

Notes on Quiz #4

Women in Antiquity • Fall 2022

1 What were some of the ways Sparta's focus on the art of war affected the women of Sparta?

Because the biological role of the mother was important to producing strong warrior children, Spartan girls were trained to be as physically fit and as well nourished as the boys. Housework and clothes-making were performed by lower classes, freeing Spartan women to train the gymnasium, manage the household, play music, and rear children. Women could bear children of men other than their husbands, though if they were helots' children they could not be citizens, and adultery was not as strictly proscribed as elsewhere. Pomeroy believes they also engaged in homosexual liaisons in order to prevent unwanted children from heterosexual fornication for pleasure.

Women controlled their dowries and inheritances, so that by the fourth century two-fifths of Spartan land and property was controlled by women, many living luxurious lives. Increasingly later Spartan women displayed their wealth with clothing, purchases like racehorses, and jewelry and cosmetics; Agis's attempts to restore Lyncurgan discipline failed through women's resistance to archaic austerity.

2 What kinds of things do the graves and depictions of funerals tell us about women in Archaic Athens?

Grave goods of Athenian women included spindle whorls, cooking pots, and other items indicating they still performed household chores that Spartan women had offloaded to lower classes. Depictions of funerals show kinswomen tending to the dead (washing, anointing, and dressing the corpse) and as chief mourners, engaging in public lamentation as an important part of the death rituals.

Burial grounds from early periods show many more male graves than female; this is partly due to men being more likely to be honored with a public burial, but Pomeroy suggests female infanticide is also to blame (again, unlike Sparta, where we are told all the girl babies were kept and only boy infants were exposed if defective).

Both male and female grave-marker figures (kouroi, korai) are extrant from archaic Athens, both derived from Egyptian forms and exhibiting the bland physical ideal of each gender. Female figures emphasize the buttocks.

EC1 Pomeroy indicates all of the following are true of Sappho EXCEPT:

(c) She's the only female Greek poet any of whose work has survived [there are fragments of a handful of female poets, quoted by other authors]

EC2 What kinds of advice regarding women does Hesiod give to farmers in Works and Days?

"Do not let a flaunting woman coax and cozen and deceive you: she is after your barn. The man who trusts womankind trust deceivers."

"First of all, get a house, and a woman and an ox for the plough—a slave woman and not a wife, to follow the oxen as well—and make everything ready at home, so that you may not have to ask of another, and he refuses you, and so, because you are in lack, the season pass by and your work come to nothing."

"And so soon as you have safely stored all your stuff indoors, I bid you put your bondman out of doors and look out for a servant-girl with no children;—for a servant with a child to nurse is troublesome."

"But when the artichoke flowers [in June] ... then goats are plumpest and wine sweetest; women are most wanton, but men are feeblest, because Sirius parches head and knees and the skin is dry through heat."