



**THE ATHENS GREEK RELIGION SEMINAR**, Tuesday November 2, 2021 at 17h Athens time (Limited live participation & participation via Zoom link).

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***RITUAL SYNERGY & INTIMACY in non-dramatic and dramatic choral lyric:  
Pindar fr. 75, Euripides' Cyclops and Aristophanes' Frogs***

**ABSTRACT**

In Archaic and Classical Greece choruses performing *choreia* (song and dance performed by a group) played a pivotal role in the festivities and more broadly in the ritual activities of the Greek communities. Excluding sacrifice in the strict sense, all stages of the various festival practices could feature choral activities. This emphatic presence of choruses cannot be explained away in a simple or singly unifying way. The interaction between song and context is complex and multilateral, and every insight that can be gained from an investigation of the surviving material can add to our understanding both of the poetics of the choral material and of the cultural form and significance of ritual events.

In my paper I would like to focus selectively on choral songs that seem to be related to the ritual complex of the *heorte* (festival) and more particularly to its initial stage, i.e. the stage of the *pompe*. My attention will be drawn to some characteristic surviving instances of songs incorporating motifs that are relevant to the broader ritual pompic context which enables linearly progressive movements (with a ritual destination) combined with stationary, circular ones. In my analysis I will draw attention to the chorus' capacity to explore the potential of the initial ritual practices and to rework poetically its place in the *heorte*. The discussion will include various means that the chorus employs (patterns, motifs and artifices expressed in performative language or imagery), so that in the new reworked environment *agency* can be broadened, in the sense that human and superhuman (or non-human) agents can be harmoniously engaged in the action. By employing such means the choruses seem to set up a process of



interaction with the gods in the direction of implicating the gods in the choral action and even inscribing the gods in the *body* of the performing group, enhancing a sense of embodied communication and community between mortals and immortals.

My test case will be the famous prelude of a Dithyramb for the Athenians composed by Pindar (fr. 75 S-M) for a historical Dionysiac feast in Athens. This historically-enacted choral instance will be (briefly) juxtaposed and correlated to two dramatic examples of *choreia*, namely Aristophanes' *Frogs* and Euripides' *Cyclops*. In the passages to be discussed the ritual, space-traversing event enacted or thematized seems to be so orchestrated, as to activate a flow of mutual 'liking' between the agents involved (mortal and immortal) and to enhance a sense of intimacy and reciprocity that turns the whole choral undertaking into a synergetic achievement.

**To register (for presence or Zoom), please contact [swedinst@sia.gr](mailto:swedinst@sia.gr)**