

## Xenop(h)ontic Channel Surfing: Spartan Races, Athenian Drinks, and Black Sea Dancing

In Xenophon's *Anabasis*, the Black Sea shore part of the expedition offered Xenophon a unique opportunity in a narrative about the social order of fighting and surviving (Ma 2010; Buxton 2016) to talk about the social role of play. R&R in a geographic and cultural threshold (Acherson 1995 10) raises the issue of identity and yields spaces to talk about it that are different from the reality of battle and the narrative techniques of parasangs traveled (Hanson 2002 253-256; Purves 2010 159-195).

This paper examines the cultural aspects of entertainments in this section. Such a view contributes to the enduring debate about the author's ideological sympathies (Niebhur 1828 I: 464-482; Ollier 1933, 372-440; Richer 2007; Strauss 1939), confirming an element of the Straussian argument of Xenophon as a 'disguised satirist' of Sparta (Christesen 2017 363). It nuances one scholar's argument that the pantomime before the Paphlagonian envoy (6.1-14) made up an ideal entertainment (Vickers 2016 28-41), an argument which built on recent insights on dance (Kurke 2012; Peponi 2013; Kowalzig and Wilson 2013). It bypasses linguistic boundaries within and outside the army, deters the enemy, and builds cohesion without the loss of local identity. My contribution is to plot this instance with other instances of entertainment: the athletic contest of Drakontios, the Armenian symposia, and the dancing of the Mossynoeki.

Viewed as a whole, the first two manifest cultural extremes that are limiting. One is geographically precarious (4.8.25-28), exclusive of some Greeks although open to some tough foreigners (4.8.27), and is managed by a murderer (4.8.25). It exemplifies a 'Spartan' ethos. The other consists of a breaking down of communication with foreigners, subjugation of them (4.5.33), and 'primitive' imitations of 'sophisticated' customs, drinking like oxen (4.5.32) and wearing crowns of hay (4.5.33). It connotes perhaps a criticism of Athenian luxury and, more precisely, dissolute Spartan responses to luxury (cf. Rhodes 1970). The dancing of Book 6 has its own under-read issues. 'The most uncivilized' (Xen. *Anab.* 5.5.34) Mossynoeki go to civil war singing and dancing 'like choral dancers' (5.4.12). This may change how we read the *mousikē* in Book 6. It is not an exclusively panhellenic expression of political harmony, but one which the least of the Black Sea tribes share. What is significant then is that Xenophon locates his ideal mode of entertainment in Book 6 beyond more dominant and 'sophisticated' cultural templates.

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