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Greek women, modern and ancient:

From fieldwork on cults connected with the female sphere towards a deconstruction of male ideologies, modern and ancient

Συγγραφέας - Author: Eny Johanne Håland

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Abstract:

Based on studies in ancient Greek sources, mainly produced by men, combined with results from fieldwork carried out on contemporary Greek religious festivals, a comparison is made with similar ancient festivals through an analysis of the fertility-cult, which is important in the festivals. This is a useful way to try to consider the female part of society, since women are the central performers of the actual cult that plays an important role within the official male value-system. This is the value-system, which the festivals and the society that they reflect, traditionally have been considered from. The absence of the female value-system leaves previous analyses one-sided and incomplete. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis requires the female point of view to be included. Hence, the paper argues for the importance of changing our approach when working with ancient culture. Taking account of the female sphere, which still exists in Greece, provides us with a basis for considering the female part of society. But, by so doing, the official male perspective, which is similar to the Western male perspective generally applied within Greek studies, has to be deconstructed. By arguing for the importance of *not* using the general male model when presenting Greek women, the article thus tries to deconstruct the male ideologies “from within”.

Keywords: modern Greece, ancient Greece, women, gender, gendered value-systems, religious festivals, fertility-cult, rituals

Περίληψη

Με βάση τις μελέτες των αρχαίων ελληνικών πηγών που παράγονται κυρίως από άνδρες, σε συνδυασμό με τα αποτελέσματα της επιτόπιας έρευνας των σύγχρονων ελληνικών θρησκευτικών εορτών, γίνεται σύγκριση με παρόμοιες αρχαίες εορτές μέσα από μια ανάλυση της λατρείας της γονιμότητας, σημαντικό στοιχείο των εορτών αυτών. Είναι ένας χρήσιμος τρόπος εξέτασης του γυναικείου ρόλου στην κοινωνία, δεδομένου ότι οι γυναίκες είναι οι βασικοί εκτελεστές της σημερινής λατρείας που διαδραματίζει σημαντικό ρόλο στο πλαίσιο του επίσημου ανδρικού συστήματος αξιών. Αυτό είναι το σύστημα αξιών, το οποίο οι εορτές και η κοινωνία αντανακλούν,



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και μέσα από το οποίο θα γίνει η ανάλυση του θέματος. Η απουσία του γυναικείου συστήματος αξιών αφήνει κάποιες προηγούμενες αναλύσεις ελλιπείς και μονόπλευρες. Ως εκ τούτου, μια ολοκληρωμένη ανάλυση απαιτεί να συμπεριληφθεί και η γυναικεία άποψη. Η μελέτη αυτή έχει ως στόχο την σημασία αλλαγής προσέγγισης όσων ασχολούνται με τον αρχαίο πολιτισμό. Λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τη γυναικεία σφαίρα, η οποία εξακολουθεί να υπάρχει στην Ελλάδα, θεωρούμε ότι μας παρέχει μια βάση για την εξέταση του γυναικείου ρόλου στην κοινωνία. Αλλά με τον τρόπο αυτό, η επίσημη ανδρική σκοπιά, η οποία είναι παρόμοια με τη Δυτική ανδρική σκοπιά πρέπει να αποδομηθεί. Με επιχείρημα τη σημασία του να μην χρησιμοποιείται το γενικό ανδρικό πρότυπο για την παρουσίαση της γυναικείας άποψης, το άρθρο προσπαθεί να αποδομήσει τις ανδρικές ιδεολογίες «από μέσα».

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Σύγχρονη Ελλάδα, αρχαία Ελλάδα, γυναίκες, φύλο, έμφυλα συστήματα αξιών, θρησκευτικές εορτές, τελετές και λατρείες γονιμότητας.



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Introduction

Many studies have been occupied with women and the body in ancient Greece. Most researchers claim that women were unfree and dominated by men. The female body was “appropriated” by male philosophers. Further, Ancient Athenian Democracy was based on the appropriation of the female combined with the subjugation of women. The male control of woman was the cornerstone, the social and cultural prerequisite for the construction of civilization, as presented in Aeschylus’, the *Orestia*, a trilogy, which culminated in a “victory of the patriarchal”, according to M. Arthur.¹ Even if women were conducting important religious festivals and rituals, most researchers claim that their activities were performed under male dominance, since women were circumscribed and constrained by domesticity. Particularly from the archaic period, their religious rituals were curbed.²

The following article argues that these statements from Western female scholars need to be nuanced. It is important to change our approach when working with ancient culture. This may be done, by using a comparative anthropological approach. The article demonstrates how this may be concretised by conducting fieldwork on religious festivals in present-day’s Greece. They are compared with similar ancient festivals through an analysis of the fertility-cult, which is important in the festivals. Based on the importance of this cult, the article tries to consider the female part of society, since women are the central performers of the actual cult which is of focal importance within the official and male value-system, a value-system which the festivals and the society that they reflect, traditionally have been considered from, and which therefore has to be supplied by a female point of view. By taking account of the so-called female sphere, which still exists in the Mediterranean society generally and in Greece particularly, we may also learn a useful way to try to consider the female part of society. But, by so doing the official male perspective, which is very similar to the Western male perspective generally applied within Greek studies, has to be deconstructed.³

¹ Arthur 1977 and 1994; Zeitlin 1984; Loraux 1989; duBois 1988.

² Holst-Warhaft 1992; Pomeroy 1995 and 1998: 68-72.

³ However, the limited space does not permit a detailed demonstration. The following argument is therefore only a very roughly suggestion. The article is based on a paper presented at the conference, *Religion on the Borders: New Challenges in the Academic Study of Religion*, at Södertörn University College (Stockholm, Sweden) April 2007. An earlier and somewhat different version was presented at the seminar *Gender, religion and change in an historical perspective: Women and Religion in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region*, University of Bergen, Norway, 2001. A more extended version was presented at the Centre for Women and Gender Research, University of Bergen, 1999. The topic for the lectures was, *Gender and Power*. Since 1983, I have had several periods of fieldwork in the Mediterranean, mainly in Greece and Italy where I have also been conducting research on religious



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Women and their female space

In the so-called patriarchal Mediterranean society, women are associated with practical religion. Both fertility-cult, healing and death-cult are deeply connected with the domestic sphere, where women are the dominating power. “The female sphere” is important when studying such personal phenomena in life as ideologies and mentalities, represented by religion, behaviour, values, customs, faith, worship and popular beliefs. We discover that what we usually call “macro-“ and “micro-society”, i.e. the “public” and “domestic spheres”, in fact have different meanings to what is generally assumed. In Greece, we do not find the “little” society or “only the family” at home; rather, this is where we meet the “great” society. Therefore, it is important to search out to what extent the official ideology is dependent on these cults, and thereby the female sphere to manifest itself.

festivals since 1987, cf. Håland 1990, 2007. There, the topics discussed in the following article also are examined further. The problems and fruitfulness of working with anthropological comparative approaches (such as using material from modern Mediterranean and particularly Greek civilization as models) to ancient society are also discussed in my dissertation, cf. further Brumfield 1981; Winkler 1990; Holst-Warhaft 1992 and Moxnes 1997. But, see Pomeroy 1998 for a more cautious view, discussed in Håland 1999. For *honour and shame* (see infra) and the unity of the Mediterranean, cf. Peristiany 1966; Gilmore 1987. Even if Herzfeld 1992 is critical to the term “Mediterranean”, he has made Greece a centerpiece of Mediterranean studies. For the most recent debates about Mediterranean Studies as a discipline, see Horden and Purcell 2000; Harris 2005; Håland 2008. Although Dillon 2002, gives a good account of women’s importance within Greek religion, he has a rather narrow view of fertility-rituals and their meanings, the same view is found in Goff 2004; Tzanetou 2007, cf. Håland 2007: ch. 6 for a more comprehensive view and definition based on modern cultural anthropological theories, cf. for example Jacobson-Widding/van Beek 1990. The importance of fertility-rituals in rural communities in general and ancient societies in particular, will also be underscored through this article, see also for example Håland 2005.



The “male sphere” is usually connected with the official world, and the female with the domestic world, but as already stated, this does not imply that the female sphere is marginal and the



Fig. 1: “Female sphere” in public space: the graveyard, a space controlled by women.

other not, as some researchers have claimed.⁴ Marginalization is a spatial metaphor and depends on where you are standing. This means that the centre in a Greek village can be both the central village square, “the man’s world” (cf. Ar. *Eccl.* 154 f. for a parallel), and the kitchen hearth or courtyard, important spaces that women control. When studying Greek village life, anthropologists have considered the two spheres of male and female importance in terms of “public” and “private”, home and outside home, but there are also public spaces where women dominate, one of these is the cemetery (Fig. 1). So, when working with this material, one realizes that the division in a male and female sphere in Greek society may, under certain circumstances, be blurred. In reality, the world of the domestic and familial or the world of women, i.e. the female sphere, is covering a more extended area and has greater power than generally assumed.

Generally, Greek women and their life have been analysed from a Western (male) standard. Based on these theories, both ancient and modern Greek women have been categorized as unfree, dependent, secluded and not living a worthy life. Accounts of women written by men, and many academic women, may portray them as passive or subservient. But, if the goal is to conduct

⁴ For example Danforth 1982, also cited by Pomeroy 1998. The main problem with his analysis is that he sees the Greek world from the male sphere, i.e. a modern counterpart of ancient male writers? Nevertheless, they were reared in the female sphere and have by definition childhood experiences (even if these often are distorted in a grown up male context, where social identity among men is important, cf. Gilmore 1987; McAuslan/Walcot 1996) Danforth does not have. According to Seremetakis 1991 the problems with Danforth’s analysis derives from his reading of rural Greek death-rites, a reading which relies on Greek Orthodox liturgy. I agree, but the problem with his reading is also that he as a male ethnographer has no possibility to carry out fieldwork *in* the female sphere.



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research from the female sphere in Greece, the picture may change, since Greek women may have other values.⁵ In this way, we may get new perspectives on our ancient texts as well.

In Greece, women are connected with birth, nurturance and the care for the dead; they are feeding and nourishing mothers, and by these encompassing activities they manage and control the fundamental course of life. Many symbols and rituals in the festivals illustrate this. These symbols and rituals are usually regarded as, and are female “domains”. By analysing some of their relevant aspects, the hope is to grasp further into the meaning and importance of the mentioned customs and values related to fundamental principles, within the “ideological entirety” a festival often is perceived as, as well as male texts, since their interest and theme is the male ideology.

Women in Greece have a double consciousness about their own existence and about men’s representations of it. Therefore, it is of focal importance to conduct fieldwork among women and men when working with ancient sources, since they with very few exceptions are written by men, and the goal is to represent a whole and not only a limping and partial society.

⁵ Even if Seremetakis 1991 has carried out valuable fieldwork in the female sphere (cf. n.4 supra), one may claim that she does not focus adequately on women’s values, as she is still influenced by Western male ideological values, and read her material from a male perspective (this also relates to Seremetakis 1993: 22 f.n.17, cf. 24n.22 discussed in Håland 2007: 462), cf. therefore Alexiou 2002, particularly 14 f.



From the cyclical festivals of the agricultural calendar to fertility-cult

The festival is an important means of communication, an offering or a gift, most often dedicated to a deceased guardian of society, alone or together with a god (dess), for instance to the modern *Panagia* (the Virgin Mary, cf. Fig. 2) or to the ancient goddesses, Demeter (Plut. *Mor.* 378e-f69, cf. *HHD.* 273 f.), Athena (*Il.* 2.546-551) or Aphrodite.⁶ In the festivals, we find fertility- and death-cult as well as healing (cf. also Håland 2005 and 2006a).



Fig. 2: During the festival celebrating the Dormition of the Panagia on Tinos, on 15 August, her miraculous icon (image) of the Annunciation is carried in procession, and also over the sick and women wanting to conceive.

The analysis of the fertility-cult demonstrates how fertility is connected to the deceased and the powers in the subterranean world where life begins, according to the cyclical symbolism, which is central in Greek culture. The deceased mediator also receives a blood sacrifice, the ritual slaughter of an animal, for example an ox- or a lamb, which afterwards is consumed as a communal meal by the participants of the festival. The communication is presented on several levels. The dead receives the offering in order to provide for the fertility of the society through the communication with stronger powers, first and foremost, Mother Earth. Her importance parallels the woman's who is the central performer of the cults, which are important in the festivals, because they are connected to the female sphere. The Greeks conceive the Earth as a woman's body and the agricultural year as a woman's life. The Earth is also seen as the female sex organ. But, the Earth represents only one of the two parts of the nature, who has to be invoked to ensure the harvest. Accordingly, rain-magic dedicated to a heavenly god is a generally theme in the festivals, particularly around the most

⁶ Cf. Phot. s.v. *Ἀδώνια*; Sappho. *Fr.* 103, 136, 25; Theoc. *Id.* 15. The sources and the relation between Adonis and Aphrodite are discussed at length in Håland 2007: ch. 5 f. Cf. Atallah 1966; Motte 1973. Concerning *Panagia*, i.e. the “All-Holy one”, she is considered the most important intercessor and saint in the Greek tradition which emphasizes her maternal role as the Mother of God, rather than her Virginity. There are further theological differences in the way in which Mary is viewed in the Orthodox and Catholic churches. In the Orthodox church, Mary is not seen as immaculately conceived and bodily assumed into heaven. Accordingly, the Orthodox Church celebrates her Dormition, rather than her Assumption, and she “does not become a semi-deified human as in Catholicism, see Dubisch 1995: 236, cf. also Economides 1986; Håland 2007 and 2008: 46; Alexiou 2002.



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important periods during the agricultural year: sowing (autumn) and sprouting (spring). From this fact follows the significance of the Sacred Marriage, *hieros gamos*, also illustrated by the union of Mother Earth with her son, the corn-seed, to make the ground fertile.

The fertility-cult is connected with important life-cycle passages, since the festivals are celebrated at important passages of the agricultural cycle, and the agricultural year is represented in terms of the life of a Mother Goddess. All the religious festivals are connected with an important passage in the cycle of nature and a passage in the life-cycle of a divine person. Today, the Panagia is important. In ancient Greece it was particularly manifested through the *Homeric Hymn* dedicated to the Corn Mother, *Demeter*.

The cyclical perspective is central in connection with the festivals of the agricultural year. After harvest and the threshing of the grain, the dead period of the grains' cycle (cf. Bourdieu 1980) starts in August. At the end of the dog days, by the end of the month, the modern festival dedicated to the Dormition of the Panagia marks a turning point towards autumn, when the transitional period towards the “productive part” of the agricultural year is about to begin again. Roughly at the same time, the ancient Panathenaia dedicated to the goddess Athena, was celebrated by the end of the first month of the official Athenian year.⁷ The other festivals deal with other important passages, as the sowing when Panagia's Presentation in the Temple is celebrated, and marks the beginning of the winter-period as the Thesmophoria did in ancient Greece. Now, the “female”, wet and fertile period in the agricultural year's cycle replaces the male period, because the woman is looked upon as the productive partner in a relationship in the Mediterranean area (cf. Bourdieu 1980; Håland 2007). The mid-winter-festivals are celebrated around solstice and the first sprouting of the grains. The end of winter or the birth of spring is celebrated around spring equinox, following are summer solstice, the “first-fruit”. The official ideological rituals are adapted to the agricultural calendar.

⁷ The Corn Mother, *Demeter*, whose festivals were celebrated throughout the ritual year (particularly before sowing in October), is generally seen as the fertility goddess par excellence, but olive is also important in the Greek/Mediterranean culture, cf. Håland 2006a and b, 2007.



The “annual calendar”/ “cyclical model” of the Kabyles and its relation to the Greek context

Pierre Bourdieu (1980) created a “synoptic diagram of pertinent oppositions” as a model to help him understand the Kabyles of North-Africa. This Mediterranean cultural pattern, may be used as well on Greek material. The male-female division, which he presented in an earlier study (1966), is a structured system of gendered classification, where the elements of the male-female division, such as male and dry, female and wet, are inserted in layers.⁸ The calendar presents the agricultural year, and the relations between humans and nature. It also has importance for understanding the male ideal gendered “*honour and shame*”-dichotomy vis-à-vis the actual gendered relations in society. The model embodies the human and agricultural life-cycles related to gender, the very cosmos. The material on which Bourdieu has based his presentation, parallels many of the scattered sources we have from ancient Greek men who mention the agricultural calendar, festivals and the two sexes in the ancient world. Hesiod’s (*Op.* 383-617) presentation of the agricultural calendar tells, in his own way, when the year starts and ends, and the most important in the cyclical calendar is what people do during the year and when they do it, of particular importance are sowing and harvest, and where other sources are more explicit (*Hp. Vict.* 27.1-6; *Arist. Pr.* 4.879a26-35), he also indicates that the wet (cf. *Op.* 519-525) woman tackles the warm and dry season better than men (*Op.* 582-596, cf. *Sc.*393-400 for the season). Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 8.1160a19-30) tells when people celebrate festivals. He connects the wet, earthly or physical part of the human couple, the woman, with the nature and the wet, and men with thought, mind, light, fire and the dry.⁹ We meet the same polar conception of the female’s and male’s association with the wet and dry, inside and outside, body/womb/earth/darkness and atmosphere/fire/light/heaven as Bourdieu presented from his researches on the Kabyles.

Bourdieu as a man, presents a man’s analysis of men’s historical paths, and his approach is similar to the presentations given by the ancient male writers. However, if we study the calendar in combination with focal features in the ancient Athenian and the modern Greek festival calendars from a non-androcentric perspective, the result will differ from Bourdieu’s. There is only a male dominance, as he claims (1980, 1990, 1998), if we read the calendar from a dominant male focus. This will automatically be reproduced, if we only base our research on the male ideological sphere

⁸ Bourdieu 1966: 222, 1980: 354, cf. 1998: 17, also for the following. See also 1990. For discussions of the similarities of modern and ancient Mediterranean cultural patterns and social values, see Håland 2007; Esler 1994.

⁹ *Arist. GA.* 765a35-765b26, see also 716a2-24, 728a19-22, 766a17-30, 783b26-784a12, *Metaph.* 1.5,986a23 ff., cf. *Plut. Mor.* 370e-f. For more sources and a comprehensive discussion, see Håland 2007: ch. 6, cf. also 2006a.



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and value-system. Many scholars working with ancient society present similar values, for example M. Detienne (1989) and F. Zeitlin (1984, cf. supra and infra). On the other hand we can learn that what seemed peripheral from the male sphere becomes the centre, if we look from the female sphere (cf. supra and see Håland 2007a, 2008 for presentation and discussion). We also find new, or female, values. And how do we look from the female sphere? What is the process? By conducting fieldwork in the modern female and male spheres and compare our findings with ancient sources, when simultaneously trying to see the material from the values of Greek women, which are similar to the few sources we possess from ancient women and also often found between the lines or distorted in the male statements, for example Hesiod, Aeschylus and Plutarch.¹⁰ So, by taking account of both spheres, we realize that they are complementary to each other and we can create a fuller picture of human experience. Accordingly, the one-sided analysis Bourdieu presents of the diagram must be read from another approach, from a *chthonic* perspective, i.e. from the bottom, below, or inside, thus emphasizing the importance of the wet and “female” part of the agricultural year – the gestation period.

From the honour of masculinity toward a poetics of womanhood, or a chthonic perspective

When reading the works written by most of the Western scholars describing ancient Greek women, I recall the downtrodden and reclusive female creatures presented by several ethnographers. Earlier male and often female ethnographers’ writings on the Mediterranean used to emphasize negative aspects of women because they based their analysis on the androcentric ideology of “honour and shame” which are conventional male values, centred around cultural conceptions of gender and sexuality. Their male informants presented them to an ideal, which is strikingly similar to the ideal found in ancient sources written by men.¹¹ Nevertheless, because of

¹⁰ That is why their view is ambiguous, for example, when Plutarch severely criticizes women at the cemetery, etc. we might understand what was going on, and what the women thought about the process, since similar situations have gone on until modern times, see Håland 2006b, 2008. See also infra. Although the philosopher, biographer, Delphian priest and famous moralist, Plutarch (ca. 50-120 CE), lived in the Roman period, he was, of course, Greek, and represents both Greek culture and the Graeco-Roman world, cf. Håland 2007, forthcoming. Concerning local differences between for example Spartan, Athenian and Roman societies, they will not be discussed here since, in general, they all represent the Mediterranean world. My point is that, instead of reading the ancient sources from a North-European perspective, it is more fruitful to use anthropological results comparatively while reading the sources since there are similarities of cultural patterns and social values found in the same geographical area from Portugal in the west to Iraq in the east see Håland 2007, 2008 for discussion. Cf. also, for example, Alexiou 2002 for a similar view.

¹¹ Cf. ancient male values as in the statements of archaic legislators, the authors of the tragedies, other authors as Homer, Hesiod, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch and late-antique Christian writers, such as John Chrysostom (cf. infra), with the works of ethnographers (Campbell 1964; Peristiany 1966 and 1966a; Machin 1983). They have been used by several scholars working with ancient women, such as Walcot 1970, 1999. But, by combining ancient and modern male ideological statements presenting extremely negative bias, the result becomes one-sided. Cf. Håland 2007, for an extensive discussion.



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the traditional separation between female and male spheres in the area, this means that they were not very qualified to inform us about women. With few exceptions, they were not very interested in women’s tasks either, and what they eventually said was often coloured with uncertainty or disdain, most often resulting from ignorance. Therefore, it is important to regard our case from another perspective to try to counteract this history of contempt. It may also be possible to dissolve some of the paradoxes and ambiguities in the male-produced texts.

While carrying out fieldwork among women, and considering their own value-system, the picture may change. Even if Greek women may subscribe to the male ideological “honour and shame” model, they have their own values in addition to, or running contrary to the male view, depending of how the male view suits their own thinking. That women experience the world differently from men is difficult to discern from ancient male-produced sources. Women also have female knowledge. Based on the values of modern Greek women, it may be called *a poetics of womanhood*, and the point is how women can present public performances of *being good at being a woman*,¹² for example when performing fertility-rituals in agricultural or procreation contexts, using magic such as in healing contexts, nursing children, performing death-rituals. Women we meet in modern Greece are often strong personalities and active participants in social life. They are often stronger and more assured than women we know from our own societies, and far from the suppressed, downtrodden and reclusive creatures presented by several ethnographers. They run their households with a firm hand, and exhibit self-confidence. The topics analysed from the festivals: the importance of fertility-cult, and thus the female body, motherhood, sexuality, women’s general activities in the religious sphere, are important means of manifesting “a poetics of womanhood”, according to which the essential thing is to “be good at being a woman” in Greece. These topics have relevance to the ancient material when we try to change our approach.

The female body provides a significant source for social symbolism: It plays an important role in the “poetics of womanhood”, because bodies have social meanings that may be used in public performances. In Greece, the female body both creates and represents the family and social relations in a variety of contexts. By wearing black mourning clothes when a family member dies, women become highly visible symbols of mourning, hence of the kinship relations between the deceased and the living. This importance of the women’s black mourning clothes is stated in ancient traditional sources from Homer (*Il.* 24.93), but is criticized by Plutarch (*Mor.* 608f4). Complaints

¹² Dubisch1995. Her presentation is similar to my own and other female researchers’ (Seremetakis 1991; Abu-Lughod 1988) fieldwork experiences among women.



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about suffering are especially expressed by women lamenting their dead. They also suffer in pilgrimage. But in relation to problems of everyday life, we meet the same complaints, since they call attention to what they must endure in order to carry out their roles as wives and mothers. All the examples are parts of the available “cultural material” upon which women may draw for the creation of “the poetics of womanhood”. Suffering as expressed through verbal complaint, the body, ritual actions, is an expression of social identity among women. This is illustrated by Sappho (*Fr.* 103) when saying: “The delicate Adonis is dying, Cythera; what can we do? Beat your breasts, maidens, and rend your garments.”

The idiom of suffering is particularly important in the context of women’s roles. For many women, the points of both tension and fulfilment centre around motherhood and familial responsibilities. For women, especially the body plays an important role in these expressions of suffering, whether it is through the wearing of black mourning clothes, or the numerous expressions of the ways women suffer in the process of bodily reproduction. In modern Greece, we meet the importance of *ponō*, suffering or feeling pain as one of the important ways of expressing the “poetics of womanhood”. In ancient society, *ponos* described motherly suffering generally, and for Plutarch (*Mor.* 496d-e, cf. 771b), and Sappho (*Fr.* 42, cf. 28, 118b). The same word signifies a woman in labour. In contemporary Greece, a woman makes a public performance when crawling on her knees to the church with a sick child on her back in the hope of healing, but the action takes validity through the sacrifice and suffering of the self on behalf of others (Fig. 3). Through the maternal role, the mother’s own body is constantly offered as a sacrifice, and this sacrifice may be dramatized in women’s pilgrimage to the shrine dedicated to the Annunciation of the Panagia on the Aegean island of Tinos.



Fig. 3: A mother crawling on her knees to the church dedicated to the Panagia on Tinos with a sick child on her back in the hope of healing.



It is important to understand the cultural meaning of emotion (*Il.* 22.33-90; Sappho. *Fr.* 83), which is different from the Western ideological focus on suppressing and hiding emotions and suffering. In Greece, a suffering mother may therefore present public performances in “being good at being a woman”. Her “public” audience most often is other women, who share her “public” space, interests and value-system, and therefore are interested in competing her performance in “being good at being a woman”, as in other respects, when they display, at home or publicly on “their tombs” at the memorials at the cemetery, when displaying their cooking abilities through the sumptuous cakes offered (cf. Fig. 4). They may be compared with the selected women who baked the offering cakes at the Panathenaia. Women seek to outdo each other in “being good at being a woman”. Their “public” audience, competitors and most critical commentators are other women who share the same value-system and interests. We meet the same



Fig. 4: Women and children rushing to the cemetery with sweets and cakes, in the village of Olympos on the island of Karpathos.

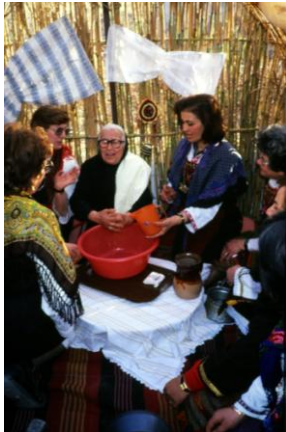


Fig. 5: Women celebrating the midwife, Babo (Agia/Saint Domenika), in the village of Monokklēsia, Northern Greece. By washing Babo’s hands, each woman anticipates the day when the midwife will assist her in childbirth.

picture in ancient society when women dedicated offerings on tombs, displayed their clothes and other objects competitively and publicly (Plut. *Sol.* 21.4 f., *Mor.* 142c30; *SIG*³1218). Their desired audience were not men, but other women who shared their values. Ancient women going on pilgrimage (Plut. *Mor.* 253f, 953c-d), celebrating the female festival called the Thesmophoria (*Mor.* 378e69) and other festivals, such as the Adōnia (Theoc. *Id.* 15; Men. *Sam.* 35-50; Plut. *Alc.* 18.2 f., *Nic.* 13.5-7) were parallels to the modern women going to Tinos during the Dormition of the Panagia or celebrating the midwife, Babo (Agia/Saint Domenika), in the village of Monokklēsia in Northern Greece. By washing Babo’s hands, each woman anticipates the day when the midwife will assist her in childbirth (Fig. 5). In the festival dedicated to Babo, sexual objects and obscenities are of greatest importance, thus paralleling ancient similar

festivals in which women took the leading roles.

A nursing mother demonstrates particularly how to “be good at being a woman”, both in modern and ancient Greece, and she nurses both in life and death.¹³ Mothers are nursing and

¹³ Håland 2007: ch. 4 and 6 (also for the following); Rowlandson 1998: pls. 11 and 14, cf. Plut. *Mor.* 375c; *Il.* 22.79-83.



feeding in public in a society where they according to the male ideology of “honour and shame” have to cover their body, which is not always the case either now or in ancient Greece.

There is a female world-view and language, which differs from men’s (Håland 2006b). Traditionally women have used weaving to tell stories, such as Helena (*Il.* 3.125-128) and Penelope (*Od.* 1.356-358; *ARV*² 1300,2). The rituals surrounding the loom are parallels to those of the sexual act (marriage), birth, childrearing, and death, since it is the life-cycle which is represented. We meet a world-frame constituted by women within an ostensibly male-dominated society (cf. Messick 1987). Through women’s laments (Fig. 6), festivals (Fig. 5) and daily life we find a “female universe”, where female activities exclude men, where the frame of reference is not their male relatives’, but rules and criteria established within this female universe.



Fig. 6: Lamenting women in front of the Epitaphios (Christ’s funeral), Good Friday in the church of Olympos.

The importance of women’s central roles does not necessarily imply that women are official priestesses. Some ancient women could hold office as priestesses, but as already stated, the point is the importance of changing our perspective and value-system.¹⁴ When dealing with women and religion, we do not necessarily have to refer to priestesses, women do more than that, for example in the home and at the cemetery where they are the performers of the laments, tend the graves and conduct the memorials for the dead. We may get an understanding of the importance of the roles in ancient society through the comparison with modern festivals, where women perform important rituals, for example through the crawling which is important at Tinos to assure the well-being of the family. But also through the other rituals which women only can carry out. Women are still taking care of the cult of the family, both in the home and in connection with the rituals performed at the cemetery and in the church before and after the ceremonies of the priests. By focussing on the meaning of these rituals, we change focus from a man’s world to a woman’s world, considering values and cults, which are important to women, for example fertility-cult.¹⁵ In a broader perspective we realize that this cult also has importance for the official ideology.

¹⁴ Accordingly, this article does not try to find out if and eventually how many ancient women participated at *symposia*, were educated, participated in the official male political sphere, as for example Blomqvist 1995 does, see also Connelly 2007. Cf. Håland: 2007: ch. 6 for discussion.

¹⁵ For women and fertility, see Schol. Luc. *Dial. Meret.* 2.1, Rabe 1906: 275.23-276.28, cf. Plut. *Mor.* 378d-f69, see also 141b-c23; Bourdieu 1980: 359; Papamichael 1975: 78, cf. 54.



One may question the statement that “women participating at festivals are not necessarily representatives for women’s daily life situation”. The reason is that it does not seem that the festival is “a change of air” for women generally confined to their own sphere within the “private” houses, living a totally secluded life, as some researchers have claimed. On the contrary, it seems that their daily life situation is intensified during the festivals. Women are the guardians of their family’s spiritual health, given the role of prayers and vows in healing and protection. Accordingly, modern women visit the cemetery nearly every day, they light the oil lamp or candle in front of the family *icons* (images), and thus, parallel ancient women also taking care of the household cult. The relations with the divine powers still are everyday activities. Religion and the rituals represented in the festivals and in connection with the life-cycle passages are an “overdose”/intensification of the rituals performed in daily life.¹⁶ Today, this is illustrated by the mother calling her daughter home in the late afternoon, and thus loudly and publicly proclaiming what may be a Greek woman’s most significant status, that of a mother. Women are also responsible for the general well-being of their families. During the festivals, their collective ritual performances are important to ensure the food for the community.

From fertility-cult towards an alternative woman- and gender research

Earlier writings on ancient Greek culture have focussed their attention on the importance of the phallus (Keuls 1993). On the other hand, the female sex organ is also important to secure the continuity of society through the reproduction, for example as symbolic votive offerings dedicated to the sanctuaries of Mother Goddesses, and its apotropaic aspect for coping with war and to ward off other dangers. Greek mythology is haunted by the importance of the female body and the female sex organ, as when Zeus needs help from his mother to vanquish his father, and later “swallows” the goddess Metis to be almighty, and subsequently gives birth to Athena from his own head. But, Athena also has another birthplace, at Lake Tritonis. This signifies that she is born from or at a meadow. A meadow (i.e. *leimōn*) symbolizes the female sex organ, and represents a parallel to the cult of the phallus.¹⁷ Several tales tell about brave women exposing their private parts to ward off enemies (Plut. *Mor.* 246a, 248b), and those who by other means (“cunning”, cf. Plut. *Thes.* 19.1)

¹⁶ To regard the modern cult as a “protesting-culture”, is an analysis conform with Herzfeld’s (1991) “protest-theory”, cf. also Keuls’ (1993) “countermovement”. Their analyses neglect the purpose of presenting society from another perspective than usually employed, the Greek woman’s.

¹⁷ For meadow/marsh symbolizing the female sex organ, Motte 1973.



solve crises in society, like a typical mother at home. This eventual “vulva-envy” of woman’s properties does not necessarily contradict that we most often meet a sort of “vulva-fear”, clearly symbolized by the importance of the head of Medusa, i.e. the apotropaic importance of the female sex organ on the walls of the Athenian Acropolis (Paus. 1.21,3) to keep the enemy away.¹⁸ Herakles, the super-hero, also had a Medusa on his shield. In addition, Athena (with her Medusa and snakes) was always in the background. One way of explaining what may seem to be a contradiction is the uncertainty, curiosity but also fear men have in front of the general invisibility around the female genital. It becomes an entity hidden for the male culture. In this mysterious cave, a place that is inaccessible to man’s sight, life emerges. Accordingly, the enemy are frightened by the life they want to conquer.

We find a physical, ritual counterpart to the secret place of women, from which their fertility secrets derive, in the underground “rooms” (*megara*), the entrances to the womb of the earth, which are central in several particularly Demetrian festivals, but also in rituals dedicated to other Mother Goddesses, such as Aphrodite. There is a correspondence between these grottos and a woman’s sex organ. Women may be regarded as possessing the “secret” of fertility, as they “know how” to give birth, a process which man inevitably finds mysterious, because he cannot experience it. Feminine anatomy is more “secret” than masculine. That women have knowledge of secrets derives from their anatomy, from the fact that they have a “secret place”, the womb, where miraculous things goes on, and of course it is assumed that women understand these miraculous events better than do men. This idea is still found in the cliché that “a woman always knows”, or “woman’s intuition”.

The female body symbolizes everything connected with conception, nourishment and birth. It is assumed as a container, but also as a microcosm. The so-called “standard Greek representation of fertility” (Pl. *Menex.* 238a), puts fertility in the hands of woman or in her womb, according to the logic behind the “*Life-giving Spring*” (i.e. *Zōodochos Pēgē*), also one of Panagia’s attributes. In antiquity, the term *pēgē* (spring/source) was used for goddesses as Hera and Magna Mater. Nevertheless, most female researchers have regarded the association between woman, jar or terracotta vessels, womb and the earth in ancient sources written by men, for example in Aeschylus (*Eum.* 658-666); Plato (*Ti.* 49a, 51a); Aristotle (*GA.* 716a6-24, cf. 765b10-26, 727b31-34) and Plutarch (*Mor.* 366a, cf. 372e-f, 373f, 374b, 368b-d), as demonstrations of male dominance. The assertions about the central role of man in the procreation process, particularly the statement of

¹⁸ Cf. also Slater 1992 as a complement to the argument about the “head of Medusa”.



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Apollo in the *Eumenides* (Aesch. *Eum.* 658-666), have been labelled the “victory of patriarchy”.¹⁹ This may be seen from a new perspective, while compared with the importance of the womb in Greek culture.

In modern Greece, we have the possibility to discern women’s sayings from men’s, and we learn that coming from the same womb, is as important among women as belonging to the same blood amongst men, a clear reference to the fact that only motherhood is publicly verifiable (du Boulay 1984, cf. also Alexakēs 2005). Perhaps this view found among modern Greek women is more conform with the reasoning of ancient women than the negative or ambiguous view we get from their male contemporaries, a view which naturally has been passed down by men. From this perspective, many sources get new actuality, especially when one may find similar meanings between the lines as the ones modern society presents through the importance of the wombs, the association between woman and the “inside”. In other words, there were several complementary hypothesis of impregnation/fertilization in ancient society.²⁰ That the ancient male writers were concerned with the importance of the womb and its relation to the female body, is indicated by all the explanations of womb and menstruation, or the factors which distinguish women from men, i.e. the way they indicate the female sex.²¹ *Mētrā*, womb, is derived from *mētēr* mother, a term also signifying the matrix. Food is identified with the mother (Eur. *Hec.* 424) as the earth (Hes. *Op.* 305-307), and these basic substances are of greatest importance for the paternal race. Accordingly, Demeter taught man grain cultivation (Diod. 5.5,2; Paus. 1.14,2 f., cf. *HHD.* 473 ff.). In Cyprus the word for harvesting corn (e.g. gather in the fruits of the earth) is *damatrizein* (Hsch. s. v.). Thus, it was a simple step for Demeter and her daughter to be used as metonyms for corn and flour (Burkert 1985: 159).

The thesis claiming that the Western philosophy from antiquity to Lacan has conquered the female body through “the sowing of it” (duBois 1988) needs to be modified, because this “phallogocentric” “appropriation” of the female body has to be substituted by the fact that they need the female body to explain everything. It is a parallel to the male god needing the earth to care for his seed: The earth cannot bring forth without rain (Paus. 1.24,3), as the male seed needs a maternal

¹⁹ Arthur 1977 and 1994. Loraux 1984, 1996; Zeitlin 1995. Cf. 1 supra.

²⁰ Plut. *Mor.* 373f-375c. He tells that the Goddess (Isis) needs to participate with the first God and to be associated with him in love, i.e. the importance of two principles to make a third, 373f-374a, 374f-375a. The “Furrowed Field Theory”: Aesch. *Eum.* 658 ff.; Eur. *Or.* 552-556; Pl. *Ti.* 91d. The “Dual Seed Theory”: Hippoc. *Genit.* 1, 6, 8; Gal. *UP.* 14.6 f. Cf. Boylan 1984.

²¹ Menstruation is the female analogous to the semen in males and without generative power according to Arist. *GA.* 727a2-30, 728b17-31, 765b8-22. Nevertheless, both the female womb and body are important to nourish the male seed *GA.* 765b10 ff., cf. 716a14-24, 727b31-33. Cf. Plut. *Mor.* 365a. According to Richlin 1997 the claim that the ancient model was “one-sex” and the “two-sex” model is a new invention (18th century, see Laqueur 1990), is wrong.



nourishing womb to be placed in. The female functions of reproduction are important for male thinking.

The archaic and later lawgivers (Plut. *Sol.* 12.4 f., 21.4 f.; *SIG*³1218, cf. Plut. *Mor.* 608f-611b) attempted to curb women’s rituals where their connection with birth and death or the mysteries of life was prominent. It has also been claimed that ancient Athenian Democracy was based on the appropriation of the female combined with the subjugation of women.²² The deprivation was especially connected to women’s rituals in the sphere of death-cult. Through the creation of the *Epitaphios Logos*, the official classical male funeral oration which focused on praise of the dead and tragedy, the Greek *polis* or “men’s club” appropriated the function of and condemned the excesses of women’s laments in order to promote the eternity of the hero who died for the fatherland.²³ Thereby, the importance of the polis was manifested, and the male polis appropriated an important female language, the way women traditionally have addressed the dead. But, when men attempt to appropriate women’s domains, as illustrated through the classical tragedy’s (Aesch. *Cho.* 22-31, 327-339) and funeral oration’s (Thuc. 2.34-46) “appropriation” of women’s traditional laments, this demonstrates an acknowledgement of the importance of women’s rituals. Athens (male) attempts to curb women’s festivals and laments which posed a threat to the official society, were probably only partly successful, since it has been stated that the same process happened in the Byzantine and modern periods when new attempts to curb women’s laments became important. The picture from the Christian era is not very different from it’s forerunner: women were still lamenting, and the female laments continued to our own days, since women’s laments and other rituals remained essential parts of the death-rituals of rural Greece.

Comparisons with modern society show that the tragedies demonstrate the importance of women in other areas than politics, for example in rituals connected with the life-cycle passages related to weddings and funerals. The rituals conducted by women plays a central role in most tragedies, demonstrating the importance of the Greek household, *oikos* the domestic world, for the polis. One may claim that men have the executive power through the official political male sphere, but there are also other arenas for power.

That public rituals where women were the central executors of power have so great importance in the tragedies does not harmonize with the alleged reduced “status” of women in fifth-century Athens. Generally and based on conventional theories about “the logic of rites of reversal”,

²² Loraux 1989. A more comprehensive version of the following argument is given in Håland 2007: ch. 6.

²³ Loraux 1981; Holst-Warhaft 1992.



one may claim that they are presented on the stage, and subsequently pushed back to their ordinary roles, as in later carnival rituals.²⁴ This is only the case if the material is read from a male perspective, according to which power is defined as governing polis officially. But who governed polis? The powerful female characters frequently challenge the male polis, and tragic men often come to new understandings through a feminizing process, most often by realizing that the male polis depends on the female oikos for its survival and prosperity.

Several researchers have also claimed that the establishment of the Thesmophoria and the Eleusinian mystery cults were a calculated compensation for women’s lost authority in the rituals of the dead, one, which placed their activities under state control.²⁵ One may challenge this assertion by claiming that this “establishment” (actually an elaboration of existing cults) was an official approval of the power of woman for the maintenance of society, her power over life and death, and the significance of women’s rituals for polis’ survival. The grief and fury of the Mother Goddess, Demeter, when her daughter has been married off without her consent, threatens to destroy humanity, since she hides the corn and the earth cannot send it back up (*HHD*. 305 ff., 332, 353, 450-453, cf. Paus. 8.42,2). Accordingly, she has to be “softened up” with several festivals during the agricultural year, in order that polis may survive, and the corn grow (*HHD*. 460-471, cf. 268-274, 292-298, 470-479). The male society’s wish to control fertility by using chthonic goddesses in their service is difficult to achieve in practical life (cf. Aesch. *Eum*. 990 f., 1018-1031).

Until puberty, Greek boys are still reared in an exclusively female environment (cf. Plut. *Lyc*. 14.1). They are moulded and socialized by their mothers, wet-nurses or grandmothers, who exercise influence upon them in ancient (Hdt. 6.138; Pl. *Resp*. 377c, cf. *Leg*. 790 and Plut. *Mor*. 609e), and modern (Gilmore 1987) society. Their experiences from early childhood may have caused that their attempts to appropriate women’s institutions never succeeded: In present-day’s Athens, the ceremony of the official male church during *psychosabbata* (All Souls’ Day) is followed by women’s rituals on each grave (cf. Thuc. 2.34-46). Similarly, the official ritual on Good Friday in the church of Olympos, on the island of Karpathos, is followed by the ritual performed by the women during afternoon, when they creep under or walk around the *epitaphios*

²⁴ See Håland 2007: ch. 6 (cf. also ch. 4) for a critical discussion of explanations based on Gluckman’s 1991 analysis of inter-human relations, based on the social. There, I argue for the “chthonic” perspective which goes deeper than Gluckman’s. From the chthonic perspective, laughter and ritual licence are connected with fertility and power, important factors in agricultural societies. Also (and concerning the following argument), the heroines of the tragedies, most probably, were not seen in a positive way by the official male ideology, my point, however is that the tragedians used women from everyday-life them when describing the women in their tragedies, cf. Håland 2007.

²⁵ Alexiou 1974: 21, cf. Holst-Warhaft 1992: 117. See Håland 2007: ch. 6, for a comprehensive version of the following.



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(Christ’s funeral) to be healthy or fertile. Since all the children are present, the boys learn that their mothers perform important rituals to ensure the fertility in the coming year. Neither, the prayers the priest says to the icons and the dead for rain (cf. Håland 2005), nor all the villagers’ ceremonial walking under the epitaphios before and after the procession, is sufficient. The performance of the women’s “afternoon-ritual” in the church is of greatest importance, and during this ritual not one single man dares to be present. The ritual is a modern parallel to the ritual during the ancient women’s Haloa-festival when the *archons* (the magistrates) stayed outside of the sanctuary, discoursing on their original discovery and dissemination of Demeter’s gift, the domesticated foods, to the populace, while the women were “within”, securing the very food by their magical rituals. Male-dominated rituals are connected with the official male sphere and in ancient Athens the relationship between them was demonstrated with the Thesmophoria, a gathering of women to ensure fertility: If an Assembly was to be held, during the days this female festival was celebrated, it was held not in Pnyx, it’s normal setting, but in the theatre.²⁶ So, the men’s political business was displayed by the women’s higher duties to Demeter and her grain, to ensure the food. The polis depends on the fertility of its region for its basic food supply of wheat and barley, so by financing the Thesmophoria, the male polis demonstrates its interest in the successful conduct of women’s magical rites,²⁷ which have to be performed to ensure that the male-dominated sowing and reaping will yield an abundant supply of food. We meet the importance of the female womb and its parallel, the womb of the Earth Mother who sends up the corn. The celebrations of the Demetrian festivals were an important way of demonstrating how to “be good at being a woman”, since their collective performance of the rituals were important to ensure fertility for the community. We meet the same picture within other festivals as well. The Panathenaia was the most important ideological festival in classical Athens. In the same way as this festival of All the Athenians was celebrated through the protecting city goddess on the Acropolis, Panagia protects present-day’s Greeks, since their nation is celebrated on the “Day of Military Strength” (Fig. 7), coinciding with the Dormition of the Virgin at Tinos. A virginal mother is still protecting (cf. *Il.* 2.546-551, Athena rearing Erekhtheus).



Fig. 7: A poster proclaiming 15 August as the Day of Military Strength.

²⁶ See Winkler 1990: 194 for *IG* II² 1006.50-51, cf. Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.29.

²⁷ Cf. also *IG* II² 1261.9-11, 1290.10 for the Adōnia.



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In both festivals, fertility-rituals performed by women are of focal importance (Håland 2006a and b).

Women are the most competent performers of the rituals connected with the promotion of fertility in society. This is represented through many of the central rituals in the festivals: Goddesses are dedicated festivals in connection with important phases during the agricultural year. Women are the sole participants, using symbolic plants related to their own fecundity and the earth's. This demonstrates a religious belief in the identification of the fecundity of earth with that of women (Papamichael 1975). Accordingly, they are given parallel expressions in the cults. The central act of the rites during the festivals dedicated to Mother Goddesses was the descent of certain female participants into underground caverns, i.e. the womb of a fertility-goddess. They bring back fertility-symbols formed as female and male sex organs, which have been thrown or carried down into the chasms.²⁸ When they have absorbed the power of fertility from the womb of the earth, they are mixed on the altar with the seed corn to ensure an abundant crop. The act of bringing down and up indicate sowing and reaping, thus aiming to promote good offspring generally, human, animal and vegetable. Women's knowledge of fertility magic means that they also have the power to prevent fertility, through their knowledge of the uses of magical plants, and thus, paralleling their mythical model, the Mother Goddess, Demeter (*HHD*. 305-307, cf. Nixon 1995) who controls agricultural fertility.

²⁸ Cf. Paus. 1.27,3 and Schol. Luc. *Dial. Meret.* 2.1, Rabe 1906: 275.23-276.28.



Conclusion

The article raises a worthy issue and asks an important question, i.e. we cannot simply assume that men’s or male-influenced descriptions of women’s festivals or rituals are accurate ones: we must ask the women. Anthropological fieldwork and participant-observation of Greek contemporary women’s festivals are essential if we are going to get closer to why these rituals are important to women and how they are important to women: in short, we need to “get men off the eyeball.” In addition, we cannot simply assume that Greek women, then or now, are totally dominated by men.

The cyclical festivals follow a ritual calendar where celebrations are performed in connection with important phases during the agricultural year. The fertility perspective shows how peoples’ values are manifested through religious festivals, and how the fertility-festivals are the fundament the official male value-system is based on. The belief in fertility-rituals is present both in ancient and modern society, and fertility-rituals are connected with women. They are the most competent performers of the rituals connected with the promotion of fertility in society, and their knowledge of fertility magic means that they also have the power to prevent fertility. The female fertility-rituals were of great importance to promote the fertility of the ancient polis, and they are still of focal importance in Greek society. In rituals connected with the life-cycle passages, such as birth and marriage, we meet the same relationship both in ancient and modern Greek society. Men are the performers of the public rituals, but the point is that these rituals can not take place before the “women-dominated” rituals have finished: The official rituals where men are agents can not be performed before women have done the preliminary work, and thus manifested their “poetics of womanhood”, according to which the point is to show how “to be good at being a woman”, for example when performing fertility-rituals in agricultural or procreation contexts, using magic such as in healing contexts, nursing children. As goddesses, women have primary control of the processes of production and reproduction, and women enjoy relative independence from male performance in the basic life processes. As Mother Earth who does the eight months’ labour necessary to produce Demeter’s grain, women carry the long burden of human generation. Women civilize Demeter’s wheat, turning it first into flour, then into bread; it is women who nurture and train children.

From a chthonic perspective, we learn that a male ideological or system-oriented approach to the relationship between men and women becomes too one-sided, because it accepts the male



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value-system’s presentation of the actual relationship. Particularly, the female festivals demonstrate an upheaval of official male roles and male power, and the fertility-cult may be considered as the unifying and underlying in all festivals. Sexuality, reproduction and fertility are central and have explicit importance in the festivals. Therefore, to examine fertility in Greece is to look at Greek society through female eyes.



A note on ancient sources:

Abbreviations for ancient authors and titles follow Hammond, N. G. L./Scullard, H. H., eds.

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* In addition, the following abbreviation is employed:

HHD: The Homeric Hymn to Demeter

Homer's name is not mentioned in citing *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

* The sources are taken from the series, *The Loeb Classical Library*, London.

* In addition, the following publications are employed:

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Illustrations (Fig.):

Fig. 1: “Female sphere” in public space: the graveyard, a space controlled by women. (Author’s photograph)

Fig. 2: During the festival celebrating the Dormition of the Panagia on Tinos, on 15 August, her miraculous *icon* (image) of the Annunciation is carried in procession, and also over the sick and women wanting to conceive. (Author’s photograph)

Fig. 3: A mother crawling on her knees to the church dedicated to the Panagia on Tinos with a sick child on her back in the hope of healing. (Author’s photograph)

Fig. 4: Women and children rushing to the cemetery with sweets and cakes, in the village of Olympos on the island of Karpathos. (Author’s photograph)

Fig. 5: Women celebrating the midwife, Babo (*Agia*/Saint Domenika), in the village of Monokklēsia, Northern Greece. By washing Babo’s hands, each woman anticipates the day when the midwife will assist her in childbirth. (Author’s photograph)

Fig. 6: Lamenting women in front of the *Epitaphios* (Christ’s funeral), Good Friday in the church of Olympos. (Author’s photograph)

Fig. 7: A poster proclaiming 15 August as the Day of Military Strength. (Author’s photograph)