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‘Now I still honour you ... the first honours are yours’: Women’s public and private epigraphic texts from Classical Greece

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Introduction

- 1 The male dominance of Classical Greek society in politics and the arts leaves women normally defined as of little consequence relative to their male contemporaries. In the light of these ancient opinions, modern scholarship has struggled to find the significance of women in this world. Indeed, some scholars have even suggested that in importance citizen women were ranked nearly as low as slaves.¹ Overall, the issue is compounded by the fact that the social position of women within the Greek polis was commonly defined by their relationship to men: here women existed as mothers, daughters, wives and concubines, not as equals and not as individuals recognised by their own identities.
- 2 Exceptions allowed to the idea of the low status of women do, however, appear in terms of religion and marriage. It is acknowledged that women had important roles to play in religion, both in public cult and in private worship. Indeed, women were recognised publicly for contributions to the religious life of the polis.² With respect to marriage, the social position and parentage of a woman were important considerations. From 451/0 BCE, an Athenian bride had to

have two Athenian parents for a marriage to be lawful. Within the elite class, the status of her father, the financial situation of the family as well as the woman's own reputation were factors in a process in which marriage was arranged for a woman by her father.³

- 3 Mysogonistic views on the nature of women can be attested in many ancient male writers: Hesiod and Semonides are but two examples.⁴ However, literary evidence offers counters to the negative view of the innate character of women: Euripides' Iphigenia courageously accepts her own death. She is more than willing to save Hellas by the ultimate act of self-sacrifice. Moreover, she sees herself winning public recognition and everlasting glory, for so doing (IA 1383-4). She understands and articulates her own importance to Hellas. Her argument is strong and convincing.⁵ Yet, in contrast, Euripides has her say:

εἷς γ' ἀνὴρ κρείσσων γυναικῶν μυρίων ὀρᾶν φάος

Indeed, it is better for a one man to see the light than ten thousand women (Eur. IA 1394).

- 4 In this paper, I aim to question the view that women were considered of little consequence in Classical Greek society by reviewing evidence for what women thought and said about themselves and other women. The traditional view of the position of women in Greek society is founded on the privileging of the importance of the political and military world, the sole preserve of men.⁶ In addition, the literary sources normally chosen to construct this view of the significance of women were written by men and offer a strongly androcentric perspective.⁷ I argue that the views of women about women are equally valid and should be read to balance the traditional viewpoint.
- 5 To try to understand the perspective women in Classical Greece held about themselves and other women we need to hear women's voices. These are not so easy to find. The nature of publication in antiquity and genres of performance available, along with societal norms, restricted opportunities for women to express themselves in public and the sort of contexts in which their voices could be preserved. This is particularly true of Archaic and Classical Greece. Indeed,

modern scholarship has long doubted that many women in Classical Greece could read and write, making preservation of their views a mute point. Yet there are, of course, texts by Sappho and other women writers from Archaic and Classical Greece which have survived in fragments and have been well studied.⁸ These, plus the many dedications with inscriptions by and to women and images of women with scrolls indicate that women (at the very least those of the elite class) were well able to read and write.⁹

6 In this paper I review some of the epigraphic evidence from Classical Greece for women's voices. In illustrating this genre of discourse, I present examples of dedications and epitaphs. We cannot be sure who wrote these texts, but where the dedicant is a woman alone, we can conclude that she, at the very least, had a measure of control over the wording of the inscription made in her name.¹⁰

7 The dedicatory inscriptions and epitaphs are public texts. To contrast these with more private views expressed by women, I have drawn on curse texts and questions put to a god by women. These provide some excellent examples of women's thoughts on themselves and other women.¹¹ While the very particular genre of each of these types of evidence restricts the scope and nature of the views expressed, they nevertheless reveal some aspects of the lives of women from a female perspective. Such texts by women should be recognised as representing women's voices. They prove not to be as androcentric as sources written by men and reveal how significant women saw their own lives and the lives of other women.

Dedications from Classical Greece

8 Numerous inscribed dedications have survived that include both male and female members of a family; there are also many examples of offerings by women in their own names for themselves or for other family members. Such dedications by women provided a mechanism for them to express a public voice.¹² The statue that Iphidike dedicated to Athena at the end of the 6th century BCE has been lost, but the small marble column on which it was mounted has survived. It is inscribed with a hexametric inscription which begins with the name

of the dedicator. The name of the artist is also provided, demonstrating to all who viewed it the quality and value of the sculpture.

Ἄρχερμος ἐποίησεν ὁ Χῖος.
Ἴφιδίκε μ' ἀνέθεκεν Ἀθηναίαι πολιόχοι.

Archermos the Chian made [me].
Iphidike dedicated me to Athena City-Guardian. ¹³

- 9 The author of the epigram remains anonymous and thus it is the statue that in effect speaks. Often on the Acropolis this would be a kore—a representation of a girl—though it has been suggested that this statue may instead have been a Nike ('Victory'), also a female figure.¹⁴ An inscribed dedication to a god has more than one purpose. Iphidike's dedicatory text recognises Athena for her role as the protector of the city: her gift thanks the goddess for this role and seeks to enhance the god's goodwill, from which the whole city will benefit.¹⁵ Yet the public display of this gift is a declaration by Iphidike of her own worth, wealth and piety too. In her text, voiced for her by a female statue (human or god), she does not include the name of her father nor any husband she may have had: the donation is hers alone. There is no question that a visitor to the Acropolis of Athens would see this as a declaration by Iphidike of her own success, functioning as a mechanism for her as a donor to enhance her own social standing along with the blessing of the god. As such it is both a religious and political act. The statue gives materiality to a female voice, while the viewer would vocalise the statue's text as they read it aloud, giving voice to its words.¹⁶
- 10 Some small items which were dedicated had brief texts to give them voice too. There is a formula used for such texts: 'x dedicated me', followed by the name of the deity to whom the offering is made. The dedications of Timagora, Myrto and Nikatta to Athena, found on the Athenian acropolis, are examples:

Τιμαγόρα μ' ἀ[ν]έθεκε τᾶθηναίαι. Timagora dedicated me to Athena. ¹⁷

Μυρτὸ μ' ἀνέθεκεν ἰ τᾶθενᾶι. Myrto dedicated me to Athena. ¹⁸

Νικαττ' ἀνέθεκεν τὰθ[εναίαι]. Nikatta dedicated (this/me) to Athena.¹⁹

11 These short texts label the gifts with the key information the dedicator wanted known: who gave them and which god they were for. Women's dedications follow the same formula used by men. Yet it is nevertheless significant in these examples that the women see no need to define themselves by reference to a father or husband. The woman's name appears alone and thus we read the gift as personal to her. The χάρις ('divine favour') exchanged thereby with the goddess is personal, and the material representation of the favour is made manifest in the object inscribed with the name of the donor alone.

12 In another example from an offering made on the Acropolis, Meneia articulates a personal reason for her dedication:

Ἀθηνάαι Μένεια ἀνέθηκεν | ὄψιν ἰδοῦσα ἀρετὴν τῆς θεοῦ.

Meneia dedicated (me/this) to Athena upon seeing in a vision the excellence of the god.²⁰

13 This dedication testifies publicly to a personal connection between Meneia and Athena. A vision of the god's 'excellence' marks Meneia out as being especially honoured by the deity, reflecting her own excellence.

14 That women could earn their own living is also attested by dedications mentioning tithes, such as those by Smikythe and Mikythe (below). Their dedications proclaim a personal connection with the god for these women. In reporting the fulfilment of a vow, they imply that the god has listened to and answered their prayers: there has been an exchange of χάρις.

Σμικύθε πλύντρια δεκάτεν ἀνέθεκεν.

Smikythe, a washerwoman, dedicated a tithe.²¹

[Μ]ικύθη μ' ἀνέ[θηκεν] | [Ἀθ]ηναίηι τό[δ'] ἄγαλμα | [εὐξ]αμένη
δ[εκάτην] | [καὶ] ὑπὲρ πα[ίδων] | [κ]αὶ ἑαυτῆ[ς]. | Εὐφρων [ἐποίη]σευ.

Mikythe dedicated me, this statue, to Athena, after vowing a tithe on behalf of her children and herself. Euphron made (me/this statue).²²

- 15 Smikythe has been seen as a woman of modest means who nevertheless found the resources to dedicate a marble basin in her own name.²³ The inscription was placed on the pedestal that supported her basin and was found on the Acropolis in debris inside the Parthenon. As with Iphidike, neither woman mentions a male authority figure in her life. Mikythe pointedly does not even mention the father of her children. Her vow is her own, celebrating her success as a mother as well as a working woman. She had prayed to the god and promised a 'tenth', a portion of her earnings, and the statue she commissioned represents her success in fulfilling this promise.²⁴ Mikythe's text is written in the Ionic alphabet. She does not say where she is from, but the dialect of her text personalizes her voice, defining her as a non-Athenian. Both of these inscriptions are not just public demonstrations of the piety of the donors, but personal proclamations of economic success by Smikythe and Mikythe, women who are able to demonstrate that they have accumulated material resources that they can, in part, attribute to Athena's good will. In voicing this success (as well as Mikythe's success as a mother) these women promote their own achievements. The female voice and dialect of these dedications says something about who the women were, making them known to the community, while also publicly acknowledging that the god has bestowed her χάρις divine favour upon them.
- 16 Dedications like these by women on the Acropolis of Athens are well attested both by extant inscriptions on objects or their bases and from temple inventories. Such donations made women visible through their material piety and testify to their sense of self-importance in making a connection with a deity. This was, in the first instance, a personal connection, but one that could also profit their family and even the wider community through the χάρις of the god.²⁵ Mikythe reveals a sense of self-importance by commissioning a named artist to announce her own value to the Athenians and the god herself. She proclaims that importance through her public donation to Athena.

- 17 A vow such as the one Mikythe made to Athena was a serious matter. It represented an exchange between the donor and the god, a communication with the god in which the dedication of a gift is pledged in return for the god's help.²⁶ Such dedications by women are not restricted to Athens. For example, a woman named Phillo dedicated a small bronze statue of a *κνηφόρος* ('basket carrier'- an honorific religious role for young women) in Posidonia, a colony of Sybaris in Italy. The inscription on it notes that the offering was also a tithe to Athena.

τάθ'ἀναγι Φιλλῶ | Χαρμυλίδα δεκάταν.

Phillo, daughter of Charmylidas, (dedicated) a tithe to Athena.²⁷

- 18 This text speaks to the success of Phillo in acquiring the resources for the tithe which she celebrates publicly through her gift. In contrast to Smikythe and Mikythe, Phillo does give her father's name. Her gift to Athena, a statuette of a woman with a mirror, is a particularly feminine gendered object, marking the gift as more personal to the woman who gave it. This dedication is yet another example of a woman demonstrating both her piety and her conspicuous engagement with the god. The implication, through the object representing a portion of her wealth, is that Athena has supported her success.
- 19 While religion was central to daily life and women have long been connected to religious observances, such offerings do not just speak to the religious sentiments of the women involved. The dedications provide the donor with status within her community and celebrate the *χάρις* they have achieved with the god. The donation was a display of their wealth made within a society that was intrinsically competitive and where a citizen's social class was defined by wealth. It was a status symbol as much as an act of piety. That these women labelled their offerings demonstrates engagement with a competitive social environment in a way that we normally think of in the context of male politics. These women positioned themselves within the polis and acted as significant political agents.
- 20 The dedication by a woman named Melinna is a further example of this:

χερσί τε καὶ τέχ[ν]αις ἔργων | τόλμαις τε δικαίαις | θρεψαμένη τέκνων
γεν[εά]ν | ἀνέθηκε Μέλιννα | σοὶ τήνδε μνήμην, θεὰ Ἐργάνη, | ὧν
ἐπόνησεν | μοῖραν ἀπαρξαμένη κτεάνων, τιμῶσα χάριν σὴν

With her hands, skill at work and honest courage Melinna raised her family of children and dedicated to you, Goddess Ergane, this monument, making a first fruits offering of a portion of her property which she earned, honouring your favour. ²⁸

- 21 Melinna dedicates a statue to Athena Ἐργάνη ('Worker') on the Athenian Acropolis. ²⁹ She celebrates her own success in an unspecified craft with a gift of the 'first fruits' to the god who had oversight of such skills. In her text, she praises her own ability with her hands and her 'righteous courage', an unusual expression that suggests hardihood, both the courage to take risks as well as moral courage. ³⁰ She declares that she has received the favour (χάρις) of the god and that this, along with her own skill and courage, has enabled her to raise her children. Her text celebrates her achievement as a mother and her success in earning a good living through her own hard work. It also implies that she is the head of her own household. ³¹ Dated to the second half of the fourth century BCE, this inscription shows that a woman could seek to control her public image, taking pride in her achievements, and through conspicuous dedication to a god simultaneously display her relative wealth and piety as well as highlighting how she has earned the favour of a god. Her benevolence serves the good of the wider community by securing the goodwill of the god. The public proclamation of these achievements is again a political as well as a personal act. ³²
- 22 In the mid-fifth century BCE, a woman from Larisa in Thessaly announces that she is fulfilling a vow made by her son.

Ἀργεῖα : μ' ἀνέθεκε [:] ὑπὲρ παιδός | τόδ' ἄγαλμα : εὗξατο : δ'
Ἀγέ[τ]ορ | Φαστικᾶι : Ἐνοδίαι.

Argeia dedicated me, this statue, for her child: but Hagetor vowed it, to our city's Enodia. ³³

- 23 The epigram survives on the base for a statue which is now lost. Argeia has taken it upon herself to complete Hagetor's vow—she does not tell us why he has not been able to complete the vow himself. In the elegiac couplet, Argeia's name comes first, demonstrating that it was important to her that the community knew not only that the vow had been fulfilled, but that she was the one who completed it. By using Enodia's epithet Ἀστική, 'goddess of the city', Argeia contextualises her dedication, alluding to the wider significance of the deity's favour. Argeia demonstrates her own importance to the community, not just to her son, in fulfilling his vow in this material way to the god who protects her city. That women such as Argeia wanted to take credit for dedications reveals a desire for public recognition and a means to achieve it. Religion was an integral part of life in Classical Greece and women were a central part of religion. That they may pursue public recognition through a religious donation also shows an active buy-in to the competitive culture of Greek society.
- 24 That women may want to recognise their children who have passed away with a memorial speaks to the natural feeling of a parent and is not in itself surprising. There are many examples of such epitaphs from Archaic and Classical Greece, as well as from later periods.³⁴

χαίρετε τοὶ παριόντες, ἐγὼ δὲ θανὸν | κατάκειμαι.
δεῦρο ἴδον ἀνάνεμαι, ἀνὲρ τις τῆδε τέθαπται·
ξένος ἀπ' Αἰγίνης, Μνεσίθεος δ' ὄνυμα·
καὶ μοι μνῆμ' ἐπέθηκε φίλε μέτερ Τιμαρέτε
τύμοι ἐπ' ἀκροτάτοι στέλεν ἀκάματον,
ἡάτις ἐρεῖ παριῶσι διαμμερὲς ἅματα πάντα·
Τιμαρέτε μ' ἔσσετεσε φίλοι ἐπὶ παιδὶ θανόντι

Greetings, passers-by. I have died and lie here. Come on and read: what man is buried here? A foreigner from Aigina, his name Mnesithos. My dear mother, Timarete, set up my memorial, an everlasting stele on the top of my high burial mound, which will say to passers-by non-stop for ever: Timarete set me up for her dear son who died.³⁵

- 25 In this memorial, written in elegiacs, Timarete includes her own name twice. Any other family member that the son or she may have had that we might expect to be recorded (Mnesitheos' father in

particular) is not mentioned. Despite the androcentric nature of Greek society, this example indicates that a mother may choose to take all the public credit for such a memorial herself. The message that Timarete wants the passers-by to take away is given in the final line of the poem which begins with her own name. It is she, Timarete, who set up the memorial. This is the message, the stele tells us, that will last for ever. So, while she publicly memorialises her son, who speaks of his love of her through the voice she gives him, Timarete ensures that she too is remembered, both as a dear mother and as a woman with resources and love to expend on her son. This particular example resonates because women are so often perceived as only being given voice by male authors, while in this case it is the woman who gives voice to a male so that she is herself remembered.

- 26 Another example of a woman's voice from Classical Athens comes in an inscription on a statue base dated to the third quarter of the fourth century:

[Ἀ]ρχίππην Κ[λεο]γένου[ς] | [Ἀ]ἰξωνέως [θ]υγατέρα | μήτηρ Ἀ[ρ]χίππη |
[Κ]ουφαγόρου Αἰξωνέως | ἀνέθ[η]κεν. | Πραξιτέλης ἐπόησεν.

Archippe, the mother, (daughter) of Kouphagoras of Aixone, dedicated Archippe, her daughter, (daughter) of Kleogenes of Aixone. Praxiteles made (this statue).³⁶

- 27 Archippe commissioned the most renowned sculptor of her generation to produce a statue of her daughter. As this artist was in demand—we know of commissions for works in important religious sites from other city states—the statue must have been expensive.³⁷ We see that Archippe had given her daughter her own name. This indicates a sense of self-worth on the part of the mother and pride in her daughter. That she wanted to commemorate her daughter in a work of art also speaks to that. The inscription does not state why the statue was commissioned, but the mother-daughter relationship in the text (the words 'mother' and 'daughter' juxtaposed in the Greek) implies a strong natural motive that a parent would be expected to hold. The statue may have been a commemoration of her daughter after death although the text does not state that the younger Archippe has died. The statue may have been commissioned to celeb-

rate the appointment of the younger Archippe to an important religious position, just as the service of Panarista as an ἀρρηφόρος ('acolyte') of Athena Polias was celebrated with a statue dedicated by her mother, father and brothers.³⁸ While of a later date than Archippe's statue, the honour felt by the whole family through the service to the god would have been felt by the families of ἀρρηφόροι in Archippe's day too.³⁹ While Archippe includes her and her daughter's patronyms and the demotic of their fathers, she takes all the credit for the dedication for herself. She thereby memorialises herself and her daughter in a gift of a statue to the god. This self-promotion asserts her value to the god and the community. As this statue, and other dedications like it, were set up in sacred spaces that were visited by the whole community, such dedications were highly public statements of wealth and success.

- 28 A grave stele for a nurse named Melitta, found in Athens, dated to the middle of the fourth century, depicts her in relief along with a young girl, most likely a representation of Hippostrate, the woman named as responsible for commissioning the epigram. The verse text that accompanies the relief is written in Hippostrate's voice.

Ἀπολλοδώρου | ἰσοτελοῦ θυγάτηρ | Μέλιττα. τίτθη.
ἐνθάδε τὴν χρηστὴν τίτ[θ]ην κατὰ γαῖα καλύπτει
Ἴπποστράτης· καὶ νῦν π[οθ]εῖ σε.
καὶ ζῶσαν σ' ἐφίλουν, τίτθη, καὶ νῦν σ' ἔτι τιμ[ῶ]
οὔσαν καὶ κατὰ γῆς, καὶ τιμήσω σε ἄχρι ἂν ζῶ·
οἶδα δὲ σοὶ ὅτι καὶ κατὰ [γ]ῆς, εἴπερ χρηστοῖς γέρας ἐστίν,
πρώτει σοὶ τι[μαί], τίτθη, παρὰ Φερσεφόνει Πλούτωνι τε κεῖνται.

Melitta, daughter of Apollodoros, a foreign resident of equal status. Nurse.

Here the earth hides the good nurse of Hippostrate; and now she longs for you. While you were alive, I loved you, nurse, and now I still honour you, though you are beneath the earth, and I will honour you as long as I live. I know that beneath the earth too, if in fact there is a reward for those who are good, the first honours are yours, nurse, beside Persephone and Pluto.⁴⁰

- 29 Hippostrate declares how much she misses her nurse, loves her and honours her. The personal tone, heard in the change to first and

second persons from the more formal third person, has led readers to conclude that Hippostrate composed the verse herself.⁴¹ She ranks Melitta as χρηστή, 'good' in a moral and practical sense, and worthy of the highest honours. While the role of nurse is typically associated with women of low status, and her status as a foreign resident (of standing) is mentioned, it has been observed that nurses are afforded gravestones that suggest a relatively higher standing than their social position might have suggested.⁴² In according her nurse, an occupation specific to women, the highest honours, Hippostrate shows how much she personally values the woman who had served her in that role.⁴³ The cost of a stele of this type shows that Hippostrate was able to draw upon significant resources which she, as the inscription indicates, was keen to expend on the memorial for Melitta.

- 30 The inscription recording Lysistrate's dedication promotes her own achievement and wealth.

[ἀ]ρρήτο τελετῆς πρόπολος σῆς, πότνια Διοῦ, | καὶ θυγατρὸς προθύρο
κόσμον ἄγαλμα τόδε | ἔστησεν στεφάνω Λυσιστράτη, οὐδὲ παρόντων |
φείδεται, ἀλλὰ θεοῖς ἄφθονος ἐς δύναμιν

Lysistrate, minister of your and your daughter's secret ceremony,
mistress Deo, set up this pleasing gift, a pair of crowns, a decoration
for your porch, nor does she spare her possessions, but is generous
as far as she is able towards the gods.⁴⁴

- 31 Lysistrate celebrates her position as a minister to Demeter in the Eleusinian Mysteries with an expensive gift to decorate the temple. The inscription, in this reading, sees her making a public display of crowns. These were awards given by the state to an individual for meritorious service. Lysistrate displays wealth and generosity in her dedication, but also speaks to her own honour and her conspicuous piety to the gods through her donations.⁴⁵
- 32 In a display of wealth on an even larger scale, Xenokrateia dedicated an expensive marble relief to a group of deities at a sanctuary on the outskirts of Athens. The inscription on the stand which supported the relief has been understood to claim that she also founded (and so paid for) the sanctuary itself, though this reading has

been challenged.⁴⁶ There is no mention of a κύριος ('guardian') so she must have had full control over a substantial amount of money to pay for the relief and take full credit herself, even more if she dedicated the sanctuary too. Xenokrateia's text is in verse form, with an exhortation in prose at the end which may serve as a form of sacred law for the sanctuary. Her name features prominently as the first word in the inscription:

Ξενοκράτεια Κηφισοῖερ-|ὸν ἰδρύσατο καὶ ἀνέθηκεν | ξυμβώμοις τε
θεοῖς διδασκαλ-|ίας τόδε δῶρον Ξενιάδο θυγάτ-|ηρ καὶ μήτηρ ἐκ
Χολλειδῶν. | θύεν τῶι βουλομένωι ἐπὶ | τελεστῶν ἀγαθῶν.

Xenokrateia, daughter of and mother of Xeniadēs of Kholleidai, founded the sanctuary of Kephisos and for her education dedicated this gift to the gods who share his altar. Whoever wishes to may sacrifice for good outcomes.⁴⁷

- 33 Xenokrateia mentions her family roles as mother and daughter and is depicted in the relief with her son in the company of the gods. There is no mention of a husband: her son pointedly shares his name with Xenokrateia's father and even has an element of her name in his, while his own father is not recognised at all. This is a further example of a public 'ego document',⁴⁸ a woman celebrating her own education, wealth, generosity and success (including as a mother). Her benefaction not only affords her a form of political status in the community but demonstrates an understanding of the nature of Greek personal politics.

Personal texts: questions to gods and curses

Questions

- 34 Many written questions to the gods from both men and women have survived at the site of a famous oracle of Zeus and Diona at Dodona.⁴⁹ These questions were written on lamellae (small tablets in the form of lead strips) which were presented to one or both of these deities. While there are formulaic elements in many of the

questions, individual concerns are expressed in the personal details provided by those who call upon the gods for advice. The distinct handwriting, orthography and dialects attested in the lamellae are witness to the many individuals from all over the Greek world who visited the site over a period of about 400 years, with the earliest lamella dated to around the mid-sixth century BCE.⁵⁰ A significant number of these lamellae record questions from women. They articulate the women's personal concerns and thus offer a mechanism for women's voices to be heard. These texts cannot always be securely dated and so some may fall outside the fifth and fourth centuries that were the focus of the previous section. Nevertheless, they offer important examples of female voices for us to consider.

- 35 Two examples of texts by women can be dated to the fourth century BCE, or perhaps a little later. These women came to Dodona to ask the oracle to which gods they should pray to recover their health.

[Ἐπερωτᾶ. . .]α τινι θεῶν θύουσα [καὶ εὐχομένα ἄμεινον] πράσσοι καὶ τᾶς νόσου [ἀπαλλαχθειή]

[[Name lost] asks] to which god she should sacrifice and pray to do better and be released from her disease.⁵¹

ἰστορεῖ Νικοκράτ[ει]α τινι θεῶν θύουσα λῶιον καὶ ἄμεινον πράσσοι καὶ τᾶς νόσου παύσα<ι>το. Νικ(οκρατεία)ς.

Nikokrateia inquires to which god she should sacrifice to feel and do better and be released from her disease. Nik(okrateia)'s.⁵²

- 36 These women indicate that they want to make a sacrifice to a god for their own well-being but need divine advice to determine which god that should be. We are, in a sense, taking a step back from public dedications thanking a god that we looked at above: here the women are endeavouring to discover which god they need to address before they make their offerings. We do not know how far these women had travelled to seek the advice, but the oracle was in Epirus and relatively remote from the major Greek cities. They may have had to travel a long way to speak with the god, a journey that may have been made more difficult if they were in poor health. These women demonstrate

a strong sense of self-worth: their health is important to them and they believe they are worth a divine hearing. They have travelled to Dodona because they believe that the oracle will answer their prayers and direct them to the god who will assist them to recover.⁵³

- 37 Questions about children are common at this oracle. This was an important matter about which both men and woman sought private divine advice.⁵⁴ While there are many examples wherein women and men seek help together, below are two examples from the fourth century BCE where the questioner is a woman alone:

ἀ(γα)θὴ τύχη · ἐπερωτῆι Πλαυράτα τὸν Δία [καὶ τὰν] Διώνα(ν) · ἢ
ἐντ[υ]γγάνουσα Πλάτωνι Κάρπω[νος σὺν π]αιδαγόν{ν}οισι θεοῖς
ἐ(σ)σεῖται μοι ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὠφέλεια.

Good Fortune: Plaurata asks Zeus and Diona whether, with the help of the divinities of childbirth, it will be a good thing and beneficial for me if she sleeps with Platon son of Karpon.⁵⁵

Θεός· αἰτ[εῖ]ται Κλευν(ι)κα [τ]ὸν Δία τὸν Νάϊο[ν] καὶ τὰν | Διώναν
[τ]έκνα<ν> οἱ γενέσθαι ἐξ ἄλλω [ἀ]νδρὸς | καὶ τίνα κα θεῶν
θεραπευο(ύ)σα(ι) γένοιτο τέκνα.

God. Kleunika asks Zeus Naios and Diona to have children from another man and what god she should worship to have children⁵⁶

- 38 A woman who takes any a question to the god shows that the issue is one of significance to her. She also demonstrates personal agency in asking the question herself. Kleunika suggests that she is has in mind 'another man' to father her children (with the help of whichever god), taking steps herself, it seems, to fulfill a desire to become a mother. Plaurata asks about sleeping with a particular man, implying her purpose by referring to the gods of childbirth. These women are taking action to find success in mothering children. In a slightly later example, a woman whose name is lost appears to be asking for advice on whether she should hide her pregnancy from a particular man.⁵⁷

- 39 In these short texts, communications with deities made by individual women reveal something about their own life situations and decisions that they need to make. We hear their voices in the

examples. It is possible that the texts represent the concerns of women from different levels in society. It has been suggested that some questions were written by slaves or former slaves.⁵⁸

[Δ]ίκα πότερα με[iv]ασαι βέντιον εἶη.

[D]ika (asks) if it is better for her to stay.⁵⁹

ἢ ἀπιῶσα ἄλλ[ο] τί μοι ἀγαθὸν ἔσσεῖται;

If I leave, will I have a better situation?⁶⁰

40 There is nothing in the texts to confirm that the questions are by slaves or former slaves, and it seems very unlikely that a slave could ask questions like this. It is possible that such questions may reflect a choice which a manumitted slave may be able to make about staying with the former owner or leaving to earn a living elsewhere.⁶¹ Either way, we can confirm by the gendered language that the questions come from women. So, while we do not have enough information to fully understand the social context and personal circumstances of these women, we can see them acting to get advice about their personal circumstances. They have voices and want to be heard. They have decisions to make and they also appear to have options: to stay or leave are choices available to them and they seek personal advice from a higher power. The determination to improve their personal lives speaks to a degree of control that they exercise over their own lives.

41 Another woman who inquired of the oracle, named Rhazia, has been taken to be a slave or freedwoman who is asking the god about the intentions of her owner or former owner, a man named Teitukos, and on a course of action for herself.⁶²

Θεός· τύχα ἀγαθὰ· Ῥαζία ἐπέθετο αἰ διαλλαγὰ μέλλει γενέσθαι ἀπὸ Τειτύκῳ ζῶοντος καὶ ἀποχώρησ(ις)

God, good luck. Rhazia asks if there will be a reconciliation from Teitukos while he is alive and a [possibility of] leaving.⁶³

- 42 The text does not articulate the social status of the petitioner nor define her relationship with Teitukos. Rhazia may well be a free woman and her connection to Teitukos may be one of marriage or some other family relationship, though the terminology of leaving used here suggests she is a slave who has been freed subject to a further term of service or the death of her owner.⁶⁴ Whatever the social or legal situation, we can confirm that Rhazia was a woman who went to Dodona to seek advice and was contemplating a significant move herself. Her personal agency is clear.
- 43 The lamellae of Rhazia and the other women are evidence that they have sufficient independence to visit the oracle and that they believed that they had the means to carry out the options they put to the gods. They expect the gods to respect them and hear their voices, to give them the advice they have asked for, whatever their social status was, just as other petitioners of the oracle do (men, other women and even officials asking on behalf of cities).

Curses

- 44 Curse tablets were written by individuals to draw upon magic to accomplish their particular desires. Examples written by women are important as evidence of women's voices too. Personal concerns about other women, about men and about possessions are apparent from such texts. Curse tablets, for example, provide primary evidence for a woman taking personal agency over her relationship. A text dated to the fourth century BCE testifies to a woman's concerns about rivals.

Ἄρι[σ]τοκύδη καὶ τὰς φανο(υ)μένας αὐτῷ γυναῖκας μήποτ' αὐτὸν
γῆμαι ἄλλην γυναῖ<κα> μηδὲ παῖδα.

(I bind) Aristokydes and the women who put themselves on show for him; may he never marry another woman nor (father?) a child.⁶⁵

- 45 The author of this curse does not include her own name. It is directed against a man named Aristokydes and any women who might make themselves available to him. The curse is a binding spell: it aims to control Aristokydes, to prevent him having a relationship with another woman.⁶⁶ The author has been identified as Aristokydes'

wife, or a woman who aspired to marriage with him, or perhaps a *ἑταῖρα* ('girl friend'/ 'courtesan'), a sexual partner cursing potential rivals.⁶⁷

- 46 Another text written by a woman in the fourth century BCE was found in Pella (Macedonia) in the grave of a man (named in the text as Makron). The author (whose name has been partly lost from the text) calls upon Makron and deities, *δαίμονες*, to hold her text and so prevent Dionysophon from marrying anyone but her. The curse is directed against a specific rival named Thetima, but 'every other woman' is also included.

Θετί]μας καὶ Διονυσοφῶντος τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸν γάμον καταγράφω καὶ τᾶν ἄλλᾶν πασαῖν γυ[ναικῶ]ν καὶ χηρᾶν καὶ παρθένων, μάλιστα δὲ Θετίμας, καὶ παρκατίθεμαι Μάκρωνι καὶ [τοῖς] δαίμοσι· καὶ ὅποκα ἐγὼ ταῦτα διελ<ί>ξαιμι καὶ ἀναγνοίην πάλ[ε]ιν ἀνορ<ύ>ξασα, [τόκα] γᾶμαι Διονυσοφῶντα, πρότερον δὲ μή· μή γὰρ λάβοι ἄλλαν γυναῖκα ἀλλ' ἢ ἐμέ, [ἐμέ δ]ὲ συνκαταγηρᾶσαι Διονυσοφῶντι καὶ μηδεμίαν ἄλλαν. ἰκέτις ὑμῶ<ν> γίνο[μαι· Φιλ?]αν οἰκτίρετε δαίμονες φίλ[ο]ι, ... φίλων πάντων καὶ ἐρήμα· ἀλλὰ [ταῦτ]α φυλάσσετε ἐμὶν ὅ[π]ως μὴ γίνηται τα[ῦ]τα καὶ κακὰ κακῶς Θετίμα ἀπόληται· [...] ἐμός, ἐμέ δὲ εὐδαίμονα καὶ μακαρίαν γενέσται·

I curse the ceremony and marriage of Dionysophon and Thetima and every other woman, both widows and maidens, but especially Thetima, and I entrust this to Makron and the deities. And if I were ever to dig up, unroll and read this once again, then Dionysophon may marry again and not before. May he not take any other woman as his wife except me and may I and no other woman grow old beside Dionysophon. I am your suppliant; pity [Phil]a dear deities, for I am abandoned and [deprived of?] all my loved ones. But keep this for me so that these events may not happen and Thetima dies very badly. ... of me, and I become happy and blessed.⁶⁸

- 47 The author of this text calls a curse upon the bride-to-be, wishing Thetima a miserable death while for herself good fortune and marriage. The individuality of this curse suggests that [Phil]a wrote it herself.⁶⁹ The text makes it clear that for the author, Thetima stands in the way of her own relationship with Dionysophon, as, potentially, does every other woman. She voices her own happiness and prosperity as dependent on her preventing the marriage of

Dionysophon to anyone but her. She wants to grow old with Dionysophon and has acted, through the writing and depositing of this curse, to achieve her goal.⁷⁰

- 48 Curses were not only made to address relationship issues. Other examples reveal that women looked for redress for personal property that had been stolen. One of these curses probably dates to the third century BCE but nevertheless is worth including here as an interesting example of a woman addressing the issue of theft. It is a curse written on a bronze tablet by Kollyra and directed against the person or persons who took her cloak and three gold coins.

[ἀνιαρίζει Κολλύρα ... ταῖς προπόλοις [τᾶς θεῶ ... τὸ ἱμάτιον] τὸ πελλόν, τὸ [ἔλαβεν... καὶ ο]ὐκ ἀποδίδωτι καὶ [...κ]αὶ χρῆται καὶ ἴσατι ... ἔστι[ν], ἀνθε[ίη τᾶι] θεῶ δυωδεκάπλουν σὺν ἡμεδίμν[ωι λιβά]νω, ᾧ πόλις νομίζει· μὴ πρότερον δὲ τὰν ψυχὰν ἀ[ι]νεῖη [...]τὸ ἱμάτιον, ἔστε ἀνθε[ίη] τᾶι θεῶ. ἀνιαρίζει Κολλύρα ταῖς προπόλοις τᾶς θεῶ τὼς τρεῖς χρυσέως, τὼς ἔλαβε Μελίτα καὶ οὐκ ἀποδίδωτι. ἀνθεῖη τᾶι θεῶι δυωδεκάπ<λ>οα σὺν με<δ>ίμνωι λιβάνωι, ᾧ πόλις νομίζει· μὴ πρότερον δὲ τὰν ψυχὰν ἀνεῖη, ἔστε ἀνθεῖη τᾶι θεῶ. εἰ δὲ συνπίοι ἢ συμφάγοι, μὴ εἰς ἄῶ σᾶ ἀθῶιος εἶην ἢ ὑπὸ τὸν αὐτὸν ἀετὸν ὑπέλθοι.

Kollyra dedicates to the ministers [of the goddess the dark cloak], which [(?) . . . took . . .] and did not return and [. . .] and is using and she knows [. . .] it is; let her dedicate to the goddess twelfefold with a half unit of incense, according to the normal practice of the city. And may she not draw her breath, [while she has] the cloak, until she makes the dedication to the goddess.⁷¹ Kollyra dedicates to the ministers of the goddess the three gold coins that Melita took and did not return. Let her dedicate twelfefold to the goddess, with a unit of incense, according to the normal practice of the city. And may she not draw breath until she makes the dedication to the goddess. And if they drink or eat together, may she remain unharmed and not know, or if she comes under the same roof.

- 49 Kollyra donates the lost items to temple servants as agents of their god, effectively transferring the crime from one against her to one against the god, and so putting the redress into the hands of that god too.⁷² The curse suggests that Kollyra knows the perpetrator or perpetrators well (the name is lost from the first part of the curse, so we do not know if it is also directed against Melita). There is a possib-

ility that she may meet with Melita and even eat and drink with her, so she has included an exclusion of harm clause should such an event occur. That Kollyra had found herself in a situation where her cloak and coins were taken implies a social context in which women mix with each other. It has been suggested that the language of the text and form of the tablet indicates that it was put on public display in the sanctuary of the god.⁷³ So, this was unlike [Phil]a's buried curse and more akin to dedications to the god. The author makes a public statement in the presence of the god for all who visit the sanctuary to read. As this text names the wrongdoer, it publicly shames her. Kollyra wants redress for the property she has lost against the woman or women that she identifies as responsible. By her actions she demonstrates confidence that the god will take her case and the perpetrator or perpetrators of these crimes will be forced to make amends through the penalties specified.

- 50 Texts from Knidos demonstrate that this form of redress was used by women who had their property stolen elsewhere in the Greek world too.⁷⁴ In such cases, women acted themselves to address the theft and punish the wrongdoer, including public shaming, through the appeal to a god. The victims of these crimes assume that the god will support them as the person wronged. An earlier example, an epigram on an aryballos found in Cumae in Italy carries a warning from its owner, Tataie.⁷⁵

Ταταίης ἐμὶ λέκυθος· ἡὸς δ' ἄν με κλέφσει, θυφλὸς ἔσται.

I am the *lekythos* of Tataie; may whoever steals me be struck blind.

- 51 Tataie asserts her ownership of this vessel and wishes a curse on anyone who might steal it. Her declaration displays a sense of pride in ownership and a desire to protect what is hers as well as offering us a female voice asserting agency. Objects carry social as well as personal meaning; owning an imported Attic aryballos with whatever special perfumed oil it held was something Tataie celebrates by attaching her name to it. This object gave her a certain status within her social circle. By asserting her ownership she also asserts her worth within that circle.⁷⁶

Conclusion

- 52 Inscriptions on dedications by women demonstrate not only their piety, their desire to offer something valuable to a god in return for that god's favour, but also their intent to demonstrate something about themselves to their community. The value, beauty and positioning of these dedications in prominent and prestigious public spaces gave the donors permanent presence and position in the community, as well as an avenue for their female voice to be heard.
- 53 Greek women are traditionally seen as being valued and defined by their relationship to men, yet to some women those relationships were not important enough to be mentioned in the texts of their dedications. These women present themselves in their own right, defining themselves by their own achievements and speaking with a female voice. Such women wanted the community, as well as the god with whom they were communicating, to know that they were successful in their own right. Conspicuous dedications were a way in which they achieved this. Women who made a public display of their success and relative wealth demonstrate a belief in their own importance, a desire for public recognition and an understanding of the nature of personal politics in Greek society. They take control of their own image through the text of their own public memorial.⁷⁷ Their texts celebrate their own success and individuality in a public religious space, a place where women's role in public cult was considered vital to the city.
- 54 When such texts were read by those who came to view the dedications, they would be read aloud. The fame of the women who made the dedications would be voiced and heard by all who were there. Their fame was repeated, made public and permanent through these texts. Pericles' advice to the widows of Athens, often quoted as the Athenians' position on the public image of women, is that a woman will attain her greatest glory by attaining the least fame (κλέος) among men.⁷⁸ On the contrary, through dedications such as the examples presented in this paper, we see that some women actively sought κλέος. Their names would be read by those who viewed their offerings and their voices heard as their texts were read aloud.

- 55 The preservation of private messages from women to gods such as Zeus and Dione at Dodona, reveal private issues, while curse tablets offer yet another avenue for the female voice to be heard. In seeking advice or assistance about their health and their children, about having children, about where they should reside and with whom, about personal relationships and about loss of personal property, women reveal their own private concerns. While these private texts take up themes concerned with the traditional role of women as mothers, wives or lovers, they nevertheless provide evidence for female agency in addressing these concerns. In engaging directly with a god and looking to find the best solution to such issues in their lives, these women demonstrate implicit confidence that a god will listen to them and care about their issues too. They are important both to themselves and to others. Their personal happiness, their lives, matter.

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Abbreviations

CEG Hansen (1983)

DT Audollent (1904)

DTA Wunsch (1897)

DVC Dakaris et al. (2013)

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NOTES

1 Neils (2007: 55); Cantarella (1987: 50-51); for Athens as a male-focused and misogynistic society, Keuls (1985). That women were considered 'for the whole of antiquity...naturally inferior', Finley (1956: 149). The quotation in the title comes from IG II² 7873, discussed below.

2 For public recognition of women by men, Siekierka, Stebnicka, and Wolicki (2021); on the importance of women in cult: Dillon (2002: 294-300); Faraone (2008).

3 Eg. [Dem.] 59.8, 16-17, 52; Hamel (2003); Kapparis (1999); Carey (1992) ad loc.

4 Hes. *Op.* 53-105, *Theog.* 570-612; Semonides 7. For the superiority of men, Aristot.; *Pol.* 1254a-b; 1259b-1260a, *Econ.* 1343b-1344a; Samaras (2016: 595-605); Stauffer (2008: 929-941); Horowitz (1976: 183-213). For the 'deeply rooted sentiment', Becker (1854: 463); Gomme (1925) offers counter examples; on the status of Athenian women, Blok (1987), Katz (1992), Katz (1998), Brown (2011).

- 5 IA 1374–1401; on the complexity of her motivation, Bacalexi (2016: 51–76), Collard and Morwood (2017: 592–593); for comparison with Polyxena, Göttsche (2011: 286–268).
- 6 On the obscuring of women from Greek history, Pomeroy (1975: ix).
- 7 On the problem of using male authored sources, Pomeroy (1975: ix–12, 95), Murnaghan (2015), Culham (1986: 15–17), Gould (1980: 38), Pritchard (2014: 174–175); on understanding Athenian women through characters in tragedy, Rabinowitz (1986), McClure (1999), Foley (2002).
- 8 For texts, Natoli, Pitts and Hallett (2022), Greene (2005), Plant (2004); that literacy in Athens was limited Harris (1989: 102–103, 106–108); cf. Missiou (2011: 143–439).
- 9 Beck (1975: 56–58; cf. Cole (1981: 133–134), Williams (1993: 100–101).
- 10 For such texts as a way in which women could make a public statement, Stehle (1997: 311).
- 11 On the construction of the self in interactions with the supernatural, Eidinow (2013: 21–39).
- 12 On the significance of inscriptions in Athens, Meyer (2013: 453–505); on female voices in Roman epitaphs Hemelrijk (2023: 86).
- 13 IG I³ 683; IG I² 487; CEG 198; Raubitschek (1949 n.3).
- 14 Raubitschek (1949: 4, 8). For the importance of considering the material art along with the text (even the script) of such dedications, Kaczko (2012: §20–23).
- 15 For women calling upon Athena as protector of the city, Ar. *Thesm.* 1136–42, Eq. 581–5, Nub. 601–2, Lys. 345; Jim (2022: 46–79).
- 16 For the viewer reading the text and the significance of this, Day (2010: 32, and 2016).
- 17 IG I³ 555; bronze bowl handle, c. 525–500 BCE; Athens, National Archaeological Museum X 7176; Lazzarini (1976 n. 229). For a catalogue of female votives, Avramidou (2015).
- 18 IG I³ 572, c. 500–480 BCE; a bronze oinochoe handle; Wellington (2018: A32).
- 19 IG I³ 560, c. 500–480 BCE; a bronze phiale.
- 20 IG II² 4326, mid. 4th century BCE; a marble pillar base. For a contemporary parallel testimony to a divine vision, IG II² 4908, CEG 2. 771.

- 21 IG I³ 794; a marble pillar base; Raubitschek (1949 n. 380); Athens: Acropolis, c. 490–480 BCE. There are two other dedications by a Smikythe (perhaps the same woman) from around the same date: IG I³ 574, 700.
- 22 IG I³ 857; Athens, Acropolis, 470–450 BCE; a marble pillar base; CEG 273; Raubitschek (1949 n. 298); Dillon (2002: 15); Avramidou (2015: 30).
- 23 Ridgway (1987: 402), who cites a dedication by Phrygia the bread-seller as an example of a dedication by a woman of similar modest means, IG I³ 546 c. 500 BCE; so Jim (2014: 130–175). However, it is possible that *πλύντρια* was the title of a woman who held a key role in the ritual washing of the cult statue at the Plynteria festival in Athens, who would therefore be a member of the elite (Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.12, Plut. *Alc.* 34, Lycurgus fr. 44 in Harpokration, s.v., *Suda* π1818 (Adler)). Hesychius tells us that the title of two girls in Athena's temple was the *Plyntrides* (or *Loutrides*), Hes. λ1277, also Phot. *Lex.* λ408.
- 24 As Dillon (2002: 369).
- 25 For the significance of offerings on the Acropolis by women, Wellington (2018: 86–88).
- 26 For dedications as communication with the gods, Nilsson (1961) 138. The idea is common, e.g. *Iliad* 6.86–98, 297–311, 10.291–4; *Od.* 3.51–61, 380–5; cf. IG I³ 728.
- 27 IG XIV 664; about 470 BCE, Poseidonia (Magna Graecia); CEG 395; Jeffery (1990: 253, 260 n.7, pl. 50). The statuette is now in the Antikensammlung Berlin, n. 7429.
- 28 IG II² 4334; second half 4th century BCE; EM 8804; Wellington (2018: A31); Jim (2014: 139); CEG 774.
- 29 Other women made dedications to Athena Ἐργάνη on the Acropolis: Hedyle IG II² 4328, EM8751; [name lost] of Acharnae IG I² 561, EM6305.
- 30 Cf. Menander: 'god helps honest courage' (fr. 572).
- 31 On Athenian women as heads of households, Taylor (2017: 146–147).
- 32 Jim suggests Melinna made her offering on retirement (2014: 139).
- 33 IG IX 2.575; Larissa (Thessaly) late 5th–early 4th centuries BCE; CEG 342; SEG 35:590, b. A dedication to Artemis Enodia from Larissa suggests a local identification of Enodia (SEG 48: 658). For a son fulfilling a mother's vow, IG I³ 773; Athens: Acropolis – c. 500–480.

- 34 Eg. verse inscriptions: mother to son Nausimachus or Pausimachus (Athens, 6th century BCE) SEG 10:439; Amphidama for her son, (Troizen, 6th century BCE), IG IV 801; Phanocrite for her son (Erythrae, end of 6th century) IEry 301; Potalis for her husband (Tanagra, end of 6th century) IG VII 3501.
- 35 IG XII 9.285; Eretria, 6th century BCE; SEG 1:409; CEG 108.
- 36 *Athenian Agora* I.4568, SEG 18:85 (4th century BCE).
- 37 For a comprehensive study of Praxiteles see Corso (2004–2014).
- 38 IG II² 3488; a little before 103/2 BCE. An ἀρρήφορος was a girl between the ages of 7–11 who would serve the goddess for a year: it was a prestigious religious role. For public honouring of these girls, including lists of their names: IG II² 1034 + 1943, 1036, 1942;(2002: 57–60); for κόρη ('maiden') statues as individualised portraits, Stieber (2004: 81–82).
- 39 For the shame a girl who was rejected for this role may feel, Thuc. 6.56.1–2.
- 40 IG II² 7873, AIUK 4.6 n.37; Athens, second half of the fourth century BCE.
- 41 Pitt (2022: 93). IG II² 12387 recognises the nurse Paideusis for her excellence too.
- 42 Kosmopoulou (2001: 286–7). Not all nurses were foreign: Dem. 57.44–5.
- 43 That a nurse may have a life-long connection to a family, Dem. 47.55; in myth, Dionysus named Nysa after his nurse, Ar. Alex. 5.2.6. For nurses in the Greek world, see Vilatte (1991).
- 44 IG I³ 953; Athens c. 450 BCE; CEG 317; Kaczko (2016), SEG 66.13. On the identity of Lysistrate, Blok and Lambert (2009: 119); PAA 617545.
- 45 Instead of 'a pair of crowns' the inscription may record a priestly title: this would equally be an achievement to celebrate: Pritchett (1940: 97–101) n. 18; Kaczko (2016, n. 125).
- 46 Parker (2020: 52–53) concludes she only claims to have dedicated the relief, not the shrine itself.
- 47 IGI³ 987, IG II² 4548 Echelidai (New Phaleron) c. 405–400 BCE (or a little later).
- 48 See Blok (2018: 1 and passim) for discussion and further scholarship.
- 49 Eidinow (2007: n. 72–123); Lhôte (2006: 29–325).

50 Archaeology suggests the site itself was of religious significance from the early Bronze Age (Vasileiou 2008: 139-41) through to the 4th century CE. Its connection with Zeus is attested in Homer: *Od.* 14.327-30, 19.296-9, *Il.* 16.233-5.

51 Date uncertain; Eidinow (2007: 104 n.1).

52 350-200 BCE: Eidinow (2007: 105.2); Lhôte (2006: 46); *SGDI* II 1561 – *Syll.*³ 1160-1162; Parke (1967 n. 15).

53 Cf. Sappho who prays to Aphrodite: *Sapph.* 1.

54 Couples and men who seek such advice: e.g. a couple *DVC* 313; women asking for children, *DVC* 342B, 347A, 885A, 1318A, 1909B, 2609A, 2674B, 3289A, 4115A, 4164B. For the frequency of women seeking advice about having children, Piccinini (2015: 141-147), Katsadima (2017:133). Laes (2020: 185) finds ten certain examples of women inquiring about children at Dodona (and 81 in which the gender of the inquirer is uncertain); for women asking for children at Epidauros, LiDonnici (1995: A4, B1, 3, 5, 21, 22, C1, 2, 6, 17).

55 C. 350-300 BCE: text Lhôte and Carbon (2021), *DVC* 2609A.

56 C. 375-350 BCE: *DVC* 2552A; there is a short reference to her question on the reverse of the same tablet: 'Kleunika from a(nother man)', *DVC* 2555B.

57 ἐπε[ρωτᾶι ἡ δεῖνα τὸν] Δία τὸν Νάον καὶ τ[ἄν Διῶ]- ναν [--] λάθωμαι [αῖ] καὶ μο[ι -] ΟΩΝ γενειθεῖ τέ[κνον- -] ὃ. ἐνκαλεῖ Νίκα[νδρος e.g. [A woman, name lost] asks Zeus Naios and Diona:... should I hide that I am expecting a child, which Nika[ndros] accuses me of? Text Lhôte (2022b); *DVC* 3114B (M1054), c. 290-190 BCE. Kallirhoa, who appears to have travelled from Thessaly with her and writes on the same tablet, asks about how she is to best to apportion the property she has to provide dowries for both her daughters while also keeping in mind the need to provide for her son: *DVC* 3113A, Lhôte (2022a and 2022b).

58 Eidinow (2007: 100-104).

59 *DVC* 1486A, end of 5th century BCE; Eidinow (2007: 102.103); Chaniotis (2007/2011 *SEG* 57-536 n. 13). On the reading Dika (rather than Leuka), *DVC* and Desbiens (2017: 9-10).

60 Dodona, 4th century BCE; Lhôte (2006 n. 62); Eidinow (2007: 103.107; 2012 n. 12).

61 As Desbiens (2017: 9-10; 201).

- 62 Eidinow (2007: 102 n.2; 2012: 259–264).
- 63 DVC 73, c. 400–390 BCE; Lhôte (2023).
- 64 As argued by Desbiens (2017: 9–10; 201), Chaniotis (2007/2011 SEG 57–536 n. 12); on manumission after conditional service (παραμονή) see Sosin (2015: 325–81).
- 65 Attica 4th century BCE: DTA 78, Eidinow (2007: 368).
- 66 For binding spells, Faraone (1991a and 1991b).
- 67 Eidinow (2007: 215–16); Voutiras (1998: 57) suggests an antithesis in gender terms here between 'woman' and 'child', and so takes 'child' to mean boy (and so 'marry' is read as a euphemism for 'have sex with'). However, the word παῖς, 'child', is regularly used in Greek to refer to a young bride (eg. Ar. *Lys.* 595, Eur. *Med.* 19, 554, *Pho.* 7, IA. 835); as an alternative reading, the phrase may imply a verb such as ποιοῦμαι in the sense 'father a child': as in Isoc. 15.156.4.
- 68 Pella, c. 380–350 BCE; SEG 43:434, Voutiras (1998: 8), Eidinow (2007:452–453). On the use of the dead to hold a written curse see Jordan (1999: 118).
- 69 The name Phila is a restoration (Voutiras 1998: 45); other short female names could fit here too.
- 70 Cf. DT 5, 10, DTA 78, Eidinow (2007: 215–216).
- 71 IG XIV 644; DT 212, Eidinow (2007: 405): Bruttium; date uncertain, perhaps 3rd century BCE (SEG 4:70).
- 72 For textile dedication by women to deities, Nossis 3 (*Anth. Pal.* 6.265); Neils (2009: 135–147).
- 73 Faraone (2021: 241–244); he also suggests that the 'ministers of the goddess' here may be deities too.
- 74 For other curses by women for theft of their property (clothes and a bracelet) DT 2, 4B, Faraone et al. (2005: 170–171), Faraone (2021: 241–249); for a question to the god regarding legal action over a cloak, DVC 4.
- 75 IG XIV 865: a proto-Corinthian *aryballos*, (c. 670 BCE) British Museum 1885,0613.1; Jeffery (1990: 240 n.3, pl. 47).
- 76 For the relationship between owned objects and self-identity, see Wheeler and Bechler (2021: 6–11).
- 77 As Iphigenia takes control of her image (κλέος) and memorial (μνημεῖα), Eur. IA 1383–4, 1398–9.

78 That is Pericles' view voiced by Thucydides: Thuc. 2.45.2.

ABSTRACT

English

The male dominance of Classical Greek society in politics and the arts leaves women normally defined as of little consequence relative to their male contemporaries. In addition, Ancient Greek male authors present women as defining themselves as inconsequential, a point we should question. This paper reviews epigraphic texts written by or for women such as public inscriptions, epitaphs and private messages to the gods. The public texts demonstrate that some women took control of their public image through their public texts. Although private texts take up themes concerned with the traditional role of women as mothers, wives or lovers, they also provide evidence for female agency in addressing these concerns.

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Keywords

Women, Classical Greece, dedications, Athenian Acropolis, Dodona, curses

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