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Public memorials, private virtues: women on classical Athenian grave monuments

DIANA BURTON
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

ABSTRACT *In classical Athens, the graves of the dead, and their accompanying memorials, were sited upon either side of the main roads into the city, where all passers-by must see them. This very public placement contrasts oddly with the private and familial virtues depicted upon these memorials, as has often been noted. In particular, the high proportion of gravestones for women and the types of virtues ascribed to them by grave inscriptions indicate that in memorials, at least, women had a status close to that of men. Women's prominence in this area is all the more paradoxical in that the virtues celebrated in the images and texts belong to private life, one of the areas in which women were more consistently subordinate to male authority. This incongruity can be resolved by a closer look at the evocation of women's role in the family on gravestones, which implicitly places them within a wider city ideology, by emphasizing the private virtues of women as essential for the stability of the household, the maintenance of citizenship, and therefore for the continuity of the community as a whole.*

Public and Private

For the ancient Greeks, death was a very public affair. In Athens and elsewhere, since adults could not be buried within the city walls, graves crowded around the gates and along the roads running into the city, so that passers-by, as they entered or left, were surrounded by a gamut of messages from the dead (Lattimore, 1971: 230; Stears, 1993: 140–150). The Kerameikos cemetery, about which we know most and from which many of the finest gravestones come, lay just outside the main entrance to the agora, and the sacred way to Eleusis passed through it. Moreover, as a general rule, the most prestigious sites, sites belonging to the wealthier individuals (to judge by size and quality of monuments), are those closest to the road; in other words, most plainly in public view and most likely to attract the passer-by. In the Kerameikos were also sited state burials for those who died in battle or were otherwise worthy of burial at public expense (Clairmont, 1983). But private burial sites were also found amongst these, tucked into spare

Correspondence to: Dr Diana Burton, Department of Classics, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand. Tel: +64 4 472 1000 ext. 8780; Fax: +64 4 463 5388; Email: diana.burton@vuw.ac.nz

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corners of land among the glorious dead, and seemingly gaining added prestige as well as extra attention from the proximity (Clairmont, 1983, 44–45). Meyer suggests that this may have been a way of 'asserting a similarly close relationship to Athens even if unable to claim the same service as those in the public tombs' (Clairmont, 1993: 119).

The Kerameikos is not entirely typical; it encompassed more than a graveyard. It was, according to Thucydides, 'the most beautiful quarter of the city' (2.34.5), and included potters' workshops (some tucked in among the graves), temples, the Academy, and the great city gates (Wycherly, 1978: 253–260). It defies categorization as graveyard or sacred space; but it was unquestionably public space. Epitaphs were written with this public placement in mind, appealing to the wayfarer to stop, read, feel pity, to notice and remember the dead. [1] This is less common in classical epitaphs than in archaic ones, but the underlying desire to make the grave noticed by the general passer-by still persists. Some graves were built up into impressive tumuli, with marble walls facing the road and earth mounds piled above them (for those who could afford them) and capped with stelai (gravestones) inscribed with the name or names of the deceased, with or without epigram. [2] In the high classical period, moreover, from c. 430 BC, gravestones carved with images once again became popular after being banned fifty years previously, and their number increased throughout the fourth century, until sumptuary legislation introduced by Demetrios of Phaleron once again curtailed such expenditure. [3] Such images were designed to present the deceased as they were when alive, and they do this so successfully that it is often hard to distinguish the deceased from their living relatives grouped with them. Some turn to look out of the frame, drawing the viewer into the space they occupy. These figured tombstones, too, were designed to engage the interest of those on the road, to the extent that the backs of them are often only roughly finished, only the fronts being visible to passers-by (Stears, 1993: 152). In both gravestone and epitaph, then, the same intention is discernible, to attract attention, to place the dead as squarely as possible into the public eye.

Even so, the public status of such art may seem doubtful in so far as these were private memorials; they were erected at family rather than state expense, and concerned with individuals rather than for service to the *polis* (city-state). The extent to which these may be regarded as 'public' rather than 'private' art is still open to debate, and depends largely on one's definition of the terms (Leader, 1997: 686–688). The difference between, for example, a piece of pottery for private, domestic use and a sculpture or wall-painting commissioned by the state to enhance a public building is clear enough, but the grave monuments so prevalent in Athens in the late fifth and fourth centuries occupy a grey area. In some senses of the term they do constitute public art. They are intended for public consumption; they are designed and placed so as to elicit a response from a far wider cross-section of the community than the deceased's family and friends. Of equal importance, I will argue, the values reflected in them evoke a broader-based and more *polis*-oriented ideology than that of the private sphere which the images depict.

The monuments emphasize the best and most praiseworthy attributes of the dead, those virtues by which they are made worthy to be remembered. Given the great numbers and prominence of them in the public consciousness, the question of whether the ideology they depict is public, private, political, familial, or any combination of these, has implications for our understanding of the interaction between family and state in ancient Athens. It is worth noting that, although the family bore the responsibility for the burial and subsequent care of the grave, Athenians were not generally buried in family burial plots (Houby-Nielsen, 1995: 142 – 144; cf. Humphreys, 1980: 105 – 108). It appears that age and status were more important as determinants of grave position than familial ties, and genuine family plots are rare. The emphasis on familial values on women's tombstones may be, in part, a way of asserting the importance of familial ties in a context in which different members of the family may not be buried together. However, in keeping with this association with others outside of the kin-group, the iconography used on the stones may also be expected to show the subject's place in the wider community, and particularly in her own status-group. The family must choose (or commission) a gravestone that enhances their own reputation by, paradoxically, reflecting the dead individual's status in a way that is not reliant on the status of the particular family itself. [4]

Monuments, then, are designed for the public gaze. In spite of this determinedly public placement, however, the virtues and activities celebrated on such monuments are not obviously related to public life. It has been remarked that gravestones and epitaphs of the classical period show more interest in the individual as part of a family unit than the earlier sixth-century aristocratic stones, which dwelt more on those virtues that make the individual part of the community as a whole (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995a; 192 – 193; Humphreys, 1993; 105). [5] This increased emphasis on the individual and the family is seen as something of a paradox in such a very publicly displayed art form. This is particularly true of stelai depicting women, with their emphasis on the *oikos*, the home and family. In the democratic climate of classical Athens, the public celebration of one's dead has been seen as running counter to the prevailing democratic ideology, as it appears to perpetuate an ancient aristocratic tendency towards conspicuous consumption that had been persistently legislated against in the sixth century. 'Throughout the *polis* world, connections between families and kin served to undermine the egalitarian structure of the democratic political system' (Goldhill, 1986: 74; Leader, 1997: 695). In applying this ideology to classical tombstones, however, the underlying assumptions that male public activity was primarily political and that Athenian public ideology was primarily shaped by Athens' existence as a democracy may be out of place. Archaic tombstones certainly set up just such an opposition between the elite and the rest, and classical tombstones have been seen as continuing this trend. [6] However, a number of reliefs do not hook in to elite pre-occupations; most notably the 'profession reliefs', such as that of Sosinos, that shows the bronzeworker with the tools of his trade (*CAT* 1.202 (*CAT*=*Classical Attic Tombstones*)). I would like to argue that public and private ideologies in the context of the 'private' funerary monuments need not have been seen as asserting familial or *oikos*-based ideology *in opposition to* state ideology.

The ambiguous status of grave monuments in this context might rather be seen as a blurring of the boundaries between private and public space, as bringing the two spheres into an interaction in which each feeds off the other.

Here again, then, we come up against the difficulty in defining shifting distinctions between public and private, men's and women's roles, *polis* and *oikos* in fifth-century Athens. It is tempting, but dangerously simplistic, to align public/male/*polis* against private/female/*oikos*. As Sourvinou-Inwood comments, the symbolic alignment of the public-private opposition with the gender opposition in the Athenian public consciousness should not be taken as the whole story, 'nor should we take the fact that it corresponds to certain types of male ideality as confirmation of its validity in lived reality' (1995b: 115). The ambiguity of these terms, and the ease with which their use and meaning can alter, is clear from the range in interpretations in both primary and secondary literature (Humphreys, 1997/8: 104). For example, Pericles' assertion that, under pressure of war, the good of the individual should be subordinated to that of the *polis* (Thuc. 2.60) should not be taken as too forceful an edict against private life—especially as, responding to the needs of the moment, Pericles here contradicts his own description in the Funeral Speech of the Athenians' freedom to lead their private lives in whatever way they choose (Thuc. 2.37). Then as now, public and private spheres are not always easy to disentangle or define, especially in the shifting sands of later fifth-century Athens.

Status and role of men and women

What follows, then, must necessarily be a generalization. A distinction was certainly drawn between the actions of men, centred on politics, war, athletics and the public sphere, and women, whose lives were bound to the household, the raising of children, and domestic industry. The gravestones bear this out; men are depicted in a range of socially and ideologically positive pursuits, as soldiers, hunters or athletes, with the tools of their trades, or as older men carrying a staff, perhaps to signal civic participation. Athenian citizens (by definition men) are, after all, expected to spend their life in the public eye; it is logical for them to spend their death in it as well. Women, on the other hand, are expected to avoid the public eye; their place was primarily within the *oikos*, the household and family. It is not clear exactly how much freedom they had. As Reeder (1995: 21) comments, 'opinions have consistently reflected the mores of the period in which the scholar was writing, and the current attitude is that women did have a certain amount of mobility'.[7] It should be noted in passing that in the context of religion, certain women did operate in the public sphere, indispensably and on an equal footing with men (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995b). In general, though, although women may not have been secluded, a degree of separation from men probably did operate. [8] We are here talking about those women referred to *en masse* by scholars as 'respectable' women; wealthy enough not to be working in the market or fields, neither slaves nor the poor nor prostitutes. [9] Not only is this the group most predominantly reflected in the sources, but also it is only the middle and upper strata of society who could afford such an expense as a figured grave

monument, and only the 'respectable' who wanted them.[10] Such a woman could go and visit relatives or friends, do the shopping, fetch water, attend festivals, funerals and perhaps the theatre; but whenever she ventured outside her home, she was supposed to remain as inconspicuous as possible, and perhaps expected to keep her head covered with a mantle (Reeder, 1995: 21). Whatever limited freedom of movement she might have had in the public sphere, she was rigorously excluded from all political areas; even mentioning any woman's name in such contexts was avoided (Schaps, 1977). Again, however, reality may have been different; Plutarch tells us that part of Pericles' mistress Aspasia's attraction for him lay in her political acumen (*Pericles* 24), and it is hard to imagine that no Athenian male ever discussed anything outside of household matters with his wife.

It is the women in this 'respectable' demographic group who had a remarkably strong presence on grave monuments, in both epitaphs and images. There is no other public art in which they are so clearly present, nor any other form of text which records so many of their names. [11] One survey of fourth-century Attic grave inscriptions for named individuals with deme affiliations shows that 102 women are named as compared to 234 men (Humphries, 1993: 111). [12] We have more Athenian women's names from these stones than from any other source; their namelessness in other respects is illustrated by the fact that their husbands' or fathers' names are usually added to identify them to their contemporaries. Looking at figured sculpture, women's presence is even more striking: in *CAT*, of the monuments showing adult men and women, 468 show men, 628 show women, and 1136 show both (*CAT*; Osborne, 1997: 14).

Osborne (1997) and Stears (1993: 298–299; 2000: 52) have both argued persuasively that one reason for this presence may be political: from c. 450 BC, Pericles' citizenship law meant that, for a man to be an Athenian citizen, his mother must herself be the daughter of a citizen, and marriage with non-Athenian women was actively discouraged. [13] Accordingly, an Athenian citizen had a vested interest in displaying his mother's Athenian status, and depicting her on a gravestone with due emphasis on her familial ties was an effective way of doing this. The law therefore may well have provided a catalyst for a sharp increase in the number of women depicted, although it is likely that more general changes in social attitudes towards women in this period underlie this increase, and the law itself may be in part a reflection of this. There does not appear to be any major shift in the freedom (or lack of it) allowed to women; but that does not mean that the way in which they were regarded did not change.

Is it possible, then, to trace any change in the attitudes towards, or status of, women in the fifth century? Attempting to trace this sort of change is notoriously difficult, as the evidence is scarce and open to interpretation; nor is it possible to tell whether such a change occurred in consequence of the law, or whether the law codified a change that had already taken place. [14] It is possible, however, to trace an increasing interest in the depiction of women in domestic settings on fifth-century pottery. Ceramics, as a private art, never fought shy of depicting women in non-mythical contexts, but there is a shift in emphasis. At the beginning of the century, the most frequent non-mythical role for women was as courtesans or prostitutes,

often in scenes related to the symposium; that is, women as part of men's social, rather than domestic, lives. With the classical period, however, the focus on courtesans declines and there is an increasing interest in women in the domestic sphere (Boardman, 1989: 219; Reeder, 1995: 128; Houby-Nielsen, 1995: 151). Weddings are also shown, often on vases such as loutrophoroi, lebetes gamikoi or pyxides, which are used as marriage-gifts, in scenes apparently meant to reassure the young bride. Women also appear frequently on white-ground lekythoi, which rapidly became the preferred grave-gift for the dead in Athens, from c. 470 BC onwards. Initially such lekythoi show both men and women in domestic contexts; gradually these are superseded by scenes concerned with funerary ritual, and women come to dominate. [15] All of these scenes appear well before Pericles' law was passed in c. 451 BC. That the pot-painters of Athens (probably mostly male) took an interest in women's daily lives need not, of course, imply any change in the status of those women; but, at the least, it does imply an increased interest in, and concern for, how women act within the household, and implicitly within the society of which that household is a part. Underlying the argument that the depiction of women on tombstones may be derived from Pericles' law is the implication that such depictions were ultimately created to further the political interests of men. Were there not the need to reiterate male claims to citizenship, women would not be so prevalent. Depictions of women in pottery do not support this, however, in either their frequency or their character. Men still frequently feature in these scenes, but it is often made clear that they are being placed in the world of women, and not the other way around, and that a more general interest is being expressed. [16]

Tying the advent of women on gravestones too closely to Pericles' citizenship law also does not take into account the series of gravestones belonging to metic women, i.e. foreign women resident in Athens. These frequently employ the same iconography, and show the same range in quality (Clairmont, 1993: *CAT*, V.9–10; see *CAT* 2.287 for a fine example showing the deceased Arnion and his seated mother Demokrita, from Corinth). Osborne (1997: 29 n. 53) explains the similarity of such monuments to those of Athenian women by reference to 'the pressures on the metic community to conform to local practice'; in addition, he points out that the iconographical similarities between Athenian monuments and those of the metics' home cities would make such conformity unproblematic. However, if women's grave monuments assert the citizen status of the women, as Osborne argues, as a response to Pericles' law, one might have expected some distinction to be made between the two groups in terms of their iconography—especially as metic women are the very group that the law is designed to exclude. Their presence, sharing the same public space as their Athenian counterparts, would seem to imply that the impetus for the depiction of women of both groups lies outside of the confines of Pericles' law.

Funerary monuments and women's place in Athenian society

Funerary monuments, then, fit into a wider context of a greater interest in women's behaviour and place in society. I would like now to take a closer look at

the light in which women appear in both epitaphs and figured monuments. If gravestones are designed to idealize the deceased by showing their finest qualities, just what are those qualities where women are concerned, and to what extent do they reflect individual or social reality?

Sourvinou-Inwood points out that the language used of women in epitaphs is often very similar to that used of men. Women may be described as *chreste*, 'excellent'; *sophron*, 'wise'; *agathe*, 'good'; or a combination of these. They may possess those highly valued qualities (for both sexes) of *sophrosyne*, 'self-control', 'temperance', and *arete*, 'goodness'; they, like men, may be *eusebes*, 'pious' (1995b, 117 – 118). From this, she concludes that 'the epitaphs reflect the most positive end of the spectrum of collective representations about women, the normative ideology about good women in which they are not thought of as radically different from men.' The stele of Mnesarete, one of the few in which both image and inscription survive, may serve as an example; the inscription reads:

> This woman left behind her husband and sibling(s), and left to her mother grief, a child, and renown for great goodness [*arete*] that will never age. Here one who reached the goal of all goodness [*arete*], Mnesarete, is held in Persephone's chamber. (Mnesarete, daughter of Sokrates. Clairmont, 1970: cat. 30 (his translation, adapted); *CAT* 2.286.)

The word *arete* encompasses a wide range of meanings. Mnesarete's name itself means 'remembering *arete*' but exactly what her conspicuously celebrated *arete* consisted in, ironically, none but her immediate family would have been in a position to say. Their reiteration of it in the inscription does show that they considered it worthy of note (or possibly the echo of her name—Mnesarete, *arete*—was too tempting to pass up). The image is no more precise. Mnesarete sits with her head bowed; in front of her stands a younger girl, also with her head down, her hands clasped in front of her. Sadness and isolation are the dominant notes here. The girl standing up is perhaps a younger sister, drawing a contrast between Mnesarete's fulfilled life—she is married, has borne a child, and has reached the highest goal of *arete*—and her sister's as yet unfulfilled life (Clairmont, 1970: cat. 53). In both epitaph and image, then, Mnesarete is placed within the context of her family.

The virtues here described—*arete, eukleia* (goodness and renown)—are found in both male and female epitaphs, and both male and female gravestones may stress those virtues by showing the dead as isolated from, and therefore missed by, their family. But these shared qualities do not necessarily imply a lack of distinction between male and female virtues after death. Aristotle states firmly that virtues like *arete* and *sophrosyne* are not the same for men and women (*Politics* 1260). Plato's Meno defines the popular view: 'a man's virtue [*arete*] is this—that he be competent to manage the affairs of his city, and to manage them so as to benefit his friends and harm his enemies, and to take care to avoid suffering harm himself. Or take a woman's virtue: there is no difficulty in describing it as the duty of ordering the house well, looking after the property indoors, and obeying her husband (Plato *Meno* 71e).' [17] The woman's *arete*, in fact, is like her husband's in

microcosm. The use of words applicable to both male and female in Mnesarete's inscription not only shows the importance of her role within the *oikos*, but also hints at the way in which that role parallels the role of the male within the *polis*, subtly reminding the viewer that the values required by the two spheres are not so far removed from each other.

Virtues largely confined to women's epitaphs include loving her husband and children, though one woman is reciprocally credited with pleasing her husband and children very much through her behaviour and character (*CEG* 2.536). Both men and women are described as being missed and longed for; but for men, formulae such as *pasi potheinon*, 'missed by all', are common, reflecting their wider social circle. Women, in contrast, are more likely to be longed for by immediate family, as in Mnesarete's case it is her mother who grieves for her departure. [18]

The evidence from figured tombstones, for the most part, bears out this distinction between the sexes. Both men and women are commonly shown carrying out their usual daily activities. Men are depicted going to the gymnasium, carrying athletes' gear, or weaponry and armour in the case of warriors, accompanied by their dogs or their young *paidiskoi* (boy slaves) or the tools of their trade. Older men may be shown seated, to show that they have a less physical role to play in civic life, and carrying a staff, symbol of their civic participation (Leader, 1997: 691). The emphasis for men, then, is on their interaction with the *polis*, the city-state, outside of their domestic sphere, and on the activities (war, athletics, trades, politics) which maintain the *polis* and keep it secure. Women, on the other hand, are depicted in pursuits that take place within the *oikos*, with boxes and containers of various kinds, or with their children, or engaged in spinning. Some stelai show her spinning, or place a *kalathos* (wool-basket) in the field, a clear reference to the woman's industry and skill in keeping her household supplied with clothes. Given the state of affluence of fifth-century Athens, in households of the social strata able to afford monuments of this kind, her work would not be absolutely required for the maintenance of the home. The skill was, however, still regarded as important, as is clear from a tombstone in the form of a basket sitting on a chest, as a sufficient symbol of the deceased woman's virtuous industry (Athens, National Museum no. 1052; Reeder, 1995: 200–202). Again, the emphasis is on those activities which contribute to the smooth running of the *oikos* and its continuation, in the form of children.

Other containers depicted in the images also bear messages for the viewer. The famous stele of Hegeso, from the end of the fifth century, shows the beautiful and elegant Hegeso selecting, apparently, a ring from a small box held out for her by her maid.[19] The box, a pyxis or similar trinket-box, is of a type particularly associated with women, and more specifically with wedding scenes, where such boxes often appear as gifts to the bride (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995a: 332). [20] The transparent style of Hegeso's clothing, and her elaborately bound hair, call further attention to her beauty and sexuality. Unlike many stelai, this one was found in situ, and it is clear from the size of the *peribolos*, her family's built-up grave plot, that they were wealthy and important. [21] The size and quality of Hegeso's stone alone would tell us this. This depiction of a young and beautiful woman adorning

herself is a rather different expression of women's status from those stelai commemorating women's industry. Here, it is Hegeso's wealth and leisured status—or rather that of her family, who put the stone up for her—that are the focus of attention. The theme of adornment is a popular one; Leader has argued that it may reflect the woman's dowry, and thus indicate her ability to contribute to the economic status of the *oikos* through the wealth—especially if land—she brought with her (1997: 692). In that case, once again the apparently private nature of the scene is belied by its wider associations. Marriage is one of the most important ways in which men formed links with each other both within and outside of the *polis*; hence the importance of Pericles' citizenship law (Houby-Nielsen, 1995: 151–152; Osborne, 1994: 93–94).[22] An intimately female action again carries wider associations of women's role as crucial to the functioning of the *polis*.

The adornment theme is repeated on the gravestone of Pausimache (Clairmont, 1970: cat. 13; Leader, 1997: 693; *CAT* 1.283). Her epitaph emphasises her *arete*:

> It is fated that all who live must die; and you, Pausimache, left behind pitiful grief as a possession for your ancestors, your mother Phainippe and your father Pausanias. Here stands a memorial of your goodness [*arete*] and good sense [*sophrosyne*] for passers-by to see.

Pausimache, then, died unmarried, or the epitaph would name her husband. The stele shows a young woman, head bowed in contemplative fashion, considering her reflection in a hand-mirror. The mirror may refer to the marriage of which death has deprived her, as girls preparing for marriage are often shown with mirrors on vases (Houby-Nielsen, 1997: 227). In spite of the fact that the image is described as a memorial of her *arete* and *sophrosyne*, the virtues ascribed to Pausimache in epitaph and image do not appear to match, as *arete* generally refers to industriousness and *sophrosyne* means common sense or moderation; neither refers to physical beauty of the sort implied by the mirror. The contrast between the moral qualities extolled in the epitaph and the beauty extolled in the image may indicate that the tombstone was bought already carved, and the verse then added. But image and text meet in the projection of the future that Pausimache would have had; just as the image has bridal connotations, so the virtues celebrated in the epitaph are those which would stand her in good stead as a wife.

It is becoming clear, I hope, that the images of women on tombstones do not simply represent the activities that they undertook when still alive. These apparently everyday activities, when commemorated in this way, serve to mark women's place in their family, but also to depict their status in a broader social setting. They are also, like much Greek art, prescriptive depictions of social ideals. They may display private virtues, but they certainly reflect public ideology, both as determinants of how women should behave and as descriptors of how the woman who conforms to these models of behaviour fulfils a role in underpinning the social structures of the *polis*.

Some images do carry precise meanings, and choice of subject may tell a great deal, even when the inscription that went with the image does not survive. A stele

from c. 420–410 BC depicts a young mother and her child. Reeder (1995: 137) suggests that this stele was probably specially commissioned by her relatives, as the child depicted is a girl; given the higher value placed on male children, it is unlikely that the sculptor would depict a girl unless requested to do so.[23] To judge by the size of the stele and the expense probably incurred in acquiring it, it is unlikely to be for the child, wriggling in the arms of her nurse and reaching towards her mother; rather it is the seated mother, hands raised to receive her daughter, who is commemorated here. The child is too old for the mother to have died in childbirth, but the emphasis is markedly on her affection for her daughter; we might otherwise have found her depicted with husband or parents. The fact that she is depicted with a daughter, not a son, shows that it is not only male children who are valued.[24]

From these few examples, it is clear that the evocation of women's virtues in both image and inscription centres on the *oikos*; the tombstones are celebrations of private lives, childbearing, the beauty of one's wife or daughter, domestic pursuits such as the making of cloth and adornment with jewellery. So, to come back to the original question, why commemorate these very private virtues in such a very public fashion?

Public commemoration of private virtues

Various reasons have been suggested. There is the emphasis on the individual; these women are members of their families, beloved, missed and mourned, and publicly celebrated in death as it was impossible to celebrate them in life. [25] Undeniably this is true, but it is not the whole reason. As Leader points out, identifying the individual is not as important as defining the female within a recognized social framework (Leader, 1997: 690; Stears, 1995: 123). Praise for both men and women is fairly generic; it is not their individuality that is being evoked here, although the rare exception shows that it is possible to give personal details should one wish to do so.[26] Secondly, as Sourvinou-Inwood pointed out, certain demographic groups are more likely to be commemorated in tomb reliefs in order to perpetuate their survival in community memory if it runs a greater than usual risk of fading; one such group, for example, is that of men who died young, for whom a monument is set up since they have no descendants to keep their memory alive. This is likely to be the rationale particularly behind some depictions of girls who died, similarly, before they could marry and bear children, such as Pausimache. But for most women, this does not explain why, after a life of anonymity, the need should suddenly be felt to publicise them. The likely influence of Pericles' citizenship law as a catalyst has already been mentioned; this meant that a woman's parentage and status became even more important in terms of ensuring the status of her family; and Stears notes good cause for depicting that status on the gravesite itself, since as part of the *dokimasia* the putative citizen had to state the whereabouts (if known) of his parents' tombs (Stears, 1993: 298–299; 2000: 52; Osborne, 1997). This also explains the emphasis on the household and the child-bearing role of women, as it is likely to be their children who are

responsible for selecting the gravestones, reiterating their claim to citizenship through the iconography of their familial relationships.

This is a complex problem and all of these solutions probably contributed to some degree. What does seem to be common to all of these is an implied recognition of a wider and less tangible shift in attitudes. As stated above, the prominence of women in particular in these monuments—a group that is so persistently marginalized in all other sources here actually has equal status, and is very often publicly named—seems likely to derive from an increased level in the perceived social status of women as a group, whether as a result of Pericles' citizenship law or as part of a more general shift in attitudes (Osborne, 1997). This need not be anything so specific as to entail altered recognition in legal or political terms. But the conspicuous display of such private virtues argues a strong wish on the part of the family not only to commemorate the deceased but to be seen to do so, and to do so in a way that placed them in a socially useful framework. At the same time, there is an uneasy juxtaposition between the requirement to depict the virtues common to the glorious many and the desire to show the characteristics of an individual. These are representations of specific and named women, but they are not portraits; they are social projections of the ideal. All of these virtues are important to the maintenance of the household; even the adornment scenes reflect the household's wealth and status. But they also may be read as contributing to the continuation and maintenance of the *polis*. What is being commemorated here is not solely the memory of the individual, nor even solely the strength and status of the *oikos*, but also its ability to continue, in spite of that death, as a useful part of a larger structure. The family's wealth and importance are demonstrated through both the virtues of the dead family member and the expense of the grave monument itself, and in turn they implicitly demonstrate support for *polis* ideology.

Stears (1995: 114–116) argues that the *oikos* extends in two directions. First, vertically, through the male line of descent; women are not of great importance here, since they cannot inherit. But kinship is also counted horizontally—cognate kinship—through alliances with other families by marriage, and here women are, of course, a vital part of the family. Both of these affiliations—horizontal and vertical—are demonstrated by the tendency to identify women by affixing the names of their male relatives: fathers (vertical relationship) and husbands (horizontal relationship). In those rare cases of family burial plots, the arrangement of burial space may also reflect this familial structure. The first clear evidence for burial plots that extend over several generations dates from the classical period.[27] The shape of the *peribolos*—the family's grave enclosure—echoes the structure of the *oikos*, and demonstrates, as Stears states, the kin group's construction of their memory, history and identification. In the centre, the tall narrow anthemion or shaft stele lists the principal members of the family; of those that survive, women are at the head of only one-fifth of them, and, Stears suggests, feature only if they bring land as a dowry or have an unusual degree of influence. This is the tallest point of the grave, representing the patrilineal descent, as it lists fathers, sons, brothers, grandsons. It is the family's public face. Other gravestones—such as the one of Hegeso, in this instance—are placed to one side or

another, and are usually shorter and wider. It is here that the figured stones are found on which women, as we saw, are prominently represented. The key members of the family, of its civic face, are male; but the women's prominent presence declares unequivocally their value within the family structure.

But to read these images as reflecting only familial unity does not give the whole story either. The cognate links are those which bind *oikos* to *oikos*, which link, in fact, the whole *polis* into a single coherent unit. Many stelai show these ties of cognate kinship through depictions of husband and wife or of larger family groupings. The strong link between women and the *oikos* visible on the individual stelai is not as distinct on the stelai depicting men and women together. Osborne, discussing those monuments that show both men and women, describes them in terms of putting the man into the domestic setting, and thus giving the household a greater prominence than it had before (Osborne, 1997: 32–33; Leader, 1997: 691). However, I suggest that there is very little evidence of the domestic setting in those images which show men and women together. In fact, the evidence of domesticity so prominent in images which show only women—jewellery, boxes and containers, weaving—is generally absent in those depictions that show both men and women. These images generally depict two or more adults, who may be accompanied by children (the greatest number depicted is seven, six women and one man; *CAT* 7.330). Interestingly, both men and women tend to carry objects with them less frequently on those stones which show more than two figures. In fact, the only artefact that commonly appears on such stones is the chair. The presence of chairs cannot be taken as evidence of a *domestic* setting, only of an *interior* one; as the stele of Tynnios shows, it is not unusual for men to be depicted seated. In groups men may also appear seated while women stand, and both men and women may appear seated in the same monument (e.g. *CAT* 5.650). [28] Much has been made of the exclusion of women from the political sphere, but in fact the political aspect of Athenian life is not greatly in evidence on any of the stones showing groups of more than two adults, even if these are groups of men. Male-only groups, however, are rare, female-only groups only slightly less so; by far the greatest number of group stones depict both men and women. [29] Depictions of such mixed groups might be seen as a move to bring women into greater prominence by depicting a kind of neutral space, neither domestic nor political. Many such scenes, indeed, have no visible setting at all; the frame of the image—the outer edge of the stone itself—acts as a support against which the subjects, male or female, may lean, as if the setting in which they find themselves is simply that of the tomb or the underworld, in which all distinctions are lost and all are of equal status, and not the world of the living at all.

The *dexiosis* (handshake) motif frequently shown between men and women may support this. This gesture signifies equality, emphasising that such images are better read as a mediation between male and female spheres than as a confrontation between *polis* and family. Both male and female are here shown as part of the family, indicating that death has failed to separate them (Johansen, 1951: 151). The gesture itself, however, is one that belongs also to the public sphere, and is used to confirm treaties, or between the groom and the bride's father.

Conclusion

I hope to have shown that the values reflected by these stones may also be seen as *polis*-oriented. The perceived contradiction between the private lives of women and the public sphere in which they are depicted can be resolved by considering the family-oriented iconography of the stones as supportive, however subtly, of the *polis*, rather than antithetical towards it. The evocation of *polis*-based ideology need not be blatant to be effective. But if we consider the familial nature of the iconography to run counter to the prevailing ideology, we have to see those who sculpt and buy such stones as treading a very fine line between the desire to commemorate their family members and the requirement not to flaunt the prevailing identity of the *polis* as superior to the family unit. Athens was a community whose identity was deeply rooted in its ancestors and their continuous habitation of the city since its mythical founding; trace family history back far enough, and the Athenians were autochthons, sprung from the soil on which their descendants still lived. This aspect, too, became the focus of greater interest in the second part of the fifth century, and the idea itself may even have been coined then (Osborne, 1997: 10). Care for the dead served to ensure the continuity of that community. This is the case for women as well as men. The juxtaposition typical of women's gravestones, of the public evocation of socially constructed virtues with the individual name of a particular woman, in itself argues that their social persona extended beyond the confines of the *oikos*. With Pericles' citizenship law, the *polis* recognized, however backhandedly, the importance of women's place in its hierarchy. But it only codified a set of attitudes that already existed. The continual references in image and inscription to family, children, dowry, the stability of the *oikos*, reflect a broader visualization of the place of the *oikos* within Athenian social structures, not solely or even primarily political structures. The emphasis on women highlights those ties that reach outside of the family and connect it to others, in a network of relationships which underlies the whole *polis*. In this way, these private, family virtues do reflect the strength of the *polis* and the cement that holds it together, and their presence in public space is thus, perhaps, not such a paradox as it seems.

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Notes

[1] For example: 'Whether you are a citizen or a stranger from abroad, pity Tettichos, a good man, as you go by; he lost his fresh youth by death in war. Mourn for him, and go on your

way with good fortune.' *IG* (*IG=Inscriptiones Graecae*. (1873–). Berlin: De Gruyter.) i^2 976 = i^3 1194 bis (Attica, *c.* 560 – 50 BC); Pfohl, 1967: no. 18. Athens, Epigr. Mus. 10650. Trans. Humphreys, 1993: 91. Here are the standard elements of such appeals: the reader's attention is caught and his compassion sought; the name of the dead man—Tettichos—is given, and a few words of praise. This is an early example, from the sixth century BC, but the idea was widespread, and continued down to the Roman period and beyond (Lattimore, 1971: 232).

[2] On *periboloi* (family grave precincts), which did not become popular until the fourth century, see Garland, 1982; on burial practices see further Kurtz and Boardman, 1971; Houby-Nielsen, 1995 (pp.142 – 146 on family burials), 1997; Humphreys, 1980, 1993; Morris, 1992, Nielsen *et al.*, 1989. My concern in this article is with the external appearance of the grave—that is, the face that the deceased's family wished to present to the community—rather than what went into it. The cost of gravestones (insofar as this can be ascertained) was generally assumed to be high enough to restrict them to the wealthier parts of the population; see Stears, 1993: 154 – 162, Morris, 1992: 138; but cf. Nielsen *et al*, 1989, arguing that even the poor could afford them, against which, persuasively, Oliver, 2000.

[3] A great deal has been written on the causes and social implications of their disappearance and reappearance. See Stears, 2000, with further bibliography.

[4] Houby-Nielsen (1995: 144 – 145) makes the point that 'noble birth was at no time sufficient to maintain membership of the elite. Public recognition of a man's abilities and virtues was equally, if not more important.' There is no doubt, however, that a noble or wealthy background (or both), as in most periods of history, did carry certain advantages.

[5] See also Osborne, 1997: 22, who describes the classical context as one in which relationships rather than actions are most prominently depicted on gravestones.

[6] Stears, 2000: 51: 'The ascendancy of the radical democracy may well have led to an attempt by some members of the elite to distinguish themselves both from the populace and from the *polis*, with its public burials, by the erection of costly funerary monuments.' Cf. Osborne, 1997: 27 – 28, who suggests that the classical depictions focused rather on 'the disruption caused to the family by the loss of an individual member', and were therefore seen as less threatening to democratic ideas.

[7] On this debate see the essays by Reeder (1995), Humphreys (1995), and Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995b; see further Fantham *et al.*, 1994: ch. 3; Cohen, 1996.

[8] On the distinction between seclusion and segregation, see Cohen, 1996; for an opposing view, Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995b. Pericles' famous and often indiscriminately quoted advice (Thuc. 2.46) that women's renown lay in being least talked about by men is directed particularly at war widows, who came under the guardianship of the state; Pericles as representative of that state is here acting *in loco parentis*, as guardian of the women's respectability, especially as many of them will still be young.

[9] There are occasional exceptions such as the relief of Phanostrate, a midwife (Clairmont, 1970: cat. 53). On profession reliefs see Stears, 1995: 124 – 125. In general only those professions were shown that would enhance the family's status (stele for a priestess) or reflect their wealth (stele for a nurse, erected by the family for whom she worked).

[10] The proportion of the population to whom monuments were available is very difficult to determine, as many of the surviving stelai are without context and comparatively few excavations are yet available. Morris, 1992: 135 – 137 suggests that 'at a guess' access to figured monuments in the fourth century was restricted to around 10% of the population, but adds that 'it may be that in the fourth century most Athenian graves had a simple inscribed stele, while a much smaller group was also buried in periboloi.'

[11] As is well known, save for mythical figures, the only craft commonly to depict women was vase-painting, created largely for private consumption and not highly regarded as an artform.

[12] This is from a survey of *c.* 600 fourth-century funerary inscriptions of Athenian citizens, giving deme affiliations. The remaining stones show various family groupings.

[13] [Aristotle] *Ath. Pol.* 26.4; Plut. *Per.* 37.2 – 5; Aelian *Var. Hist.* 6.10; see Just, 1989: 44 – 51. On the reiteration in 403 BC: Eumolos fr. 2 Schol. ad Aeschines 1.39. On the increasing importance of citizenship in the fifth and fourth centuries, see Meyer, 1993: 112 – 119.

[14] Osborne (1997: 3) raises exactly this question, and argues in favour of the former option, seeing the citizenship law as the 'trigger' for the emphasis on women in the archaeological record (pp. 28 – 29). See pp. 31 – 32 for a suggested change in attitudes towards women in tragedy throughout the fifth century.

[15] On the iconography of white-ground lekythoi see Sourvinou-Inwood, 1987; Kurtz, 1975; Osborne, 1997: 16 – 18.

[16] One example of many: on a hydria attributed to the circle of Polygnotos (c. 440 – 430 BC), a seated woman hands her child over to a nursemaid. Behind the mother's chair stands the father, but the two women seem almost unaware of his presence. He seems rather ill at ease, and leans upon a walking-stick, marking his connection to the world outside of the household

(Reeder, 1995: 218–219 with fig. 51; Attic red-figure hydria, Harvard University Art Museums 1960: 342).

[17] Admittedly Socrates' own view is different (cf. 73), in that he claims that men and women do in fact share the same virtue, that of temperate and just management. He does not, however, dispute the different roles assigned here to men and women.

[18] The only woman who is described as *pasi potheinon,* 'missed by all', Phanostrate, is a nurse and healer; Clairmont, 1970: cat. 53.

[19] Athens, National Museum 3624, *c.* 400–375 BC. On this well-known stele see Stewart, 1997: 124–129; Leader, 1997: 688–692.

[20] See Lissarague in Reeder, 1995, for containers as metaphors for women. Boxes are almost never carried by men.

[21] Hegeso's stele (*IG* i^2 1079; *CAT* 2.150) shares the *peribolos* with the anthemion stele *IG* ii^2 6008 (see Humphreys, 1993: 116, for translation and family tree); also with the loutrophoros stele *IG* ii^2 6858 dedicated to Kleidimos. Stewart, 1997: 124–127, summarizes what little is known about the history of the family and grave plot.

[22] See Reilly, 1989, for a further link between funerary and marriage iconography, in the 'mistress and maid' scenes on white-ground lekythoi.

[23] Reliefs depicting children on their own, with no adults present, are the only configuration in which males outnumber females, with CAT listing 49 females and 80 males (Osborne, 1997: 14). This may still be a sufficiently high number of females to make such tombstones part of a sculptor's normal stock.

[24] In contrast, similar scenes in vase-paintings almost invariably show male children. Beard, 1991: 24, discussing one such scene, comments that 'the baby is clearly depicted as a *boy* [this] would have been a clear indication to the Athenian viewer that the woman had fully discharged her obligation to reproduce the (male) citizen line.'

[25] Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995a: 192–193, notes that this spirit of lament contrasts with the state memorials, which focus on the heroic death in battle as an occasion for praise.

[26] This is made very clear by contrast with the epitaph for Dexileos, which is unique in telling both the dates of birth and death of the deceased. Unusual though this is, it does indicate that lack of personal detail on other monuments was personal choice as well as convention.

[27] Shapiro, 1991: 656; Houby-Nielsen, 1995: 142–143, who suggests that area A in the Kerameikos may also be a family plot, with the earliest graves dating to *c.* 710–680 BC and the later ones between 600–575 BC; she points out, however, that these family burials are not united by a common grave marker, but some adult burials are individually marked.

[28] For example, in tombstones listed in *CAT* showing four adults, women are seated on 63, men on 26, and two show both a man and a woman seated; on 27 stones, all four are standing.

[29] Of groups of three adults (both with and without children), *CAT* lists 31 showing males only, 77 showing females only, and 464 mixed groups. Of groups with four adults, there are 4 female only, 3 male only, and 112 mixed. There are no all-male groups of greater numbers, and only one group of five females.

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