



# EPHEDRISMOS: PIGGYBACK COMPETITION, DANCING AND MODERN PARALLELS

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**ABSTRACT.** In Ancient Greece, the child's game *ephedrismos* (piggyback) is well known as a sort of blind man's bluff. According to literary sources and dictionaries such as Julius Pollux' *Onomasticon*, a young boy rides a friend who carries him piggyback. The bearer leans forward for balance. The one receiving the piggyback squeezes his knees together. This game is possibly linked with theatrical or dancing festivals. It was also very popular as iconographic subject in vases, terracotta statues, and gems. Furthermore, many piggy-back games in modern Greek Folklore are related to Ancient descriptions too. Finally, French novelist Alain-Fournier gives a point of comparison by portraying teams of *ephedrismos* players in *Le grand Meaulnes* (1913).

**PAROLE CHIAVE:** : *ephedrismós, en kotýlē*, piggyback, mimesis, performance, folklore, Alain-Fournier.

## PREFACE



athletic exercise, teen-age's game, or competition ruled by an exact choreography, the practice of being carried piggyback on their companions persisted in popularity in Antiquity. Such a ritual is countermarked by various, playful and athletic elements and is worthy to

be wide-ranging examined. The analysis of this contest concerning a segment of Graeco-Roman ludic culture includes his survival through modern and contemporary Folklore. We can also draw a parallel in early 20<sup>th</sup> century's French narrative. The above-named terms of comparison are highly revealing and allow us to better understand interpersonal dynamics with respect to such a performance largely practised in Ancient times.

a. A chapter of a somewhat biographical novel *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1913) written by French author Alain-Fournier, semi-pseudonymous of Henri-Alban Fournier (1886-1914) greatly helps us to introduce the game called *ephedrismós* in Classical Greece. In this novel, boys carried piggyback on other pupils were divided in couples and defied each other in order to unhorse their adversaries. They gained their contest through an eminently physical test. At this respect, qualities of nimbleness, agility, and bodily harmony were requested. Subsequently, it was matter of a contest comparable to a choreutic framework based upon an overflowing competition.

At the beginning, we read a vivid description offered in the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the novel, 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter: *The gypsy at the school (Le Bohémien à l'école*, Leuwers 1983: 115-116):

De tous les plaisirs nouveaux que le bohémien, dès ce matin-là, introduisit chez nous, je ne me rappelle que le plus sanglant : c'était une espèce de tournoi où les chevaux étaient les grands élèves chargés des plus jeunes grimpés sur leurs épaules.

Partagés en deux groupes qui partaient des deux bouts de la cour, ils fondaient les uns sur les autres, cherchant à terrasser l'adversaire par la violence du choc, et les cavaliers, usant de cache-nez comme de lassos, ou de leurs bras tendus comme de lances, s'efforçaient de désarçonner leurs rivaux. Il y en eut dont on esquiva le choc et qui, perdant l'équilibre, allaient s'étaler dans la boue, le cavalier roulant sous sa monture. Il y eut des écoliers à moitié désarçonnés que le cheval rattrapait par les jambes et qui, de nouveau acharnés à la lutte, regrimpaient sur ses épaules. Monté sur le grand Delage qui avait des membres démesurés, le poil roux et les oreilles décollées, le mince cavalier à la tête bandée excitait les deux troupes rivales et dirigeait malignement sa monture en riant aux éclats<sup>1</sup>.

The team competition has its denoue-

ment in recess at school, when the two protagonists, François Seurel and Augustin Meaulnes, are involved in the fighting. The first is the homodiegetic narrator and the son of Mr. Seurel, the school director at Saint-Agathe in Sologne. He has been invited to play by either, the eponymous hero, the good giant, called "Le Grand Meaulnes" by other pupils, who is always ready for adventure. Both defy a newly arrived schoolboy with a bandage around his head "disguised" as a gypsy ("le bohémien"). The latter quickly becomes the new leader. Only in a second time, this mysterious young man will reveal his identity to Meaulnes: He is Frantz de Galais himself, the brother of Yvonne and the unfortunate lover of Valentine, who plays a crucial role in novel's plot. It is also interesting to consider the end of the defy when the grand Meaulnes and the young Seurel intervene on the scene. At the beginning, they are merely spectators, not participants of the game. Immediately afterwards, they do not resist the appeal of the competition by getting soon into the fray (Leuwers 1983: 116-117):

Augustin, debout sur le seuil de la classe, regardait d'abord avec mauvaise humeur s'organiser ces jeux. Et j'étais auprès de lui, indécis.

Partout, dans tous les coins, en l'absence du maître se poursuivait la lutte : les plus petits avaient fini par grimper les uns sur les autres ; ils couraient et culbutaient avant même d'avoir reçu le choc de l'adversaire [...] Bientôt il ne resta plus debout, au milieu de la cour, qu'un groupe acharné et tourbillonnant d'où surgissait par moment le bandeau blanc du nouveau chef.

Alors le grand Meaulnes ne sut plus résister. Il baissa la tête, mit ses mains sur ses cuisses et me cria :

« Allons-y, François ! »

Surpris par cette décision soudaine, je sautai pourtant sans hésiter sur ses épaules et en une seconde nous étions au fort de la mêlée, tandis

1 ) Transl.: Among all delights newly introduced by the gypsy among us since that morning, I remember just the most cruel of all: it was a kind of tourney, where the horses were the great pupils carried by the youngest pupils sitting astride them. They were coupled in two groups at the two corners of the courtyard, and were jumping each other, they attempted to unhorse their adversaries through the violence of the bullet. The riders attempted to unhorse their rivals by using their scarf as lassos or their arms outstretched as spears. Certain boys dodged a bullet from those, who fall in the mud after having lost balance, while the rider rolled under his horse. There were some pupils half unhorsed, the "horse" took the child by the legs. These boys persisted again in fighting and they climbed again the shoulder of their "horses". After having carried the great Delage, a red-headed boy with enormous limbs and prominent ears, the frail rider with a bandage around his head was exciting rival troupes and maliciously driving his horse by laughing out loud.

que la plupart des combattants, éperdus, fuyaient en criant :

« Voilà Meaulnes ! Voilà le grand Meaulnes ! »  
 Au milieu de ceux qui restaient il se mit à tourner sur lui-même en me disant :  
 « Étends les bras : empoigne-les comme j'ai fait cette nuit. »

Et moi, grisé par la bataille, certain du triomphe, j'agrippais au passage les gamins qui se débattaient, oscillaient un instant sur les épaules des grands et tombaient dans la boue. En moins de rien il ne resta debout que le nouveau venu monté sur Delage : mais celui-ci peu désireux d'engager la lutte avec Augustin, d'un violent coup de reins en arrière se redressa et fit descendre le cavalier blanc. La main à l'épaule de sa monture, comme un capitaine tient le mors de son cheval, le jeune garçon debout par terre regarda le grand Meaulnes avec un peu de saisissement et une immense admiration :

« À la bonne heure ! » dit-il.

Mais aussitôt la cloche sonna, dispersant les élèves qui s'étaient rassemblés autour de nous dans l'attente d'une scène curieuse. Et Meaulnes, dépité de n'avoir pu jeter à terre son ennemi, tourna le dos en disant, avec mauvaise humeur :

« Ce sera pour une autre fois ! »<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, we must await to know the final result of the contest among the challengers. This outcome will be cleared through subsequent vicissitudes imagined by Alain-Fournier who continually overlaps the unreal and the real (see Guiomar 1964: 159-161). Anyway, it is still very significant to stress the value assigned to the contest among the pupils sitting astride.

They are enacting a kind of war dance relating to an initiation's framework enacted by youths who are going to enter adulthood, once closed the time of adolescence<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to basic novel's male protagonists such as the grand Meaulnes and his helper, the narrator Fr. Seurel, we must also include Frantz de Galais who plays a crucial rôle in plot plains. Here, de Galais, who organizes this extraordinary tourney, is said to metamorphose into a gypsy and comedian ("bohémien-comédien"). Such a circumstance prefigures a symbolic confirmation about the determinant role reserved to ludic ritual in this novel which is at once a game of life and a game of death<sup>4</sup>.

**b.** As far as concerns rituals of carrying playmates piggyback, we find a necessary term of comparison with the *ephedri(a) smós* game. For current ephebic rituals of piggyback rides in Ancient Greece, an antecedent is given by Gilgameš, the mythical Sumer king sitting astride the inhabitants of Uruk, while he pursues a ball-game similar to a floor hockey match (see Rollinger 2006: 21-24 for the parallel case of the giant hero carried piggyback by his subjects in *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld* poem: such agonistic exercise

2 Transl.: Augustin, standing at class' threshold, looked at first in low spirits which games they were organizing. And I stayed with him on the fence. Everywhere, the fighting persisted at every corner in the absence of the teacher: The smallest boys finally gave each others a piggyback ride; they were running and unhorsed still earlier to have received the bullet of their adversaries. [...] Very soon only one dogged and swirling group of guys was standing in the middle of the court, from where the white bandage of the new leader rose up at that very moment. Then, the great Meaulnes had no way to resist. He lowered his head with his hands on his thighs and shouted me: «Go on, François!» Astonished by his sudden decision, I carried, however, him astride without hesitation, in a second we were at the heart of the fray, while most of fighting boys were lost and escaped shouting: «Here's Meaulnes! Here's the great Meaulnes!». Among the remaining guys, he began to spin around and told me: «Stretch out your arms: hold on them like I did last night.». And me, aroused by this fight, sure about our triumph, I caught the boys who were squirming and oscillated on the shoulders for a while before falling in the mud. In a moment, no one was still standing except the newcomer mounted on Delage: This one, however, unwilling to be involved in the fighting against Augustin, straightened up with a violent sudden jump backwards and lets the white rider down. The hand on his rider's shoulder, like a captain holds the bit of his horse, the young boy, standing up, looked at the great Meaulnes a little astonished and he told him greatly admired: «Finally!». But, as soon as the break bell rang, the pupils who have gathered together around us awaiting a beautiful scene dispersed. So, Meaulnes vexed by having failed to rid his enemy down turned back and said in a bad mood: "It will be another time!"

3 See Cellier 1963 for this book conceived at the beginning as an *initiation's novel*, following as an *adventure's novel* and ending as a *failure's novel*, Leuwers 1983: 303-304 shares this judgement on condition to do not admit the failure of the novel itself. See Maclean 1973: 67 on the tourney among classmates ended by a scene of cavalry, where competition-agon, simulation-mimicry, and vertigo-*ilinx* according to basic attitudes governing play established by Roger Caillois (see 1971: 71) are intertwined.

4 See Leuwers 1983: II. As Guiomar 1964: 156-159 remarks, Frantz de Galais represents the chimeric, fantastic self, while the great Meaulnes is a dynamic, proteic self in opposition to the shy narrator, oppressed by his parents.

is so attested since the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millenary).

In particular, the lexicographer Julius Pollux of Naucratis (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) examines the *ephedrismós* game in two distinct sections of his thematic dictionary, the *Onomasticon*, which offers an extremely relevant source for ergonomics in Ancient games and their real outcome<sup>5</sup>.

This game was so called through a deverbal term derived from *ephedrízō* or *ephedreúō* (< *epí* + *hédra*)<sup>6</sup>, two synonymous being used to indicate the act of sitting astride a companion and being carried around. In the passage of the 9<sup>th</sup> Book specifically devoted to ludic culture (§ 94-129), we also read:

119 ὁ δ' ἐφεδρισμός, λίθον καταστησάμενοι πόρρωθεν αὐτοῦ στοχάζονται σφαιραῖς ἢ λίθοις ὁ δ' οὐκ ἀνατρέψας τὸν ἀνατρέψαντα φέρει, τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπειλημμένος ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, ἕως ἂν ἀπλανῶς ἔλθῃ ἐπὶ τὸν λίθον, ὃς καλεῖται διορος. [...]

122 ἡ μὲν ἐν κοτύλῃ, ὁ μὲν περιάγει τὴν χεῖρα εἰς τοῦπίσω καὶ συνάπτει, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τὸ γόνυ ἐφιστάμενος αὐταῖς φέρεται, ἐπιλαβὼν ταῖν χερσῶν τὴν ὀφθαλμῶ τοῦ φέροντος. Ταύτην καὶ κυβησίνδα καλοῦσι τὴν παιδίαν.

119 *Ephedrismós* («piggyback game»): when players put down a stone from a distance and throw at it with pebbles and balls. The one, who fails to overturn the stone, carries the other having his eyes blindfolded by his rider, until, if he does not go astray, he reaches the stone, which is called target (*dioros*). [...]

122 A variant of the game was called *en kotylê* («in a hollow»), where someone, eyes still covered, locked his arms behind his back to form a cradle (a cup), in which the other placed his knee and was then carried up. This game was also called *hippás* («mare») and *kybesinda*.

Pollux gives a detailed description that is worthy as reference study. In the first above-quoted passage, he focuses on this

children's game as a test of strength and dexterity, courage and skill, in which the winner sits on the loser's shoulders and blindfolds him, while the latter must reach the stone previously designated as a target (*dioros*) and then hit it. Previously, the players placed a stone on the ground in the middle of the playing field<sup>7</sup>.

Generally said, we deduce from the Greek source that the one, who is charged to carry his companion on his back, is the loser who failed to reach the target stone at the beginning of this child's ritual. With respect to the performance of boys sitting astride their companions, we cannot neglect performative features linked with bodily, space-oriented exercises according to a previously established schema. Subsequently, this game appears eminently to be meant as a very popular test of skill. In this contest, the winner carries astride the loser, who must take him for a piggyback ride. The difficult task of being blindfolded is added to the burden of being mounted by a companion<sup>8</sup>.

As far as concerns the rule of proceeding with his eyes blindfolded, we may recall the similarity with the aptitude of Frantz de Galais in the defly portrayed by Alain-Fournier. The boy appears on the scene with a bandage, and he conceals his real identity. Upon this perspective, he can be likened to a well-known figure in Ancient ludic framework known as the *katamýōn* the protagonist of many hide-and-go-seek plays, such as *myínda* (< *mýō* = "to blindfold") and *apodidraskínda* games, literally the «runaway game» (< *apodidrásō* = "to escape", "to fight", cf. *drapétēs* = a "fugitive slave"). In another hide-and-go-seek game called *chalkê muía*

5 In the sole thematic dictionary of Antiquity, Pollux shows his attention for the *Realien* together with his priority for *euglōtía* a shameless language from stylistic and rhetoric point of view countermarked by a moderato Atticism. This ideal is proposed first to the work's dedicatory, the emperor to be Commodus and then to all members of Graeco-Roman elite, see Tosi 2007: 5; Id. 2013: 140-146; Zecchini 2007: 17-26; Matthaios 2013: 67-140; Conti Bizzarro 2018: 2-5; Costanza 2019a: 1-4.

6 On the use of the verb *ἐφεδρεύω* in Pollux' *Onomasticon*, see Bussès 2011: 60: the lexicographer would not be coherent because he rejects this verb (I 209: ἔστιν μὲν βιωτότερον ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔξω φιλοτιμίας), but he accepts it in the following (II 184)). The first quoted passage has, however, certain reservation against this term in the first passage, but he did not unconditionally reject it.

7 On *ephedrismós*, see Neri 2003: 248 for literary context, Jüthner 1905: 2747; Zazoff 1962: 35; Paraskevaïdis 1990: 22; Lazos 2002: 262-271; Id. 2010: 34-35; Miller 2012: 125, 178; De Siena 2009: 92-99; Karanika 2014: 166; Costanza 2019; Id. 2020c: 400.

8 See Mandel 2013: 28-29; Dasen 2016: 73-100 for iconographical developments of *ephedrismós*.

(Latin: *Aenea musca*, literally «bronze fly», see Italian: Mosca cieca), a bandage is expressly requested, in order to blindfold the boy destined to pursue his playmates<sup>9</sup>. In such cases, the player metaphorically subsumes an identity opposed to his/her real identity, as well as in the *ephedrismós* contest boys are meant to metamorphose into “horses” or “riders” depending on the respective playing roles. Indeed, symbolic or fictional games are very well-known in Graeco-Roman culture. They are founded upon a conscientious fiction, a *mise-en-scène* shared by every participant. We may recall the *basilinda* game, that is, the “king-game” also described by Pollux (*Onom.* IX 110) and attested by many historiographical sources. There, the protagonist plays the role of the “king”, while his playmates act as his servants and are obliged to obey to his orders. They must also accept to be hardly chastised by their “king” player<sup>10</sup>.

Therefore, the piggyback game is to be interpreted as a punishment against an outrageous act, as well as a gymnastic exercise in view of the epebic training, given their future military life under the service of the *polis*.

Black and red-figure Attic ceramics offer very common representations relating to this play ritual. A scene faithful to Pollux’ description (*Onom.* IX 119) appears in a chous of the Shuvalow Painter (430-420 B.C., Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Antikensammlung inv. nr. F 2417), in which a youth sits astride another and blindfolds him, while a third boy is kneeling before them and designates two stones put down on the ground corresponding to the *díoros*, the target. The young man mounted by the companion seems to proceed in order to reach the

stone, just as Pollux prescribes to do<sup>11</sup>.

Still in athletic context, the subject of an Attic black-figure lekythos attributed to the Edinburgh Painter (500-490 B.C.) is slightly different, where a bearded man is to be identified with the gym teacher, and he is about to throw the ball to three youths mounted by their playmates piggyback<sup>12</sup>. The Theseus Painter was specialized, even if not exclusively, as decorator of black-figure *skyphoi*, and he regularly affronted this ludic subject. For example, on each side of a skyphos from Ernest Allen Collection (500 B.C.) six naked young boys practice *ephedrismós*, two couples piggyback alternating with two single figures, all moving right. The artist stresses different play-roles among the players: the mounted youths are hefty, strong, and large-headed men, while the riders to which they give a piggyback ride are quite slight and frail<sup>13</sup>. The difference between young mounted as “horses” and their riders carrying them is also remarkable in the above-quoted French novel that proposes the rivalry of ancient contest again, Alain-Fournier also distinguishes in couples of this tourney the heftiest youths acting as horses, such as the grand Delage or the grand Meaulnes, and the slightest boys carrying them astride such as Fr. Seurel or youngest pupils.

With respect to the age of *ephedrismós* players, we may easily deduce that it is conceived not as a little child’s, but indeed as a youth’s game practised by epebes which needed a relevant physical stress. We may apply the conclusion to *kyndalismós*, the stick-game (*kyndalē*), where players had to throw a stick and to drive it in ground floor, as well as for other hard exercises that Pollux accounts in detail (IX 128, see

9 See Pollux, *Onom.* IX 113, 117 and 123 respectively about *μύινδα*, *ἀποδιδρασκίινδα*, and *χαλκή μύια*, further see Lambin 1975: 168-177; Id. 1977: 108-113; De Siena 2009: 100; Lazos 2002: 158-159; Id. 2010: 33-34; Dasen 2018: 29; Costanza 2019a: 237-242; Id. 2020c: 396-397.

10 At first, we may recall Herodotus I 114, Suetonius, *V Ner.* 35. see Costanza 2019a: 224-230; Id. 2019b; Id. 2020b; Id. 2020c: 393-395. The Modern game called “vizier” (*βεζύρης*) is absolutely different. It has nothing to do with role plays. Indeed, it is based upon the use of knucklebones, see Id. 2018. On the notion of bullying in Ancient ludic culture, see Laes 2019.

11 Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Antikensammlung inv. nr. F 2417, see Miller 2004: 174, pl. 256.

12 Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. nr. 1890.27 (250), Miller 2004: 174, pl. 257.

13 Coll. Haverford, EA 1989-4, see the description given by Harnwell Ashmead 1999: 31-32, pl. 37-40 and *ephedrismós* as subject of Theseus Painter’s bowls according to the catalogue of Borgers 2003: 20, pl. 12 (nr. 54-63).

Costanza 2019a: 257-259, 298-299 for games' age classes). The same happens, as we have noticed, in Alain-Fournier's novel, in which explicit details upon age are provided by the writer according to prose gender. In fact, at the very moment of the defy in the boarding-school, Augustin Meaulnes is almost seventy years old (Leuwers 1983: 11: «C'était un grand garçon de dix-sept ans environ»), while François Seurel is just fifteen years old (Leuwers 1983: 7: «J'avais quinze ans»), as well as his further classmates.

With relation to the number of participants involved in this performance, the Greek lexicographer mentions two boys, but he does not exclude girls as players a priori, as he specifies for other plays which are strictly male games such as the *chytrinda*, the “cauldron game”<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, Pollux does not take out a game performed by many players distributed in pairs, as we may verify in quoted examples of Attic ceramic painting or in the spectacular tourney enacted by the school-boys of Alain-Fournier's novel. Surely, this ludic ritual needs at least two persons who are engaged to hit the stone and to carry a companion astride in case of losing. It is very likely that two or more couples of boys were involved in such attempts corresponding to skill tests. Even in *basilinda*, the game of the “king”, Pollux just quotes two players respectively acting as “king” and “servant”. Thus, he accounts only the basic plot of this role-play. Indeed, historiographical sources inform us about a collective ritual, where many boys were playing around the boy chosen (or designated) as a “king”<sup>15</sup>.

In the second passage (IX 122), Pollux' interest is centred upon a term of Attic dialect (*kotyllē*) indicating a cup and the hollow of the hand. This term is subject of attention for other commentators since

Athenaeus of Naukratis till Eustathios of Thessalonica. In this case, the loser locked his arms behind his back to form a cup, in which the companion placed his knee, in order to be carried on his back. With respect to the act of carrying someone astride on his shoulders, Pollux provides another ludonymous: *kybēsinda* also attested by Pausanias Atticist (κ 52 Erbse 1950, p. 191: κυβησίνδα· ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς φέρειν ἢ κατὰ νότου. «The *kybēsinda* is the practice of carrying someone on his head or on his shoulders.»). Reasonably, Pollux employs here Atticising sources at § 122, as we may deduce from the frequent use of the dual number, a vestige of Classical morphology disappeared in Hellenistic and Roman *koiné*. We find here many occurrences of the dual number said of hands with accusative (τὼ χεῖρε) and dative case (ταῖν χεροῖν, but with agreement to a pronoun in the plural number: αὐταῖς), and still of eyes with accusative agreement (τὼ ὀφθαλμῶ). In the same phrase, there are, thus, two subsequent nouns in the dual number. Indeed, there are no occurrence of the dual number in § 119, probably because Pollux employed here different sources.

In Ancient times, other two titles for the same game are attested, such as the “mare” (*hippás*), where the stress is put on the image of the player mounted on his blindfolded companion as a rider piggyback on a horse. At this respect, we may quote the Modern Greek title of *kavála*, a case of transparent semantic continuity, in view of Late result from Vulgar Latin *caballus* = horse. Other corresponding ludonymous entered in current use such as *plakítses*, the “tiles”, *loumbárda*, the “bombard”, nothing to say about this practice often requested as chastisement for the loser in many playing rituals<sup>16</sup>.

Definitively, Pollux associates four different titles to an extremely popular game,

<sup>14</sup> If the boy with a cauldron (*χύτρα*) on his head kicks a playmate, the latter takes his place in the middle of the playing field, see Costanza 2019a: 242-245; Id. 2019b: 7; Id. 2020b.

<sup>15</sup> See Costanza 2019b: 99. Among the undertones of report given by Pollux' *Onomasticon*, a choral dimension is evident. It is not so striking the opposition marked by Harnwell Ashmead 1999: 31 between Pollux' text and The-seus Painter, who shows teams of players, not just two participants.

<sup>16</sup> See Koutsoklenis 1986: 56-57; Papazis 2011: 173-174; Vdokakis 2014: 52; on *λουμβάρδα*, see Babiniotis 2005: 1023; on practice of carrying a playmate piggyback as a chastisement of the loser in other games, see Darakis 1994: 29. The name of *karfiá* (“nails”) is founded upon the use of such items, see Kakridis 1925: 172; Darakis 1994: 29.

as we may deduce from this exuberant ludonymic wide. Conversely, the practice attested in some iconographical sources of Classical times imply a clear erotic mark as a ritual of seductiveness among adult people, in which also women, possibly portrayed as menads, satyrs or erotes are involved (see especially Mandel 2013). Evidence of games with erotic emphasis comes from Hellenistic coroplast groups. Small-scale terracotta figurines from Tanagra (4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.) are very remarkable, in which two women wear a thin chiton, one is straddled by the other. This subject has evident epithalamic undertones and foreshadows the possible triumph of Aphrodite on the shoulders of the *parthénos*, the young girl in marriageable age subjugated from the seductive power of the goddess' *cháris*<sup>17</sup>. However, no parallels on eroticised piggyback games come from literary documents. In Ancient Greek everyday life, interactive games imply a strict physical contact and need participants of the same sex confronted with endurance challenge or balance tests, which clearly reveal contact points on a dancing competition performed as a dance duet<sup>18</sup>. Correspondingly, we remark an individual exhibition in the Classical world based upon the ability of staying balanced by leaping on skins smeared in oil. This was the game called *askoliasmós* (< *askōliázēin*= “to hop on one foot”, a pareymology derived from *askós*= “skin” being chronologically subsequent). It was likewise conceived as a skill test as well as an exhibition of moral and intellectual harmony<sup>19</sup>. It was enacted at Dionysian festivals (*Askolia*) with cathartic value<sup>20</sup>.

An analogous framework for the game performed by boys sitting piggyback is also

depicted by Hesychios of Alessandria. The lexicographer of the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century attests a double title of *ephedrismós* and *en kotylē* for this game. In his alphabetical *Lexicon* such a game appears in two different sections, as well as we remarked for Pollux' criterion to describe the same ritual in two distinct passages. We may quote the following Hesychian glosses:

ε 3167 Ἐν κοτύλῃ φέρειν· παιδιᾶς εἶδος, ὃ γὰρ φέρων τινὰ ἐκ κοτύλῃ ἐποίει ὀπίσω τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ὁ αἰρόμενος ἐνετίθει τὰ γόνατα καὶ οὕτως ἐβαστάζετο. [...]

7362 ἐφῆδριζεν· φῆδιέσκευεν, ἔπαιζεν

7363 ἐφῆδρίζειν· παίζειν τὴν λεγομένην ἐφῆδρισμὸν παιδιάν, ὅταν περιγαγὼν τὰς χεῖράς τις κατὰ νότου ἐκ τῶν κατόπιν βαστάζη τὸν νικήσαντα. Τάυτην δὲ τὴν παιδιάν Ἀττικοὶ ἐν κοτύλῃ λέγουσιν. Ἄλλοι δὲ τὴν συναφὴν τῶν χειρῶν παρὰ τὸν κρίκον.

7364 ἐφῆδρήσων· παρακαθήμενος.

7365 ἐφῆδριστήρας· τοὺς ἐπικαθημένους ἐν τῇ εἰρημένῃ παιδιᾷ

«ε 3167 To carry in the hollow (*en kotylē pherein*): a kind of game, whoever carries someone in the hollow gets his hands back and the either places his kneel and so carry him on his back. [...]

7362 *ephedrizen*: ἴ... he was playing. 7363 *ephedrizein* means to play the *ephedrismós* game, when someone gets his hands behind his back and carries the winner on his back. The Attics call this game *en kotylē* (in the hollow). Others indicate the hollow of the hands around the ring-arm. 7364 *ephedrēssōn*: sitting astride. 7365 *ephedristēras*: those who are sitting astride in this game.»

Hesychius (ε 7363) explains that the Attics, that is, authors of Classical period of Greek literature, mention the game “in a cup” (ἐν κοτύλῃ). We also discussed that the text of Pollux depended upon Attic sources because of the frequent use of the dual number. In a previous gloss (ε 3167) about the game “in a cup” Hesychius confirms the information provided by Pol-

17 See Neils-Oakley 2003: 75; Jeamment 2010: 182; Beaumont 2012: 132; Karanika 2014: 167; Madej 2016: 36, pl. 43.

18 See Paraskevaïdis 1990: 21; Mandel 2013: 28; De Siena 2009: 104; Mitchell 2009: 224-226; Lazos 2010: 37; iconographic representations assign greater emphasis to girls as players.

19 Attested by classical (Aristophanes, *Pl.* 1128-29; Plato, *Smp.* 190c-d; Eubulus, *Ἀμάλθεια* (?), fr. 7 K.-A.; Lucianus *Lex.* 2, Vergilius *Georg.* II 380-84) and lexicographical sources (Pollux II 194; Pausanias Gr. α 161, Erbse 1950: 166= Eustathius 1769,45; Hesychius α 7680, 7722, 7723; Photius α 2974 Th. 1,2974; Timaeus α 74 Valente 2012: III; Suda α 4177 s.v. ἀσκός ἐν πάχνῃ; *Etymologica Genuinum* α 1283 s.v. ἀσκολιάζειν; *Symeonis* α 1460; *Gudianum* 213, 24 Stef.; Eustathius 1646,24), see Latte 1957; Déonna 1959; Rüdiger 1967; Hurschmann 1997; Paraskevaïdis 1989: 86-87; Costanza 2019a: 155-159, 259-260.

20 See Lissarague 1987: 66-68, 147; Costanza 2019a: 260-262, 296.

lux, but he does not precise, if the player mounted by a friend was obliged to stay with closed eyes or not. At this respect, Athenaeus of Naucratis (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.) does not mention the rule of blindfolding the player, on whose back someone was sitting. Confiding the authority of the mythographer Apollodorus of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., Athenaeus attests (*Deipn.* XI 479a):

Ἀπολλώδορος δὲ ποτηρίου τε γένος ὑψηλὸν καὶ ἔγκοilon, πᾶν δὲ τὸ κοῖλον κοτύλην -φησίν- ἐκάλουν οἱ παλαιοί, ὡς καὶ τὸ τῶν χειρῶν κοῖλον [...] Καὶ ἐν κοτύλῃ δὲ τις παιδιὰ καλεῖται, ἐν ἣ κοιλᾶσαντες τὰς χεῖρας δέχονται τὰ γόνατα τῶν νενικηκότων οἱ νενικημένοι καὶ βαστάζουσιν αὐτούς.

Apollodorus of Athens (*FGrH* 244F 254) adds that the Ancients define *kotylē* a kind of high and concave bowl, and furthermore any sort of hollow object, such as the hollow of the hands [...] A game is also called *en kotylē*, in which the losers shape a hollow through their hands and accept the kneels of the winners and they give them a piggyback ride.

If we do not focus on the corresponding omission in the *Deipnosophistae* (*Sophists at Dinner*), probably for a choice of a more concise style with comparison to its model, we must admit a variant of the *en kotylē* game, in which no rule of blindfolding the with-players was active. Subsequently, the concurrent in such a choreography must be carried by another on his back, but he goes with his eyes open. In such a case, the attempt of carrying a friend and reaching the target stone, that is, the *díoros*, appears a valuable effort for a ludic competition. So, we may suppose that the rule of proceeding with closed eyes by a companion sitting astride was successively added in order to increase the stress of the player by imposing him a supplementary effort. The Patriarch of Constantinople Photios (9<sup>th</sup> century) does not add further information, but he simply attests that an Ancient game was associated to verb *ephedri(á)zein*, whose memory was still living in Middle Byzantine times. In his *Lexicon* (π 61 Theodoridis 3, 142), he quotes the comedy known under the title of *Ephedritai* or *Ephedρίζontes*, literally “Those who are sitting astride” written by the poet of New Comedy Philemo

of Syracuse (or Soloi in Cilicia). Photios lists some terms drawn from this piece, in order to justify the use of *palastē* as a feminine noun (= Philem., fr. 26 K.-A.: σκιμπόδιον ἐν καὶ κώδιον καὶ ψιάθιον / ἴσως παλαστικής. «A barrow, a wool-skin and a little mat, maybe of a spam»).

As far as we may deduce from the title of this comedy, the ritual of *ephedrismós* played a major role and it was probably practised by main characters. This subject was aimed at ironically perfect mimicry, especially if the audience had to see adult men, not teenagers involved in such exercise. However, we cannot reconstruct the plot in detail nor to specify how comic figures were described as sitting on someone’s back. It would be tantalizing, but too perilous to risk more circumstantial hypotheses, given that we have just two short fragments provided by indirect tradition. Besides Photios’ quotation, we just account an absolutely generic aphorism given by John Stobaeus (5<sup>th</sup> century): χαλεπὸν τὸ ποιεῖν, τὸ δὲ κελεύσαι ῥάδιον («It is a hard thing to do, but it is very easy to order it.» = Philem. fr. 27 K.-A. *ap.* Stob. 4, 49, 3, V, 1018). We could apply this sentence to every possible situation of the plot, not only to an order of sitting astride on the back of a companion or giving him a piggyback ride, as the title seems to suggest. Further conclusions about Philemo’s comedy are not ascertainable. Nevertheless, this piece attests that the game persisted in popularity in Hellenistic times, given that it should be easily identified by spectators who were perfectly aware of its rules. Otherwise, the Comic poet had not chance to propose a piggyback ride to his audience at theatre, if it was not able to understand the allusion to this ludic frame.

Besides, it is useful to examine discussion about polysemic values of the Attic term *kotylē*. Similarly, the paroemiographer Zenobius (2<sup>nd</sup> century) remarks (3,60, *CPG* I,71):

Ἐν κοτύλῃ φέρῃ: παιδιᾶς εἶδος· ὁ γὰρ φέρων τινὰ ἐν κοτύλῃ, ἐποίει ὀπίσω τὰς χεῖρας, καὶ ὁ αἰρόμενος ἐνετίθει τὰ γόνατα, καὶ οὕτως ἐβαστάζετο.

If he holds in a cup (*en kotylē*): a kind of game, in which one was mounted by another boy on

his back, he locked his arms behind his back, while the rider placed his knee up, so to be carried.

The above-quoted grammarian Pausanias Atticist (2<sup>nd</sup> century) echoes (ε 6, Erbse, p. 175 ap. Eust., *Il.* 1282,54):

Ἐν κοτύλῃ· παιδιὰ τις, ἐν ἣ διαπλέξας τις ὀπίσω τοὺς δακτύλους τῶν χειρῶν ἐπενωτίζετο τὸν ἀναιρούμενον· ὁ δ' ἐνθεῖς τὸ γόνυ ταῖς χερσὶ καὶ περιλαβὼν τοῦ αἵροντος τὴν κεφαλὴν ἢ τὸν τράχηλον ἐβαστάζετο. Ἐκλήθη δὲ ἐγ κοτύλη, ἐπεὶ τὸ κοῦλον τῆς χειρὸς κοτύλη λέγεται, εἰς ὃ [κοῦλον] ἐνετίθει τὸ γόνυ ὁ βασταζόμενος.

*En kotylē*: a game, in which one clasped the fingers and carried a companion on his back to lift him. The either placed his knee with his hands, clasped the head or the neck of the guy who carried him and he was carried up this way. It was called *eg kotylē pherein*, because the hollow of the hands is named *kotylē*, in which the one was carried up and placed his knee.

Finally, the encyclopaedic knowledge of Eustathios does not omit the game “in the hollow”. The interest of the commentator focuses on various meanings applied to the use of the *kotylē* by the Ancients, the *palaioi*, that is, authors of Archaic and Classical period (p. 550.4 *ad Il.* 5.306):

Ὅτι δὲ οὐ μῆροῦ μόνου, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὄμου κοτύλη λέγεται τὸ κατ' αὐτὴν κοῦλον τῆς ὁμοπλάτης, λέγουσιν οἱ παλαιοί. [Δῆλον δ' ὅτι κοτύλη καὶ μέτρον τις εἶδος ἐστὶν οὐ μεγάλου, ἀλλὰ τινος βραχέος. Τίθεται δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ κοιλότητος χειρὸς. Ὅθεν καὶ παιδιὰ τις παίζεται καλουμένη ἐν κοτύλῃ. Προάγεται δὲ οὕτως περιαιγῶν ἕτερος δὲ τις εἰς τὰ κοιλώματα τῶν χειρῶν, ἄπερ εἰσὶ κοτύλαι, τὰ γόνυ ἐνθεῖς καὶ οὕτως ἀναβαλὼν ἑαυτὸν φέρεται ἔποχος, ἐπιλαβὼν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ φέροντος. Εἶτα ἐν μέρει ὁ τέως φερόμενος κατελθὼν φέρει τὸν ἕτερον. Καὶ ἦν αὕτη παιδιὰ ἐν κοτύλῃ.

The Ancients call *kotylē* not only the hollow of the thigh, but also of the arm and the shoulder upon the shoulder-blade. It is well-known that the *kotylē* is also a not great, but short unit of measure consisting in the hollow of the hand. Subsequently, a game is called *en kotylē*, and it is performed as follows: one places his knee in the hollows of the hands called *kotylai*, he is so carried sitting on a companion' back and he blindfolds the one who carries him. After that, the one who is carried astride till that moment goes down and he carries the either piggyback.

And this was the game “in the hollow” (*en kotylē*).

In turn, Eustathios insists on closed eyes of the one who carries astride his companion on his back. This point omitted by Athenaeus and Hesychios appears in an analytic way in the detailed description of the 12<sup>th</sup> century's universal erudite. A further point to be taken in account is given at the conclusion of Eustathios' commentary, that is, the principle of reciprocity. Whoever sits piggyback is obliged to carry his companion in turn, once he goes down from the latter's back. According to Eustathios, it is necessary to reverse their roles: such a reversing through a passing of the baton between the two players is even more interesting since nothing is said at this respect by the above-quoted authors. Far from supposing a mere invention or arbitrary addition given by the Late Byzantine intellectual, it is better to imagine a key issue in ludic practice. In fact, role plays often request such a reverse, as sources relating to *chelichelōnē*, the “tort-tortoise” and *chytrinda*, the above-named game of “cauldron”, expressly state<sup>21</sup>. All this ascertained, Eustathios is trustworthy upon this point, whose meaning is also very significant in piggyback play ritual. In such a perspective, the game of mounting astride is instructive to favour social cohesion: It does not appear merely as a severe punishment for the loser, who overthrew the stone, but also a shared effort to carry on his back his own companion and to be carried in turn on the one's back. This frame was coherent to the ideal of *homotimia* valuable to citizens of the polis, in whose ranks the participants were entering for ever, once sealed the period of their adolescence. The fact to reverse their roles refers to the score of a dance stage, in which boys enact roles assigned to them by an exact choreography.

c. As we have already noticed, there are many games founded upon the act of sitting astride in Modern times: one guy

21 In an initiatory game strictly reserved to young girls, the tortoise-girl (*χελώνη*) must catch a girlfriend who takes, then, her place in the middle of the scene, see Karanika 2012; Ead. 2014: 166; Costanza 2017; Id. 2019a: 265-275, 242-245; Id. 2020a.

bends down, while another jumps upon him and holds the arms on his back, a third similarly jumps upon the second boy and so on<sup>22</sup>. This ludic ritual is variously known as *kaváles* (“mares”), *kavalária* (“riders”) or *makriá ghaïdhoúra* (“long donkeys”) on the grounds of similes drawn from animal world or as the *karekláki* (the “chair”) or *teicháki* (the “wall”) through a metaphor of boys imagined in column<sup>23</sup>. Of course, the first youth of the line was necessarily the heaviest boy sitting astride, as we remarked for an Attic black-figure skyphos and the French novel of Alain-Fournier. In contemporary Greek ritual each of two teams are formed of four or five boys, who make the attempt of standing up without falling on the ground<sup>24</sup>.

The game called *afromeliá*, the “flower of the apple-tree” shows the test of mounting piggyback on the captain of the rival team named the “mum” (*mana*) as its main subject. This one tries in every way possible to prevent a playmate to mount on his back: A war dance meant to unhorse their companions becomes, in fact, a satyric dance countermarked by stubborn spites and useless revenges (see Koutsoklenis 1986: 57-58).

In the *tsarouchi* or *papoutsána*, the game of the “slipper”, the captain of a team placed at the middle chooses which adversary must bend down in order to mount a companion’s back. The players of the opposing team bring their position in front of these two boys playing defence, and they try to avert the guy acting as a “horse” to take over the *tsarouchi*, that is, the boot thrown by playmates from a dis-

tance of around 5 meters. This term is a loanword borrowed from Turkish *çarik* that indicates typical men leather shoe with a pompom on top that was used by Northern Greece shepherds (see Babiniotis 2005: 1807). So, this game has, in turn, its own setting in rustic surroundings. If the rider is able and gets taking the shoe thrown behind him, the same team makes a new attempt. On the contrary, if he fails to catch it, the two teams reverse their positions. They also change playing field, if the rider loses balance in the attempt of standing up on his friend’s back, and he falls awkwardly: the fall is another parody element that provokes laughter and mockery (see Koutsoklenis 1986: 59).

Another ritual corresponding to mount piggyback on a playmate is practised among two teams and it is called *cheimónas kai kalokairi* from the opposition between “winter and summer”. The players decide by drawing lots which players are involved to act as “horses” (*álogha*) and which should be engaged as “riders” (*kavalárēdes*) by mounting their playmates piggyback. The contrast between distinct times, meant as hypostasis of the opposition between darkness and light, is not unknown to Classical games. We may recall the Ancient ritual of pursuit called *ostrakínda*, from *óstrakon* (“terracotta bit”). This game shows the direct contrast between night and day performed by participants distributed in two teams. “Day” and “night”, that is, the outer side left blank and the inner side, darkened pece are previously assigned to the two teams<sup>25</sup>. This terracotta bit serves as heads or tails as an

22 See Mellios 1985: 20, 82; Koutsoklenis 1986: 57; Papanis 1996: 38-41, 174; Vdokakis 2014: 52, 118 on other variants known as “mares” (καβάλες or καβαλαρία), “long donkeys” (μακριά γαϊδούρα), or “wall” (τειχάκι), where boys being carried piggyback are designated as animals or a rampart.

23 See Mellios 1985: 20-21, 82; Papaskevaïdis 1990: 23; Papanis 1996: 38-41; Vdokakis 2014: 118.

24 See Koutsoklenis 1986: 56-57; Papazis 2011: 173-174; Vdokakis 2014: 52.

25 This kind of game is known by allusions given by Comic poets (Aristophanes *Eq* 856, see *Schol. Ar., Eq.* Koster, p. 206 *Vet.* 855a; *Etymologicum Magnum* 402,39 and Plato Comicus *Συμμαχία*, fr. 168 K.A.), Platonic discussion (*Phdr.* 241b, *R.* 7.521c, *Thet.* 145e-146a), Late authors (Dio Chrysostomus, *Or.* 15,455 R.; Eunapius 1,364; Marinus V. *Procl.* 39) and paroemiographic tradition centred on the inconstancy of fate: *Suda* ο 719 = Photius ο 571 Th. 3,113; Diogenianus (Coisl.) 6,95 = Pausanias Gr., ο 26 Erbse 1950: 202; *Schol. Pl., Phdr.* 241b; Eust., *Il.* 1161,38; Gregorius Cyprius 2,93, *CPG* II,84; Apostolius 13,3 *CPG* II,570; Diogenianus (Vind.), 6,95, *CPG* I,285; Herm. *in Phdr.* 241b = *Prov. Coisl.* 380,59,18-60,6 *Couvr.*; *Schol. ad Luc., Apol.* 1 ad D.Chr. p. 19 Morell.; Suetonius, *De lud.* 8, Taillardat 1967: 70,168-169. See Paraskevaïdis 1992: 22-23; Siewert 2002: 223-226; Lazos 2002: 436-439; Pirrotta 2009: 306-308; Costanza 2019a: 138-143, 231-232.

alternative to a coin or other random-givers<sup>26</sup>: A participant throws it in aria on the playing field divided equally by a line and after this he verifies on which side it fell on ground floor. If he shouts: “night” (*νύχ*), then, the team associated with the white side, that is, with the “day” (*hēméra*), chasing immediately after the either team, while the others went precipitously on the run. If the side of the “day” was drawn, the game for pursuers and fugitives begins again with reversed roles. Even in this case, we find the adhesion to a previously accepted choreography, in which everyone was conscientious about which act he should then perform. For Modern Greek ritual of “winter and summer” (*χειμώνας και καλοκαίρι*), is also known the lullaby to sing in choirs, in order to accompany the movements executed by children sitting astride the other pupils:

Σαμ σαμ τους ουρανούς / και στου χασάπη  
την αυλή / φύτρωσε μια λεμονιά, / λεμονιά,  
πορτοκαλιά.

Bum bum in the heavens / and in butcher's  
courtyard / a lemon-tree sprouted, / a lemon-tree,  
an orange-tree.

After having uttered the last verse of this rhyme, the rider asks the boy, on whose back he is sitting astride:

Πόσα δάχτυλα βαστώ ανοιχτά;  
(How many fingers have I opened?).

Or he sings:

πόσα ξύλα στη βαρέλα;  
(How many rods are they in the barrel?).

If the boy-horse guesses the number of fingers opened by his rider, he takes the latter's place and both of them reverse their roles<sup>27</sup>. As in Ancient ritual of *ephedrismós* game, boys acting as riders are charged to blindfold the pupils who carry them astride. Evidently, the last must keep

the eyes closed in order to guess the exact answer without cheating.

Finally, it is useful to mention a variant of Ancient *ephedrismós* prescribed in female milieu, which was known under the title of *pinakōtí* (πινακωτή). According to evidence drawn from literary and lexicographical sources, there are not variants in Modern nor in Ancient Greece, in which participants of both sexes were performing together. This contemporary variant strictly reserved to girls is called from kneading-trough, the wooden table, where women placed leaven in order to bake bread. The ludonymous here employed as a feminine noun derives from a not otherwise attested adjective \*πινακωτός < πινάκιον, a Medieval hypocoristic of πίναξ “table” (see Babiniotis 2005: 1407). This game is well known in Amphissa and elsewhere in Continental Greece and Cycladic Islands<sup>28</sup>. It is worthy to discuss in detail lo development, in which a choreography is to be recognized, where parts are previously assigned and movements to be executed are rigorously defined according to a directorial idea conceived in detail.

At first, a girl is chosen as the “queen” (*vassílissa*). Another sits on her knees or crouches down at her feet, and acts as the beloved “daughter” of the “queen”<sup>29</sup>. A third girl is standing or sits at a little distance, then she approaches the “queen” and engages with her in the following dialogue punctuated by two voices giving a series of antiphons:

“*Daughter*”: Πινακωτή, πινακωτή!

*Pinakoti*: Πίσω από τ' άλλο μου τ' αυτί / έλα από  
τ' άλλο μου τ' αυτί, / γιατί είν' η μάνα σου κουφή.

“*Daughter*”: Πινακωτή, πινακωτή!

*Pinakoti*: Από τ' άλλο μου τ' αυτί! Τί ζητάς;

“*Daughter*”: Με έστειλε ο αρχηγός να μου δώσεις  
το καλύτερο αρνί. / Ένα κοκοράκι!

(Οτ: Είπε ο βασιλιάς να μου δώσεις / ένα απ' τα  
καλύτερά σου τα παιδιά.)

*Pinakoti*: Διάλεξε και πάρε.

26 In Ancient Rome, an obol was used to make heads or tails, where Bifront Ianus on one side and a ship' bow on the other were portrayed, whence the title of *nauia aut capita* (“ships or heads”) assigned to this game, see Lazos 2010: 103; Costanza 2019a: 232.

27 See Darakis 1994: 174; Koutsoklenis 1986: 37-39. In some towns, the game is defined as *καρεκλάκι* or *καβαλαρία*, see Mellios 1985: 21.

28 See Koutsoklenis 1986: 37-39; Papazis 2011: 26-27; Vdokakis 2014: 115-116; Rossolatu-Deverakis 2017: 221.

29 On *Pinakoti* game, see Koutsoklenis 1986: 37-39, Papazis 2011: 26-27; Vdokakis 2014: 115-116; Rossolatu-Deverakis 2017: 221; Costanza 2019a: 254-256.

(Or: «Πάρε όποιο θέλεις!»)  
 “*Daughter*”: Pinakotí, pinakotí!  
*Pinakotí*: «To the either ear, / approach to either ear, / because thyn mum is deaf.»  
 “*Daughter*”: «Pinakotí, pinakotí!»  
*Pinakotí*: «To the either ear! What do you search for?»  
 “*Daughter*”: «The prince sent me so that you give me thy best lamb (or cockerel).»  
 (Or: «The king told me to give me one of your best children.»)  
*Pinakotí*: «Choose it and take it.»  
 (Or: «Take what you want.»)

Then, the playmate who adressed the “queen” at first takes the girl setting at the top of the column, lifts her and removes her by putting her near to the place, where she was sitting at the beginning. Then, she engages again in dialogue with the “queen”. Both of them reply the antiphon they sang, until the “queen” stays alone just with her beloved “daughter”, that is, with the girl who crouched at her kneels up to that time.

The “daughter” speaking with the “queen”, after having dragged off all playmates, addresses again *Pinakotí* and claims for the handover of her most beloved “daughter”. At this point, the “queen” refuses, however, to give her “child” and replies hastily:

Ένα τόχω και το θέλω!  
 «I have got one child and I want it!»

After that, the “queen” suddenly stands up and, in response, runs away from the scene by letting her “child” alone. Thus, her girlfriends take advantage of this intermezzo in order to take away the last “child”. When the “queen” comes back, she does not find her beloved “child” near to her on the scene. Then, she starts looking frantically all over the place and she asks in the grip of anguish:

Που είναι το παιδί μου; Μήπως το είδατε;  
 «Where is my child? Maybe did you see it?»

The other girls answer her:

Το είδαμε. Να πας τον κόκκινο δρόμο!  
 «We saw it. Go on the red road!»

The “queen” is, thus, in search for her beloved “daughter” again and the others

answer similarly after further attempts of pursuit by suggesting her:

Να πας τον πράσινο δρόμο!  
 (Or : Να πας τον κίτρινο δρόμο!)  
 «Go on the green road!» (Or: «Go on the yellow road!»)

After many attempts presupposing movements of approaching and distancing of the participants from the middle into the periphery of the scene and vice versa, the “queen” asks them distrustful:

Μήπως είναι αυτό;  
 «Maybe is this one?»

The girls told her in chorus:

Ναί, αυτό είναι!  
 «Indeed, it is this one!»

The “queen” approaches her “beloved daughter” and asks her:

Τί σε τάϊσαν, παιδάκι μου;  
 «What did they feed you, my little child?»  
 (On feeding the children, the popular term ταΐζω from Medieval ταγιζω is here employed, see Babiniotis: 1734 s.v.).

At this point, the playmate enacting the queen’s beloved “daughter” admits:

Κουτσουλιά και λάδι!  
 «Bird roop and oil» (from \*κοττο-τσιλιά< Ancient τιλω, see Babiniotis: 950 s.v. e 940 s.v. κοτώ).

To this answer, the “queen” is infuriated and runs together with her “child” at the pursuit of the other girls, in order to catch them one after another. After having caught the first girl at her disposal, she harasses her, while her “beloved child” pleads:

Κλούρα, μάνα! Κλούρα, μάνα!  
 «Please, a doughnut, mummy! A doughnut, mummy!»

Subsequently, the two girls acting respectively the “queen” and the “beloved daughter”, release their prisoner and run away to catch another playmate. Therefore, they replicate a choreography according to the above-mentioned ritual until they get by catching all girlfriends who were previ-

ously placed piggyback in column. Once that all playmates are in the hands of the “queen”, ludic plot begins again with reversed roles.

In this performance, the subject of the motherhood and parental tutorship appears a binding task of the future mother and it is not unknown to other playing rituals such as “tort-tortoise”, in which playmates ask the girl acting the role of the protagonist news about the destiny of her son. Therefore, the ending of *Pinakotí* stresses kourotropic theme through a parody switch. At a certain time, the “queen” becomes very angry, and she accentuates her abrasive reaction against her playmates who neglected their tasks by serving up this unclean meal for her beloved “child”. On the contrary, the girl acting as her child claims a right feed by asking for a right feed such as a “kolloura”, that is, a sesame doughnut<sup>30</sup>. The game celebrates the kourotropic task of the woman towards her progeny through a series of predetermined movements of such a peculiar choreography, whose pedagogic value is undeniable<sup>31</sup>.

### CONCLUSIONS

The Ancient *ephedrismós* is marked by multifarious issues centred on motility, psychomotor spatial coordination and aptitudes corresponding to good relationship with their playmates. On the grounds of proper social relations with target community, children’s challenge piggyback exemplifies self-control through a limited and ritualized violence. Rivalries are convoyed into a spectacular competition exempt of dramatic, irremediable harassment. Under performative perspective, this contest is useful to temper interpersonal antagonism. The heaviest and ablest youths of the group rise to the top. These are designated to perform a charismatic role and rightly claim the leadership of the polis, given the

physical and intellectual primacy that they have shown in this tourney. Moreover, victory does not come to individuals, as we have noticed in the for-mentioned *askoliasmós*, but to the pair, in which “rider” and “horse” lead efforts, in order to do not lose balance. Subsequently, they get to grips with the opposition of their adversaries. To achieve victory, they must have a good understanding so far.

Therefore, *ephedrismós* was not matter of individual attainment, but of a success gained by the most reactive pair, whose ability to control emotions was useful to achieve its objectives. At this end, the game is identifiable with a regulatory act. A canonical variant was possibly included in religious or theatre festivals as we also stated for *askoliasmós* (as Harnwell Ashmead 1999: 31 also suggests for *ephedrismós* players as in a chorus).

Polysemic rituals of giving someone a piggyback ride verify acts of resemanticizing (and reconfiguring) the meaning of this choreography in Modern Greek Folklore as well as in a significant rewriting provided by Alain-Fournier’ novel, where a dreaming atmosphere similarly corresponds to an intense reflection upon the implicit difficulties relating to transition from childhood into adulthood.

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<sup>30</sup> Derived from Ancient Greek κολλούριον, see Babiniotis: 943 s.v. κολλούρι, this meal is known as *collura* in Sicily. On learning food standards inculcated in the young girls by their mothers, see Garnsey 1999: 100. On this ritual, see Koutsoklenis 1986: 37-39; Rossolatos-Deverakis 2017: 221.

<sup>31</sup> Included among the founding myths of social community, correct feeding guarantees livelihood for the newborns, their growth and transition into adult life, it is thus the premise for them to be inscribed in social ranks, see Costanza 2019a: 256. On educative value of this game starting with Platonic discussion, see D’Angour 2013.

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