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Lada Stevanović

WOMEN'S EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCE IN ANCIENT GREECE

ABSTRACT
The paper deals with women's education in Ancient Greece. In ancient times, women were dominated by men throughout the Greek world, while their roles and competence were strictly defined (albeit differently across various city-states). Although not all women were deprived of education, their education was almost never organized by the city-state. Women's knowledge and voice were never welcome in the public domain. However, the picture of women's education, knowledge and competences is not one-dimensional and it would be wrong to claim that those did not exist. Foreign women sometimes had more freedom of education and free communication with men than Greek citizens' wives (especially in Athens); education was also available for girls from rich families; some city-states other than Athens were less restrictive towards their women.

The other aspect of the issue was the fact that there was some knowledge available to women, and in some professions, women did not appear as an exception, but rather as a rule. Such was the case of midwives, women physicians and herbal specialists/pharmacists. Their prominent role in the private domain did not only involve care of home and closest kin, but also rituals, and this should be considered an important aspect of women's competence. However, researching women's education and knowledge in antiquity is a difficult task, because veils of silence were cast over women's voices in ancient times, including those that attempted to break through the barriers of their age.

KEYWORDS
women, education, knowledge, competence, private domain, public domain, death rituals

Introductory Remarks

The discussion about education and knowledge is always a question of epistemology and gnoseology. How to approach the concept of knowledge, what do we mean by it and how did the Ancient Greeks understand knowledge? It is well known that the Western philosophical tradition developed on the grounds of Greek philosophy. Furthermore, mainstream academic research about antiquity has been shaped through the lens of Western thought and 19th-century

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academia, researching antiquity from its own standpoint and focusing on particular interests – philosophy, history, arts, architecture, theatre, etc. Thus, the Western philosophical tradition and the knowledge about Greek antiquity are inevitably related, sharing the same phallogocentric thread. "Phallogocentrism as an apparatus of subjectivity works by organizing the significant/signifying differences according to a hierarchical scale that is governed by the standardized mainstream subject" (Braidotti 2002: 158). From antiquity on, the mainstream subject has been male and what we research has been *his* philosophy, *his* history, *his* knowledge. This takes place in *his* language and *his* epistemology. The very notion of reason in the Western philosophical tradition is male.[1]

Such an academic perspective has only fragmentarily been challenged for the limitations of its standpoints and prejudices. Apart from the fresh perspective and interest in the research of women, provided by Classical Women Studies (developing at first in the USA), the biggest turn and the impetus for change in the approach to the ancient world was given by the school of Anthropology of Ancient Worlds (Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pier Vidal-Naquet, Nicole Loraux etc.), but also by some related researchers on the other side of the English Channel (Geoffrey Lloyd) and across the Atlantic (Froma Zeitlin, Gregory Nagy, John Winkler, etc.) who made efforts to become aware of their own perspective, changing not only the angle of their research, but also its focus by moving towards the margins of Ancient Greek society and life. Following the methodological paths of this school that started developing during the 1960s, I will pose some questions about women's education and knowledge in ancient Greece. This challenging task involves numerous doubts and obstacles – how to research women's knowledge when only rare women had the right to education? How to research women when they were mainly silenced, absent from the public and from the available sources? Does knowledge include only what is contemplated and learned in public education, written down, or transmitted by manuscripts? Who produces and transmits knowledge? Is there women's knowledge that is not standardized or included in the intellectual heritage and as such not being mentioned in research and literature? So, apart from the already open question of reasons for women's absence from the canon, even when they "thought like men" and "did what men do" (Waithe 1987: XII), and not only when their (philosophical) problems and ethical questions transgressed the borders of the dominant paradigm (Waithe 1987: XII), the important methodological question is – how to reach and research the women's knowledge that does not fit into the dominant intellectual male streams, including not only women's intellectual heritage, but also knowledge in a wider sense? Trying to tackle this question from different sides, I will start from the sources and information that are available, primarily those concerning the (im)possibility of education for girls and women.

1 A brilliant book on this subject was written by Genevieve Lloyd (1993).

The Education of Girls and Women in Greek Antiquity

Of the entire Greek world, only the militaristic Sparta organized education for women already in the archaic and classical periods (Pomeroy 2002: 3, 4). Just at the first glance, it might seem paradoxical that this warrior-like patriarchal society aimed at giving birth to healthy male offspring and raising future soldiers, provided their mothers with relatively good living conditions and freedom, especially compared to Athenian women (Pomeroy 2002). Unlike in Athens, women in Sparta were supplied with good food portions, they exercised, they got married much later than Athenian girls, maintaining close relationships with their primary families and other women; Spartan women, moreover, could own and inherit property and they were educated. Compared to male Spartans, it is considered that women were better educated intellectually because men were focused on improving their physical strength. However, the quality of intellectual education was not high, while average literacy was much better in Athens.[2]

It is interesting to note that one of the rare women among Plato's disciples, and also a teacher at the Academia, was Axiothea of Philesia (ancient Philus was at that time under the Spartan rule). This woman came from Peloponnesus intending to learn from Plato (Themistius, *Orationes* 23.295C, ed. Dindorf cf. Waithe 1987: 209) and stayed in the Academia as a teacher. Dicaearchus informs us that she used to wear men's clothes (Dicaearchus, *Fragmenta* 44, ed. Wehrli, Waithe 1987: 205–206). This might be related to the social norms in Athens at the time, which were extremely limiting for women (especially Athenian born women), and might have been the reason that the female philosopher decided to cross-dress, symbolically empowering her social status by at least looking like a man. In this context, it is interesting to note that in *Menexenus,* Plato used a masculine noun side by side with a feminine participle and feminine adjective when referring to the famous Aspasia: διδάσκαλος οὖσα οὐ πάνυ φαύλη περὶ ῥητορικῆσς /she who is my *instructor* is by no means in the art of rhetoric (Plato, *Menexenus* 235e), although in *The Laws* (814c) he created non-existent feminine nouns to denote women citizen (πολιτίδες) as Greek nouns were easily adaptable to grammatical gender shifts. So, although women were obviously rarely educated and only few of them could educate men, teacher in ancient Athens had to have some masculine signifier be that only in terms of grammar. Another Plato's woman disciple, as well as the disciple of his successor Speusippus, mentioned by Diogenes Laertius (though in fewer details) was Lasthenia of Mantinea (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* Plato III 46, 317; Speusippus IV 2, 375). The presence of these and other women philosophers in Plato's Academy was possible due to Plato's philosophical position about the immateriality of soul that was eternal, non-sexual and therefore, not different between men and women (Salisbury 2001: 277).

2 In his book on ancient literacy, William Harris argues that by the fifth century, everybody who had an important political role in all of the Greek world, except Sparta, had to be literate (Harris 1989: 74).

Anyhow, it would be wrong to claim that there were no educated women in Athens, yet female education in Athens was not formally organized. It is supposed that educated women mainly came from rich families of the former aristocracy or from the families of highly educated men who were ready to share their knowledge with the women from their surroundings. All in all, the destinies of and decisions concerning Athenian women were always in men's hands – until marriage the decisions were made by their fathers and afterwards by their husbands. The numerous vase images testify that women could be musically educated – that they danced, played the cithara, lyre or flute (Golden 2015: 62). Mark Golden mentions also the vase fragment representing an older girl with tablets which indicates that this girl was educated outside her home. Due to the fact that the vase fragment belonged to the cup used for drinking wine, Golden suggests that the represented girl was a hetaira. He uses the same argument to interpret a red-figure phiale representing a girl dancing with several other women (Golden 2015: 62).

Many educated women in this famous polis belonged to the social category of non-Athenians – especially foreigners – metics (μέτοικοι), some of whom were hetairai (ἑταίραι), known not only for their beauty, but also for their intellect. It is important to emphasize that hetairai, unlike pornai (prostitutes) were often from high social circles, refined, interesting to talk to and well educated. The status of foreign women in Athens is particularly interesting because of the independence they enjoyed in comparison to Athenian women. However, it is difficult to determine who among the educated and famous female metics was a hetaira and who was not due to the sources being quite ambivalent and unclear especially concerning Aspasia.[3]

Aspasia was probably the most famous, learned, prominent and influential woman in Athens. She was the life partner of the famous Athenian politician Pericles, having moved from Miletus to Athens around 450 BC shortly after Pericles introduced the law that Athenian citizens could be only those men whose both parents were born Athenians. The reason for such a law was to support marriages between Athenian men and women and providing Athenian brides with grooms of a proper social status. Anyhow, this law was the reason why Aspasia could have never become the legitimate wife of Pericles and their son an Athenian citizen. However, as Nicole Loraux comments on Aspasia's situation as a metic, "this status, while denying her the right to become the legal spouse of the man whose life she shared, allowed her – at the risk of a somewhat sulphurous reputation – the freedom to be seen, to think, and to express herself" (Loraux 2021: 9). She was not only the partner and probably the teacher of rhetoric to Pericles and other Athenians (such as Lysicles), but also had encounters with Socrates both as a lover and an intellectual companion (Loraux 2021: 12). But, as Loraux revealed in her brilliant and complex analysis of Aspasia, not only that the sources should be read carefully when they maliciously mention her

3 The complicated issue of the sources in which Aspasia appears and their fictionality/factionality is brilliantly and delicately approached by Nicole Loraux (2021).

as a courtesan, i.e. the brothel owner (Aristophanes, *Ach. Anonymus, Ed.* 496; Plutarch *Pericles* 24.3), one should also take into account the very strong antithetical ideas about women which prevailed in Athens at the time – about married Athenian women being modest and foreign women having suspicious morality:

> Indeed [...] in Athens maybe more than anywhere else, the image of woman is split between the figure of the wife, mother of legitimate children, deprived of all personal autonomy and legal status (and which the orthodoxy of civic representations wishes to remain as ignorant as possible), and that of the courtesan, always available, expert in the pleasures of love, intelligent, and of sound council. (Loraux 2021: 21–22)

Such ambivalent and reductive ideas about women (e.g. the idea of woman as a saint or a whore) are also found, in a somewhat different form, in other patriarchal societies, which share the tendency to neglect women's rights to free choice and independence, judging negatively any behavior which does not fit perfectly into the dominant social demands and reducing women to typical roles they may or may not fit.

Midwives and Women Physicians

Among the educated women in Ancient Greece, in addition to philosophers and poets, a special place belongs to midwives (μαῖα) and women doctors (ἰατρικῆ) mentioned in the 4th century BC already, with midwifery being one of the oldest medical professions.[4] The skills of midwifery had less to do with the knowledge acquired from books and more with the women's private domain of care and healing. And while midwifery skills were shared among women, women physicians additionally acquired knowledge always through practice as a skill from their male family members – fathers and husbands.[5]

"Women's health was women's business" (Flemming 2007: 257). This phrase did not only refer to women's choice to be treated by women, but also to the whole practice of midwives who not only helped with labor but also treated different illnesses in women and children and learned the healing skills mostly from other women. The younger women (whether slaves or daughters) generally used to learn from older ones (Tsouclas, Karamanou, Sgantzos 2014: 547). Certainly, neither midwives nor other women working in medicine could earn a diploma where "one's reputation served as one's 'certification'". (Retief, Cilliers 2006: 168)

4 Nurses did not appear in Greek or Roman antiquity, and their appearance is related rather to the role of female deacons in the early Christian church, while usually members of the family or slaves helped (Retieff, Cilliers 2006: 167).

5 Plato, *Phaedrus* 268c stresses that medicine cannot be learned from books. However, the article by Rebecca Flemming reveals there were female authored works though all of them appeared in Hellenistic or Roman times (Flemming 2007: 257–279). However, the later sources – referring to Roman times – as Soranus inform us that literacy was a desirable (but not necessary) skill for midwives and women physicians (Retief, Cilliers 2006: 168).

It is interesting that exactly from this domain, the word that denotes midwifery – ἡ μαιευτική τέχνη – was borrowed by Socrates whose mother used to be a midwife. In Plato's *Theaetetus* Socrates first mentions his mother Phaenarete (Plat. *Theatetus* 149a) and then explains that he adopted her technique to help giving birth to ideas through dialogue without the awareness of the other person (Plat. *Theatetus* 149a). The respect for the profession of midwives is obvious in this dialogue – from the surprise that Theaetetus did not know who Socrates' mother was, to the clear statement about the importance of midwives (Plat. *Theatetus* 149–150). However, the words of Socrates suggest that his philosophical skill of midwifery is much more important and difficult than the job of midwives that help giving birth to human beings:

> So great, then, is the importance of midwives; but their function is less important than mine. For women do not, like my patients, bring forth at one time real children and at another mere images which it is difficult to distinguish from the real. For if they did, the greatest and noblest part of the work of the midwives would be in distinguishing between the real and the false. Do you not think so? (Plat. *Theatetus* 150a-b)

The aforementioned Plato's text represents the earliest written source about midwifery, while other important evidences that testify to the existence of women physicians and midwives are epigraphic, most often funerary inscriptions. One of those (around 350 BC) mentions Phanostrate (from Acharnai in Attica) who was both a midwife and a physician (Retief, Cilliers 2006: 171; Pleket 1969). However, Herophilus from Alexandria (320–260 BC) left the earliest work on midwifery (*Maieutikon*), although saved only in fragments. Somewhat later, Soranus of Ephesus (98–138 AD) with his *Gynaecology* (Retief, Cilliers 2006: 171) is yet another significant source which offers detailed information about midwifery. Although evidence about women physicians is not as numerous as those about midwives, there is no doubt that society respected and accepted them, though again, to a lesser degree than their male counterparts, whose knowledge was considered to be more general (Flemming 2007: 258). Here we once again come across the issue of phallogocentrism and the values that assume that men's knowledge and skills were more valuable, although, as Soranus informed us, midwives were sometimes invited by women also for other health problems since there were fewer women physicians, and women preferred to communicate with other women (Retief, Cilliers 2006: 184).[6] Except from Soranus, other authors that mention women physicians and midwives include Martial (38–104 AD) in his epigrams, Pliny the Elder (2379 AD) in *Natural History*, Juvenal (1st and 2nd century AD) in his satires, Galen (129–200 AD) and others. However, it is important to mention one manuscript written by a woman physician – Metrodora (around 2nd/3rd century AD) titled *On the*

6 Soranus also categorizes midwifes into three groups: 1. wise women of the village communities; 2. midwifes trained also in the theory of obstetrics; 3. generally trained women physicians (Retief, Cilliers 2006: 184).

Suffering of Mothers as Women that discusses not only diseases that might affect fertility but also contraception (Retief, Cilliers 2006: 173).

Especially in Greece and in the Greek speaking Eastern Mediterranean, the obstetric profession was highly regarded and provided good living, while in Rome the situation was different and the profession was more spread among slaves, who, however, could have earned freedom with the earnings from the job (Retief, Cilliers 2006: 184). Anyhow, we may suppose that the respect that midwives enjoyed in the Greek speaking world is related to the high status of women in the ritual sphere, particularly when it comes to the rituals related to the matters of life and death (and all the related tasks and rituals) that were regarded to be dangerous since the processes of giving birth and dying were considered to happen in the periods when borders between life and death were blurred and unstable. The strict ritual regulations and prominent place in these tabooed domains brought women high reputation in society, at the same time marking them with ritual impurity – μίασμα (Parker 1983: 32–70). Helping with giving birth and treating other illnesses were closely related to this domain and women's competence in the sphere that was at the same time practical and ritual.

However, while Plato mentions that the midwife could have been only a woman who already had her own children, later sources do not mention this condition (Retief, Cilliers 2006: 180). In the Byzantine period, the situation changed and virginity started to be the condition which provided women the license to practice male's professions. What we might conclude from this is that women's position in society was not the same throughout antiquity, neither in place, nor in time, and that we should interpret all this information with caution. Anyhow, one thing is certain – women were not forbidden to practice medicine although the respect they enjoyed in comparison to men was smaller (Flemming 2007: 279). Midwifery, as any other women's work and skill, was partly self-understandable.

Another medical domain in which women participated was pharmacology and botany. Although the domain was not exclusively female and although written sources are numerous and abundant, it is important to emphasize that the transmission of knowledge happened orally (Totelin 2016: 1). However, there is no doubt that some women were authorized to make herbal remedies and antidotes. Yet another dangerous side of this skill is described in literature. Namely, many mythical women were known as magicians – the most famous among them were Circe and Medea[7] – while Thessalian women were famous for the love potions they made (Totelin 2016: 6). Anyhow, the knowledge was considered to be a secret and interesting cross-cultural research would be possible to make across the Balkans about herbalists in the 20th century – men and women whose knowledge was enormous but secret and not easily shared.[8]

7 About prehistoric origins of magic and relatedness of magical rituals and beliefs to the cult of Great Earth goddess, and later animosity towards it, see: Luck 2006.

8 Still famous is the case of Montenegrin herbalist Jovan Šaljić, who gained world fame helping famous actress Kitty Swan (who appeared as Jane in a film about Tarzan)

This insight into women's irregular education and the fact that there were women physicians and midwifes as well as herb specialists and healers in Greek antiquity, lead us to approach women's knowledge and skills in a wider sense without focusing on the organized education that was mainly available to men in public spaces. I would further like to open the following question: which knowledge and skills (apart from the already mentioned) were accessible to women? First of all, there are necessary skills for the functioning of home (οἶκος) and all that was related to women's life and space (and their social competence) which means all those domains that belonged to women such as care for the children and family, sexuality and birth control, care about housing and food, clothing and waving.

All of the mentioned bears belittling connotations and even today these jobs and skills are necessary but self-understanding and not much appreciated. Brule and Nevill point out that "the exploitation of gender was more commonplace than that of slaves" (Brule, Nevill 2013: 26), and emphasize that "nor does it count for much in the eyes of historians, who look more at the slaves" (Brule, Nevill 2013: 26).

However, there is another, already mentioned domain, which in ritual (and hence social) context had a huge importance, being related to the fact that women were familiar with the knowledge and secrets of life and its inseparable part – death. In addition to the practical aspect, this domain had an important dimension – the ritual one, which regulated the behavior of the whole community struck by the crisis provoked by the death or birth of a new community member. All the care around newborns and the deceased as well as all the surrounding rituals was women's responsibility. It was believed that in times of death and birth, all paths between the world of the living and of the Beyond were opened, which was one of the reasons to adhere to precisely defined rituals. As it was believed, only properly performed rituals enabled a newborn to survive, and the deceased to reach the world of the dead, at the same time protecting the living from the powers of death (and life) that at these periods of crises represented a bigger threat for the living and their whole community (Stevanović 2009: 23). Respecting ritual regulations had to provide success and protect the members of the community, eventually enabling them to go on with life.

Let us now return to women's work in households. The mentioning of ταμία – home economist, supervisor, manageress – appears very early in Greek

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after being burnt during the film set. When doctors could not help her anymore, Šaljić did. The actress spent some time in the home of Dragica and Jovan Šaljić and their treatment healed her. Šaljić balm, already famous and sold well in Yugoslavia (people would travel to Berane and wait in front of his home to be accepted and get the proper balm) became famous worldwide (Mitrović 2017). When Šaljić died, after many obstacles, a big pharmacist house bought the recipe from the family and his balms are still produced and sold. However, the people who used to buy directly from him say that something is missing and that the creams he used to make were much better. Even when written down and sold, the secret knowledge did not lose its secrecy. Probably the family did not sell the complete recipe.

literature. In the *Odyssey* it is Eurycleia (*Od.* 2.345); in the *Iliad* the "house-dame" responds to Hector, who asks about Andromache (*Il.* 6. 390), and Priamus thus addresses Hecuba (*Il.* 24. 302). However, the most interesting for us is Xenophon, who in the *Oeconomicus* through the mouth of Isomachus thus calls his wife, mentioning that he invited her to be "the guardian of the laws for our household" (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* ix, 14, 15, 16; cf. Brule, Nevill 2013: 24). Xenophon also mentions Aspasia, through the words of Socrates, who praises her as the one who might explain how wife takes care of the household and expenses, in a way similar to the one in which husband takes care of incomes (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* iii, 15, 16).

However, being a manageress of the house did not save women from other jobs in the house but did require organizational skills. One of the most important women's jobs was related to clothes production. From an early age, Athenian girls learned to weave, and they were doing that both for their home, i.e. private needs of family members, as well as for public needs. Even Homer mentions the capable hands and wisdom of Hippodameia (*Il.* 13. 432). Especially important and famous was the weaving of the complicated peplos devoted to the goddess Athena. Namely, every four years, for the festival of Great Panathenaea, a peplos was woven for Athena. Many women of different ages participated in this task. The peplos was magnificent and colorful, and it had a rich decoration retelling the story about Athena's victory over the Giants.

Women's Poetry, (Wo)Men's Thought, Women's Voice

When we think about women's self-expression in antiquity, we have to start from poetry and from Sappho, a poetess from Lesbos living in the 7th century BC who was a woman talking about women and their sexuality (Winkler 2020: 44).[9] So, as John Winkler emphasizes, the problem is not the subject sung in her poetry (since Alkmans' interests were similar), but rather the perspective. Namely, Sappho as a woman dared not only to speak publicly, but also to speak about the subject of women's sexuality (Winkler 2020: 44), thus breaking taboo double. Sappho's name is unbreakably tied to Lesbos, the wealthy island where she was born and gained her education. She died in Sicily, in exile (because of the island revolution), where she probably lived for thirty years. Although the greatest part of her poetry is lost – except for fragments and the "Hymn to Aphrodite" – it is supposed that Sappho had a circle of friends, a kind of women's school, where they wrote poetry. Although there is no doubt that she, alongside wedding poems, also wrote verses with homosexual content (Rayor 1991: 5), the insistence on Sappho's homosexuality in the Greek and European traditions is not that much the consequence of explicit or exclusive homosexuality in her poetry, but should be rather read in another, ideological and conservative key. As Svetlana Slapšak points out, Athenian democracy, which silenced its own

9 For more about women lyric poets (Korinna, Praxilla, Telesilla, Erinna, Anyte, Nossis, Moiro, Hedyla, and Melinno) see: Rayor (1991).

women and controlled their life by strictly defined norms that kept them shut in homes (except in periods of ritual participation), could more easily accept (and even develop) a phantasm of the distant island on which women were not only free to speak and write poetry about their own sexuality but also enjoyed (homo)sexuality in ways women elsewhere were not allowed to (Slapšak 2013: 150–151). So, no matter how inspirational this narrative might be for contemporary pro-lesbian and feminist studies, its conservative kernel (of ascribing its freedom to the distant Other) is inseparably tied to it in this Janus-like situation. On the positive side, the questions and disputes about Sappho's lesbianism that often divided academics into different poles, inspired a lot of research and findings about the early Aegean culture, and also social sensibility of the place and time (Slapšak 2013: 151).

Except among poets, we find women also among philosophers. Already two women philosophers who were teaching in Academia have been mentioned in the text – Axiothea of Philesia and Lasthenia of Mantinea. There are two other women that are explicitly mentioned in relation to Academia – one of them is Aspasia, and the other is Diotima of Mantinea, who is mentioned only in Plato's dialogue *Symposium* as the one who influenced Socrates' philosophy of love and immortality. Among many interesting ideas of Diotima, I would like to point out the one about the possibility for people to develop abstract values and to be "'pregnant in soul' (101) – that is, those who conceive wisdom and virtue in general, and poets and craftsmen who produce beautiful things" (Salisbury 2001: 88). Is it possible that precisely this idea of the famous woman philosopher, priestess, and Socrates' teacher thus inspired the *maieutic* technique? What else might help the pregnant soul than the technique of bringing new ideas through questioning and dialogue?

However, scholars are still very much focused on questioning whether Diotima existed at all. Those who claim her fictitious character argue that Socrates would have never had a woman teacher, that the *Symposium* is the only text that mentions her, and that it is unusual for Plato to give a woman such a prominent role in the dialogue (Salisbury 2001: 89). The issue of the historicity of Diotima is brilliantly questioned by Ellen Mary Waithe.[10] Among many complex philosophical arguments, she also mentions the evidence from the 15th century that testifies to disbelief ("silliness") that a woman philosopher existed. She confronted this argument with the straightforward evidence of the archaeologists and classicists who found a carving that is interpreted as a scene from the *Symposium* – Diotima speaking to Socrates (Waithe 1987: xiv). Furthermore, Plato did ascribe to Diotima the role of Socrates' teacher and her ideas are different from the ideas of Plato and Socrates (Salisbury 2001: 89). Instead of the question whether Diotima was Socrates' teacher or not, we might ask: Why is it so difficult to believe that Socrates acquired knowledge from a woman? Undoubtedly Diotima's authority was supported by the fact that she appeared as a priestess, being related to the Earth-mother and the domain of

10 For a detailed discussion, see: Waithe (1987).

fertility (life and death), in which women, and especially priestesses (as mediators between people and gods), were still respected.

Pythagoras (6th century BC) also had a woman teacher. She was also a priestess (from Delphi) who, as Salisbury claims, “not only links him to a woman but also gave his philosophic musings divine authority” (Salisbury 2001: 277). However, her existence is not doubted by scholars because Pythagorean teachings equated women and men regarding their reason – the most important characteristic of any human being.[11] Therefore, women philosophers were not an exception, but rather a rule in the Pythagorean community. Famous are his wife Theano I, his daughters – Myia, Arignote, and Damo – while among late women Pythagoreans (4th century BC) we come across the names of Phintys of Sparta, Perictione (actually two philosophers with the same name), Theano II, and Aesara of Lucania (Salisbury 2001: 277).

The question that is posed is how to regard women’s place in the philosophical, male tradition? This question leads to the opening other problems. The first would be whether it is possible to talk about *women’s voice* in ancient philosophy, especially regarding the fact that some women philosophers raised questions different from those of their male colleagues, although the main themes were always in harmony with the philosophical school they belonged to. Exactly because of the fact that the themes which preoccupy women are even today recognized as less valuable as well as because of the absence of the awareness of the fixation to the binary-valued logic characteristic of Western philosophy in which everything related to women is regarded as deprivileged (emotions, nature, the corporeal) and less valued than the other part of the pair related to men (reason, culture, spirit etc.), ancient women philosophers are more often marked in literature as women thinkers than philosophers.

One of the examples of *women’s thought* in ancient philosophy is the one by Theano II in letters – *Theano II to Eubole*. She questioned the concept of harmony discussing the case of the cheated woman, trying to answer the question how this woman should have behaved (Salisbury 2001: 42–47), while Phintys and Perictione I (*On the Harmony of Women)* dealt with the same concept, asking themselves how a woman should behave in private and in public life (Waithe 1987: XII). In accordance with Pythagorean philosophy, self-control and modesty are main values, and in terms of these, mentioned texts might be characterized as anti-feminist. However, the approach of women’s philosophers is more practically oriented than those of men, because they discuss specific situations and not ideal theory (Salisbury 2001: 32–34). And this perspective, that does not rise above the situation (that does not have a perspective *from above*), is feminine.

11 However, Pythagorean philosophy is not deprived of the symbolical dichotomy that deprivileges women and what was considered to be female. Namely, one of the main Pythagorean oppositions was between the determinate and clear mode and what was vague and indeterminate, while femaleness was always related with the vague, irregular, unlimited, disorderly, and at the same time inferior. For more on this issue, see: Lloyd (1993).

Another example of thought ascribed to a woman philosopher that completely fits into the dominant male-stream thinking is mentioned by Plutarch who quotes Theano I (regarded as a disciple and wife of Pythagoras) and her reaction to the comment of her exposed arm:

> Somebody exclaimed, "A lovely arm." "But not for the public," said she. Not only the arm of the virtuous woman, but her speech as well, ought to be not for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself; for in her talk can be seen her feelings, character, and disposition. (Plutarch, *Coniugalia Praecepta*: 31)

This excerpt points directly to the core of the problem of research into women's education and knowledge, because in Greek antiquity "her speech as well, ought to [have been] not for the public". In accordance with this widespread opinion, even when women's public speech or thought existed, it was covered by the patriarchal veil of silence. A problem that is hard to solve.

Nevertheless, Women's Voices

As it is already pointed out, women were free to speak only in the private and ritual domains. This actually did have an overall importance, especially during death rituals and funerals, because it was the only occasion in which women were authorized to speak publicly – in the graveyard, not only mourning the deceased, but also bringing decisions about the blood feud, an institution of common law that in spite of legal measures directed at it, continued to exist in some parts of rural Greece (especially Peloponnesus) up to modern times (1980s).[12] The Athenian legislator Solon introduced the law in the 6th century BC that had to decrease the number of women who were mourning, allowing it only to the next of kin and not professional mourners, prescribing also that the procession should be held very early in the morning so as not to disturb other citizens. Research of the Greek lament through history reveals a striking continuity of the phenomenon, which might be considered through the lens of Fernand Braudel's concept of *longue durée*, which requires considering historical events in long historical periods, because only such a perspective might enable understanding them (Braudel 1998). The research related to ancient Greek ritual by Nicole Loraux (1998) and ritual lament throughout history by Margaret Alexiou (1974/2002), Gail Holst-Warhaft (1995), and Nadia Seremetakis (1991) offer us brilliant insights into this phenomenon from antiquity through the Middle Ages, up to the 20th century.

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12 Brilliant anthropological research of lamentation and the funeral rite in Inner Mani (Peloponnesus) was done by Nadia Seremetakis, who researched this phenomenon from 1981 until 1991, spending a lot of time in the field (once during an uninterrupted 15-month stay). She also had family connections in the region, so she lived with relatives, not only as an outside researcher, but also as an inside participant of all the events and rituals related to the dead and death. See: Seremetakis 1991.

Anyhow, the knowledge of mourning was something that belonged to every woman even after the introduction of the mentioned law. The research into women's lamentation revealed the political dimension of appropriating ritual by the state, of the introduction of funeral oration (Pericle's famous speech), and of an effort of the polis to promote the ideal of heroic death in contrast to individual death, mourned and grieved in women's lamentations. Mourning was a powerful skill, and if the law of Solon made it complicated for older women to make money out of it, the practice itself was not easy to suppress.

However, there is no doubt that the new political democratic system and the abandonment of the importance of the aristocratic clans led to a redistribution of roles and power, trying to reduce the power of women (and of their voice) in the graveyard and hence its impact on the decisions of the community.[13]

Women were denied the right of participating in the political life, but, in spite of all the efforts, they did not lose their role and competence in the tabooed area of death and mourning despite the efforts of the states and later of the Church (introducing the office for the dead) to take over the control over the whole ritual. In charge of the duties related to death and life, as healers, pharmacists, physicians and midwifes, or without vocation but often in charge of all of the mentioned (and other household duties) as mothers, daughters, wives – women, especially born Athenians, were in charge of women's duties which were in antiquity (the same as today) belittled and disdained.

As for women's self-expression, apart from what we know about some women philosophers and their thought, but also vaguely about Sappho and women's circle around her, the most information we have is actually about lamentation, which was a feminine domain of expression. Although a type of oral poetry, women's lamentation is kept in tragedies, due to the fact that laments in tragedies might be regarded as examples from real life, since tragedies are not imitation, but rather a re-enactment of real life (Nagy 1998: x; Loraux 1998: 10–11). Lamentations in the graveyards, which means in public spaces, were bodily and oral performances, expressive in terms of emotion but also content. Often marked as uncontrolled and unrestrained (and even mad) behavior, since laceration of skin and hair often accompanied them, laments were actually enacted according to the existing rules, also being limited to the time and space of the ritual. The expression of grief and emotion confronted all who gathered with the loss and death, finally bringing emotional relief. Lamentation was performed by a group of women, in antiphonal structure, which corresponds to specific socio-communicational code of women. According to recent sociological research into men's and women's communication, men are

13 City-states introduced many rituals that supported civic ideology, trying to diminish the role of women in the ritual domain too. Apart from the mentioned invention of the public funeral ritual, what was also important was the introduction of the heroic cult that had all the characteristics of the cult of the dead, however, with a changed focus. The dead ancestors and all the rituals that once belonged to them were exchanged for the eponymous heroes, the founders of the city-states (Stevanović 2009: 72–75).

more adapted to speak in monologues, while women communicate more easily with other women, preferring to take turns in conversation with others, and as good listeners developing the topic by reference to the previous speaker (Minister 1991: 27–41). Dialogue of exactly this kind is characteristic of numerous lamentations, which implies that the same women's socio-communicational model with many dialogues and turn-taking in conversation has continuously existed throughout the Greek patriarchal area ever since antiquity. This competence of women, considered to belong to the very old tradition of funeral ritual, reveals an important role of women, not just as actors in the mentioned ritual – preparing the corpse for the wake, anointing it with oils, dressing the deceased, and generally being in charge of bringing the community through the crisis – but also to confront all the members of the community with the loss and grief, and to mediate the emotions (Stevanović 2009, 158). Ancient Greeks did not know about psychology and psychotherapy,[14] but they did have ritual mechanisms to cope with loss, to handle the inner and social crisis provoked by death, and also to face one of the biggest human fears, the fear of death. Women's role in this ritual was decisive.

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14 For the way in which psychoanalysis colonized the Greek past and Greek myths thus constructing a European identity (and view to the inner self through Greek myths), see: Dubois (2013: 316–317), Khanna (2003: 23–27), and Stevanović (2020: 108–109).

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Lada Stevanović

Obrazovanje, znanje i kompetencije žena u antičkoj Grčkoj

Apstrakt

Rad istražuje obrazovanje žena u antičkoj Grčkoj. U doba antike, žene su bile podređene muškarcima širom grčkog sveta, a njihova uloga i kompetencije strogo su bili definisani (doduše na različit način u različitim polisima). Iako je bilo žena kojima je obrazovanje bilo dostupno, ono gotovo nikada nije bilo organizovano od strane polisa. Žensko znanje i ženski glas nisu bili dobrodošli u javnom prostoru. Pa ipak, slika ženskog obrazovanja, znanja i kompetencija nije jednodimenzionalna i bilo bi pogrešno tvrditi da su ih žene bile u potpunosti lišene. Strankinje su katkada uživale veću slobodu u pogledu obrazovanja i slobodne komunikacije sa muškarcima nego supruge grčkih građana (pogotovo Atinjana); obrazovanje je bilo dostupno devojkama iz bogatih porodica.

Sa druge strane, činjenica je da su postojala znanja i profesije koji su bili dostupni ženama i u kojima su se one često pojavljivale. To je bio slučaj sa babicama, lekarkama i biljarkama/farmaceutkinjama. Dominantna uloga žena u privatnom domenu nije samo podrazumevala brigu o kući i najbližim srodnicima, već i nadležnost u ritualnom domenu koja je spadala u žensku kompetenciju. Pa ipak, istraživanje ženskog znanja i obrazovanja u atnici nije jednostavno, pre svega zbog velova tišine kojima su obavijeni ženski glasovi u antici, uključujući i one koji su pokušali da se probiju kroz barijere sopstvenog doba.

Ključne reči: žene, obrazovanje, kompetencije, privatno, javno, pogrebni rituali.