

Studying Greek History through Inscriptions

BASIC LITERATURE ABOUT ANCIENT GREEK WOMEN

- Connelly, J. B., *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece*, 2007
- Pomeroy, S. B., *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*, 1976
- van Bremen, R. 1996. *The Limits of Participation. Women and Civic Life in the Greek East*. Amsterdam

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD

- Women had no civic rights. They could never participate to the council (*boule*) and the popular assembly (*ekklesia*).
- Women had not the possibility of transactions, except when they were accompanied by their *kyrios* (= guardian).
- Their *kyrios* could be any male relative (father, brother, husband, cousin).
- Women could not inherit unless they were only children. But in this case they were obliged to marry their next of kin (*epikleros kore*)

WOMEN IN GREEK INSCRIPTIONS

Inscriptions help us to understand that

- 1) The position of women was not the same everywhere in the Greek world (the Dorian regions were more advanced than the Ionian ones).
- 2) There were multiple identities-activities of women and their position varied accordingly.
- 3) In the Hellenistic and Roman period women entered the public sphere to a greater extent.

Women were attested mostly in following categories of inscriptions:

- Dedications
- Funerary inscriptions
- Honorific inscriptions

Women were also mentioned in certain decrees, whether they were directly concerned or not.



The Gortyn
code

DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY IN DIVORCE

I.Creticae IV 72, Gortyn/Crete, before 450 BC

(ii.45-iii.16) If a husband and wife divorce, she is to keep her property, whatever she brought to the marriage, and one-half the produce (if there is any) from her own property, and half of whatever she has woven within the house; also she is to have 5 staters if her husband is the cause of the divorce. If the husband swears that he is not the cause of the divorce, the judge is to take an oath and decide. If the wife carries away anything else belonging to the husband, she must pay five staters and whatever she carries away from him, and whatever she has stolen she must return to him. About what she denies [having taken], the judge is to order that she must swear by Artemis before the statue of [Artemis] Archeress in the Amyclean temple. If anyone takes anything from her after she has made her denial, he is to pay 5 staters and return the thing itself. If a stranger helps her to carry anything away, he must pay 10 staters and double the amount of whatever the judge swears that he helped her to take away.

I.Creticae IV 72 ii 45-iii 16

αἱ κ' ἀνὲρ [κ]αὶ γυ-
νὰ διακρ[ί]νο[ν]ται, τὰ γὰρ α-
ὐτᾶς ἔκεν, ἅτι ἔκονσ' εἶε π-
ὰρ τὸν ἄνδρα, καὶ τὸ καρποῦ τ-
ἀννεμῖναν, αἱ κ' εἰ ἐς τῶν φοῦ-
50 ν αὐτᾶς κρεμάτο[ν], κοῖτι
κ' ἐνυπᾶνει τὰν [ἐμῖνα]ν ἅτι
κ' εἶ, καὶ πέντε στατεῖραν, αἱ κ' ὁ ἀ-
νὲρ αἴτιος εἶ τᾶς κερ[ρ]εύσι-
ος· α[ἱ] δὲ πο[ν]ίοι ὁ ἀνὲρ [αἴτι]-
55 [ος μεῖ ἔ]με[ν], τὸν δικαστὰν
col. III.1
ὁμνύοντα κρίνεν. αἱ δὲ τι ἄλλ-
ο πέροι τὸν ἄνδρος, πέντε στ-

ατεῖραν καταστασεῖ κοῖτι
καπέρε[ι] αὐτόν, κοῖτι κα παρ-
5 ἔλε[ι] ἀποδότο[ν] αὐτόν. ὃν δὲ κ'
ἔκσαννέ[σεται] δικάσαι τ-
ὰν γυναῖκ' ἀπομόσαι τὰν Ἄρ-
τεμιν παρ Ἀμυκλαῖον παρ τὰν
Τοκσίαν. ὅτι δὲ τίς κ' ἀπομο-
10 σάνσαι παρέλε[ι], πέντε στατ-
εῖραν καταστασεῖ καὶ τὸ κρ-
έος αὐτόν. *vac.* αἱ δὲ κ' ἀλλόττρι-
ος συνεσάδδε[ι], δέκα στ[ατ]εῖ-
ραν καταστασεῖ, τὸ δὲ κρέ-
15 ἰος διπλεῖ ὅτι κ' ὁ δικαστὰς
ὁμόσει συνεσάκσαι. *vac.*

IDENTITIES OF WOMEN

- **Priestesses and other sacred functions**

- **Poetesses**

- **Doctors – Midewifes**

- **Benefactresses**

Grave -stele, Athens, 380-370 BC. SEG 22, 199.

Kerameikos Museum, Athens

Polystrate holding a key.

She is possibly representing a female priestess with temple keys.



Funerary inscription

IG II² 6288, Athens, after the middle of the 4th c. BC

[Chairestrate]

[wife of Men]ekr[ates] from the deme of Ikarion.

A reverent and august priestess of the Mother of All Offspring, Chairestrate, lies in this grave, whom her husband loved when alive, and lamented when she died. She left the light blest, since she had seen her children's children.

IG II² 6288

[Χαιρεστράτη]

[Μεν]εκρ[άτους]

[Ι]καριέως [γυνή].

3a duae rosae

4 μητρὸς παντοτέκνου πρόπολος

5 σεμνή τε γεραιρά | τῶιδε τάφωι κεῖται

Χαιρεστράτη, ἣν ὁ σύνευνος | ἔστερξεν

μὲν ζῶσαν, ἐπένθησεν δὲ θανοῦσαν· |

φῶς δ' ἔλιπ' εὐδαίμων παῖδας παίδων ἐπιδοῦσα.

**Stele with a priestess being crowned by Nike, the winged goddess of victory, held in the hand of Athena
Relief of an honorific decree
Antikensammlung. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin**





Decrees relating to the temple of Athena Nike
IG I³ 35 = ML 44 = OR 137, Acropolis, c. 450 or c. 438 BC?

[The Council and People decided.?.] . . . -kos proposed: [to install] a priestess for Athena Nike to be [allotted?] from all Athenian [women], and that the sanctuary be provided with gates in whatever way Kallikrates may specify; and the official sellers are to place the contract within the prytany of Leontis; the priestess is to receive fifty drachmas and to receive the backlegs and skins of the public sacrifices; and that a temple be built in whatever way Kallikrates may specify and a stone altar. Hestiaios proposed: that three men be selected from the Council; and they shall make the specifications with Kallikrates and [show them to?] [the Council?] in accordance with [the contracts?]

IG I³ 35

[Λεοντίς ἐπρυτάνευε]

[ἔδοχσεν τεῖ βολεῖ καὶ τοῖ]ι [δέ]μο[ι· ...]

[...7... ἐπεστάτε, Γλ]αῦκος εἶπε· [τεῖ]

[Ἄθυναίαι τεῖ Νί]κει *hierean hē ag* [κλ]-

5 [ερομένε λάχε]ι ἐχς Ἄθυναίον *hapas*[σο]-

[ν καθίστα]σθαι καὶ τὸ *hieron* θυροῖσα-

ι καθ' ὅ τι ἂν Καλλικράτες χσυγγράφσ-

ει· ἀπομισθοῖσαι δὲ τὸς πολετὰς ἐπὶ τ-

ἔξ Λεοντίδος πρυτανείας. φέρειν δὲ τ-

10 ἐν *hierean* πεντέκοντα δραχμὰς καὶ

τὰ σκέλε καὶ τὰ δέρματα φέρειν τῶν δε-

μοσίον· νεὸν δὲ οἰκοδομεῖσαι καθ' ὅ τι

ἂν Καλλικράτες χσυγγράφσει καὶ βο-

μὸν λίθινον *vacat*

15 *hestiaios* εἶπε· τρεῖς ἄνδρας *helēstho-*

αι ἐγ βολεῖς· τούτος δὲ μετ[ὰ] Καλλικρά-

[το]ς χσυγγράφσαντας ἐπ[ιδειῖχσαι τε]-

[ι βολ]εῖ καθ' ὅ τι ἀπομ[ισθοθέσεται ..]

[..6...]ει τὸ σ — — — — — — — — — —

IG I³ 36 = ML 71 = OR 156, Acropolis, 424/3 BC?

The Council and the People decided. Aigeis held the prytany. Neokleides was secretary. Hagnodemos was chairman. Kallias proposed: for the priestess of Athena Nike the fifty drachmas written on the stele, the payment officers in office in the month Thargelion shall pay (them) to the priestess of Athena Nike . . .

IG I³ 36

ἔδοχσεν τεῖ βολεῖ καὶ τοῖ δέ-
μοι· Αἰγεῖς ἐπρυτάνευε, Νεοκ-
λείδες ἐγραμμάτευε, Ἀγνόδε-
μος ἐπεστάτε, Καλλίας εἶπε· τ-
5 εἰ ἱερέαι τεῖς Ἀθηνάας τεῖς Νί-
κες ν πεντήκοντα δραχμὰς τὰ-
ς γεγραμμένας ἐν τῇ στήλ[ηι]
ἀποδιδόναι τὸς κωλακρ[έτας],
[ο]ἱ ἂν κωλακρετῶσι τῷ Θ[αργηλ]-
10 [ιω]νος μηνὸς, τῇ ἱερ[εῖαι τῆς Ἀ]-
[θην]αίας τῆς Νίκη[ς ...8....]

ΜΟΙ ΤΑΙ ΛΑΙ ΣΕ ΠΡΥΤΑΝΕΥΙ ΝΙ ΟΚ
ΚΙ ΤΑΙ ΣΕ ΠΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΥΡΑΝ ΟΛ
ΜΟ ΣΤΗ ΕΤΑΓΕΚΛΑΒΕΙΣ ΕΙΣ
ΙΙΙ ΠΛΑΙΣ ΕΛΟΝΑΣΤΕΣ
ΚΙ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΚΟΝΤΑΡΧΙΑΣ
ΕΙΣ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΝΑΣ ΕΝΤΗΣ ΤΗ
ΑΠΟΛΛΟΝΑΣ ΚΑΛΑΡ
ΑΝΚΑΛΑΚΡΕΤΟΣ ΕΙΣ
ΝΟΣ ΜΗΝΟΣ ΤΗ ΕΙΣ
ΑΥΤΗΝ ΚΡ

Decree relating to the sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandemos
IG II³ 879, Acropolis, 283/2 BC

When Hegesipyle was priestess. In the archonship of Euthios, in the twelfth prytany, of Aiantis, for which Nausimenes son of Nausikydes of Cholargos was secretary. On the old and new day of Skirophorion. Kallias son of Lysimachos of Hermos proposed: so that those who at any time are allotted city guardians may carry out their management of the sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandemos according to ancestral custom, for good fortune, the Council shall decide that the presiding committee who are allotted to preside at the forthcoming Assembly shall present the member of the priestess's household and shall put the matter on the agenda and submit the opinion of the Council to the People, that it seems good to the Council that those who at any time are allotted city guardians, whenever there is the procession to Aphrodite Pandemos, shall prepare for the purification of the shrine a dove, and shall whitewash the altars and put pitch over the [doorways] and wash the statues; and they shall prepare purple of weight (\geq) 4 drachmas . . .

IG II³ 879

ἐπὶ ἱερείας Ἥγησιπύλης·

ἐπ' Εὐθύου ἄρχοντος, ἐπὶ τῆς

Αἰαντίδος δωδεκάτης πρυ-

τανείας, ἧι Ναυσιμένης

5 Ναυσι<⁶¹κύδ>⁶¹ου Χολαργεὺς^{VII}

ἐγγραμμάτευεν· Σκιροφοριῶ-

νος ἔνηι καὶ νέαι· Καλλίας Λ[υ]-

σιμάχου Ἑρμειος εἶπεν· ὅπ[ω]-

ς ἂν οἱ ἀστυνόμοι οἱ ἀεὶ <λα>νχ[ά]-

10 νοντες ἐπιμέλειαν ποιῶντα[ι]

τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης τῆς

Πανδήμου κατὰ τὰ πάτρια, τύ-

χη ἀγαθεῖ, δεδόχθαι τῆι βου-

λῆι· τοὺς προέδρους οἱ ἂν λάχω-

15 σιν προεδρεύειν εἰς τὴν ἐπιου-

σαν ἐκκλησίαν προσαγαγεῖν τὸν

[ο]ικεῖον τῆς ἱερείας καὶ χρηματίσαι

περὶ τούτων, γνώμην δὲ ξυνβάλλε-

[σ]θαι τῆς βουλῆς εἰς τὸν δῆμον, ὅ-

20 [τ]ι δοκεῖ τῆι βουλῆι τοὺς ἀστυνό-

μους τοὺς ἀεὶ λαχόντας, ὅταν ἧι

ἡ πομπὴ τῆι Ἀφροδίτῃ τεῖ Πανδή-

μοι, παρασκευάζειν εἰς κάθαρσι[ν]

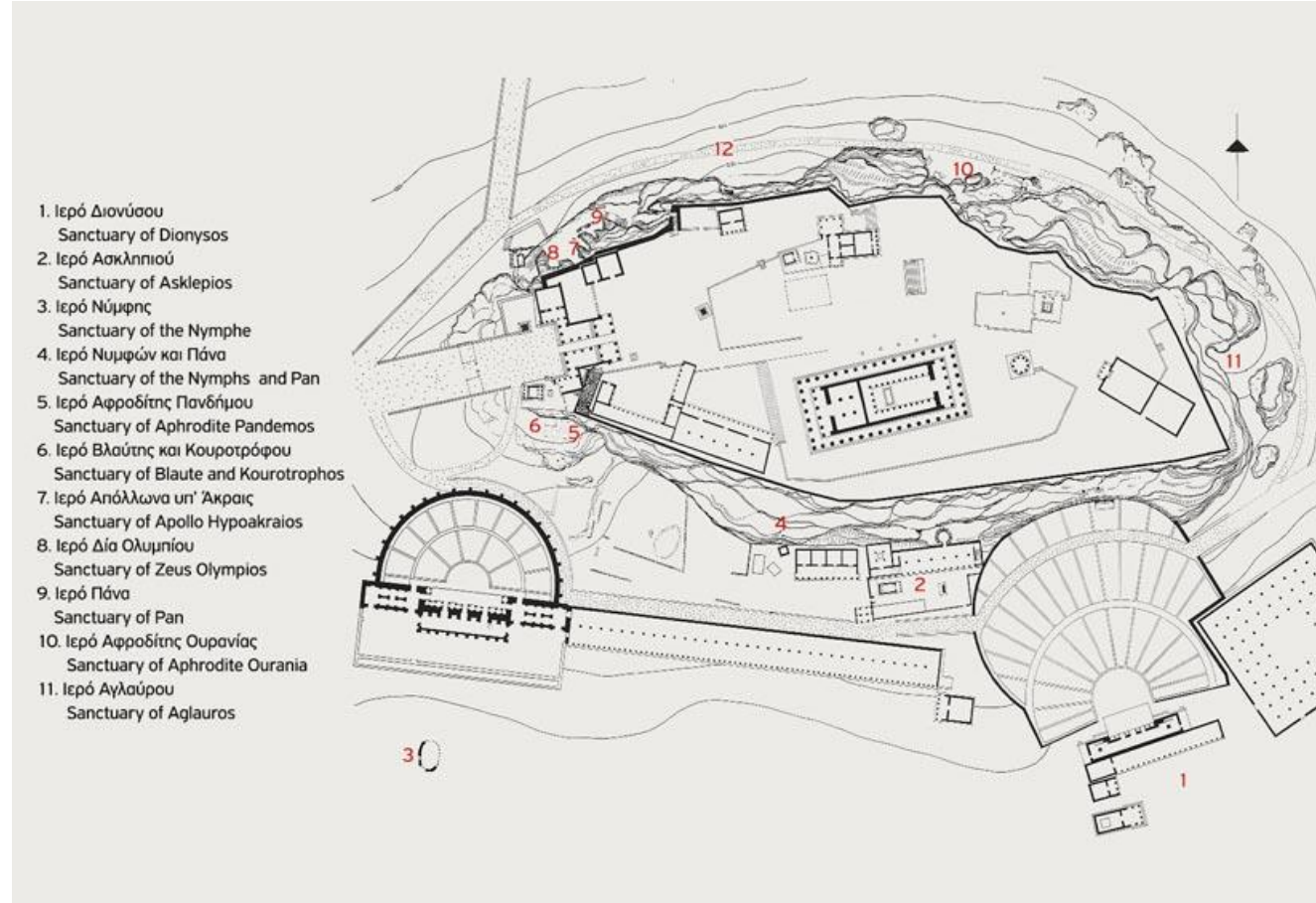
τοῦ ἱεροῦ περιστερὰν καὶ περιαλε[ῖ]-

25 [ψα]ι τοὺς βωμοὺς καὶ πιτῶσαι τὰς

[θύρας] καὶ λοῦσαι τὰ ἔδη· παρα[σκευ]-

[άσαι δὲ κα]ῖ πορφύραν ὀλκῆν : □□□□[..]

Plan of the site of the sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandemos on the slopes of the Acropolis (no 5) [no 10 sanctuary of Aphrodite Ourania]





Honorific decree for the father of a basket bearer
IG II³ 1284, south slope of the Acropolis, 186/5 BC

Gods. In the archonship of Zopyros, in the tenth prytany, of Ptolemais, for which Megaristos son of Pyrrhos of Aixone was secretary. The twenty-first of Elaphebolion, the fourth of the prytany. Assembly in the theatre of Dionysos. Of the presiding committee Sopatros son of Philagros of Hybadai was putting to the vote, and his fellow presiding committee members. The People decided. Xenon son of Asklepiades of Phyle proposed: since the archon Zopyros declares that Zopyros, the father of the selected basket bearer, sent his own daughter, -, to carry the sacred basket for the god according to tradition, and that he also led as beautiful a sacrificial victim as he could, and took care also of the other things proper to himself for the procession beautifully and with love of honour, for good fortune, the People shall decide: to praise the father of the basket bearer, Zopyros son of Dikaios of Melite, and crown him with an ivy crown for his piety towards the gods and his love of honour towards the People of the Athenians; and the prytany secretary shall inscribe this decree on a stone stele and stand it in the sanctuary of Dionysos. and the treasurer of the stratiotic funds shall allocate the expense accrued.

In ivy crown The People (crown) the father of the basket bearer Zopyros son of Dikaios of Melite.

IG II³ 1284

[θ]εο[ί].

[ἐπὶ Ζ]ωπύρου ἄρχοντος ἐπὶ τῆς Πτολεμαϊίδος δεκ[ά]της [πρυ]-

[τανε]ίας, ἧι Μεγάριστος Πύρρου Αἰξωνεὺς^{VIII} ἐγραμμάτευεν·

[Ἐλαφ]ηβολιδῶνος δεκάτει ὑστέραι· τετάρτει τῆς πρυτανεί-

5 [ας· ἐκκ]λησία ἐν Διονύσου· τῶν προέδρ[ω]ν ἐπεψήφισεν Σώπα-

[τρος Φι]λάγρου Ὑβάδης καὶ συμπρόεδροι·
vacat

ἔδοξεν τῶι δήμωι·

[Ξένω]ν Ἀσκληπιάδου Φυλάσιος εἶπεν· ἐπειδὴ ὁ ἄρχων Ζώπυρος

[ἀπο]φαίνει τὸν πατέρα τῆς καταλεγείσης κανηφόρου Ζώπυρον

10 [π]έμψαι τὴν θυγατέρα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ Τ[— c.6 —] οἴσουσαν τὸ ἱερὸν

κανοῦν τῶι θεῶι κατὰ τὰ πάτρια, προσαγαγεῖν δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ θῦ-

μα ὡς ἠδύνατο κάλλιστον, ἐπιμεμελῆσθαι δὲ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ν

τῶν καθηκόντων ἑαυτῶι εἰς τὴν πομπὴν καλῶς καὶ φιλοτί-

μως, ἀγαθεῖ τύχει, δεδόχθαι τῶι δήμωι· ἐπαινέσαι τὸν πατέρα

15 τῆς κανηφόρου Ζώπυρον Δικαίου Μελιτέα καὶ στεφανῶσαι ν

αὐτὸν κιττοῦ στεφάνωι εὐσεβείας ἕνεκα τῆς πρὸς τοὺς ν

θεοὺς καὶ φιλοτιμίας τῆς εἰς τὸν δῆμον τὸν Ἀθηναίων· ἀναγρά-

ψαι δὲ τότε τὸ ψήφισμα τὸν γραμματέα τὸν κατὰ πρυτανείαν

ἐν στήλῃ λιθίν[ε]ι [κα]ὶ στήσαι ἐν τῶι τεμένει τοῦ Διονύσου· ν

20 τὸ δὲ γεγόμενον ἀ<νά>λωμα μερίσαι τὸν τα[μ]ίαν τῶν στρατιωτι-

κῶν.
vacat

Basket bearers (*kanephoroi*)

Parthenon-frieze



Boeotia



Poetesses - Musicians



Honorific decree
IG IX 2, 62, Lamia, 218/7 BC

In the year when Agetas of Kallipolis was general of the Aetolians; with good fortune it was resolved by the city of Lamia: since Aristodama of Smyrna in Ionia, the daughter of Amyntas, being a composer of epic poetry, has visited our city and has given many [performances] of her own poetry, in which she has made honourable mention of the Aetolian race and the ancestors of our people, and she given these performances with great enthusiasm, *therefore* she shall have the status of proxenos and benefactor of the city, and she shall be granted citizenship, the right to own land and buildings, grazing rights, inviolability, security by land and by sea in war and in peacetime, both for herself and for her descendants and her property for all time, and all the other rights which are granted to other proxenoi and benefactors. Let there also be given . . . to her brother and his descendants: proxeny, citizenship, [and inviolability]. When the archons were (?) Python, Neon and Antigenes; the general was (?) Epigenes; and the hipparch was Kylos. Python son of Athanaios acted as guarantor of the proxeny.

IG IX 2, 62

τῶν Αἰτωλῶν·

στραταγέοντος Ἀγήτα Καλλ{λ}ιπολίτα {²⁶Καλλιπολίτα}²⁶· ἀγαθαῖ
τύχαι·

ἔδοξε [τᾶι πόλει]

τῶν Λαμιέων· ν ἐπειδὴ Ἄριστο[δ]άμα Ἀμόντα Ζμυρναία ἀπ' Ἴω[νίας]

ποιήτρια ἐπ[έ]ω[μ] πα[ρα]γ[ε]νομ[έ]να ἐν τὰμ πόλιν πλείονας
ἐ[πι]δείξεις]

5 ἐποιή[σ]ατο τῶν ιδίωμ ποιημάτων, ν ἐν οἷς περὶ τε τοῦ ἔθνεο[ς]

τῶν Αἰτωλῶ[μ καὶ τ]ῶμ προγόνω[ν] τοῦ δάμου ἀξίως ἐπεμνάσθη,
με[τὰ]

πάσας προθυμ[ίας] τὰν ἀπόδεξιμ ποιούμενα, ν ε[ἶ]μ[ε]ν αὐτὰμ
πρό[ξενον]

τᾶς πόλιος καὶ εὐεργέτιν, δεδόσθαι δ' αὐτᾶ[ι κ]αὶ πολιτείαν καὶ
γᾶς κα[ὶ οἰκίας]

ἔγκτησιν καὶ ἐπ[ι]νομίαν καὶ ἀσυλίαν καὶ ἀσφάλειαν κατὰ γᾶν
καὶ κατὰ θ[ά]λασσαν]

10 πολέμου καὶ εἰρά[νας καὶ] α[ὐ]τᾶι καὶ ἐκγόνοις αὐτᾶς καὶ
χρ[ή]μασιν ἐν τὸν ἅπ[αντα]

χρόνον καὶ ὅσα τοῖς ἄλλοις προξένοις καὶ εὐεργέταις δίδοται
πάντα· ν ὑ[παρ]-

χέτω δὲ καὶ Ο...νει τῶι ἀδελφεῶι αὐτᾶς καὶ ἐκγόνοις αὐτοῦ
προξενί[α]

πολιτεία [ἀσυλί(?)]α. ἀρχόντων [Πύ(?)]θωνος, Νέωνος,
Ἄντιγένεος, στρα[ταγέ]-

οντος Ἐπι[γένε(?)]ος, ἵππα[αρχέο]ντος Κύλου· ἔγγυος τᾶς
προξε[νίας]

Doctors



Funerary inscription

IG II² 6873, Acharnai/Athens, ca. mid-4th BC

Midwife and doctor Phanistrate lies here,

she caused pain to no-one and, having died, is missed by
all

IG II² 6873

in margine summo: Φανο[στράτη — — —, — — —]

Με[λιτέως γυνή]?

supra sedentem: Φανοστράτη.

3a infra anaglyphum:

4 μαῖα καὶ ἰατρὸς Φανοστράτη ἐνθάδε κεῖται

5 [ο]ὕθενι λυπη<ρ>ά, πᾶσιν δὲ θανοῦσα ποθεινή.

BENEFACTRESSES

Dedication of land by Arete to Poseidonios and the community of Aigosthenitai for the cult of Poseidonios

IG VII 43, Aigosthena/Attika, second half of 3rd BC

With Good Fortune. Arete, daughter of Aristarchos, dedicates Poseidon and the community of the Aigosthenitans half of the garden which lies by the sea, having purchased it from the Aigosthenitans for 1,000 drachmas and she makes it into a *temenos* called *Poseidonion*. Let the Aigosthenitans, after getting the income from this *temenos*, add it to the money that is spent on the sacrifice which they decided to offer to Poseidon and onto the contest held at the sacrifice for Poseidonios and let them make both sacrifice and contest more splendid.

IG VII 43

Ἀγαθῆ τύχη.

Ἀνατίθησιν Ἀρέτη Ἀριστάνδρου Ποσει-
δωνίῳ καὶ τῷ κοινῷ τῶν Αἰγιοσθενιτῶν
τοῦ κήπου τὸ ἥμισυ, ἀγοράσασα παρὰ
5 τῶν Αἰγιοσθενιτῶν δραχμῶν χιλίων,
τὸ πρὸς θάλασσαν, καὶ ποεῖ τέμενος
Ποσειδώνιον· τοῦ δὲ τεμένους τούτου
[τὸν γινόμενον] φόρο[ν] λ[αμβά]νον[τε]ς οἱ
Αἰγιοσθενῖται προστιθέτωσαν πρὸς τὸ
10 ἀ[ρ]γύ[ρ]ιο[ν τ]ὸ εἰς τὴν θυσίαν ἀν[α]λισκό-
μενον, ἧ[ν α]ὐτοὶ ἐψηφισμένοι εἰσὶν
θύειν Ποσειδωνίῳ καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἀγῶνα
τὸν τιθέμενον ἐν τῇ θυσίᾳ τῇ Ποσει-
δωνίου, καὶ ποιούντ[ωσ]αν τὴν τε θυσίαν
15 καὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα λαμπρότερον.