

Prostitutes and Queens: Making the Women of the Past Visible in the Digital Age

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- **Introduction: How can Digital Humanities methods increase visibility of ancient women?**
- **Digital Methods 101**
- **Unnamed Women in Attic Oratory**
- **Queens of the Hellenistic World and their untold influence**

The unique case of Belestiche or Bilistiche:

- **An Olympic Games winner and a Courtesan**

WOMEN *in the* ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

From the Palaeolithic to the Byzantines

Guy D. Middleton



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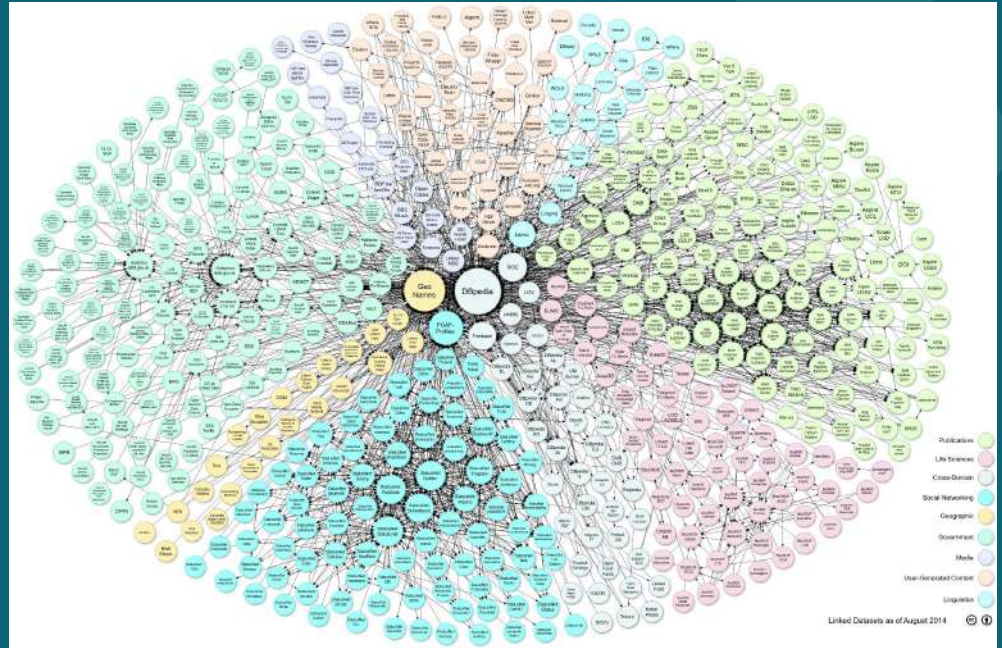
Digital Methods 101

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Linked Data:

Data that can be shared, reused, and linked to other data online.



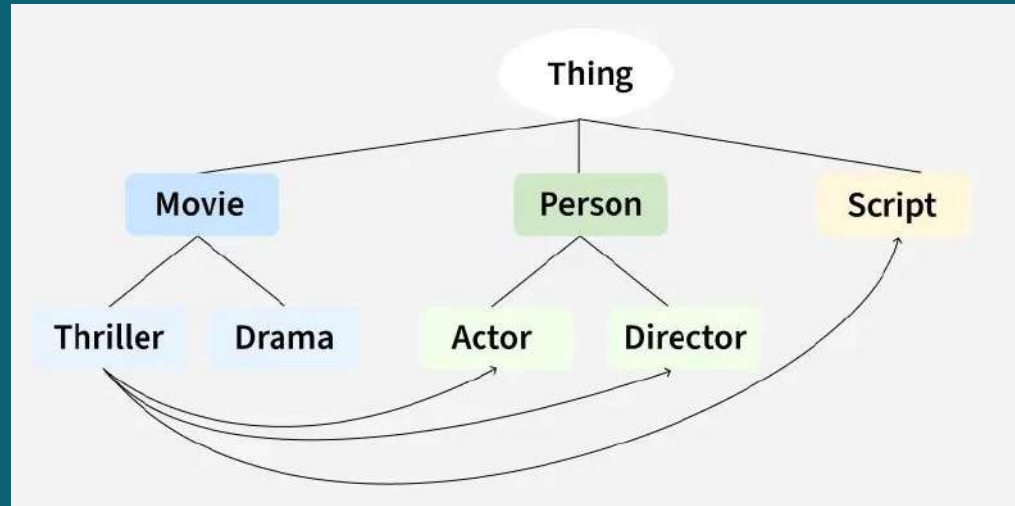
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Linked Open Data Cloud, <https://lod-cloud.net/>

Ontology

A machine-readable and formal description of a domain and the entities and relationships that exist in it



Introduction to Ontologies,
<https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/machine-learning/introduction-to-ontologies/>

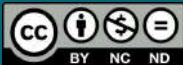
Ontoterminology

A way to structure a terminology as Linked Data through an ontology



TEDI, <https://ontoterminology.com/tedi>

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Unnamed Women in Attic Oratory

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Value of Attic Oratory

Attic Oratory: genre of works intended for oral delivery in Classical Athens (i.e. speeches, especially court speeches)

Network of people: well-known historical figures, everyday people not mentioned elsewhere, Athenian citizens, foreigners, prostitutes, and unnamed women



*Ideal for Linked
Data
Prosopography*

Challenge of Unnamed Women

Etiquette: “respectable” women’s names are intentionally avoided in public speech

“τῆς Πολεμάρχου **γυναικὸς**” (Lys. 12.19)

“τὴν **μητέρα** τὴν Τιμάρχου” (Dem. 19.283)

“Ἄβρωνος γὰρ τοῦ Βουσέλου υἱὸς ἔλαβεν τὴν **θυγατριδῆν** Καλλίστρατος” (Dem. 43.73)

“If we wish to learn about Athenian citizen women, we must take into account not only Plangon, but Mantitheus’ mother, Democrates’ sister, and Meixiades’ daughter” (Schaps 1977, 330)



Woman extends her arms to an infant brought by another woman. Red-figure hydria, British Museum (c. 440-430 BCE).

480735 ΗΓΗΜΩΝ husband of —, who is also daughter of ΔΙΟΓΕΙΤΩΝ (PA 6289 D) cited in speech by Lysias as married with dowery of 5000 drachmas to daughter of Diogeiton, 408a (-408 to -408). Status: A*. Treated in APF 3885.

1.1 Lys 32 12: ἐλθὼν δ' ἐγὼ ἡγανάκτουν μὲν πρὸς Ἡγήμονα τὸν ἔχοντα τὴν τούτου θυγατέρα

PAA entry for Hegemon, husband of unnamed daughter of Diogeiton,
<https://attica.artsci.utoronto.ca/index.html>

A representative digital
prosopography of Attic Oratory
must include unnamed women

Unnamed wife of Diodotus

Type: Real

Gender: Female

Relations:

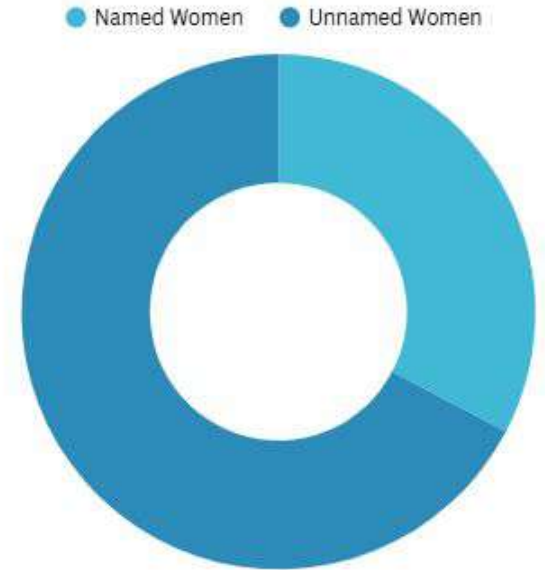
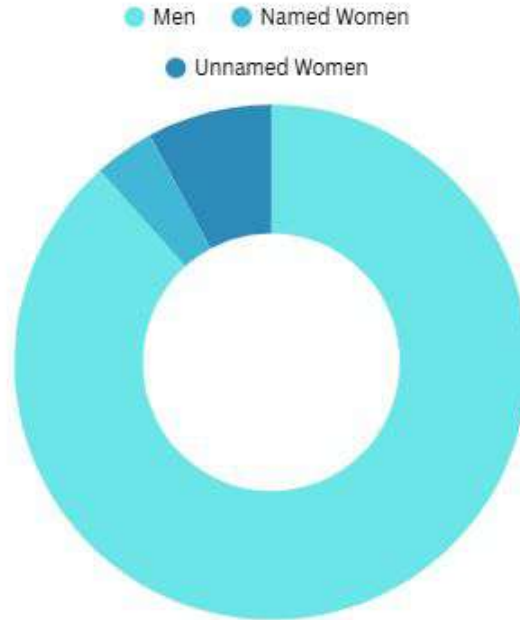
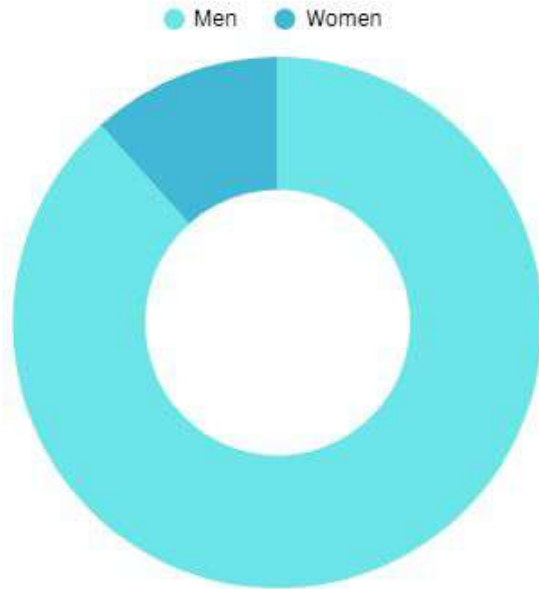
- Wife of: [Diodotus](#)
- Daughter of: [Diogeiton](#)
- Mother of: [Unnamed daughter of Diodotus](#)
- Wife of: [Hegemon](#)
- Mother of: [Unnamed Son of Diodotus](#)

References

Lys 32

"...δέ, ἐάν τι πάθῃ, τάλαντον μὲν ἐπιδούναι τῇ γυναικί καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ δωματίῳ δοῦναι, τάλαντον δὲ τῆ..."

Lys 32.6



Results: 1378 people, 160 women

Queens of the Hellenistic World

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Guernico, *The Dying Cleopatra or The Death of Cleopatra*, 1648, oil painting on canvas, Palazzo Rosso, Genoa.

- The Hellenistic period (323–31 BC) marked a turning point for women in positions of power.
- In the kingdoms of the Successors, and particularly in Ptolemaic Egypt, queens acquired unprecedented political, social, and religious roles.
- They were no longer simply wives or mothers of successors. They became co-rulers, army commanders, deities, and symbols of unity between cultures.
- How do coinage, art, and texts "construct" the image of the Hellenistic queen?



Arsinoe II Philadelphus, Oinochoe from Canosa di Puglia, glazed composition, 30.48 cm x 32.40cm, 270 BC-240 BC. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Arsinoe II Philadelphus

Primary Sources:

Text:

- > refer to her marriages with Lysimachus and Ptolemy II Philadelphus
- > posthumous deification led by her husband and brother Ptolemy II (temple in Alexandria and statues)

Coinage:

- > one of the first living women to be systematically depicted on coins (gold octadrachms). The portrait is idealized, with a diadem and veil (symbol of royalty)

Art:

- > statues, figurines and reliefs depicting and honoring her as queen and goddess
- > testimonies all over the Mediterranean (Egypt, Greece, Minor Asia, Cyprus, Italy)

Conclusion: Presented as a political and religious symbol of power



Gold octadrachm of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BCE). Arsinoe II on obverse.



Ceramic figurine from Amathus, © École française d'Athènes/ Y999.



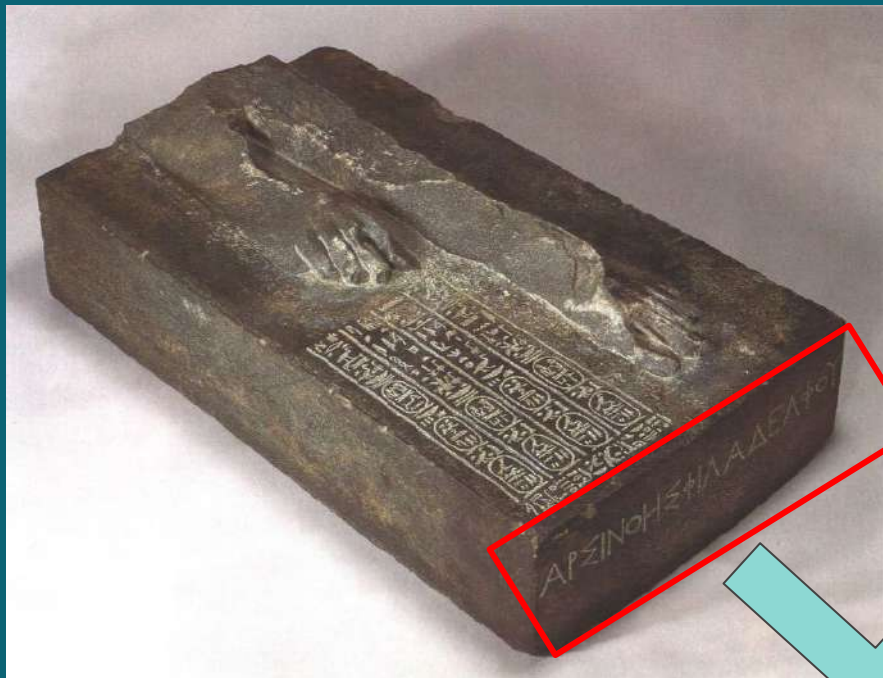
Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Arsinoe II, limestone relief, Chapel of Ptolemy II, ca. 260 BC, 42 x 34.3 cm. © The Trustees of the British Museum



Statue base from Chytroi, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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Pliny the Elder, Natural History, 34.148

The architect Timochares had begun to use lodestone for constructing the vaulting in the **Temple of Arsinoe at Alexandria**, so that the iron statue contained in it might have the appearance of being suspended in mid air; but the project was interrupted by his own death and that of **King Ptolemy** who had ordered the work to be done in **honour of his sister.**

Cult Statue of Queen Arsinoe II. Ptolemaic Period, reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, 284-246 B.C., Basalt. 55 x 33.7 x 11 cm.

ΑΡΣΙΝΟΗΣ ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΟΥ

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The great soul, daughter of Amun, god's wife, sister of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, User-ka-re-mery-amun, daughter of Amun, **Arsinoe**. The great benefactor, beloved of Re, wife of the king, son of Re, lord of Appearances Ptolemy, daughter of Amun, **Arsinoe**. The lady, beloved of Ptah, royal sister of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, User-ka-re-mery-amun, daughter of Amun, **Arsinoe the wise**, beloved of Thoth, royal daughter of the Lord of the Two lands Setep-en-re- mery-amun, Lord of Appearances, Ptolemy (I), daughter of Amun **Arsinoe**, beloved of Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, the foremost of Karnak, beloved of Mut the great, **Mistress of Isheru**, and beloved of Khonsu in Thebes, Nefer-hotep.

Cult Statue of Queen Arsinoe II. Ptolemaic Period, reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, 284-246 B.C., Basalt. 55 x 33.7 x 11 cm.

Different web sources -> how can we connect them?

The British Museum

Arsinoe II

Information Related objects

Also known as

Arsinoe II
primary name: Arsinoe II
other name: Arsinoe Phil.

Details

individual; ruler; royal/imj

Other dates

c.316 BC-c.270 BC (rule)

Arsinoe II

Arsinoe II (c.316-268): second wife of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, queen in the Ptolemaic E

Relatives

- Father: Ptolemy I Soter
- Mother: Berenice I
- First husband: Lysimachus
 - Children: Ptolemy, Philip, Lysimachus
- Second husband: her half-brother Ptolemy Keraunos
- Third husband: her brother Ptolemy II Philadelphus

Perseus Encyclopedia

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our current position in the text is marked in blue. Click anywhere in the line to jump to another position.

alphabetic: letter: entry group: entry:

This text is part of: PersEnc. A.17.arsinoe

↔

Arsinoe

Arsinoe, daughter of Leucippus

Paus. 3.26.4, Paus. 4.31.6
mother of Aesculapius by Apollo: Apollod. 3.10.3, Paus. 2.26.7, Paus. 4.3.2, Paus. 4.31.12
her sanctuary at Sparta: Paus. 3.12.8
portrait: Paus. 4.31.12

Table of Contents:

- ▶ Abacus - Achiloleum
- ▶ Achilles - Aesoides
- ▶ Aesoids - Aemineus
- ▶ Aeolo - Aetolians

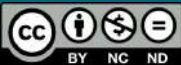
Arsinoe (2), da

Arsinoe II

Ptolemaic Greek Princess of Ancient Egypt and Queen of Thrace, Asia Minor and Macedonia
Wikidata ID: Q40234

Author, Title	Category	Type	Language
SHOW 25 ENTRIES			
SEARCH:			
Author, Title	Text	Date	
Pausanias, Description of Greece (Paus.)	\$1.7.1 This Ptolemy fell in love with Arsinoe, his full sister, and married her, violating herein Macedonian	-300	
Photius, Bibliotheca excerpts (Phot.+Bibl.)	\$224.4.9 affection to the [daughter] of Ptolemaeus Philadelphus, who was called Arsinoe, and this caused Amastris to part from him. After	-300	
Photius, Bibliotheca excerpts (Phot.+Bibl.)	\$224.5.3 was now king of Macedonia, and though his relationship with Arsinoe had caused Amastris to leave him, he still felt some	-300	

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Object identifier **arsinoe ii philadelphus** links-images

International object identifier **arsinoe ii philadelphus** images

begin period -323 end period -31

Instance of Concept (term: person) en Az ?

<Agent human one person>

select remove edit fast ? objects linked to self

Attributes ?

begin date year add

birth date delete

date of death

name

year of birth

Attribute value

Relations ?

appearsInTheSourceOf add

hasFather add

hasMother delete

hasRole delete

isAnentOf

Relation value

Comment

Language **Associated Proper Names** ? begin period: -323 end period: -31

en **Arsinoe II Philadelphus** add edit

fr

el delete



Tedi - External Links Editor

Terminology **EventOntoHellenistic**

Object **arsinoe ii philadelphus**

proper name **Arsinoe II Philadelphus**

External links ?

Values (must respect a valid URI syntax)

foaf:depiction <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/dd/Arsinoell.jpg>

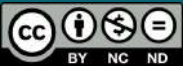
rdfs:seeAlso <https://topostext.org/people/13586>

rdfs:seeAlso <https://kyprioscharacter.eie.gr/el/episthmonikes-symboles/details/threskeia>

rdfs:seeAlso <https://web.archive.org/web/20110318173344/http://www.livius.org/arl-arz/>

add external link edit value delete link-value open url

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Arsinoe II Philadelphus

Instance of concept: <Agent human one person>

Term: Person

Attributes:

year of birth: ca. 318-314 BC

year of death: ca. 270-268 BC

Relations:

hasFather: Ptolemy I Soter

hasMother: Berenice I of Egypt

hasRole: Arsinoe II Queen of Thrace, Macedonia and Egypt (instance of political role)

isMemberOfDynasty: Ptolemaic Dynasty

isAgentOf: Marriage of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II

isDepictedIn: Cult Statue of Arsinoe II

Gold Octadrachm of Arsinoe II

appearsInTheSourceOf: Description of Greece, Historia Naturalis

Egyptian Hieroglyphic Inscription on Cult Statue of Arsinoe II

Inscribed Architectural Fragment of Arsinoe II from Idalio

referencedInChapter: PausDescGr 9.31., PausDescGr 1.7.1, PlinNat 34.148

Egyptian Hieroglyphic Inscription on
Cult Statue of Arsinoe II
Instance of concept: <Words inscribed
on material>
Term: Inscription

Attributes:

dated from: 270 BC

dated to: 246 BC

material: basalt statue base

number of corpora: Chicago OI 10518

Relations:

hasFunction: posthumous deification of a
hellenistic queen (religious function)

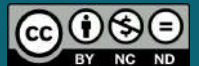
inscribedOn: Cult Statue of Arsinoe II

refersToAgent: Arsinoe II Philadelphus

refersToEvent: Establishment of the cult
of Arsinoe II (<lawful religious event>



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Pausanias, Description Of Greece, 5.8.11

προσέθεσαν δὲ ὕστερον καὶ συνωρίδα πῶλων καὶ πῶλον κέλητα: ἐπὶ μὲν δὴ τῇ συνωρίδι Βελιστίχην ἐκ Μακεδονίας τῆς ἐπὶ θαλάσση γυναῖκα, Τληπόλεμον δὲ Λύκιον ἀναγορευθῆναι λέγουσιν ἐπὶ τῷ κέλητι, τοῦτον μὲν ἐπὶ τῆς πρώτης καὶ τριακοστῆς τε καὶ ἑκατοστῆς Ὀλυμπιάδος, τῆς δὲ Βελιστίχης τὴν συνωρίδα Ὀλυμπιάδι πρὸ ταύτης τρίτη. πέμπτη δὲ ἐπὶ ταῖς τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ἑκατὸν ἄθλα ἐτέθη παγκρατίου παισὶ, καὶ ἑνίκα Φαίδιμος Αἰολεὺς ἐκ πόλεως Τρωάδος.



Afterwards they added **rac**es for chariots and pairs of foals, and for single foals with rider. It is said that the victors proclaimed were: for the chariot and pair, **Belistiche**, a woman from the seaboard of **Macedonia**; for the ridden race, Tlepolemus of Lycia. Tlepolemus, **they say**, won at the hundred and **thirty-first Olympiad [256 BCE]**, and **Belistiche at the third before this [264 BCE]**. At the hundred and forty-fifth Olympiad [200 BCE] prizes were offered for boys in the pancratium, the victory falling to Phaedimus, an Aeolian from the city Troas.

Plutarch, Amatorius 753f

ἢ δὲ **Βελεστίχη**, πρὸς Διός, οὐ βάρβαρον
ἐξ ἀγορᾶς γύναιον, ἧς ἱερὰ καὶ ναοὺς
Ἀλεξανδρεῖς ἔχουσιν,
ἐπιγράψαντος δι' ἔρωτα τοῦ βασιλέως
Ἀφροδίτης Βελεστίχης;



Deification, Religious function

And was not **Belestiche** a barbarian courtesan
bought in the market, in whose honor the
Alexandrians erected shrines and temples, with
inscriptions to **Aphrodite Belestiche** as marks
of the king's affection to her?

Athenaeus, Deipnosophistae 13.70

Βιλιστίχη δ' ἡ Ἀργεῖα ἐταῖρα καὶ αὐτὴ
ἐνδοξος, τὸ γένος ἀπὸ τῶν Ἀτρειδῶν
σῶζουσα, ὡς οἱ τὰ Ἀργολικὰ γράψαντες
ἱστοροῦσιν.



Courtesan, Social Role

There was also **Bilistiche** the Argive, who was
a very celebrated courtesan, and who traced
her descent back to the Atreidae, as those
historians relate who have written the history of
the affairs of Argolis.

Conclusions

- Digital methods enhance visibility of historic women, named and unnamed
- We can counter the narrative that historical women were entirely powerless
- Even in a patriarchal system, women still had a presence and impact



Greek *hetaira* and her client, Terracotta kylix (Signed by Hieron, Attributed to Makron) ca. 490 BCE.

Conclusions

Case studies of the ancient world -> broader potential

Data-driven approaches can increase visibility for women throughout history, up until today



Greek *hetaira* and her client, Terracotta kylix (Signed by Hieron, Attributed to Makron) ca. 490 BCE.

Thank you for your attention and patience! Questions?

Rachel Milio, PhD Candidate, RT1: Semantic Annotation of Texts, TALOS-AI4SSH.

Antonia Lourentzaki, Research Assistant & Video Editor, TALOS-AI4SSH

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https://www.academia.edu/19647890/The_Woman_Least_Mentioned_Etiquette_and_Women's_Names.

