# Images of the Dances on the 4th Century Vases from the Black Sea Area

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Ancient vase-painting gives us the richest iconographic material for learning all sides of contemporary life. The attention of the researchers attracts the images of different dances, one from the deepest antiquity and before our time is the brightest expressions of the emotional nature of the Greeks. The features of succession in a national choreography speak about the extraordinary stability of this component of culture and on the other side about saving of national character.

The Greek dances in antiquity were divided into military, *Bacchic,* and pacific ones. We know some of these dances from ancient literary sources. Athenaeus and Pollux, lexicographers from Alexandria ($2^{nd}$ –$3^{rd}$ century AD) give a quite complete list of the Greek military dances (Ath. Deipn. 6. 628s. - 31; Pol. On. 4.95-104). The most popular dances were the *apokinos*, the *Pirrhic*, and the Prylis (Bron, 1996. p.76). Many information has been saved in the sources about *Pirrhic*. It was performed usually under the accompaniment of a flute. The dancers had to wear helmets and hold shields and spear in their hands. In Athens the dance was associated with Athena, on the other part of Attic territory; Pirrhic was performed in the Artemis sanctuaries. Both girls and *ephebes* danced *Pirrhic* during an initiation ritual (the moment of transition from childhood to adulthood) (Bron, 1996, p. 63-83). We have much information about performing *Pirrhic* in the 4th century BC, but this image is not popular in the vase-painting at this time. In the late 5th century we know 2 vases with this subject from the Black Sea Area - a fragment of krater, stored in the Chersonesus museum. (Sevastopol, Ukraine) (fig.1.) (Zedgenidze, 1979, 28, fig. 2, 3; Vdovichenko, 1999,81-86) and the krater from Kiev typical barbarous warrior' s tomb near villages Pishchal'niki and Lazurtsi (fig. 2) (Funduklej, 1848 18,19,71, tab. XII).

The *apokinos* (other name was *maktrismos*) remains only a name for us, we know also that this dance performed amazons. Prylis danced Curetes around the baby Zeus. Amazons and Curets performed it with shields and swords. The images of amazons and arimasps were very

popular at that time, that's why their militant dances were pictured on the vases quite frequently. On the Pelike from Yalta two *arimasps* perform the ritual dance (maybe *apokinos*) around the Griffin (fig. 3).

Plato in the "Laws" ("*Nomoi*") marks out Bacchic dances in a separate category of dances (5, 8-9). He negatively perceives ecstatic motion, characteristic for them. But, he does not say that these dances are ugly (except for Kordax). Bacchic dances showed the trance caused by a deity, instead of entertainment and consequently, they were out of human comprehension and opinion. However, in his judgment, they contradicted the ideal of *sofrosini* (σωφροσύνη) - prudence, moderation. In Plato's opinion, they were divided into two varieties - mystical, caused by a trance (the dances of maenads) and dances of *commos*, which were performed by men. In Modern Greek folk choreography, mystical dances were not saved (except for dances *anastenaries*- dancing on a fire-brand, which exist nowadays in Northern Greece). But many dances from the other category of Bacchic dances performed by drunk men are saved better.

In antiquity, they also were very popular, to what the performance of "Bakchai" by Euripides testifies. In 630-530 BC, the images of these dances for the first time occur on the Corinthian vase. Then, this theme is spread in Attic, Beotia, and other parts of the Greek world. It is interlinked, apparently, with the spreading of the popularity of a Dionysos cult. In 530-475 BC, this theme becomes popular in the vase-painting, which one at this time passes to the new red-figure technique. In period 475 - 320 BC the new cults - Dionysos's - Zagrey, Isis, Kybele, Sabazios were grown. It was reflected in the plastics and choreography of the Bacchic dances (Marie-Helene Delavaud-Roux 1995. p. 45). The movements become less active, softer than in the earlier period, tearing animals to pieces disappear.

The images of Dyonisos, satyrs, and maenads are very popular in the vase-painting of the 4th cent. BC. Ritual dances in honor of Dionisos started spontaneously and were improvised, using traditional moves - jump, turn, sliding, or running. Dances, performed by drunk men during the holidays in honor of God or after symposiums, you can meet on the kraters dated back to the 5th - 4th cent. BC. On the fragments of kraters, from the Taman museum and Feodosia Museum of Local Lore N 6966 (fig. 4, a, b), you can see the picture of komos. Dances performed by

professional girl-dancers during symposiums can be attributed to this category too. The second one – includes the ritual dances in which both men and women creating the image of mythological creatures - satyrs and maenads. The invitation to dance is depicted on the pelike from Crimean Republican Museum: satyr gives tympanum to maenad (fig. 5). Maenads begin the dance, standing on both sides of Dionysos (oinochoe from the Novorosijsk Museum  (fig. 6). Running maenads and satyrs are represented on the pelikai from Sochi ОФ-543 (fig.8a), from Feodosia A - 5971 (fig. 7), a fragment of the cup from Feodosia (fig. 8b) and a fragment of krater from Kerch KMAK-10647 (fig. 9), oinochoiai from Kertch (inv.6547) (fig.10) and a fragment of krater from Chersonesos (inv.31629)(fig. 11).

The dance with a coverlet (himation) is one of the curious dances popular in the late 4th century BC. Menandros in the "Diskol" had described the performance of this dance at a friendly carousal by two young maidservants. In the opinion of some researchers, the dance is connected with a cult of fertility (Delavaud-Roux, 1994) These dances are represented on the pelikai  4th century BC from Feodosiya  (fig. 13a), Yalta  (fig. 13b), and Kerch inv. KMAK- 52 (fig. 14).

The moves of this dance included covering and recovering himation, turn, sliding.

We can see another pacific dance on the Oinochoia from St-Perersburg, provenanced from the Black Sea area, where youth and a girl dance there. Their moves are calm and slow. (fig.12).

The musical support of the dances was double flute – aulos and tambourine.

So, the Greek cult dances preserved some relicts of the archaic cults, but it did not influence their popularity. Moreover, the chorographical traditions preserved during the existence of the Byzantine Empire up to the modern time.

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Zedgenidze A. A. , 'O vremeni osnovaniya Khersonesa Tavricheskogo', *KSIA* 159 (1979) 28, fig. 2, 3

**List of abbreviations(cuttings):**

Ath. Deipn. - Athenaios, Deipnosofistai. // K. Latte. De Saltationibus Graecorum capita quinque. Giessen, 1913.

Pol. On. Pollux Iulius. Onomastikon // K. Latte. De Saltationibus Graecorum capita quinque. Giessen, 1913.

AGORA XXX – The Athenian Agora. Results of Excavation conducted by The American School of Classical Studies At Athens. Volume XXX. Attic Red-Figured and White-Ground Pottery by Mary B.More.Princeton, New Jersey,1997

ARV² - .J. Beazley, 1963. Attic Red Figure Vase-Paintings, 2nd edition, Oxford.

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fig. 3.*Pelike from Yalta Museum. A-498; 390 BC, Painter of the Lion Griffin, ARV$^2$ 1473, UKV, 44,taf. 5,1. fig. 3.*

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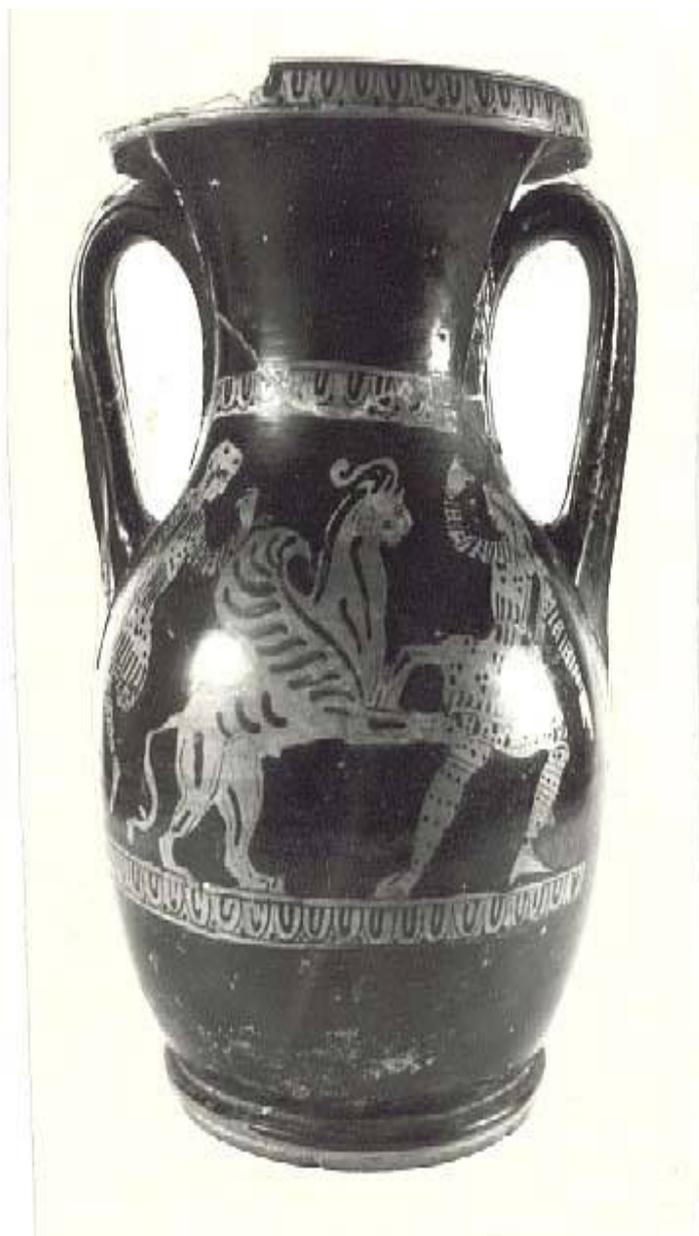fig. 14. *Pelike from Kerch KMAK-52 .320 BC. Group of London 245. ARV$^2$ 1483.*
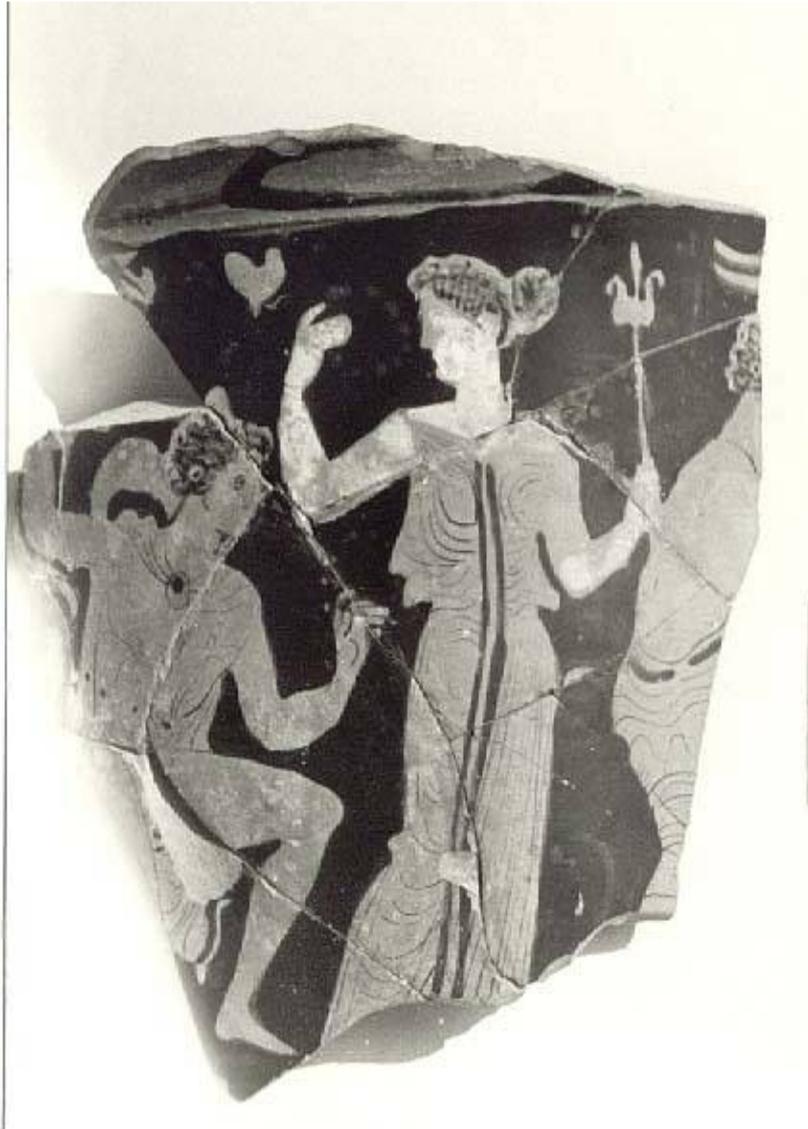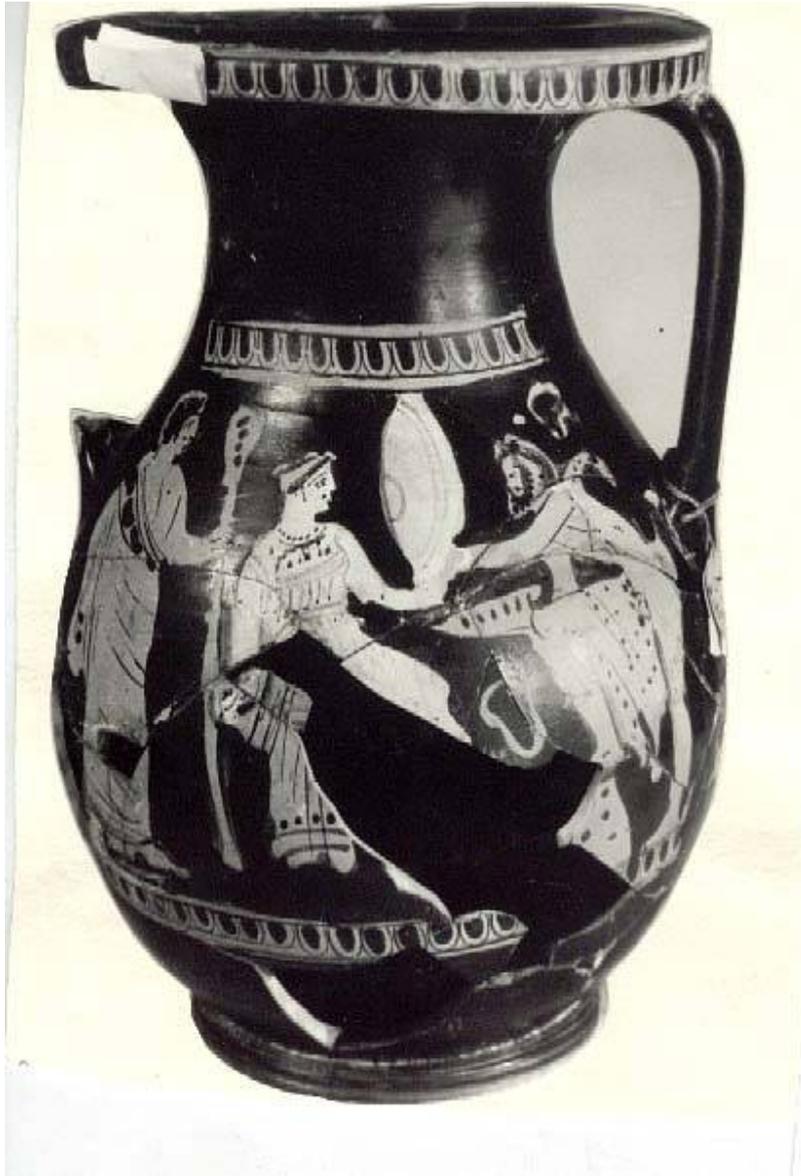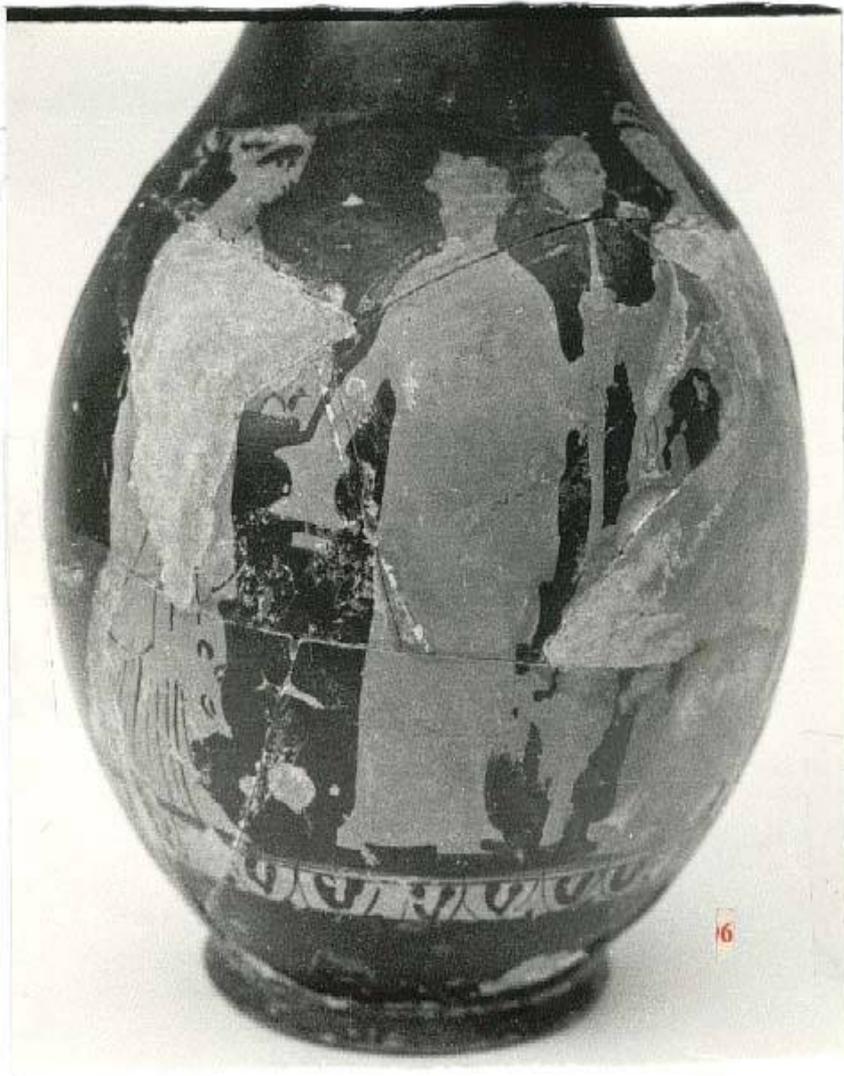
Plate 1



Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 5

Plate 6
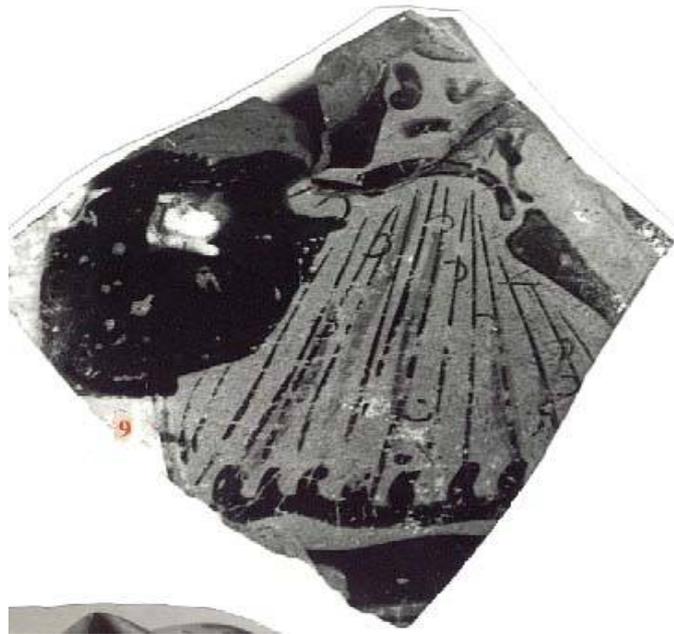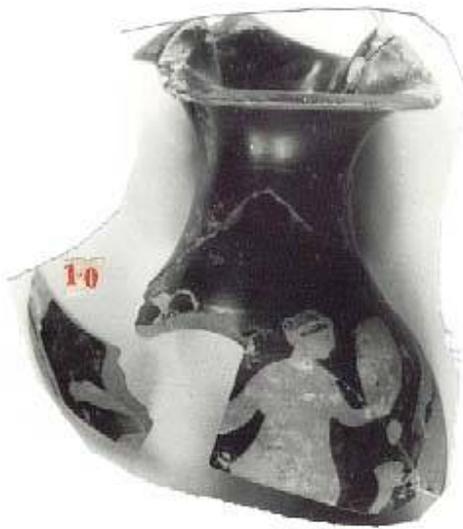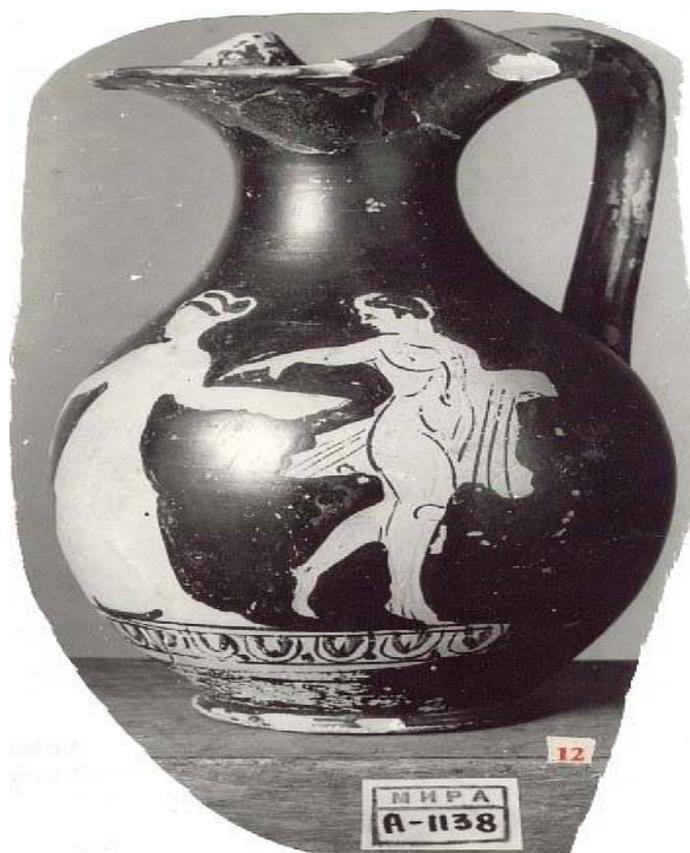
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Plate 8 A



Plate 8

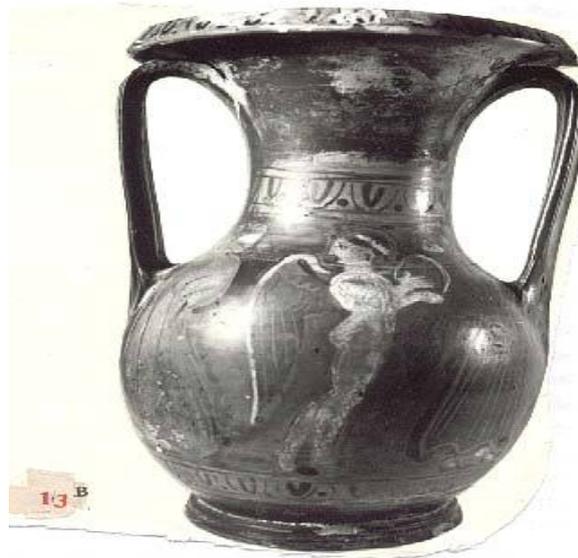Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11

Plate 12



Plate 13 A

Plate 13 B

Plate 14