

Funerary Spaces: private dedications and the public exposure of women in Athens (6th-4th centuries BC)¹

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RESUMO

Estudo sobre a comemoração funerária das mulheres em Atenas a partir dos epigramas. Trata-se de explorar a hipótese de que os contextos funerários, como espaços de ‘publicização’ e de exposição, mostram uma relação positiva da comunidade póliade com as mulheres, através da valorização de temas como o das relações de *philia* e da recorrência de elogios derivados da tradição épica, em épocas anteriores destinados apenas aos elogios fúnebres masculinos. Discute-se essa positividade sob a ótica da tese de Vernant sobre a forte conexão entre espaço público e identidade política, concluindo que a apresentação feminina em espaços funerários pode ser concebida como uma das formas pelas quais a sociedade póliade representa sua identidade, ultrapassando o quadro restrito dos valores cidadãos.

Palavras-chave: epigramas funerários; história das mulheres; Atenas clássica.

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the funerary celebrations of women in Athens, focusing particularly on Attic epigrams. It explores the thesis that funerary contexts, viewed as ‘publicizing’ and exposing spaces, highlight a positive relation of the polis community towards its women, by means of the valorization of question such as *philia* relationships and the recurring epic traditional eulogies, which formerly applied only to men. I seek to discuss this positivity, drawing on Vernant’s thesis of a strong connection between the public space and political identity, arguing that female presentation in funerary spaces can be conceived as one of the ways by which polis society represents its identity, moving beyond the restrictive frame of citizen values.

Keywords: funerary epigrams; women’s history; classical Athens.

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I would like to discuss here a dimension of what Jean-Pierre Vernant has called the 'publicity of life,' linked to the spiritual universe of the *polis*, though focusing on a non-institutional space, which means a space which historiography does not normally connect to the political universe of the city-state. This involves spatial contexts of burial, which we designate as necropolises, not with the intention of evoking a closed system that is functionally predestined, but for the simple reason of uncoupling 'burial' from 'cemetery.' I start from the premise that funerary spaces, with their stelae and epitaphs carved in stone, constitute what can be defined as a daily dialogic context in which are inextricably connected certain publicizing and exposure 'functions' linked to stone monuments and family needs for expression in a broader context than the sphere in which citizens transit. Although this premise which takes the funerary space as the context for exposure and publicizing is distant from an approach to these spaces through the religious, private and family angle, common to studies of epigraphy and Greek funeral archeology, it is not an innovative perspective in itself, since the majority of specialists currently agree with the public approach and with 'publicizing activities' being characteristic of the funeral space. However, the focus on the problematic of gender relations and relations between gender and power justifies a deeper debate. The principal objective is to show that the laudatory and public appearance of women in funerary contexts from the final quarter of the fifth century BC onwards has to be explained in political terms, with the construction of gender identities being correlated not only to the social space of families, but principally to the public and political space of the *polis*. Thus, it removes the subject of 'women' from the private domestic context and restates the problem in terms of identity and public exposure in a moment in which public exposure defines a fundamental political dimension.

When we analyze the place of burials in relation to spatial axes such as the *asty*, walled enclosures, pathways and fountains, etc, we can perceive important characteristics. First, their extramural position in relation to the central part of Athens. Second, the contiguity of the gates which opened to the territory, following the course of the rivers and running alongside the principal routes, especially in the case of the necropolis in the northeast, in the Kerameikos.² This location of burial spaces is not fortuitous. It responds to a form of soil and natural resource usage since remote epochs, which have marked a significant place or point in terms of community activities. In the classical epoch and even later the preference of the location of burial sites near heavily used roads demonstrates that concern with the exposure and publication, shall we say, of

news about the dead of the community was fundamental. To a certain extent, this involved the exposure of the community to itself and to others from the perspective of families in the funerary space. In other words, what I am defending is that from this perspective burial spaces can be understood as places for the publication of ‘public notes,’ as the Agora or Acropolis would be: places aimed at the collective view, without being places appropriated by political institutionality (although they could be used and even coveted by the latter).

The importance of this place as a space of exposure can be measured when we report the political conflicts from the beginning of the Athenian constitutional period when, according to sources from antiquity itself, Solon wrote laws limiting the pomp of aristocratic funerals. Also in accordance with sources from antiquity, some time later these laws were made more rigid with the prohibition of the construction of private monuments in stone. The funeral landscape near the *astu* was disturbed during the Greco-Persian Wars and later when many of the archaic monuments were used as raw material for the construction of walls during the time of Themistocles. During the fifth century the lack of private monuments is evident, while the public funerals of the war dead became an important moment in civic commemorations, according to the testimony of Thucydides. After this, perhaps as a consequence of the long period of wars and family losses, and perhaps as a consequence of the epidemic that killed thousands of Athenian inhabitants between 429-428 B.C., or perhaps also as the result of the reinforcement of the expression of families, private monuments came to be constructed again, in a profusion that kept increasing until the end of the fourth century, when a new decree, reportedly by Demetrius of Phalerum, prohibited these constructions. The custom of writing a memorial, the epitaph, however, resulted in the creation of a literary genre of great popularity in the Greek world during the Hellenistic period.

The profusion of stelae erected for women, with or without epigrams, accompanied in this period the abundance of feminine images in general and in particular in the iconography of vases. The latter was studied by J. Bazant,³ who advanced the hypothesis that the focus of the iconography in the classical period came to be the private life of citizens and not longer their ‘martial figuration’ as hoplites, characteristic of the black figure style from the end of the archaic period. Authors such as Humphreys⁴ have highlighted that the *oikias* and domestic life guided the production of this new type of funerary monument which was propagated in the fourth century B.C. However, the vision that seems most interesting in this respect – and for this reason I will

return to it at an opportune moment – is that of R. Osborne (1997), which connects the figuration and the commemoration of women in funerary spaces to a new status conferred on wives and daughters of citizens following Pericles' law restricting citizenship to the children of Athenian fathers and mothers. The author sees the female presence in funerary spaces as a consequence of the valorization of the public role of the women of Athens as citizens: women who had already died were valorized by publically exposing their virtues, while the possibility of citizenship introduced by the law was maintained in its latency and imminence not as a 'fact.'⁵ Whatever the position adopted – the valorization of private life, the affirmation of the possibility of female citizenship, the enhancement of the public identity of women, etc., – those who have studied the question agree on one point: the increase in the commemoration and the dedication of the death of women pointed to a public valorization of this exposure, as well as in the polis. However, there has been disagreement about the interpretation of the meaning of this female exposure.

The Greek historian Christos Tsagalis⁶ represents the predominant thesis very well, which sees in the burial spaces a universe of negotiation between the private and the public, a negotiation that explains the exposure of women. He says the following:

The inscription of female virtues in Greek Stelae indicates the wide-ranging mode in which women were commemorated as members of the household whose loss is then 'publicized' by the family. Without overly concerning ourselves with a very demarcated dichotomy between public and private, we are capable of understanding how increasing concerns with these two spheres could make relatives publically commemorate scenes of domestic life even in their idealized sculpted representations, scenes which in another mode would have remained hidden in areas more confined to the home, where women were supposed to operate. As a result of this the *oikos* manifested its presence in a much vaster manner than just Athenian society. (Tsagalis, 2008, p.192)

Tsagalis does not distance himself from an approach that privileges the close relationship between women and the *oikos*, corroborating the interpretation of an important part of specialists who understand the commemoration of female figures on Attic funerary stelae in the fourth century BC as a form of publically representing the family, looking at negotiations and values in the sphere of the *oikias*. The timing of these manifestations coincided with the so-called 'crisis' of the *polis*, and it is very common for historians to

refer to funerary spaces and their private dedications as an unmistakable sign indicating the ‘political demission of the *demos*.’ The question is summarized in the apparent preponderance of family questions in social life, which constitutes a strong indication of the end of the golden period of political participation in Greek cities, as well as strong evidence of the weakening of the *polis* as a communitarian (and identity) structure.

However, private monuments are not simply resumed, much less reused, at the end of the fifth and beginning of the fourth century BC. According to S. Humphreys:

It was the public funerals for the dead in the war that brought for the first time the honors of the heroic funeral within the reach of each Athenian citizen, and I would suggest that this was a significant change, which stimulated the development at the end of the fifth and beginning of the fourth century of monuments commemorating the domestic virtues of the common citizen. Far from being gradually destroyed by the growth of the state, as Fustel thought, the idea for a tomb visible to everyone and the ‘continuity’ of all the *oikoi* was probably generated by this. (1983, p.121)

According to Humphreys’ position, we can see that the funerary landscape of the moment of the ‘crisis of the *polis*’ is profoundly civic. Despite the private appropriation of burial spaces, despite the funerary stelae speaking of families of citizens and non-citizens, the predominant model or ideology is civism, or better a use of civism as a means of praising the family, family relations, the *philia*, even among non-citizens. Nevertheless, what is not explained when the emphasis is placed on the family is not the need for family groups to appear as part of the community, but the reason for the concomitant emphasis on women: an appeal to female figures in images, the praise of women in speeches, the naming of women in public after death, practices which we do not expect from a masculinized society. The position of Christos Tsagalis, in short, starts from the assumption that Athenian women existed in the space of the house and for the family; he ignores C. Sourvinou-Inwood’s instigating hypothesis,⁷ according to which women found their liberty and individuality as agents of the public space, especially in the religious dimension of the *polis*, while in the space of the home and the family women could only be found with their status as a minor and not nameable figure, according to the good wife model, aimed at silence and the ‘recondite of the home.’ In relation to Tsagalis’ thesis, the question is thus relatively simple: how, by what historical movement, by what

cultural paths, did women come to be able to represent for Athenian society the *family* as a group? Thus, to what extent can female dedications be really understood as indirect references to the family group, and not only direct references to *individually commemorated* women? Or also, to what extent did the praise of the *female* individual turn the eyes of the community to the family?

BRIEF COMPARATIVE PICTURE OF FUNERARY INSCRIPTIONS

In relation to the *corpus* of funerary inscriptions dedicated to women between the sixth and fourth centuries BC, the numbers are not exact, due to the lack of a recent study. The order of grandeur has to be considered. Thus, Nielsen et al.,⁸ for example, present the following inventory for the fourth and third centuries BC (we do not yet have a similar count for the sixth and fifth centuries BC): of a total of 4519 names carved on funerary stelae, 1472 are female. Of these only 176 are exclusively dedicated to women, while 168 are exclusively male. Of the 1490 mentions of females names, between 115 and 130 are accompanied by epigram dedications made for women; approximate data for the period between the sixth and third centuries BC. The order of grandeur of the numbers suggests that in terms of inscriptions, around 9% of the stelae have verse epigrams; although we do not have data to count the epigrams dedicated to children or men, the same study by Nielsen et. al. suggests that the proportion was restricted to the larger group of simple inscriptions of names /patronymics. However, this restriction could not be connected to social class or status criteria, as its reasons are still unknown. I am not going to analyze the entire universe of female inscriptions, but only use examples that are characterized by a certain amount of reoccurrence.

1. The archaic period (560-500 BC)

- (1) ... placed me as a *sema* for his beloved daughter with the beautiful form; Phedimus erected it (E68, Attica, interior (Vurva), c. 560-550 BC)⁹
- (2) Here Phi... buried the caste Lampito in the soil, far from her native soil. Endoios made the statue. (E75, Pfohl 53, Athens, VI century BC)¹⁰
- (3) *Sema* of Phrasikleia: I will always be called maiden since the gods gave me this name instead of marriage. Aristion Pario made me. (E80, Attica, Demos Mirrinunte, sixth century BC)

- (4) This is the *sema* of Archias and his beloved sister; Eucosmides made it beautiful; and the wise Phedimo put the piece over it. (E169, Attica – Mesogeia, c. 550 BC)
- (5) I am the *sema* of Mirrina, who died of the plague (E170a; Pfohl 68; Attica, south, Demo Cephale at. Keratea, c. 525-500 BC)
- (6) Terpo erected this <beautiful> *sema* of Melissa, who died <of the plague> . (E170b, Pfohl 38; Athens, Dipylon, end of the sixth century BC)

The epitaph of the archaic period indicates the presence of *sema* or frequently indicates that it *is* the *sema*. Perhaps for this reason, the name of the sculptors is constantly mentioned and their work praised, since attention has to be given to the stone, to the mark of a determined burial, and not so much to the *persona*, to the publicizable face of a dead individual. In fact, even in the epigrams it is not an individual who is praised, but a daughter, a sister, who died in a determined phase of life, leaving behind a commitment such as to marry and to establish a relationship between *oikoi*.

At first sight these epigrams have an informative function: died of the plague; died before marriage; was a loved sister who looked after the sickness of her sister; or was a daughter of marriageable age. Nevertheless, what is lacking is praise or at least structured praise texts. At this point it is necessary to cite some examples of male epigrams from the same period:

- (7) This is the *sema* of <Antifilo>, a virtuous and prudent man <Aristion Pario> made me. (E6; Attica, Demo Prospalta, sixth century BC)
- (8) The father, Cleobulo, made the *sema* for Xenofantus, who died, in honor of his virtue and prudence. (Athens, Dipylon E71, sixth century BC)
- (9) In front of the *sema* of Antiloco, the virtuous and prudent, <shed a tear >; since death waits for you as well. Aristion made me (E85, Athens, c. 550 BC)

The *agathou kai sophronos andros* (virtuous and prudent) Antifilo, as well as Antiloco, have to be remembered for this ideal which, according to Friedländer, echoes the lyric poetry of Tirteu or Theognis in their praise of the hoplite, thus gaining ‘martial’ connotations. Similarly, in honor both of the virtue (*areté*) and the prudence (*sophrosuné*) of Xenofantus, his father made the *sema*. Also according to Friedländer, we have here a variation of the ideal warrior of Theognis, with ‘moralizing’ connotations and connections with the

poetry of Solon (temperance as a virtue). Ideas that produce a stylized image of the citizen-soldier, or better the hoplite citizen of the archaic period. The praise of nobility, virtue and prudence will appear with greater frequency in epigrams for women in later periods, as well as remaining in male epigrams.

2. Classical Period (440-325 BC)

In all the funerary epigrams dedicated to women during this period the woman is named, often also receiving the name of the father (patronymic) followed by the demotic or 'ethnic' name. Daughters were most numerous, followed by wives, mothers, sisters and nursemaids.

Nobility, prudence and virtue are recurrent elegies, as shown by the examples below:

(10) Here lies Aristilla, daughter of Ariston and Rodilla; Oh daughter you were prudent! (GaE Pl. 13, 27. Athens, National Museum 766 – Piraeus, c. 430 BC) ¹¹

(11) This woman left behind her husband and her brothers, and (left) her mother grief, a child and renown for her great virtue which will not age (megáles te aretês eúklean agéro). Here, someone who achieved true virtue (páses aretês), Mnesarete, is kept in the chamber of Persephone (thallamos). Mnesarete, daughter of Sokrates. (GaE Pl. 15, 30; gv 1962; c. 380 BC) ¹²

(12) ----sandros; Chairelea, daughter of Theopompos. Gly<cera---> / daughter. This tomb here hides Glycera; neither in form, nor in actions did there exist a women who achieved a fuller virtue, the motive of immense sorrow for her parents and the grief of her (friends). She obtained the common share necessary to everyone. (GV 543, p. 132; Athens, Laurion, IV Century BC)

(13) It is the destiny of everyone who lives to die; and you, Pausimaca, left behind a painful sorrow as the share of your progenitors, your mother Phenipe and your father Pausanias. Here a memorial is raised to your virtue and prudence so that passer-bys may see it. (GV 1654; Paiania, c. 390-80 BC)

(14) QUERIPE The best praise that among men a woman can achieve, Queripe in her death had already achieved to the highest degree. To my children I leave the memory of her virtue. (GV 891, p. 245. Piraeus c. 390-80 BC)

(15) Philostrate, daughter of Philon. / Philon, son of the *kallippos* of Aixone Here is someone who achieved all the virtues, Phanagora, is now maintained

in the chamber of Persephone. Alkimache / Kallimachos/ Ananthrasio (GV 488, p. 120, c. 390-365 BC)

(16) The body is below the earth, but prudence, Crisante, a tomb does not hide. (GaE Pl. 18 fig 34; GV 1778; Athens, c. 380 BC)

(17) Eukoline Antiphanos. This woman had a name that combines with her noble nature and her life. She lies here beneath the earth, having completed the lot for which she was born. (GAe 8,14. Ceramic, c. 380 BC)

(18) The body of Timokleia is now enclosed in the folds of the earth. Her virtue shall remain for eternity, since the memory of nobility is immortal (GaE pl. 18, 37 Athens, c. 380 BC)

(19) Here lies Philonoe, daughter of ... blessed and prudent, and with all the virtues. (GaE Pl 24, fig 51; GV 335, Psychiko, N Athens, c 380-370 BC)

(20) She achieved more praise than any other woman from men, oh Antipe, and now, even though you are dead, you still maintain this praise. (GaE Pl 25, fig 55; GV 1705; Athens, c. 380-70 BC)

(21) Whatever is the best praise given by men to a woman, Kalliarista, daughter of Phileratos, enjoyed them when she died, due to her virtue and prudence; for this reason her husband Damokles built a memorial of his love to his wife. Now her life can have a good destiny. (GaE Pl. 16, fig 32, Museum of Rhodes, Rhodes, Attic style; c. 375 BC)

(22) Here the earth covers someone noble and prudent, Arquestrate, whose husband suffers from her absence. (GaE Pl 23, fig 52; GV 495, Athens, Markopoulos, 375-350 BC)

(23) GLYCERA, DAUGHTER OF THUCYDIDES what is not frequent in a woman to be excellent and at the same time sensible, this Glycera achieved. (GV 890, p. 245 Piraeus, c. 360 BC)

(24) It was not clothes and gold that this woman admired when she was alive; no, it was her own husband and prudence [that she loved]. But instead of her youthful beauty, it is the tomb of Dionysia that her husband Antiphilos adorns. (Athens National Museum 2054; GV 1810 Piraeus, c. 350 BC)

(25) A remembrance of your virtue, Theophila, shall never vanish, so sparing, valorous and hardworking and having all the virtues. (GV 1490, Piraeus, c. 350 BC)

(26) Pasistrateia, daughter of Euphronio of Lamptrai. Euphronio, Aristodico. Here lies Pasistrateia, daughter of Euphronio; although destiny has taken her

soul, she left her children the practice of virtue and prudence. (GaE Pl. 27, fig 57; GV 596. Pireu, c. 350 BC)

As I have shown above, the formula *aretês tes sophrosûnes* was already used in male epigrams in the archaic period. During the classical period the elegy was 'extended' to women, with the highest incidence occurring between 430-360 BC, highlighting a requisition of a renowned ally in the competition for the 'excellence' of the women commemorated; in the later period, nobility, virtue and prudence came to share space with other types of praise, as in the examples below:

(27) Here (entháde) the land hides the nursemaid (títthen) of the sons of Diogeites; she came from the Peloponnese [and proved] to be very trustworthy (or to be very just, dikaiotáten). Malicha of Kythera (GV 493, CAT i. 328-9 no. 1350; Kosmopoulou N4; Piraeus, 375-350 BC) ¹³

(28) A daughter of Apolodoro, the freeman (isoteles), Melitta Here the earth covers the valorous (chréste) nursemaid of Hipposstrate; so he now misses her. When you were alive I loved you, nursemaid, and now I also honor (timé) you, though you remain below the soil, and I will honor you while I live. I know that even below the ground, if there really exists any prize for the valorous, you, nursemaid, more than anyone, will be honored by Persephone and Hades. (GV 747; CAT i 510-12, in 1969; Kosmopoulou, N7; 350 BC)

(29) Chairestrate, wife of Menekrates of Icaria. The venerable and honored servant of the mother-of-all-things rests in this tomb, Chairestrate, whom her consort loved when she was alive and whom he mourned when she died. But she left the light of day blessed for seeing the children of her children. (GV 421; Kosmopoulou P7; CAT i 495-6 in 1934 prob. Piraeus, c. 350 BC)

In these examples women are commemorated for being 'professionals,' as E. Kosmopoulou says; for having a prominent public activity, such as a priestess (Chairestrate) as nursemaid, as in the case of Melita, daughter of an isoteles (*foreigner* or freeman, who is awarded citizenship) or Malicha. Far from being recognized just because of her function, the priestess Chairestrate is *guné*, mother and grandmother; Mélita is a daughter. It seems to me that this suggests a greater complexity in the social relations that are exposed in the funerary spaces for the recognition of women. We can suggest a change of focus in female epigrams between the sixth and fourth centuries BC, moving from a moment in which monuments were erected to daughters in a pre-

nuptial state and to sons – and also the valorization of relationships between brothers and sisters, as in the case of Archias and his sister Phile – representing the predominance and the social prestige of a paternal *oikos*, to another moment in which, even though obeying the logic of married, or about to marry, daughters, these appeared often as sisters and frequently as wives and/or mothers. The ‘daughters’ seem now to be between two houses at least and to have other external ties, and now not so much the focus of the paternal *oikos* but the networks of relationship between *oikoi* is what is most presented. In addition, this is just concerning kinship relations, since if we include the so-called ‘professional activities,’ the scope of social networks is expanded further.

At the same time it is not the contract (*engûe*) between two *oikoi* which is recorded in the epitaphs; the love of a couple, love for children, friendship between women is recorded:

(30) A memorial (mnema) to Mnesagora and Nikochares is raised here. They could not show themselves; the lot of destiny has carried them away, leaving behind for their dear mother and father great sorrow, since they have died and went to the halls of Hades (Pfohl 117; GV 95 Athens National Museum 3845; Vari; 425-401 BC; or 440-30 (Pfohl) BC)

(31) Herophile and Anthemis This is the *sema* of Anthemis: Their friends have put ribbons everywhere remembering their virtue and friendship. (GaE pl. 146, n 69; Pfohl, 112; Piraeus, fourth century BC; or Pfohl, fifth century, before 430 BC)

(32) Ampharete It is the son of my daughter who now holds with love who I once held in my arms when in life we saw the light of the sun, and now I (still) hold her, dead as I am dead. (GV1600; Pfohl 104 Athens, Keirameikos Museum – Keirameikos 410 BC)

(33) Beltiste, daughter of Numenio of Heraclea. I’ve buried my pious mother, so that everyone can see her. In so doing I shall be honored and praised. (GV 287, Piraeus, c. 390 a.C.)

(34) Hail, tomb of Melita. Here lies a valorous woman. Lover of her male lover, Onesimo, you were preponderant. For this reason he continues to lament your death: you were a valorous woman. — Hail, you the most dear of men, love my dear ones. (GaE pl. 19 fig 39; GV 1387; Piraeus, c. 360 BC)

(35) [I] In life, Arquestrate, daughter of Lisandro, from the demos of Pito, received the greatest praise for her character. Now, by abandoning the light

for the death which Destiny reserved for her, great pain and longing for her friends and most than anyone her husband. [II] After a life of piety and honor, I died when I reached the end designated for my life [III] I died which is a reason of pain for my mother, my brother, my husband and my son. In this place I am covered with earth, common for all the dead. Who is buried here is I, Arquestrate, daughter of Lisandro, from the demos of Pito. (GV 1986, p. 624, Pireu, c. 350 BC)

(36) Myrtis, a daughter of Hierokleia and wife of Moschis, lies here; due to her character she pleased enormously her husband and children (GaE Pl. 20, fig 40; gv 343, Athens, c. 350 BC).

2. Continuities and transformations

The first regularity in the funerary commemorations of women is the attention given to daughters. Although in the archaic period some of them appeared more as virgins than daughters, it is still an age class, we can say, that is represented on the monuments. By age class we mean not a simple age group, but a level of social classification of female roles in accordance with certain phases of life, generally demarcated by rites of passage (or rites of consecration, such as marriage). A marriageable daughter, a *parthénos*, was seen in a very different social position from adult women, a position that some ethnologist consider to constitute a boundary: between infancy and adolescence, between virginity and marriage, between the paternal house and the house of a future husband to whom they were destined. Some historians point to the social valorization of the *parthénos*, precisely because of the symbolic value of the boundary and the possible alliance she incarnated.¹⁴ The virgin daughter is not, yet, a woman (*guné*), but its postulated that she will be. And when she dies before marriage, this is the reason for commotion and *news*: to the chamber of Persephone, died of the plague, etc. The symbology of the sculptures of *korai* also leads to seeing the boundary between the phase of life in which the young woman died and the destination of marriage as fundamental (the Keratea *koré*, for example, has a pomegranate as a symbol of fertility and the pre-nuptial state).¹⁵

Jean-Pierre Vernant, in his article on Hestia and Hermes as potencies linked to an experience of space and movement in archaic Greece,¹⁶ deals with the role of the young woman in the paternal *oikos* showing how the young pre-nuptial daughter carries with her the symbolic force of the *oikos* of her father, being a guardian of the hearth (*hestia*), guardian of the identity of the

paternal house, in its enrootedness in space as well as its permanence in time. In this point the daughter relates with the brother in a complementary form: she is the communication with the divine potencies and guarantee of the unity of an *oikos* which the brother materially incarnates. The death of a daughter at this age represents to an extent the loss of this communication and the imbalance in the protection of unity.

It is also the loss of a possible connecting link and alliance with other *oikoi*. The funerary contexts of the archaic period, at least in this initial epigram analysis, focused on this, this loss and this moment; focusing on the rupture of the connecting element between *oikoi*, as well as moving passersby with the loss of young daughters and sons.¹⁷ There are houses who speak through epigrams and speak about themselves in the middle of a space of social interactions between houses.¹⁸ It does not seem to me that the women are being valorized as individuals, nor that they are present in the funerary monuments as individuals, even when recognized by name. It is always a status, a degree of relationship with the *oikoi* which is unveiled: the prudent virgin marriageable daughter; the dear sister who looked after her sick brother, etc.

The daughters of the later period (basically 400-325 BC) are no longer only marriageable, and seem to have few connections with their brothers. Most often they are, in addition to being daughters of a father whose name in several examples follows the demotic of ethnic, *alochoi* and *gunai* whose death causes sorrow to her parents and husband. They are frequently mothers as well, in such a way that only in a few exceptions is it possible to separate the status of daughter from that of mother or wife. An age class is not focused on so much as a set of family relations that intercross in the funerary discourse about the women.

The proposal discussed a long time ago by C. Sourvinou-Inwood in an article entitle *Male and Female, Public and Private, Ancient and Modern* (1995) appears to me to be instigating to understand this scenario. She proposes inverting the terms of the equation with which we approach gender relations in Classical Greece, between the public and the private, or between the *polis* and the *oikos*. Normally in studies on women, the question of the female condition is developed based on a premise: that in relation to the *polis*, women were bound to a type of legal minority, being dependant on men and excluded from political decisions, while in the *oikos* they found their own space and identity. Sourvinou-Inwood proposes the challenge of seeing this contrariwise: while in the *oikos* women depended on men (father, brothers, husband) as their guardians — which often appears in the discourses of Attic orators — and

did not have a fundamental religious responsibility as operators of the rites of the house (only in particular points, such as for example in a phase of the funerary rite), it is in the domain of the *polis* that they operate in an independent form as the officiates in rituals, being there in the religious dimension of the *polis* that women found their recognition and their strength as 'part' of the city.

Transferring this discussion to the purposes of this research, I would say that in the public space of burials and necropolises women are recognized as a social *persona*, which owed much to a type of personal identity, obviously based not on the 'I' but on an exposure structure based on praise (and on censorship). This structure already 'functioned' it can be said in the male universe of bellic achievements: we can see its importance in Homer's poems, as well as its connection with the memory and the word of the poet. It is clear that the identity of the women commemorated on tombs is interlaced with family ties, much more than appeared in the previous period. These networks of relations complexify the form of recognition of the social position of the dead woman, but the social recognition that these many links required came from the praise and not only the fact that the woman *appeared* inserted in these networks (although the two things are inextricably related). The praise reminds everyone and is publically exposed to the eyes of everyone, for all to see. Therefore, it is in the exposure and in a public space that women are valorized as women, conferring in the same movement value to the father, husband and children. Female exposure direct to the family the praise and the honors for having stimulated and housed such a virtuous and valorous woman.

Furthermore, love (*philia*) is a question that appears on epigrams in the classic period. It is difficult to understand the scope of a relation of *philia*, but from the epitaph examples we can enlist some of them empirically. In the archaic period, for example, we have a reference to a (dear) sister whose name is Phile, as well as a beloved daughter and mother. However, between 440-325 BC, we can see the emergence of a series of relationships qualified as *philia*, as for instance the mention of the *philoï*, the beloved, which are probably the children. We can see that Anthemis is commemorated for her virtue and *philia*; while various husbands declare love and even venerate the woman/wife/consort. In the epitaph of Melita, (no. 34 above), the terms derived from *philia* can be found in almost all the dialogue given.

In his article in the collection *L'Homme Grec (O Homem Grego, 1994)*, James Redfield¹⁹ analyzes what he calls the 'disappearance of private life' in the ideology of Athenians in the classical period. One of the assertions he makes to support his argument that there was an ideological devaluation of the

‘private’ in the context of the official discourse of the democratic *polis* is the absence of love stories, or the absence of a positive valorization of love in the period. This argument is based on an analysis in which Redfield uses Attic orators and historians, basically to show that in the literature a type of ‘official’ ideology saw marriage as part of a universe of public male transactions; as a contract between two men. It is not for me here to discuss how appropriate this remark is; however, if we use the normative ideal of the good wife focusing on the contexts in which a female posture is discussed in various Athenian texts, from the tragedies to the Socratic dialogues, we can see that the role emphasized for virtuous women to perform in order to assure the best way of imposing their nature is that of being *led* or *governed*. Love (*philia*) between men and women in marriage is not denied; it just does not appear as relevant.

When we are faced with the profusion of declarations of love than man make for women in these funerary epigrams, we can see that, if we speak of types or standards of representation, these standards do not necessarily coincide with those which are mobilized by the texts of the classical period. For example, we can suppose that women such as Melita, Mnesareta or Dionysia are examples of good wives, but this will greatly reduce the capacity that their epigrams have to say other things! Beginning with the wide range of relationships that sometimes connect one of these wives to their mother, father, or brother, and even types of activity such as priestess. Furthermore, Dionysia did not love wealth, but more than this loved her mother and prudence; Melita was the best lover of her husband and, if this was *chresté*, it was also *kratisté*, the best; and she will not be remembered for any reproductive activities, like Mnesareta will not, but rather for having reached all the virtues, an undying *areté*. And Beltiste, whose son want others to see and for this to cover her with honors! We can presume that the honors due to Beltiste or Mélita came from their position as good wives; but we can only presume, since this is not what the epigrams tell us. In the funerary spaces wives are honored and are loved and it is perfect to exhibit this, and even compete for it: for the biggest love of the consort, for the greatest share of virtue, honor and praise that a woman can obtain.

Generally speaking, the historiographic perspective of female praise — a theme that is also quite rare — follows the path of an explanation that does not go beyond the ‘private-female’ versus ‘public-male’ dichotomy. According to Burton,²⁰ for example, the images of classical funerary stelae sought to represent the good wives of an elite inserted in domestic and family relations; the epitaphs as a result praise these women with virtues which, such as *areté* and

sophrosuné, mean something else when applied to women. To support this statement the author relies on Aristotle (*Politics* I.1260), who says this literally (when distinguished the virtues of those who are led and who lead, *archomenoi* and *archontes*), and Plato's dialogue *Menon*.²¹

Maybe this is so. Nonetheless, I see two problems in agreeing with this. First, D. Burton clasps onto an explanation that is imposed on the data from funerary contexts by the already traditional preeminence of the consolidated literary corpus of classical Greece; it is as if the prisoner wants to be chained again, after glimpsing the parted prison gates. If I can hear the murmuring of the streets, why would I like to return to the bars that separated me from them?

Even Aristotle, when he states the differences between the *areté* and *sophrosuné* of the led and the leader, follows a debate which he refers to in the figure of Gorgias and to Plato's *Menon*; he refers to the Socratic inheritance which produced fruits in relation to an understand/valorization of marriage and love (who follows a different direction from marriage). But to what extent can this inheritance take into account *all references* to *areté* and *sophrosuné* in the epitaphs dedicated to men and women in the classical period? To what extent can this explain the *agon* between women in relation to the *areté*? To what extent can it explain other attributes, such as *eusebes*, *eusynetos*, *hósios*, or *chresté*? Why not try the inverse movement through epitaph discourse inserted in funerary contexts, mobilize them in a history that involves in a circuit, not of mirroring with literature, but of political appropriation (aimed at the community) of male praise?

The second objection is directed to the core of the approach. For Burton, as for Osborne (1997), the element to be understood is the praise in itself, a word with content and meaning: honor, nobility, etc. And the *topos*? If we consider what is enunciated, the *speech-act* of the epitaphs, it is not such much the sense of praise that matters, but an 'artefactual', a material emulation of a piece of formula, a piece of the inscription: *aretês tes sophrosûnes* is one of these *topoi*. I can say that this means something else when applied to women; though I can change the focus from women in themselves to the social context of female exposure and public requisitions and check that the formula rather than distinguishing men and women, approximates both in an archaic structure of public praise.

Thus, there is continuity of two forms of praise that frequently are found together, between the archaic period and at least until the period that goes from 400 to 375 BC. Afterwards the *topos* continues, but it coexists with a much greater diversity of references, some of which can help to question the elite

position of the women commemorated.²² Nevertheless, as I have already mentioned, in the archaic period the praise given to men, valorized them for their public activities as warriors, *hoplitai*. Between 400 and 375 BC, praise derived from *areté* and *sophrosûne* are indistinctly directed at men and women, as well as various other formulae (such as ‘achieved all the virtues,’ or ‘descended into the lair of Persephone’). I cannot end the discussion of this question stating that *aretés tes sophrosûnes* meant different things for men and women. Since in the funerary landscape the probable user, consumer, reader of monuments *sees the same thing*. Frequently they see this in stelae which are also very similar in the attention they give to female figures and family groups. But to pass from this to the assumption that it is read differently, and that in reading *sophron* as an attribute of a woman, the reader immediately refers to the reclusion of the domestic space, to subordination to the husband and to sexual/verbal moderation... both paths are driven away by two rivers of pre-conception. It is enough to ask how this imaginative act could compose ‘hidden, female, cast and subordinate moderation’ with the immense requisition of exposure made by funerary contexts, with the constant injunction that the passerby stop and look, with the frequency of the proposal of competition between women, to at least start to suggest that this can be a discursive transformation profoundly linked to what is expected, or to what the public/political space requires, permits, authorizes. The women — wives, daughters and mothers, in first place — appear to have entered this public dimension of the city space.

It is this phenomenon that Osborne speaks of in his article *Law, the democratic citizen and the representation of women in classical Athens* (1997). He discusses his hypothesis based on a type of symbolic agreement represented by the 451 BC law attributed to Pericles. Perhaps the most famous ‘jurisprudence’ of the classical period is this law, which limited citizenship to the children of Athenian fathers **and mothers**. What Osborne argued was that the law, no matter how much its actual application is discussed, and no matter how much the meaning of ‘and Athenian mother’ can be taken into account or relativized, must have resulted in a game of symbolic negotiations around the figure of the *Athenian woman*, the *asté*. This does not mean that it could be expected from Athenian women that they would participate in the government of the *polis*, a formally constituted citizenship. However, for the author the valorization of women in funerary space, both in monuments and in epitaphs, can be better explained if we take this recognition of a type of citizenship as a reference. A type of symbolic transposition: women citizens

could not lead the *polis*, in other words they could not act in the institutional sphere, the masculine and military sphere of politics; however, due to this impediment they came to be *publically* valorized citizens in a dimension that was always an Achilles heel for the political system of Athenian democracy: the religious space of burials. Robin Osborne thus suggests that the praiseful presence of female figures in funerary spaces represents an improvement in the social *status* of Athenians from the end of the fifth century BC.²³

I tend to agree with this suggestion; and Osborne's article is very well supported. Nevertheless, after greater contact both with the epitaphs and with inscriptions, monuments and the organization of spaces, I have doubts in relation to the centrality of Pericles' law in this game of symbolic requisitions; like I also have doubts in relation to the passage from the finding of these requisitions in funerary contexts to the supposition of an improve of the social status of Athenians.

First, in relation to the periodization. Osborne compares two periods, the archaic (560-490 BC) and the classical (essentially the fourth century BC). The contrasts here are clear and definitive: we move from a period of a lack of female representations to another one with a proliferation of these representations. However, if we observe from close-up what happened with the funerary epigrams between 440-325 BC, we can see that the homogeneity of the comparative affirmation is subdivided into a variety of types and temporalities.

Between 440 and 400 BC, for example, shortly after Pericles' law and still during the Peloponnese War, the plague, the institutional crises, oligarchic coups and the transformation of funerary monuments, daughters and companions (*hetairai*) are commemorated in a greater number, against an equivalent number of epitaphs in which the *status* is not determined. It can be noted that I am not taking the iconography into account, as well as the fact that it is not the case of counting inscriptions in which the name of a woman appeared alone followed by *guné* or *thugáter*. Thus, the epigrams are few and do not commemorate daughters, wives and mothers, but daughters — who can also be mothers — and companions. At least in the epigrams, a direct relationship cannot be perceived between the figuration of a socially prominent model of *asté* and the valorization of the status of women in funerary contexts.²⁴ While we can suppose that the choice of writing the epigram also functioned within a context of public requisitions of burial spaces, perhaps as another instrument in the negotiation of families, the fact that wives are not mentioned

as wives in dedications, rather, for example, as the companions that they were, is something that has to be taken into account.

Between 400 and 375 BC, wives (*alochoi* and *gunai*) and mothers, but also daughters, gained greater distinction in Athenian funerary epigrams; the names of parents appeared more frequently associated with epigrams, following by the demotic or the ethnic. The name of the husband could appear as a husband (*anér* or *pósis*). Amongst other elegies, *areté* and *sophrosúne* appear in a constant form in a type of public competition between women.

Due to the attention given to wives and to the insistence on models of virtue and moderation in a competitive form, the funerary epigrams of this period are what most correspond to an analysis that correlate the commemoration of the *asté* to its public representation as Athenian. Nevertheless, although the monumentality of funerary spaces makes it appear as if a more or less homogenous finding was in question, it is possible to separate some cases in which *astai* were certainly not praised: the nursemaid Málka, for example, is not Athenian. And nor is Beltiste, daughter of Numenio of Heraclea. They are only two examples, though in most of these, if it were not for the context of burial, it would be difficult to state the status of the families to which these women belong.

This does not involve putting a rule in doubt because of exceptions. I would just to stress that the women appear to receive epigrams not only because of the status of their families (whether they were citizens or not), but rather due to a need for praise which I believe does not necessarily involve formal legal citizenship as a value. Funeral spaces, with their private inscriptions and monuments are not exclusive spaces for citizens or citizen families. Thus, the decision to praise someone with an epitaph does not appear to me, at least at the current moment in the research, to depend on a direct relationship with the institutional political space of the city.

We can see this in the period that runs from 375-325 BC, when wives and daughters continued to appear in most epigrams (with wives as daughters and daughters as wives and mothers), confirming the advance of a process than had been underway since the end of the fifth century. More than this, other women appear commemorated for activities such as priestess or midwife. Daughters and wives of non-citizen families continued to be commemorated; one more nursemaid received an epitaph, Melita, daughter of an *isoteles*. Like her, other non-Athenian women were also praised; and virtuous, moderate and noble wives appeared. But now they are more loved that competing among themselves; they are more domestic, more valorous wives (*chresté guné*) than

gifted with all the undying virtues. Did this slight change in registration have any relation to the improvement of the social status of women, caused by an improvement in the legal status of the *asté*? I do not see an *a priori* connection.

Between 400 and 350 BC, more than eighty years had passed since the law of Pericles; Athenian democracy was in a period of radicalization as a system, after the defeat of the oligarchic coups and even in the middle of the crisis and loss of hegemony, a partial reconstruction of the League of Delos. The hardening of the democratic system may have favored the reemergence of the literal strength of the law of Pericles, in order to cleanse the body of citizenry; which actually does not seem consistent with the valorization of women in general.

In summary: the valorization of women in funerary contexts seems to be a phenomenon that extrapolates the symbolism of the *asté* as *Athenian* wife and mother. Osborne's analysis provides a legitimate explanatory model: since the women could be legally considered as citizens, in some way this needed to be made concrete so that it was possible to ask that a wife be given the status of Athenian. It was on the graves of ancestors that for a long time magistrates had to anchor their claims to be *innate Athenians*. It is thus reasonable to suggest that these same graves conferred legitimacy and value on women. Nevertheless, while I can agree that many of the cases found demonstrate this concern with valorizing Athenian daughters and wives, it does not appear to me that this type of explanation can take in account the specificities of the discourse of epigrams, and nor does it appear to me that it can be extended to the comprehension of a general phenomenon of the valorization of female exposure in images and words.

The valorization of female figures in the iconography has a long history, since at least 470 BC on painted vases. In funerary spaces female figures cannot be separated between Athenians and non-Athenians; the monuments are standardized and can be used for one or the other without distinction. Thus the iconographic profusion of female figure may be related to the phenomenon studied by J Bazant (1984; 1985) and which Osborne actually mentions: Athenian citizens being recognized for their domestic connections by the *oikias* and by the family. Nevertheless, this only resolves the 'part' where we have to focus on the citizen. However, the vase and stelae, like the funerary epigrams, are not forbidden texts, images for the 'initiated.' Much to the contrary, they are elements which circulate and among which people circulate. They are elements of daily life, of practical spaces, uses and rites. In this way,

I do not see how it is possible to link their meaning to an exclusive relationship of the citizen to the *polis* and with other citizen families.

Restricting myself to the particularity of epigrams, I can ask this somewhat differently, to what extent can the valorization of female exposure in funerary spaces gradually respond to a conjuncture of the renegotiation of the status of the citizen in relation to a city which is not constructed only with citizens? To what extent did the praise of women and families carry with it a common language through which the citizenry could reaffirm their autochtone profile, but also through which is possible to negotiate prerogatives about the space inhabited?

Exposure and not the expected reclusion of women, whether or not they were Athenian, should be the starting point: the families expose their women; citizenship is not a common element in this exposure, but the praise and the *philia* seem to be. Thus, this involves social prestige (as the son of Beltiste says, worthy of honors)? This involves socially basing through public opinion a legal requirement for status or inheritance? How is this linked to the valorization of female citizenship under the auspices of an autochtone ideology?²⁵ The social requisitions and the mobilizations of public opinion in funerary spaces are not phenomenon exclusive to the classical period: prestige and public opinion went together since the archaic period, if not in the epigrams for women, then certainly in the epigrams dedicated to men, as I have sought to show. Placing the female figure in the center of prestige and at the core of public opinion does not match with the vision of silence and reclusion applied to women. This makes the profusion of female exposure in funerary contexts even more intriguing. This phenomenon was linked to a social space of negotiations between families; the cards are put on the table and these cards are pieces of images and utterances that talk about and name women. This occurred between 440-325 BC in funerary spaces and was not restricted to citizens, although we can agree that the latter were certainly a majority and provoked emulation by others. Certainly, this points to a politically important public place occupied by women as valorous, noble and to a certain extent heroic, individuals. The timing of these representations link to the political fact of the final moment of democracy the moment of the weakening of the *demos* and perhaps for this reason the radicalization of the regime. This relationship between political ideology, between the symbolic marks of the sustenance of a hegemonic groups of citizens, and the appearance of praise for women in funerary spaces of exposure, strongly indicates that, through the request for

praise of families, is being generated a space of political negotiations in a space of coexistence between citizens and ‘others.’

NOTES

¹ Research supported by CNPq and Faperj.

² In relation to the position of the necropolises, see ARGOLO, P. F. *Imagens da Família nos contextos funerários: o caso de Atenas no período clássico*. Dissertação (Mestrado – MAE, USP). São Paulo, 2006; e KNIGGE, U. *The Athenian Kerameikos*. History, Monuments, Excavations. Athens: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Athen, 1991.

³ ³ See ANDRADE, M. M. As ‘visitadoras’: a presença das mulheres nas imagens da morte dos homens. *Anais Eletrônicos do XVI Ciclo de Debates em História Antiga*, 2007; BAZANT, J. Les vases athéniens et les réformes démocratiques. In: BÉRARD, C.; BRON, C.; POMARI, A. *Images et société en Grèce Ancienne*. L’iconographie comme méthode d’analyse. Actes du Colloque International de Lausanne. Lausanne: Cahiers d’Archeologie Romande, 1984, p.33-40; BAZANT, J. *Les citoyens sur les vases athéniens du 6e. au 4e. siècle av. J.-C.* Praga: Academia, 1985.

⁴ HUMPHREYS, S. Family tombs and tomb cult in Classical Athens: tradition or traditionalism? *The family, women and death*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, p.79-130; transl. MMA.

⁵ “The formal exclusion of non-Athenian mothers from political society led to an emphasis on Athenian wives and mothers, literally bringing women into the heart of public life.” OSBORNE, 1997, p.32.

⁶ TSAGALIS, C. *Inscribing sorrow: fourth century attic funerary epigrams*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008, p.192, transl. MMA.

⁷ SOURVINOU-INWOOD, C. Male and female, public and private, ancient and modern. In: REEDER, E. (Ed.). *Pandora*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, p.111-121.

⁸ NIELSEN, T. H. et al. Athenian grave monuments and social class. *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, v.3, n.30, 1989, p.411-420, p.411.

⁹ FRIEDLANDER, P. *Epigrammata*. Greek inscriptions in verse from the beginnings to the Persian Wars. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987 (here, ‘E’).

¹⁰ PFOHL, G. *Greek poems on stones, I*. Epitaphs. Leiden: Brill, 1967 (here, ‘Pfohl’).

¹¹ CLAIRMONT, C. *Gravestone and epigram*. Mainz: Von Zabern, 1970 (here, ‘GaE’).

¹² PEEK, W. *Griechische Vers-Inschriften*. I. Grab-Epigramme. Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1988 (here, ‘GV’).

¹³ KOSMOPOULOU, A. ‘Working women’: female professionals on Classical Attic gravestones. *Annual of the British School at Athens*, 2001, p.281-319.

¹⁴ BRULÉ, P. *La Fille d’Athènes*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1987.

¹⁵ See D'ONOFRIO, A. M. *Aspetti e problemi del monumento funerario attico arcaico*. AION, Napoli, v.X, 1988, p.83-96; RICHTER, G. M. A. *The archaic gravestones of Attica*. London: Phaidon Press, 1961; see also OSBORNE, 1997.

¹⁶ VERNANT, J.-P. Hestia-Hermes. Sobre a expressão religiosa do espaço e do movimento entre os gregos. In: *Mito e pensamento entre os gregos*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1990, p.151-192; ver também VERNANT, J.-P. *As origens do pensamento grego*. São Paulo: Difel, 1982.

¹⁷ HOFFMANN, G. La jeune-fille et la mort: quelques stèles à epigramme. AION, Napoli, v.X, 1988, p.73-82.

¹⁸ LEADER, R. E. In death not divided: gender, family and state on classical athenian grave stelae. *American Journal of Archaeology*, v.101.4, 1997, p.683-699.

¹⁹ REDFIELD, J. O homem e a vida doméstica. In: VERNANT, J.-P. (Ed.). *O homem grego*. Lisboa: Presença, 1994, p.147-171.

²⁰ BURTON, D. Public memorials, private virtues: women on classical athenian grave monuments. *Mortality*, v.8, n.1, 2003, p.20-35.

²¹ “The virtues described — arete, eukleia (goodness and renown) are found in both male and female epitaphs ... However, these shared virtues do not necessarily imply a lack of distinction between male and female virtues after death. Aristotle strongly states that virtues, such as arete and sophrosyne are not the same for men and women” (BURTON, 2003, p.26-27)

²² This is the case of *chresté* or *ergatis*, which I hope to discuss at a later stage of the research.

²³ “I suggest that this symbolic requisition actually had an effect on how Athenians symbolized their own identity, encouraging the public recognition of Athenian wives and mothers. And I also suggest that this new symbolic languages, in turn, affected Athenian attitudes [in relation to women]” (OSBORNE, 1997, p.11).

²⁴ When an epigram is transcribed, the various inscriptions on the stela are also noted, so it is often possible to recover a family context to which a female commemoration is linked. There are also spaces for the burial of families, the *periboloi*, which can indicate the origin of a citizen family, though this reference cannot be considered yet. For the present I am interested in discussing Osborne’s hypothesis through epitaphs and what they say.

²⁵ Nicole Loraux studies the autochthone idea in two different works (1981 and 1990). In *Les Enfants d’Athènes* (1990), she sought to demonstrate how the autochthone idea radically excluded women, removing the name of Athenian from them by stating the Athenians were born of the father on the soil of the patria. Detienne and Sissa, in *Os Deuses Gregos* (1990), question Loraux’s interpretation, citing the example of Euripides’ lost tragedy *Erecteu*, in which Praxiteia, an Athenian woman, wife of the first autochthone, make a speech totally concerned with the autochthonic idea as being the birth of the *mother earth*, that which gives its fruits, as is also stated in the funeral oration of Demosthenes. I tend to agree with the opinion of Detienne and Sissa in this regard.

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