
Imbrication of Woman Image

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All my remarks are based on the research project (conducted by P. Siekierka, K. Stebnicka, A. Wolicki): “Honours for women and the change of citizen mentality” - the first corpus of all Greek honorific inscriptions for women which consists of 1208 preserved texts ^{for 1131} women (sometimes one female individual was honoured in more than one inscription), issued by public civic male institutions (the people, council, religious and professional associations) in the Greek cities in mainland Greece, Asia Minor, and Aegean islands from classical period till the end of 2nd century CE. Most of the available Greek honorific inscriptions for women were made in the early Imperial period (beginning from the late I BCE).

The honorary inscriptions point female merits and virtues. I will start with female merits.

I. Describing Female Merits

Public honours for women are not different from the ordinary honours for men: public praise, granting of a crown, commemorating the event with engraving of the decree on a stele and its public display: all of these constituted a list of the earliest female honours. In the earliest times women were predominantly honoured for their achievements in the sphere of cult. It has been once stated that within the city (Greek *polis*) the religion was for women an equivalent of politics for men and in the sphere of religion women exercised their (quasi)citizenship rights.

The first women to be indisputably honoured were an anonymous sister of Pythodoros in the first half of the fourth c. BCE¹ and an anonymous priestess in Athens at the end of the fourth c. BCE.²

1. *ID* 88, ll. 28-37: “In the archonship of Charikleides, in the seventh prytany of the (phyle) Hippothontis, [---] when Aphidnaios was the epistates, Nikostratos (30) of Pallene was the secretary. Andromenes said. It was decided about the sister of Pythodoros and nephew of Pythodoros. Since he is a serviceable man on the islands [---] let there be a proxeny for the nephew of Pythodoros. And it is to inscribe (35) his name on the stelai of Pythodoros, secretary of the council (shall do it) on the one on the Acropolis, secretary of the Amphictyons (shall do it) on the one on Delos.” (tr. by P. Siekierka)

2. *IG* II² 1199: “Philaos son of Chremes proposed. Since the appointed by lot *hieropoioi* in the sanctuary of Hebe took care justly and with love of honour in sacrificing the sacrifice for Hebe and the other gods for whom it is necessary for them to sacrifice, and they gave account (of what they did), it is to crown each of them with an olive

In terms of analogous granted privileges, the earliest known public honours for men were a golden crown for Thrasybulos, Phrynichos' killer, voted in 410/409 BCE (year of a political, oligarchic coup in Athens) and a statue for Konon granted after the battle in 394 BCE. Perhaps the timespan between the earliest public honours for men for their 'political achievements' and for women for their 'religious exploits' was not at all as distant as it usually seems.

An honorific decree for a women called Bakchis issued by a religious association (*thiasos*) of the Good Goddess in the early third c. BCE marks the turning point of female ambitions: Bakchis from Athens not only fulfilled her obligations as the priestess, but in order to gain prestige she went far beyond her duties: 'at her own cost she paid more or (even) double of what was allotted to her by the association, she gave accounts of (her) management, and when the term of her office ended she sacrificed to the goddess and having made the most beautiful preparations possible she was the first one to entertain all the members (*thiasotai*) in the sanctuary'.³ Also a priestess Timokrite was honoured by the council and the people for her religious accomplishments in a decree from the mid-third c. BCE.⁴ These two inscriptions symbolically constitute the beginning of individual activity of women in the public sphere: the male part of the community accepted it and even supported such deeds.

The following ages witnessed the emergence of a new category of female honorands, i.e. benefactresses who generously sponsored some public expenses made by women at their own cost on behalf of the city (for example building activity, public distribution of money and others like paying ransom for the captive citizens) which, however, only appear in the available sources after the so-called 'Hellenistic revolution'. The famous French scholar Philip Gauthier argues the character of *euergesia* (which means "well-doing, kindness, public services" in Greek) changed in the Hellenistic period from the Classical definition of extra expenses made during one's term of office to some separate and very lavish donations of rich citizen. Women of the Hellenistic period definitely went beyond the bounds of religion and – again - male members of community must have accepted and supported such a process.

The first known benefactress of the Hellenistic type was Archippe of Kyme in Asia Minor who lived around the mid-second century BCE. The list of her achievements is very long. She funded the construction of the council house along with its enclosure and later repaired the roof of the building, provided for the feast, gave 1000 staters for sacrifices, one talent for the repairs

crown: Anticharmos son of Nauson and Nearchos son of Chairigenes, Theodotos son of Aischron, Aristokles son of Kalliphon because of righteousness and love of honour for the members of the deme. The demarch (chosen) after the archon Neaichmos shall engrave this decree on a stone stele and set it up in the sanctuary of Hebe. It is also to praise the *sophronistai* and to crown each of them with an olive crown: Kimon, Metalexis, Pythodoros son of Pytheas and the herald Charikles because of love of honour concerning the festival. It is also to praise the priest of the Herakleidai Kalias, **the priestess of Hebe and Alkmene**, and the archon Kallisthenes son of Nauson and to crown each of them because of piety and love of honour concerning the gods. It is to engrave this decree on a stone stele and to set it up in the sanctuary of Hebe." (tr. by P. Siekierka)

3. *SEG* 56.203, tr. by P. Siekierka.

4. G.S. Dontas, 'The True Aglaurion', *Hesperia* 52 (1983), 52= *SEG* 33.115

and purchase of public slaves, she also gave donations for the native city and left property to her homeland in her will. It is probable that she made many more benefactions to the community of which we know nothing about. Archippe's benefactions were all undoubtedly of political and not religious nature. The several lavish inscriptions for Archippe not even once mentioned any of her priestly functions.⁵ She was rich and she acted on her own behalf.

The most important is that Archippe was the first woman who received a statue for her benefactions towards the city. The privilege of granting statues of men grew in popularity from the third century BCE on; women started receiving that kind of privilege from the mid-Hellenistic period. Such statues were usually put in display for the entire city and it was the most prestigious – let me say –reward. The practice of erecting statues for members of the city elites, both for men or women, became so popular in the Roman period (I BCE- I CE) that one is entitled to speak of devaluation of such honours. 85% of the extant inscriptions on statue bases come from the period between the reign of Augustus and the third century CE.

The Roman times brought with them great changes in the East. From that moment on, the honours for women of the elite were commonplace in the Greek cities, a phenomenon that can be observed on a mass scale. Women could already hold offices and undertake civic obligations (liturgies) in the Hellenistic period, but the practice became popular only in the first c. CE, i.e. when women started holding some particular eponymous offices in the Greek cities. We need to stop here to remark that only 45 female honorands were members of the city elites: the attested individuals held eponymous offices, were the gymnasiarchs (*office of gymnasiarch, president of gymnasium*, lasted usually for a year), i.e. they covered the cost of delivering olive to the gymnasia), and agonothetes, i.e. they took the costs of organizing festivals upon themselves and they also paid for theatrical performances. In Roman times women erected public buildings of different kinds: they expanded temples, but more often gymnasia, in exceptional cases some buildings at the agora. By these means, wealthy women could get involved in exactly the same activities as men and they imitated men in their acts, a phenomenon that became typical in the East in the early Empire (honorific inscription for Claudia Anassa reads that she made donations “imitating generosity of her husband”). What is striking here is that many women acted there autonomously and we know of many instances where the women were capable of erecting buildings by themselves whereas the others did it with their husbands.

5. Archippe is known from the eight decrees (*I.Kyme 13 II=SEG 33.1036; I. Kyme 13 I=SEG 33.1035; I.Kyme 13 III=SEG 33.1037; SEG 33.1040; SEG 33.1041; I. Kyme 13 IV=SEG 33.1038a; I.Kyme 13 V=SEG 33.1038b; SEG 33.1039*) incised in the same period, but the individual decrees were passed at different times; on the chronology of texts see R. van Bremen, ‘The Date and context of the Kymeian Decrees for Archippe (*SEG 33, 1035-1041*)’, *REA* 110 (2008), pp. 357 – 382.

I would like to mention some women of this period. In the second c. CE, Lalla of Tlos (Asia Minor)⁶ made a substantial donation: “[---] gifts [---] in exchange for the gymnasiarchia of the neoi she had promised 12.500 denarii which had been put on a contract to pay interest to bring profit to the city in such a way (that there is no need) to select investors (i.e. people who lend the capital) or the people to demand dues. She certified to give one denarius each year out of the interest for each of 1.100 grain recipients, on the 15th day of the month Xandikos, on the first day of the magisterial elections. In return, at the electoral assembly the city called by acclamation upon the priest of the Augusti to propose a motion that Lalla should bear the title ‘mother of the city’, and should be honoured [---].” (tr. K. Stebnicka). Around the same time Atalante of Termessos (Asia Minor), following in the footsteps of her ancestors, provided money for public benefit and promised the city to buy grain when the city did not have enough of it.⁷ Benefits of Iunia Theodora who was a Corinthian citizeness of Lycian origin living around the mid-first c. CE was of a different kind.⁸ She is well known among the researchers of early Christianity for she was remarkably similar to Lydia, a rich merchant of purple cloth of Thyateira who lived in Macedon and who hosted saint Paul in her house (Acts 16:14-15). After Iunia’s death, there were five honorific inscriptions made for her. She received guests from Lycia in her house (nothing was said of her husband: perhaps she was a widow?), helped the Lycians who stayed at Corinth and she probably facilitated their contacts with the Roman governor of the province Achaia. Unfortunately, the available sources do not attest any other ‘female ambassadors’ who represented their native cities’ interests in such a dignified manner.

Women were rarely honoured for their craft and skill in e.g. poetry, philosophy, drama etc. We know only of 4 poetesses, 2 harpists, 1 female rhetor, and 1 physician who were honoured in the Greek inscriptions.

II. Describing Female Virtues

Since most of the female honours were of a religious character, comes as no surprise that piety (*eusebeia*) is the most common term used in those inscriptions; *eusebeia* almost monopolized the Greek language to mean a praiseworthy religious devotion. Since the *eusebeia* was mainly mentioned in the cases of priestesses, it indicates that it was not commonly associated with womanhood, but rather being a priestess. On the other hand, the *eusebeia* is commonplace in the honorific inscriptions for men, priests, and sacred property administrators or managers of funds reserved for ritual practices.

6. Ch. Naour, ‘Inscriptions de Lycie’, *ZPE* 24 (1977), no.1.

7. Ph. A. Harland, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations and commentary*, vol. II, Berlin 2014, no. 147& 148, pp. 385-387.

8. D. I. Pallas, S. Charitonidis, J. Venencie, ‘Inscriptions lyciennes trouvées à Solômos’, *BCH* 73 (1959), 496-508 : *SEG* 18.143 ; *SEG* 22.232; *SEG* 23.176. On Iunia Theodora see f.e. A. Kearsley, ‘Women in public Life in the Roman East: Iunia Theodora, Claudia Metrodora and Phoebe, benefactress of Paul’, *Tyndale Bulletin* 50.2 (1999), pp. 189-211 (for Iunia Theodora, pp. 191-199).

Eusebeia was sometimes the only visible reason for the honours granted to women, but more often appeared in the company of other terms referring to the honorand's activities outside religion; it usually took the form of: 'X is honoured for her *eusebeia* towards gods and for [the other virtue/merit] towards the people/city/humans'.

In the late Hellenistic and early Roman period, perhaps due to 'devaluation' of the traditional formulae, some new formulae were invented, which either succeeded *piety* or were used in conjunction with it: goodwill (*eunoia*), virtue (*arete*), modesty/chastity (*sophrosyne*) but *eusebeia* (or epithet *eusebes*, pious) retained its dominant position till the end of paganism. Piety and some other female virtues created their public image as of 'good women'.

Goodwill (*eunoia*), virtue (*arête*), and modesty (*sophrosyne*) were the most common virtues invoked in the Hellenistic and Roman period. Whenever community wanted to emphasize the honour, put stress on the extraordinary merits of the honorand, or simply add some rhetoric to the honorific language, it could add some new virtues to the list, but they generally did not supersede the earlier virtues, but only duplicate them.

Sophrosyne/modesty is definitely the most female virtue from the attested list. It is indeed also attested in the honours for men, but unquestionably less often (it is difficult to find a single group of terms used in the public honours for women in the Hellenistic period that would not find their place in the honours for men). *Sophrosyne* can be clearly seen as a 'female' virtue when we have got parallel honours for men and women. When Demetrios and his wife Meltine were honoured in Apollonia in Phrygia in the second c. BCE – early first c. BCE, Demetrios was praised for his virtue - *arete*, goodwill - *eunoia*, good order - *eutaxia*, righteousness/justice - *dikaiosyne* and love of glory - *philodoxia* towards the people, but his wife received praises for her *arete* and *sophrosyne*.

With the end of the Hellenistic period the honours for women gained a new dimension: they started being praised for their attitude towards their relatives. Praises for female *philandria* (love for husband), and *philoteknia* (love for children) started being common. This new approach was certainly related to the new kind of relations between particular families and the city: families no longer fought for the favour of the city – it was the city fighting for the favour of powerful rich families which sponsored the Greek poleis; women who 'only' fulfilled their duties to their families now were seen as deserving public praise.

The typical pairs and groups of female moral virtues of the period were as follows: piety, modesty, love for husband, love for children, virtue in all things. Female honorands became also models of virtue, like in inscription for Lala of Arneai (Lycia in Asia Minor), end of the first c. CE: „The people of the Arneians and (the people) of their *sympolitai* honoured Lalla daughter of Timarchos, son of Dioteimos, their co-citizeness, wife of Dioteimos son of Ouassos, who held the priesthood of the Augusti and fulfilled gymnasiarchia as a free gift (for the city), already honoured five times, **prudent (woman), citizeness, husband-loving (wife) who surpassed all the fame, model of virtue, and embellished the virtues of her ancestors with tokens of her own**

character, because of (her) virtue and benevolence.” (tr. K. Stebnicka).⁹

The available inscriptions only once mention *oikodesposyne* (“household rule”) which described the honorand as a good lady of the house. Beauty, a virtue which can be found regularly in the funeral epitaphs, can be found in public honorific inscriptions extremely rarely.

III. Female Images in Art – Visualisation of the Female Virtues

Now I would like to show three female images of different periods and of different styles.

1. An anonymous woman from Smyrna.



First one belongs to a series of the Hellenistic grave *stelai* from Smyrna (III-II BCE) which have been indubitably made for women from the higher social strata.¹⁰ They presented women most often in standing position (depiction of seated figures seemed to suggest maturity). The deceased were accompanied by female servants (usually one or two) and the catalogue of female attributes on the stelae normally consisted of small jewellery boxes, hats, and umbrellas, all of them ordinary female utensils. The reliefs rarely presented items related to spinning which was a typical female activity (only two stelae depict items remotely linked to spinning), there were no children there that would be a traditional indicator of womanly life. In the entire collection of female reliefs from Smyrna, there is also only one that presented a woman in company of a nursemaid with two children

Women are presented mostly in a *pudicitia typus* (modesty stance) that was widely popular

9. *TAM* II 3, 766.

10. On the *stelai* from Smyrna see P. Zanker, ‘The Hellenistic Grave Stelai from Smyrna: Identity and Self-image in the Polis’, in: A. W. Bulloch et al. (eds.), *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World*, Berkeley 1993, pp. 212-230.

in the reliefs from the Hellenistic period: the women stood with their arms and hands hidden underneath the robes, their heads were covered and their entire body language seemed to express modesty. The reliefs reflected the luxurious life of the deceased and yet at the same time presented female modesty and restraint, i.e. female virtues that were to become indispensable elements of female praises from the Hellenistic period on.

2. Menophila from Sardis (Asia Minor).



Large funerary stele from Sardis (ca. half of the second c. BCE) brings a literary epitaph:¹¹

“The people (honoured) Menophila daughter of Hermagenes.

‘The stone displays a cultured and graceful woman. Who is she? - The writings of the Muses tell us, Menophila. – Why is there carved on the stele a lily and an alpha, a book, a basket, and a crown as well? – The book indicates her education, the crown on her head her office, and the number one that she was an only-born. The basket is a sign of her orderly virtue, and the flower shows her youth, which fate has taken from her. So they may the earth rest lightly on such a woman as this. Ah, to your childless parents you have left only tears”. (tr. K.J. Gutzwiller).

Literary epitaph for the deceased Menophila of Sardis has a close analogy with poems of a famous Hellenistic poet Antipater of Sidon due to the usage of symbolic figures. The crown mentioned in the poem referred to the *stephanophoria*, an eponymous office held by Menophila in

11. On Menophila see for example K.J. Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands. Hellenistic Epigrams in Context*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1998, pp. 265-267; A. Bielman, *Femmes en public dans le monde hellénistique*, Paris 2002, no. 44, pp. 224-229; A. Bielman, ‘Unu vertu en rouleau ou comment la sagesse vint aux Grecques’, in R. Frei-Stolba, A. Bielman, O. Bianchi (eds), *Les femmes antiques entre sphère privée et sphère publique*, Bern 2003, pp. 79-107; B. Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess. Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece*, Princeton 2007, pp. 251-252; K.J. Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands. Hellenistic Epigrams in Context*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1998, pp. 265-267.

Sardis. The relief presents a draped woman flanked by two servant girls, with a crown on her head; she is surrounded by a lily, letter alpha, roll of papyrus, crown and basket. Although (according to Bielman) the inscription presented one of the rare cases where a ‘virtue-male’ woman may have enjoyed the education usually reserved for a boy, the figure of Menophila emphasized Menophila’s typically female virtue – her modesty.

3. Plancia Magna from Perge.



Plancia Magna, a great benefactress of Perge in the early second c. CE, came from the most notable and wealthy families in Asia Minor: her father M. Plancius Varus achieved the senatorial rank under Nero, held several Roman offices, he was the proconsul of Pontus and Bithynia in 70-72 CE.¹² The name of Plancia’s mother is never mentioned in the inscriptions (probably Plancia was daughter of Iulia, who in turn was the daughter of the Armenian king Tigranes VI; the expression ‘daughter of the city’, always present after her filiation in the preserved inscriptions, may indicate adoption by the personification of the city. Plancia’s husband, C. Iulius P.f. Hor. Cornutus Tertullus was *cosnul suffectus* in 100 CE and proconsul of Africa in 116-117 CE.

Ca. 121 CE, Plancia restored the Hellenistic city gate, the main southern gate of Perge, and its two round towers. The gate complex included a new inner oval courtyard, which was closed by a

12. On Plancia Magna and the Plancii family see St. Mitchell, “The Plancii in Asia Minor”, *JRS* 64 (1974), pp. 27-39; M.T. Boatwright, “Plancia Magna of Perge. Women’s roles and status in Roman Asia Minor”, in S.B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women’s History and Ancient History*, Chapel Hill-London 1991, pp. 249-272; *eadem*, “The city gate of Plancia Magna in Perge”, in E. D’Ambra (ed.), *Roman Art in Context. An Anthology*, Englewood Cliffs 1993, pp. 189-207; J. Nollé, ‘Frauen wie Omphale. Überlegungen zu ‘politischen’ Ämtern von Frauen im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien’, in M. Dettenhofer (ed.), *Reine Männersache? Frauen in Männerdomänen der antiken Welt*, Köln 1994, pp. 247-252; S. Şahin, *I.Perge I*, pp. 107-123 (on the family, foundations of Plancia Magna and her sculptural programme); Sh. Dillon, *The Female Portrait Statue in the Greek World*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 156-161.

two-storied triple arch. On the inner two-storied walls of the courtyard 28 niches were made for the bronze statues: the 14 lower niches held the statues of the Olympian gods and local deities, the upper niches carried statues of founders of the city, mythical and contemporary figures (including Plancia's father and brother related to her as 'father of Plancia Magna' and 'brother of Plancia Magna').

The preserved statue of Plancia Magna in the so-called Large Herculaneum format represents her wearing the crown of the priestess of the imperial cult. The most striking is that the statue of the rich and generous benefactress emphasized her female modesty.