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The Archaic Korai Statues and The Women of Athens

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As ancient sources were often negligent in providing information on women it is often necessary for a historian to look for other sources of primary information from art and archeological artifacts. Art is a cultural response, since certain art forms can only be created when they are understood and appreciated by a society. Art is especially representative of a culture in a community as small as ancient Athens. As the archaic korai sculptures of the Acropolis were intended to portray Athenian women, they are a valuable source of information on how Athenian women were perceived at the time of the sculptures' creation. The korai statues have been studied before, but usually from the perspective of art history rather than in the context of what they have to communicate about the women of Athens. I intend to provide a fresh look at the korai statues, and evaluate what they have to say about archaic Athenian women as against what later literary sources have to say about the social roles of Athenian women who came later.

The korai statues were once situated in the central location of the Athenian Acropolis. They are lifelike representations of women created during the time of the Athenian tyrants, from about 620 to 480 BCE. These statues would have been very costly to create, yet while a majority of the korai were commissioned by the Athenian aristocracy, several of the statues were also dedicated by common fishermen and crafts people. Essentially, the dedication of the korai was not limited to those of a particular social status, as the statues could be commissioned by anyone who had the means. More common people became increasingly able to make such dedications as their access to wealth increased as a result of democratic reforms. As the dedicants came from different levels of economic well-being, the statues varied in size according to what the person

commissioning the statue could afford. As the korai, especially the large korai, required a reasonable amount of money to commission an artist to create, they were a public testament to the wealth of the dedicant. Undoubtedly such a public display of wealth was one motivation for individuals and families to commission a korai. As a highly visible fixture on the Acropolis, they were also a mode of creating posterity for the dedicant.

The archaic korai of Athens were knocked down by the Persians during their invasion of Athens during the second Persian war. When the Athenians returned, instead of rebuilding the korai they buried them in order to build up the ground of the Acropolis for further construction projects, and the art form was never duplicated by them again. Something in society changed during or after the Persian war, which resulted in the korai statues being rejected by the population as inappropriate. There are very few sources which communicate evidence of the social status of Athenian women during the time in which the archaic korai statues were created. However, as the korai statues represent seemingly ordinary Athenian women, and in such a prominent location in Athens, the korai may indicate something of the social status of women during this time in and of themselves. Accordingly, the rejection of the korai art form as inappropriate may be found to correspond with the low social status and few roles available to Athenian women following the Persian wars. Through a comparison of what the korai indicate about women in the archaic period, and what later primary sources say about women, I have discovered similarities and differences between the social roles of Athenian women in these periods. In particular, through comparing the visibility of the statues to the relative seclusion enforced upon later Athenian women, I have found that women in the

archaic period may have been slightly more accepted in public spaces than the women living in later periods in Athenian history. The korai statues portray individual women, a fact which could indicate an importance placed on the archaic Athenian women as individuals, unlike later written sources which generally communicate Athenian women as important only in the familial and religious roles they serve. Most notably, the sensuality of the korai statues contrasts the later importance placed on female modesty. Overall there appears to be a shift after the archaic period in Athens towards hiding women away, not only behind more clothing, but out of the public eye as a whole. The Korai Statues of Athens

The Athenian korai of the Acropolis are freestanding draped marble statues of women. The korai were found on the Acropolis in the eighteen-eighties.¹ With over fifty surviving korai having been unearthed from this site,² the Acropolis contains the largest surviving group of korai from ancient Greece, and therefore one of the best groups of korai available for study. The Acropolis korai date from the latter third of the sixth century B.C. during the Peisistratid era. At this time, Athens was under the rule of the rule of the tyrant Peisistratis and his sons Hippias and Hipparchos.³ During this period Athens had become an important artistic center.⁴ The korai were created by artists commissioned mostly by wealthy aristocratic families as dedications to Athena. The fact

¹ Gisela Marie Augusta Richter, *Korai: Archaic Greek Maidens: A Study of the Development of the Kore Type in Greek Sculpture*, (New York: Hacker Art books, 1998), 68.

² Katherine Keesling, *The Votive Statues Of the Athenian Acropolis*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xiv.

³ Richter, 68,

⁴ Richter, 5.

that korai are also known to have been dedicated by fishermen and craftsmen seems to indicate that anyone could dedicate a korai if they could afford to do so. The korai came in a variety of sizes ranging from larger than life to about half-life size depending on the wealth of the dedicator. There are eight larger than life Acropolis korai, as well as eight life size korai. There are twenty-seven smaller than life size korai, seventeen half size, and thirteen korai found which are a fraction of life size.⁵

Almost all of the Acropolis korai exhibit the same gestures, costume, stance and decoration. While the korai generally remained constant, as an archaic art form they were illustrative of a shift from conventional to more naturalistic forms.⁶ The progression can be observed in the rendering of the drapery as well as by changing features such as hands and feet. The korai have been dated based on the script used in their inscriptions which date to the last sixth century. These dates correspond to the style of the korai as well as to the approximate dates made of the cut marble.⁷ Gisela Richter has, as she says "very tentatively," divided the Acropolis korai into early (c. 535-530 B.C) middle (c. 530-510 B.C.) and late (c. 510-495 B.C.) groupings based on a slight progression in style regarding the "rendering of features, the elaboration of the garments, and in the depth of the carving of the folds."⁸ The development of the korai can be witnessed largely through their drapery, which develops over time from stiff to modeled surfaces with detailed folds assuming the forms of the body beneath it. Several loose arms and hands of korai have

⁵ Katerina Karakasi, *Archaic Korai*, (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), 117.

⁶ Richter, 1.

⁷ Evelyn B. Harrison, "A New Fragment of Acropolis 883," *Hesperia* 24 (1995):169.

⁸ Richter, 68.

been discovered holding various votive offerings. Three korai at one time held apples, several held a plate, one a wreath, three doves, and one a pomegranate.⁹

The korai were discovered in five different locations in the Acropolis: first near the north wall, then in the vicinity of the Erechtheion, by the Parthenon, close to the Propylaea, and others from unknown locations.¹⁰ The largest number of Acropolis korai were discovered near the Erechtheion, and the second most were found in the vicinity of the Parthenon.¹¹ The placement of korai near the north slope of the Acropolis was likely so that the votive statues would be highly visible, even from afar.¹² There is no way of knowing for sure where the kore stood originally, it can only be guessed at through where the kore were unearthed with regard to where it would have made sense for them to be originally erected.¹³ Judging from the fact that the backs of some korai remain unfinished, it can be implied that some such korai once stood inside a sanctuary with their backs against a wall, while others were probably placed outside. Fifteen statues thought to have once stood out-of-doors have metal pins projecting from their heads which are thought to have affixed a *meniscus* or "an umbrella or crescent-shaped shield" to the head of the korai in order to protect the statues from the elements.¹⁴

After Greece was liberated from Turkey in 1833, it was decided to clear the

⁹ Personal field notes, Acropolis Museum Athens, June 2005.

¹⁰ Karakasi, 129.

¹¹ Karakasi, 130.

¹² Karakasi, 119.

¹³ Karakasi, 130.

¹⁴ Karakasi, 118.

Acropolis of the many Turkish buildings that had been erected. In 1885 it was decided to systematically dig down past the classical level to the native rock of the Acropolis. In February of 1886 the first fourteen korai were unearthed in a hole north-west of the Erechtheion. More kore were discovered east and west of the Parthenon and west of the Erechtheion and near the south wall.¹⁵ Many archeologists were active in the process of the restoration of the damaged statues, especially Studniczka, Winter, Lechat, Heberdey, Bruckner, Wolters, Dorpfeld, and particularly Schrader.¹⁶ After the Athenians had returned to their city after the Persian invasion in 480 and 479 B.C. they decided to enlarge the area of the Acropolis and used the broken statues which they found to fill in the sloping ground.¹⁷ The korai excavated from the Acropolis were reasonably well preserved due to this underground burial, as they were not exposed to the elements. The Acropolis korai can now be viewed in the Acropolis Museum.

Visibility

The korai statues once stood on the Acropolis, the most focal part of the city of Athens. The statues would have stood both outside and inside the temple to Athena existing on the Acropolis at the time. This highly visible location seems to be almost a strange place for statues of women to be located considering that later sources establish it to be inappropriate for women to be highly visible in public spaces. In the Greek comedy *Lysistrata* by Athenian playwright Aristophanes, it is considered a ridiculous and

⁵ Richter, 5.

⁶ Richter, 5.

⁷ Richter, 6.

humorous concept that the Athenian women would take over the very same Athenian Acropolis where the korai statues once stood.¹⁸ Perhaps, during the archaic period when the korai were erected on the Acropolis, it was not so inappropriate, or at least much less taboo, for women to be such an obvious sight in public arenas. However, not long after the creation of the korai Solon made the statement that "The woman who leaves her house should be of such an age that those who encounter her do not ask whose wife but whose mother she is."¹⁹ In a similar fashion, according to the even later source of Pericles' funeral oration "it is good that a woman do nothing that would have her talked about for good or for evil among men."²⁰ Since we know that later Athenian women were not expected to be seen in public places, it is reasonable assume that this may be one reason why the korai statues were not rebuilt in the public space of the Acropolis.

Clothing and Ornaments

The observations that follow are based on field notes that I took myself at the Acropolis Museum in Athens.

The korai statues all exhibit very similar clothing styles — they each wear either a heavy tunic or "peplos," or a lighter tunic known as a "chiton." Some korai dressed in a more Ionic style wear the "Ionic himation" or short pleated mantle. Most korai wear

¹⁸ Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, trans by Benjamin Bickley Rogers (London: W. Heinemann, 1924).

¹⁹ Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985), 88.

²⁰ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans by Rex Warner (New York: Penguin Group, 1972), 151.

a shawl-like wrap, or "epiblema" in long and short versions. The ornamental patterns of traces of paint still remaining on the korai's garments often appear to be geometric in nature. The clothing of kore 594 features such a geometric border (see appendix photograph 2), while kore 680 (see photo 2) has garments painted with flowers in addition to the geometric borders.²¹ The front of the korai are usually fully covered with drapery, but the buttocks and legs are usually quite exposed, only being covered with the long tunic cloth which is pulled to the side by the statues in such a way that it is tight against the lower body of the statue, revealing the body contours. Often the cloth is pulled so tightly against these statues that the musculature of the legs is clearly visible.²² While one might think that this positioning is merely a way for the artist to exhibit his skill in rendering the human body, this may actually be a way in which Athenian women legitimately positioned their garments during the religious festivals, where they were allowed to be seen in public, in order to walk and to attract potential husbands who would see them there these few times out of the year, with some of their more sexualized attributes. Upper class Athenian women would have spent most of the time virtually sequestered in their homes. The religious festivals they were permitted to attend would have been one of the few times an artist, or anyone else outside that woman's family, would have been privileged to see these upper class women at all. It is only fitting that an artist would model his religiously associated female statues after the way he would have seen women dressed and displaying themselves on the religious occasions which allowed

²¹ Personal field notes, Acropolis Museum Athens, June 2005,

²² Personal field notes.

them to be seen in public. The accentuation of the legs and buttocks on many of the korai statues (see reference photos 16 and 18 in photo appendix) seems to contradict the later importance placed on keeping a woman's body fully covered, so that men would not lust after them and place their personal integrity, and more importantly, the definite knowledge of the fatherhood of their children, in jeopardy.

The similarity in the dress of many of the korai is probably only representative of the style of the time that would have been worn by many women due to its availability and popularity, as opposed to an overall ideal. However, it is worth mentioning that many late classical statues of women (not goddesses) from around BCE 300 were fully covered in full length chitons and himations that covered their heads and entire bodies (see photo 19.) It is probably a reasonable assumption that clothing styles followed the sentiments as far as what was considered to be appropriate and inappropriate physical features for a woman to show.

The hairstyles on all of the Acropolis korai are generally very similar; all of the women have long, wavy/curly, almost plaited looking hair, which makes up a uniform mass down the back and hangs in several tendrils down the front of the shoulders (see appendix pictures 3 and 4.)²³ The statues often wear jewelry, sometimes made of metal, as in the case of kore 669 (see photo 7), which features holes in the ears and neck which would have once held some sort of metal necklace and earrings. Many more korai wear what probably served as a more economical option for the dedicant in the form of jewelry

²³ Personal field notes, Acropolis Museum Athens, June 2005.

carved into the marble sculpture, such as the necklace of kore 593 or the bracelet and very popular disk earrings seen on korai 680 and 675 (see photos 5 and 6.)²⁴

Nearly all of the korai wear some type of head piece, most predominantly in the form of a diadem like kore 670 (see picture 8) or else something like a headband as worn by kore 684. The amount of drapery worn by many of the korai is considerable. The drapery of the some korai such as kore 681 (photo 9) is much heavier than others, this could be attributed to the skill of the artist, or to the wealth of the woman/family of the woman being portrayed.²⁵ A woman seen in public at a religious festival would often wear her wealth as clothing since it was a testament to the wealth of her family. The jewelry, quantity of cloth, and the elaborate hairstyles which the upper class Athenian women, and the korai statues were portrayed to have worn in public, would both serve as indicators of their family's wealth. Just as a young girl adorned with all of her family's riches in cloth and jewelry at a religious festival would be indicative of the wealth of her father, so too would an elaborately adorned korai statue, or the commission of any korai statue for that matter, act as a highly visible and permanent testament to the wealth of the dedicant.

Later in Athenian history when there was an emphasis on democratization, although women were still allowed to attend certain religious festivals, documents demonstrate there is an emphasis placed on female modesty, and that women who would have been in the public eye on such occasions were encouraged to keep adornments to a

minimum. It was determined to be a desirable trait for even the most wealthy and/or prominent women, the type of women the kore may have often depicted, not to be arrogant. This quality in a woman is made evident by the epitaph for Arechedice which read "This dust hides Arechedice, daughter of Hippias the most important man in Greece in his day; but though her father, husband, brothers, and children were tyrants, her mind was never carried away into arrogance."²⁶ Furthermore, the epitaph shows that Arachedice was defined as a person by the roles of her male relatives. Other desirable traits for an Athenian women would appear to be the possession of a noble character and unaffected ways of life, at least according to a character in Menander's play *Antinoopolis* written in the 4th century BCE. The male character relates of his wife "I wanted her, honestly, I was tied to her by her noble character and her unaffected way of life; she loved me and I loved her."²⁷ The importance that was placed on modesty in later Athens may have been motivation for the discontinuance of the korai statues which may have been viewed as overly revealing or sexualized according to later Athenian values regarding modesty.

Facial Expressions

The facial expressions of the korai statues vary considerably from statue to statue. These expressions could possibly be indicative of the emotions and even, in some instances, the personalities of actual Athenian women used as the inspiration for these

²⁶ Funerary Epitaph from Mary R. Lefkowitz ed. and trans., *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook in Translation* 2nd ed, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1992), 16.

²⁷ Menander, *Antinoopolis*, in Lefkowitz, 180.

statues. Kore 677, (see photo 10) for instance, looks very focused and serious, while the facial expression of kore 679 (photograph 11) is quite serene and happy. Korai 673 and 675 (see photo 6) are evidently smiling. The facial expression of kore 682 (see photo 12) seems to best bring across the personality of the woman it is meant to portray. The statue appears dignified and self assured, her long nose, small pouty mouth and slanting eyes give her an air of haughty femininity.²⁸ Kore 684 (photograph 13) has a rather solemn expression on her face and looks fairly serious or contemplative with a very intent look to her. Kore 686/609 also has a somber expression which makes her look serious and displeased. Kore 688 also wears a very serious countenance. Despite the occurrence of such serious expressions among some of the korai as mentioned, the majority of the korai statues have expressions which seem to exude both contentment and restraint. There is a high prominence of the so-called "archaic smile," a small contented looking smile that may illustrate either an ideal that woman in archaic Athens be content, or the fact that the women seen by the artist often were content. Statues like kore 269 and 679 both exhibit variations of this archaic smile. Even when a korai is not smiling such as in the case of kore 684, their cheekbones are often still portrayed as prominent.²⁹ Since prominent cheekbones are a feature which most of the korai share, it may be indicative of a beauty ideal of the time.

The fact that the face and body structures of each of the korai statues are so unique is a good argument for the theory that the korai are representative of individual women as

²⁸ Personal field notes, Acropolis Museum Athens, June 2005.

²⁹ Personal field notes.

opposed to a feminine ideal for appearance. Some statues such as kore 673 have large boned and fleshy faces, others like kore 675 and 670 are curvaceous, while there are also statues which are more slender or slight in their features.³⁰ Kore like 269 (see photo 14) have broad shoulders and powerful arm musculature that appears so masculine that it is possible a male model may have been used by the artist during his sculpting, since it would be impossible to find a female to use as an artistic model, except as they would be seen in public at religious festivals. The hardy qualities of some statues, however, may be representative of a female ideal. There was a later theory that a hardy woman would produce the desired result of hardy sons, and this theory may have existed even in archaic times.³¹ Other statues such as kore 674 are much more distinctly feminine looking in appearance with a delicate quality to them. While styles in dress and hair are very similar, the faces, body types, and expressions of the statues are unique enough to assume that the similarities are probably based on popular styles, and that the statues were generally based on the appearance of individual women, or at least composite features of individual women rather than simply an ideal. Despite sharing similarities, the faces and features of each korai are unique.³² In this way the statues seem to depict individual women. If the statues do in fact portray varying characteristics which make each statue and therefore each woman being portrayed unique, it may be assumed that the women from archaic Athens whom the statues portray may also have been seen as individuals, and perhaps valued as such.

³⁰ Personal field notes.

³¹ Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T.A. Sinclair (London: Penguin, 1992), 442.

³² Personal field notes.

The expressions of contentment on korai, could indicate that the young women represented were fairly happy with their lives, and therefore the men in them. This is a large jump to make, seeing as the women may have been viewed on an occasion such as the afore-mentioned religious festivals that would probably have been happy circumstances. What can be implied is that the young women whom the korai statues represent appear to be well dressed and apparently well fed and adorned, and that the likenesses of women are found on a place as prominent as the Acropolis. These implications seem to indicate that women like those represented by the korai were generally well taken care of and treated with a certain amount of respect.

An inscription on a gravestone from around 360 BCE, a time predating the creation of the korai statues, depicts a loving and appreciative relationship between a husband and wife through the representation of a dialogue between a husband and his deceased wife: "Farewell, tomb of Melite; a good woman lies here. You loved your husband Onesimus; he loved you in return. You were the best, and so he laments your death, for you were a good woman." "And to you farewell, dearest of men; love my children."³³ Melite at least sounds as though she was valued as an individual by her loving husband.

Despite their physical appearance as individuals, the Acropolis korai do not "speak" their inscriptions in the first person as other Attic funerary korai do. One kore

³³ Gravestone inscription circa 360 BCE in Lefkowitz, 180.

grave marker for instance reads in the first person, "Gravestone of Phrasikleia. I will always be called kore [daughter] the gods destined this name for me in place of marriage, Aristion of Paros."³⁴ This kore clearly represents an individual, and judging by their appearance the Acropolis korai probably do as well. However, as the korai do not speak in the first person or mention themselves, the Acropolis korai are not functioning in an individual capacity, but merely women filling an accepted religious role. Unlike the funerary korai, the Acropolis korai are not supposed to focus on the individual women represented by the statues, but on their role as a religious votive.

Religious Roles

In later sources we know that religious occasions were one of the few instances that a middle or upper class Athenian women would be out in public. Fittingly the korai figures who are also in a public space are there in a religious context as votives. An individual could dedicate a korai statue in order to fulfill a pledge to a god, most often Athena since she was the patron deity of Athens. This role of the statues is communicated both by their location near the temple of Athena, and because of the inscriptions on the marble bases of many of the statues. Unfortunately, many of the inscribed bases which have been discovered have been separated from the sculptures they once described and vice versa.³⁵ This poses a problem in understanding the original effect the statues were meant to elicit as they were intended to be viewed with the accompanying text. Nonetheless, the korai inscriptions represent one of the few existing

³⁴ Karakasi, 134.

³⁵ Personal field notes.

texts from the archaic period of Athens which, due to their association with the statues, are related to women. Most of the inscriptions merely list the name of the donor, which all appear to be male.³⁶ There are rumored to be inscriptions by females, but the only one of these that I personally examined is the korai statue dedicated by several members of a family. "To Athena Apollonios from Aphidnaia the daughter Anthemia the uncle Uliades and the mother Philotera after she was an Arrephoros have dedicated."³⁷ Significantly, in this dedication, both the mother and daughter are named.

The lack of sources about Athenian women might be viewed as representative of an archaic view that women were not worth mentioning in texts and had little intrinsic importance. However, before the Persian Wars there were few good written sources in general that survive. The lack of representation of women in writing may be due to the fact that there was fairly little writing going on overall, or that few of these writings survived. Most Athenian sources come from the period in Athenian history after the Persian wars. So the fact that women are not well represented in archaic Athenian literature should not necessarily be taken too seriously as there appear to be few important documents being written at this time in general.

When the roles of women are mentioned in later sources, they are often mentioned in a religious context. In the play the *Bacchae* for instance, the women of the city take part in a religious ceremony to Dionysus.³⁸ Women who had few social roles available to

³⁶ Personal field notes.

³⁷ Karakasi, 138.

³⁸ Euripides, *Bacchae*, trans by Paul Woodruff, (Indianapolis, IN : Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1998.)

them had an outlet in religious participation. Athenian women were allowed to take part in various religious festivals and a few select women were even given important roles within religious cults as priestesses or Arrephoros. An inscription on a marble stele tells of the appointment of the Athenian priestess to Athena. "For Athena Nike a priestess who.. .from all Athenian women shall be appointed.. .Payment to the priestess shall be fifty drachmas [per year] and the legs and hides from public [sacrifices]."39

The korai also played a role of religious significance. They were used as votives from Athenian citizens to keep promises of tithes and to give thanks to the goddess Athena in particular. These statues of beautiful young women were for some reason viewed as a votive gift that would be pleasing to the goddess, perhaps because they were similar to those young women, the Arrephoros who served Athena. One afore mentioned korai inscription that became separated from its statues reads: "To Athena Apollonios from Aphidnaia the daughter Anthemia the uncle Uliades and the mother Philotera after she was an Arrephoros have dedicated."⁴⁰ This inscription appears to commemorate the appointment of a man's daughter as an Arrephoros, lending further evidence to the theory that the korai statues were supposed to represent individuals. Statues of young woman, like those who served as Arrephoros to the goddess Athena, would seem to be an appropriate votive offering to the goddess. **Inscriptions**

³⁹ Inscription on marble stele in Charles W. Fornara, ed. And trans., *Archaic times to the end of the Peloponnesian War*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 44.

⁴⁰ Translation in Karakasi, 138.

Unlike this dedication, few other inscriptions communicate as much. Most inscriptions merely name the dedicator of the statue, some like kore 283 name multiple donors who went in together on the endeavor, probably in order to create a larger statue than any of them could afford to commission on their own.⁴¹ Several other inscriptions list the donor as well as the artist. The inscription for kore 681, for instance, reads "Nearchos [the potter], dedicated me from the first-fruits offering; Antenor the son of Eumares [made me]."⁴² This particular inscription, as well as others like it, communicate something of the social position of the dedicants commissioning the statues. If the dedicant is in fact a relative, particularly a father, of the girl being portrayed (as in the case of the Arrephoros mentioned before), then they communicate something as to the social class which the girls being portrayed come from as well. Nearchos the dedicant of kore 681 would be an artisan, and therefore probably in the middle class. If the kore Nearchos commissioned were to represent his daughter, as may have legitimately been the case, she would not have been a member of the upper class, but of the middle class of the Athenian population as well. In a similar fashion another inscribed base separated from its accompanying kore statue was dedicated by a fisherman, someone who was probably a member of a fairly low economic and social class. If the kore represented his daughter, she would have been in the same economic and social class as himself. The inscription reads: "[...] lochos the fisherman dedicated this kore to Poseidon with the

⁴¹ Personal field notes.

⁴² Translation in Karakasi, 133.

golden trident as a first-fruits offering for his good catch."⁴³ This particular votive was one of the few found on the Acropolis that were not dedicated to Athena, rather the fisherman makes his dedication to perhaps a more appropriate deity, Poseidon, in thanks for his good catch.

One inscription on the base of kore 236 reads "Timarchos" [donor] to fulfill a vow made by his mother."⁴⁴ This would seem to indicate a relationship between mother and son close enough, that he would feel the obligation to fulfill his mother's vows. It was customary for children to fulfill the vows made to a god or goddess if the parent had not been able to do so. Upon the death of a parent, their vows, like debts, became the responsibility of their children to fulfill like debts. The inscription of kore 248 "Lysibios [donor] to fulfill a vow made by his ancestors,"⁴⁵ indicates that this responsibility was applicable to ancestors as well as parents. This was applicable to the vows of ancestors as well. Likewise, there were also instances where in the untimely death of a child, a parent would take it upon themselves to fulfill their vows. The inscription for kore 283 for instance reads: "Diophanes" and "Pythophanes" [donors] one fulfilled the vow of his child."⁴⁶

A play fragment called "Tereus" written by Sophocles discusses the lot of women from a female character's point of view and can offer some insight as to what a woman's life might have been like in Athens during the mid-5th century BCE.

⁴³ Translation in Karakasi, 135.

⁴⁴ Catherine M. Keesling, *The Votive Statues of the Athenian Acropolis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5. (English translation of inscription)

⁴⁵ Translation in Keesling, 6.

⁴⁶ Translation in Keesling, 6.

But now outside my father's house, I am nothing, yes often I have looked on women's nature in this regard, that we are nothing. Young women in my opinion have the sweetest existence known to mortals in their father's homes, for their innocence always keeps children safe and happy. But when we reach puberty and can understand we are thrust out and sold away from our ancestral gods and from our parents. Some go to strange men's homes, others to foreigners', some to joyless houses, some to hostile. And all this once the first night has yoked us to our husband, we are forced to praise and to say that all is well.⁴⁷

This passage certainly does not represent a very positive image of what it may have been like to be an Athenian woman after marriage. A general idea of the male view of women and the relationship between the Athenian husband and wife in the fourth century BCE was well illustrated in Aristotle's "Politics" in his view that:

Again the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle of necessity extends to all mankind... Of household management we have seen that there are three parts- one is the rule of master over slaves...., another of a father, and the third of a husband. A husband and father rules over wife and children both free, but the rule differs, the rule over his children being a royal, over his wife a constitutional rule. For command than the female, just as the older and full grown is superior to the

⁴⁷ Sophocles, *Tereus*, in Lefkowitz, 12.

younger and more mature...⁴⁸

There is no real way of knowing how true this belief applies to the archaic Athenian view towards women, but based on what is known about the archaic Athens government leadership by men, it is likely that men took the lead in the familial sphere as well.

Like the ideal for women that emerges in later Athenian writings, the korai are silent. The statues do not speak, they are simply on display. Any words the korai statues may have in the form of inscriptions are not their own, but rather the words of a male dedicant. The dedicatory purposes of the korai are not their own, they are votives which serve the dedication purposes of the men who commissioned them. They serve a function for men, and are given some respect in that function, much as their living female counterparts probably received some respect for the roles that they played as wives, mothers, and in religious spheres.

Later sources such as Aristotle made the argument that men and women can both be virtuous and be respected for their different roles. However, the expectations for the appropriate behavior and roles of men are much different than those behaviors and roles seen as appropriate to women.

Moral virtue belongs to them all; but the temperance of a man and of a woman, or the courage and justice of a man and of a woman, are not, as Socrates maintained, the same; the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in

Aristotle, 92.

obeying... Silence is a woman's glory, but this is not equally the glory of a man.⁴⁹

The korai statues seem to fulfill this ideal of women, they are seen but are not heard. The only thing they have to say is what is communicated by their mere presence and appearance. Even their inscriptions are not their words, but the words of their largely male dedicants. Essentially the korai, like Athenian women, have no voice, and in that way they are perfect women. Later even the presence of the korai statues seems to be much for the Hellenic period as the korai art form is abandoned.

There are significant similarities and differences between what the korai statues communicate about women in the archaic period and what later written sources say about women in subsequent periods of Athenian History. Both the archaic Athenian women represented by the korai statues and the women written about in later sources seem to be defined and valued based on their relationship with men. Women from both periods appear to be limited to roles as wives, mothers, and roles of religious necessity, and their likenesses stood on the highly visible Acropolis, the presence of women in public spaces seems to be slightly more accepted in archaic Athens, than is the presence of their later female counterparts. Nonetheless, the archaic women were represented on the Acropolis in the accepted role of a religious capacity. The dress of the archaic korai statues could be described as significantly more provocative than images of their later female counterparts. The voluptuous korai statues were never recreated, which considering the later emphasis placed on female modesty, may indicate that the highly public and

⁴⁹ Aristotle, 24.

somewhat sensual looking korai figures were no longer seen as appropriate, or as indicative of the Athenian women they would have represented.

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notes, taken at Acropolis Museum Athens, June 2005.

Kore 594.

Kore 680.

Kore 669.

Kore 593.

Kore 675.

Kore 670.

Kore 684.

Kore 681.

Kore 677.

Kore 679.

Kore 673.

Kore 682.

Kore 686/609.

Kore 688.

Kore 269.

Kore 674.

Kore 283.

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Photographic Appendix

All photographs were taken by myself at the Acropolis Museum in
Athens, Greece June 2005.





Photo 1

kore 680



Photo 2

Detail of geometric border on kore 594 The

clothing of kore 594 features such a geometric border, while kore 680 has garments painted with flowers in addition to the geometric borders.

Reference photographs for page 6.



Photo 3

Close up of front of typical korai hairstyle.

kore 684



Photo 4

Back view of a typical korai

hairstyle, kore 670.

Reference photos for page 6.



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Photo 5

Bracelet from kore 680

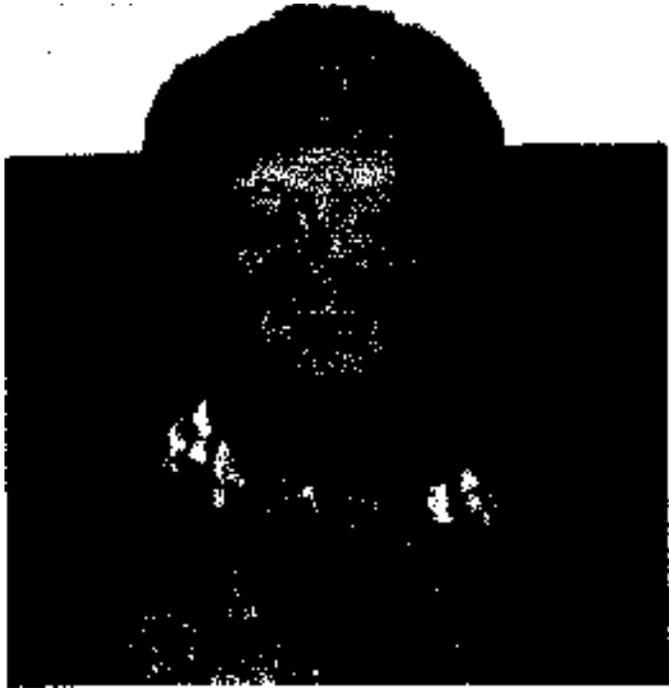
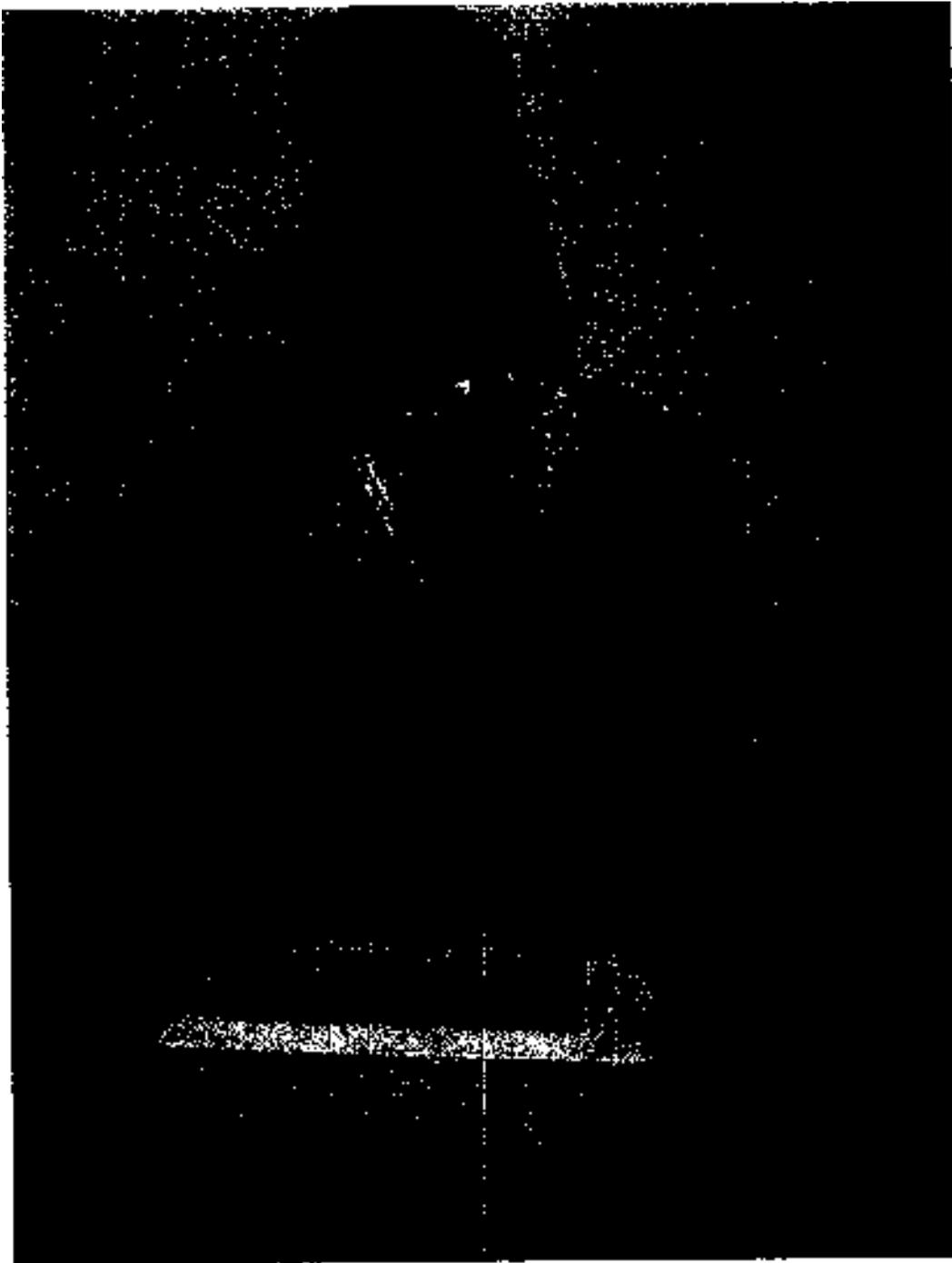


Photo 6

Popular disk earrings as seen on kore 675

Reference photographs for page 6.



kore 669 features holes in the neck and ears for metal jewelry additions.

Reference photograph for page 6.



kore 670

Photo 8

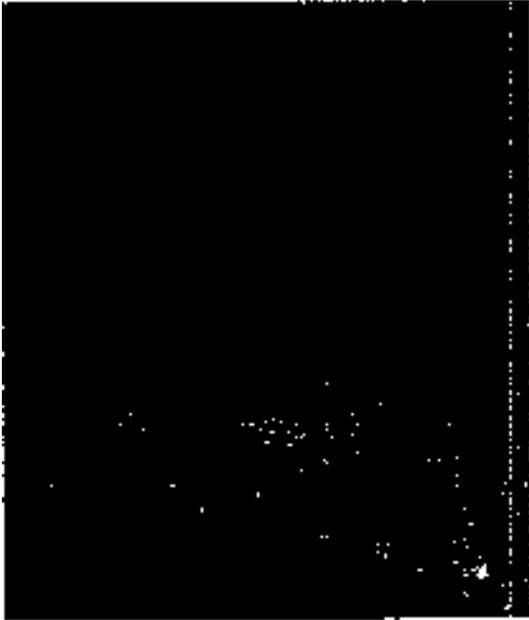
korai wearing diadem



kore 681 Photo 9

Elaborate drapery

Reference photos for page 7.



kore 677

Photo 10



kore 679

Photo 11



kore 682

Photo 12



kore 684

Photo 13

kore 269

Photo 14

Powerful arm musculature



Later statuary- Fully covered

Athenian woman Photo

19





Photo 15
Backs of earlier korai without body
contours emphasized.



Photo 16
Back of later kore with body contours
emphasized.
Reference Photographs for page 8



Photo 17
Photo 18

