

Dancing Before Dawn: The Performance of Alcman's *Partheneion*
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Beyond the likelihood of a pre-dawn ceremony, critics have had little idea of how the poem was danced and performed. A scholium attached to the end of the fourth strophe (VIII Page) suggests semichoruses, but critics have been baffled how the poem could be so divided; Rosenmeyer's effort (*GRBS* 1966; cf. Péron in *GB* 1987) has met with no followers. I wish to argue that he was on the right track, but had misassigned the stanzas based on a failure to understand how the rhetorical conventions of foil and priamel are deployed in this text.

The chorus' challenge is to be laudatory of both Hagesichora and Agido, but each semichorus foregrounds one of the two: strophe 4 (vv.36-49), rather than being Agido's semichorus, as Rosenmeyer thought, starts with praise of Agido (vv.39-43), but ultimately asserts the superiority of Hagesichora (vv.43-49). Similarly, strophe 5 begins with Hagesichora, declared superior to a Venetic stallion (vv.50-56), but caps its praise with Agido, to whom other horses are second in beauty (vv.57-58). Strophe 6 is an elaborate priamel building up to Hagesichora as the capping term, introduced by the conventional ἄοοᾶ in v.77. This stanza also implies a division of the eight choristers other than Hagesichora and Agido into two groups of four: I believe that vv.70-72 list and address the four girls of the other semi-chorus, while vv.74-76 describe the four girls now dancing under Hagesichora's watchful eyes, safe from erotic seduction by their rivals. Strophe 7 responds positively to the suggestion of erotic bonding by asking, "After all, doesn't Hagesichora stand near Agido?" (i.e. why should we dispute, when your chorus-leader stands next to mine?). After Hagesichora's acknowledgement as the cause of peace in vv.89-90, the two semi-choruses probably reunite in the last stanza.

Based on Pausanias 3.13.7 and 3.16.1, I will suggest that Hagesichora and Agido are the two priestesses in the Spartan cult of the Leucippides (alluded to in the mythical portion of the poem), who join together with the eleven Dionysiades in making sacrifice to Dionysus; the statement about "ten singing instead of eleven" (vv.98-99) is thus to be understood as a comparison of the two Leucippides and their eight fellow-choristers to the eleven Dionysiades with whom they ritually collaborate.