Original Study

Paola Budano*

The Addaura Cave: Dance and Rite in Mesolithic Sicily

<https://doi.org/10.1515/opar-2019-0036>

Received February 21, 2019; accepted November 9, 2019

Abstract: The Addaura Cave, located on Monte Pellegrino – Palermo, Sicily, is known for its exquisite engravings dating between the end of the Epigravettian and the Mesolithic periods. The frieze shows a group of men arranged in a circle around two very controversial figures which have generated much scholarly debate. So far, the purely choreographic and musical aspect has been little investigated. From the examination of the position of legs and arms and the presence of particular ornaments it is possible to deduce that these figures are engaged in a dance whose purpose is most probably linked to the ceremonial sphere. The purpose of the present contribution is to return to the concreteness of gesture related to dance, describing the modalities and the possible rhythmic implications.

Keywords: Dance, performance, Sicilian prehistory, Addaura Cave, iconographic analysis

1 Introduction

Talking about dance in the ancient world means reconstructing a part of artistic expression related to the musical field as a “performative” moment. Performance studies applied to Prehistory could shed new light on one of those irreproducible activities that have sometimes left traces in iconographic documentation. For the prehistoric period the record is very fragmented but we have a conspicuous *corpus* from the Near East and Southeast Europe that could be useful for producing a history of the development of dance (Garfinkel, 2010). The case of the Addaura Cave in Italy allows us to draw concrete inferences about the practice of dance in the Sicilian Mesolithic. This study, after an analytical description of figures, will try to reconstruct the performance held in the cave.

1.1 The Cave

The Addaura Caves are a vast complex of cavities, formed by the erosive action of the sea, which open along the northern cliffs of Monte Pellegrino in the province of Palermo, Sicily. The most important of these caves is the Caprara Cave, a huge shelter clearly visible from the coast below. The smaller cave called Antro Nero or Bovidi follows immediately to the west and, a little further on, the Cave of Incisions or Addaura II. The Cave of Incisions is a rock shelter with a wide entrance, 9 m deep and 3 m high (fig. 1). A small test trench inside the cavity allows us to date the first visits to the late Epigravettian (Leighton, 1998). The main frieze

Article note: This article is a part of the Special Issue on Unlocking Sacred Landscapes: Digital Humanities and Ritual Space, edited by Giorgos Papantoniou, Apostolos Sarris, Christine E. Morris & Athanasios K. Vionis

***Corresponding author: Paola Budano**, Department of Human Sciences, University of Catania, Via Morandi 14, Castelfidardo, 60022, Italy, E-mail: paola_budano@yahoo.it

develops diagonally for 2.5 m at about 2–3 m above ground level, at the innermost point of the cavity. It includes 16 human figures and about 10 animals (fig. 3).

Figure 1. Addaura cave, planimetry (Leighton, 1998).

Figure 2. Addaura cave, part (www.lasiciliainrete.it/monumenti/listing/grotte-di-addaura).

Figure 3. Addaura cave, frieze (Leighton, 1998).

1.2 The Frieze

Four stages of chronologically distinct execution have been postulated on the basis of overlapping and style. The first stage is represented by scattered shallow lines with no recognizable pattern. A second stage has a sequence of lightly engraved figures of humans and animals in a naturalistic style. On top of these, the group of human figures which are more deeply engraved and appear in a roughly circular arrangement is often assigned to a third stage, while one or two schematic bovids are sometimes regarded as later in date.

2 Methodology

Iconographic analysis was conducted on the basis of the “dance indicators” described by Garfinkel (Garfinkel, 2003):

- The figures are arranged in a circle;
- The figures appear in motion with raised arms and variously bent legs;
- The distance between the figures is uniform;
- The figures are quite uniform;
- Presence of ornaments (headgear and masks).

Following the iconographic analysis of each figure, we tried to make hypotheses about gestures, body movements and more generally about the development of the dance. In order to simplify the interpretation of the Addaura dance we decided to use common graphic processing programs to animate the scene and make it immediately understandable. The programs chosen were Coreldraw, Adobe Illustrator and Movie Maker. Coreldraw and Adobe Illustrator are vector graphics editors helpful for rebuilding the intermediate positions of the figures. Movie Maker is a software for creating movies that can be made by assembling image files. These programs were useful for creating a video whose sole purpose is simply that to show how the dance might unfold. So, for this reason, we chose a two-dimensional image without ornamental elements.

A similar but more creative work in 3D, focusing on the rock art in Valcamonica, was presented at the “Triennale” of Milan in 2013 from the Prehistoric Picture Project of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (Baker & Chippindale, 2013). This project employed film, photography, dance, animation, music, 3D printing and scanning technology to record and re-present the *Camuni* people not only preserving the prehistoric images for posterity, but also bringing them to life with real depth.

The creation of the Addaura animation was divided into four phases:

1. Scanning of the image and transformation of the figures into a path;
2. Drawing of intermediate positions to make the movement more fluid;
3. Making a frame for each dance step;
4. Assembly of the sequence of frames.

3 The Human Figures

Figure 5

Figure 5 is about 25 cm high. The right leg is very naturally stretched forward, the knee is in evidence showing that the limb is not in tension. The left leg does not have the profile of the knee showing that it is in tension and pushed back. While the leg and calf muscles are well articulated, the feet are not incised but are replaced by a simple linear appendage of the leg that ends in a point. The left limb is connected to the torso without interruption so that the profile of the leg shares the same line as the right arm. The waistline is barely hinted at and the genitals are not recognizable, even though two small parallel lines seem to describe a male gender profile. The buttocks are incised but with less muscular tension than the other figures. The back is arched back and the arms are pointing upward, and bent at the elbow. The head appears covered by a hat whose flaps slide on the back: a straight incision on the left shoulder seems to continue the profile

of the headgear, showing the inclination of the artist to trace the outline of the object even though covered by another element. This shows a compositional ingenuity that can also be found in other segments of the work and can be counted among the characteristics of the “author’s style”. Another straight incision is visible at the right shoulder height, stopping just beyond the arm line. The head is facing downwards and, as in other figures, the long and prominent nose is interpreted as a mask with a long “bird-shaped beak” (Tusa, 2004). Other parts of the face, such as the eyes, are not etched.

Figure 6

Figure 6 is about 24 cm high. It is the only one to be frontally represented: the knees are turned outwards and the legs are bent, the feet are not etched in full but it is clear how the sole is firmly placed on the ground with the heel facing inwards. The genitals are not visible but the junction point of the legs is perfectly engraved. Due to the musculature we could hypothesize a male gender. The trunk is vigorous and a wavy incision seems to define the abdomen. The arms are pointing upwards and describing almost a right angle; the hands are not incised, although a small hint to the left hand appears to represent it with the palm facing upwards. The head has a small protuberance on the top and is devoid of headgear. The face is again characterized by the “bird-shaped beak”.

Figure 7

Figure 7 is about 23 cm high. It is represented in profile with the left leg extended forward. The knee is slightly bent while the right leg is in tension and shows a well-defined musculature. The right foot is replaced by the pointed end of the leg, while the left foot is not visible because it is behind the folded legs of figure 9. This is an important chronological element: the author has recorded figure 7 only after completing figure 9. The waistline is delineated by a horizontal incision and the genitals are clearly visible, showing the male gender. The right arm is bent sideways and the left one is extended forward and facing down. Both left arm and left leg are crossed by the right leg of figure 6: this is apparently in contrast to the care of the creation of the left foot, not visible because it is covered by figure 9. The head appears facing down and the chin is very pointed; the figure wears a large flat headgear.

Figure 8

Figure 8 is about 18 cm high. It is the smallest figure of the group and also the least visible as it is crossed by numerous parallel incisions. The right leg is stretched highlighting the muscles and the foot is not incised but shows slightly divergent leg endings; the left leg is bent and stretched forward, ending in a point. The genitals are visible (male gender) and the waist is defined by a horizontal incision. The face, shown in profile, is pointed downwards and the headgear with the flat top is visible. The right arm is bent at the waist and the hand is not represented: the overlapping of the lines relative to the right flank and to the arm can be seen. The left arm is bent but facing upwards and again the hand is not represented.

Figure 9

Figure 9 occupies a space of approximately 18 x 13 cm. The legs are bent towards the back bringing the feet to the height of the buttocks; only the right foot is visible. The penis is erect although it is also possible that the protuberance does not represent genitals but an oblong object placed between the legs and protruding behind the buttocks: if this interpretation is correct, what we have identified as the right foot would be the rear continuation of this object. The waist is defined and the torso is arched back, the arms are stretched forward and appear to be disproportionate in length in comparison to the body. The hands are indicated as usual by a tip ending of the arms which overlap and cover the legs of figure 10. At shoulder height, a line (or a group of lines) apparently connected to the incision that obliquely crosses the torso, branches off to the buttocks. The head is uncovered, it is possible to notice the usual “bird-shaped beak”, although less pronounced, and the incision of the right eye seems to be present.

Figure 10

Figure 10 occupies a space of about 13 x 16 cm. The legs seem bent but are not entirely visible because they

are covered by figure 9. Although male genitalia are visible and the penis is erect, even in this case, it would be possible to identify a continuation in the form of two parallel lines on the opposite side. The waist is delineated and a straight line connects the shoulders to the legs. The arms are stretched forward, ending in a point and they are much shorter and stubbier than those of figure 9. From the neck a bundle of lines branches downwards, the face is not characterized and the hair is defined (or is it a type of headgear?).

Figure 11

Figure 11 is about 21 cm high. The right leg is in tension, with muscles in evidence and the foot seems to end in a point as if leaning on the left foot; the left leg is stretched forward and is slightly bent, the foot ends in a point. The waistline is delineated but the genitals are not visible, although we can identify the male gender on the basis of comparison with the other similar figures (7, 8, 13). The right arm is rather long, slightly bent and stretched forward, the lines do not overlap with those of the chest and the ends are pointed, joining the left hand; the left arm follows the same movement as the right one, converging at the same point. The face is represented in profile, the figure is looking forward and from the chin descends a vertical line that is interrupted on the shoulder. The headgear with the flat top rests on the right shoulder and the inner line that separates it from the face protrudes towards the shoulder joining the inner profile of the right arm.

Figure 12

Figure 12 is about 15 cm high. It appears immediately, without any hint of movement. The legs are joined and end in a point. The right leg is straight and devoid of clues about the muscles: the external line, in fact, is one with the shoulder. The left leg is slightly bent instead. The right arm is not visible, but the left hand is brought to the face showing the arm that goes from the waist up. On the chest a horizontal line is evident, absent in the other figures. The head is uncovered and devoid of facial details. We could hypothesize a female gender because of the different anatomical characteristics: the musculature is not evident, the male genitalia and the delineated waist feature or “belt” are absent, the presence of a horizontal incision interpretable as breasts.

Figure 13

Figure 13 is about 23 cm high. The right leg is in tension and its internal profile continues without interruption until it delineates the left side, the foot is not represented but the extremities of the leg appear to have a convergent trend; the left leg is bent and the foot is not visible because it is placed behind the right leg. The genitals seem faintly represented (male gender) and the waist is not indicated as in the other figures. The right arm is bent at the side and the hand is not shown. The left arm is bent, facing upwards and also in this case the hand is not incised. The face is in profile with the usual headgear with the flat top and the chin line coincides with the shoulder. A new element is the incision that profiles the inner lines of the face separating it from the headgear; it diverges from the headgear and continues downwards reaching the right shoulder.

Figure 14

Figure 14 is about 19 cm high. It differs considerably from the others in terms of both features and attitude. The right leg is bent and turned back, the foot is not visible but from the lines it seems to end in a point; the left leg is bent and forwards, the foot is not fully incised but part of the sole and the instep are visible. The waist is not underlined and the torso is strongly inclined forward, the buttocks overlap figure 15 which, by consistency of the stretch, seems to belong to a chronologically different compositional stage. The arms extend forward and the right arm overlaps the chest line. The right hand is complete, although not characterized, the terminal part is almost rounded but the two lines of the arm meet for a short distance describing an “x”; a rectilinear incision, almost in correspondence to the hand, departs from it. The left hand is complete although it is not characterized either; the termination is rounded and has two parallel vertical incisions. The face is not visible in its entirety, being partially covered by the shoulder; the usual headgear with the flat top is less swollen than the one worn by the other figures and, after an almost pointed peak, slides over the shoulders. According to Leighton (1998) and Filippi (2014) this figure should be a woman but I think this figure has the same structure as the others in the circle and probably male genitalia are not

visible because they are covered by the leg. Furthermore, the characteristics we find in the female figures 12 and 17 (breasts, belly, slighter structure) are not present here and this would be the only dancing woman in a group of men. This would represent an *unicum* for the reason that the known testimonies of circular dance see homogeneous groups of only women or only men. In this regard, the cases of Gönnerdorf, Tell Halula and Tall-I Jari A could be cited (Garfinkel, 2014, pp. 6, 12). The headgear is different from that of the other figures: the terminal part is on the shoulders and appears to be crumpled. It could be the consequence of the movement providing an element for understanding its features: if it naturally follows the movement of the body it evidently does not have a rigid support (as it might seem from the other figures which show it as being extremely static), but it is a soft headgear.

Figure 15

Figure 15 is about 18 cm high. The incision seems less profound than the others in the group and is poorly characterized: the style seems to approach that of figure 17. The legs are joined and seem slightly bent; the feet are not well defined. The right arm is extended forward and the hand is indicated with a horizontal line; the left arm is bent at the side and the end is rounded. The left shoulder is one with the line of the head; probably the profile of the face is the protuberance on the left and, above it, the vertical incision would represent the face-headgear demarcation similarly to the other subjects of the frieze.

Figure 16

Figure 16 is about 25 cm high. It is represented in profile, striding to the right: the right leg is turned backward and shows a well defined foot with sole on the ground; the buttocks, the muscles of the leg and the calf are clearly visible. The left leg is extended forwards and shows an incomplete foot with the only reference to the ends that appear divergent. From the left leg hangs a rectilinear element that does not reach the floor. The waistline is emphasized by a horizontal incision and the genitals are visible (male gender). The back is slightly bent forwards and the right arm follows the weight of the body which leans on the left leg. The left arm is only partially visible, protruding from the back: it probably holds the long linear object that measures about 30 cm. The head is facing down and the headgear does not have the usual flat top. The figure shows the “bird-shaped beak”.

Figure 17

Figure 17 is about 15 cm high. It is moving and proceeds to the left. The legs are spread apart, the muscles are absent and the feet are not incised. The extremity of the right leg is not closed and the lines of the leg are parallel; the lines of the left leg instead have a convergent trend, even though they do not close at the extremity. The genitals are not visible and it is the only figure without joins at this point: at the genitals the lines remain open by drawing the inner profile of the right leg with an unusual oblique line that connects to the lower part of the leg. The abdomen is swollen and just above it is possible to notice a small protuberance that could be interpreted as breasts, so the gender could be female. The right arm is extended forward and interrupted in the middle, the left one descends along the side and has a pointed end. The back is affected by a huge protuberance that seems to push the subject forward. The head is uncovered and seems to tilt forward too.

Figure 18

Figure 18 is about 20 cm high. The subject has the legs apart and is facing right. The feet are not engraved: the right one presents divergent lines, the left one converging. Gender is defined (male) and a rectilinear element hangs in the middle of the legs. Neither the torso nor the legs appear particularly muscular and only the left arm is visible: lacking a hand, it is bent and pointing upwards. The right arm is not visible but it seems to hold a circular element described only in the lower boundary. The head seems to be uncovered, but the usual “bird-shaped beak” leans against the shoulder.

Figure 19

Figure 19 is about 21 cm high. The subject has the legs apart and moves to the left. The musculature of

the legs is evident while that of the thorax shows less vigor. The right leg ends with divergent lines, while the left one ends in a point. Gender is well defined (male) and the figure seems affected by kyphosis: this creates a concavity at the level of the pelvis and the belly is pushed forward. This could be the effect of the load that the figure seems to carry on the shoulders. The right arm is bent and facing upwards, the left arm is bent and seems to turn to the shoulder: in fact, in this case the lines are not closed as in the other figures without hands. The elbow is marked and the head is uncovered and facing down. The subject seems to bring three elements identifiable by the lines placed between the shoulders and the head: a horizontal element supported by both hands that extends beyond the shoulders and two vertical elements, one shorter, interrupted at forehead, and the other one longer, formed by two converging lines merging into one under the right arm.

Figure 20

Figure 20 is about 18 cm high. The right leg is extended forward and is interrupted at the knee as if it were covered by a curvilinear element; the left leg is complete but has no foot. Genitals are visible (male gender). The right arm is bent and turned back at ears; the left one is bent and brought to the chest. Neither of the hands are visible. The face is represented almost frontally and is devoid of facial features. The head seems to have thick hair that stops at the back; if this is headgear we would be looking at a specimen of a different type because the top does not appear flat as in the other cases.

4 Reconstruction of Dance

There is no doubt that all the represented figures are moving. The subjects have an attitude that is anything but static and each person poses in particular dynamic sequences. The name “dancers” is applicable to the figures of the frieze placed at the top and engraved with a more marked stroke (fig. 4). The figures are arranged in a circle with two central units and seem to move legs and arms in various ways.

Uniformity is one of the “dance indicators” and it could be considered as an alter ego of rhythm. The figures are similar in stature, structure, clothing (in this case absence of clothing), hair (the headgear, if present, is represented in the same way in all the figures) and in what was identified as a bird-beak mask, although not present in all subjects.

The sequences of the dance can be firstly reconstructed from the position of legs and arms. The movement seems to proceed counter clockwise: we can read it starting from figure 16 which does not belong to the circle but seems to be approaching to take part in it. The man is represented with his back turned to what we could call “the outside world” populated by animals and humans shown according to a different style. This closure can be interpreted in a physical, symbolic and conceptual sense. Physical because it may indicate the entry into a “closed” environment which could be the shelter under the rock that houses the engravings, symbolic because it could underline the otherness of the action (associated with the ritual sphere) compared to the rest of the composition (daily activities) and, finally, conceptual as in this way the author isolates the group from the rest of the engraved figures. Figure 16 is not dancing, but he is about to do so after having probably put down the lance that he holds in his left hand. The reading of the movement continues with figure 14 (figure 15 does not seem to belong to the group considering the different orientation, the different style of incision and the partial overlap of figure 14): with it “the real dance starts”. The subject seems to support the weight on the left leg and to be lifting the right leg while moving both arms; it is not clear whether the limbs are complete or the figure holds objects in the hands. Figures 13 and 8 have the same attitude showing that the movement provides a coordination between legs and arms: the arm is always raised in coordination with the bent leg. Figure 8 is smaller than the others, perhaps because it is in a marginal position compared to the point of view of the engraver or because it is conditioned by the pre-existing deer head. I believe this figure is not holding a lance in its left hand as stated by Filippi (2014): it is crossed by numerous vertical lines that could be a following intervention; moreover, figure 13, identical in movement, does not hold any object, nor do the other dancers of the group. Individuals 13 and 8 turn their backs on the central figures: probably the dance steps also included turning movements

Figure 4. Addaura cave, circle dance.

or the engraver wanted to show the face of all the participants and to avoid drawing them from behind. The peculiar representation of the feet offers the opportunity to make an observation: some characters, like figure 8 (but also nos. 5, 7, 11, 12), show the terminal part of the leg as pointed. Where the leg does not end up in a point, the author chooses to leave the profile of the foot open, as for example in figures 6, 13, 14, 16. This different portrayal could reflect a different movement of the leg connoting the representation of a remarkable realism: the pointed foot would represent the raised leg, while the incomplete termination would represent the foot resting on the ground through which the weight of the body is conveyed. If this interpretation were correct, figures 13 and 8 would show an alternate movement of the legs, together with the raising of the relative arm, which sees the knee raised towards the chest at the same time as the arm of the same side is raised upwards. Figures 5 and 6 are the most interesting of the scene. Both show the arms raised and legs apart. Figure 5 has an arched back probably because it is moving the chest repeatedly inward and outward accompanying this movement with the arms. The right leg ends in a point so it could be raised: the left leg also ends in a point but the right one shows a long appendix that highlights its detachment from the ground. Another interpretation could be that which unifies its movement with that of figure 6. This shows the arms raised and legs apart: its movement seems to be a classic “up and down” in which the whole body is lowered and raised again from a similar movement of the arms. Probably, the creation of the lower limbs of the figure 6 indicates a downward movement, while that of figure 5 an upward

movement. Figure 7 moves to the right, overlapping the left leg and arm with figure 6. This overlap could be interpreted as an indication of depth: probably figure 6 is behind figure 7. Finally figure 11: it is the least dynamic and its legs end in a point. Figure 12, much smaller in size, is standing; it does not seem to be moving like the others and it is in the background observing the scene. The interpretation of the latter as a woman is plausible because of the different anatomical characteristics (the musculature is not evident, the male genitalia and the “belt” are absent), the horizontal incision interpretable as breasts and the fact of having the head uncovered like figure 17 which, because of the swollen belly, shows more clearly its gender. The definition of gender is important because it gives us information about social behavior: if the woman is in the background and is not shown in movement, was she perhaps excluded from the dance? Figures 17, 18, 19 and 20 do not belong to the dance scene as their spatial otherness and the different direction of movement shows.

After analyzing the possibilities of movement it is possible to make two hypotheses about the “choreography” of the dance:

- All men are moving in a circle assuming different positions from time to time;
- Only figures 7, 11, 13, 8 (with the input 14) move in a circle and figures 5 and 6 move on the spot.

The last interpretation is motivated by the following considerations:

- Figures 7, 11, 13 and 8 are extremely uniform in attitude, in the direction of the movement, in the graphic rendering, and they are all wearing headgear;
- Figures 5 and 6 deviate from the others both for the position and because they are probably wearing masks. Their different position, slightly set back from the circle, is evidenced by the overlapping of figures 6 and 7. Only these figures raise their hands at the top: are they inciting the dance? Are they singing? Are they playing instruments?

Based on the movement it is possible to hypothesize the rhythmic aspect of the dance. This, primarily based on the up and down movement of figures 5 and 6, appears to be of a binary type.

We have no clue about musical instruments so we can only exclude or accommodate particular categories of instruments. If figures 7, 11, 13 and 8 are moving in a circle, moving legs and arms and performing turning movements, we can exclude the possibility that they may be playing large instruments or membranophones which require a standing position. It is possible that figure 14 is extended forward with both hands to play a percussion instrument at the bottom but we have no trace of this. If figures 5 and 6 are not taking part in the movement, they may be playing idiophones, raising these into the air. However, we can not exclude that the musical “background” to dance is achieved only through the voice: in this case, the absence of instruments would be due to the fact that the men of Addaura accompany their movement with singing.

Regarding the location of the performance we can make two hypotheses:

- It took place outdoors;
- It took place inside the cave.

The first hypothesis could be supported by the presence of animals. However, it must be emphasized that animals do not get confused with the “dancers” and seem to belong to an external world and to be other from the scene. Moreover, figures 16 and 14 seem to “enter” the circular system from “outside”. About the second hypothesis, we have to consider the size of the shelter together with the space occupied by the dancers. The most commonly used dimensional standard is that which defines the space required for the passage of a person as being 60 cm, instead the maximum width for opening arms is about 180 cm. Considering that the characters in question are dancing but do not seem to open their arms to full width, for an easy dance movement we need about 150 cm. We do not know the height of the central characters but considering that their legs are bent and that they are lying diagonally we can estimate their size as about 150 cm. It follows that to perform a circular movement, describing an ellipse as shown, a minimum width of 4.5 m is required. In the innermost part the cavity is 3.75 m wide thus making the movement rather awkward. The fact that the dance describes an ellipse instead would tend to place it just under the shelter, as it is easily explained by the shape of the cave which is narrow and long with the wide entrance that reaches to measure 9 m.

Finally, some consideration must be given to the motivations of dance. A lot has been written, in the years since the discovery, about the interpretation of the scene starting above all from the central figures alternatively defined as “acrobats” (Bovio Marconi, 1951–52, 1953, 1953a, 1953b, 1953c, 1955; Graziosi, 1956, 1973; Mezzena, 1976) or “condemned to death” (Blanc, 1954, 1954a; Chiappella, 1954; Bolzoni, 1986; Mussi & Zampetti, 2004). According to Mezzena, they are flying acrobats launched from figures 5 and 6 and collected by 14 and 13. Because they are ithyphallic they could be involved in an acrobatic performance related to fertility. Scholars who identify them as condemned to death interpret the incised lines of the back like cords that tie the ankles to the head causing self-loosening. Blanc says that we are facing a capital execution for ritual purposes and in this regard he cites numerous ethnographic examples to demonstrate the existence of a strong link between death and procreation (Blanc, 1955). As ethnographic research shows, dance can play different roles within a community; its purpose could be ritual, educative or social (Soar & Aamodt, 2014, p. 2). Dance facilitates religious experience because of its power to express emotions and states of mind. Circular dance in particular, can lead to a trance state that allows communication between man and the supernatural. The induction of an altered state of consciousness can be useful to healing rituals, rites of passage or to invoke deities or spirits. Dance can have an educative role because it categorizes the status of the various members of the community and can show “new status” becoming a substitute of formal laws (Garfinkel, 2018, p. 6). Finally, dance plays an important social role because it reflects interaction between people so it can help in understanding the structure and values of a society (Kaeppler, 2000, p. 117). In the case of Addaura, the presence of two men inside the circle could be the key to interpret the purpose of the dance. It is a circular dance that could lead to a trance state so it could be related to the ritual sphere. It could be a rite of passage from life to death, if the central figures are dead, or from childhood to adult life. The second hypothesis is supported by the only engraved eye of the scene in figure 9 and by the penis in erection, absent in the other figures. A connotation of adult life not specific of dance could be the headgear as worn also by figure 20 that is foreign to it (also figure 18 seems to wear it but it is not clear). Figure 19 lacks this but this could be linked to the fact that he is in another phase of life: his body and his attitude, far from the vigour of the men engraved higher, may lead to the interpretation of an elderly person or an outcast not admitted to community life. On the other hand, if groups 5–16 and 17–20 belong to chronologically distinct phases, the headgear could be intended as a specific ornament of the dance.

5 Conclusions

The Addaura Cave shows an example of circular dance performed by men and connected to rites of passage. The iconographic analysis of each figures has made it possible to reconstruct the choreography of the dance and a pattern of movements that animated the men involved. This evidence reveals an almost unexplored universe in Sicilian archaeological research, linked to the musical dimension, which could open up new scenarios and bring us closer to the “sensitivity” of prehistoric man.

The dance is part of a complex system that includes different components: the circumstances in which it takes place, the functions it performs, the aims it proposes and the emotions it generates. All this gives meaning to the dance and allows us to open a window through which we glimpse the past and know it in a more complete and profound way.

Acknowledgments: I thank Prof. Pietro Militello (University of Catania) and Prof. Adje Both (DAI) who have been generous with their advice and time.

I also thank Alessandro Falcioni for the digital component.

References

- Baker, F. & Chippindale, C. (2013). *Pitoti. Arte Rupestre Digitale dell'Europa Preistorica: Beni Culturali, Film, Archeologia. Catalogo della mostra (Milano, Triennale, 1ottobre-4 novembre 2012)*. Skira.
- Blanc, A. C. (1954). Considerazioni su due figure dell'Addaura. *Quaternaria*, 1, 176–180.

- Blanc, A. C. (1954a). Il sacrificio umano dell'Addaura ed il nesso ideologico tra morte e generazione nella mentalità primitiva. *Quaternaria, I*, 184–186.
- Blanc, A. C. (1955). Il sacrificio umano dell'Addaura e la messa a morte rituale mediante strangolamento nell'etnologia e nella paletnologia. *Quaternaria, II*, 213–223.
- Bolzoni, G. (1986). Nuove osservazioni sulle incisioni della Grotta dell'Addaura del Monte Pellegrino (Palermo). *Atti della Società Toscana di Scienze Naturali, XCII*, 321–329.
- Bovio Marconi, J. (1951–52). Sui Graffiti dell'Addaura. *Rivista di Antropologia, 40*, 55–64.
- Bovio Marconi, J. (1953). Incisioni rupestri dell'Addaura (Palermo). *Bullettino di Paletnologia Italiana, VIII*, 5–22.
- Bovio Marconi, J. (1953a). Interpretazione dell'arte parietale dell'Addaura. *Bollettino d'Arte, a. XXXVIII*, 61–68.
- Bovio Marconi, J. (1953b). Sulle forme schematizzate dei graffiti dell'Addaura (Palermo). *Atti del IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi del Quaternario*, 1–7.
- Bovio Marconi, J. (1953c). Sui graffiti dell'Addaura. *Rivista di Antropologia, 40*, 55–64.
- Bovio Marconi, J. (1955). Sull'esegesi del graffito dell'Addaura (Palermo). *Quaternaria, II*, 201–207.
- Chiappella, V. G. (1954). Altre considerazioni sugli "Acrobati" dell'Addaura. *Quaternaria, I*, 181–183.
- Filippi, A. (2014). *I danzatori dell'Addaura. Le radici preistoriche della religiosità in Sicilia*. Erice.
- Garfinkel, Y. (2003). *Dancing at the Dawn of Agriculture*. University of Texas Press.
- Garfinkel, Y. (2010). Dancing in Prehistoric Europe. *Documenta Praehistorica, XXXVII*, 205–214.
- Garfinkel, Y. (2014). Archaeology of Dance. In K. Soar & C. Aamodt (Eds.), *Archaeological approaches to dance performance* (pp. 5–14). Oxford: BAR International Series 2622.
- Garfinkel, Y. (2018). The evolution of human dance: courtship, rites of passage, trance, calendrical ceremonies and the professional dancer. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal, 28*(2), 1–16. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959774317000865>
- Graziosi, P. (1956). Qualche osservazione sui graffiti rupestri della Grotta dell'Addaura presso Palermo. *Bullettino di Paletnologia Italiana, 65*(1), 285–295.
- Graziosi, P. (1973). *L'arte preistorica in Italia*. Firenze.
- Kaeppler, A. L. (2000). Dance Ethnology and the Anthropology of Dance. *Dance Research Journal 32*(1), 161–125.
- Leighton, R. (1998). *Sicily before History*. Cornell University Press.
- Mezzena, F. (1976). Nuova interpretazione delle incisioni parietali paleolitiche della Grotta Addaura a Palermo. *Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche, XXXI*(1), 61–85.
- Mussi, M. & Zampetti, D. (2004). Le raffigurazioni parietali dell'Addaura in una prospettiva europea. In G. Grotta, A. Scuderi, S. Tusa, A. Vintaloro (Eds.), *Primo Congresso Internazionale di Preistoria e Protostoria Siciliane* (pp. 257–266). Corleone.
- Soar, K. & Aamodt, C. (2014). Archaeological Approaches to Dance Performance: An Introduction. In K. Soar & C. Aamodt (Eds.), *Archaeological approaches to dance performance* (pp. 1–4). Oxford: BAR International Series 2622.
- Tusa, S. (2004). L'arte preistorica in Sicilia. *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Preistorici, 34*, 33–88.