

Homer

Iliad XVIII.484-9

In his minutely detailed description of the great shield made for Achilles by the divine craftsman Hephaestus we can find scenes of the **dance** of peace set within a world at once broader and narrower than the plains of Troy. The shield displays an image of the Homeric universe in miniature, an image so ingeniously wrought that its many figures seem to move with the vitality of nature itself. On it are depicted

*The untiring sun and the full moon
And therein all the constellations crowning heaven,
The Pleiades and the Hyades and the mighty Orion,
And the Bear, also called the Wain,
Which turns in its own place and watches Orion,
And alone has no share in the baths of Ocean.*

XVIII.590-606

The dateless scenes of early Greek civilization are presented in a series of brief tableaux. The final scene is a **choral dance** of youths and maidens:

*And therein the famous lamed god skilfully fashioned
A **dance**-floor [choron], like that which Dedalus once wrought
In broad Cnossus for the fair-tressed Ariadne.
Youths and maidens worth the price of many cattle were there
Dancing [orcheunt'j], holding their hands on each other's wrists.
And the maidens had beautiful garlands, and the youths
Had daggers of gold hanging from silver belts.
At one moment they ran round with skilful footworn,
As when a potter sits by his wheel fitted between his hands
And tests it to see whether it will run;
And at another moment they ran in rows towards each other.
And a large crowd stood round the lovely **choral dance**
[choron],
Delighting themselves; and two tumblers leading the **dance**
Twirled round through the midst of them.*

Quoted by James Miller, Measures of Wisdom (See Bibliography)

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Published in:

Lazou, Anna & Raftis, Alkis & Borowska, Malgorzata (ed.): *Orchysis. Texts on ancient Greek dance*. Athens, Greek Dances Theater, 2003.