

BA Program in the Archaeology, History, and Literature of Ancient Greece

Course: 75403 Studying Greek History through Inscriptions

S. Aneziri

## THE EPIGRAPHY OF DEATH

### A. LEGISLATION ON FUNERALS AND TOMBS

#### 1. Plutarch, *Solon* 21. 6

He also subjected the public appearances of the women, their mourning and their festivals, to a law which did away with disorder and licence. ... Laceration of the flesh by mourners, and the use of set lamentations, and the bewailing of any one at the funeral ceremonies of another, he forbade. [5] The sacrifice of an ox at the grave was not permitted, nor the burial with the dead of more than three changes of raiment, nor the visiting of other tombs than those of their own family, except at the time of interment.

#### 2. *IG XII 5, 593 = CGRN 35, Iulis on Keos, 425-400 BC*

Face A

These are the laws regarding the deceased. The deceased must be buried according to the following guidelines: in three white cloths, a cloth underneath the corpse, one wrapped about it, and one over it—there may be less than that—worth not more than three hundred drachmae. One should carry him out on a bier with wedge-shaped legs and do not cover [...] with cloths. Carry wine to the tomb, but no more than three choes, and oil, not more than one chous, and bring back the containers. Carry the deceased, completely covered over, to the tomb in silence. Use a preliminary offering according to (the ancestral customs). Bring back indoors the bier from the tomb and the bedclothes, and on the following day a freeman should sprinkle the house with seawater first, and then all the living quarters with hyssop afterwards. When it has been sprinkled, the house is clean, and one should offer the sacrifices at the hearth. The married women who go to the funeral rite should leave the tomb before their husbands. In honour of the deceased, do not perform the rites made on the thirtieth day. And do not place a wine-cup under the bier, and do not pour out water and do not bring the sweepings to the tomb. Wherever someone dies, when he is carried out, no women should go to the house, other than the polluted ones. Polluted are the mother and the wife and the sisters and the daughters. In addition to these there

should not be more than five women. And children of the daughters and of first cousins. But nobody else. Those who are polluted, having washed themselves [...] with a pouring of water are clean.

Face B

It has been resolved by the council and the people: that on the third day during the yearly ceremonies, those who take part are pure; but are not to go to a sanctuary, and the house is pure until they return from the tomb.

### **3. GIG 3562 = CGRN 108, Gambreion/Asia Minor, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC**

With good fortune. When Demetrios was *hieronomos*, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the month Thargelion, Alexon son of Damon proposed: there is to be a law for the people of Gambreion, that the women who are in mourning are to wear grey clothes, not dirty ones; and that men and children in mourning are also to wear grey clothes, unless they prefer to wear white. The customary rites are to be fulfilled within three months for those who have gone to their end (i.e. died). On the fourth month men are freed from mourning, women on the fifth. And it is obligatory that they free themselves from their funerary duty and participate in the processions (and outdoor activities) which are written in the (other?) law. The *gynaikonomos* appointed by the people for the purifications prior to the Thesmophoria is to pray that "it will go well for those men who abide by and for women who obey his law, and they will have the enjoyment of their present blessings, but for those who do not obey it or abide by it, the opposite (will happen). And it will not be pleasing to the gods for women (who disobey the law) to sacrifice, since they are impious, to any god for ten years". Let the treasurer chosen for the next year after (the year of) the *stephanephoros* Demetrios inscribe this law on two stelae and erect one these stelae in front of the doors of the Thesmophorion, the other in front of the temple of Artemis Lochia. The treasurer is to report the expenditure for the stelae in the first meeting of the *logistai*.

### **4. Cicero, *De legibus* 2.26.64-66**

When later, as Demetrios writes from Phaleron, people had begun to conduct funeral services at great expense and to accompany them with dirges, these abuses were abolished by the law of Solon, which our Ten Men have placed on the tenth tablet in almost the same words.

For the instruction about the three cloths, like most everything else, comes from Solon. The provision about the dirge is even taken verbatim: "The women shall not scratch their cheeks and shall not intonate a dirge during the burial."

## THE EXCESSES

### **5. *I.Knidos 71, Knidos, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD***

Because Y, from the descendants of Theopompos, the son of Artemidoros, who brought about the freedom of our forefathers and freedom from taxation, died, and (because) the people were shocked beyond measure (by her death) because of her virtue and reputation, they gathered with great zeal in the theatre and, when her body was carried out, the people seized her body and then unanimously demanded that she be buried with the participation of all the people, manifesting by acclamations her virtue, so that after her death she might also receive the appropriate honours similar to those of her ancestors.

## INSCRIPTIONS ON THE GRAVES – FUNERARY INSCRIPTIONS

### **6. *IG IX,1 868, Corfu, 630-600 BC***

This is the sign of Arniadas who was destroyed by fiery-eyed Ares fighting close to the ships on [river] Arachthos's flows, greatly excelling in the uproar of the battle that brings lament.

### **7. *IG I<sup>3</sup> 1503 = IG IV 50, Aegina, ca. 457-431 BC***

Greetings passers-by! But I, Antistates son of Atarbos, lie here dead, having previously left my fatherland. Antistates Athenian.

## FINES AGAINST VIOLATION

### **8. *Grave stele of Nikephoros and Glykonia, Conane (Gonen, Bahkesir), end of 2<sup>nd</sup>-beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> C AD***

Nikephoros, son of Moschion (made) (this grave) for his wife Glykonis and in his own memory while still alive: if anyone buries another body (here) without my permission, he will pay 2500 denarii to the city and will be responsible for the crime of grave robbery.

## FINANCING THE MEMORY

### **9. *Dedication of money by Alkesippos to Apollo and the city of Delphi for a festival in his memory, CID V 128, Delphi, 183/2 BC***

When Damosthenes was archon, in the month of Poitropios, Alkesippos, son of Boutheras from Kalydon, dedicated to the god and to the city of Delphi 130 golden coins and 22 silver mines and 30 staters on the following terms: if Alkesippos suffers anything, the city of Dephi shall perform a sacrifice and public feast to Apollon Pythios every year, calling it Alkesippeia, from the interests

produced by the gold and silver. The sacrifice shall be performed in the month of Heraios and the priests of Apollon and the archon and the prytaneis and all the other citizens shall march in procession from the circular square. Let the magistrates inscribe this in the sanctuary and the dedication be valid. And all his (i.e. Alkesippos') other personal belongings shall be dedicated, if anything happens to him, to the god and the city, as well as Theutima, his own slave, so that she become free, if anything happens to him. Let Damippos, Theutima, Ageas and Peisilaos bury him using the bronze money that he deposits in his house and let them render an account to the city. Witnesses: Kritolaos, Latropos, Ageas, Polemokrates, Agasidamos, Gennaios, Xenokrates of Medeon, Stratagos, Kallikles, Andronikos, Pisilaos, Dexikrates, Charixenos, Polemarchos, son of Pausanias. Athambos, Ageas, Peisilaos shall keep the testaments.