



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



## The significance of wine and the vine in the odyssey, suggestions for new technologies and experiential teaching approaches

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### Abstract

The following study tries to present the multidimensional culture and importance of wine, analyzing examples from the Odyssey as one of the greatest heroic epics of antiquity. Through his epics, Homer deals with important values such as faith, a person's love for the country, as well as the power to overcome difficulties. However, the institution that seems to be of utmost importance, especially in the Odyssey, is that of "filoxenia" (hospitality), since the words "xenos" (foreigner) and "filoxenia" (hospitality) had great value in antiquity. All of the above is highlighted through the events and adventures that take place, with wine having an important place in terms of the development of the plot of the Homeric epic.

Education is one of the areas, where New Technologies can be applied, and, therefore, have brought a variety of changes, perspectives and possibilities, both in teaching and learning. Similar efforts have been made to teach the "Odyssey" in schools, as well as use experiential approaches to attract adult cultural tourists.

**Keywords:** Wine; "Filoxenia" (Hospitality); Homeric Epics; Odyssey; Journey; New Technologies; e-Culture

### 1. Introduction

Wine has been a powerful symbol of hospitality and social communication since ancient times. Offering wine to guests is traditionally considered a sign of kindness and generosity, creating a warm and friendly environment (Page, 1988). In social gatherings, wine acts as a catalyst for conversation, supporting the social interaction and the cultivation of friendship. It embodies the concept of friendship, social cohesion and cultural tradition and plays a central role in people's relationships (Freely, 2016). According to Lesky (2014), the success of the Iliad and the Odyssey during antiquity was enormous. Homer was the object of great admiration throughout Greek antiquity, and the memorization of his poetry was an essential part of the education of the Greeks.

Through the Homeric epics one can explore the human existence, the social structure, and the spiritual thought of the ancient Greek culture of which hospitality is a part. Wine in the "Odyssey" is not just an element of everyday life, but a multidimensional symbol of hospitality. The presence and role of wine reveal a rich dimension of ancient Greek culture and human nature as it is not a simple drink but a multiple symbol of concepts and values. Analyzing the use and significance of wine in the "Odyssey" also reveals aspects of human character. Teachers, in their effort to convey the meanings of the "Odyssey" to the students, use the new technologies, with educational games in the mythological context of the Odyssey aiming at entertainment, as well as educational goals. Moreover, many forums and websites have been created, where anyone can take ideas and adapt them to their students, in order to achieve the best possible result. This new reality could contribute to the effective teaching of "Odyssey" and its messages, but calls for appropriate strategies, which will allow the implementation of pedagogical goals with the integrated, pedagogical, social and cultural

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approach of ICT. Thus, the new technologies will be the means of a wider educational reform and social reorganization (Vasilikopoulou,Retalis,2008), (Sones,1944)( Adamidou 2014

The interest in the "Odyssey" is also evident in the survey by Oikonomou et al (2024), which showed that the "Odyssey" is an important field of interest for experiential theatrical actions in the streets of Athens. Based on the survey data, more than 80% of the surveyed cultural tourists responded that they are willing to watch the Odyssey performed in outdoor spaces in Athens in an experiential way, while a percent of 75.6% would be willing to pay for it. Equally important is the interest in watching the Odyssey in ancient theaters.

Furthermore, the aforementioned research showed that the experiential cultural routes in the "steps of Odysseus", accompanied by texts and theatrical actions in a virtual action context, would help those interested, regardless of age, to understand more clearly the content of the epic.( Ikonomou et al.2024)

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## 2. Chronology

According to Andò (2019), mythology claims that the cultivation of the vine was brought to Greece by Bacchus from the Indies. From Greece, however, it spread to all the Mediterranean countries and Europe. According to mythology, Dionysus gave a vine to the king of Calydonia, Oeneas, and from there came the word "oenos" (wine). Later, from the habit of the ancients to mix wine with water ("krama" / "krasi" / "anamixi", ie. alcohol/brewing/mixing) the term "krasi" (wine) prevailed. Names such as Oinousses, Oinoi, Oinophyta, Oinopeias are prominent evidence of the cultivation of the vine and the production of wine in our country. According to Papadakis (2011), remains of wine were found in the jars of a settlement of the 3rd millennium BC, in South Crete. The chemical analyzes made on amphorae in Mycenae showed a variety of types of wine with resin (Gerari, 2024). The vine is not just an agricultural product, but is also connected to the economy, science, culture and, most of all, to people's everyday life. It is the product that gives energy, heals and sterilizes. Wine intertwined with food and culture is a product linked to the economy of our country. It has an important place in our religion, too. Noah took a vine with him, Christ in Cana turned water into wine and at the Last Supper he offered wine to his disciples with the well-known phrase "this is my blood". The vineyards and wine of many monasteries are famous (Lakoutsis 2014).

Today, according to Archontakis (2024), red wine is considered beneficial for heart diseases, as the tannins it contains act as antioxidants and antiaging since they protect cells. Fleming admitted that penicillin cures the sick but wine raises the dead. Within modern Greek literature, which is a rich world full of myths, stories and journeys, a multi-dimensional look at the daily life, beliefs and traditions of ancient Greece is offered and, according to Beta (2002), one of the most defining elements of this literature is that when wine is mentioned, it lends itself to the study of literary motifs that, on one hand, are part of everyday life and, on the other, they symbolize deeper religious and cultural values. Wine, being the most ancient drink on earth, makes it a key pillar in Greek culture and civilization, thus reflecting man's relationship with tradition, nature, and the art of its own production, oenology.

The cultural and historical value of wine in Greece is distinctive and indisputable, as since ancient ceremonies its role is combined with social cohesion, celebratory character and spiritual quest. From ancient epic works to modern literary texts, wine is a frequent motif used to express a multitude of emotions and themes, from human euphoria and social interaction to philosophical musings.

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## 3. The wine and the vine in homer

The stories told by Homer offer numerous testimonies regarding the societies and customs, the living conditions, as well as the values of the Greeks of early antiquity (de Romilly, 1994: Latacz, 2000).

The mention of wine in Homer's epic takes place in various moments, where wine is presented as a protagonist in moments of communication, joy, hospitality, while in other circumstances it functions as a means of exploring human experience and emotions. It is the symbol of kindness, wealth and hospitality. In the Homeric epics, many famous wines of the time are mentioned such as Pramnios and Ismarikos, and many cities are given adjectives such as "ampeloessa" (full of vines) and "polystaphylos" (full of grapes), to emphasize the production of the wines and to state, in today's terms, the appellation of origin.

As the epic progresses, wine has many different symbolic uses which are then mentioned, as following:

### **3.1. Wine as a symbol of Hospitality and Culture**

According to Reece (1993), there are twelve hospitality scenes in the *Odyssey*. The provision of hospitality was a sacred institution, by the application of which a person's character was judged. The standard of hospitality provided for a treat of wine. Aged wines were, as is the case today, of great value; this is why Nestor treats Telemachus with an eleven-year-old wine, to honor him (Kakridis, 2006).

The Supper of the Gods takes place in Pylos. This folk banquet is described in rhapsody C (v. 5-9, 43-50, 339-341), where Telemachus and his entourage drink from malamentous cups, after previously taking turns into having a libation, one after the other, in order to please the gods; the wine is characterized as sweet drink (Kakridis, 1980). The offering of wine by the hosts to their guests is a sign of hospitality and generosity. This custom is deeply rooted in ancient Greek culture and reflects the values of hospitality and social solidarity. Hospitality in ancient times had a dominant role, hence the use of the phrase "Xenios Dias"/ Hospitable Zeus (Zygouraki, 2021). In Rhapsody K, the reference to hospitality is made through the creation of comfortable conditions for those present with the use of long-haired handmade blankets ("flokates"), linen sheets and other items. The protagonist here is the wine, as there is a reference, not only to the type of wine served, but also to the tableware used, made of gold and silver (v. 353-359 p. 125).

### **3.2. Wine as a communication and entertainment tool**

Wine is present in the scenes of the celebration. It symbolizes joy, reunion, the regaining of the kingdom and the resumption of normal life. During meals and celebrations it is an essential accompaniment and symbolizes social unity, politeness and prosperity. It accompanies the characters in their meetings, and acts as a means of joy and communication. In the first rhapsody, when the suitors enter the palace while they are eating and their glasses are overflowing with wine, they are accompanied by the psalms and the guitar of Phemius (a 144-154:9). In the ninth rhapsody, while the Phaeacians are gathered, Odysseus and the singer Demodocus are surrounded by abundant food and drink in the palace of Alkinoos (v. 71-72 p. 89). In the continuation of the same rhapsody, Odysseus returns from his bath, thanks Nafsika for her help and sits next to Alkinoos, again having for company the wine they were serving at that time (v. 469-470 p. 99). In the tenth rhapsody, Odysseus and his companions enjoy the "all-sweet" wine (p. 183-184, p. 120). The mention of wine even stigmatizes the acquaintance of Odysseus, as Pallas narrates in the first rhapsody how Odysseus was "having fun drinking their wine" (a 255-259 p. 11). (Venini, 1989)

### **3.3. Wine as a strategic tool**

According to Homer, the resourceful Odysseus uses wine as a means of "escape", as well as a springboard to achieve his goals. In Homer's narrative, readers are given the opportunity to recognize this motive, whether it is a means of escape or oblivion. In the second rhapsody, Odysseus and his men tie the sails of the ship and set sail with wine-drenched cups and wine drops falling, in homage to the immortal gods and especially to the goddess Athena, wishing to have good journey; as a result, the ship sails with the help of a strong, favorable wind (v. 430-435, p. 27).

Odysseus' use of wine during his confrontation with Polyphemus demonstrates the hero's intelligence and resourcefulness. Instead of using force, Odysseus uses brains and diplomacy to achieve his goal. Wine, here, becomes a tool of intelligence and strategic ingenuity. In the eighth rhapsody, where it is mentioned that "he was blessed with favorable wind and is 'loaded' with bread again, wine but also immortal dresses" (v. 264-266 p. 86), Odysseus the resourceful, attempting to save himself from the "monster" on his way, he offers him wine as a token of thanks, so that he will let him return to his homeland. But in reality, what Odysseus seeks behind this act is to succeed in getting the Cyclops drunk, so they can all escape from him (v. 345-380, p. 110).

### **3.4. Wine as an element of prosperity**

One of the important roles that wine plays during the epic is its usefulness as an element of highlighting the prosperity of the kingdom, as well as demonstrating social status. In the first rhapsody, the "prominent servants" are shown once again serving wine to all present in the hall (v. 109-110 p. 8 and 146-148 p. 9), while in the second rhapsody, the importance of wine is highlighted, as in the palace of Odysseus it was kept in the same place as a valuable commodity, such as gold, (v. 337-342 pp. 24-25), as well as that "the chamberlain guarded the wines night and day" (345: 26). Telemachus asks for jugs of sweet wine, the best of what they have, which suggests, according to Klingner (1999) that he seeks to please his guest, but also to show him, in this way, the bliss of their kingdom. ( 349-356:25). Athena is offered wine in a golden cup, an act that impresses and pleases her ( 51-53 p. 29). In the continuation of the third rhapsody, at yet another banquet, the accompaniment of the wine in "all-gold" glasses is not omitted. It shows, once again, the wealth

of the kingdoms of the time. (470-473: 39). In the rhapsody, along with valuable gifts such as gold and a silver wine mixing vessel, wine is also given, which shows that it was considered a commodity of the highest importance ( 202-207:106).

### 3.5. Wine and social well-being

It was considered necessary to have wine in the cellar together with other goods. As described in the second rhapsody, verses 354-360, it. "And there was copper, and in a row against the wall leaning, jars of old sweet wine full, unquestioned, divine drink, for the wise Odysseus, when he returns home after much suffering". The wine cellars described in Nestor's palace are described in the third rhapsody, in verses 390 -392. In the 7th ode, the garden of Laertes full of trees and the thylopedon is presented and many scenes are described, where the protagonists drink wine mixed with water (124,161,166) "they mix wine in cups with water - and every now and then the servant passed by, filling the cups up with wine; teenagers with cups overflowed with my unfortunate father's wine, so that he returns, if he is saved from death and from his heavy fate". Wine was also used as a means of reward and social well-being, as a form of giving away/ generosity, always being referenced during moments of joy, revelry but also compassion. From the very beginning of the first rhapsody, the question arises of where Odysseus might be and what his "fate" might be. The people he has left behind, according to Klingner (1999), are still at his side and still have faith and hope that he is alive and will return. Even the old woman who cares for him, leaves a "present" with wine and food in his vineyard, in the hope that he will return and find it. "... he doesn't come to the state anymore, he just sits outside in the fields and is tyrannized, and an old woman cares for him in front of him carrying food and wine, as if your father was still in his farm, in the eight vineyards.. But the gods would have certainly blocked his way. No, Odysseus the noble-born is not dead yet!" (185-196: 10). Penelope is a tragic figure as she recounts her "longing" for her beloved, as she does not know where he is and what fate has in store for him. The song of Femius, the feast and the people drinking wine, do not bring any joy to Penelope who misses her lover, telling the singer, "One of them, whichever you want, sit down and sing to them, and let the dumb drink the wine, but this song is sad enough! Every time my heart is torn, what an unforgettable sorrow has struck me above all others, I do not forget my brave man, whom I have missed..." (339-344: 13).

The second rhapsody focuses on the "ruin" that the palace has suffered, but also the difficulties that cannot be dealt with during Odysseus' absence. "The living things that are slaughtered, the wine that is hypothetically an "instrument" of prosperity, cannot cover the absence of the resourceful" (55-59:18).

### 3.6. Wine and Travels

Odysseus prepares for the journey as mentioned in the fifth and eight rhapsodies. "And I will put bread, water and red wine inside, so that you will have something to eat, so that you will not lack and hunger will tame you" and I will dress you in clothes..." (v. 165-170, p. 63). "He carried two sacks for him first; the one had black wine, the other one had water — the bigger one — and also, in the small bag with the food, and he had delicious offerings, and, finally he was sent a favorable, strong wind " (v.265-269, p.66). Telemachus, guided by Athena, prepares for a journey in search of Odysseus, according to Pikoulas (2003), with the aim to restore prosperity in the palace and kick out the suitors. "Food in containers and wine in jugs were among the first things prepared for this journey (v.288-295, p. 23).

### 3.7. Wine and Banquets

In ancient times they preferred dark red wine; to preserve it, they sometimes added salt, honey and various aromatics and pine resin and aged it for 5-10 years, kept in amphoras in the basements. A wine preparation was the Homeric Cykeonas (water, barley and herbs), which was made from Pramnios wine. Pramnios wine was mentioned to be "dry" and "austere", meaning astringent. During excavations, various vases with performances from banquets have been found. The most widespread was the beetle which was the main symbol of Dionysus. In Homer's texts, wine flows abundantly at every meal, is toasted to the gods and consumed during all three meals of the day. He glorifies the battles fought by his heroes for their city and for their love (20th rhapsody, p.460-461). He magnifies its usefulness when consumed in moderation, "it harms (the wine) the one who drinks it greedily". Civilized wine drinking requires that they drink the wine watered down so as not to get drunk in contrast to the barbarians and uncouth like Polyphemus who drinks it unquestioned. In the rhapsody o (335-339) he also mentions the vines of Laertes "You gave me twelve pear trees, forty fig trees, ten apple trees and you proposed to give me vines - fifty ones loaded with grapes, which, when the time came, they would bear fruit".

### 3.8. Wind and Vine

Odysseus praises the estate of King Alkinoos and describes the "thylopedon", i.e. the place where the grapes were sundried and pressed with stone cylinders. In his text, the poet uses the adjectives "idys" which means sweet-drinking, "eliidis", "melifron" (warms the heart), "akirasios" i.e. plentiful, "evinora" which suits the brave ones, "eristaphylo" from

diligently cultivated grapes and "athesfato" (infinite); also "gerusion" (wine of the lords), which is Ethiopian/"ethiops", i.e. dark brown and is the boiled wine kept in the cellars, to take with them on their journeys and the melikretos, which is used for libations. Telemachus takes this wine with him when he goes to Sparta to look for his father. The sea is likened with dark wine and Odysseus is sailing in the winey sea. (Pantermali-Poulaki, 2007).

### 3.9. Wine and Religion

Wine in religion had a prominent place. With wine the ancient Greeks honored the gods at libations with vessels of wine to accompany they said goodbye to their dead. Wine in the "Odyssey" also reflects its importance in ancient Greek religion and rituals. In addition, it is often used in sacrifices and ceremonies as an offering to the gods, strengthening the connection between the divine and the human worlds. In banquets preceded by libations, people from the same social circle participate and the boundaries between fellow drinkers and political council are not distinct. (Casson, 1995)

In the tenth rhapsody (236-243), Circe offers Odysseus' companions Pramnios wine and then transforms them into pigs. Nestoras and Aeolus offer their guests wine in cups filled to the brim. (Maronitis, 2009).

During libations, to please or ask something from the gods, red wine is used as a simulation of the nectar of the gods; people wish for whatever they desire and after pouring, they drink watered wine (fifth rhapsody: 92-94, third rhapsody: 48-50, thirtieth rhapsody: 369-370). Reinhardt (1999) describes that during pourings performed in honor of the dead, a mixture of wine, honey and water is used, which is poured three times on the ground (twentieth rhapsody: 519).

### 3.10. Wine and Risk

During Odysseus' journey wine can also be associated with situations, where it can become dangerous.

We see Helen putting some herb into the wine of Menelaus and Telemachus, which had the ability to make the drinker ignore any sadness and bitterness weighing on him. Thus, wine is also presented as a means that can mislead someone, if some substance is mixed with it (ninth rhapsody, 219-226: 45).

The most famous representation of wine in the "Odyssey" is the scene with Polyphemus. Odysseus and his companions encounter the Cyclops, Polyphemus, who locks them in his cave. Odysseus plans his escape using wine. He offers Polyphemus strong wine, which intoxicates him and renders him vulnerable, allowing Odysseus and his companions to blind the Cyclops and escape. This scene shows wine as a tool of deceitful planning and resourcefulness (Jacoby, 1999). In his account of Odysseus, the Cyclops describes how he managed to blind him, by giving him wine, in order to escape. "But I was always waiting for a man to arrive on our island and be handsome and tall, with too much bravery, and now this short, demented, lost man has taken my eye out, clouding my mind with wine!" (tenth rhapsody, 510-516:114).

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## 4. The role of digital technologies, e-culture and the wine

Electronic - digital culture (e-culture) comes from the convergence of ICT with the traditional form of the cultural sector of human activity. E-culture includes all the axes and manifestations of culture with the strict or in the loosest sense of the term, which are now created, presented, stored, retrieved, transmitted, displayed, accessed, etc., media from the use of ICT services and facilities.

The usage of wine is an ancient cultural phenomenon which we have to see it within the digital age. Generally speaking, E-culture is the culmination of human creativity and communication within the context of information technology adoption. It is defined by the development of free information spaces, virtual forms of expression, remote technologies, and liberal use of content. In conclusion, we stress the importance of all digital technologies in the field of culture and education as an all, even for the wine cultural aspects. These technologies are highly effective and productive, facilitate and improve cultural and educational procedures through mobile devices that bring cultural and educational activities anywhere [31-33], various ICTs applications that are the main supporters of culture-education [34-39], and AI, STEM, Games and ROBOTICS [40-45] that raise culture-education to new performance levels. Furthermore, the development and integration of ICTs with theories and models of metacognition, mindfulness, meditation, and the development of emotional intelligence [46-54], accelerates and improves educational practices and results as well as the improvement and adoption of cultural perspectives for all people with and without disabilities.

## 5. Conclusion

Wine is intertwined with people in a religious and social sequence. It has been identified with the expression of joy and unhappiness since ancient times. Odysseus and his companions through the journey enable the reader to discover the multidimensional significance of wine in the epic. It is a necessary accompaniment to banquets and religious ceremonies, while its reckless use has a high degree of risk.

Wine is not only associated with enjoyment and celebration, but carries deeper symbolisms related to culture, communication, well-being, social well-being, excellence, strategic resourcefulness and, most of all, hospitality, for which it is an essential ingredient.

The creation of "Odyssey" themed activities is a modern trend in the field of education and tourism that helps the interested parties of all ages loving the meanings and significance of them, and spreads the importance of Homer within and beyond borders.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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