und Variationen erfahren. Die grundlegenden Merkmale bleiben jedoch die selben” (Tsochos 2002, 266; translation U. Luig).

18 For a discussion of the representation of Greek life on vessel images and other iconographical data, see: Hölscher 2012; Kubatzki 2015; Laxander 2000.

19 True et al. 2004, 2.

20 Hom. *Il.* 6.171.

21 See Pantelia 2011, key-word *pompé*.

22 Graf 1996, 56.

the danger of being ambushed and robbed. To address this precariousness the Greeks developed the institution of *philoxenia* or *xenia*, and a sacred state of inviolability was negotiated.²³ But additionally these “unsafe conditions require greater, often supernatural protection,” as Graf points out.²⁴

From the sixth century onwards the term *pompé* meant a “sacrificial procession,” referring to the fact that “worshippers escorted gifts and sacrificial animals to the altar.” This use of the term became increasingly widespread in Greek writings.²⁵ This change in meaning may reflect a change in the perception of the gods. In the Homeric epics the gods were considered the stronger entities which protected the weaker humans. They took responsibility for their favorites or accompanied humans to other worlds/places such as Hades or the battlefield. In that respect gods could be regarded as “security personnel” in *rites de passages* or when changing the *heterotopics*.²⁶ From the sixth century, with Pindar and Pherekydes of Syros, *pompé* was a clearly defined concept of a religious movement oriented towards a certain place. Now the worshippers took the lead in conducting the sacrificial offerings and the sacrificial animals to the gods.

3.2 General characteristics of processions

In general, processions can be described as ritual acts of political, ethnic, and cultic groups which support the cohesion of the community undertaking them, because they take place regularly and are structured in the same way as all rituals which stabilize the community. The archaeologist Tsochos declared processions to be “a ceremonial parade of a religious community in connection with a religious ritual” and summarizes in this way the central features of processions.²⁷ Other researchers specified that processions consisted of concerted steps towards a place where ritual acts are performed.²⁸ In contrast to other ritual acts such as sacrifices, processions have a territorial aspect; they appropriate spaces which link the members of processions with the space they have traversed. The territorial aspects are joined by social aspects.

For scholars of classical studies and sociologists, notes about the arrangement of the processions are important indices for the hierarchical structure of society.²⁹

In Greek antiquity processions were arranged movements by worshippers with the aim of escorting offerings for a god to a sacred site. Starting from a central place inside

23 On that issue see Dillon 1997 and the article of Kristoph Hammerschmied in this volume.

24 Graf 1996, 56.

25 Tsochos 2002, 25–26.

26 Graf regards the procession as an institution for changing spaces. “Such a procession has its clear, structural place: in the *rite de passage* of the sacrifice, it belongs to the initial phase, which transports the

participants into the sacred space or, seen from the sanctuary, from outside inside.” Graf 1996, 57 and n. 16.

27 Tsochos 2002, 20.

28 True et al. 2004, 9.

29 Auffahrth 1999, 38; Bremmer 1996, 44–45; Chan-iotis 1991, 128–129; Connor 2000, 73; Gengnagel 2008, 11; Graf 1996, 57–58; Laxander 2000, 1–2.

the city, the destination was the sanctuary, especially the altar where the sacrifice was carried out. Two types of procession existed: official processions organized by the cultural and/or political elite, and private processions conducted by families.³⁰ Many of the official state processions were regular events and were established dates in the festive calendar. The ritual complex of the sacrifice-festival basically consisted of four elements: the procession, the sacrifice, the meal, and the contest.³¹ Processions formed a major part of the cult activities and took place frequently in most of the Greek poleis.³²

The sacrifice of animals, food, garments, and other precious possessions must be regarded as the central point of the whole cult, while the procession was the essential ritual to bring the offerings to the altar.³³ The sacrificial ritual created the sacred space in which communication with the gods could take place.³⁴ Usually the altar lay inside the sanctuary (*temenos*), sometimes also inside the temple itself. For that reason, the sacrifice could not be witnessed by all citizens, since the space around the altar was limited and entrance to the sanctuaries was commonly not allowed to all participants, but only to the dignitaries.³⁵ The rituals of the procession, which were compatible with the masses, and the feast after the sacrifice were necessary in order to bind everyone in the community to the worship of the gods.

My hypothesis is that the processions acquired higher importance with the growing number of inhabitants of the cities. One can notice a correlation between the increase in population and the growing number of processions from the late archaic period (seventh century BCE).³⁶ I suggest that the urgency of tying everyone individually to the gods in the cultic community (since religion was not based on faith, but on deeds)³⁷ led to mass rituals such as processions and festivals in which the whole cult-community could join and in whose rituals everyone could participate.³⁸

Ancient texts reflect the fact that processions were the biggest spectacle of all cult ceremonies. They are described as well-performed movements with music, incense, animals, gifts, and wagons.³⁹ In state processions large choirs of maidens sang and danced.

30 Official processions were in Hellenistic times arranged by a benefactor (Kavoulaki 1999, 299; Voigt 2008, 146–160).

31 True et al. 2004, 2.

32 In Hellenistic times they occurred almost every day (Bömer 1952, 1895).

33 Bömer 1952, 1886.

34 Communication is understood in two directions: the worshippers addressed their requests to the gods, and the gods ‘answered’ by agreeing to receive the sacrifice or not. Without the agreement of the gods, the sacrifice could not take place. The gods usually communicated by natural phenomena such as wind, rain, thunder, or animals. An interesting

discussion about the manner of religious communication can be found in Scheer 2001, Frelvel and Hesberg 2007, and Koller 1963, 92, 150–164.

35 Bömer 1952, 1911.

36 Compare with the schemata and the analysis in my dissertation (Kubatzki 2015).

37 See the discourse on embedded religions.

38 In the case of sacrifice it meant that everyone got a piece of the sacrificed animals. The anthropologist Jean-Pierre Vernant described this phenomenon of sharing flesh in his *Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks* (Vernant 1989).

39 Presented in the catalog in my dissertation (Kubatzki 2015).

The procession followed a specific route and probably passed many citizens watching the spectacle.⁴⁰ The audience was thus an important part of the ritual. Athena Kavoulaki regards processions and theatre in the same category as “viewing occasions,” where the focus is on the role of the viewer and “the audience is a constitutive factor of performance.”⁴¹

The performance of the procession is a frame in which the participants should behave differently “in front of the eyes of a beholder;” it is “a frame which in a way sets performances apart from other everyday activities.”⁴² The texts and depictions also show that the participants were dressed in their finest garments.⁴³ Especially late antique texts describe the luxury of the garments, such as in Heliodoros’ *Aithiopia*.⁴⁴ It was the moment of being “on stage” and an outstanding moment to represent the status, hierarchy, and luxury of the polis.

4 The rise of procession scenes in the ancient Greek world: an iconographic analysis

Processions are ancient rituals, as the early wall depictions in Mesopotamia and Egypt reflect and as is known from the first moments of illustrations and texts (third millennium BCE).⁴⁵ The younger Greek culture also presented processional scenes in its earliest repertoire of images. In contrast to the depictions of the late Geometric and Archaic periods (eighth–seventh century BCE), the earliest processional scenes were most frequently found on wall paintings and not on vase images.⁴⁶

One of the first depictions, the Sarcophagus of Hagia Triada (Fig. 1), a cultural center of ancient Crete, dates to the middle of the second millennium BCE (late Minoan III A). Since its excavation in 1903, this Minoan sarcophagus has continued to hold the attention of scholars,⁴⁷ since it was made out of limestone (from the island of Poros) and not clay as was usual in Minoan Crete.⁴⁸ Its painting can be read as a complex narrative

40 Bömer 1952, 1906.

41 Kavoulaki 1999, 294.

42 Kavoulaki 1999, 294. – The philosopher Maria A. C. Otto describes the festival as a necessity for mastering everyday life in its monotony (Otto 2000, 9).

43 “The wearing of festive garments can be assumed as a matter of course” – Originally: “Tragen von Festgewändern darf als selbstverständlich angenommen werden” (Bömer 1952, 1911; translation U. Luig. – See also True et al. 2004, 2 and Graf 1996, 57).

44 Hld. *Aithiopia* III, 34.

45 “The historical genesis of the festival (procession of the gods) in Mesopotamia cannot be grasped

by scholarship because at the moment of the first written record an anthropomorphic image of god existed and the cults had already established themselves.” – Originally: “Die historische Genese des Festes (Götterprozession) ist in Mesopotamien für die Wissenschaft nicht greifbar, da mit dem Moment der ersten schriftlichen Überlieferung ein anthropomorph gedachtes Götterbild existiert und Kultetablierungen sich bereits vollzogen haben” (Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 3; translation U. Luig).

46 Intensively considered by Blakolmer 2007, 41.

47 For a recent bibliography see Burke 2005, 403 n. 1.

48 Long 1974, 16 n. 26.



Fig. 1 Side A. Sarcophagus of Hagia Triada. Archaeological Museum Iraklio, Greece.



Fig. 2 Side B. Sarcophagus of Hagia Triada. Archaeological Museum Iraklio, Greece.

referring to “life, death, sacrifice, homage, passage and regeneration,” as Walgate points out.⁴⁹ The sarcophagus is covered in an elaborate polychrome fresco technique and depicts figures on four sides. These scenes show men and women standing or walking in a row carrying offerings. Both long sides show a sacrificial procession with festively dressed worshippers of both sexes. The narrow sides depict goats drawing wagons led by female figures.

Side A (Fig. 1 displays five figures stepping to right. A captive bull lies on a table under which two little goats are squatting. Next to the table a man is blowing a Phrygian *aulos*, wearing a mouth band (*phorbeia*).⁵⁰ He is followed by four women in procession, identifiable by their garments and white-colored skin.⁵¹

Side B (Fig. 2) illustrates five male and two female figures in two different scenes. The women stepping to the left are accompanied by a lyre-playing man. The first woman conducts a libation.

On the right, the men of the second group are walking towards a smaller figure dressed in a long fur-like robe which hides his arms and legs. This male figure is receiving two goats and a boat in front of a temple or sarcophagus. It seems that the two long sides,

49 Walgate 2002, 1.

50 An *aulos* (pl. *auloi*) is a wind instrument consisting of two tubes. It is more a pipe than a flute and in sound is comparable to present-day oboes. The Phrygian *aulos* is an *aulos* with a specially adapted horn on one of the pipes. This was able to deepen

the sound. *Auloi* were the most common wind instruments in Greek antiquity and in myth were connected with Dionysos, the Satyrs, Maenads, and other ecstatic figures of Greek myths.

51 There is discussion over the gender of these figures (Brand 2000, 24–25).

each with two different scenes, essentially belong together and may show either a cult performance or a funeral.⁵²

The interpretation of these scenes depends on the interpretation of the figure in front of the building or sarcophagus. If it is regarded as a statue, the whole scene must be understood as a sacrificial procession with gifts, animals, and musicians. But when it is interpreted as a dead person or a mummy, the performance may rather be classified as a funeral procession.⁵³ A third interpretation is as the epiphany of a god, since the figure has no legs or arms, and seems to grow out of the ground. This recalls vegetal gods such as Zeus Velchanos, as Erika Simon suggested.⁵⁴ Since the painted object itself is a sarcophagus, the funeral context cannot be neglected. But whatever the prominent figure may be – a dead person, statue, or god – the image represents a sacrificial procession with sacrificial animals, offerings, a libation, and music. For that matter it is striking that the blood sacrifice on Side A (Fig. 1) is accompanied by an *aulos*, while in the libation scene a *kithara* is shown.⁵⁵ Parallels to the Greek procession scenes a thousand years later can be observed.⁵⁶ With regard to the iconography, it can be concluded that particular details of the Greek sacrificial procession have a very long tradition, right back to the Minoan age.

4.1 Geometric Period: the absence of processional scenes

This Minoan procession scene with its clear association with an animal sacrifice was unique for a long time in Greek art. Some centuries passed before the next procession scenes appeared, in the Geometric period (900–700 BCE). In the Geometric painting style, processional acts appeared mainly in funeral contexts as *ekphorai* and *prothesis* processions. The depictions of these performances are quite similar to the later procession scenes, but sacrificial offerings and animals are absent, since this was probably not a typical habit at funerals.⁵⁷

While these Early and Middle Geometric depictions prove that the principle of processional rites was familiar, it is noticeable that no cultic procession scenes outside a funeral context appeared before the Late Geometric style.

The first Geometric depictions that can be interpreted as cultic processions did not exist before the seventh century BCE. They are iconographical combinations of oriental models and Cypriot round dancing scenes, as the archaeologist Nota Kourou has

52 For a discussion of the topic depicted see Long 1974; Militello 1998, 154–155; Brand 2000, 19–29; Walgate 2002, 1–24.

53 Long 1974.

54 Simon 1978, 1417.

55 A *kithara* is a string instrument that was played with a plectrum. It was connected with Apollo, profes-

sional musicians, and elaborate music. A discussion of the function of music in the procession is offered below.

56 See also Kavoulaki 1999, 296.

57 Animal sacrifices indicated a ritual for a god or, from classical times, for a hero.

demonstrated.⁵⁸ Originating from female circle-dancing scenes, these scenes represent processions, sometimes conducted or accompanied by a male musician.⁵⁹ Kourou explains this invention of a new subject on vase images as an adoption of oriental procession scenes which were appropriated by Phoenician craftsmen. On Cyprus this was combined with the traditional dancing scenes.⁶⁰ Considering this development, we have to ask why a familiar motif such as the procession, which was well known in Minoan times, could be ‘forgotten’ in Greek art for centuries and then be reintroduced by Ancient Near Eastern art. The argument of Tsochos, that the cult was not completely established at this time in Greek culture, is questionable, since the lack of images of a cult practice is no evidence for the absence of this practice altogether.⁶¹ We can only assume that for some reason it was more important to depict funeral scenes than sacrificial processions in early Greek art before the seventh century BCE.

4.2 Circular dance scenes as a precursor

Circular dances can be regarded as another precursor of processional scenes, since their iconographical arrangement is very similar. Dancing scenes, as the archaeologist Yosef Garfinkel has been able to show, are the earliest depictions found in Mesopotamia, the Ancient Near East, and Southern Europe of the Bronze Age.⁶²

Depictions of circular dances and processions coexisted on a few Cretan vessels⁶³ of the late eighth century.⁶⁴ Aside from this Cretan exception the motif of figures participating in processions with offerings and sacrificial animals did not appear until the middle of the sixth century BCE. The Late Geometric procession scenes mentioned above appear more as dance processions than as sacrificial processions. It is noticeable that the sacrificial procession scenes enter the stage of Greek art at the time when the scenes of circular dances almost disappear.

There is one explanation that can be attributed to the style of painting: the Early Geometric style used human figures, like all other ornaments, as patterns that circled the round vessel.⁶⁵ The equality of all items is the reason why there is almost no difference between the dancing figures. Also, the arrangement of the figures in *Wechselansicht* – that is, with legs and heads shown from the side, but the body shown frontally – was useful for illustrations of figures holding hands. An example is the circular dance with musicians from the late eighth century BCE on the Hydria Berlin, SM31573, A1.⁶⁶

58 Kourou 1985, 415–422.

59 Kourou 1985, 418.

60 Kourou 1985, 417.

61 Tsochos 2002, 170–171.

62 Garfinkel 2003, 3.

63 Kunze 1931, 212–213.

64 Tsochos 2002, 174–175.

65 Kleine 2005, 11.

66 See Haug 2012, 164 fig. 132.

The painting technique of *Wechselansicht* may explain why dance scenes were favored in the Geometric period. There are hundreds of vessels decorated with circular dance scenes and only a handful of procession scenes, which are highly debated.⁶⁷

With the beginning of the Orientalizing episode (seventh century BCE) the painters started to show the figures consistently in profile, which marks a break with the Geometric style. The first scenes that could be regarded as processions show “loose” circular dances,⁶⁸ e.g. figures in a row not holding hands. Later, in the first third of the seventh century, circular dance scenes disappeared from vessels for quite a long time, but appeared again 100 years later. Kleine gave a convincing reason for this disappearance: she argued that with the beginning of the profile view it was almost impossible to show figures in a row holding hands.⁶⁹ However, the lack of processional scenes in *Wechselansicht* in paintings where many similar figurative formations of rows did exist (funeral processions, warriors in a row) is not explained by this argumentation.

The absence of processional scenes in ceramics and other objects before the seventh century must also be explained with regard to the content, not just the form. When the sacrificial procession scenes came into existence in the middle of the Archaic period, their presentation was quite detailed, as is shown on a Boeotian black-figure lekanis from about 550 BCE.⁷⁰

It displays a relatively detailed sacrificial procession for the goddess Athena Promachos (the armed Athena), who is receiving the offerings. Starting from Athena the picture shows an altar with burning flames, a girl with a basket (*kanephore*), and two sacrificial animals, while the bull is accompanied by an *auletes* (a male *aulos* player), some nude worshippers, and a wagon pulled by two mules. While the men before the wagon are striding towards the altar, the men beyond it seem to be dancing, since their feet are lifted slightly from the ground. Their focus in different directions could also be read as dancing positions. This depiction may show both a sacrificial procession and a ritual dance, because the first group of men are clearly stepping in the same direction, as was usual in processional scenes.

From the middle of the sixth century BCE processional scenes increased in Greek vase painting: Tsochos counts hundreds of them in Greek art, with their maximum frequency in black-figure painting of the Archaic period.⁷¹ A similar event occurred when the sacrifice scenes appeared in Greek art at the end of the black-figure style. Their increase correlates with the disappearance of procession scenes.⁷² A reason for this devel-

67 See for instance Tsochos 2002, 167–171, and Kourou 1985, 417–422.

68 Mannack 2012, 96. – Kourou 1985 also interprets these loose dances as processions, as was shown before.

69 Kleine 2005, 41. – On the other hand there are a few exceptions that show that it was possible to illustrate

circular dancing in profile view. The best example is a dance row on the Francois krater, sixth century BCE.

70 Kubatzki 2015, 302 fig. 6.

71 Tsochos 2002, catalogue.

72 See Kubatzki 2015.

opment may be found in the painting technique, such as the growing figures which filled the ground of the image and the ‘zooming in’ to the altar. Simply put: because of the new painting technique of bigger, more detailed figures it was in the end the lack of space on the vessels that led to more scenes of sacrifice on an altar. But socio-political reasons may also be important. The archaeologist Heike Laxander bases her interpretation on a shift from collective scenes, such as dances, funerals, and processions, to more individual scenes, such as single figures, such as a god on the altar, or sacrifice scenes with few figures.⁷³

The main difference between the two ritual performances is the way ritual space is treated. On the one hand, circular dance scenes are signified by participants holding hands and dancing around a meaningful object or place such as an altar. This performance fits well for small groups celebrating their identity by worshipping gods, maintaining their social values and rules, which are embodied through dancing, and by creating a safe frame in which communication could take place.⁷⁴ On the other hand, processions allow a greater number of worshippers to participate. They can be interpreted as a broken circle – since they have a starting point and a target.

Both rituals are about maintaining communal identity and the worship of the gods, but their body language and performance are different. Their mission is the same: to bring the community together and create a sacred space. However, since processions can assemble more worshippers, they are therefore more useful for larger communities such as states.

4.3 Organization, composition, and ritual performances of processions

Although we have some depictions on vessels showing processions from the seventh century up to the Hellenistic period, their composition cannot be taken as a one-to-one representation of reality. Like all paintings in ancient Greece the particular items must be read as a pictographic language. It was Heike Laxander who pointed out the *pars pro toto* principle,⁷⁵ by which each figure in the procession scene symbolizes the participation of one or more persons of a given group (*kanephoros*, musicians, servants, warriors, priests). Also, the order of the participants as shown in the pictures cannot simply be taken at face value, although it does at least inform us about the hierarchy of the positions. More details about the composition of the procession are therefore drawn from ancient texts and epigraphy.⁷⁶

73 Laxander 2000, 16.

74 See above, Voigt 2008.

75 Laxander 2000, 16. – Kurt Lehnstaedt formulated this principle decades previously, though without naming it (Lehnstaedt 1970, 17).

76 First and foremost, the collection of Franz Bömer must be considered who collected more than 350 data about ancient Greek processions: Bömer 1952.

Processions were not spontaneous happenings in a community but were planned by a cultural or political elite; in Hellenistic times this could have been a benefactor or the most senior family member in the case of private processions.⁷⁷ The larger official processions most likely followed a special procession route beginning at a central place (most often the agora of the city) and passing the important streets and temples of several gods.⁷⁸ Special procession streets, the *hierai boroi*, are known from Eleusis, Delphi, Amyklai, Sykyrion, and Didyma.⁷⁹ The goal of processions was the altar, but we have only a little knowledge about the starting point: were the participants assembled in a special place such as the agora or did they start from their own houses, as Graf suggests?⁸⁰

At Athens there was a special building for the assembly of the participants from Hellenistic times onwards: the *pompeion*. It was built at the beginning of the fourth century BCE between two of the boundary gates of Athens: the Sacred Gate and the Dipylon Gate.⁸¹ Important Processions such as the Panathenaia or the procession of the Mysteries to Eleusis started from there.⁸²

The *pompeion* consisted of a large open court with a surrounding portico and was built as part of the wall, next to Athens' cemetery, the *Kerameikos*. Since such specialized buildings were not known before Hellenistic times, I argue that this shows a development in the organization of processions. They became more institutionalized and presented a higher level of cultic performance. The architecture turned these transient performances into timeless events, even when the cultic rituals were conducted. They embodied a *permanent act*. The position of the *pompeion* on the boundary between the city and the *Kerameikos*, which lies outside the city walls, created links between the living and the dead as well as between the outside and the inside of the city. Kavoulaki calls this "a transitional point between the city and the wider periphery."⁸³

Since the Parthenon on the Acropolis was the goal of the Panathenaia, it was necessary to traverse the whole city. The philologist Fritz Graf has called these inner city processions "centripetal" in opposition to the "centrifugal" ones that started from the center (the *agora*) and led to a sanctuary outside the city,⁸⁴ e.g. the Mysteries.⁸⁵ It is probable that alongside the procession several ritual performances occurred, such as sacrifices

77 Voigt 2008, 146–165; see also Kavoulaki 1999, 299.

78 Compare with True et al. 2004, 8. For a more detailed description of the route of the Athenian Panathenaia see Kavoulaki 1999, 300 and n. 36.

79 Bömer 1952, 1910; see also Hammerschmied, this volume.

80 "[...] and whether they had already formed a small procession from their home through the city streets. This would seem to have been likely, since they must have been conspicuous, wearing their Sunday best and crowns" (Graf 1996, 57).

81 For a digital reconstruction of the *pompeion* see http://travelingclassroom.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Pompeion_aerial.jpg (visited on 31/07/2017). – On the dating of the *pompeion* see Hoepfner 1976, 112.

82 Bömer 1952, 1907; True et al. 2004, 2.

83 Kavoulaki 1999, 300.

84 Graf 1996, 55.

85 See also Kavoulaki 1999, 300.

for deities, dances, and musical and mimetic performances.⁸⁶ The duration of processions could last from some hours to several days, depending on the length of the route.⁸⁷ Wagons, such as can be seen in the Boeotian *lekanis*,⁸⁸ refer to those longer trips.

4.4 Order and composition

The procession was usually led by the highest dignitary, but there were also private processions, such as marriages or funerals, which were led by single musicians or choirs of girls or boys.⁸⁹ Behind them the community followed in a special order that was controlled by official ushers.⁹⁰ The placing of the different social and political groups in the procession is an essential element for their characterization. A position in the first third of the procession, near to the sacrificial animals or the wooden cult image of a god (*xoanon*), or a position next to the altar marks a high rank in the hierarchy of the polis.⁹¹ These arrangements yield insights into the values that were authoritative at that particular time.⁹² Thus, the order of the groups was an opportunity to indicate changes in the political order and in the social hierarchy. This flexibility turned processions into an important political tool by bringing constitutional changes of the polis to a general level of consciousness.⁹³ “The ritual, in other words, does not support or confirm an order of things but this order is shaped through and by ritual activity,” writes Kavoulaki.⁹⁴ And Boris Voigt points out that the cultic manifestation of the political order could have been one of the essential aims of the festivals: “Perhaps the celebrations offered the first possibility for the citizens to connect the new stratification of the polis with their own actions and gain some kind of familiarity with it. Therefore, the preoccupation of the Athenians with the new structure of the polis was for an important part the worry about its cultic manifestations. In them the political order experienced its sensual-meaningful readability.”⁹⁵

The possibility of transforming administrative processes into a “sensual-meaningful readability” turned festivals, regular rites, and other public exercises into exceptional performances to maintain socio-political systems.⁹⁶ One of those translation-capable

86 Xenophon tells us about such performances: the main procession of the Attic Dionysia stopped at different altars for musical performances and sacrifices. Satirical songs are also attested (*Xen. Hipp.*); see also Kavoulaki 1999, 295.

87 See Schlesier 2000, 138–140.

88 Kubatzki 2015, 302 Abb. 6.

89 True et al. 2004, 2.

90 True et al. 2004, 2.

91 Bömer 1952, 1908, regards the middle of the procession as the most important place inside the procession.

92 Compare Graf 1996, 47–48.

93 As Connor 2000, 71, points out, festivals have been used in situations of important political change: “Solon need have done little more than utilize a festival pattern that antedated his reform and extend it to the political privileges as allocated in his new system.”

94 Kavoulaki 1999, 298.

95 Voigt 2008, 147.

96 See Kavoulaki 1999, 294, on processions as performances: they are “physically inscribed, it becomes a mode of the body.”

performances in ancient Greek processions is the music – including dances, plays, choirs, and musical instruments.

4.5 Music and musicians in ancient Greek processions⁹⁷

Music must be regarded as an important cultural factor in ancient Greek society.⁹⁸ Leading philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and also some Pythagoreans wrote about music as a political, institutional element.⁹⁹ As the ancient writers thought music to be in closest connection with the soul, and assumed that music was able to change the mood and also the character, a deep relation to cult is apparent.¹⁰⁰ “Both the visual impression of colorful objects and choreographic movement, as well as the acoustic impression of instrumental and often vocal music show that processional performance was an elaborate event with symbolic and highly aesthetic qualities.”¹⁰¹ It is therefore surprising that only a third of all processional scenes on Greek ceramics depict musicians. On vessels with images of processional scenes musicians are more often depicted with sacrificial animals than without. This closeness gives us a hint that there was a functional connection between music and sacrificial animals.

The common musical instruments were the *kithara*, the *lyra*, and the *aulos*.¹⁰² String instruments were common in Geometric-style processions/circle dances, whereas *auloi* dominate the procession and sacrifice scenes from the sixth century BCE. With only a few exceptions all depictions of musical processions feature an *aulos*. The second most common combination is an ensemble of *aulos* and string instruments. Some musical instruments, such as idiophones (rattles, *sistra*,¹⁰³ bells) and percussion instruments, never appear in processional scenes. In contrast, mystery cults, such as for Dionysos, Kybele, or Demeter, are known for their use of ecstasy-inducing musical instruments, as the *Bacchae* of Euripides illustrate colorfully.¹⁰⁴

It is also remarkable that the singing and dancing in musical processional performances, which are best described in ancient Greek texts,¹⁰⁵ are almost never displayed in

97 For further information, see Kubatzki 2015.

98 The ancient Greek term *mousiké* includes more than just instrumental and vocal music; it also encompasses circular and individual dancing, acting in a play, and poetry. The famous Muses embody all these different performances by each standing for a different kind of ‘music’: For a detailed introduction to that term see Murray and Wilson 2004, 1–5, and Kaden 2004, 67–80. For a comprehensive introduction to Greek music in general see West 1992; Anderson 1994; Landels 1999; Murray and Wilson 2004.

99 Plato, *Pol.* III 401d; see West 1992, 31.

100 Hermann Koller traces musical compositions (songs) back to the invocation of the gods by the priests (Koller 1963, 112–122).

101 Kavoulaki 1999, 295.

102 While the *kithara* is made of wood, the *lyra* is a smaller string instrument made of tortoise shell.

103 *Sistrum* (pl. *sistra*): a metal hand clapper that reached Greece from the Egyptian Isis cult.

104 Eu. *Bacch.* 64–166.

105 These forms of ancient music must be regarded as the central performance at every ancient Greek festival in all periods.

procession scenes.¹⁰⁶ In this case, we cannot argue from the painting technique, since we know countless representations of singing and/or dancing figures in other contexts.¹⁰⁷ Obviously there was no need or desire to show choirs or singers as part of the procession. Possibly singing was so common that it was not worth mentioning, but in contrast musical instruments could have been regarded as a kind of luxury. This may be the reason why they were depicted.

At any rate, there is a big gap between the illustrations on ceramics and the ancient Greek texts concerning the reference to musical performances. In spite of the iconographic record it seems likely that music was mandatory in every festival, because ancient writers emphasize festive situations that had to omit music, such as chthonic cults or songs of grief and sorrow.¹⁰⁸

5 Complex functions of processions

The involvement of large parts of the population either as participants or as spectators turned the processions into lively events at which the Greeks could pay homage to their gods in a very complex and elaborate way.¹⁰⁹ Processional performances can be read as *the staging* of Greek identity, which could be renewed, changed, fixed, and commented upon.¹¹⁰ Greek processions were complex rituals with multiple functions concerning different spheres in human and superhuman life.

But in comparison with present religious processions the foundation of ancient Greek procession was the very close connection with a sacrificial act, mainly of animals. Its aim probably arose from the wish to accompany the offerings (animals or gifts) in a reverent way to the altar or temple. During the time of the procession the route was transformed into a *sacred space* – it no longer represented a banal street, or a commercial route, but a sacred trajectory where other rules were in operation. This was expressed in the festive atmosphere, which was characterized by the garments and movements of the participants, the musical performances, the smells, etc., all of which marked a difference to daily life.¹¹¹

106 See the analysis of the instruments and musical performances in processional scenes in Kubatzki 2015 and Brand 2000.

107 For example, the singing *kithara* player on an Attic red-figure amphora dated to the fifth century by the Berlin Painter, Metropolitan Art Museum, Gallery 157.

108 See West 1992, 13–14; Zschätzsch 1992, 138.

109 The function of Greek processions has been of interest to several scholars in the last decades: Geng-

nagel 2008; Connor 2000; Rutherford 2004; Graf 1996; Schlesier 2000; Polignac 1995 [1984]; True et al. 2004; Kavoulaki 1999; and even more.

110 For the comparison of processional performances and theatrical performances see also Kavoulaki 1999, 295.

111 Bömer 1952, 1911. – Since processions are festivals, the same rules were in operation, such as behaving – differently and festively (Kavoulaki 1999, 294–295).

Greek processions touched two different spheres: the human and the superhuman. Hence, different functions can be analyzed. Processions had a territorial aspect.¹¹² They were the expression of a wide cross-section of the Greek population, which connected the single *phylai* (clans or tribes) with the central sanctuaries. “The procession demarcates space and symbolically appropriates it. The group builds a relation to spatial environment and organizes space, but at the same time it organizes itself through the arrangement of the procession: in the space which is available to the community human relations are formed and power associations are manipulated and negotiated.”¹¹³ Other functions included political communication, social interaction, and cultic transformation.

5.1 Religious aspects

The religious motive must be regarded as the most essential and the initial factor for processions. At its core, a procession is an offering: the pomp and glory was meant to delight the gods.¹¹⁴ The offering was always an exchange, a reciprocal trade. For the most precious gifts a community could afford, the gods offered in return shelter, power over the processes of nature, and support in matters of war. But as Kavoulaki argues: “The procession remains always an attempt. The community, hierarchically arranged, approaches the divinity but divine reciprocity cannot be guaranteed.”¹¹⁵ On the one hand there is the *insurance* character of ritual processions, which can be interpreted as an expression of the powerlessness of humans in the face of superhuman power.¹¹⁶ On the other hand there is the aspect of communication. The contact between human and superhuman spheres can become physical. The first aspect is the shared meat: by eating the same meat, all participants are connected with each other and with the god who received some parts of the sacrificial animal. The second aspect is the epiphany of the gods as described for Artemis, Dionysos, Apollo, Zeus, Athena, and others: their “appearance” may have been a sensual effect (natural phenomena such as wind, earthquakes, birds, and so on) or real epiphanies: Apollo was said to dance with his followers, and Dionysos appeared in the *Bacchae* of Euripides.¹¹⁷ Communication during processions and sacrifices represents an interaction between the two spheres.

112 The territorial aim of processions is discussed in several texts. See for instance Polignac 1995 [1984]; Graf 1996; Kavoulaki 1999, 297; Kubatzki 2015.

113 Kavoulaki 1999, 297.

114 The uniqueness of the processions regards their character as offerings (Voigt 2008, 153). – “By presenting itself, the marching community becomes a gift” (Kavoulaki 1999, 302).

115 Kavoulaki 1999, 3.

116 Nowadays this insecurity still exists, but the gods have changed into large insurance agencies which take the offerings (money).

117 Eur. *Bacch.* Prologue and other verses (Apollo epiphany: Kall. *Ap.* 1); other epiphanies of deities: Papadopoulou 2004b, 347; Papadopoulou 2004a, 48.

Rituals such as processions offered a safe space for the interaction on vertical and horizontal levels with the gods and with other people.¹¹⁸ A sacrifice always included mediation between the two realms.¹¹⁹ In this context there is no longer any distinction between religious and psychological aspects: feasting, coming together with others, and overstepping social borders by acting differently are needs of anyone living in any society.

5.2 The psychological aspect

The psychological aspect must be seen as the real first motive for organizing festivals such as processions. The gods were perceived as the most powerful entities, who received the gifts and attention (by performing rituals). The embodying of community in a procession, the closeness to other polis members, *communitas*,¹²⁰ feasting, and the creation of another world in which different rules apply (masquerade, marking social boundaries by crossing them) embodied the psychosocial order and were necessary to maintain the identity of both realms, namely the individual member of a polis and the polis itself. The participants were to call to mind their position inside the polis by re-enacting their social status by dressing in their best garments and presenting luxury of any kind, which also underlined their economic power. In the context of daily life, to relax in the festivity was a regularly used outlet for destructive emotions and a means of empowerment for facing the everyday hard work again.

5.3 Socio-political aspects

The organization inside the procession of the Great Panathenaia is a mirror of the polis structure and, as Graf points out, “gives a spatial model of how the polis was structured, which individuals and which groups were part of the polis [city, JK] and what their roles were. Again, the procession manifests what Athens is, not only to foreign by-standers but to the citizens and the participants. The moment is well chosen: when the annual cycle begins, the polis remembers and manifests the way in which it is ordered.”¹²¹

Kavoulaki describes it as a kind of self-organization of the polis: “The group builds a relation to spatial environment and organizes space, but at the same time it organizes itself through the arrangement of the procession: in the space which is available to the community human relations are formed and power associations are manipulated and

118 Cf. Köpping and Rao 2008, 22.

119 See Graf 1996, 57.

120 The term *communitas* was coined by ethnologist Victor Turner. *Communitas* means the opposite of structure: it keeps people together in their social struc-

ture. At the same time *communitas* is an always desired spontaneity, an intuitive togetherness (Turner 2005 [1969], 122–123).

121 Graf 1996, 58.

negotiated.”¹²² Both authors emphasize that ritual performances give insight into the political body, revealing its social and political order, but do not change it. Another author, Jan Assmann, underlines the important role of processions and festivals in providing a frame in which the citizens could meet, interact, connect, and trade.¹²³ As a “marriage market” he considers them to be the original reason for a tribal festival.

Another sociopolitical function is probably the regulation of social conflicts: W. R. Connor noticed a correlation between festivals and war situations in Greek antiquity.¹²⁴ Thomas Figueira has also suggested that there was a convergence of the Great Panathenaia and the years of instability in the early sixth century BCE.¹²⁵ Romans used the same mechanism of manipulation: they became very famous for their *panem et circenses* (bread and games) to appease the public in rough times with meals, festivals, and circus shows.

5.4 Cultural aspects

In the research literature, festivals such as processions have been described as communication systems and as stages for politicians to establish a new political order (see chapter 4.4 above). I would like to go a step further and add the sensual expressions of Greek processions: *aesthetic performances*, such as dances, plays, choirs, and instrumental music, *sensual acts* such as smelling incense and the scent of meat, and the *festive self-expression* of the worshippers through Sunday clothing and decoration.¹²⁶ Among these events music was important for bringing political ideas to a level of awareness, since it enabled the worshippers to remember and maintain ideas by dancing and singing.

5.5 Territorial aspects

Processions that followed a route outside the cities can also be regarded as territorial expressions that connected the single clan or tribe (*phyle*) with the central sanctuaries: by moving through landscapes and cities, processions are like flexible borders. Whenever processions made their way, they marked the territory and so the organizing city claimed the space.¹²⁷ The sociologist François de Polignac was one of the first scholars to focus attention on the territorial role of processions by realizing that growing populations from the Greek Archaic period onwards tended to install their sanctuaries in the suburban area.¹²⁸ By this the city space was expanded and activated by regular festivals

122 Kavoulaki 1999, 297.

123 Assmann 1991, 23.

124 Connor 2000, 58.

125 Figueira 1984 cited from: Connor 2000, 59 n. 8.

126 Bömer 1952, 1911.

127 Gengnagel 2008, 8; Graf 1996, 55–56; Polignac 1995 [1984], 32–33.

128 Polignac 1995 [1984], 33–36.

Who was reached by processions	Individuals	Cities	Community of states
How were they reached	Religious/Psychological/ Social/Political	Social/Political	Political
What happened	Communication with gods, cultic engagement Coordination and channeling of emotions Communitas (feeling of togetherness) Identification with the polis	Channeling anti-social energies Remembering and realization of social hierarchy Marriage market Market place for trade (economic sphere) Political demonstration of power Identification with polis	Demonstration of polis-power Marking the territory Creating and maintaining a Greek identity

Tab. 1 Systematizing the different functions of processions in ancient Greece.

in these sacred sites. Table 1 and 2 systematize the different functions of processions in ancient Greece.

6 Pilgrimages

Although scholars in the fields of archaeology and the science of religion have since the 1990s focused on the different forms of travel by the Greek populations, the term “pilgrimage” was not mentioned in these studies.¹²⁹ Only in 1997 did M. Dillon publish an overview of Greek pilgrimages, differentiating them according to their structures, destinations, and ethnic groups.¹³⁰ Rutherford and Elsner edited a volume on the ancient world and late antique period in 2005, in which the delegation/embassy (*theoria*)¹³¹ and the consultation of oracles took centre stage. In that volume S. Scullion published a critical article on the use of the term ‘pilgrimage’ in relation to ancient Greece.¹³² He argued that pilgrimage, according to our present understanding as the “journey of a single person or a group of persons with a religious motivation,” had not existed in ancient Greece – at least as a special term. Yet, a vast number of Greeks travelled to the many

129 A detailed bibliography is found in Schlesier 2000, n. 1 and 2.

130 Dillon 1997, xiii–xviii.

131 For introductory articles about *theoriai* see Nilsson 1951, 310; Dillon 1997, 11–20; Schlesier 2000, 141; Tsochos 2002, 32–33.

132 Scullion 2005.

Spheres/realms	Human/Social level	Mythological level Level of writing	Divine/Spiritual Dimension
Effect What did the procession effect	Perception, Realization, and Preservation of the self	Creating or maintaining the collective memory of myth	Satisfaction/gratification of gods
How How did it work	Participation	Staging the story	Offering performance
Mode of action What did they do	Same action by all participants	Bringing down to earth the fictive, the imaginary	Processing
Activity What were the concrete actions	Sensual perceptions (mass of people, music, smells, optical attraction, festival atmosphere) Trade, commerce, exchange of goods	Sensual experience of gods	Feasting Offering donations and animals Making great efforts to celebrate festivals Waste of precious goods

Tab. 2 A more comprehensive overview including all spheres that shows the differences in the way that processions may have had effect.

Panhellenic festivals in order to compete as athletes, to consult an oracle, to be healed of a disease, to make an offering as a representative of their hometown, to participate in the festival as spectator, or, last but not least, to engage in trade.

A pilgrimage, without being specified as such in ancient Greece, was a journey to a place of worship. The motivation for such a journey was not necessarily religious but had different reasons: individual, economic, or political. In contrast to the present understanding of pilgrimage the journey was not ritualized, as Scullion remarks: “[...] whereas the notion of pilgrimage implies that the journey is ritualised, there is little evidence of this in classical Greece”¹³³

Most scholars argue that there was not one form of pilgrimage, as a “journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a sacred ideal”¹³⁴ in ancient Greece, but many types of pilgrimage.¹³⁵ Elsner and Rutherford singled out fourteen motives for a pilgrimage, such as *theoriai*, healing, *oreibasia*, oracle consultation, and sacred tourism.

In the following I want to focus on the delegations, since they seem to be highly important for the political connections of Greek cities and were iconographical quite similar to processions.

133 Scullion 2005, 111.

135 Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 5, 11.

134 Morinis 1992, 2.

6.1 Delegations: *theoriai*

Theoria means the seeing, watching, witnessing of a spectacle, and derives from the term *theoreo* (= watching).¹³⁶ A *theoria* is here defined as a delegation of dignitaries sent from another polis to participate in a sacrifice.¹³⁷ Through this practice their city of origin could participate in the ritual *pars pro toto* without the real presence of the whole city: “Possibly the original function of the *theoroi* was to observe the celebrations on behalf of their cities, and to provide official representation,” Dillon points out.¹³⁸ This was of great importance since rituals only worked for those who attended them.¹³⁹ Kavoulaki underlines that the term and practice of *theoria* align participation most closely with the aspect of viewing: “watching the *heorté* (= festival), seeing what was taking place, meant actually participating in the *heorté*.”¹⁴⁰ There were two forms of delegates, the hosts and the guests, but mostly these were the same persons. *Theorodokoi* was the term used for the people who were sent out to Greek cities to invite other delegates to a festival as ambassadors, whereas *theoroi* were the visiting delegates.¹⁴¹

In general, *theoriai* were religiously motivated delegations that represented the absent polis in large national festivals such as those at Olympia, Eleusis, and Delos. Besides pursuing religious and individual purposes, consultations, and healing, delegations were highly political as regards the question of which city invited which other poleis. The movements of societies’ noble and aristocratic men meant a constant contact between different cities and between particular cities and their gods.¹⁴² Delegates served as diplomats, carried information (letters, documents, and gifts), and discussed territorial borders.¹⁴³ *Theoriai* were necessary movements in order to sustain the fragile Greek world with its widespread poleis, but in contrast to processions *theoriai* were not sacred themselves, although in the words of Barbara Kowalzig both movements were “mapping out the religious space.”¹⁴⁴

136 Pantelia 2011, keywords: *theoreo*, *theoria*.

137 Dillon 1997, 11.

138 Dillon 1997, 20.

139 “The whole community asks for the deity’s reciprocal protection” (Kavoulaki 1999, 302).

140 Kavoulaki 1999, 311.

141 Pantelia 2011, keyword: *theorodokos*; Dillon 1997, 11–12.

142 “Evidence points towards a high level of inter-city contact based on religious activity” (Dillon 1997, 25).

143 For a brief overview of all the functions of *theoroi* see Dillon 1997, 11–26.

144 Kowalzig 2005, 69. – That expression she used especially for the songs that were sung by choirs, both in *theoria* and in processions. These songs and melodies, more than other performances and offerings, conveyed the character of the participating city. The great significance of musical performances was briefly considered at the beginning of this article, but of course an intensive analysis cannot be offered here.

6.2 Iconographic differentiations: processions and *theoriai*

Using archaeological data, especially vase depictions, it is hardly possible to differentiate processional scenes from scenes with *theoriai*. Quite often depictions consist of two or more people in fine garments with wreaths in their hair, holding branches, vessels, and other cult objects in their hands. Sometimes an animal is shown, appearing with or without musicians, as shown above.

Sometimes there are trees, columns, altars, vessels on a wall, and other characteristics that indicate the place of the performance. Basically the depictions suggest an open-air procession. On the first depiction (Fig. 1) we have an almost complete processional scene.

The depictions from the Archaic period show these characteristics of a long procession, but they did not last long after their appearance in the sixth century, when they were replaced by shorter procession scenes. These black-figure paintings are characterized by figures and architectural elements designed in more detail, but they show fewer people.

I propose that short procession scenes without an altar may display a delegation. Whereas ceramics with processional scenes must mainly be understood as offerings for the gods, to show the efforts of the worshippers, the political dimension of scenes with delegations on ceramics is more explicit.¹⁴⁵ Here, the effort of communities is shown, the readiness of several cities to interact and participate in Panhellenic festivals. One interpretation may be that the iconic code of procession scenes could signal 'offerings for gods.' Another interpretation would draw attention to the iconic code of delegations, which refers to cultural identity, symbolizing 'we are Greeks.' If these different meanings of iconic codes of processional rituals are accepted, it seems clear that scenes of delegations replaced processional scenes on ceramics at the end of the sixth century BCE.

7 Conclusion

Concerning scenes of pilgrimage (here: delegation) and procession, an interrelation between political bias and the iconic codes created by the Greeks, is possible. Depictions were not only about representing the daily life of the ancient Greeks, but about communication. Iconic codes could be treated as a language that was understandable to everyone in the Greek community. These iconic codes could be deciphered by ancient recipients through the meaning of the rituals presented. In my analysis I discussed the

145 Laxander 2000, 146.

complex meaning and practices of processions and *theoriai* and also of circular dances. I have linked them to aspects of identity, social hierarchy, and channelling antisocial energies (Tab. 1). I have also drawn attention to their political dimensions. Processions were – more than sacrifices – the place for the demonstration of power and rule. In a broader context they were active performances which created the identity of Greece as a community of states

Altogether, processions and delegations can be regarded as a glue that connected the fragmented Greek cities. Before alphabetical writing became the common medium to transfer values, ideas, techniques, and common notions, the medium had always been the traveling people. Panhellenic festivals were most effective in connecting communities by worshipping the same gods, exchanging goods (arts, garments, food), and of course by marriage, as shown above.

Processions and *theoriai* are communication systems that helped to create and maintain such innovations as a common Greek language, Greek myths, and Greek democracy. Regarding both types of movement (that is, processions and *theoriai*), it is remarkable that the different arts and media of ancient Greece show an increase in religious movements which parallels the increase in population in Greece. Smaller communities – Yosef Garfinkel speaks of pre-state communities in the early Greek eras – produced a different iconic code: that of circular dance scenes, which were the main subject in several arts.¹⁴⁶ Procession scenes marked the era of the beginning democracy, while the *theoriai* became commonplace in the fifth and fourth century BCE.

I would like to hypothesize a contextual relation between the growth of cities and population and the need to perform ritual acts that involved the whole community. The density of those movements increased in parallel to the development of Greek state organization and the growth of population from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period.¹⁴⁷

146 Garfinkel 2003, 81–82.

147 Kavoulaki 1999, 289–299, speaks of some kind of correlation between processions and democratic politics.

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