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Hippokleides, the ‘Dance’, and the Panathenaia

Brian M. Lavelle

Hippokleides, the son of Teisandros and of the clan Philaidai, is an intriguing but obscure figure in the history of Athens in the early sixth century BCE. There are only two testimonia of consequence about him, one quite brief, the other much longer. The briefer one states that he was archon of Athens when the Greater Panathenaia was established and has been taken to imply that he was the festival’s originator. The longer, less substantive testimonium is far more entertaining. It is of course Herodotos’ famous story of the ‘marriage of Agariste’, the daughter of Kleisthenes, tyrant of Sikyon (6.126–130). For the greater part of the story, Hippokleides seems to be the star of the show: a luminous paragon of Archaic Greek noblesse, he is outstanding among the many suitors at Sikyon vying for the girl’s hand, demonstrating αὐθαρραγαθία and other qualities over nearly a year. Yet, for all of that and his year-long probation, things turn out quite badly for Hippokleides—and all at once. A shocking display of vulgarity at the exact moment when victory is imminent sinks him and his chances utterly. Such a catastrophic lapse in behavior and judgment is surprisingly inconsistent with Hippokleides’ chronically demonstrated excellence and moderation. The stunning reversal is in fact improbable—it is as if ‘Hippokleides’ is two different persons—and raises doubts about the story, to which may be added those created by its obvious folktale.

elements and impossible chronologies. Notwithstanding its dubious nature, the tale has been taken as essentially factual by many scholars. The ‘marriage of Agariste’ story and Hippokleides’ role in it and the relation of the two testimonia about him certainly merit re-examination. Could Hippokleides in fact have been responsible for establishing the Greater Panathenaia? If so, why is the only extensive information about such an important Athenian so vivid, yet so bizarre?

Hippokleides or Peisistratos?

One thing is certain: Hippokleides did not found the Panathenaia. Rather, according to Hellanikos and Androtion, the festival was inaugurated by Erichthonios (or Erechtheus) in the deep of Athens’ mythic past. Later sources, however, state that the festival was originally called the Athenaia after the city-goddess, but that it became the Panathenaia after Theseus synoecized Attika to Athens. There is in fact little of actual substance to help in determining the true foundation-date of the original Panathenaia, but clearly the Athenians believed

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that the yearly festival predated the Greater Panathenaia by many centuries. Erika Simon points out that the main rite of the Panathenaia, a garment-offering to the goddess, is represented in Mycenaean frescoes and that Homer describes the presentation of a *peplos* to Athena by Hekabe and her attendants (*Il.* 6.283–304). The focus of the Athenian festival was Athena Polias who resembles the ‘citadel-goddess’ of Mycenae. While it is possible that the annual Panathenaia came into being during the Dark Ages, it was in any case much older than the quadrennial version.

The aggregate of testimonies involving the inauguration of the Greater Panathenaia points to 566/5 as its date; separate testimonies implicate as the founder either Hippokleides or Peisistratos, who became tyrant in 561/0. In his *Chronikon*, Eusebios whose source was most probably the Athenian chronographer Apollodoros, says that the “*agon gymnicus* which they call the Panathenaia was begun” in Olymp. 53.3 (566/5), and he must mean the Greater Panathenaia. This date roughly

7 Eus. (Jerome) *Chron.* p.102 Helm: *agon gymnicus, quem Panathenaeon vocant, actus.* Cf. Davison, *JHS* 78 (1958) 27. Eusebios’ chronology largely derived from the work of Apollodoros of Athens, who authored his own *Chronika* in the second century BCE: cf. F. Jacoby, *Apollodors Chronik* (Berlin 1902), and A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and the Greek Chronographic Tradition* (Cranbury 1979). Apollodoros, in turn, derived his information from such as Timaios’ *Histories* (ca. 250 BCE) and, ultimately, the *Atthides*, the local chronicles of Athens, the earliest of which was composed by Hellanikos in
aligns with the establishments of other panhellenic festivals, including the Pythian (586), Isthmian (582), and Nemean (573), and it was ca. 565 that Athens ended its long and bitter war with Megara in a great victory. A festival of national identity was a fitting way to celebrate both the triumph of Athena’s *polis* over Dorian Megara and Athens’ now much brighter future. Finally, the earliest Panathenaic prize vase extant, the so-called Burgon Amphora, dates to the 560s. Taken all together, the evidence supports Eusebios’ date for the festival’s establishment. In fact, the precision of Eusebios’ (or rather, Apollodoros’) date points to the festival’s alignment with an Athenian archon-year in an older source, perhaps an Atthis.

The Greater Panathenaia became the most significant of festivals at Athens, the centerpiece of Athenian nationality as it was advertised to other Greeks and to the Athenians themselves. Its establishment may be justly viewed as Athens’ declaration of its greater aspirations in the Greek world and so as a watershed event in its history. The festival’s grandiosity


11 Cf. Davison, *JHS* 78 (1958) 26–29; Shapiro, *Art and Cult* 19 ff. The doubts expressed by Corbett, *JHS* 80 (1960) 58, about the precise date are not well founded because they overlook Eusebios’ sources. See also n.14 below.

implies a singular, visionary Athenian patron and leading political personage, whose design for the Greater Panathenaia was to promote Athens, but also himself among the Athenians. That this patron expanded the games and sought a panhellenic character for the festival is quite significant.

Which of the two, Hippokleides or Peisistratos, was the founder of the Greater Panathenaia? Pherekydes of Athens, who was of the generation before Herodotos, states that the Panathenaia was established at Athens in the archonship of Hippokleides (FGrHist 3 F 2). This testimonium has implied to some that Pherekydes’ date for the Panathenaia was the same as Apollodoros’ and led them to conclude that Hippokleides was in fact the founder of the Greater Panathenaia. But the question is not so neatly resolved. The sponsor of the new festival should have stood out if only as a result of that sponsorship and might reasonably be expected to be mentioned further in

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13 Cf. A. Boegehold, “Group and Single Competitions at the Panathenaia,” in Worshipping Athena 96: “And certainly the sudden magnification of the festival in 566/5 or 530 has the look of a politically motivated happening.”


Athens’ history. Apart from his archonship and the colorful but insubstantial Agariste-episode, however, Hippokleides is not heard of again. Coupled with that relative anonymity, a scholion to Aelius Aristides’ Panathenaikos states unequivocally that “Peisistratos established (ἐποίησε) the Greater Panathenaia.”

This association makes far more sense to many, since tyrants possessed considerable resources and desired to ‘own’ festivals. Pheidon of Argos, for example, commandeered the Olympic games in the earlier seventh century; Kleisthenes of Sikyon himself established Pythian games in the early sixth century; and Polykrates, tyrant of Samos, intended to found an agonistic festival on his home island in the later sixth century. The Peisistratids seem to have been very much involved with the Greater Panathenaia. Peisistratos’ son Hipparchos, whom some sources credited with establishing Homeric recitations at the Greater Panathenaia, was marshaling its procession when he was slain by Harmodios and Aristogeiton; his brother Hippias was receiving it at the time of the murder. Their official

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roles indicate special attachment to the festival, the greater benefits of which are implied by the involvements of other Greek tyrants in such festivals. Those who take Peisistratos to be founder might argue that Hippokleides was really not politically significant.

Several proposals have been advanced for solving the apparent contradiction. Perhaps Hippokleides was a minion or co-operative of Peisistratos under whose auspices as archon the quadrennial festival was inaugurated. Or, Hippokleides represents one re-founding of the Panathenaia, while Peisistratos represents another later one. Or, Hippokleides just happened to be archon when the Greater Panathenaia was established: it really had nothing to do with him. Or, very simply, Peisistratos was the founder. But there are substantial objections to these proposals apart from the explicit connection made by Pherekydes to Hippokleides’ archonship and the Apollodoran foundation-date of the Panathenaia. For one thing, Peisistratos did not become tyrant until five years after

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22. J. Camp, *The Archaeology of Athens* (New Haven 2001) 31; Mikalson, *AJP* 97 (1976) 152. The date of Peisistratos’ first tyranny is established by its coordination with the archonship of Komeas (*Ath.Pol*. 14.1), which is dated in the *Marmor Parium* to 561/0 (cf. Rhodes, *Commentary* 201). The material for the *Marmor Parium* comes in part from an Atthis, probably Hellanikos’ (F. Jacoby, *Das Marmor Parium* [1904]). Thus the coordination dates to the fifth century.
566/5 and even then was so politically weak that he was expelled from Athens twice by Megakles, the son of Alkmeon. He was not at all wealthy before his Thracian sojourn many years later and was in no position to underwrite or manage such a festival, even to make minor adjustments until then at the earliest. Minor adjustments made several years after 566/5 would hardly make Peisistratos the ‘founder’ of the Greater Panathenaia.

In fact Hippokleides, who is most substantively linked to the festival, was a man of some consequence in his time. Beyond mentioning his attainment of the archonship, the leading office until the democracy, Pherekydes’ testimonium places him among the outstanding descendants of Philaios, the son of Ajax, down to Miltiades the oikistes of the Thracian Chersonesos. An Athenian Kypselos, who is usually taken to be the grandson of the tyrant of Corinth, was an uncle of Hippokleides and probably the archon for 597/6. Hippokleides’ relation to Kypselos of Corinth is cited by Herodotos as most impressive to Kleisthenes of Sikyon. As Thomas has pointed out, Pherekydes’ Philaid genealogy highlights the luminous members of the family, while it omits embarrassments. Hippokleides was included among these luminaries because he was an ornament on the family tree, not a disgrace. Apparently the Philaids did not know about the shameful behavior of Hippokleides described in Herodotos’ marriage-story, else they would not have mentioned him. That fact bears substantially

24 This is Miltiades III, the original settler-ruler of the Chersonese: see Davies, Athenian Propertied Families 294–295.
25 Davies, Athenian Propertied Families 295–296; Develin, Athenian Officials 34. According to J. Salmon, Wealthy Corinth (Oxford 1984) 217, “[t]here was no doubt some special motive” for the marriage-union between Kypselos of Korinth and the Philaidai of Athens.
26 Hdt. 6.128.2; cf. L. Scott, Historical Commentary on Herodotus Book 6 (Leiden 2005) 425.
upon the nature and authorship of the story about Hippokleides in Herodotos.

**Hippokleides and Herodotos I: the story**

The ‘marriage of Agariste’ is one of the most celebrated tales in Herodotos’ *Histories*. In fact, it is not history at all. The story has been cited since Grote as a doublet of the mythical ‘wooing of Helen’ of Sparta. The basis of it, that Kleisthenes would abandon political gain of any type simply for honor achieved in a kind of epic fashion, is implausible in a cynical age when tyrants and other politically ambitious men were making marriage-alliances for definite advantages, not abstract, honorific, or speculative gains. Then again the roster of contestant for Agariste’s hand is a kind of fabulous ‘who’s who’ of Archaic Greece, thrown together with scant regard to the chronological problems created. Apparently these ‘heroes’ were meant to represent categories of superlative. The comment of

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29 G. Grote, *A History of Greece* II (London 1888) 413 and n.1; McGregor, *TAPA* 72 (1941) 268 and n.4, who nevertheless asserts that “there is no solid evidence to justify dismissing the story from the realm of history” and attempts valiantly to salvage the historicity of the Agariste-episode in Herodotos. See also Thomas, *Oral Tradition* 269.

How and Wells on the story sums things up: “The fact of the wedding of the daughter and heiress of Cleisthenes is doubtless historical, the details are obviously fictitious.”

According to Herodotos, Kleisthenes announced the competition for the hand of his daughter at the Olympic games where he had just won the four-horse chariot race. (Of the dates proposed for this Olympiad, 576 and 572 are the most favored.) Any Greek who thought himself to be good enough to become Kleisthenes’ son-in-law was to come to Sikyon in sixty days and then be scrutinized for one year. Kleisthenes had a running track and wrestling ground prepared so that the suitors might compete athletically.

The list of suitors seems impressive, even though we know little about them. Some of the more outstanding were the storyed Sybarite Smindyrides, whose lifestyle had reached a peak of χλιδή. Males of Aitolia was the brother of the strongest man in Greece, Titormos; Leokedes was the son of Pheidon, tyrant of Argos. (Both of these are impossibly synchronized with the date of the ‘marriage’.) Laphanes’ father, Euphorion, was famous for his hospitality, having entertained the Dioskouroi. Diaktorides of Krannon was a scion of the cattle-wealthy Skopadai of Thessaly. From Athens came Hippokleides, “outstanding among the Athenians in wealth and

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33 Cf. Scott, Historical Commentary 421; Alexander, CJ 55 (1959) 131.

34 Cf. How and Wells, Commentary II 117–118; Vandiver, Heroes in Herodotus 255; Scott, Historical Commentary 421–422.
appearance,”35 and Megakles, the son of Alkmeon, otherwise undescribed. By the story’s end, these are the only two who matter.36

For a year, Kleisthenes interviewed and tested the contestants for their manliness, character, education, and manners; he also wanted to know their lineages and to observe their athletic abilities. He watched them exercise and compete, but was especially keen to observe their social behavior.37 At length, Herodotos says, Kleisthenes was most impressed with the Athenians—a statement of preference marking this as an Athenian-centered version narrated for an Athenian audience. Hippokleides was outstanding to the tyrant for his many attributes and his connection to the Kypselids of Corinth. On the day when Kleisthenes’ still pending decision was to be announced and the marriage was actually to take place, the tyrant held a feast for all of Sikyon, slaughtering a hundred cattle for his guests. At the marriage-banquet, the suitors continued to compete, singing and speaking; Hippokleides continued to lead the pack in the competitions.38 But then, fatefully, Hippokleides summoned an ἀὐλητής.

Calling upon the flute-player to play an ἐµµελία, the son of Teisandros began to dance—and dance and dance. While Hip-

35 Hdt. 6.127.4, πλούτῳ καὶ εἴδεϊ προφέρων Ἀθηναίων.


37 Hdt. 6.128.1, καὶ τὸ µέγιστον, ἐν τῇ συνεστοῖ διεπειρᾶτο. Cf. Scott, Historical Commentary 425: “As to why this is called the most important test, in view of what happened in §129, it is tempting to think that Cleisthenes wanted to see if they continued to behave like gentlemen even in liquor.” Quite, for while this would seem to have been sorted out long before by the prospective father-in-law, it is the exact realm in which Hippokleides needs to fail on this occasion.

38 There is no sense in Herodotos’ text at 6.12.9.2 that Hippokleides was out-drinking every other contestant (cf. Scott, Historical Commentary 426–427), but rather that he was maintaining his overall superiority.
Hippokleides enjoyed what he was doing a great deal, Kleisthenes did not. At length, Hippokleides mounted a table and began to dance upon it. He first performed some “Laconian figures,” then some Attic ones. Finally, standing his head on the table, he gesticulated with his legs in the air. With that, Kleisthenes, who now could not bear the idea of Hippokleides being his son-in-law because of his dancing and shamelessness (ἀναπήδεω), had enough and said, “Son of Teisandros, you have danced away (ἀπορχήσαό) your marriage.” To which Hippokleides famously replied, οὐ φροντὶς Ἱπποκλείδῃ—usually translated as “Hippokleides doesn’t care!” And that, according to Herodotos, became a saying among the Greeks. Kleisthenes then proceeded to award or, rather, to marry Agariste on the spot to the Athenian who had proved superior simply by maintaining his cool, Megakles, the son of Alkmeon.

This curious, fascinating tale has generated a great deal of interest. To quote one appraisal: “The real origin of the whole story is puzzling as it seems to have archaic and poetic elements combined with the tale of Hippokleides’ undignified behaviour which would be more appropriate to a popular milieu.”

Before anything else, let us look at the famous words of Hippokleides because they essentially end his story. What did Hippokleides mean when he answered Kleisthenes or, rather, what did Herodotos’ ultimate source intend for Hippokleides to mean? Was it pretense and face-saving, on the order of “Never mind: I really didn’t want the girl anyway”? Or was it an arrogant rebuff to the tyrant? “My dancing is more important than your daughter, you stone-thrower.” (The noble) Hippokleides never really wanted such a girl and couldn’t care less about her!”

In both cases, the responses would be more clear-

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39 Cf. Scott, Historical Commentary 429.
40 Thomas, Oral Tradition 269.
41 λευστῆρα: Hdt. 5.67.2. Cf. How and Wells, Commentary II 34–35.
42 Cf. Scott, Historical Commentary 429: “We may speculate whether, behind the story, lurks an unwillingness on the part of Hippokleides to marry Agariste.”
headed and purposeful than the implication of heavy drinking leads us to imagine. They would also be at odds with the purported point of the exercise: one whole year wasted contending for Agariste and then dismissal of the girl and her father? Or was it a simpler, drink-induced response, an aside really, produced by the wine and the heat of the dance? Something like “I can’t be bothered now, I’m dancing.” Or was it a very brief moment of lucidity and self-realization amidst the haze of inebriation, a confession really that Hippokleides was out of his mind? So: “Hippokleides’ brain is not home at the moment and he doesn’t really care about anything. Don’t bother to leave a message.” Of course, both of these suggest Hippokleides’ total loss of sense and situation.

Although some have proposed to construe the tale in light of the famous remark—the tail wagging the dog, so to speak—it is surely the context and the way that Herodotos’ (ultimate) source meant the response to be taken as part of the story that must guide our interpretation. The saying, which, in the story, is undeniably attached to Hippokleides, can nevertheless have been delivered in very different circumstances with rather different intent and meaning from that in Herodotos. The phrase originated years before the Halikarnassian heard it from an Athenian, but what it meant was really up to Herodotos’ source, not to him. And this source can have fashioned the story to supply an origin for the saying when the actual circumstances of its origin were otherwise unknown, lost, obscured—or meant to be obscured. If we place the saying in the context of the story, we may eliminate the first two possibilities earlier

43 According to A. Cook, “Hippokleides’ Dance,” CR 21 (1907) 169–170, Hippokleides’ final dance was a Kabeiric dance after Athenian and Spartan ones; but cf. the solid criticisms of A. Solomon, “Hippokleides’ Dance,” CR 21 (1907) 232–233, which are founded on Cook’s failure to contextualize the ‘dance’, especially ignoring Kleisthenes’ censure of him.

44 Cf. Thomas, Oral Tradition 269: “If we think of the tale from the point of view of the proverb, there is a hint that Hippokleides’ retort is approved...”
mentioned, since the story’s author(s) did not intend that the words approve of Hippokleides in any way. The impact of his gross indiscretion is quite evident: profound drunkenness is implied; Kleisthenes’ embarrassment and reproval are underscored by what he says to the dancer. The word ἀναίδεια marks Hippokleides as shamed in the eyes of the tyrant, but also of the company attending the bride-feast. Hippokleides’ final demonstration of vulgarity is the coup de grace of base misconduct, amounting to the very opposite of ἀνδραγαθία: the occasion of his outrageous dancing was, after all, the actual marriage-feast (κατάκλησις τοῦ γάμου) and the bride-to-be was present. Hippokleides seems quite detached from place and time, senseless and stupid.

The ‘dance’

Hippokleides’ dancing is the defining moment of his failure and the set-up for the famous saying at the story’s end. That definition begins with the summoning of the αὐλητής. For Aristotle, the αὐλός was a dangerous instrument at drinking-parties: it was immoral and excited emotions. Greeks likened its sound to the honking of a goose because it could be very

45 That seems to be how Athenaios (628c–d) took it. Cf. Scott, Historical Commentary 426. Papakonstantinou, Nikephoros 23 (2010) 80, suggests that Hippokleides’ intoxication disgusted Kleisthenes, but disregards the fact that it is the dance, not the inebriation, that is featured in the story. As Papakonstantinou himself points out, intoxication itself was not automatically regarded as a negative attribute. Cf. Lonsdale, Dance and Ritual Play 220 ff., and n.51 below. On the eastern motif of the ‘Dancing Peacock’ see Macan, Herodotus 303–311; cf. How and Wells, Commentary II 119; McGregor, TAPA 72 (1941) 269 n.6.


47 Pol. 1341a.17 ff.: ἐτὶ δὲ ώκ ἔστιν ὁ αὐλός ἡθικὸν ἄλλα μᾶλλον ὀργιαστικὸν (21–22).
loud and dominating; its sound was shrill or blaring, but overpowering in any case.48 Perhaps the closest modern instrument to the ancient aulos is the Turkish zam<br>bir or Lebanese/Syrian mijweiz, although musicology scholars have sought to recreate its sounds by constructing models from vase-paintings.49 The aulos was used by Greeks to keep soldiers marching in formation, rowers rowing together, athletes continuously training, and, of course, dancers dancing. The music of the aulos simply takes over the body and governs it. As Richard Martin states, aulos music “in Athenian culture makes one do things.” It could “bind the listener” and, in the case of dancing, make the dancer one with the αὐλητής and the music being piped.50 The aulos is of course often depicted in symposion-scenes in Greek vase-painting and is especially associated with Dionysos, bac- chai, and satyrs. It is the instrument’s connection to Dionysos that explains Aristotle’s remarks about it.

Kleisthenes’ mounting doubts about Hippokleides were accelerated by the kind of dances he danced inasmuch as they seemed to have gone from barely acceptable to completely intolerable.51 The inventory of dances precisely recorded in the story is astonishing: Hippokleides began with an ἐµµελία, ap-

48 Ath. 626 ff.; cf. Martin, in The Cultures 166.
50 Martin, in The Cultures 173. Cf. J. Fitton, “Greek Dance,” CQ 23 (1973) 273: “According to Longinus [Suhl. 39.2], it is a more ‘dancy’ instrument than the lyre, and it forces men to move in rhythm.”
51 Cf. Lonsdale, Dance and Ritual Play 220: by dancing, “Hippokleides usurps the role of Cleisthenes as organizer of the contest … He loses a sense of the collective context of the gathering as he shifts to perform narcissistic solo dances which are to his own liking, but totally inappropriate for the banquet.” While we may agree that Hippokleides is certainly portrayed as going too far, his vulgar dancing display overpowers and occludes the marriage-competition while he is performing. As Lonsdale himself implies (221 ff.), Hippokleides is portrayed as thoroughly detached from any sense of appropriate conduct.
parently a slow, sober, and stately dance associated with the tragic chorus, which nevertheless did not please the tyrant. For all its reputed stateliness, the ἐµµελία incorporated miming gestures.52 When Hippokleides began to dance upon a tabletop, he became at once acrobatic and outlandish. The Laconian σχηµάτια may have included the πυρρίχη for which the Spartans were famous.53 This dance involved bending, leaping, and crouching—it was something all Spartans and Athenian aristocratic youth learned. (It is noteworthy that dancing the πυρρίχη was one of the competitions of the Panathenaia.)54 There are several other possibilities for the Laconian σχηµάτια including the βίβασις and the ὑπόρχηµα, which is sometimes related in sources to the πυρρίχη. These were very vigorous dances, the former involving repeated jumping up and slapping the buttocks with the soles of the feet; the latter, with an element of pantomime, was “rapid, flashing, joyous, fiery.”55 The

52 On the ἐµµελία: Pl. Leg. 816b–c; Hesych. s.v. Cf. P. Larcher, Notes on Herodotus (London 1829) 326–327; L. Lawler, The Dance in Ancient Greece (Middletown 1964) 82–85; G. Ley, “Modern Visions of Greek Tragic Dancing,” Theatre Journal 55 (2003) 474–476; Lonsdale, Dance and Ritual Play 220. Larcher asserts that Kleisthenes would have had no cause to be displeased with Hippokleides if he were dancing a solemn dance, therefore there had to be at least one other type of ἐµµελία that was indecent. Of course, such reasoning proceeds from a desire to fit a square peg in a round hole. The tyrant’s displeasure was kindled by the increasing vulgarity of Hippokleides’ self-absorbed dancing, for which the anachronized ἐµµελία acts as a kind of benchmark (see 332 below).

53 On the πυρρίχη (and Sparta): Ath. 630b–631b; Lucian Salt. 10. Cf. P. Ceccarelli, La pirrica nell’antichità greco romana (Pisa 1998); Lawler, The Dance 107–108; S. Bundrick, Music and Image in Classical Athens (Cambridge 2005) 79–80. Hippokleides’ σχηµάτια have been considered the “essential, defining figures of the dance” (Ley, Theatre Journal 55 [2003] 476), but as Fitton (CQ 23 [1973] 262) observes, “Showing-off dances, such as the leaping of young men between points of swords … tend toward a circus act.” When Hippokleides stands on his head and waves his legs about, he has become a veritable circus acrobat: see n.58 below.

54 Cf. Neils, in Goddess and Polis 56–57; Bundrick, Music and Image 80.

55 βίβασις: Arist. Lys. 82, Poll. 4.102; cf. Lawler, The Dance 121.
tempo of aulos playing clearly picked up as Hippokleides danced. The crescendo of the incident—the highwater mark of Hippokleides’ meltdown—was the finale when he stood on his head, became an acrobat in fact, and “made his legs gesture like hands” (τοῖσι σκέλεσι ἐχειρονόµησε). The impression is of frantic movements and the gesticulations of a man with his legs, buttocks, and genitals exposed above the heads of the wedding guests, flailing away with his bride presumptive present.

Hippokleides’ head-standing and leg-gesturing amounted to the supreme indecency for a mortified Kleisthenes: what was merely offensive had become intolerable. One interpreter offers the following:

The dance which offended Cleisthenes was clearly an obscene one that displayed Hippoclides’ genitals: not only would his tunic have fallen back when he turned upside down, but he enhanced the effect by waving his legs around. The genital display is saluted in Cleisthenes’ address to Hippoclides, which provoked the response that was to become proverbial, “Hippoclides doesn’t care.” Cleisthenes’ response ostensibly means “you have danced away (aporchêsao) your marriage,” but the hapax aporchêsao also puns significantly on orcheis, ‘testicles’: “You have lost your marriage by displaying your testicles,” possibly even “You have ballsed up your marriage.” It is appropriately then to the great tyrant that the true wit of the exchange belongs.

While this interpretation is inventive, lively, and even witty, it is oblivious both to representations of Greek hand-stand dancing

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56 The word ἐχειρονόµησε is also associated with ancient pantomime; on χειρονομία see Ath. 631C; cf. Ley, Theatre Journal 55 (2003) 476–477. Telestes, a stage actor, is said to have become so proficient at χειρονομία that he was able to mime Aischylos’ Seven against Thebes in its entirety (Ath. 22A; cf. Lawler, The Dance 128).

and what is humanly possible. The only way that Hippokleides could “make hand gestures with his feet” is if he was head-standing faced away from the audience regarding his dancing. Proof positive for this is not only offered by nature, but also by a number of vase paintings, which, while they do not show head-standing, nevertheless depict dancers and acrobats standing on their hands and gesticulating with their legs. A Campanian red-figure hydria by the Foundling Painter (BM F232) dated ca. 340–330 shows a hand-standing female acrobat whose legs are deployed in the only way possible for any ‘hand-gesturing’ by means of legs. A Campanian bell-krater (LACMA Hearst 50.9.45) from ca. 330–310 depicts two dancer-acrobats. The hand-standing female might be dangling something from her feet. There are several other such examples. Nearer in time and most pertinent is the famous red-figure psykter ascribed to Douris, dated c. 500–490. In this scene of revels, satyrs are drinking and dancing and some have become sexually aroused—all activities associated with Greek symposia. In one part of the revels, a satyr is performing a handstand, very similar to the female acrobat/dancers in the other depictions. Another satyr, moving toward the hand-stander, is aroused to erection not because of his view of the genitals of his fellow satyr, but rather apparently because of his buttocks, which are right in front of him.

There is certainly a sense of abandon and great impropriety in Hippokleides’ dance, which, as with Douris’ satyr, highlights his buttocks and suggests that the dance has become both satyric and homoerotically suggestive: Hippokleides was apparently advertising for male penetration in the midst of what

58 Female acrobat, Paestan red-fig. kalyx krater, Asteas Group, ca. 350, Museo Eoliano, Lipari (inv. 82S); female acrobat, Paestan red-fig. skyphos, Asteas Group, ca. 350–325, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; female acrobat, terracotta statuette, third century BCE, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Taranto; female acrobat, terracotta statuette, second century BCE, Museo Provinciale Campano, Capua.

59 BM E768: ARV² 1 446 no. 262.
should have been his own wedding feast! Whether his head-standing and gestures were lascivious, it was certainly not what Greek sons-in-law-to-be should be up to, especially at wedding banquets, especially before the assembled multitude of Sikyonians, apparently including the bride. If we may judge from the subjects of the artistic representations of hand-standing and his “using legs to gesture like hands,” it was not only unseemly, but unmanly. Hippokleides had humiliated himself by showing, as it were, his true colors: his reputation for ἄνδραγαθία was instantly replaced by µαλακία, its opposite. There could be no wedding for him.

Hippokleides and Herodotos II: the story’s source and the source’s intentions

There are good reasons for considering the ‘dance of Hippokleides’ a fiction. One of them is that context of the story within the story, the ‘marriage of Agariste’. The ‘marriage’s’ obvious parallel to the ‘wooing of Helen’, the roster of suitors—whose own or whose kin’s superlativeness corresponds in many cases to distinct categories like wealth (Smindyrides, Diaktorides), intelligence (Leokedes), social grace (Laphanes), athleticism (Males), etc.—its folkloric elements, and obvious chronological problems mark the ‘marriage of Agariste’ as heavily embellished, if not made up from whole cloth. Again, this is no new idea. As to the ‘dance of Hippokleides’, apart from the implausibility of Hippokleides’ total reversal of character and complete loss of restraint at the very last minute of a

60 Cf. Fitton, CQ 23 (1973) 260: “Bending, stretching, whirling, hand gestures … are ‘closer motions’ and as such more feminine.”

61 Cf. McGregor, TAPA 72 (1941) 269 ff., well lays out the story’s problems, although he essentially takes the tale as historical.

62 On the parallels see n.29 above; on the renown of the suitors’ fathers, Vandiver, Heroes in Herodotus 255; on the problems of chronology, How and Wells, Commentary II 117–118. I find Papakonstantinou’s statement (Nikephoros 23 [2010] 74), “In this sense, it is quite likely that Herodotus’ narrative approximates the way Cleisthenes himself wanted the whole episode of Agariste’s betrothal perceived,” rather astonishing.
whole year of good behavior, there remains a further pernicious detail cited by Graham Ley. Hippokleides is said to have performed the ἐμελία, a dance associated with tragedy which incorporated miming gestures. According to Ley:63

Herodotus does not suggest how Hippokleides came to know these dances, and anachronism is vigorously at play in the story if tragic dances are being suggested, since tragedy was not established at Athens until the later sixth century, a generation after the time of this event.

This detail in the story certainly appears anachronized, as does the remarkably specific litany of the different types of dances danced in rather precise order by Hippokleides on the occasion.64

This brings us round again to the question—and motivation—of source. That Hippokleides shamed himself and his family by his vulgarity on any occasion is highly questionable. The later Philaids did not consider Hippokleides at all a disgrace. To the contrary, Pherekydes’ Philaid-derived testimony placed Hippokleides in the constellation of their most luminous ancestors well-worthy of recollection. Herodotos’ sources for the ‘dance of Hippokleides’, which depict him as addled and extremely vulgar, were obviously not these Philaids. Since the story marks the Athenians as the best among the suitors, Herodotos’ sources should be Athenian. Inasmuch as Megakles triumphed at the expense of Hippokleides, won Agariste, and


64 Detached from text and context, the story of Hippokleides’ dance seems to inspire imaginative but quite misleading interpretation: e.g., R. Sutton, “The Good, the Base and the Ugly: The Drunken Orgy in Attic Vase Painting and the Athenian Self,” in B. Cohen (ed.), Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art (Leiden 2000) 183: “It is better to recognize that in this tale, which contains many elements of folklore, Hippokleides enacts a widespread conflict between the staid, old fashioned aristocratic values of Kleisthenes, of an essentially heroic world of dignity, responsibility, and measured self-control, with a new more individualistic ethic of personal self-expression.” Cf. Papakonstantinou, Nikephoros 23 (2010) 71–93.
became thereby, as it were, ‘the best of the Athenians’, the likeliest sources for the story of the ‘marriage of Agariste’ and the ‘dance of Hippokleides’ are his relatives, the Alkmeonidai.\textsuperscript{65} There are further grounds for believing this.

The ‘marriage of Agariste’ and, in it, the ‘dance of Hippokleides’ are embedded in a series of stories about the Alkmeonidai in Herodotos, which flatter or defend them and which must have originated with them (6.121–131).\textsuperscript{66} The series begins with a special plea that the Alkmeonidai could not possibly have been responsible for the notorious shield-signal at Marathon (6.121) because the enemy consisted of Persians and tyrants (6.121.1), because the Alkmeonidai hated tyranny (6.123.1), and because they were in any case in exile from Athens for the whole period of Peisistratid tyranny from the time of Pallene (6.123.1).\textsuperscript{67} Of course the latter two grounds are outright lies that Herodotos seems to have swallowed whole: Kleisthenes, the son of Megakles, was an Athenian archon during the period of Peisistratid rule.\textsuperscript{68} In the passage preceding the ‘dance of Hippokleides’, Herodotos goes on to say that the Alkmeonidai achieved prestige and distinction among their fellow Athenians in the time of Alkmeon and then again of his son Megakles—the victorious groom in the competition at

\textsuperscript{65} Cf. How and Wells, Commentary II 116–117; McGregor, TAPA 72 (1941) 269; Griffin, Sikyon 55; and Lavelle, Fame, Money, and Power 242 n.54.

\textsuperscript{66} F. Jacoby, Atthis (Oxford 1949) 160 ff.; Strassburger’s counter-arguments (in Herodotus, Volume I 297 ff., 310 ff.) cannot be taken up in detail here, but his attempt to construe the lion-dream of Agariste as negative is unconvincing (see n.70 below).

\textsuperscript{67} Cf. How and Wells, Commentary II 115; Lavelle, Fame, Money, and Power 284–285 and nn.77–78.

\textsuperscript{68} The sixth-century archon-list fragment (IG I\textsuperscript{1} 1031; cf. Lavelle, Fame, Money, and Power 239 n.12) shows conclusively that Kleisthenes—son of that Megakles who married Agariste—was archon eponymous under the tyrants (cf. Cadoux, JHS 68 [1948] 109–110; Develin, Athenian Officials 47). Not only does this prove that the Alkmeonidai were not permanently exiled from Athens, but also that they were politically active and apparently trusted collaborators of the Peisistratid tyrants.
Sikyon (6.125.1). After the ‘marriage of Agariste’, Herodotos notes that the union produced that Kleisthenes, the namesake of his Sikyonian grandfather, who established the ten Athenian tribes and the democracy (6.131.1). Kleisthenes’ brother, Hippokrates, begat another Megakles and another Agariste, named after their mother of Sikyon, who married Xanthippos, the son of Ariphron. According to Herodotos, while this Agariste was pregnant, she dreamed that she gave birth to a lion. A few days later, Perikles was born (6.131.2)—an outright flattery of Herodotos’ contemporary and apparent patron. The story of the ‘marriage of Agariste’, which includes the ‘dance of Hippokleides’, was part of a chain of positive publicity for the Alkmeonidai in Herodotos. The information reflected favorably upon Megakles and his descendants, in the case of the ‘dance’, at the expense of the Philaid Hippokleides.

The ‘dance of Hippokleides’ fits further into a tradition of scurrility directed at Athenian rivals and political enemies of the Alkmeonidai, the episodes of which show those rivals or enemies to be immoral and even depraved. Most involve sexual misconduct and reflect quite badly upon the subjects of the stories. For example, when Peisistratos sought to become tyrant of Athens for the second time, he married the daughter of Megakles and Agariste. The marriage was part of the agreement made between him and his father-in-law for Megakles’ support. However, according to Herodotos, once restored, Peisistratos did not want to beget children with the unnamed

69 Cf. Davies, Athenian Propertied Families 379.
Alkmeonid girl because he had grown sons and because the Alkmeonidai were cursed with the Kylonian miasma. To avoid impregnating the girl, Herodotos says that Peisistratos had sex with her οὐ κατὰ νόµον, “unconventionally” or “unnaturally.” According to the story, the naïve girl suspected something was amiss and told her mother Agariste who in turn told her husband. When Megakles got wind of Peisistratos’ misconduct, he was furious because of the insult to him and ran Peisistratos out of Athens. Megakles is thus depicted as an upright father, reacting righteously to an insult to him and his family brought about by the perverted conduct of the tyrant. Peisistratos, on the other hand, is unrighteous, sexually deviant—and archly tyrannical in his disregard for social and sexual convention.

The story is pure fiction. First, it deals in the actual thoughts and exchanges of its principals. Herodotos uses words like βουλόμενος “wanting” and μαθὼν “having learned” of Peisistratos, describing the tyrant’s actual thinking process and reactions in what seems to be real time. To whom would Peisistratos have communicated such thoughts and how were these transmitted faithfully to Herodotos verbatim? How did the “insult” to the girl, her own intimate thoughts, words, and actions—all of which could have earned great shame at the time—become record? (In another place in the Peisistratos-logos [1.61.3] Herodotos reports the actual assertion of an adolescent Hippias in conference on Eretria one hundred years before the historian’s time. Who could have been the source for this?) On the other hand, sexual outrage is typical of ‘evil’ tyrants. Abuse of women and boys was routine for Archaic Greek tyrants, their hybris symptomatic of their depravity and disregard for social convention. In the famous ‘Debate on Constitutions’ in Herodotos (3.80.5), Otanes the Persian says precisely that of tyrants. The story of Peisistratos’ sexual outrage was plausible to the ancient Athenians. It shames Peisistratos for gross sexual misconduct on the one hand, while it praises Megakles for right
In another such narrative, Isagoras, a political rival and enemy of Kleisthenes, the son of Megakles, vied for power with him after the Peisistratids had been expelled from Athens (Hdt. 5.66.1, 70 ff.). Getting the worst of it, Kleisthenes took the demos into partnership, temporarily trumping his rival. Isagoras retaliated by summoning Kleomenes, the king of Sparta, who arrived in Athens with an army at his back and put Kleisthenes to flight. According to Herodotos, Isagoras was a ἔζεῖνος of Kleomenes, but then the historian adds the following obiter dictum (5.70.1): τὸν δὲ Κλεομένεα εἴχε αἰτίη φοιτών παρὰ τοῦ Ἰσαγόρεω τὴν γυναῖκα (“Kleomenes was guilty of having intercourse with Isagoras’ wife”). The word αἰτίη indicts Isagoras; the statement is meant to be a slander of him. While the sentence explains why Kleomenes responded as he did to Isagoras’ summons to come to Athens, it shames Isagoras by suggesting that he offered his wife to Kleomenes as a way to influence him to do so. Isagoras is guilty of gross sexual misconduct by Athenian standards (though not necessarily by Spartan ones). The authors of the story and the obiter dictum are surely the Alkmeonidai, but its publicist is Herodotos. It is noteworthy that, though the tie of hospitality to Kleomenes is observed, the charge against Isagoras is not repeated in the Aristoteleian Constitution of the Athenians.

Finally, in Plutarch’s Life of Kimon (14.2–4), the renowned

72 The fictional elements of the story are more fully examined in Lavelle, Fame, Money, and Power 98 ff.


74 The author follows Herodotos, but only so far as to say that Isagoras was a ἔζεῖνος of Kleomenes (20.2), thus highlighting the omission.
Philaid Athenian general of the fifth century and political enemy of Perikles, was brought to trial for bribery through the latter’s machinations. During the time of the trial, Elpinike, the sister of Kimon, with whom he was accused of having incestuous relations, was said to have come to Perikles requesting that he intercede on Kimon’s behalf. According to Stesimbrotos of Thasos, the fifth-century source quoted by Plutarch, Perikles replied to Elpinike that she was “too old, too old at your age to bring off this business” (14.4). The imputation of this gratuitous barb was not only that an over-aged Elpinike was offering herself sexually to Perikles, who, with such a brush-off, put himself quite above such conduct, but also that Kimon had somehow put his sister up to her attempt. Kimon is variously slandered as depraved and possessed of a sister of such character. Here the Alkmeonidai seem to embellish in their own interests what seems to have been comic scurrility alleging Elpinike’s sexual indiscretions and an incestuous relationship of Kimon and his sister. 

All these aspersions are directed at rivals of the Alkmeonidai and men of political consequence. Herodotos was quite willing to transmit these slanders as he obtained them from the Alkmemonidai. Of course, denigrating a philos’ rivals and enemies is simply the flipside of praising his kin and allies: it is to do what a good Greek ‘friend’ does for a ‘friend’, especially a patron. Herodotos certainly profited from his friendship with Perikles by being sent out to the new, very promising Athenian colony of Thurii in southern Italy in 443. And, from the last

75 γραῦς εἶ φάναι γραῦς, ὃς Ἐλπινίκη, ὃς τηλικαῦτα διαπράττεσθαι πράγματα. Cf. Per. 10.5, ὃς Ἐλπινίκη, γραῦς εἰ, γραῦς εἰ, ὃς πράγματα τηλικαῦτα πράσσειν; 28.5, οὐκ ἀν μύροισι γραῦς ἐσοὖ ἢλείφειο.
77 See nn. 66–67 above.

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example, it is reasonable to consider Perikles or those close to him as the likeliest sources for Herodotos’ Alkmeonid ‘history’. While the slander involving Hippokleides is more elaborate and embellished with folktale overtones, the ‘dance of Hippokleides’ is nevertheless a denigration of a rival in the same spirit and roughly in the same way as the others: it is a citation of sexual misconduct and makes its object, Hippokleides, look very bad. It is also a praise of Megakles whose triumph is achieved through moral superiority and benchmarked by nothing other than Hippokleides’ catastrophic lapse. When Hippokleides reveals that one enormous, implausible flaw, all that he is, all that superiority and “manly excellence,” is made over on the spot to Megakles, who because of his implied self-restraint and righteousness, establishes himself as superior not just to Hippokleides but to the generation of ‘heroes’ assembled to win Agariste. Hippokleides is one more victim of Alkmeonid calumny; Megakles, one more beneficiary.

**Hippokleides and the Panathenaia**

The historical Hippokleides, who is masked and costumed to some extent in the ‘marriage of Agariste’ by the role that he must play for its authors, is nevertheless discernible in outline. That Megakles’ victory would be measured against him implies reputation and status, and not just among the Athenians. Herodotos’ sources had other options, but Hippokleides was somehow necessary to gauge Megakles’ victory. The necessity to build Hippokleides up and then knock him down, taken together with his archonship and his family’s pride in him, supports the conclusion that Hippokleides was not only a memorable person for the Athenians because important in his time, but also that he was in fact a rival of Megakles. The name ‘Hippokleides’ must have resonated with the audience for those things for which he is singled out in Herodotos: wealth, athleticism, lineage, and “manly excellence.”

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79 Cf. D. Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Oxford 2007) 153: Hippokleides “was a member of an agonistic family, he had shown athletic
It is significant that Hippokleides’ superlatives, which become Megakles’ in the story, are demonstrated by means of athletic and other competitions. Herodotos says that, right after Kleisthenes made the announcement at Olympia about the contest for Agariste, he prepared a running track and a wrestling ground. He tested the suitors for manliness (ἀνδραγαθία), temperament (ὀργή), training (παιδεία), and character (τρόπος). Above all, he tested them for “sociability” (συνεστώ)—the last accented as a set-up for Hippokleides’ failure.80 Hippokleides was superior in every contest: even on the wedding day, he continued to compete and to excel all others in both music and speech. The emphatically articulated benchmark of excellence in the ‘marriage of Agariste’ is agonistic. Because of this emphasis, it seems plausible to imagine that the story took the form it did in Alkmeonid lore—and lore it is, not history—because Megakles’ most formidable Athenian opponent was particularly tied in popular memory to athletic and musical competitions, including dancing. It seems rather more than coincidental that the Panathenaic games included these competitions and that Hippokleides was linked by a different source to the establishment-year of the Greater Panathenaia.

On the present evidence, we cannot say for certain who established the Greater Panathenaia in 566/5. There is no direct statement about that organization. But Hippokleides, rich, well-born, politically connected and successful and worthy enough to warrant such singling out and shaming by the Alkmeonidai, is far more apt as founder of that most significant of Athenian festivals than Peisistratos. Whereas ca. 566/5 Hippokleides was wealthy, politically prominent, and apparently

training as a suitor at Sikyon, and Herodotus calls him the wealthiest man in Athens. Hippokleides perhaps just responded to the desire of Athenians, rich and poor, for a popular form of ceremony, competition, and recreation.” Cf. Kyle, in Worshipping Athena 117.

80 Cf. Scott, Historical Commentary 424–425: “ἀνδραγαθίας ... τρόπου Roughly ‘character, disposition, education, manners’ ... συνεστώς is generally translated ‘at [communal] dinner.’” See n.37 above.
famously tied to athletic and musical competitions, Peisistratos was linked to none of those things. The latter came to wealth and his final tyranny only two decades later. The only evidence linking Peisistratos to the Greater Panathenaia is a single scholiast’s note attached to a speech in praise of Athens composed nearly eight centuries after the festival was founded. On the other hand, the Philaids’ own tradition, transmitted to Pherenydes, active ca. 450, expressly ties the ancestor, Hippokleides, as archon to the establishment date of the Panathenaia. The Philaids were proud of their connection to Hippokleides, who held Athens’ most important office at the time of the festival’s founding.81

Whether Hippokleides was an actual suitor of Agariste is also impossible to say, but it may be that the saying ascribed to him, which we should expect did not actually originate at the ‘games’ in Sikyon in the heat of a drunken dance, had perhaps something to do with Megakles’ match. When confronted with the fact by the Alkmeonidai to whom the match obviously meant so much, the son of Teisandros may have issued the rejoinder—perhaps a variation on a popular catchphrase not Hippokleides’ own82—that became famous as an aristocratic dismissal of an implied inferior: “(Such a thing) matters not to (a) Hippokleides.” The gist would perhaps be that an Athenian aristos like himself, tied to the more resplendent Kypselids of Corinth, would have no truck with a Sikyonian “stone-

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81 Cf. Thomas, Oral Tradition 168.

82 The versified saying, οὐδὲν μέλει μοι, which occurs famously at Eur. Hec. 1274 and is found in the Tragicorum fragmenta aequipote 513 (Π 145: ἐμῶι θαῦντος γαῖα μιχθήτω τυρί· / οὐδὲν μέλει μοι· τάμω γὰρ καλός ἔχει) and was probably old by the time of Hippokleides’ alleged utterance, may well have provided the basis for the variation attributed to him. Solomon, CR 21 (1907) 232–233, is much too literal in distinguishing οὐδὲν μέλει μοι from οὐ φροντὶς Ἰπποκλείδῃ. The joke could be increased by the substitution of specifics in the well-recognized phrase. Cf. E. I. McQueen, Herodotus. Book VI (Bristol 2000) 220: “Attempts to explain the origin of the saying will have resulted in the application of a less specific story to one particular individual.” See also note following.
thrower’s” daughter and thus that the marriage was nothing to crow about for any Athenian who mattered. Such a rebuff would have been stinging indeed to the tainted Alkmeonidai who could never quite shake off the muck of the Kylonian miasma. Thorough Alkmeonid revenge had to wait until the fifth century, however, and their spokesman, Herodotos, who transmitted their account of the ‘origin’ of the saying after they had set its context as they pleased rather than as Hippokleides intended it when or where he uttered it. On the other hand, it could be that the ‘saying’ of Hippokleides was entirely made up as a variant on a popular phrase, falsely attributed, and then purported to be famous to Herodotos whose publication of it as Hippokleides’ in turn helped it to become so from his time.83

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83 The number of misattributions of sayings of the famous, whose false connections are popularly ignored, is considerable: cf. for example P. F. Boller and J. George, They Never Said It: A Book of Fake Quotes, Misquotes, and Misleading Attributions (Oxford 1990).

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