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Smell, Taste, Colours and Gender in Modern and Ancient Greek Healing Rituals

Odeur, Goût, Couleurs et Genre dans les Rites de Guérison Grecs Modernes et Anciens

Evy JOHANNE HÅLAND

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Summary : The article presents a new method to the study of antiquity: ethnographic fieldwork combined with studies of ancient sources. Of especial focus are topics related to modern and ancient healing rituals, such as the importance of smell, taste and colours in relation to gender and healing in modern and ancient Greece. Healing rituals are generally connected with the domestic sphere, where women are the dominant power. Therefore, the article presents the "female sphere" from a female perspective in order to deconstruct the ancient male-authored sources, which present persistent male views about women and their magic healing rituals.

Résumé : L'article présente une nouvelle méthode pour l'étude de l'antiquité : les résultats des travaux du terrain combinés avec des études de sources anciennes. Les sujets liés aux rites de guérison anciens et modernes, tels que l'importance de l'odeur, du goût et des couleurs en relation avec le genre et la guérison dans la Grèce moderne et ancienne, sont particulièrement importants. Les rites de guérison sont généralement liés à la sphère domestique, où les femmes constituent la pouvoir dominante. Donc, l'article présente la « sphère des femmes » d'une perspective féminine afin de déconstruire les sources anciennes produites par des hommes, qui présentent des points de vue masculins persistants sur les femmes et leurs rites de guérison magiques.

Mots-clés :
Gender, Theory, Method, Ethnohistory, Religion, Senses, Healing Rituals, Modern and Ancient Greece

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Introduction

The present article is based on a larger project, *The Dangerous Life: Gender, Pain, Health and Healing in Modern and Ancient Greece, a Comparison*. This project presents a new method to the study of antiquity: ethnographic fieldwork combined with studies of ancient sources. The background for the project is the problem regarding how we can come to understand such mainstays of ancient Greek culture as its healing rituals, generally carried out during festivals and rituals connected with life-cycle passages, when the male recorders did not and could not know or say much of

what occurred, since the rituals were carried out by women. A way of tackling this dilemma is to attend similar healing rituals in modern Greece, carried out by women, and compare the information with ancient sources, thus providing new ways of interpreting the ancient material we possess.

The project therefore seeks to look at how women have played a role in defining European societies in the southeastern corner of Europe. Not by covering all possible variations, but by seeking out a very promising, and perhaps surprising field of activities in which women always have played an important role, the one of dealing with pain, health and healing. Based on a comparison between modern and ancient Greek religious festivals and rituals performed during life-cycle passages, and the gendered spheres they represent, the work therefore aims to shed fresh light on both the ancient and modern worlds from a female perspective.

Religion constitutes the set of beliefs and practices directed at supernatural beings and powers. This implies that lived religion is concerned not only with belief but rituals or action, the rituals that people do or perform, which also is conform with Aristotle's emphasise on action in the ancient context.[1] Both within ancient Greek pre-Christian religion and modern Orthodox Christianity this encompasses the ways humans engage the world through the senses: in the heat and light of candles or torches lit at ceremonies; in the smell of incense in connection with prayer and incubation; in the recitations of the Creeds and *Homeric Hymns*; in the visions of holy icons and divine statues; in the kissing of sacred objects; in the tasting of various foods and drinks (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Pilgrims sharing *kesketsi*, the traditional dish cooked on the sacrificial bull, on the summit of *Tauros* (Bull) mountain, the island of Lesbos, June 1992 (Author's photograph).

In short, the metaphysical dimensions of religion are predicated on sensual engagements with the physical world.

All senses are important in the encounter between the believer and her or his deities. While hearing and seeing have been treated for many years, the way religion is linked to taste, smell and touch, their effect and purpose do not have such a long research tradition. The topics however are important, for example, in connection with material used to make protective amulets, and are connected with women's religion in general and their healing rituals in particular. This article will delve into some of these topics related to modern and ancient healing rituals.

Festivals and Rituals connected with Healing

In two of my earlier books, I have focused on fertility cult and death cult, respectively (Håland, 2014 and 2017). This new research draws on the same methodology; that is, using modern in conjunction with ancient sources, however, here I focus on healing. One of the reasons to this is that the presence of death may provide healing, and fertility is closely allied to rituals relating to death and to healing—the three large areas within women's purview.

Little attention has been paid historically to the topic of "Greek Women and Healing" from a gender perspective, where fieldwork is of central importance, and where the focus is on how we present the voices of our informants alongside the historical sources. The proposed research intends to fill this gap, and therefore aims at establishing a new and heretofore neglected area of study. But why should we study women and healing?

Among the modern festivals I analyse in my aforementioned books, we find the most important Pan-Hellenic pilgrimage festival. The important festival celebrated on 15 August, is called *Ä KoimÄsis tÄs Theotokou* (the "Falling Asleep" or Dormition of the Mother of God), and during this healing festival, enormous crowds of pilgrims come to the Aegean island of Tinos to be healed by the miracle-working holy icon of the *Panagia*; that is, the "All-Holy One" (*Pan*: all/*Agia*: holy, Virgin Mary). Healing was also important during the ancient *Panathenaia* ("the Festival of all the Athenians"). It is particularly important to observe that most pilgrimage centresâa modern church or an ancient templeâconnected with healing rituals, are built over the tomb of a dead mediator, a Christian saint or an ancient hero or heroine. Furthermore, the tomb is often situated inside a cave where healing water also is found. But what is healing?

Healing

Medicine and religion have often been tackled together and in the Greek environment this is logical. The reason for this is that for the Greeks, religion is a kind

of medicine because the religious rituals are performed to ensure people's health and fertility in collaboration with the dead in the underworld. The religious festivals are therefore a unique area for analysing healing since they are also healing festivals, and people's intention in performing them is magico-religious.[2] This is manifested through the purifying procession which passes through the socially defined territory. The divine or deceased mediator also possesses healing power. Many of the symbols linked to the festival are important in themselves in relation to healing, particularly the icon, which represents a microcosm in itself, being made of all substances of the world. Ancient cult statues had the same effect. Processions during religious festivals as depicted in ancient vase paintings also illustrate decorated sacrificial bulls and musicians, paralleling the modern circumstances during many saints' festivals. Colours, ribbons, plants, purifying lemon water, candles, incense, blessed bread (Figure 2), amulets, and musical instruments are fertility and healing amulets. Other symbols associated with healing include nature formations at the place where the festival is performed, such as caves with springs where people fetch holy water (*agiasma*). Healing in this context means the way one copes with the critical transition periods in nature and human life; that is, how people handle the life-cycle passages of birth, illness, and death in interaction with each other and their divinities. The healing term encompasses purification, which we encounter in the processions, but also the healing that is important during illness (see infra for discussion). Today we encounter this mingling in the procession on the holy island of Tinos, when the icon is passed over the faithful to heal or purify them for the next year.



Figure 2. People fetching blessed bread, next to the candles, by the end of the liturgy, Tinos island, 14 August (Author's photograph).

As already mentioned, in contemporary Greece, the festival dedicated to the Dormition of the Panagia is celebrated on 15 August. On Tinos, this fertility and healing festival is particularly important due to several reasons. The church of the Panagia, *Euangelistrias*, owes its fame to a miraculous holy icon of the Annunciation, which was unearthed in a field in 1823. The miracles worked by this icon have made Tinos a centre of Pan-Orthodox worship, and pilgrimages are particularly made to this greatest shrine of Greek Orthodoxy during the Dormition. The Dormition of the Panagia is also an important ideological festival for the "New Greek nation-state of 1821", as illustrated through several ceremonies during the festival, particularly the actual procession when the icon is carried from the church to the harbour. In short, 15 August is a special day for Hellenism, combining religion with patriotism, and the Dormition on Tinos is a profound social event. The festival is also an excellent occasion to study the relation between the female and male world. Accordingly, there are several meanings and values connected to the festival and its rituals, popular and official, female and male, since the pilgrimage site on Tinos presents an interrelationship of history, ritual and gender. Here, different interestsâ□□sacred and secular, local and national, personal and officialâ□□all come together, we meet an intersection of social, religious and political life (cf. Håland, 2012a).

Similarly, in ancient Athens, the Panathenaia dedicated to the protecting city Goddess, Athena, was the most important festival. It was celebrated by the end of the first month (*Hekatombaion*, July-August) of the official political Athenian year. It celebrated the birth of the *polis* ("city-state"), but the importance of healing is also illustrated in connection with this main festival, since Athena under her aspect of *Hygieia* (Health) received a sacrifice. Furthermore, many rituals during her festival belong to women's life generally, and several rituals are particularly important in connection with the rite of passage undergone by girls at puberty to prepare them for marriage. They wove the *peplos* (dress) of the Goddess Athena. The design of the peplos of Athena was executed in bright colours (Figure 3): yellow and hyacinth (blue) are mentioned, in addition to murex purple, the most expensive and sought-after dye.

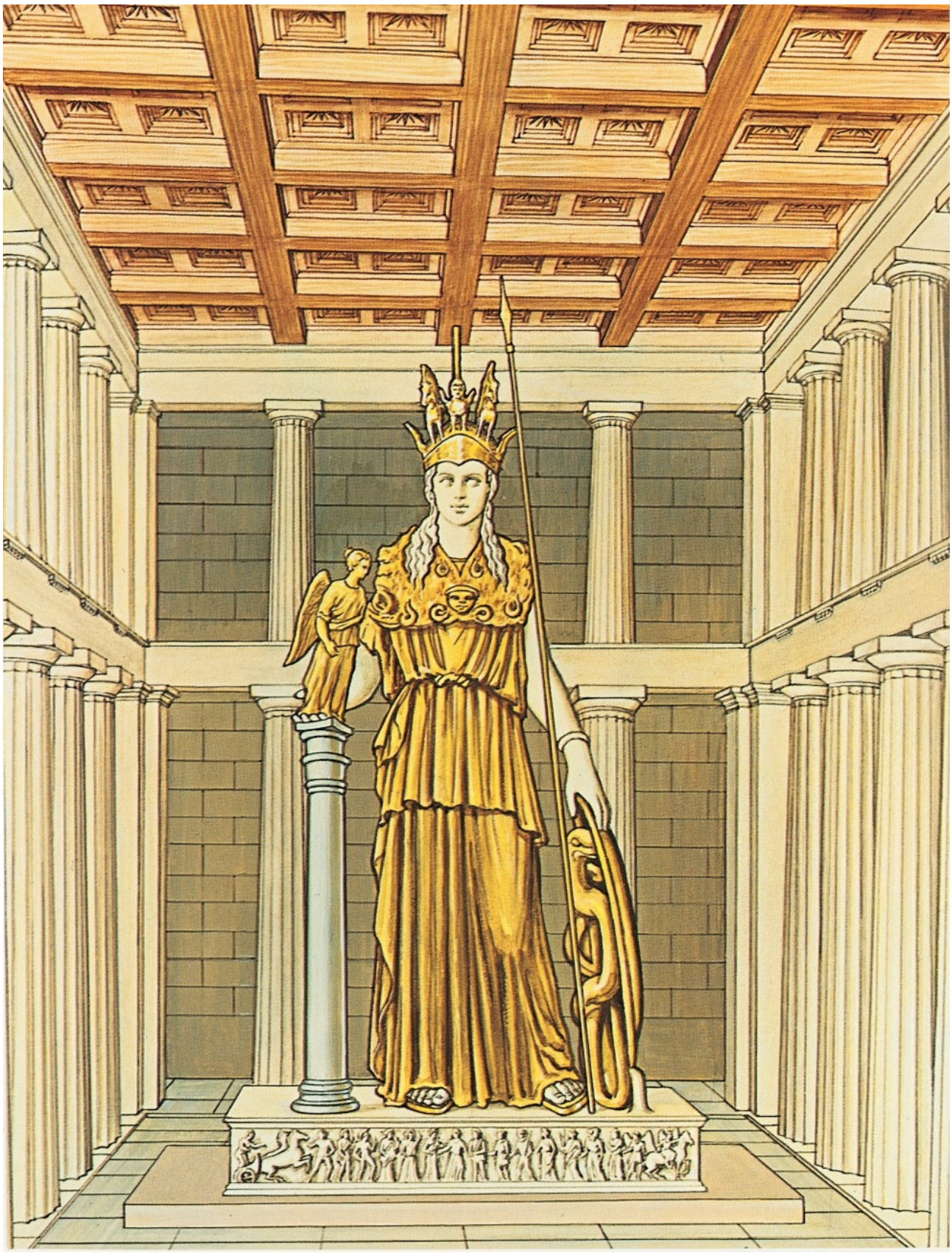


Figure 3. Reconstruction of the colossal gold and ivory statue of the Athena Parthenos by Phidias (438 BCE). Image from Andronicos, Manolis. *L'Acropole*. Athens: EkdotikÄ AthÄnÅn, S.A., 1980: 29.

But the dominant colour, the colour of the ground-weave, was saffron-yellow. The

“saffron peplos” of Athena (Eur. *Hec.* 465-74) is of a colour, which was part of a very old Aegean tradition intimately connected with women and their special Goddess. Early sources like Homer (*Od.* 15.250) and Hesiod (*Th.* 381, cf. also *HHA* 226) regularly use epithets like “saffron-robed” for female deities and heroines, from obvious ones like *Eos* (Dawn) to miscellaneous giantesses, nymphs, and muses. Aristophanes in his comedies invariably bedecks in saffron clothing the men he portrays as effeminate and those who are masquerading as women. Parts of the text of *Thesmophoriazousai*, “the women celebrating the Thesmophoria festival”, are full of yellow gowns (*Thesm.* 939-46). We also meet the colour in the tragedies: when Iphigeneia was offered as a sacrifice in Aulis, she was wrapped in saffron-coloured robes (Aesch. *Ag*. 238 f.). Today, Aegean girls use saffron to relieve menstruation pains (cf. Håland, 2006, 2012b). The link between colours and herbs in traditional Greek healing plant lore must be emphasised, but also the importance of particular colours in popular healing, such as red and blue. According to people’s cosmogonic perception, the blue colour is related to the sky, air, breath and oxygen, while red is the colour of fire and blood and the two in combination—air and fire—signify, and also secure and preserve, life.[3]

Animal sacrifice can generally be understood as “killing as a source to fertility”, from the logic behind “sympathetic magic”. Today, it is important that the blood from the sacrificial animal will flow into the earth, through the freshly dug hole close to the sacrificial tree and its roots, to ensure the continuity of the vegetable life, such as in the villages of Agia ElenÄ and Agia ParaskeuÄ. However, the living can fetch some of the life-giving blood from the bull at the summit of *Tauros* (Bull) mountain when they immerse their hands in the blood, and daub a cross on their foreheads or palms with the blood, “*gia to kalo*” (for the good of it). By coming into contact with the bull’s blood, people are protected against all kinds of sickness during the coming year. The red colour of the blood signifies both death and life, as illustrated by red Easter eggs today, while according to an ancient Greek myth Athena gave Erichthonios a special gift of two drops of blood from the dead Medusa, which, according to Euripides (*Ion*. 999-1015), both have miraculous power over the human body: one drop kills, while the other heals.

Like the dead mediators who particularly perform healing miracles on the anniversary of their death days, ancient Goddesses and Gods connected with death were also associated with healing. Strabo (14.1,44), for example, tells about a healing cult in the cave connected with the shrine of Pluto and Kore between Tralleis and Nysa. The cult has many parallels with other ancient healing rituals, reported by such authors as Herodotus and Pausanias, as well as rituals linked with modern Greek saints. Here it is relevant to mention that the ancient cult of heroes and the practice of sainthood within the Christian ideology, also have parallels to the *marabouts* (holy men) in North Africa (Håland, 2014).

The icons depicting the Panagia are the most venerated among all the Orthodox icons, and her icons are not only important in the Greek context, but also, for example,

in North Africa, where her weeping or sweating icons are considered to be important messages for the faithful, since the icons may tell them to do different things. I have not come across weeping icons in the Greek context, but an icon of the Panagia Kardiotissa, which was bleeding from the neck in 2001, cured several people, among others a woman who suffered from cancer (Vassilaki, 2003: 123). In 1992 my informants in the Athenian Akropolis caves told me that a miracle had occurred in the church dedicated to Agios Ephtimidios since they found blood on the icon of Jesus Christ (Håland, 2009: 91). A parallel to the sweating and bleeding icons of saints is found in ancient statues that were sweating, bleeding, and shedding tears (Plut. *Cor*. 38,1). This communication between deities and the believers is also present today when female pilgrims on Aegina tell the saint is opening his eyes during the holy night of his festival when they venerate him at one of his tombs (Figure 4). Like the Tinos pilgrims, they come for their *tama* (*ta*), their pledge which involves offering something to the miracle-working saint in return for his help with especially health problems. Many pilgrims cluster at his tomb to sing prayers over the "sleeping" saint, caress his face, or pass supplication papers over his body, particularly his arm, hand and face to make them holy. The same procedure is carried out with children's clothes and amulets. These women around the coffin perform their own individual rituals.



Figure 4. Women venerating the right hand tomb of Agios Nektarios, Aegina, 8 November 2011 (Author's photograph).

Today saints reside in their icons as the ancient Goddesses and Gods resided in their statues. Accordingly, today the modern pilgrims come to the sanctuary to see the icon, touch and kiss it and be healed, paralleling the ancient pilgrims going to a sanctuary such as Demeter's in Eleusis or the sanctuary of Asklepios in Epidauros to witness an event or seeing a spectacle and thus "be seeing". Both in modern and ancient Greece seeing comes before words, which means that a pilgrim can proclaim the sacred rites better with her eyes than with her tongue. In Eleusis the goal was indeed to reach the highest grade of initiation *epopteia*, to be *epoptÄ□s*, "one who sees" (Håland, 2017: Chap. 5), and in Epidauros one would seek to encounter the God in a vision to be healed. Seeing also includes all the famous votive gifts today paralleling the ancient equivalents, illustrating the efficiency of the pilgrimage. Demeter as a healing deity has not been emphasised much in earlier research, but is *inter alia* illustrated by her relationship with Asklepios, especially in connection with the cult at Eleusis. The same concerns Athena. Both Goddesses were the recipient of numerous votive gifts, most probably predominantly from women, and material from the modern context therefore may broaden the picture from the ancient world through a comparison. Furthermore, in modern Greece, as in antiquity, pilgrims sleep in the court of healing sanctuaries hoping to have a vision and be healed by the deity, the modern saint paralleling the ancient healing God. Today, the bones of a saint are especially important, since the colour of the bones of the dead foretells the future of the living. The condition of *Agios* (Saint) Gerasimos' corpse two years after his death, clearly signified his holy character, as was also the case with Agios Nektarios and *Agia* (Saint) Pelagia (Håland, 2014: Chap. 2). In this connection the smell is also important, since a condition for sanctity is not only the colour of the bones but also that they exude a pleasant, sweet and heavenly fragrance, paralleling the smell the women of Eleusis felt when Demeter revealed herself (Figure 5):

[T]he Goddess changed her stature and her looks, thrusting old age away from her: beauty spread round about her and a lovely fragrance was wafted from her sweet-smelling robes, and from the divine body of the Goddess a light shone afar, while golden tresses spread down over her shoulders, so that the strong house was filled with brightness as with lightning. (*HHD*. 189-190, 277-279)



Figure 5. Demeter, enthroned and extending her hand in benediction toward the kneeling Metaneira, who offers the *triune* wheat that is a recurring symbol of the mysteries. Varrese Painter, red-figure *hydria* (water jar), ca. 340 BCE, from Apulia. Downloaded 22.11.2018 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleusinian_Mysteries#/media/File:Eleusinian_hydria_Antikensammlung_Berlin_1984.46_n2.jpg.

The light around her parallels the light around the Panagia when appearing in a vision for the nun Pelagia, on Tinos in 1823.[4] According to believers, the cotton wool, which has come in contact with the holy skull of saint Pelagia, has thereby obtained some of its sweet smell, an important sign of its sanctity, although a non-believer might claim that the smell derives simply from the lemon-sprinkled cotton with which the nun wipes off the glass top above the skull. For the faithful, however, it is treated as an important amulet. Moreover, amulets made by nuns on Tinos today contain cotton which has been in contact with the holy skull of Agia Pelagia, dried flowers from the *Epitaphios* (funeral) of Christ, and earth from the hole where the miraculous icon was found on Tinos.

During processions at saint's feasts and Easter today in many places along the road

stands a woman holding her burning censer (Figure 6). A woman who throws incense on the embers in her censer as a holy icon or the Easter Coffin approaches is rewarded by the priest who pauses to say a prayer for her, because she has let the body of Christâ□□alternatively, the holy saint's iconâ□□pass through sweet-smelling air. By many houses there is also someone who sprinkles lemon water on the passers-by.

Furthermore, on their way down from the monastery on Tinos during the procession at the festival dedicated to the vision of Agia Pelagia, many women are busy collecting herbs, flowers and green leaves in the grass growing on the hillside. The herbs are thought to be particularly holy when the icon is carried in procession, thus paralleling the holy earth traditionally collected on Tinos as well as the "dust" from Gerasimos' tomb. One may also mention the analogous ritual in the Italian village of Cocullo where people are eager to fill their handkerchiefs with "Saint Domenico's Earth" from the heap in one of the recesses in the church during his festival.

How will this relate to the ancient period, where colours, amulets and sacred objects, smell and visions, or the encounter with the divinity through a dream was also important to be healed? Already in the very beginning of Homer's *Iliad* (1.14 ff.) we are presented to the meaning of wool on a staff, which in a wider context is connected to hair, life and healing. During religious rituals the tasting of bread and various drinks, such as the ancient Eleusinian sacred drink *kykeÅ□n* (*HHD*. 208-210), a special mixture made of mixed barley meal, water and pennyroyal, is central. Furthermore, both in the ancient and in the modern worlds, Goddesses or saints, preferably reveal themselves to female worshippers.



Figure 6. Some house altars awaiting the procession with the head of Agios Nektarios, Aegina, 9 November 2011 (Author's photograph).

Concerning the distinction between disease or the medical doctors' objective diagnosis on the basis of signs (that is, measurable changes in bodily functions, for example, blood pressure) and illness, or the patient's subjective experience of the disorder (for example headache that cannot be observed or measured by doctors),[5] we encounter the same distinction in the Greek material as well, in the terms *arrÅstia* (illness) and *astheneia* (disease). The first category encompasses illnesses, "doctors do not know" which can manifest as headache, insomnia, lacking appetite, worries, sufferings, pains, grief, depression, and so on. An illness can, for instance, be caused by someone having thrown the *Evil* (envious) *Eye* on another person (cf. Håland, 2017: Chap. 3). To have been stricken by the Evil Eye may manifest in various physical symptoms, such as headache, or other accidents, and may be healed with various kinds of divination and spells that invoke the healing power of Christ and the Panagia. Although the Church officially opposes magic, people often go to church in order to have the priest "remove it", to have the curse lifted. Actually, anyone can be stricken by the Evil Eye. Furthermore, like many of the illnesses that are accepted by the official Church, and which are believed to be brought about by God to punish or test someone, or by the Devil while possessing a person, people consider these to be illnesses without any natural explanation, and so "neither for doctors" or a—mostly

female—healer’s herbal teas or compresses (fomentations: the application of hot moist substances to the body to ease pain). These are also the illnesses that people go on pilgrimage in order to get rid of—as they also do when struck by serious illnesses or diseases which cannot be treated by other, especially medical means—because religious healing is the only hope (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Women drink holy, healing and fertility-ensuring water from the "Life-Giving Spring" (ZÅ□odochos PÄ□gÄ□), Tinos, 14 August 2007 (Author's photograph).

Traditionally it is especially women who have been, and still are, afflicted by

ailments which the professional medical doctors have characterised as “neurika” and for which they, especially after the 1960s, have prescribed various kinds of calming or soothing drugs as curing remedies, paralleling the ancient male misinformation about the female body and women’s ailments, and following erroneous therapies for female complaints.[6] The problem is that neither the modern drugs nor the ancient remedies, which generally was to ordain constantly intercourse followed by constant pregnancy—as indeed male medical doctors actually have also ordained until quite recently—do not have the intended effects, and therefore the modern women find other solutions, as women have always done.

Since the healing rituals thus in general are connected with the domestic sphere, where women are the dominant power, presenting the “female sphere” from a female perspective will help us to deconstruct the ancient male-authored sources, which present persistent male views about women and their magic healing rituals. One may, for instance, mention a story from 1850 found in the Tinos archive about the wise woman or healer who collects healing herbs and is regarded as a “witch”. Is she really an evil person because she is presented as being a magician and therefore seen as one who works against the church’s ideology? The story seems very similar to some of Plutarch’s and, for instance, Homer’s tales from the ancient world in connection with women’s magical knowledge of healing herbs and plants using these in an evil way. Still, it is my opinion that one may be able to read between the lines of these male authors, by comparing the evidence with modern realities in the female sphere, as will be discussed in the next section.[7] The reason to this is that the aforementioned Greek woman from 1850 actually reminds about Kirke who was an especially competent Goddess of magic, and was referred to as a skilled sorceress by Homer, when she mixes a potion and cast drugs into the food, while simultaneously using her wand. In the *Odyssey* she uses two kinds of *pharmakon*, the bad—or baneful drug—and the good one (*pharmakon allo*).[8] In another—and later—connection we learn about her “sprinkling baleful drugs and poison juices over them, while invoking the aid of Night and all the Gods of Night from Erebos and Chaos, and desired the aid of Hekate with long, wailing cries” (Ov. *Met*. 14.399-415). This is also reminiscent of the very Medea, when being active at the graveyard and also enchanting the giant guardian snake of the golden fleece with her song while with a cut spray of juniper, dipping and drawing untampered charms from her mystic brew to cast sleep over the snake (Ap. Rhod. 4.144-158). Nonetheless, a similar procedure was also used in the treatment of Asklepios (Pind. *Pyth*. 3.51-53), and as we will see in the next section, Medea actually also had a positive reptation. Furthermore, not only men accused women, since women might also be accused by other women, or accuse other women for using potions, such as the one who curses the woman who accused her for making pharmaka against her own husband.[9] Here one might mention, that today a woman charmer always first makes the sign of the cross saying “come Christ and Panagia”, alternatively “Christ and the Holy Spirit”, thus illustrating that without the help of Christ and the Panagia

the spell does not work.[10] Perhaps this was also the logic of the wise woman on Tinos in the 1850s?

Furthermore, the Hippocratic doctor, for instance, criticised magicians ("purifiers") and others who tried to cure people with methods the former considered superstitious (Hp. *Morb.Sacr*. 2-4), while earlier as today there existed illnesses, "doctors do not know", and these illnesses have traditionally been in the hands of women, especially wise women. In Euripides' *Hippolytos*, for instance, Phaedra seems to be suffering from something like the wandering womb, imposed by a deity, and her nurse tells her: "[i]f your malady is one of those that are unmentionable, here are women to help set it to rights. If your misfortune may be spoken of to men, speak so that the thing may be revealed to doctors" (Eur. *Hipp*. 293-296). Her advice reminds very much about the Hippocratics lamenting women they regard as inexperienced, feeling shame when suffering gynaecological diseases,[11] and the recommended women who might "help set it to rights" are most probably not those the male doctors would like to deal with, regarding these women as competitors.[12] This fear of competition might also be why women who are those who in general traditionally have had most knowledge of plants and herbs, later were described as using their knowledge maliciously, as we have already seen in connection with Kirke. Pliny, for instance, tells us that "[t]here was nothing more highly admired than an intimate knowledge of plants, in ancient times". He continues stating that the intimate knowledge of plants has traditionally been confined to females, and typical names mentioned in the same breath are Medea and Kirke (Plin. *HN*. 25.5). From Apollonius Rhodius we learn that it was Hekate who taught Medea "to handle magic herbs with exceeding skill" (Ap. Rhod. 3.525-533). However, the descriptions of Medea and Kirke as "early investigators of plants…deteriorated as they were passed along over the centuries", as already illustrated with the fate of Kirke, who along with Medea were skilled root cutters, and in the aforementioned reference to Pliny, he reflects on the situation from Homer to himself (Plin. *HN*. 25.5). On the other hand, although the portrayals of women and their plant lore deteriorated in the male produced sources, women are still those most knowledgeable in plant lore in Greece, and have evidently handed down their knowledge from woman to woman throughout the years, despite what scholars have told us by studying male produced sources from a one-sided perspective .[13] This will automatically be reproduced, only if we base our research on the male ideological sphere and value-system.[14] 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. 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.[15] So, by taking account of both spheres, we realise that they are complementary to each other and we can create a fuller picture of human experience. Accordingly, the one-sided analysis several male scholars presents of the gendered relationship must be read from another approach, from the female sphere.

Women and the Female Sphere

In "patriarchal" Mediterranean society, women are associated with practical religion. In Italy and Greece women are the guardians of their family's spiritual health, given the role of prayers and vows in healing and protection. Accordingly, modern women light the oil lamp or candle in front of the family icons, and thus, parallel ancient women also taking care of the household cult. The interactions with the divine powers still are everyday activities. Fertility cult, healing and death cult are deeply connected with the domestic sphere, where women dominate. The "female sphere" is essential when studying such personal phenomena as ideologies and long-lasting mentalities, represented by religion, behaviour, values, customs, faith, worship, and popular beliefs. While popular religion has been researched for several decades (see, *inter alia*, Mikalson, 1987), the topic remains to be seen from the female sphere. By using this approach, we also discover that what we usually call "macro-" and "micro-society"; that is, the "public" and "domestic spheres", may, in fact, have different meanings than those 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, where the decisions are made. Hence, it is important to search out to what extent the official ideology is dependent on these cults, and so on the female sphere to manifest itself.

The "male sphere" is usually connected with the official world, and the female with the domestic world, but as stated, this does not imply that the female sphere is marginal and the male not, as some researchers have claimed.[16] Marginalisation 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", 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. There are however, public spaces where women dominate. One of these is the cemetery. Women, in groups or alone, also constitute the main people going on pilgrimages to ensure their own or their families' health (Figure 4), as they also did formerly such as during the *AdÅnia* (Adonis festival, Theoc. *Id*. 15). On Kos the ancient pilgrim women also fetched healing bread (Herod. *Mime* 4.1-95, esp. 93-95) as they also do today (cf. Figure 2). When working with this material, one therefore realises that the division between female and male spheres in Greek society may, under certain circumstances, be blurred. The world of the domestic and familial or the world of women, the female sphere, covers a more extended area and has greater power than has generally been assumed.

Generally, Greek women and their lives have been analysed from a Western male perspective. Based on this approach, both ancient and modern Greek women have been categorised as lacking freedom, dependent, secluded, and not living a full life. Accounts of women written by men, and by many academic women, portray them as passive or subservient. Even if several female researchers, as, for instance, Constantina Nadia Seremetakis and Juliet du Boulay, have carried out fieldwork among women, in the female sphere, one may claim that they do not focus adequately on women's values, as they are still influenced by Western male ideological values, and read their material from a male perspective.[17] A parallel is Joan B. Connelly, who in an analysis of ancient Greek priestesses seeks to find her own Western female predecessors, while ancient Greek women do not necessarily have to be priestesses nor to be like modern Western women, as she thinks. Perhaps ordinary ancient Greek women were not so interested in going to the theatre or being priestesses, since they might have been more interested in being with other women in female public spaces? We do not know. As I have argued elsewhere (Håland, 2017: Chap. 1 and 7, cf. Håland, 2012c), we might nonetheless find more fruitful comparative material in the Mediterranean and Middle East, than in the North of Europe and the USA, the point being that it is better to use comparative material from today's Mediterranean societies to get new approaches on our ancient texts. Conducting research from the "female sphere" which still exists in Mediterranean society generally and in Greece particularly, in fact changes the picture of women's lives. We learn that Greek women have other values and interests than men and academic women from northern Europe and the USA, and it is important to discover if women's values were similar or different in ancient society. Therefore, to conduct fieldwork among women and men in modern Greece is vital when working with ancient and modern sources, since modern Greek women's perspectives on their own lives and experiences differ from contemporary men's, and since these latter have similar perspectives to ancient men, the modern material therefore supplements the ancient written sources composed by men. These do not make up for the paucity of ancient women's testimonies, however, they may provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the values and experiences of ancient Greek women than if we relied solely on the ancient, male-originated texts. It should be stated that the importance of tracking real women in the ancient world has recently also been recognised by others, but without including Greek material on the topic of women and healing.[18]

Since the healing rituals are first and foremost associated with the female sphere and this researcher is a woman who continues her "wanderings" both in the "female" and "male" sphere during my fieldwork in modern Greece, while conducting parallel research on ancient sources, mainly written by men, hence making a comparative analysis between the modern and ancient material, I hope my researches may be a contribution to a female perspective on ancient texts.

In Greece, women are connected with birth, nurturance and the care for the dead; they are nurturing mothers, and by their activities as care-takers they manage and

control the fundamental course of life. Many symbols and rituals in the festivals illustrate this and are regarded as belonging to the female domain. Religion and the rituals represented in the festivals and in connection with the life-cycle passages seem to be an "overdose" or intensification of the rituals performed in daily life. By analysing the healing rituals then, the hope is to gain further insight into the meaning and importance of the customs and values related to fundamental principles within the "ideological entirety" that constitutes a festival, and into male texts, since their interest and theme is the male ideology. They must therefore be deconstructed and considered from a gyno-inclusive perspective by examining them in conjunction with information from the female sphere.

According to Plutarch (*Mor*. 950 f.), women in Greece have a double consciousness about their own existence and about men's representations of it. Therefore, it is of vital 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 complete and not a lame and partial society. Thus, it is important to compare the male- and very few female-produced ancient sources with information collected from the modern female and male spheres: Is the information found in the few sources produced by women, such as Sappho (e.g., *Fr*. 28, 211a, see also, e.g., *Fr*. 66, 97, 134; AP. 6.273), consistent with the information given by ancient and modern men, or are these sources more in accordance with the information given by modern women, for example in relation to rituals performed in healing contexts at home and during pilgrimages? The most famous ancient representative of "la femme fatale", Helen of Troy,[19] was renowned for her knowledge of drugs or rather knowledge of pharmakon (Plut. *Mor*. 614bc) and the handling of pharmakon is a typical female occupation, as we have already seen in the former section. She had her cunning of drugs of healing from another woman (*Od*. 4.219-234). Here one may remind of the importance of smell or a heavenly fragrance in connection with sanctity and healing. In ancient sources the good smell was connected with Olympian Gods (cf. Hes. *Th*. 557) as opposed to the stench and decay connected with the Chthonian Furies according to the ideologist Aeschylus (*Eum*. 53), who also associated them with snakes, women, female, dangerous and unruly aspects. The Furies, also called the *Erinyes*, the daemons of death, however, were also worshipped as *Eumenides*, "Kind Spirits" (cf. Aesch. *Eum*. 1021-1038, cf. 854-857, 778-891, 126, *Cho*. 1050), and seen as the *Semnai* (the Holy or August, Paus. 1.28,6, cf. 2.11,4) with power over life and death and thus the fertility of the polis, and may have been worshipped by women in particular, who dedicated them meals. Even if the healers we read about in the male-produced sources are men, be they snake-born men, priests or a God, such as Asklepios who was followed by snakes (cf. Hp. *Ep*. 15), certain female divinities loom in the background (Håland, 2011). These include Angitia, Hekate and Kirke, although they are more famous as witches, as already pointed out, although Kirke evidently had a positive reputation as well, at least originally. Another is Medea, who once was spilling out her drugs and so made Thessaly abound in healing herbs (Aristid. *Or*. 38.15). She also had the power to enchant snakes (Ap. Rhod. 4.144-153, cf. 3.1211-1215), as already illustrated. According to Euripides (*Ion*. 25 f.), it was the custom of Athenian mothers

to protect their babies with golden amulets in the form of snakes. It might be possible to find out more about women's real connection with the healing of, for example, snake-bites by reading the male-produced sources in combination with comparative material from later periods and other cultures. With few exceptions, such as the snakes of the Panagia in the modern village of Markopoulo on the island of Kephallonia (Håland, 2011) and the ancient fertility Goddesses, female divinities are generally negatively perceived in connection with snakes, as if this suggests they use their power maliciously. How will male-produced texts' often critical and simultaneously paradoxical[20] but mostly inadequate information about women carrying out rituals in connection with healing (cf. e.g., Paus. 2.11,6; Plut. *Per.* 38.2; Pl. *Leg.* 909e-910a) be understood from a female perspective (cf. *IG* 4² 121-2)? From a female point of view, what is termed witchcraft by men (cf. Ap. Rhod. 3.838-867; Theoc. *Id*. 2), may be an acceptable way of practicing healing, for instance snake-bites. The aforementioned description of Medea enchanting the snake while with a spray of juniper, dipping and drawing charms from her brew (Ap. Rhod. 4.144-158) may allude to this. The story thus gets a new meaning, especially also when seen in connection with her reputed spilling out drugs making Thessaly abound in healing herbs (Aristid. *Or.* 38.15). The bites of snakes were generally healed with plants, such as *Agnos/Vitex agnus castus* (Dsc. *de Materia Medica*, 1.135) and the all healing plant, *Panakeia* (Theophr. *HP*. 9.7,2.), both of which were closely connected with women.

As already mentioned, Asklepios owes his status and popularity to the healing of sickness. His daughter, simply named *Hygieia*, Health, also illustrates the healing aspect. News of the miracle cures drew hordes of visitors to Epidauros, the "home" or original cult centre of Asklepios (cf. Paus. 2.26,8) â□□located in a sheltered valley with abundant woods and water sourcesâ□□and gave rise to a regular health business. The pilgrims who arrived in ancient Epidauros where presented to *stÄ□lai* telling about the healing miracles of Epidauros (*IG* 4² 1.121-122; cf. Edelstein & Edelstein, 1998; LiDonnici, 1995). Their content was built on orally spread folk traditions and pictures on votives and their arrangements were certainly not unintentional, since the first two inscriptions told about Asklepios as provider of midwifery (*IG* 4² 121-2,I.1-2=LiDonnici, 1995: 84-87 [no. A1-A2]). One may wonder if this propaganda was a way to enter into competition with wise women (see, though, Hp. *Carn*. 19.1,15 for their value) and female midwives who have been the managers of this system both in antiquity and until modern times. It reminds of male medical doctors writing on the birth sphere, which does not mean that they by writing theoretical works on the topic thereby managed to invade and appropriate the sphere, as some female scholars have assumed they did. Perhaps it rather indicates that wise women and midwives were the strongest competitors Asklepios had? To shed new light on these topics, it is important to compare ancient miracle accounts with the letters, mostly from women, telling about miracles that are found in in archives of modern pilgrimage centres, like the one on Tinos, and talk with the women going to these centres.[21] It is also crucial to reconsider ancient sources telling about male deities taking over female cult, such as Asklepios' former appropriation of the healing power of Water-Nymphs, for instance in

the Akropolis cave where the Panagia under her attribute of the "Life-Giving Spring" is worshipped today (Håland, 2009). It is also important to observe that his *iatric* (healing) daughters are personifications of functions, *Panakeia* (Schol. Ar. *Plut*. 701, cf. 639), for instance, is the "universal remedy", actually an "all healing herb", as already mentioned. In a healing scene from Aristophanes' *Plutus*, Panakeia is also related to the healing power ascribed to the red colour *per se*, when she covers the head and face of an ill person with a purple cloth, thus assisting her father (Ar. *Plut*. 731).[22] This positive information challenges other sources critics of a woman handling purple wool (cf. supra on Theoc. *Id*. 2, e.g., 1 ff.). As mentioned, the red colour is generally linked to blood and also life, and often combined with the colour blue in healing rituals. Today, therefore, in popular healing rituals the body of an ill person suffering with breathing problems may be swept with a red followed by a blue cloth. It is also told that in case of bronchitis, being afraid it would turn into tuberculosis, the mother used to murmur a special incantation to nurse while smearing the body of the ill child with a red and then blue cloth. Next, she gave the child marshmallow to drink. The marshmallow is often called the red, because usually its flower has a red colour.[23] The colour red was also adapted by the priests of Asklepios, who were clad in purple robes, while their hair was bound with a white fillet (Ov. *Met*. 15.676). Originally, Panakeia was, like her sisters, an independent Goddess and was linked with the God of medicine only later. One may wonder whether the male elements in the classical period and later, such as the power of Asklepios, nevertheless together with his daughter Hygieia, and his other daughters were intermezzos.

It is also crucial to compare "approved" and "non-approved" modern cult, when dealing with ancient written sources, whose authors often condemn cult carried out by women and "outsiders" (cf. Hp. *Morb. Sacr*. 18; Pl. *Leg*. 909e-910a). Seen in conjunction with the modern realities, the ancient male-produced sources might be tapped for new and unprecedented information. The Tinos shrine's archive contains a wealth of material which has not been studied previously. Miracle accounts as written in the letters from pilgrims have been little tapped as sources to especially the women's world, and using them in conjunction with similar stories from the ancient material, they are likely to provide much information seen from the women's perspective and so being a contrast to official male views, modern and ancient. The latter might be represented by the way much of the already published modern material is selected, such as the three volumes S. Lagouros (n.d.-2002) has published on the miracles from Tinos. The reason to this is that the material published by Lagouros, such as the two stories about a paralysed boy and the dumb Sophia (Lagouros, n.d. 125-129) belong to the sources that the Pan-Hellenic Holy Foundation of the Euangelistrias of Tinos selects to be shared with people through official publications. The Foundation's influence in selecting which information gets presented to people is also evident in the way they tell people that the statements are given in the witness of church employees. It is therefore important to compare these with some of the stories I have heard pilgrim women tell themselves, and also miracle accounts from other pilgrimage centres (see, *inter alia*, Despiri, 2002).

Robert Parker (2011) has recently addressed the methodological problems in the study of Greek religion, albeit without giving any clear methodological statement. He also asks for a deeper study of ancient Greek women's religiosity. The healing rituals modern women carry out belong to a vast subject of major importance for understanding European culture and it is mandatory both to study the ancient Greek heritage and to undertake fieldwork in the same geographical region. Unfortunately, scholars of antiquity generally do not carry out fieldwork themselves (see, *inter alia*, Lloyd, 1983; Dean-Jones, 1994; Demand, 1994; Walcot, 1999), but rely on the results from other researchers, mostly ethnographers (*inter alia*, Peristiany, ed., 1966; Machin, 1983; Delaney, 1987; du Boulay 1974, 2009, cf. also Bourdieu, 1998, see also Håland, 2012c, 2017: Chap. 7 for discussion). They have thereby problems assessing the impact of folk-belief on the views of, e.g., the Hippocratics and Aristotle by help of an informed comparison. Being aware of the importance of using oral culture and its relationship to written as well as visual culture, may let us use both for historical and modern research questions. This is especially important when working on topics related to women's rituals and their relation to the male-produced sources, where ambiguous and paradoxical statements often illustrate that it is possible to read a double meaning between the lines, which might become clearer by comparing with modern circumstances encountered in the field. Comparison can make familiar what appears strange; make comprehensible what seems paradoxical.

That women often are mentioned in a negative light by those who adopted their female knowledge, such as medical experts taking over their plant lore, parallels Asklepios' competition with wise women or midwifes. Also, that former studies of sources (such as Lloyd, 1983; Demand, 1994; Totelin, 2015) tell us men took over women's knowledge, does not, however, meant that this knowledge disappeared from women and their female sphere. We learn this when we familiarise with women and turn our attention to what women do. Many sources tell us about wise women throughout history. In the male written sources, they are often dangerous, such as the ancient Medea, Kirke or the witch from the 1850s. On the other hand, it is crucial to note that the male written sources very often tell us about herbs or plants that stimulate or provoke the menstrual flow (Plin. *HN*. 20.54 on pennyroyal, linked to Demeter, cf. supra on *HHD*. 208-210), brings about abortion (Dsc. *de Materia Medica*, 4.151), uses of plants as contraceptives (cf. Hp. *Nat. Mul.* 32 (Littré Vol. 7: 364) or plants used to be pregnant (KapsÅmenoo-ChatzitakÄ, 1997: 173). Sokrates' mother was said to be a midwife (Aubert, 1989: 429, cf. Pl. *Tht*. 149cd). He also depended on "his teacher", Diotima from Mantineia, the wise woman who also was known for having helped the Athenians in connection with the plague,[24] and this dependence clearly is also present in other relationships between the two sexes, where men depend on female knowledge. In my opinion it is naïve to assume men originally were especially knowledgeable or interested in these uses of plants, and much of the knowledge the written sources have handed over to us were most probably obtained from women, without that indicating that women ceased having and so continued to use their knowledge within their own sphere. Although it is impossible to prove this opinion, parallel knowledge from later and other societies in which women have always been

concerned with this expertise, might help us see the statements in the male produced writings from new perspectives. It seems that the ancient world was not very different from today's Lesbos where traditional knowledge of plant collection has been preserved in the rural society on the island and is mainly transmitted by women to people who are active in land management, who tell that during fieldwork, men were contacted to be interviewed, but these indicated that women would be the most suitable to talk with (Strenchok, Dimitrakopoulos, Kizos, & Pitta, 2018, esp. 4, cf. 9-10). The reason to this is that women are able to give much useful and detailed information on the traditional use of plants in the region, given that women are the typical knowledge keepers in plant collection and usage and are responsible for the dissemination of ethnobotanical knowledge as is the general rule in the Mediterranean. I have also experienced from Tinos that women are those to take the long walks to distant fields and collect plants on their way during the low season within the agricultural year (late summer, early autumn and late winter) and also use plants for cooking, medicinal and cosmetic usages, as do also other women in the Mediterranean. This means that it is most likely that the information we read about in the male produced sources, or the "male medicine" was dependent on traditional—most often—female knowledge then, as now. Likewise, the traditional female knowledge did not disappear, even if it is very difficult to find traces of it in the male produced texts, which therefore need to be compared with later realities. With regard to the Hippocratic doctors claiming to have listened to the voice of women (cf. also Hp. *Carn*. 19.1,15), one may compare them with the modern realities where teaching doctors at medical schools urge their male students to do exactly this, to search out the wise woman in the village in order to exploit her female knowledge in traditional healing, especially women's knowledge in plant lore.[25]

The modern religious festivals are dedicated to Christian saints; that is, holy dead persons (Håland, 2014), and they present ritual similarities to ancient festivals which were held in the same geographical region, and which were especially concerned with pilgrimage and healing rituals. Pilgrimage is a kind of medical travel, and the pilgrims are patients without borders. The problems and fruitfulness of using the notion pilgrim and pilgrimage on pre-Christian religions has already been examined (Elsner & Rutherford, 2005), and I assume the modern festivals can be compared with similar ancient festivals. Although Fritz Graf (2015: Chap. 10) recently has claimed that the differences between pagan incubation and Christian dream healing miracles are too great to ignore, from my fieldwork among Greeks and comparisons between ancient (Hp. *Insomn*.; Ar. *Plut*. 653-695, 707-747) and modern written sources from Tinos (Lagouros, n.d.-2002), I would argue the topic needs more research.

Many sources today illustrate people being visited by the Panagia in visons or dreams similar to the ancient written testimonies of successful healings—*iamata*—that were inscribed on stÄlai and hung on walls in the temple of Asklepios at Epidauros.

While both men and women, of course, dedicate votive gifts today as in antiquity, mostly women come to healing sanctuaries with votives, which actually include all

kinds of sacrifices or offerings vowed to deities while searching their help, most often—but not exclusively—during an illness, such as organising a festival, dedicating various material offerings, such as a church (or renovating a church) today, or other items, including votive lamps, an orange tree made of silver, a marble fountain, a silver- or gold- plated ex-voto illustrating various items, such as a house or a ship, but especially body parts. One may note that the modern word “tama” comes from Ancient Greek *tazÅ*, to promise, and similarly to the modern tamata illustrating body parts, we also have votives from Korinth, predominantly in terracotta (Figure 8), and from Athens, predominantly in marble, where also the “cure” followed a ritual, during which patients washed in a sacred spring, offered at an altar, and then retired to the *stoa* (a porch or portico not attached to a larger building) where the mysterious process of incubation (*egkoimÄsis*) was assisted by incense from the altars (cf. Paus. 2.27,1 f.). This and religious excitement produced dreams, through the medium of which Asklepios was supposed to cure (cf. Paus. 2.27.3).

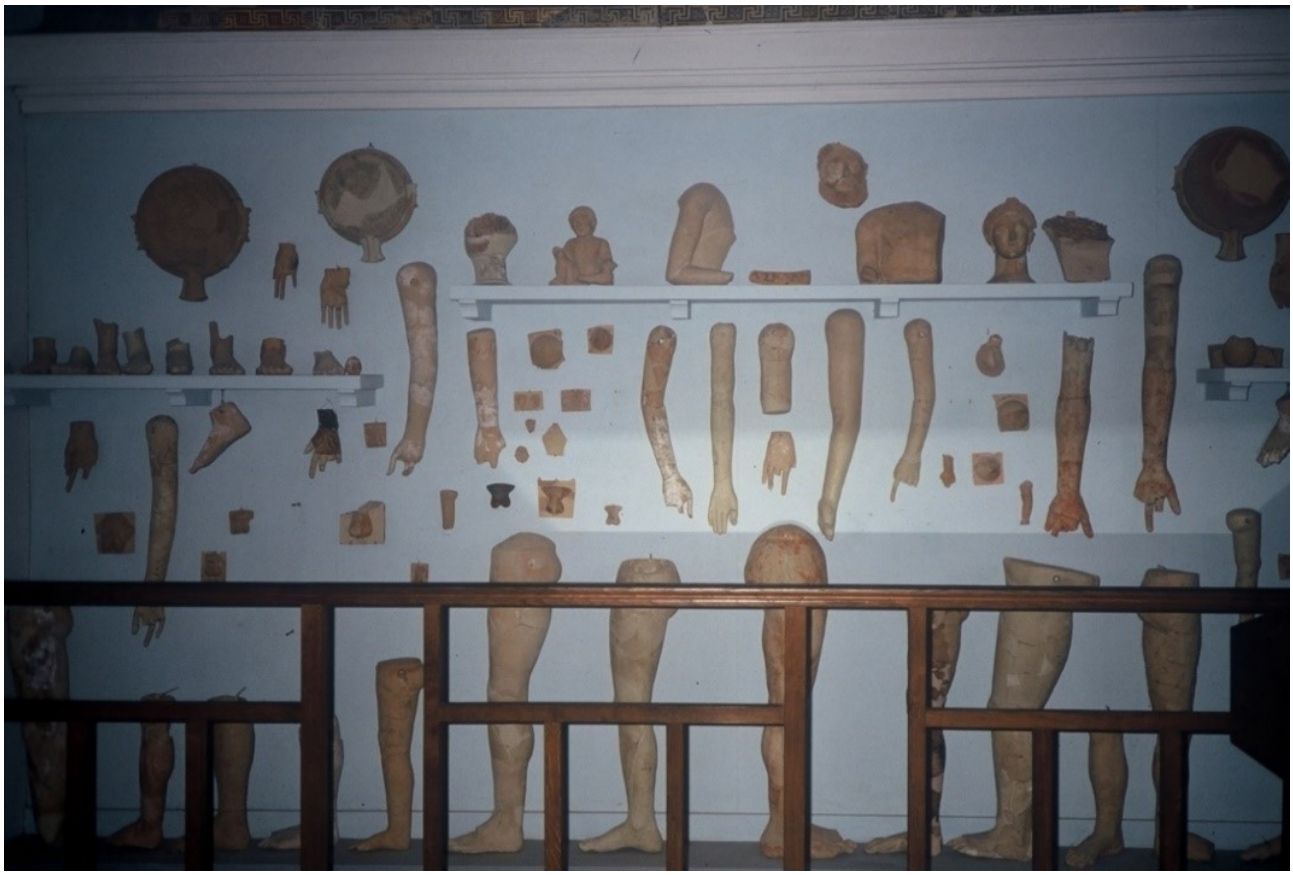


Figure 8. Votive offerings of body parts in terracotta from the Asklepieion at Korinth, late fifth-fourth centuries BCE (Author’s photograph).

Many ex-voto tablets to Asklepios and Hygieia have been found showing the portion of the anatomy treated. These were fixed to a wall or in the columns; larger votive stÄlai, some showing the God visiting sick patients in their sleep, were affixed to the stoa steps. The image on a votive marble relief from the Asklepieion of Piraeus (Figure 9) shows Hygieia, standing behind Asklepios, thus supervising the healing procedure

carried out by her father, a topic which must be stressed. The importance of touch in the healing process is clearly depicted as well. Furthermore, the picture illustrates the healing of a woman, and might be a parallel to one of the stories from Epidauros (e.g., *IG* 4^2 121-2, II.21=LiDonnici, 1995: 100-101 no. B 1 [21]) or elsewhere in the ancient world.



Figure 9. Votive marble relief from the Asklepieion of Piraeus, Archaeological museum of Piraeus, Classical period (inv. no 405). Downloaded 07.04.2019 from *http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/4/eh431.jsp?obj_id=4553&mm_id=533*

Many votive gifts found in the sanctuaries of the Goddess Eileithyia, who protected women in childbirth, such as those votive gifts found in her sanctuary by the Ilissos river in Athens (which was furthermore close to a sanctuary of Artemis, who was also worshipped with the epithet of Eileithyia) were given as thanks for an easy delivery or protecting the children depicted on the votives.[26] A woman in Athens might also make a dedication to Eileithyia "in fulfilment of a vow" (*euchÄ□n*), mentioning the Goddess' "rescuing power".[27] Moreover, numerous epigrams in the *Greek Anthology* demonstrate women's invocation of Goddesses. Girls dedicated their childhood toys to Artemis before marriage, since she would determine their fate in childbirth (AP. 6.280). Later, their invocation of Artemis, Eileithyia, and other helpers in childbirth was common, and one epigram thanks Eileithyia for the safe delivery of a

daughter.[28] Ambrosia, for instance, dedicated her headbands and robe to Eileithyia after bringing “forth the double fruit of her womb” (AP. 6.200). Furthermore,

“Euphrante, when she was happily delivered of the burden of her womb, dedicated in the temple of Artemis her sandals and beautiful headband, and this scented curl cut from her lovely locks, her *zÅnÄ* [girdle], too, and this fine under-vest, and the bright band that encompassed her bosom.” (AP. 6.201).

The dedication of hair was also common in other healing contexts, such as when women offered locks of their hair or “strips of Babylonian raiment” to the image of Hygieia (Paus. 2.11,6). These women parallel the modern women who dedicate their hair or other personal items to the icon of the Panagia, thus fulfilling their vow to her.



Figure 10. Boeotian red-figured krater (ca. 400 BCE), Athens N.M. (inv. no. 1393) (photograph by Irini Miari). © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Hellenic Organization of

Also to be considered in the context of female sacred space is a painting on a red-figured krater from Boeotia (ca. 400 BCE), found in the National Archaeological Museum Athens (Figure 10) which shows anatomical votives as well. A young woman is depicted carrying a jug in one hand and an offering-plate of fruits, cakes, and a lighted candle in the other. She approaches a seated Goddess depicted in larger scale. From above hang two votive legs and a votive hand as well as three wreaths. In the center of the image, there is a convergence of hands as the worshipper holds up the offerings, the Goddess extends her right hand to receive them, and the votive hand hanging above almost touches the Goddess's hand, emphasising the aspect of gift exchange in the scene. We do not know who this Goddess is. She might be Demeter, since the God Kabeiros in the form of the Dionysos Chthonios is depicted on the other side of the krater. Likewise, Demeter and Dionysos were the most important deities of the agricultural society. That the Goddess receives cakes also points in the direction of Demeter. On the other hand, cakes were a common offering to the daughters of Asklepios as well, and, regarded in connection with, for instance, the aforementioned marble relief from Piraeus (Piraeus Museum no. 405=Figure 9) and the *Orphic Hymn to Hygieia*,[29] it should be possible to propose that she might be Hygieia. Under all circumstances, the image suggests the close association of the divinity with offerings within a sacred space, probably a temple. It suggests an intimate connection between sacred offerings and divine favour as illustrated by the gifts, especially the anatomical votives, and may depict a female worshipper approaching a Goddess in order to be healed or seeking healing for a dear one, echoing the modern female worshipper on Tinos.

Conclusion

This article has argued for the importance of employing a new method to the study of antiquity: ethnographic fieldwork combined with studies of ancient sources. The reason to this is the problem of how we can understand ancient Greek healing rituals, which generally were carried out by women and connected with the domestic sphere, where women are the dominant power. Pilgrims arriving at pilgrimage centres are also most often women who actually domesticate the pilgrimage spaces. Furthermore, women themselves often strive with problems male medical doctors do not know about, therefore do not understand, and accordingly are unable to handle.[30] Despite the fact that the ancient sources telling us about women and healing as well as the modern publication of the miracles on Tinos (cf. Hp. and Lagouros, n.d.-2002) are generally written by men, adult men have traditionally been excluded from women's rituals and spaces. Moreover, the two genders have different interests and opinions. Actually, both earlier and today, the men express the same ideology and values. Simultaneously, there are many paradoxes in their writings. Furthermore, the male authored written sources often tell us about another reality than those we encounter in the few inscriptions and other sources, such as epigrams, authored by women. The latter often

have more in common with ancient vase paintings. By carrying out fieldwork among men and women today, learning how the latter understand their own world, and compare the results with ancient sources while simultaneously trying to see the material from the values of Greek women, which corresponds to what the few women-authored ancient fragments tell us, since they reflect similar interests and values, we also see that these female values are often found between the lines or distorted in the male statements. Accordingly, one may gain a new understanding of the male produced sources. This means that the male-produced texts must be deconstructed and considered from a gyno-inclusive perspective by examining them in conjunction with information from the female sphere, such as the few sources we have from ancient women and the oral stories shared by women on today's Tinos and Aegina and in Athens. The article has therefore presented the "female sphere" from a female perspective in order to deconstruct the ancient male-authored sources, which present persistent male views about women and their magic healing rituals.

The present study has therefore focused on topics related to modern and ancient healing rituals, such as the importance of smell, taste and colours generally linked to plants which traditionally have been connected to women's domain of knowledge. In relation to gender and healing rituals in modern and ancient Greece, touch is also important both in connection with touching modern icons and saints' relics with various items to make these powerful healing remedies, and also ancient statutes, for instance, by dedicating hair offerings and other personal items as demonstrated in ancient written sources. The importance of touch is also illustrated in ancient visual healing scenes. The article has argued that by writing theoretical works on the topics in which women have most knowledge due to their traditional activities, this does not thereby mean the ancient male writers managed to invade and appropriate the female sphere neither concerning birth nor food production and food, especially plants and herbs, used for healing purposes.[31]

Accordingly, this article has tried to provide some reflections on how modern and ancient sources related to healing rituals can be compared in order to shed fresh light on both the ancient and modern worlds from a female perspective. By demonstrating the importance of religious festivals and life-cycle rituals in modern and ancient Greece, how these relate to medicine and healing, and the importance of entering into the female sphere in Greece, to gain a new understanding of the sources we possess, the study has demonstrated a fruitful way of tackling the dilemma ancient scholarship has when trying to incorporate the female component into the presentation we try to give of the ancient world; the men and women populating that world.

To try to gain a better understanding of ancient society through a comparison with modern Greek rituals, it is necessary to conduct analysis on different levels. Modern society must itself be "read" in order to illuminate ancient society. In addition, ancient society must be analysed from the relevant sources we possess, such as inscriptions, epigrams and, for instance, a painting showing a Goddess receiving votive gifts from a woman (cf. Figure 10=Athens N.M. 1393) which also might be a suggestive illustration

of many epigrams from women invoking their Goddesses (cf. *inter alia*, AP. 6.201). Thirdly, a diachronic analysis must be conducted. The necessity of conducting comparative analysis on all levels simultaneously is self-evident. In this way, modern society can enlighten ancient society and vice versa. Thus the research on which this article is based employs my theoretical ethnohistorical approach to new empirical material connected with Greek women and healing with the aim of integrating the female component in the sources we possess in order to obtain a more complete view of ancient and modern societies, seen through the optic or lens of healing.

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Abbreviations

Aesch.= Aeschylus, tr. H. W. Smyth (1946) [1926]. Vol. 2: *Agamemnon* (=*Ag.*), *Libation-Bearers* (=*Cho.*), *Eumenides* (=*Eum.*), *Fragments* (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

AP.=*The Greek Anthology*, tr. W. R. Paton (1953) [1916]. Vol. 1 (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Ap. Rhod.=Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica,* tr. R. C. Seaton (1912) (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Ar.=Aristophanes, tr. B. B. Rogers (1946) [1924]. Vol 3: *The Lysistrata*, *The Thesmophoriazusae* (=*Thesm.*), *The Ecclesiazusae*, *The Plutus* (=*Plut.*) (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Arist. *Eth. Nic.*= Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. H. Rackham (1962) [1926] (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

—. *HA.=History of Animals*. Vol. 10, tr. A. L. Peck (1970), (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

Aristid. *Or.*=Aristides, *Orationes*, in EDELSTEIN & EDELSTEIN (1998), pp. 132 and 137.

Dsc. *de Materia Medica*.=Dioscorides, *de Materia Medica*, tr. T. Osbaldeston and R. Wood (2000),

Johannesburg: Ibidis Press.

Eur.=Euripides, tr. A. S. Way (1946-1953) [1912]. Vol. 1: *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Rhesus*, *Hecuba* (=*Hec.*), *The Daughters of Troy*, *Helen*, Vol. 2: *Electra*, *Orestes*, *Iphigeneia in Taurica*, *Andromache* (=*Andro.*), *Cyclops* (=*Cyc.*), Vol. 4: *Ion*, *Hippolytus* (=*Hipp.*), *Medea*, *Alcestis* (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

Herod. *Mime*=Herodas, *Mimes*. Cercidas and the Choliambic poets, tr. Jeffrey Rusten, I. C. Cunningham and A. D. Knox (1993). (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Hes. *Th./HHA/HHD.=Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, tr. H. G. Evelyn-White (1950) [1914] (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

Hp.=Hippocrates, *Opera Omnia*, vol 7: *De natura muliebri* (=*Nat.Mul.*), *De septimestri partu*

(=*Septim.*) vol. 8: *De morbis mulierum* (=*Mul.*), vol. 9: *Epistulae* (=*Ep.*), Littré, É. (ed.) (1982) [1861]. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert.

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(=*Morb. Sacr.*), Vol. 4: *Insomn.*, Vol. 8: *De Carnibus* (=*Carn.*) (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

IG=Inscriptiones Graecae. Consilio et auctoritate. Academiae litterarum Borussicae editae. Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriors, J. Kirchner (ed.) (1927-1977), Berlin: Walteri de Gruyter et Soc.

IG 4^2=*Inscriptiones Epidauri*, F. Hiller Von Gaertringen (ed.) (1929), (2nd. ed.), editio minor, v. 4, (fasc. 1), Berlin: Walteri de Gruyter et Soc.

Il.=Homer, *The Iliad*, tr. A. T. Murray (1946) [1924]). Vol. 1 (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Od.=Homer, *The Odyssey*, tr. A. T. Murray (1946) [1919]. Vols. 1-2 (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Ov. *Met.=Metamorphoses,* tr. Frank Justus Miller (1958-1960) [1914-1916]. Vols. 1-2 (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

Paus.=Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, tr. W. H. S. Jones (1933, 1955) [1918]. Vols. 1 and 3 (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

Petron. *Sat.*=Pétrone, *Le Satiricon*, tr. Alfred Ernout (1950), 3rd edn., Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres.

Pind. *Pyth.=The Odes of Pindar: including the principal fragments: Pythian* (=*Pyth.*)*; Nemean*; *Olympian*; *Fragment*, tr. John Sandys (1919) [1915]. (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

Pl.=Plato, *Leg.=The Laws*, tr. R. G. Bury (1952) [1926]. Vol. 2 (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

—. *Lysis, Symposium* (=*Symp.*)*, Gorgias,* tr. W. R. M. Lamb (1953) [1925], (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

—. *Theaetetus* (=*Tht.*)*, Sophist,* tr. Harold North Fowler (1961) [1921], (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Plin. *HN.*=Pliny, *Natural History*, tr. H. Rackham/W. H. S. Jones (1956), vol. 7, (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Plut.=Plutarch, *Lives*, tr. B. Perrin (1951) [1916]. Vol. 3: *Pericles* (=*Per.*) *and Fabius Maximus; Nicias and Crassus*, Vol. 4: *Alcibiades and Coriolanus* (=*Cor.*)*; Lysander and Sulla* (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

—. *Mor.*=*Moralia*, tr. F. C. Babbit, *et al*. (1949-1969) [1928]. Vols. 2, 8, and 12 (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Sappho. *Fr.*=*Lyra Graeca*, tr. J. M. Edmonds (1963) [1922]. Vol. 1: Terpander, Alcman, Sappho and Alcaeus (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

—. *Greek Lyric*, tr. D. A. Campbell (1982). Vol. 1: Sappho and Alcaeus (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Schol. Ar. *Plut.*=Dübner, Fr. (1969), *Scholia Græca in Aristophanem. Cum prolegomenis grammaticorum*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms (or. Paris: Ambrosio Firmin Didot, 1855).

Sor. *Gyn.*=Soranus, *Gynecology*, tr. O. Temkin (1991), Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

Strab.=Strabo, *Geography*, tr. H. L. Jones (1960) [1929]. Vol. 6 (The Loeb Classical Library), London: Heinemann.

Theoc. *Id*.=Theocritus, tr. A. S. F. Gow (1950). Vol. 1 (Text), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Theophr. *HP*.=Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants and Minor Works on Odours and Weather*. tr. Arthur Hort (1949) [1916]. Vol. 2 (The Loeb Classical Library], Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Notes

[1] Arist. *Eth. Nic*. 10.1172a35 ff.; see also Pl. *Leg*. 790c-791b. The transliteration of modern and ancient Greek follows the rules of the Nordic Library, Athens. Greek names are not Latinized with the letter c which does not exist in the Greek alphabet.

[2] The term is an implicit recognition (used by anthropologists) of the lack of a clear distinction between magic and religion. For a comprehensive discussion of magic and religion and their relationship, see, Håland, 2017: Chap. 3.

[3] KompocholÄ, 2018: 385-390, esp. 386; TsatsarouMichalakÄ and

PapadÄmÄtriou, 2018: 391-410. One may also note the replacement of the white colour with green at hospitals today.

[4]
___ Håland, 2014: Fig. 4. See also Petridou, 2015: Chap. 1 on light and smell relating to divine epiphany in ancient Greek culture, and Harvey, 2006 on smell in ancient Mediterranean culture.

[5]
___ See e.g., Scott, 2010: 109.

[6]
___ The male misinformation about the female body is evident in Soranos' *Gynaecology*, when, *i.a.*, stating that "it is a mistake to assume that a thin membrane grows across the vagina dividing it and that this membrane causes pain when it bursts in defloration", 1.17. Cf. also the male view re intercourse as the cure for female *hysterika/hystrika pathe*, see, e.g., Hp. *Mul.* 1.1-7 (Littré Vol. 8: 10-33), 2.127 (Littré Vol. 8: 272-274), 2.137 (Littré Vol. 8: 308-310), *Nat.Mul.* 2-3 (Littré Vol. 7: 8-10); Arist. *HA*. 582b22-26. Cf. Blum/Blum, 1965: 105; Danforth, 1989: 76-79 on the modern evidence.

[7]
___ See infra on "women and the female sphere". Håland, 2017, also provides a comprehensive discussion. Cf. Lagouros, n.d. 67 and Plut. *Mor*. condemning magic 145be, 139a5 (love potions are dismissed), 166a (but accepts magic as well: 138cd, 143d38, especially if it is "white": 138d1) and *Od.* 10.210-247, 276-335, cf. the following.

[8]
___ *Od*. 10.392 vs. 394. See also 10.210-247, 276-335, esp. 290-295 and 214, 234-236 for her potions, herbs and charms.

[9]
___ See Chaniotis, 2009: 63 for *I:Knidos* 150, cf. also *I:Knidos* 147, 154. Women are charged with administering *philtra* (sing. *philtron*, love-charm) in food and drink/love-potions and magic spells upon their husbands: Plut. *Mor*. 139a5, while according to Ar. *Thesm.* 561, "a woman caused her [husband] to lose his reason with her potions". See also Eur. *Andr.* 32 f. Hermione accusing Andromache for making her childless with secret poisons, cf. 157 f., 205, 355 f.

[10]
____ KapsÅmenoo-ChatzitakÄ, 1997: 165, despite the official Christin ideology

claiming charming is a sin, see Håland, 2017: Chap. 3 for discussion.

[11]
____ Hp. *Mul*. 1.62 (Littré Vol. 8: 126.7-14).

[12]
____ On the other hand, according to Sor. *Gyn*. 2.10, the midwife should put the newborn on the earth, and announce the sex by signs “as is the custom of women”.

[13]
____ KapsÅmenoo-ChatzitakÄ, 1997: 171, cf. Lloyd, 1983: 69 on competition among healers, and 215 on the fate of midwifes and root cutters in the sources we have. The topic is discussed at length in my forthcoming volume, Chap. 7.

[14]
____ Many scholars working with ancient society present similar values, for example Detienne, 1989.

[15]
____ That is why their view is ambiguous, for example, when Plutarch severely criticises 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, 2014.

[16]
____ E.g., Danforth, 1982, also cited by Pomeroy, 1998. The main problem with Danforth’s analysis is that he sees the Greek world from the male sphere; i.e., a modern counterpart of ancient male writers? Yet, the ancient male writers and Danforth’s informants were reared in the female sphere and have childhood experiences (even if these often are distorted in an adult male context, where social identity among men is important, cf. Gilmore, 1987) that Danforth does not have. As a male ethnographer, he has no possibility of carrying out fieldwork in the female sphere.

[17]
____ Seremetakis, 1991; du Boulay, 2009, cf. also Humphreys, 1983; Connelly, 2007; Stratton, 2014; Walter-KarydÄ, 2011: 429 on the ancient material. For a more promising perspective, cf. therefore Dubisch, 1995, who, unfortunately, only work with modern Greek society. See however Alexiou, 2002; Denzey, 2007: xxi; Mathieson, 2014. Re the fact that the entire ancient Greek world has been analysed from a Western, male perspective, this is a topic too wide to deal with in this article, see however, Håland, 2017: Chap. 2 and 7.

[18]
____ Cf. Budin and Turfa, eds. 2016: esp. 1.

[19]
____ On the importance of a literary figure's portrayal for understanding male views of women and the role of actual women in society, cf. Holst-Warhaft, 1992; Håland, 2017.

[20]
____ Magic is important in connection with healing, see supra; e.g., n.7 and 9 for references and paradoxes.

[21]
____ I went through parts of the archive with the help of the archivist in 1993, but many more letters have been received since then. I had the opportunity to look at some of these with an archivist in 2012. Some of the most famous have also been published, see e.g., Lagouros, n.d.-2002.

[22]
____ Cf. Petron. *Sat*. 131 for the importance of the colour in love magic.

[23]
____ KompocholÄ, 2018: 386, see 385-390 on the importance of red and blue in traditional popular healing.

[24]
____ Pl. *Symp*. 201d, 206b-212b, see also 202e-203a on mantic powers such as incantation, cf. Håland, 2017 Vol 2: 344.

[25]
____ Cf. Tsatsarou-MichalakÄ and PapadÄmÄtriou, 2018: 406 f. and n.130 and, *i.a.*, Hp. *Septim.* 4 (Littré Vol. 7: 440.4). Riddle's (1994) discussion regarding what happened to herbal knowledge after the Renaissance (155-163), thus needs to be complemented with material from southern Europe, such as Greece.

[26]
____ See, e.g., National Archaeological Museum Athens, henceforth Athens, N.M. (inv. no.) 696, cf. 695. On the birth Goddess Eileithyia by Amnisos: *Od*. 19.187 f. See also Paus. 6.20,2 f.

[27]
____ *IG* 2^2, 4793; Chaniotis, 2009 : 62.

[28]
____ AP. 6.146, cf. AP. 6.202, 271-273, 276 to Artemis, 270, 274 to Eileithyia.

[29]
_____ *Orphic Hymn to Hygieia=Orphic Hymn* 67, tr. T. Taylor, https://www.theoi.com/Text/OrphicHymns2.html#67 (accessed 1 January 2021).

[30]
____ This was indeed also the background that the Norwegian Research Council launched a program dealing with women's medical complaints in 1998.

[31]
____ Cf. also Håland, 2017: Chap. 7, 2014: Chap. 4 vs. Totelin 2015.