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From Birth to Burial:  
Exploring Social Positioning and Symbolic  
Representation of Women in Athenian Grave Stelae

By

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the positionality of women in ancient Athenian culture through the context of funerary engagement. The research examines the evolution of female identity in grave reliefs and how ideals were instilled and perpetuated in society. By comprehensively reviewing influential voices of ancient Athens that contributed to discussions surrounding women and their positionalities in ancient Athens, historically significant laws and legislation pertaining to funeral rites, an investigation of grave stelae manufacturing, before a final analysis of crafted grave stelae representing women at different life stages, this thesis aims to holistically investigate the ways in which women in ancient Athens were memorialized and how this affected the production of social ideology surrounding female identity. This research aims to contribute to a richer understanding of the ancient Athenian social landscape during the Classical period to better comprehend the production of social ideology. By examining the interplay between socio-political factors and individual agency, valuable insights into the complex dynamics and underlying forces that shaped the societal perceptions and roles of women in ancient Athens can be better understood.

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## Introduction

Understanding the mourning process in ancient cultures provides valuable insights into community engagement with death, kinship relationships, and the representation of individual identities at death (Meyer 1993, 106). A comprehensive understanding of social structures is essential for unraveling the intricacies of cultural practices associated with funerary engagement. The significance of comprehending funeral contexts in ancient Athens is no exception, as contextualizing burial practices has greatly enriched knowledge on the daily life of those in ancient Greece. Surviving archaeological materials, such as burial monuments, sculptural reliefs, and grave stelae, offer a glimpse into Athenian family dynamics and enable archaeologists to examine the roles of women within the *oikos* (family unit) from adolescence to adulthood and how these roles were presented to the wider *polis* (community) (O'Neal 1993, 117).

Women in Athenian society faced limitations in their public presence, as their primary responsibilities revolved around household affairs and fulfilling societal expectations related to reproduction (Margariti 2018; O'Pry 2015, 9). Nevertheless, one domain in which women actively participated and held a prominent role was funerary engagement. Women were recognized as better suited than men to navigate the challenges and complexities of certain events and conditions, such as funerary rites, which were viewed as a form of societal pollution (Stears 1998). This meant from the preparation of the body to the public lamentation, women played a central role in expressing the loss of a family member within the *oikos* and demonstrating their grief to convey familial ideals to the larger *polis* (Hame 2008, 1).

Memorialization of the deceased in ancient Athens encompassed both funeral processions and the inclusion of elaborate grave goods. One of these goods produced by skilled craftsmen was

the highly personalized funerary stelae which saw a resurgence in popularity during the Classical period. Paralleling the status of women in Athenian society, craftsmen occupied a marginalized position within the public sphere of ancient Athens. Traditionally, they were relegated to a low social standing or, at best, considered part of the *demos* (common people) according to the Athenian elite's perspective. However, the dynamics between individual patrons and craftsmen underwent a significant shift during the Classical period. As the market transformed, craftsmen found new opportunities to leverage their talent and agency to meet the growing demand, particularly in the production of personalized goods such as grave stelae. This transformation in craft organization coupled with the active involvement of women in funerary proceedings and the intricate and highly gendered socio-political environment, provides a rich foundation for the analysis of grave stelae. Through careful examination of stelae, deeper insights into the complex components of Athenian society which collectively shape the prevailing ideology and directly influence the performative nature of gender and status roles within ancient Athenian culture can be understood.

The majority of the stelae in the analysis date to the latter half of the Classical period and fall between ca. 410-320 BCE. Due to the rapid expansion of the marblework industry in part because of the resurgence in the production of funerary markers along with significant changes in legislation pertaining to funerary rites, the second half of the Classical period becomes insightful for understanding the evolving representations of women in material culture, particularly women of prominent families given the high cost for many of these produced grave stelae (Burton 2003).

In order to explore the multifaceted representation of female identity at different stages of life, it is necessary to establish a theoretical framework. This research adopts a post-processual approach, focusing on the marginalized position of women and their personal negotiations within

a society that regarded them as second-class citizens (Hodder 1985, 8). Grave stelae provide an ideal tool for understanding not only the intricate gender dynamics within public cemeteries but also the broader social fabric of Athenian society. This research primarily focuses on girlhood and womanhood in the Athenian context, particularly in relation to formative years. While it may highlight some differences between males and females, the main objective is to delve into the experiences of women and girls in this social environment. Future research could further explore the life stages of Athenian men, but for this particular study, that aspect will not be extensively covered. Another significant analytical framework employed in the analysis of grave stelae is semiotic theory. This theory allows for valuable insights into the cultural implications and meanings conveyed by the abundant symbolism present on these grave markers. Within the context of ancient Athenian society, the symbols on these stelae serve as a vehicle for communicating broader social concepts and ideas, providing a deeper understanding of the culture and beliefs of that time (Atkin 2023). By employing semiotic theory, the culturally significant symbols found in stelae iconography can be examined to decipher how womanhood was depicted, particularly concerning concepts of innocence and purity. This approach enables a deeper exploration of the meaning behind these symbols within an environment considered socially polluted.

First, expectations associated with being a woman or child in late Athenian society will be outlined using a culmination of current scholarship and ancient Athenian scholarship written by philosophers of the Classical world such as Plato and Aristotle. This will establish a foundation for comprehending the prescribed roles and ideals that female members of the *oikos* were taught to embody. Next, is the examination of laws and legislation relevant to funeral procedures, particularly those specific to women's involvement. This explores the strategies utilized by the *polis* in order to control the ways in which women were to be involved in funerary rites along with

how these legislative changes aided in the social *habitus* of women (Navarro 2006). Furthermore, the production process of grave stelae will be considered, with particular attention given to the evolving relationship between craftsmen and their clientele considering the changing Athenian marketplace. Then, selected grave stelae memorializing Athenian women at different life stages will be examined, with a focus on the motif patterns and symbols utilized to commemorate the deceased individuals. Finally, a discussion and conclusion section will explore the nuanced ways in which female identity was portrayed and celebrated within the context of ancient Athenian society. By delving into these components of Athenian funerary culture, this research endeavors to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between gender, ideology, and memorialization for ancient Athenian women. The findings will delineate the societal dynamics that influenced the representation of female identity and contribute to a richer understanding of the broader cultural context of ancient Athenian society.

The crafted object itself, resulting from a highly symbolic and intricate process, serves both as a public monument for conveying Athenian ideals as well as a personalized memorial for a member of an *oikos*. By acknowledging the involvement of a diverse array of individuals and cultural groups all with varied perspectives and interests, a more comprehensive understanding of the constructed female identity from childhood to motherhood can be achieved (Hodder 1985, 8). By drawing attention to marginalized positionalities of those involved in the production process and utilizing both ancient scholarship, existing research, and a combination of qualitative and quantitative analytical methods applied to classical Athenian grave markers, this research addresses the following questions: How do the socio-political forces connected to funerary practices shape the prevailing ideology concerning women and the performative nature of gender roles in ancient Athenian culture, and in what ways are these forces contested? Additionally, what

do these symbolically rich depictions of women in grave iconography reveal about the presentation and progression of women at various life stages, and what is the significance of their display in a public environment?

## **The Culturally Bound Social Status: Women and Children in Ancient Athens**

The understanding of what defines a child, a woman, or a man is shaped by both biological and social factors, and the interpretation of these categories varies depending on the cultural context being examined (Turner 1980, 112). The perception of women and children in ancient social contexts significantly impacts the interpretation of archaeological evidence related to identity. The concept of *habitus*, which can be defined as "an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted; the *habitus* engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions and no others," becomes crucial to understand in order to grasp the nuances of a given cultural environment as it shapes behavior and thinking (Bourdieu 1972, 95; Navarro 2006, 16). The concept of *habitus* is in a constant state of fluctuation, shaped by the process of socialization and varying between cultures and societies (Mauss 1973, 73). Ultimately, *habitus* integrates and constrains the conditions of a given environment (Navarro 2006). Additionally, "social capital" refers to resources mobilized to ensure social positioning, encompassing material, cultural, social, or symbolic aspects (Navarro 2006, 16-17). Grave stelae, in this context, function as a form of capital, and those commissioning them become negotiators of their positionality through the grave stelae. By recognizing the concept of *habitus*, one gains a better understanding of prevailing attitudes towards women and children in Ancient Athens during their life which assists in



establishing a conceptual framework for analyzing identity in the context of funerary stelae in death.

In ancient Athens, the Athenian citizens constituted only a small portion of the overall population. These citizens were predominantly elite men who held significant wealth and occupied positions of power in the political realm (Meyer 1993). Requirements for holding citizenship status necessitated both of an individual's parents to be Athenian and active engagement in Athenian society, including fulfillment of military service to demonstrate commitment to the city-state's welfare (Tanner 2000, 138). Athenian women, although recognized as having Athenian lineage, held a subordinate status as they were considered the property of their *kyrios* (their legal guardian) typically their fathers and later their husbands upon marriage (Johnstone 2003, 249; Pritchard 2004, 174). So, although some women were considered citizens through their parent's status, their social privileges were significantly restrained making their citizenship second-class in comparison to male citizens. While there were some notable philosophers, such as Plato who challenged aspects of the gender hierarchy in works like *The Republic*, many philosophers of the Classical period upheld the belief that men were inherently superior and more equipped for governing and ruling (Plato 1918, 261). For example, Aristotle, a student of Plato, adhered to more traditional views on women and their place in society. In his work *Politics*, he discusses the concept of virtue, asserting that different degrees of virtue exist among different groups: "the freeman rules over the slave after another manner from that in which the male rules over the female, or the man over the child" (Aristotle 1920, 51). According to Aristotle, women possess deliberative faculty but lack authority, while children have it but in an immature form (Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics* 1920). He concludes that "the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying" and states

that "Silence is a woman's glory" (Aristotle 1920, 51). Aristotle's views align with the prevailing perspective on women in Athenian society.

Similarly, children in ancient Athens were deemed inferior in status due to their lack of experience and wisdom, which would be acquired over time through education and guidance. In elite households, while boys received an education that prepared them for future political engagement and public life, girls were primarily trained for domestic work under the supervision of their mothers (Golden, 2015). The naming of children was an early form of social conditioning in ancient Athens and served as an opportunity for parents to express their opinions on public issues and shape their children's sense of self, reflecting family and community values while transmitting them to others (Golden, 2015, 20). Importantly, children were not named at birth; rather, their acceptance into the *oikos* occurred on the tenth day of their lives, known as *dekatê* (Golden 2015). This marked the official recognition of the child as a member of the household and typically was when a child received their name (Patterson 1985, 105-106). This celebration held significance as the majority of infant deaths occurred within the first week after birth (Morris 1989, 302). While mothers had some influence in choosing a child's name, fathers ultimately held the authority in naming decisions (Mueller 2010, 369). Prior to the *dekatê*, acts such as infanticide or exposure of infants to the elements was acceptable as it did not carry the same social repercussions in Athenian society, given that the child was not yet recognized as a member of the *oikos* (Patterson 1985, 104-105).

Names were chosen to reflect desired values, attributes, and identities within the family. In ancient Athens, one thing names could communicate were patrilineal ties and social status (Golden 2015). This was particularly evident for sons but also extended to daughters who might receive feminine versions of their father's name (Golden 1986). For example, "Philon of Aixone, his sons

Philokrates and Philostratos, and his daughter Philostrate" (Golden 1986, 257). For girls, the fact that names were determined by fathers and often connected to patrilineage highlights the notion of women as property of their *kyrios* and reinforces their position as secondary citizens within Athenian society (Golden 2015, 21; Neils et al. 2003). Names were also inspired by notable historical and legendary figures, such as Socrates and Plato whose names rose in popularity following their contributions (Golden 1986, 247). It is interesting to note that research focused on the name Theano, associated with a priestess character in the Homeric epic *The Iliad*, revealed that "perhaps five out of the eleven Athenians known to have been named Theano were priestess of one kind or another" which is particularly intriguing considering, "the (literally) thousands of personal names from which ancient Greeks could choose" (Nagy 1979, 360-362). Nevertheless, when it came to girls, names were often chosen based on desired attributes and characteristics, such as physical attractiveness, docility, and virtue. Examples include Eutamia meaning "easily managed," Eirene meaning "peace," Kathara meaning "pure," Philia meaning "friendship," and Eukoline meaning "contented" (Golden 1986, 249-250). While names did not determine an individual's personality or future, they carried symbolic connotations within society and could reflect the interests or the desired profession a parent wished for their child (Kimihiro 1974, 84; Nagy 1979, 362-363).

Generally, the stages of childhood do not seem to have universal rules as the language surrounding age groups is inconsistent or just not widely used (Golden 2015, 11; Neils, et al. 2003, 16). There are some terms that reflect child development some of which were gender specific such as the male-specific terms *paidion* (the nursling) and *paid* (a child who can be educated) however exact ages for these terms were unrefined and often vocabulary related to child development fluctuated in and out of usage altogether (Golden 2015, 11). The only minor exception to this in

classical Athenian terms seems to be newborns, however, even this is imprecise (Golden 2015, 12). Despite the lack of definitive terminology in the Classical period, there was clear social recognition of child development reflected most often especially in relation to behavior with the Greek philosopher Aristoxenus stating, “children should not behave like infants (*nepiazoien*), youth like children (*paid-ariouinto*), or adults like young men (*neanieuointo*); and old men should not become crazy” (Aristoxenus, Huffman and Wehrli 2019; Golden 2015, 8).

Generally, the progression from childhood to adulthood, particularly early childhood in ancient Athens was socially recognized through the exhibited habits and behaviors of children along with generalized physical qualities such as “the sweet smell of their breath and skin and their softness” (Golden 2015, 6). This lack of concrete demarcation in age is also reflected in funerary commemoration as the grave stelae of adolescent children were generally commemorated similarly and did not delineate further by age. However, a clearly socially recognized change that was in fact biologically marked was puberty which was the turning point for children (Margariti 2018, 92). For boys, *hēbē* (puberty) was a transitional period in which they were to fulfill their required military service (Golden 2015, 18). At the age of eighteen following military service boys were considered fully matured adult men as they could now participate in politics (Golden 2015, 24). For girls’ puberty was also considered a transitional period reflected in grave stelae which had iconographic changes to represent a girl’s newfound maiden status (Margariti 2018). However, since women were not allowed to engage in Athenian politics at any age, adulthood for them was less distinct. Full maturity for women appeared to be reached once they were married and had a child, which could happen as early as fourteen (Beaumont 1994, 87). For the purpose of discussing funeral motifs, significant turning points for women can be marked by life stages, such as puberty and motherhood.

It is crucial to understand the evolving gendered expectations that women experienced from adolescence through adulthood. The construction of female identity was deeply ingrained and practiced through the performative nature of girlhood and womanhood, constrained by the cultural norms within the male-dominated Athenian society (Bourdieu 1972; Mauss 1973, 73-74). Identity extended even beyond the physical body and continued in death through social engagement with the remaining material culture. Individual identity was expressed as it was understood from the perspective of the *oikos*. This meant constantly reaffirming the idealized qualities of a young girl, maiden, young mother, or matron as they relate to her gender, familial positionality, and progression through life.

## **Regulating Funeral Procedures: Women and the Production of Grave Stelae**

The memorialization of deceased individuals in ancient Athens underwent frequent changes influenced by various factors such as social philosophies, technology, resource management, and laws and legislation that shaped Athenian culture. Notably, written records provide valuable insights into Athenian laws enacted by the *polis*, which played a crucial role in regulating different aspects of funerary practices, including the size of grave markers and the expected decorum during funeral processions and burials (McGregor 2014). These laws specifically targeted women, considering their extensive involvement in funerary rites. Moreover, a significant aim of these laws was to standardize funeral procedures, particularly by regulating the material goods used for commemoration, including grave markers (Garland 1989, 5-8). This section explores Athenian legislation concerning funerary procedures from the sixth century BCE onwards, providing a contextual understanding of how such legislation impacted the social

practices of women in funerary rites and the manufacturing process of grave stelae in Classical Athens.

In Ancient Athens, an important social belief was that women were seen as contributors of *miasma* (pollution), which was perceived as a form of cultural and religious contamination that repelled the gods (Bendlin 2007; Visser 1984, 199-201). Although events and conditions like homicide (outside of war), sacrilege, disease, and generally death were forms of pollution, pregnancy, the act of birth, and menstruation were also considered social contaminants (Bendlin 2007, 182) Cemeteries were considered highly and consistently polluted spaces due to their evident association with death and the home space succumbed to pollution during the time in which a corpse was being prepared by the women of the *oikos* (McGregor 2014, 107). As a result, women found themselves in a complex situation where they were both consistent contributors of *miasma* and obligated to fulfill their related duties. This had significant implications for women's involvement in the funeral processes from their role in preparing the body to their participation in funeral processions (Stears 1998, 92; Zaidman and Pantel 1993, 72). This also led to legislation and laws specifically targeting women's participation in funerary practices as a means to address *miasma* (Stears 1998, 92). Such legislation became a way for the *polis* to regulate women and their engagement with death rituals (Bendlin 2007, 182-183; Stears 1998, 92).

In the pre-Classical period of Athens, mourning took various forms, characterized by widespread public engagement and minimal limitations or restrictions (Garland 1989, 2). Funerals held significant social complexity and "provided a perfect showcase for the display of family wealth, power and prestige" (Garland 1989, 2). Women in Athens were expected to participate in funerary rites, especially for members of their *oikos* due to their ability to engage with events that

contained *miasma* (Stears 1998, 92, 96). These expectations encompassed various responsibilities, such as preparing the deceased for burial through acts like washing and anointing the body, actively participating in processions, providing ongoing grave offerings, and engaging in lamentation practices that involved mourning signs such as wailing, tearing garments, and self-inflicted injuries as manifestations of grief (Hame 2008, 1; Stears 1998, 96). However, the sixth century B.C.E. witnessed the introduction of funerary legislation by Athenian statesman Solon, who aimed to bring better organization to the funeral process. Plutarch, in his work *The Life of Solon*, provides notable documentation of Solon's efforts, stating:

He regulated the walks, feasts, and mourning of the women and took away everything that was either unbecoming or immodest; when they walked abroad, no more than three articles of dress were allowed them; an obol's worth of meat and drink; and no basket above a cubit high; and at night they were not to go about unless in a chariot with a torch before them. Mourners tearing themselves to raise pity, and set wailings, and at one man's funeral to lament for another, he forbade. To offer an ox at the grave was not permitted, nor to bury above three pieces of dress with the body, or visit the tombs of any besides their own family, unless at the very funeral; most of which are likewise forbidden by our laws, but this is further added in ours, that those that are convicted of extravagance in their mournings are to be punished as soft and effeminate by the censors of women. (Plutarch 2013, 16)

Solon's early legislation were an effort to standardize the customs of mourning and regulate behavior within Athenian society, particularly with regard to women. These regulations imposed restrictions on women's participation in public funeral rites, redefining the acceptable behavior expected from them during the commemoration of a family member's loss. Furthermore, these limitations on women's roles extended beyond the time of burial and influenced their participation in daily life, notably affecting how they were allowed to move between different spaces. As a result, the social norms and expectations surrounding women's conduct underwent a significant reconfiguration influenced in part by funerary regulations.

In later centuries, funerary legislation continued to evolve, with a growing emphasis on curbing the extravagance of funerals and grave goods. Grave monuments from earlier periods came in many different varieties and materials. For instance, in the sixth century ceramic monuments were a popular form of memorialization and were frequently displayed in Keramikos, one of the largest public cemeteries in the ancient Greek world (McGregor 2014, 106). However, a shift in regulation led to a decline of grave stelae and eventually led to grave stelae ceasing to be erected altogether around 500 B.C.E. (Garland 1989). Athenian statesman Kleisthenes played a prominent role in this change, as he sought to abolish the use of grave stelae altogether, resulting in a near absence of such monuments in the Attica region for approximately 70 years (Garland 1989; McGregor 2014, 107).

By around 430 BCE, grave stelae began to regain popularity as a preferred form of commemoration (Garland 1989). These stelae exhibited distinct stylistic changes compared to those of earlier centuries. However, despite the renewed popularity of stelae, regulations concerning social decorum and standardization of grave markers persisted. Plato's *Laws*, for instance, include suggestions such as “and let not the mound be piled higher than would be the work of five men completed in five days...,” and “The expenditure on the entire funeral of him who is of the highest class, shall not exceed five minae; and for him who is of the second class, three minae, and for him who is of the third class, two minae, and for him who is of the fourth class, one mina, will be a fair limit” (Plato 2012, 259-260). Although these suggestions were not formal laws, Plato's influence in Athens suggests that his sentiments likely resonated with other citizens.



The existence of established laws and the prevailing cultural expectations regarding reducing *miasma* through the restriction of funeral rites had a lasting impact on the social norms and behaviors of women in ancient Athens. Furthermore, the regulation and cultural sentiments also affected the craft production processes. With the resurgence of grave stelae as a favored commemorative medium, the grave stelae industry experienced a revitalization, leading to changes in how craftsmen interacted with elite consumers in Athens. Focusing on the marblework industry, the following section explores the changes it experienced during the Classical period.

## **Craftsmen and Patronage: Power Dynamics and Changing Attitudes**

During the period preceding the Classical era, craftsmen in Athens faced a distinct separation from the political landscape, resulting in limited involvement with the city-state and minimal social standing within the community (Tanner 2000, 138-139). Even if craftsmen were able to amass wealth, they held marginalized positions due to the prevailing social ideologies of the time which held negative perceptions of reliance on others for livelihood and undervalued manual labor, despite the admiration for the craftsmanship itself (Hochscheid 2020). In the context of this research, the term "craftsman" specifically refers to individuals engaged in any stage of the marble manufacturing process, from raw materials to the creation of completed marble artifacts like statues, stelae, votives, and friezes. This definition is based on the concept of "chaîne opératoire", a term coined by Leroi-Gourhan to describe the sequential manufacturing process from beginning to end for a given artifact from raw material to finished product (Dobres 2000, 168-170). The efforts of transforming marble slabs into finished sculptures required the expertise and acquired knowledge of individuals, including quarrymen, sculptors, painters, scribes, and

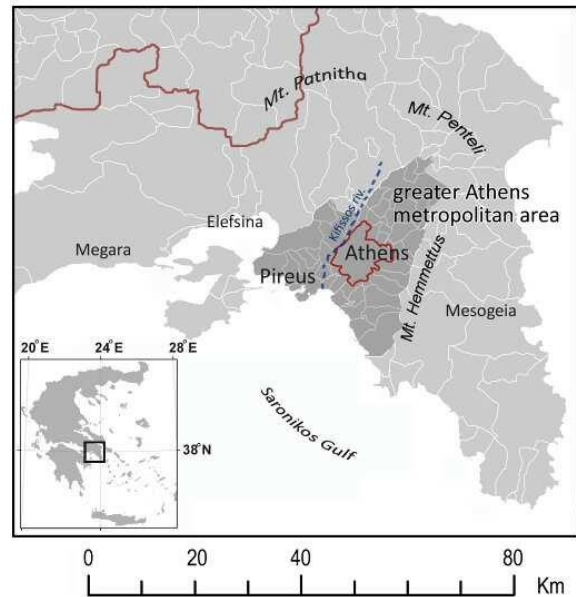
others. Thus, all individuals contributing to this chaîne opératoire will be recognized as craftsmen even though not all craftsmen were considered of equal value in Athens.

By the Classical period, attitudes towards certain craftsmen began to relax, and even philosophers like Plato and Aristotle acknowledged and commented on their efforts. The term *techne*, which is relevant to craftsmen, is mentioned in ancient texts and is defined as the knowledge of how-to-do, or how-to-produce something, specifically with reference to teachability (Aristotle 1926, 73; Hochscheid 2015, 158). Despite the inherent variation in their craft, sculptor craftsmen acquired *techne* due to the teachable nature of their trade. They also had the ability to perform what was called *mimesis* which is defined as the practice of replicating the perfection of nature with an emphasis on timelessness, balance, and perspective (Aristotle 2008, IV; Plato 1918, 139). Therefore, although marble-working craftsmen relied on manual labor for their livelihood due to the teachability of replicating the perfection of nature, they were held in higher regard. Craftsmen generally continued to remain disconnected from the political activities of city-states. However, there was a noticeable shift in the attitudes of the *polis* towards craftsmen compared to the discourse of the Archaic period. As a result, this facilitated the rise of renowned craftsmen or “master craftsmen” within the industry who possessed specific talents desired by consumers across ancient Greece which resulted in a major shift in the relationship between patrons and craftsmen (Lewis, Stewart and Harris 2020, 211).

It is important to consider the availability of marble in Classical Athens as there were various sources from which it could be obtained, as well as how factors such as size, weight, and accessibility impacted workshop organization and trade. One popular location was the island of Thasos, which involved the transportation of large marble slabs to Faliron and later Piraeus before being brought to Athens (Hochscheid 2020, 117). However, the most commonly used marble for

sculpture and marblework in Athens can be traced back to local quarries in the Penteli and Hymettus mountains in the Attican region (Figure 1) (Grossman, *Funerary Sculpture* 2013, 18).

These quarry sites, located approximately 18 km from Athens, made Athens an ideal destination for the marblework industry (Hochscheid 2015). Many of these quarries were controlled and operated by the local *polis*, which directly influenced the relationship and power dynamics between the governing authority and the marble craftsmen operating in the region. Some scholars suggest that all quarries in the Hymettus and Penteli Mountains were under the control of the Athenian *polis* (Lawton 2006, 7).



**Figure 1** Map of Attica Region AIZ ITU  
Journal of Faculty of Architecture, 2014

At quarry sites, specialized roles that required specific knowledge were often carried out by individuals from the *demos*, while more menial tasks such as debris removal were likely performed by the growing labor source of slaves (Hochscheid 2015, 125). These quarry operations experienced significant expansion from 430 BCE onwards, driven by the growing market and increased commercialization of marble (Hochscheid 2015, 129). Although there was an increase in individualized marble projects, the primary demand for marble extraction still came from civic projects sponsored by the *polis*. Given that the Athenian *polis* held a monopoly over nearby quarries, most of the resources were allocated for larger civic undertakings. For the marble that went unused for civic projects, craftsmen could purchase it for their own smaller individual projects. Alternatively, patrons also had the option to directly pay for the extraction and

transportation of marble (Hochscheid 2015, 149). This contributed to the adjustment in accessibility, utility, and job organization as the quarry craftsmen and sculptural craftsmen relationship changed along with the alterations in market dynamics (Hochscheid 2015, 135).

Once extracted, much of the marble at these local quarry sites was transported to the Athenian Agora. The Agora was central to the functioning of notable Greek city-states and served as a center for political activity, religious activity, commerce and trade (McGregor 2014, 79). While there was a certain degree of mobility among marble craftsmen, there were also more permanent workshop and store locations, particularly in proximity to major quarry sites (Lewis, Stewart and Harris 2020, 144). In Athens, one such area, known as the "Street of the Marbleworkers," emerged in the early 5th century and was situated southwest of the main Agora (Hochscheid 2015, 201). This specific district became a prominent location for marble craftsmen, making Athens a dominating location for marble production. These workshops often were run by a master craftsman, however, the production quantity and expected quality of these commissioned marble pieces necessitated a significant number of specialized laborers. The painting and engraving of marble pieces, for instance, would have been outsourced to other craftsmen who would have collaborated on the project. While civic marble projects continued to be significant, there was also an increase in personal projects commissioned by individuals. Elite families were purchasing crafts from these Greek marble workers and various city-states even requested notable craftsmen (Helms 1993; Hochscheid 2020). The increased demand in personalized marblework including funeral stelae gave craftsmen more opportunities to develop personal relationships with local clientele and serve the needs of the *oikos*.

The master craftsmen of the Classical period experienced significant benefits from the changing cultural conditions of funeral stelae and craftsmanship. Similar to the evolution of the

craftsmen's organization, marblework underwent stylistic changes and gradually moved away from its heavy Egyptian influence seen in the Archaic period, to establishing its distinct Greek style in the Classical period (Tanner 2000). Figural marble work in the Archaic period was rather static, however, during the Classical period, figural compositions became much more dynamic (Tanner 2000). Sculptors began to be acknowledged for their valuable contribution to the community through their technical skills, in addition to the culturally accepted attitude that their craft allowed them to communicate with the divine. Athens had a particularly strong association with craftsmanship, as its patron deity, Athena, was closely connected to marblework and other crafts (Tanner 2000, 140-141). Furthermore, the city-state actively employed a considerable number of craftsmen on a semi-permanent basis, often issuing public calls for craftsmen or directly recruiting renowned artisans for specific projects (Harris 2020). These factors contributed to making Athens a flourishing destination for marble craftsmanship during the Classical period.

With the surge in individually commissioned sculptures, craftsmen became more directly engaged with their clientele, especially when working on highly personalized sculptures such as stelae. Although not all stelae were expensive, with records indicating prices as low as twenty drachmai, clients had the option to pay more and hire renowned artisans within the bounds of funerary expense laws, using the sculptures as a means to showcase their wealth and social standing (Hochscheid 2015, 230). During the Classical period in Athens, sculptural patronage held great significance for wealthy elite families who sought to assert their status within the community. While social ranking is complex, patronage provides valuable insights into social groupings and cultural trends.

Analyzing the iconography and textual inscriptions on grave stelae provides an opportunity to better understand patrons and their motives for financing these expensive sculptural projects,

which extended beyond mere commemoration. Data suggests that during the Classical period, there was a higher frequency of sculptor craftsmen signing their work, although the actual act of signing would have been done by a professional scribe on behalf of the sculptor (Hurwit 2015, 140). Particularly, grave stelae, often bore the craftsman's signature. Craftsmen who already had reputations would frequently sign these marble objects at the request of the client as a way for the consumer to flaunt the craftsman they commissioned (Osborne 2010). Given that these stelae were typically commissioned by wealthy Athenians, it is not surprising that despite the many other restrictive legislations in effect at this time, a sculptor's signature became a way of displaying status.

While some grave stelae provide explicit details about the social position of the deceased within the *polis* or *oikos*-- such as the inscription on stele (66) mentioning the individual as "...daughter of....from Sounion [Eu]arate," not all stelae clearly indicate the social standing of the deceased (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.). Some stelae may lack inscriptions or have partially worn inscriptions that offer limited information, like stele (37) which only mentions the name of the deceased as "Lysistrate Panathenais" (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.). However, in Keramikos, it was typically required for individuals to be citizens at the time of death or granted citizenship posthumously to be buried in this, with a few exceptions (Hochscheid 2015). Not all the analyzed stelae in this research have a definitive origin, with many provenances indicating only the Attica region as the place of creation, which allows for the possible representation of non-Athenian citizens. As a result, confirming the citizenship of the deceased through these stelae is challenging, sometimes impossible, and requires comprehensive analysis in order to fully understand their social status in ancient Greece.

Though there are textual legislative records in ancient Athens that explicitly restrict women's involvement in monetary transactions, one of which being "women could not conduct a transaction worth more than certain amount of barley (a *medimnos*, a modest but not trivial quantity)" in daily life, women often performed transactions well above the restricted amount (Johnstone 2003, 247; Wyse 1904, 659). In fact, older female members of the *oikos*, such as mothers and wives, were actively involved in commissioning these often costly commemorative markers on behalf of the deceased (Hochscheid 2015, 280). This finding emphasizes the significant role women played in funerary preparations and highlights the personal relationship they had with sculptural craftsmen when considering the high degree of customization observed in many of these grave markers. Both of these parties shared marginalized positionalities within their social sphere yet used informal forms of power in a way that continued to uphold the Athenian ideals that enforced their inferior status.

It is important to clarify that the involvement of women and craftsmen within the complex Athenian social system that upheld their presumed inferior positionality did not negate individual agency. Instead, they operated within the constraints of this system, exerting their influence on societal ideals in a nuanced and impactful manner. The scarcity of written records makes it difficult to ascertain the precise frequency of women acting as primary patrons for grave stelae. Conducting future research to explore the extent and frequency of women's involvement in the design of grave stelae and the nature of the relationship between patrons and craftsmen would be valuable in advancing the discussion on the utilization of patronage as an alternative means of agency for marginalized groups. Ultimately, by examining the multifaceted dynamics between women, craftsmen, and societal ideals, a deeper understanding of the roles and contributions of women in

shaping commemorative practices and the construction of female identity in ancient Athens can be gained.

For Athens, the fact that the quarries were under the control of the *polis*, which consisted entirely of elite consumers, provided a rationale for implementing policies that would enhance the efficiency of the production process and promote the excellence of Athenian craftsmanship (Hochscheid 2015, 118-124). As a result, Athens flourished as a center for craftsmen in ancient Greece. The city's abundance of resources, coupled with its concentrated clientele, made it an attractive destination for skilled craftsmen from various regions, which led many to establish themselves, at least partially, in this prominent city-state of craft production (Hochscheid 2015).

Given that “symbolic capital” played a crucial role in individual and familial success and status, the evolving representation of various individuals and their skills on grave markers influenced the perception of idealized values (Tanner 2000, 202). Craftsmen, especially those possessing *techne*, were increasingly recognized as influential and valuable members of Athenian society. The utilization of slave labor increased resource acquisition and production, allowing non-citizen individuals to focus on building status and acquiring wealth independently from political involvement (Hochscheid 2020). Furthermore, a significant cultural transformation took place in the perception of certain craftsmen by the citizenry. There emerged a market demand not only for the product itself but also for the work produced by specific artisans (Lawton 2006). Additionally, the indication that women were involved in the commissioning process of grave stelae means both craftsmen and women, despite their secondary status in Athenian society, influenced how the memorialization of many elite *oikos* members was represented including but not limited to the commemoration of girlhood and womanhood.



## **Interpreting Athenian Grave Stelae: Patterns, Motifs, and Symbolic Representations**

So far, this thesis has explored various aspects of the classical Athenian socio-political environment, particularly focusing on women's engagement in spaces of funerary practices. The first section aimed to establish the framework of Athenian social organization by defining the roles of children, women, and citizens, while also examining how society perceived the progression of life stages. Biological and social conditions relevant to the perceptions of these social groups in classical Athens were considered. Larger discussions concerning significant age markers for women have been introduced and will be further explored in the subsequent sections of this research, as the examination of these grave stelae will shed light on these aspects. The second section contextualized women's involvement in funeral procedures, particularly in relation to the Athenian concept of *miasma* and the impact of funerary legislation on women. These legislative rulings sometimes presented contradictions when applied in social contexts, prompting inquiries into their underlying motivations and their impact on women's engagement in these spaces. The most recent section covered the process of manufacturing funerary stelae, drawing parallels between the marginalized positionality of women and craftsmen within Athenian society. This led to probing into the ways in which these marginalized groups utilized their agency and the influence it had on the social conditioning of gender roles for women.

Now, using grave stelae as the primary material for analysis, the following sections of this research will delve into the tensions within Athenian society surrounding idealized perceptions and social conditioning of womanhood in Athenian society.

## Methods

The selection of the 74 stelae for this analysis were sourced from various museums and had to meet specific criteria. Firstly, an image of the stele needed to be available, either obtained directly from the museum or through scholarly works with comprehensive catalogs containing imagery. Secondly, the stelae had to be approximately dated to the Classical period, with a focus on the late Classical period. The analyzed stelae spanned from around 450-320 BCE, and the selection is relatively evenly distributed across this time range (Table 1). Thirdly, the stelae needed to have a confirmed origin in the Attica region. These criteria ensured that both the lives of the deceased and the manufacturing process occurred within a shared socio-political context consistent with the research question and goals.

*Table 1 Complete Date Range of Grave Stelae*

Date	Catalogue Number	Total
ca. 450-400 B.C.E	10, 16, 18, 19, 24, 27, 28, 32, 40, 41, 42, 44, 47, 53, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 69	21
ca. 400-375 B.C.E.	2, 5, 7, 14, 20, 21, 23, 26, 34, 35, 36, 38, 50, 56, 64, 71	16
ca. 375-350 B.C.E.	1, 6, 8, 15, 17, 31, 33, 39, 49, 51, 52, 54, 55, 66, 67, 72, 73	17
ca. 350-320 B.C.E	3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 13, 22, 25, 29, 30, 37, 43, 45, 46, 48, 58, 65, 68, 70, 74	20

It is important to note that the selected stelae in this analysis were chosen with the intention of representing variety and general trends of the Classical period. However, they do not encompass all the stelae from this period, nor do they cover all possible iconographic patterns found in stelae commemorating Athenian women. Therefore, the data breakdown should be considered as reflecting general patterns and trends through a thorough analysis, while recognizing the limitations of this relatively small data set compared to the entirety of stelae found in collections worldwide.

In terms of organization, the categorization of the stelae was primarily based on emphasized life stages in Athenian society, as well as the symbolism and patterns depicted on the stelae corresponding to these stages. The four categories used are adolescent, maiden, young mother, and matron. To comprehend the significance of the depicted stelae and the connections between figures, symbols, objects, and approximate stage of life, a comprehensive approach was taken. This involved gathering information from the digital collections of the respective source museums, consulting published museum catalogues, and incorporating supplemental scholarship that provides descriptions of the grave stelae. These measures were taken to accurately identify the various elements of the grave markers. In instances where certain details remain unknown, such as unidentified figures, relationships, objects, or fragmented stelae resulting in missing information, specific categories have been introduced to indicate the undetermined aspects. Stelae classified as adolescent were those created for pre-pubescent girls, while young mother included stelae specifying the death of a woman leaving behind a young child or those who died during or shortly after childbirth. The matron category comprised older women depicted with blood relatives, particularly older children or grandchildren. The maiden category, being the broadest, encompassed post-puberty females who were unmarried, though it could also include engaged individuals (Margariti 2018, 92). Considering the societal value placed on women as individuals primarily responsible for bearing and raising children, it is worthwhile to analyze not only each category individually but also the differences and evolution in the representation of women progressing through these life stages.

The research of Katia Margariti, a prominent scholar in the field, has greatly influenced this study, shaping the data format and subsequent analysis. Margariti's scholarship focuses on classical Athenian grave iconography, with a particular emphasis on maiden motifs. Her work

delves into the chronology of stelae and explores the symbolism of objects, clothing, gestures, and stances depicted in the iconography. By employing semiotics, Margariti offers valuable insights into the positioning of the deceased within these representations. Therefore, her work provides a solid foundation for this research, aiding in the interpretation of these motifs and elucidating the specific symbolism and patterns they convey.

This study will address inquiries concerning the social position of Athenian women through a comparative analysis of their life stages, ranging from adolescence to matronhood. Emphasizing the contested nature of graveyard spaces and the perpetual tension between gendered performance and societal expectations, this research, like the work of Margariti uses semiotics to navigate this complex environment. Considering the notion of women as producers of *miasma* and the inherent pollution of burial grounds, the significance of symbols representing purity and innocence in the grave iconography found in these cemetery spaces are all the more valuable to understand within the larger social framework.

Through a broader exploration of topics such as the perception of women in Athenian society, gender-related social tensions, negotiations of agency, and the idealization of purity in relation to these iconographic stelae, this study seeks to reevaluate the understanding of womanhood in ancient Athens. By conducting a nuanced examination of these grave markers, valuable insights can be gained into the diverse roles and experiences of women within the cultural context of ancient Athens.

The analysis of the stelae motifs will be conducted in three subsections: depicted figures, personal possessions, and a collective category referred to as symbols, positions, and details, which aims to identify specific elements that hold significance within the context of ancient Athens.

Additionally, information about the stelae themselves, such as their origin and other unique characteristics, will be considered in conjunction with the socio-political environment discussed in previous sections. This research will explore how the memorialization of women through funeral stelae reflects the construction of identity and what this signifies in terms of the idealized representation of women within the *oikos* and broader *polis* of the ancient Attica region.

## Figures

The first aspect of the stelae relevant to consider are the individuals represented in the motif (Table 2). Many stelae have completed or partial inscriptions which usually consisted of identifying the deceased and a description of their positionality within the *oikos*. For instance, stele 31 (Figure 2) states, "Here lies Mynnia, to the sorrow of her mother, Euphrosyne." and goes to identify the figures depicted in the carving as "Artemisias, Mynnia, [daughters] of Euteles" (Getty Conservation Research Foundation Museum 2023).



**Figure 2 Grave Stele of Mynnia. (31)** Grave Stele of Mynnia. ca. 370 BCE. Malibu, J. P. Getty Museum 71.AA.121

Servants are not typically identified in these descriptions; however, there are a few common signifiers used to illustrate a servant, which often vary depending on who the deceased is. First, servants are primarily female, typically younger girls, and are always depicted smaller to ensure the deceased individual remains the main focus (Margariti 2018, 125-126; Roccas 1986, 259). In maiden and young mother stelae, servants are often observed holding and presenting an object to their master. For maidens, this object is typically a pyxis, and for young mothers, though there are examples of servants holding a pyxis,

it is usually the mother's child (Margariti 2016, 91; Margariti 2018, 127). In multifigured scenes, which in this case are primarily matron and some young mother stelae, servants are often found behind the chair of the seated woman, as seen in examples (52, 65, 68, 70).

**Table 2 Grave Stelae Figures**

	Adolescent	Maiden	Young Mother	Matron
Alone	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	20, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49		
Servant	4, 9	15, 18, 21, 23, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 48, 50	51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 60, 63, 65	68, 70
Sibling		17, 19, 29, 31		
Infant			53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64	69, 71
Young Child			51, 52, 56, 57, 61, 62, 66	
Mother		22, 30, 31, 37		
Multiple Adult Family Members	3	25	65	67, 68, 70, 72, 73, 74
Unknown Figure		16, 22, 37	59, 66	



**Figure 3 Grave Stele of Eukoline (3)** ca. 350-338 BCE. Athens, Kerameikos Archaeological Museum P 694/I 281.

Among the 14 selected adolescent stelae, the majority (11 stelae) depict the young girl alone (1, 2, 5-8, 10-14). Two stelae show young girls accompanied by attendants (4, 9), while one stele portrays the girl with adult family members (3). Stele 3 (Figure 3) is rather unique in terms of represented figures compared to the other adolescent stelae but considering its approximate date of creation (ca. 350-338 BCE), the inclusion of multiple family members in the scene becomes more understandable seeing as that rose in popularity towards the end of Classical period (Margariti 2018, 105). However, based on the data set, 78% of the adolescent stelae feature girls

entirely alone, which suggests that this was the most common depiction in this category throughout the Classical period.

Similar to the adolescent stelae, maiden stelae are frequently depicted alone. Out of the 36 maiden stelae, maidens are portrayed alone 47% of the time (20, 24, 26-29, 32-34, 41-47, 49). The depiction of children alone was not exclusive to young girls; rather, children in general were often portrayed alone, likely to emphasize the prematurity of their death (Margariti 2018, 41-42). Unlike adolescent stelae, maidens are much more frequently accompanied by a servant (15, 18, 21, 23, 35, 36, 38-40, 48, 50) which accounts for 30% of the maiden funerary markers.

The presence of a servant on grave stelae, particularly when depicted in a state of grief, serves to “promotes an idealized picture of the Athenian *oikos* and familial harmony, a most suitable theme for Attic funerary reliefs of the Classical period” (Margariti 2018, 127). It is worth noting that the motif of the isolated deceased individual is exclusive to adolescent and maiden grave stelae, with no examples found in the young mother and matron markers within this selected data set. This does not imply that there are no instances of isolated figures who are indeed young mothers or matrons, but rather, it appears to be less common to depict them in such a manner.

Instead of scenes featuring interaction between family members, most adolescent and maiden stelae have the figure often interacting with pets and objects. The absence of multi-family scenes for maiden motifs may be attributed to the emphasis on the tragedy of a young loss, as these stelae memorialize women who had not yet reached the culturally significant milestone of motherhood. Although multi-figural scenes were not common for maiden motifs, there are



**Figure 4 Stele of Mnesagora and Nikochores (19)** ca. 420-410 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum



**Figure 5 Grave Stele (22)** ca. 350-325 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 870.

examples of maiden stelae featuring some family members such as siblings (17, 19, 29\*, 31). Some grave markers memorialize multiple individuals, as exemplified by stele 19 (Figure 4), where a textual inscription indicates joint memorialization (Margariti 2018, 125). Another reason for featuring siblings could be to emphasize qualities like innocence, as siblings are companions with whom a child would play, much like toys. Another popular figure set is the maiden accompanied by her mother (22, 30, 31, 37). As discussed earlier, the mother-daughter relationship held significant importance, with mothers playing a vital role in their daughters' upbringing and education, preparing them for their future domestic roles (Golden 2015). These stelae often depict a level of affection in the interaction, typically portrayed through facial expressions or arm gestures as seen in stele 22 (Figure 5) (Margariti 2019).

There are exceptions to these major trends within the maiden stelae, such as stele 25 (Figure 6), which features a multi-figural family scene that includes the father. This stele, like stele 3 (Figure 3), was created towards the end of the Classical period, and its inclusion of multiple family members aligns with the general increase in such depictions during that time. Lastly, it should be mentioned that

some of the maiden reliefs feature figures that were inconclusively identified or, due to fragmentation, the maiden herself is the only known figure on the stele (16, 22, 37).



Moving on to focus on young mother stelae, there are 16 examples in this category. Among them, many depict the young mothers accompanied by servants (51-56, 58, 60, 63, 65), accounting for 62% of the stelae in this group. These servants are often depicted holding the infants and children. Infants are featured on stelae (53-55, 58-61, 63, 64) and young children on (51, 52, 56, 57, 61, 62, 66) making children in young mother motifs occurring at a rate of 94% of the time. It is impossible to definitively know if the infants pictured are living or deceased unless specified. However, infants and children that are explicitly reaching towards the mother signify that those children survived and are unable to be with their now-deceased parent (Margariti 2019). Stele 54 (Figure 7) provides an example of this motif. The motifs depicting the separation between a mother and her young child seem to convey the tragic loss felt by the entire *oikos* and are captured through the facial expressions and body positioning. In stelae where the child is depicted reaching out for attention, the predominant sense of anguish or longing is expressed by the child, while the mother is often presented with a sense of impassivity (Margariti 2016, 87). This emotional dynamic contrasts significantly with the playfulness or reflective states often seen commonly in adolescent and maiden motifs (Margariti 2018).



**Figure 6 Grave Stele (25)**  
ca. 330 BCE. Piraeus,  
Archaeological Museum  
3914.



**Figure 7 Grave Stele of Phylonoe (54)**  
ca. 370 BCE. Athens, National  
Archaeological Museum 3790.



**Figure 8 Woman Dying in Childbirth (65) ca. 330 BCE.**  
Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums 1905.8.

Of the young mother motifs in the dataset, one striking example is stele 65 (Figure 8). This stele portrays a young mother surrounded by multiple servants, dying from childbirth, with no child present (Harvard Art Museum 2023). While the specific commissioner of this stele remains unknown, its representation raises questions about the implications of presenting a woman in such a manner. Unlike other motherhood motifs that depict stages of somberness, serenity, passivity, or playfulness, this stele seems to deviate and instead portrays the woman as an active source of *miasma*, given that she is depicted in the process of dying. The motives behind this motif are uncertain, but it presents an opportunity to consider alternative representations of women in grave stelae, with this not emphasizing the loss of a mother-child relationship. Additionally, this grave marker highlights the relationship between the woman and her father, rather than her mother. Given that the relationship between mother and daughter is often emphasized in other motifs, it is perplexing to see that it does not continue in this case, unlike the rest of the grave stelae featuring parent-child relationships.

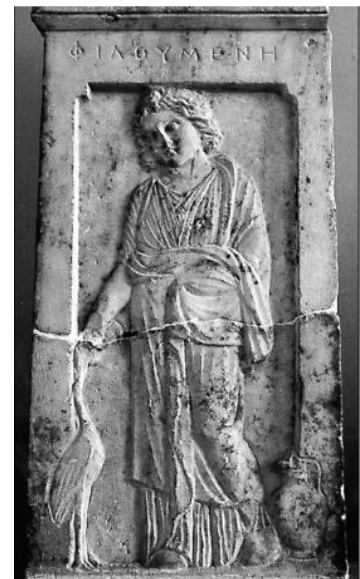
Among the matron stelae, there are 8 examples in this category. Matron figures are typically depicted in multi-figural scenes that include family members such as husbands and children (67, 68, 70, 72-74). Matrons are also the predominant stelae type in which adult men are present not including those of younger figures like babies and small children. Of this grouping, two stelae deviate from the multi-figural scene and are also the only ones in this category that date before 375 BCE. Stelae (69, 71) which portray matrons with deceased infants who are identified

as their grandchildren, once again commemorating the family unit and the legacy of lineage but with a more somber tone due to the loss of a child.

The presence or absence of additional figures in a woman's motif can provide clear indications of the time period in which the woman in the ancient Attica region passed away. The figures present and their interactions, along with other contextual indicators, can help determine the relationship with the deceased and the intended tone within the scene.

### **Personal Possessions**

A second aspect important to contextualizing funerary motifs are the objects and personal possessions depicted in the scenes (Table 3). As previously mentioned, many of the adolescent stelae feature toys or pets, with the young girls often engaging with these items in an innocent and playful manner. Appearing in 86% of the adolescent grave markers, birds and dogs are the most commonly depicted pets, with birds, especially small birds like partridges, more predominant (1, 3-5, 7-10, 11, 13, 14). However, larger birds are also depicted, as seen on stele 2 (Figure 9). Birds hold significant importance in relation to adolescent girls and maidens, symbolically representing the soul and ideas surrounding youth, which resonates with the prevailing themes depicted in these memorials (Grossman 2007, 321; Margariti 2018, 33).



*Figure 9* Grave Stele of Philoumene (2) ca. 400-375 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 1023.

**Table 3 Grave Stelae Personal Possessions**

	Adolescent	Maiden	Young Mother	Matron
Pyxis		15, 18, 21, 23, 24, 35, 36, 39, 40, 48	51, 55, 56, 63	
Doll	6, 7, 11, 13	33, 46, 50		
Mirror	12	26, 47	53	
Small Bird	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14	17, 19, 22, 25, 27, 29, 32, 43, 46, 49, 50	51, 61, 62, 66	69
Large Bird	2, 11	33		
Dog	1, 3, 8, 13, 14	43		
Vessel	2	29, 39		
Other Object	6, 8	17, 35, 44		
Unknown Object	2	20, 21		

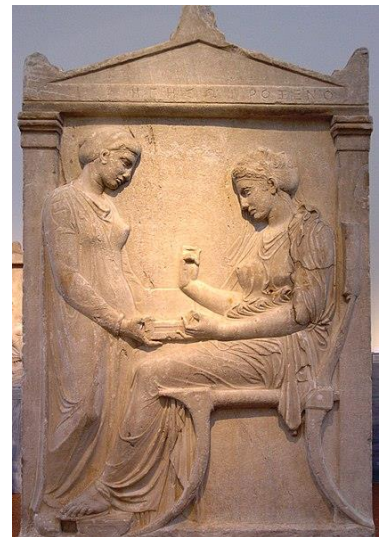
Additionally, dogs are frequently featured on adolescent stelae ( 1, 3, 8, 13, 14), with children often interacting with them, offering toys or even birds, as seen on stele 13 (Figure 10). Alongside pets, toys such as dolls are commonly found on adolescent stelae (6, 7, 11, 13). Among the objects depicted on the stelae, some, like balls, are toys that can be found in both male and



**Figure 10 Grave Stele of a Young Girl “Melisto” (13)**  
ca. 340 BCE. Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums 1961.86.

female adolescent iconography (Grossman 2007). However, certain toys, such as dolls and wheeled toys, are gender-specific, with dolls exclusively featured in adolescent girl iconography and wheeled toys in adolescent boy iconography (Grossman 2007, 321). Additionally, other objects seen in this sample set include mirrors and vessels, with mirrors and vessels being slightly more common in maiden motifs.

Maiden stelae share many similarities with adolescent grave markers, as the transition into maidenhood often occurred around the same age, marked by puberty. Pets, once again, are a common feature, although dogs are less frequently depicted, appearing only once in the maiden category. Birds are the predominant pets on maiden stelae (17, 19, 22, 25, 27, 29, 32, 33, 43, 46, 49, 50), appearing 33% of the time. Dolls, although less common compared to adolescent stelae, are still present on maiden grave markers, possibly indicating a younger age for the featured maiden. Another object frequently featured on maiden stelae is the *pyxis* (jewelry box). The *pyxis* appears in 28% of the stelae (15, 18, 21, 23, 24, 35, 36, 39, 40, 48). Maidens are often depicted seated, either in the process of adorning themselves with jewelry or reaching towards the jewelry box while a servant holds it. Stele 18 (Figure 11) provides an example of this motif. Adornment with jewelry was a common activity among wealthy maidens, symbolizing timeless beauty and maturity (Margariti 2018). There is also a slight increase in stelae featuring maidens with mirrors, likely for similar reasons. Finally, it is worth noting that a select few stelae in this dataset feature a vessel called a *loutrophoros-hydria*, which symbolizes an unmarried woman (29, 39) (Margariti 2018, 92).



**Figure 11** Grave Stele of Hegeso (18) ca. 410-400 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 3624.

Young mothers, like maidens, are often depicted seated with a servant holding a *pyxis*, likely for similar symbolic reasons. *Pyxis* can be found occurring 25% of the time (51, 55, 56, 63). Interestingly, birds also appear in motherhood motifs, but with different symbolism. In these scenes, the bird is typically held by a young child and offered towards the mother, as seen on stele 51 (Figure 12), or the mother holds the bird to capture the attention of a small child as seen on



**Figure 12** Grave Stele of Archestrate (51) ca. 370 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 722.

stele 62 (Figure 13). The bird is more associated with the child in these scenes, representing their innocence and playfulness (Margariti 2018).

In matron scenes, the presence of objects is limited due to the abundance of figures, with the exception of stele 69 (Figure 14), which features a bird used to gain the attention of a young child, similar to stele 62 (Figure 13). Generally, except



**Figure 13** Stele of Timarete (62) ca. 430-400 BCE. London, The British Museum 1947.0714.1.

for some young mother stelae with *pyxis*, the grave stelae of mothers and matrons tend to focus on the interaction between the women and the other figures in the scene, rather than objects.

## Symbols, Positions and Details

Athenian grave markers are characterized by their rich symbolism, with numerous details and interactions carrying meaning within the context of Athenian culture (Table 4). One commonly observed detail is the presence of a *naiskos*, a small temple structure supported by columns. This detail is not exclusive to any specific category and can be found on 64% of the stelae. The *naiskos* serves as a framing element for the scene and holds a direct association with funerary customs (Temür 2015, 818). It is worth noting that the *naiskos* detail may have been lost on some of the stelae due to fragmentation. If all the stelae were fully intact, the percentage of those featuring the *naiskos* detail would likely be higher.

**Table 4 Grave Stelae Symbols, Positions, and Details**

	Adolescent	Maiden	Young Mother	Matron
Standing Figure	1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 36, 39, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50		
Seated Figure		16, 18, 22, 23, 25, 31, 35, 37, 38, 40, 48	51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 65, 66	67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74
<i>Dexiosis</i>	3	31, 37	53, 65, 66	67, 68, 70, 72, 73, 74
Other Touches of Affection	3	22, 25, 30	55, 57	
<i>Anakalypsis</i>		16, 28, 31, 35, 36, 38, 45	52, 58, 59	71
Sphinx Detail		39, 46	66	72
Siren Detail		21, 39, 40, 41, 46, 49	66	
<i>Naiskos</i> Detail	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13	15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 44, 46, 47, 49, 50	51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 62, 63, 66	68, 69, 72, 73
Interaction With Dog	7, 8, 13, 14	43		
Interaction With Child		19	52, 57, 60, 61, 62, 64	71
Young Child/Infant Seeking Attention		17, 19, 31	51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 60, 61, 62, 66	69

In the case of adolescent grave markers, it is almost universal for the depicted child to be shown standing (Margariti 2018, 30). This positioning is observed in 100% of the adolescent grave markers in this dataset. Typically, the child is depicted engaging in play and interaction with toys and pets, which could explain the high frequency of this particular position.

In the case of maidens, there is a division regarding their posture, with some depicted standing and others seated. Standing maidens, similar to adolescent grave markers, often interact with a pet or a sibling, as seen on stele 11 (Figure 3), although the specific actions vary. On the other hand, seated maidens can be seen interacting with objects such as the *pyxis*, as depicted on stele 18 (Figure 10) or engaging with other figures. The seated position for maiden stelae (16, 18,



**Figure 14** Grave Stele of Ampharete (69) ca. 430-420 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum P 695/I 221.

22, 23, 25, 31, 35, 37, 38, 40, 48) occurs 31% of the time and the standing position for maiden stelae (15, 17, 19-21, 26, 28-30, 32, 33, 36, 39, 43-47, 49, 50) occurs 56% of the time. When seated without a *pyxis*, the maiden typically interacts with a family member, usually the mother figure, displaying affectionate gestures (22, 25, 30, 31, 37). One notable display of affection is the handshake motif known as *dexiosis*, where the deceased and a living individual are depicted shaking hands as a symbol of connection beyond death (Nováková and Pagáčová 2016, 207). Although *dexiosis* is seen on stelae (31, 37), it is more frequently featured on stelae of young mothers and matrons. Notably, the handshake motif appears more frequently in grave stelae created towards the end of the Classical period (Nováková and Pagáčová 2016, 309). Among all the stelae featuring the *dexiosis* motif, only stele 53 (Figure 14) is dated back to around 375 BCE or earlier, which supports the prevailing theory that this motif popularized during the latter half of the Classical period (Nováková and Pagáčová 2016). Another motif seen frequently on maiden stelae is the *anakalypsis* gesture (16, 28, 31, 35, 36, 38, 45). This gesture which is the uncovering or unveiling of the face is typically associated with married women but can also indicate a maiden being ripe for marriage or betrothed when she died (Schmaltz 1983, 208, 221). An example of this gesture can be seen on matron stele 69 (Figure 14). It is important to note the ambiguity within the maiden category due to the shared motif patterns between the adolescent and young mother categories. Lastly, two details worth considering are the sphinx and siren. Sphinxes, often associated with guarding the deceased, can be found on stelae (39, 46) as



well as on stele in the young mother category and stele in the matron category, making it a symbol not exclusive to any specific age group (Margariti 2018). Sirens, which are commonly found on maiden stelae, are bird-woman figures that serve as perpetual mourners for the deceased and are often depicted alongside sphinxes (Oldfield 2014). Sirens appear on 17% of the maiden stelae and are typically positioned on the perimeter within the *naiskos* detail and symbolize passage to the underworld (Margariti 2018). An example of the siren and sphinx can be found on stele 46 (Figure 15)



**Figure 14 Grave Stele of Selino (53)**  
ca. 430-420 BCE. Athens, National  
Archaeological Museum 901.

In the young mother category, the majority of figures are seated, accounting for 88% of the stelae. There are only two stelae in this category where it is unclear whether the mother is seated



**Figure 15 Grave Stele of  
Aristomache (46)** ca.  
330-320 BCE. Boston,  
Museum of Fine Arts  
Boston 66.971.

or standing due to fragmentation. Interestingly, there is a marginally higher frequency of the *dexiosis* motif at 19%, compared to maidens where it occurred at a rate of 6%. It is noteworthy that in many young mother stelae, the child or infant depicted is seeking the attention of their mother, yet the mother is not acknowledging them usually with a certain sense of impassivity (Margariti 2016, 87). Out of the 10 stelae where the child seeks attention, only 3 have a responsive mother. This could serve to emphasize the separation between the child and the deceased mother, highlighting her passing.

For matron grave markers, all figures are seated. This is accompanied by the highest frequency of the *dexiosis* motif found on stelae (67, 68, 70, 72-74), occurring at a rate of 75%. Of the matron figures not engaged in *dexiosis* are depicted holding a child in their arms.

The observed patterns across these four categories demonstrate a clear recognition of age based not solely on biological factors but also on life stages and socially significant indicators of maturity. These significant changes are often reflected in the figures, personal possessions, and culturally important symbols and details depicted on the stelae. It is important to consider these patterns while also acknowledging motif imagery trends, such as the increased occurrence of the *dexiosis* motif towards the end of the Classical period. These dynamic and multifaceted compositions, even without accompanying textual information, effectively convey individual identities while simultaneously conveying aspects of status, familial ideals, wealth, and the specific messages that the surviving household wishes to transmit to the broader *polis*. In the final section, this data-driven information will be applied to the cultural context of Athenian society to gain a deeper understanding of the social habits and customs surrounding women in Athenian culture.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Athenian grave stelae offer a valuable perspective on women's position and agency within Athenian society, challenging the prevailing notions of gender and identity engrained in the cultural disposition in Athens. The limited perspectives of a privileged few, mainly wealthy male Athenian citizens who considered themselves authoritative figures, have undermined the active participation of women in shaping their own identities. By examining the grave stelae, a form of material culture, constructed in part by marginalized social groups such as women and craftsmen, valuable insights can be gained into how Athenian women navigated their own oppression and

contributed to the reinforcement of social *habitus* (Bourdieu 1972). This is with the addition of acknowledging the societal and political forces that restricted their agency. Focusing on women's participation in funerary rites, along with analyzing the imagery and symbolism depicted on grave stelae, a form of symbolic capital, reveals how women acted as agents within the context of their subordinate identities (Hodder 1985; Navarro 2006, 17).

Funerary rites were an integral part of Athenian culture, and women played a prominent role in shaping these rituals (Stears 1998). Women were responsible for upholding the proper procedures and actively participated alongside male members of the household in projecting family-specific ideologies in public settings. Funerals provided a rare occasion for the *oikos* units to be at the center of attention and exert control over the logistical aspects of commemoration (Garland 1989, 2). The details of funerary material culture, including the presence or absence of funeral stelae, were subject to frequent changes. While women influenced many of the specifics of commemoration, legislative restrictions also influenced their bereavement behavior, and the ways individuals were remembered and memorialized (Garland 1989).

During the latter half of the Classical period, funeral stelae served as the primary mode of commemoration, offering ample opportunities for customization. These markers not only portrayed the likeness of a household member but also served as public symbols representing the personal beliefs and ideals of the household (Hame 2008). Concurrently, the Athenian marketplace, and consequently the position of craftsmen, experienced significant changes from the Archaic period through the Classical period (Hochscheid 2015). Craftsmen in the ancient Greek world found themselves in a lucrative environment due to the continuous hiring by the *polis* for civic projects and the increasing demand for smaller, more personalized projects sponsored by individual households, particularly the elite and wealthy citizens of the Attica region (Hochscheid

2015, 129). Among these endeavors, grave stelae and other memorial markers became avenues for social and economic opportunity (Hochscheid 2015).

Not only did craftsmen experience economic success through these ventures, but personalized projects like stelae also became powerful symbols of status for elite consumers. Drawing on the conceptual ideas put forth by Dobres and Helms, it becomes evident that recognizing the agency of craftsmen and their ability to leverage interpersonal connections is crucial to understanding the dynamic relationship between consumers and craftsmen and the ways this might impact the construction of grave stelae (Dobres 2000; Helms 1993). Women were not excluded from the phenomenon of patronizing crafts, especially those related to funerary rites (Hochscheid 2015, 280). While the exact level of involvement for each individual grave stele remains uncertain, the fact that women participated in the process indicates their contribution to shaping the details and features within the iconography of these stelae, and consequently, perceptions pertaining to womanhood through the iconography. In many ways, despite the opportunities available to craftsmen in the late Classical period, women and craftsmen shared similar positionalities and status. Both were subjected to multifaceted forces that limited their standing within Athenian society, yet they actively engaged in upholding the societal expectations imposed upon them. Therefore, the very cultural conditions that oppressed these individuals also shaped the environment in which both parties were reliant contributors.

Women faced social restrictions and expectations by virtue of their birth, learning primarily from their mothers and other women of the *oikos* about the societal norms associated with being a woman in Athens (Golden 2015, 26-28). The expectation for Athenian girls was to uphold chastity and virtuousness until they reached a suitable age for marriage and reproduction. At that point, their identity would shift to that of a maternal figure, responsible for transmitting the familial

ideology (Margariti 2018, 92). These ideals were largely maintained by the male-dominated *polis* which held substantial social authority (Beaumont 1994, 87; Golden 2015, 24). These gendered social expectations are evident in the symbolism depicted on the grave stelae, where the focus is on the ideals of femininity throughout the various life stages (Margariti 2019). These stelae offer illustrative examples of the evolving social concepts surrounding the aging process of women and the maturation of girls during their formative years.

In the context of ancient Athens, women were viewed as inherent contributors of *miasma*, which created a complex dynamic in their participation in funerary rites. Ideology surrounding women as producers of pollution, women having the capacity to withstand pollution, and cemetery spaces as polluted environments meant a constant tension as to the extent in which women were able to participate in funerary rites (Bendlin 2007, 182; Stears 1998, 92). These idealized motifs of womanhood when erected in an important public environment in a constant state of pollution seem to create a dichotomy in which women are both the pinnacle of purity and the perpetrators of pollution. Of course, as discussed there are exceptions to iconography indicating these themes as seen in stele 65 (Figure 8) where the depicted scene does more to illustrate a woman's polluted nature rather than one of idealized qualities. It leads one to consider the motivations behind such a disruption of the idealized *habitus* of womanhood and the individuals responsible for the creation of such a grave marker. Regardless, there is no doubt a constant tension found in the cemetery space and the peculiarity behind the perpetuation of these ideals.

Future research could continue to draw out the different forms of agency and the extent to which marginalized groups impact funeral rites to help elaborate on motivations behind the socio-political choices and cultural perceptions that contribute to concepts surrounding the life stages of women in Athenian culture. Additionally, given this analysis has predominantly found itself

focused on women within the space, the participation of men and perceptions around the gendered expectations of boys through the stages of life could be beneficial to the larger conversation on gendered expectations and the presentation of gendered ideology in the cemetery space.

In the context of the *oikos*, the expectations of Athenian women were to take on a domestic role under the authority of her husband (Golden 2015, 29). From childhood, these values were ingrained through social conditioning and interactions with societal structures and their associated values (Bourdieu 1972). Despite a woman's life being predetermined in many ways, individual identities were acknowledged, and the unique traits of girls during adolescence were recognized. Although considered as property, daughters were still cared for and cherished by their family members. As they matured, expectations adjusted to accommodate new milestones and life changes, such as childbirth. The stelae, in a way, immortalized the embodiment of age and gender as represented through social engagement during life. These grave reliefs presented idealized versions of women, reflecting their personal identity, their identity as perceived by the *oikos*, and the qualities and characteristics that the household wished to showcase to the wider *polis*. All of these attributes were shaped by the social *habitus* of women in Athenian culture (Bourdieu 1972). As performative and expressive forms of identity, these stelae reaffirmed the social ideology surrounding the role of women in Athenian society, especially given their placement as monuments in an important public space. Through this dynamic interplay, the lives of Athenian women and their engagement with the social environment in Classical Athens are better understood as their identities were influenced and shaped by both societal expectations and personal agency. The grave stelae serve as a testament to the multifaceted roles women played in Athenian society and how they navigated the constraints imposed upon them.

## Dedications

First, I would like to thank Professor Lozada and Professor Kramer for their guidance during my time at the University of Chicago and for their support as I tackle the single most important work of my academic career. Next, I would like to thank my Aunt Donna for inspiring me from an early age. Her continued encouragement has fueled my passion for academia and pushed me to pursue my dreams wholeheartedly. A special shout-out to my dear friend Robert, my trusted proofreading machine. Your keen eye and attention to detail have saved me from countless comma catastrophes. To all my close friends, near and far, I want to express my deep appreciation for listening to my ramblings and brightening my life. Allie, Jomana, Mia—each of you holds a special place in my heart. My parents deserve a big thank you for supporting my dreams, even when they are not sure what I'm doing. Your unwavering belief in me means the world. Lastly, I want to give a heartfelt thanks to my partner Conor. Your incredible support throughout this intense program has been invaluable. And let's not forget the countless emotional support chipotle bowls—thank you for always being there for me.

## Catalog

The following catalog is the represented funerary reliefs included in the data set and analysis seen in section Interpreting Athenian Grave Stelae: Patterns, Motifs, and Symbolic Representations. They are separated according to the four categories: adolescent, maiden, young mother, and matron. A brief description is included along with an image and any additional information relevant to the analysis. The iconographic descriptions are written based from the available information found on the source museums digital collections along with additional supporting research on the represented grave stelae.

### Adolescent Stelae

1. Grave Stele of Kallipe. ca. 375-350 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 748.

Young girl standing turned toward the right with a bird in her right hand extended toward a dog at her feet (Margariti 2018, 21).



2. Grave Stele of Philoumene. ca. 400-375 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 1023.

*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Young girl standing faced forward with right hand outstretched toward a large bird (goose) and small vessel in the bottom left corner (Margariti 2018, 22).





3. Grave Stele of Eukoline. ca. 350-338 BCE. Athens, Kerameikos Archaeological Museum P 694/I 281. *Naiskos* detail with inscription. Multi-figural family scene in which mother and daughter are performing *dexiosis* along with the mother caressing the face of the young girl. In the background is a woman performing *anakalypsis* and a male figure presumably the father. At the young girl's feet is a dog and in her left hand an unknown object (Margariti 2018, 109).



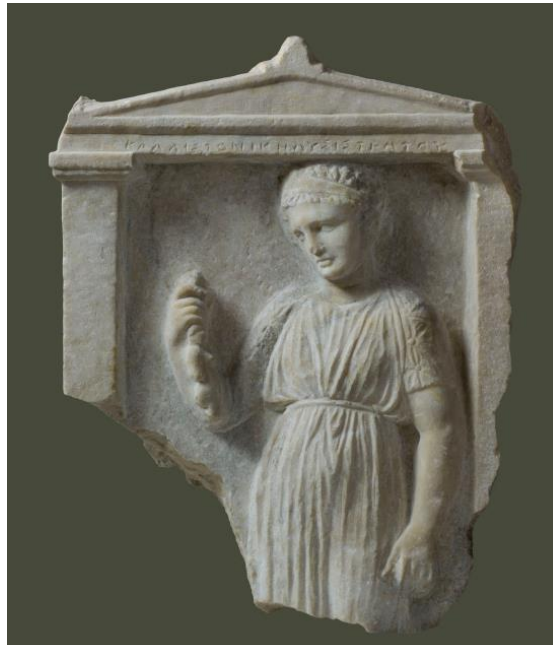
4. Grave Stele of Kallistion. ca. 350-320 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 895. *Naiskos* detail with inscription. Young girl standing forward facing with a small bird in her left hand. On the right side within the *naiskos* detail is a female servant half the size of the young girl (Margariti 2018, 23).



5. Grave Stele of Nikagora. ca. 400-375 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 894.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Young girl standing turned toward the right with a bird in her right hand (Margariti 2018, 23).



6. Grave Stele of Kallistonike. ca. 375-350 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum P 1140, | 161.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Young girl standing turned toward the right with a doll in her right hand and a ball in her left hand (Margariti 2018, 24).



7. Grave-stele. ca. 400-375 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 776.  
*Naiskos* detail. Young girl standing turned toward the left with a doll in her left hand and a bird in her right hand extended toward a dog at her feet (Margariti 2018, 25).



8. Grave Stele of Mnesiptoleme. ca. 375-350 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 981.  
*Naiskos* detail. Young girl forward facing with a ball in her left hand and a bird in her right hand extended toward a dog at her feet (Margariti 2018, 23).

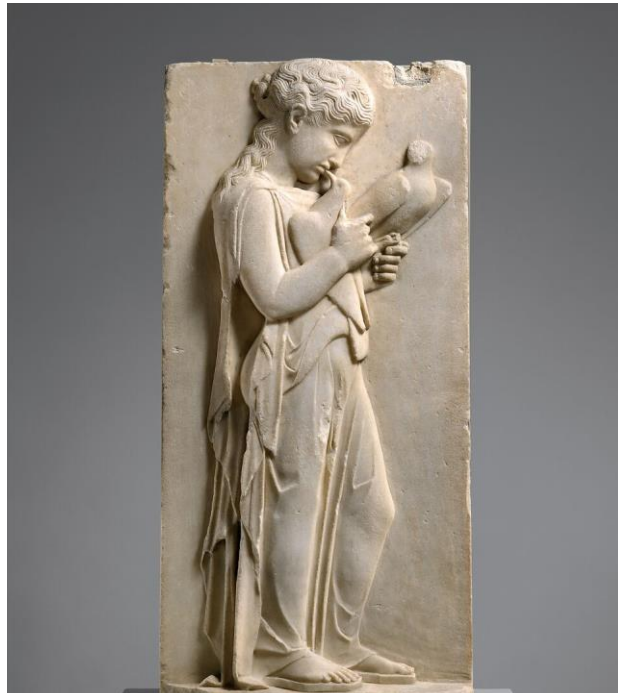


9. Grave *Naiskos* of Demainete with an Attendant Holding a Partridge. ca. 350-310 BCE. Malibu, J. P. Getty Museum 75.AA.63.

*Naiskos* detail. Young girl forward facing with a bird in her right. A female servant about half the size holds a larger bird in both hands looking up toward Demainete (Getty Conservation Research Foundation Museum 2023).

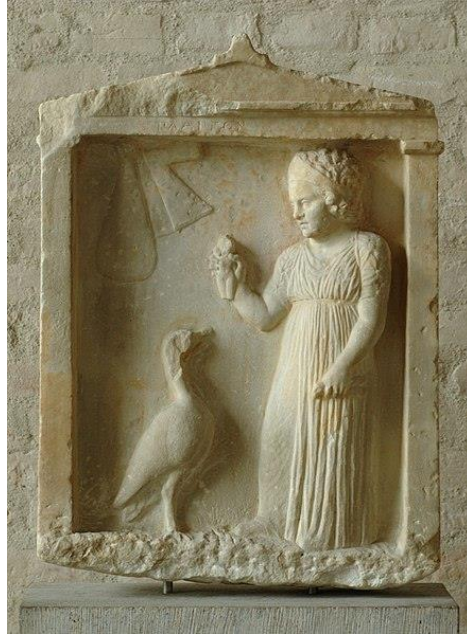


10. Marble grave stele of a little girl. ca. 450-440 BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 27.45. Young girl turned toward the left with one bird cradled in her right hand and another bird perched on her left hand (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.).



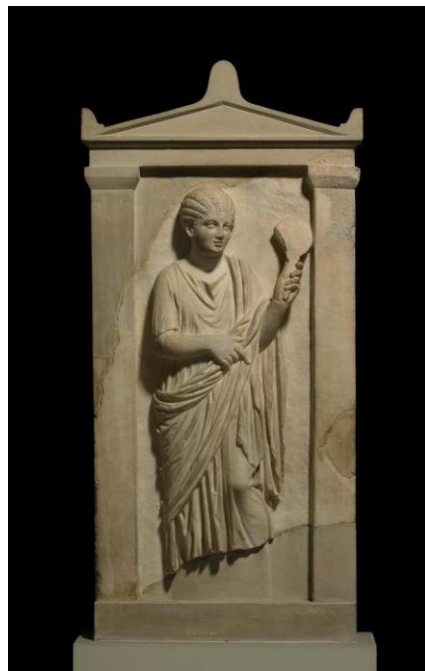
**11.** Grave stele of Plangon. ca. 325 BCE. Munich, Glyptothek 199.

*Naiskos* detail. Young girl standing turned toward the right with a doll in her right hand and small bird in her left. She is looking down toward a large bird (duck) on the right side (Glyptoteket 2023) (Margariti 2018).



**12.** Stele of Young Girl. ca. 330-317 BCE. London, The British Museum 1909,0611.1.

*Naiskos* detail. Young girl facing forward with a mirror in her left hand (The British Museum n.d.).



**13.** Grave Stele of a Young Girl “Melisto”. ca. 340 BCE. Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums 1961.86. *Naiskos* detail with inscription. Young girl turned toward the left with a doll in her left hand and a bird in her right hand extended toward a dog at her feet (Harvard Art Museum 2023).



**14.** Grave Stele of Aristokrateia. ca. 400-375 BCE. Eretria, Archaeological Museum 13062. Young girl turned toward the right with a bird in her right hand extended toward a dog at her feet (Margariti 2018, 25).



## Maiden Stelae

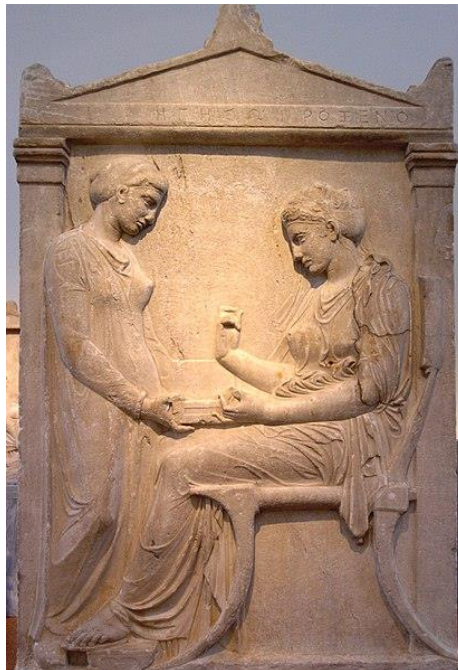
17. Grave Stele. ca. 350 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 1896.

*Naiskos* detail. Standing maiden who is faced forward with castanets in her hands. To her right is an adolescent boy with a bird in his hand extended towards her (Kaltsas 2002, 188).



18. Grave Stele of Hegeso. ca. 410-400 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 3624.

*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Seated maiden turned toward the right picking jewelry from a *pyxis* that a female servant standing to the right is holding (Margariti 2019, 153) (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest 2023).



**19.** Stele of Mnesagora and Nikocharēs. ca. 420-410 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 3845. Stele with inscription. Standing maiden turned toward the left with a bird in her left hand extended toward her younger brother who is kneeling at her feet looking up at her (Margariti 2018, 111).



**20.** Grave Stele of Ameinodora. ca. 400-375 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 3283. *Naiskos* detail. Standing maiden who is faced forward with her head slightly downturned and with an unknown object in her hand (Kaltsas 2002, 166).





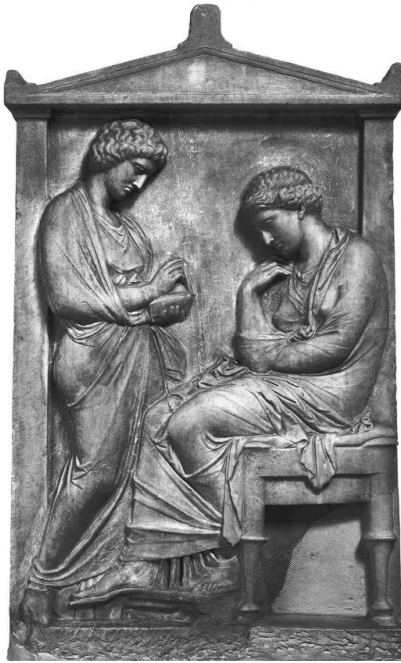
**21.** Grave Stele of Eukoline. ca. 380-370 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 4006.  
*Naiskos* detail with two rosettes on the edges and a siren centered at the top. Standing maiden turned toward the left with an unknown object in her left hand. A servant stands to the left looking up with her right hand touching her face in grief, in the servant's left hand is a *pyxis* (Kaltsas 2002, 161).



**22.** Grave Stele. ca. 350-325 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 870.  
Seated maiden facing to the left. Her mother is standing leaned down toward the maiden and in an act of affection is touching her daughter's arm with one hand and face with the other. Behind the two figures is a third unknown female figure. Beneath the seat of the maiden is a small bird (Kaltsas 2002, 195).



**23.** Grave Stele. ca. 400-375 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 726.  
*Naiskos* detail. Seated maiden faced toward the right with her face down. To her right is a female servant standing and holding a *pyxis* (Kaltsas 2002, 163).



**24.** Grave Stele. ca. 430-420 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 910.  
Standing maiden turned toward the left with a *pyxis* in her hands (Margariti 2018, 117).



**25. Grave Stele. ca. 330 BCE. Piraeus, Archaeological Museum 3914.**

This multi-figural family scene depicts a seated maiden turned toward the right with a bird in her right hand. Her mother standing to the right and behind the two her father (Margariti 2018, 118-119).



**26. Grave Stele of Pausimache. ca. 390-380 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 3964.**

*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Standing maiden turned toward the left with a mirror in her left hand (Margariti 2018, 114).



27. Grave Stele of Nikeso. ca. 420-410 BCE. Piraeus, Archaeological Museum 264.  
*Naiskos* detail. Maiden turned toward the left with a bird in her hands (Margariti 2018, 119).



28. Grave Stele. ca. 410 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 3891.  
Maiden standing performing the *anakalypsis* gesture (Margariti 2018, 104).



**29.** Grave Stele of Hagnostrate. ca. 320 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 1863.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Standing maiden faced forward leaning on a loutrophoros-hydria which depicts *dexiosis* between the maiden and her brother (Margariti 2018, 105).



**30.** Grave Stele. ca. 350-330 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 763.  
*Naikos* detail. Standing maiden faced toward the right with her mother beside her. The mother has her right hand on the maiden's face in as a sign of affection (Margariti 2018, 109).



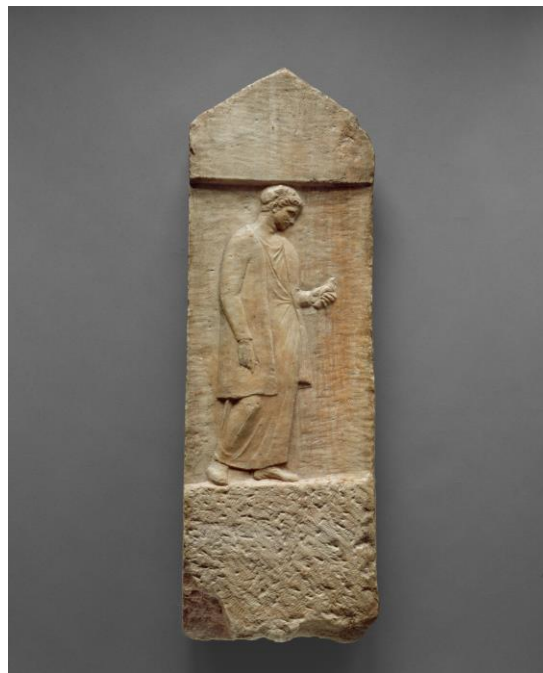
**31.** Grave Stele of Mynnia. ca. 370 BCE. Malibu, J. P. Getty Museum 71.AA.121.

*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Seated maiden turned toward the left performing *dexiosis* with mother who is standing. With her other hand she is performing the *anakalypsis* gesture. Her younger sister who is much smaller reaches out toward the seated maiden (Getty Conservation Research Foundation Museum 2023) (Margariti 2018, 113).



**32.** Grave Stele of Myttion ca. 400 BCE. Malibu, J. P. Getty Museum 78.AA.57.

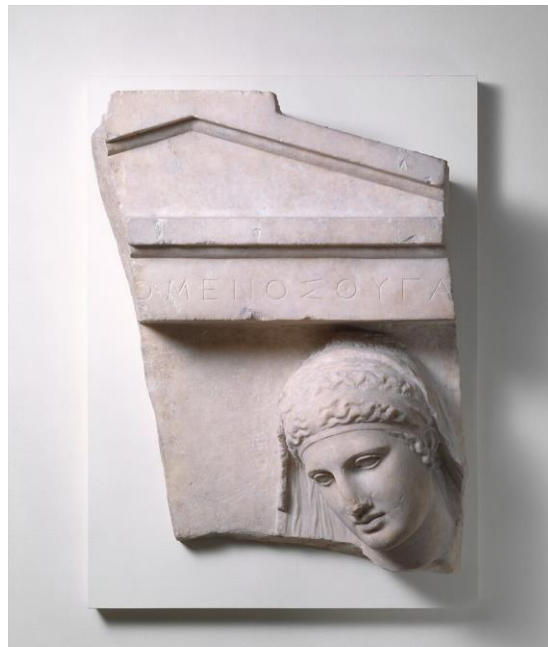
*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Standing maiden faced toward the left holding a bird in her left hand (Getty Conservation Research Foundation Museum 2023).



**33.** Grave *Naiskos* of a Young Woman. ca. 360 BCE. Malibu, J. P. Getty Museum 82.AA.135.  
Standing maiden turned toward the right cradles a doll in her hands. Below her a bird (goose) looks up at her  
(Getty Conservation Research Foundation Museum 2023) (Margariti 2018, 115).

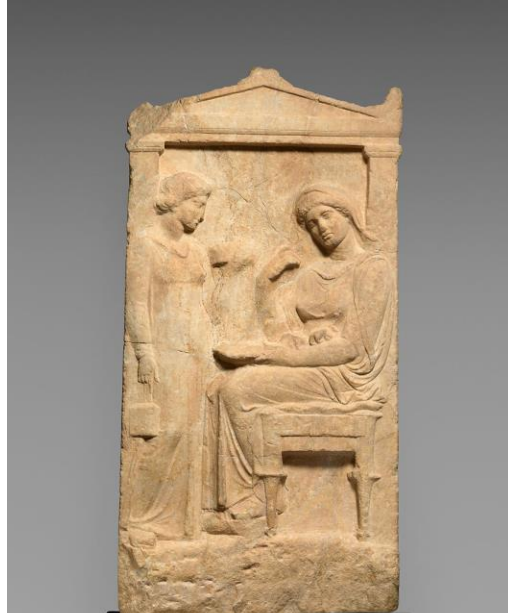


**34.** Fragment of a marble grave stele of a woman. ca. 400-390 BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 30.11.3.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription fragment which shows the maiden's head (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.).



**35.** Marble Stele of Phainippe. ca. 400-390 BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 53.11.7.

*Naiskos* detail. Seated maiden turned toward the right holding a mirror in her left hand and performing the *anakalypsis* gesture with her right hand. Her female servant who stands to the right holds a casket and *pyxis* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.).



**36.** Marble Grave Stele of a Young Woman and Servant ca. 400-390 BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 36.11.1.

*Naiskos* detail. Standing maiden turned toward the right performing the *anakalypsis* gesture and looking down at a female servant who holds a *pyxis* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.).





**37.** Marble Grave Stele of Lysistrate ca. 350-325 BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 6.287.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Seated maiden turned toward the left performing *dexiosis* with standing mother. A third unknown figure stands behind the pair (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.).



**38.** Funerary Relief of Mnesarete ca. 380 BCE. Munich, Glyptothek 491.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Seated maiden turned toward the right performing the *anakalypsis* gesture. To the right is a female servant with her head bowed (Glyptoteket 2023).



**39.** Grave Stele of Silenis ca. 350 BCE. Berlin, Antikenmuseum Basel 1492.  
*Naiskos* detail with a vessel, siren, and sphinx at the top. Standing maiden faces forward with a servant to the right holding a *pyxis* (Margariti 2018, 131).



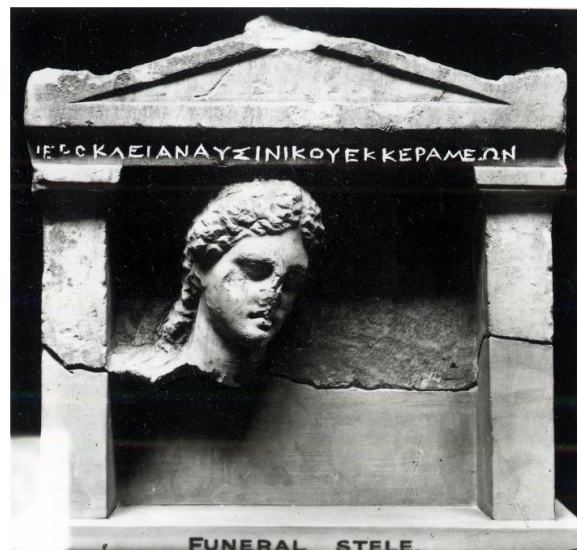
**40.** Attic Grave Relief of a Woman with a Servant ca. 350 BCE. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin SK 755.  
*Naiskos* detail with two sirens holding a crown over the maid. Seated maiden turned toward the left putting on jewelry while her standing female servant holds a *pyxis* (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2023).



41. Fragment of Marble Stele of Klearete ca. 400 BCE. London, The British Museum 1910.0414.1. *Naiskos* detail with inscription and siren figure. Fragment which shows the maiden's head (The British Museum n.d.).



42. Marble Stele of Hierokleia ca. 400 BCE. London, The British Museum 1907.1025.3. *Naiskos* detail with inscription. Fragment which shows the maiden's head (The British Museum n.d.).



**43.** Grave Stele of Maiden ca. 350-330 BCE. Paris, Musée Rodin Co.459.  
Standing maiden turned toward the right with a bird in her right hand extended toward a dog at her feet (Musée Rodin 2023).



**44.** Grave Stele of Kallistrate ca. 420-380 BCE. St. Louis, Saint Louis Art Museum 4.1933.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Standing maiden turned toward the left holding a necklace of amphora shaped beads in her hands (Saint Louis Art Museum 2023).



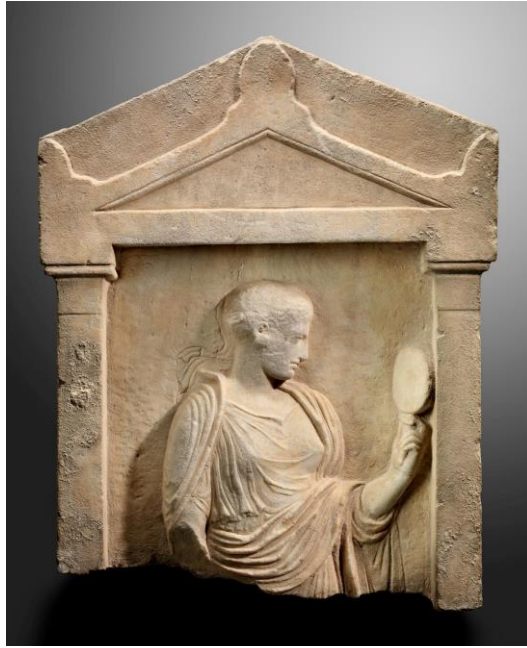
45. Attic Grave Marker ca. 350-325 BCE. Providence, RISD Museum 31.278.  
Standing maiden turn toward the left performing the *anakalypsis* gesture (RISD Museum 2023).



46. Grave Stele of Aristomache ca. 330-320 BCE. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts Boston 66.971.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription a siren, and sphinx. Standing maiden turned toward the right with a doll in her right hand (Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2023).



47. Grave Stele with Woman Holding Mirror ca. 420-380 BCE. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts Boston 4.16. *Naiskos* detail. Standing maiden turned toward the left with a mirror in her left hand (Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2023).



48. Grave Stele of Seated Girl ca. 325-320 BCE. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts Boston 1979.51. Seated maiden faced toward the right with a standing female servant to the right holding a *pyxis* (Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2023).



**49.** Grave Stele of a Young Woman ca. 355-345 BCE. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts Boston 1973.169.  
*Naiskos* detail with a siren. Standing maiden turned toward the right with a bird in her right hand (Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2023).



**50.** Grave Stele ca. 400-375 BCE. Avignon, Musée Calvet E-31.  
*Naiskos* detail. Standing maiden turned toward the right with a doll in her hands and a servant standing to the right looking up at the maiden with a bird in her hands (Margariti 2018, 110).



## Young Mother Stelae

**51.** Grave Stele of Archestrate ca. 370 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 722.

*Naiskos* detail. Seated mother facing the right with her right hand in a *pyxis* that is being held by a female servant. A small child is at her legs with a bird in her right hand extended towards her mother (Kaltsas 2002) (Margariti 2016, 92).



**52.** Grave Stele of Polyxene ca. 375-350 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 723.

*Naiskos* detail. Seated mother facing the left with a female servant behind her and her son at her legs with a ball in his hand looking up at his mother (Margariti 2016, 93).





**53.** Grave Stele of Selino ca. 430-420 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 901.  
Seated mother facing the left with a mirror in her left hand performing *dexiosis* with a woman who is holding her infant. The infant is facing the mother with a hand reaching towards her (Margariti 2016, 89-90).



**54.** Grave Stele of Phylonoe ca. 370 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 3790.  
*Naiskos* detail. Seated mother facing the right and a standing female servant holding an infant who is reaching out towards the mother (Margariti 2016, 88-89).



**55.** Grave Relief ca. 360-340 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 819.  
Seated mother facing the right holding a *pyxis* in her lap. Three female servants surround her. One servant is touching her face in grief and another servant is holding the mother's infant child (Margariti 2016, 90).



**56.** Grave Relief of Phrasikleia ca. 400-380 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 831.  
*Naiskos* detail. Seated mother facing the left with a female servant on the left side holding *pyxis*. A small child is at her mother's legs looking up towards her (Kaltsas 2002, 160).



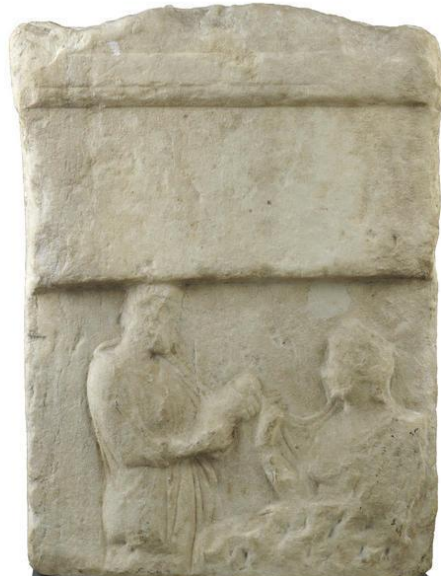
**57.** Grave Stele of Asia ca. 400 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 767.  
*Naiskos* detail. Seated mother facing the left her child's arm in affection who is outstretched towards his mother (Margariti 2016, 95) (University of Cambridge 2023).



**58.** Grave Stele of Kleariste ca. 350-330 BCE. Bauron, Archaeological Museum 92.  
Seated mother facing forward performing the *anakalypsis* gesture. A female servant is to the right holding an infant (Margariti 2016, 89-90).



**59.** Stele ca. 400 BCE. Cambridge, The Fitzwilliam Museum GR.18.1865.  
Seated mother turned to the right performing the *anakalypsis* gesture. A female servant is to the right holding an infant (The Fitzwilliam Museum 2023).



**60.** Grave Stele ca. 443-437 BCE. Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden I 903/2.1  
*Naiskos* detail. Seated mother turned toward the right with her arms reaching towards a child who is being held by a female servant. The child is reaching back towards the mother (Rijksmuseum Van Oudheden 2023).



**61.** Funeral Stele with a Seated Woman and Child ca. 440-400 BCE. Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum 23.176.

Seated mother turned toward the right with an infant in her arms. A second child is at her knees with a bird extended towards his mother (The Walters Art Museum 2023).



**62.** Stele of Timarete ca. 430-400 BCE. London, The British Museum 1947.0714.1.

*Naiskos* detail. Standing mother turned to the right extending a bird towards a child who is reaching up towards his mother (The British Museum n.d.).



**63.** Stele of Young Mother ca. 400 BCE. London, The British Museum 1894.0616.1.  
*Naiskos* detail. Seated mother turned to the right holding an object in her lap. A female servant on the right stands holding the mother's infant (The British Museum n.d.).



**64.** Female Figure Holding Swaddled Child ca. 400-350 BCE. Paris, Musée Rodin Co.00221.  
Fragment piece of a stele that shows a mothers hands holding an infant (Musée Rodin 2023).



**65.** Woman Dying in Childbirth ca. 330 BCE. Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums 1905.8.  
Seated mother turned to the right performing *dexiosis* with her father. Behind him is her mother and behind the seated woman is a female servant (Harvard Art Museum 2023).

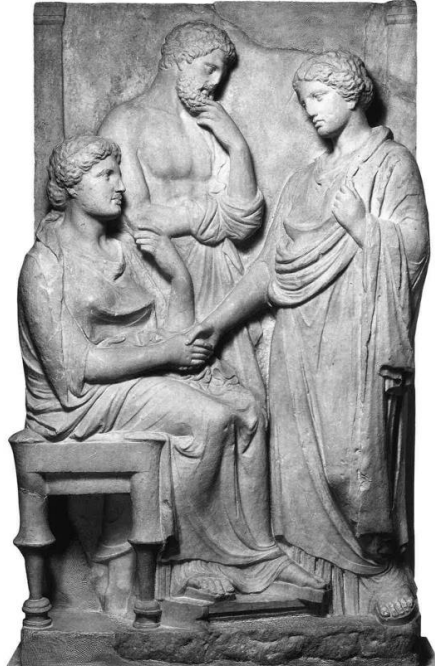


**66.** Marble Stele of a Woman ca. 375-350 BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 65.11.11.  
*Naiskos* detail with two sphinx and a siren. Seated mother turned to the left performing *dexiosis* with a female figure. Behind the pair is a servant and at the knees of the mother is a child with their right hand reaching towards the mother and their left hand holding a bird (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.).



## Matron Stelae

**67.** Grave Stele ca. 375-350 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 717.  
Seated matron turned to the left performing *dexiosis* with her daughter. Behind the pair is her husband (Kaltsas 2002, 185).



**68.** Grave Stele of Damasistrate ca. 340-320 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 743.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Seated matron turned to the left performing *dexiosis* with her husband. Behind the pair is their daughter and behind the chair is a female servant (University of Cambridge 2023).





**69.** Grave Stele of Ampharete ca. 430-420 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum P 695/I 221. *Naiskos* detail. Seated matron turned to the left looking down and holding her grandchild in her left arm and a bird in her right hand (Margariti 2016).



**70.** Grave Stele of Philino ca. 340 BCE. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 832. Seated matron turned to the left performing *dexiosis* with her daughter. Behind the pair is the father figure and behind the seated matron is a female servant (Margariti 2019, 139-141).



71. Fragments of the Marble Stele of a Woman Holding a Baby ca. 400-375 BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 52.11.3.

Seated matron turned to the left performing *anakalypsis* with a grandchild in her lap (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.).



72. Marble Stele of Archagora ca. 380-340 BCE. London, The British Museum 1911.1010.1.  
*Naiskos* detail. Seated matron turned to the right performing *dexiosis* with her husband. Behind the pair is their daughter (The British Museum n.d.).



73. Marble Stele with Family ca. 375-350 BCE. London, The British Museum 1910.0712.1.  
*Naiskos* detail with inscription. Seated matron turned to the right performing *dexiosis* with her daughter. Behind the pair is her husband (The British Museum n.d.).



74. Grave Stele of Krinyllaca. 350-300 BCE. Philadelphia, Penn Museum MS5470.  
Seated matron turned to the right performing *dexiosis* with her husband. Behind the pair is a male figure likely her son (Penn Museum 2023).



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