Lysimache: A Portrait of a Priestess[1]

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[1] As this work draws heavily on the scholarship of Joan Breton Connelly in her 2007 book, *Portrait of a Priestess*, this title has been chosen as an homage to her invaluable contribution to the field.

Studies about women's lives in Ancient Greece within the past two decades, particularly studies into women's visibility, mobility, and authority, have at times seemed to take it upon themselves to act as a corrective to the work done in the 20th century and earlier. Recent scholarship about women's lives has taken a turn recently as it focuses on how women may have been able to gain some level of independence for themselves. Discussions of this sort often focus on priestesses and the level of authority they may have been able to achieve within that role. Such is Joan Breton Connelly's *Portrait of a Priestess*, the first comprehensive history of feminine priesthoods. In *Portrait of a Priestess*, Connelly examines known priestesses and the cults they presided over as well as matters of their compensation, honors, perquisites, and the manner in which they acquired their priesthood, which is identified as generally through inheritance, lot, or payment.

Connelly establishes with relative certainty not only that feminine priesthoods were a historical reality but also that these women were *paid* officials held in high regard by their communities. In this thesis I turn my focus to a particular priestess: Lysimache, priestess of Athena Polias in the second half of the fifth century, and possibly early fourth century, BCE. Lysimache was first proposed as a priestess of Athena Polias by Lewis (1955), with the aid of epigraphic evidence. At this time Lewis additionally brought forth the argument that Lysimache may have been the model for the titular character of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. This proposal has spawned much scholarship into the play's connection with this priestess as well as other priestesses who may have served as prototypes for the characters of Kalonike and Myrrhine. Some have taken Lewis' argument as possible but dismissed its importance and labelled the connection "nothing more profound than to cause amusement".[2] Such dismissals fail to

[2] H.D Westlake, "The 'Lysistrata and the War'", *Phoenix* 34, no. 1 (1980): 52.

acknowledge just what this connection can tell us about Athenian society, just what it would really mean for Aristophanes to have modeled his titular comedic heroine off the most distinguished priestess in Athens, a priestess who very well may have been seated front and center at the *Lysistrata*'s premiere.

When Lysimache is mentioned by scholars more often than not it is only regarding her connection with Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and part of a larger analysis on Aristophanes and/or Greek comedy. While of course this connection is fascinating and when looked at in the right light can reveal much about Athenian life in the late fifth century, it seems few have attempted to focus on the historical Lysimache herself. Nevertheless, scholars who have investigated Lysimache through her connection with *Lysistrata* have uncovered interesting aspects of Greek feminine priesthoods. For example, Faraone analyzes *Lysistrata* through the lens of avenues for independence available to women. He argues that women could gain some semblance of autonomy through either priesthood or prostitution, and that while by and large the women of the play are lumped into either the category of the sex-crazed young wives or the chaste, pious older women, Lysistrata straddles both categories.[3] More recently, Thonemann sheds light on the implications of Lysimache as a model for Lysistrata. In analyzing the play through its contemporary historical and political events, Lysimache is brought to the forefront as an active member of Athenian politics.[4] Focusing on the language used by the Greek women when they call for female leadership to end this war, Thonemann connects their strife with the 412 BCE decision to broach the 1,000 talent 'Iron Reserve' set aside by the Athenians, which was originally intended to be used only for the repulsion of a Spartan naval attack and use its contents

[3]Christopher Faraone, "Priestess and Courtesan: The Ambivalence of Female Leadership in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*," in *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2006).
[4] Peter Thonemann, "Lysimache and Lysistrata", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 140 (2020).

to fund the war.[5] Pointing to the devastating losses of the dragging Peloponnesian War, especially that of the Sicilian Expedition just a few years prior to the play's conception, he speaks to the possibility of very real female unrest in Athens, similar to what we see in *Lysistrata*. In viewing this play as possibly reflecting the contemporary Athenian political climate we must also extend our scope to the actions of certain characters as possibly reflecting reality. As Lysistrata in Aristophanes' play led the band of frustrated women to the Acropolis to end the war once and for all, did Lysimache too somehow 'lead the band of frustrated women' by calling upon herself to complain on behalf of the women of Athens? Thonemann dismisses this train of thought with the statement that he sees "no reason to think that the priestess of Athena Polias was in any sense the 'spokeswoman' of the women of Athens."[6]

The idea that Lysimache may have been somewhat of an advocate for the women of Athens is discussed more at length by Hall (2010). First, the case for Lysimache as a model for Lysistrata is further strengthened by pointing out Lysistrata's characteristics which liken her to that of a priestess; this includes her being named in public by men, her weaving skills, and her impressive command of ritual. Hall mentions lines 587-93, which seem to betray what the actual women of Athens were feeling about the war[7]:

> 'We bear war's burden twice over: in the first place by giving birth to our sons and then by sending them out as hoplites...and then, at the age when we ought to be having fun and enjoying our prime, we have to sleep alone because of the campaigns. About our position

[5] Thonemann, "Lysimache and Lysistrata", 11.
[6] Ibid., 10.
[7] Hall, "The Many Faces of Lysistrata", in *Looking at Lysistrata,* ed. David Stuttard (NYC: Bloomsbury, 2011) 36.

I do not speak, but I am deeply saddened by the number of spinsters growing old in their virginal bedrooms.'[8]

Did these women take their discontent to the streets? Thucydides' version of Pericles' 431 BCE funeral oration may implicitly reveal a brewing unrest among the female population of Athens. When he tells the grieving women to 'bear up' should they still be of childbearing age, is he just reminding these women of 'their place' in society? Why now does he tell them that greatest glory will be to the woman "who is least talked of among the men, whether for good or for bad" (2.44-5)?[9] Is it again just a reminder of the order of society or something more? Perhaps as Hall suggests Pericles is "forced to mention the women because he is faced with a militant, distraught, and noisy group of ritual mourners who are going to make life difficult for politicians advocating war".[10]c Indeed, when one looks over the language of the funeral oration, 'forced' seems a fair description for how he chooses to address the women, stating "if I must say anything on the subject of female excellence…"(2.45.2). If Pericles found himself pushed to address female behavior in reaction to the war losses as early as 431, who is to say what the situation would have looked like nearly two decades later, when things had become much more dire.

Perhaps the situation had become dire enough for the Priestess of Athena Polias to feel the need to do something about it. One could view the actions of Lysistrata and her band of Greek women taking over the Acropolis and denying sex as possibly reflective of a genuine breaking point reached by the women of Athens. Although, for the historical women of Athens this 'breaking point' would have culminated in seeking help from the Priestess of Athena Polias, not occupying the Acropolis. Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* is a work of comedy deeply entrenched in

[8] trans. Edith Hall
[9] trans. E.P. Dutton
[10] Hall, "The Many Faces of Lysistrata", 36.

the contemporary political events, perhaps even more so than initially thought. If Aristophanes portrays the women of Athens as finally having enough of the horrors of the Peloponnesian War and deciding to do something about it then it is within the realm of possibility that the real women of Athens did so too, albeit in a less comedically outlandish fashion.

The point of this thesis is not to prove conclusively whether Lysimache intervened in Athenian politics in the late fifth century or not. The evidence is far too insufficient to state with any degree of certainty the true extent of political authority held by this woman. Rather, what I aim to challenge is the idea of seclusion and isolation within the home as a standard for women in ancient Greece, using Lysimache as an example of a woman who may have exercised great authority over her community. In examining the attested political interventions of other historical priestesses, coupled with what we *do* know about Lysimache and priestesses in general, one can attempt to make claims about the possibility of such a political intervention. This thesis will be divided into four sections as follows:

1. Historical and epigraphic accounts of feminine priestly authority & priestesses intervening in politics
2. Epigraphic evidence for Lysimache as priestess of Athena Polias
3. Evidence for Lysimache as a model for Aristophanes' heroine in *Lysistrata* & the implications of that association
4. Lysimache & the historical context of her life in connection with Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*

The field of women's history in ancient Greece has come quite a long way in the past few decades. The acknowledgement of the existence of Greek feminine priesthoods has been a long time coming. No scholar published a comprehensive book on priestesses until Connelly in 2007,

and yet despite the advances the field has made, there are still those who cling to the idea of feminine priesthoods as somehow secondary or peripheral or those who suggest that these cult agents were not paid in the way their male counterparts were. Connelly's *Portrait of Priestess* is comprehensive enough to dash any doubts of Greek feminine priesthoods as somehow lesser than masculine priesthoods. Of course, women's ability to gain great power and status in these roles does not change the overall disenfranchised position of Greek women, but it does alter the picture slightly. Since Lysimache was a priestess of the most distinguished cult on the Acropolis, a sister to the secretary of treasurers, and likely a member of the Eteoboutad clan, there is no doubt that this woman was endowed with a preternaturally elevated level of authority.[11] Although the evidence for her is scanty, Lysimache has left her mark on Greek history, and as one scours through the texts a picture begins to form of a commanding, involved woman very invested in the welfare of Athens. The question is then, how far did her command stretch?

Political interventions by priestesses & broader feminine priestly authority

A fragment of Lykourgos's lost speech *On the Priestesses* sheds light on the question of what sorts of rights and responsibilities were bestowed upon the priestess of Athena Polias. It states that the priestess is required to add her seal to the register, officially authorizing her to countersign documents.[12] In other ancient texts, we see a similar thread as in Lykourgos with the representation of priestesses as an influential class of people endowed with an exceptional level of power in comparison with their non-sacerdotal female counterparts. The works of Herodotus in particular put a special emphasis on relaying the tales of powerful priestesses and the

[11] Judy Ann Turner, "*Hiereiai*: Acquisition of Feminine Priesthoods in Ancient Greece," (University of California Santa Barbara, 1983).
[12] Joan Breton Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) 217.

communities which listened to them. One such example is his account of the ejection of the Spartan king Kleomenes from the Acropolis by the priestess of Athena Polias in the year 508 BCE (5.72). As the Spartan king approached the shrine of the goddess, the priestess rose from her seat and stated: "Go back, Lacedaemonian stranger, and do not enter the holy place since it is not lawful that Dorians should pass in here" (5.72.3).[13] First, it is interesting to note that Herodotus describes the priestess as rising "up from her seat" within the adyton. The fourth century dedication of marble thrones by Sostratos at Rhamnous could reflect a practice of priestesses receiving specially carved thrones to be used while they are within the sanctuary, much like what is described here by Herodotus.[14] These seats for the exclusive use of the priestesses reveal the authority they held over the sacred space. Additionally, the reasoning given by the priestess of Athena Polias for why Kleomenes is to be ejected from the Acropolis demonstrates her role as the protector and enforcer of sacred laws within the sanctuary. Yet, the king was not deterred, and tried again to seize the Acropolis, only to be cast out along with the rest of the Lacedaemonians.

In addition to the ejection of the Spartan king from the Acropolis, Herodotus' account of the 480 BCE evacuation of Athens prior to the battle of Salamis (7.142-44, 8.41) underscores the authority of the priestess of Athena Polias in various ways. Following a typically cryptic response from the Delphic oracle concerning what they are to do about the advance of the Persians, the Athenians were torn over interpreting the oracle's advice as taking refuge in the Acropolis or as taking to the ships of the Athenian fleet. This account is especially interesting when one views it in the context of collusion and cooperation between politics and religion to

[13] All Herodotus passages draw from A.D. Godley's translation.
[14] Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 202.

meet a common goal. When the envoys had returned from Delphi, it was Themistokles, a politician and general on the rise, who put forth the suggestion to evacuate to the ships of the Athenian fleet. Dubbing Themistokles a "better counsellor than the readers of the oracle" (7.143.3), the other men soon followed suit in agreement. However, the evacuation would perhaps not have taken place without the assistance of the priestess of Athena Polias. Herodotus describes the mood in Athens the day preparations were to take place as 'anxious' as people scuttled about, wanting to make sure everything was taken out safely. One can only imagine the hectic atmosphere that would have clouded the city at this time, especially if not everyone was so willing to evacuate as others. It was the priestess of Athena Polias, after declaring that the sacred snake had failed to eat its honey cake, thus implying that the goddess herself had fled the city, that pushed the populace to evacuate more willingly and efficiently. This then allowed Themistokles to enact his evacuation plan. One can imagine a scenario wherein this act could have been purposely orchestrated by the priestess, working in accordance with the politicians of Athens who wished to move along the evacuation as quickly as possible. If this were the case, it would be an example of priestly authority being exercised past the religious sphere in collaboration with the political sphere in order to receive a desirable outcome for the city and the officials.

These instances in which a priestess not only intervenes in the political sphere but also has her authority in doing so recognized by her community are of course not limited only to Athens. Such are Herodotus's manifold accounts of the Pythia at Delphi and the seriousness with which her advice is followed, including the claim that it was the Pythia who equipped Lykourgos with the Spartan structure of government.[15] While the, at times fantastical, nature of some of

[15] Herodotus 1.65

Herodotus's stories does call into question their veracity, the common theme of priestesses intervening in the political sphere and having their advice heeded, usually in a way which results in a favorable outcome for all, does reflect the reality of the preternatural authority enjoyed by priestesses, especially those of high-status cults. When one examines the perquisites, honors, and roles in ritual bestowed upon the priestesses, this authority is further illuminated.

Both priests and priestesses regularly received some form of compensation for their service as a cult official, and this compensation is often called *apometra* or *hierosyna*.[16] The latter is understood to be a sum paid by the person making the sacrifices which is then used for the sacrifice itself. Apometra is a portion of the sacrifice given to the priest or priestess who presided over it and could take the form of cash, a share of the sacrificial victim, or other offerings such as textiles.[17] While there is still debate over whether the apometra and hierosyna represent direct compensation for their service or rather reimbursements for the cost of materials used in sacrifice, certain literary and epigraphic sources point toward a decent income for at least the priestesses of high-status cults. Pseudo-Aristotle's *Oikonomika* states that the tyrant Hippias instituted a payment of one day's worth of barley and wheat, plus one obol, to the priestess of Athena on the occasion of every birth and death in Athens.[18] By the fourth century, the male citizen population of Athens is thought to have been around 29,000, and so the annual number of births and deaths would have been fairly high, allowing for a substantial, steady income for the priestess of Athena, especially when one considers the other forms of payment she would have received as well.[19] One mid-fifth century Athena Nike decree speaks to the payments of priestly

[16] For discussion of these terms see Connelly pg. 198.
[17] Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 198.
[18] Pseudo-Aristotle, *Oikonomika* 2.1347a.
[19] *CAH* 3 VI 566-567.

offices as well.[20] The decree declares that the priestess of Athena Nike be paid fifty drachmas per year in addition to the legs and hides of the public sacrificial animals. Interestingly, this decree also highlights the importance with which priestly payment was regarded, as a rider carved on the back of the decree states that the priestess *must* be paid the amount stated on the front. This implies that she had not been receiving what she was due, and the Athenians sought to rectify that. A common perquisite for many Greek priesthoods, such as Athena Nike mentioned above, was the skin of the sacrificial victim. This commodity could be sold for profit if desired, further advancing the priestesses' salaries.

Many public honors received by priestesses also point towards a high status and authority within their community. By the Hellenistic period, the public honors of crowns, reserved seats in the theater, and portrait statues were commonplace for priestesses.[21] From the late fifth century and onward, the public crowning or *stephanosis* was among the highest honors that could be bestowed upon an individual by their community.[22] One text dated 255/254 BCE states that the priestess of Athena Polias at the time, Lysistrate, was to receive a crown of olive leaves.[23] Even more valuable was the gold crown which, in second-century Pergamon, was regularly granted to priestesses of Athena along with a bronze portrait statue.[24] *Proedria*, or a reserved seat in the theater, came to become an honor bestowed upon priestesses with regularity. While the question of whether or not women attended the theater is still up in the air, we know that the women of Roman Athens attended theater in large numbers, due to the significant amount of inscribed female names on theater seats.[25] Not a single ancient source explicitly mentions the exclusion of

[20] *IG* I^3 35.9-12; *IG* I^3 36.
[21] Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 203.
[22] Ibid., 204.
[23] *IG* II^2 776.24.
[24] Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 205.
[25] Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 207.

women from the theater and much of the argument that they were excluded is based upon assumption rather than actual evidence. As early as the second century BCE, Chrysis, a priestess of Athena Polias, was granted the honor of a reserved seat in the theater.[26] This award would have brought great social prestige and capital, as the prominent position of the seat in the very front of the audience and the often throne-like appearance of the seat would have brought considerable visibility to the individual. Furthermore, Connelly has noted that if women were excluded from the theater in the classical period, then suddenly allowed in the Hellenistic period, one would think that there would be *some* comment about this drastic change *somewhere*, but there is not. Additionally, she speaks to the religious aspect of theater performances and argues that since women were so prevalent in the processions, prayers, and rituals of these religious festivals, it would not make much sense for them to be excluded from this aspect of the festivals.[27] As I think it quite naive to assume that women were excluded from the theater, especially considering the lack of evidence for this, it is quite possible Lysimache sat front and center at the performance of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* at the Lenaia festival in 411 BCE.

Priestesses have also been proven to be active in the legal sphere of society, something denied to other female citizens. Perhaps the most famous account of this is Plutarch's tale of the strong-willed Theano, embroiled in the legal proceedings against Alkibiades in 415 BCE. Alkibiades was convicted of crimes against Demeter and Kore for his mocking of the Eleusinian

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[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 212.
For further discussion of women and the theater see Jeffrey Henderson. "Women and the Athenian Dramatic Festivals." *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-)* 121 (1991): 133-47 and Goldhill, Simon. 1994. “Representing Democracy: Women at the Great Dionysia,” in *Ritual, Finance, Politics: Athenian Democratic Accounts,* ed. Robin Osborne and Simon Hornblower. Oxford. 347–69.

Mysteries, and was to be publicly cursed by the priests and priestesses. Following this order, Plutarch writes that:

> "Theano, the daughter of Menon, of the deme Argaule, they say, was the only one who refused to obey this decree. She declared that she was a praying, not a cursing priestess."[28]

This account is particularly interesting for my investigation into the priestess of Athena Polias, Lysimache, due to its 415 BCE date. However, even Plutarch's account gives quite scanty details about Theano. In these cases, what is *not* written is almost as important as what is. Had speaking up and refusing to obey the order to curse Alcibiades resulted in negative consequences for Theano, it would be a bit strange if Plutarch had just decided not to mention it. This is especially true considering that Plutarch's account is not contemporary with the event and he likely would have been aware of negative consequences for Theano, should she have received them. Instead, what we see is a priestess both going against her colleagues, refusing to do something that she did not believe was right, *and* having that opinion respected as well. Of course, her opinion was not respected enough to have the punishment altered, but it was at least respected enough for her to have the ability to speak her mind without negative consequences. Some, such as Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, have questioned the accuracy of this account, but she nevertheless states that the image painted of Theano by Plutarch reflects a historical reality where it was customary for priestesses to speak their minds, even if it meant dissenting from the consensus.[29]

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[28] Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 22.4, trans. Bernadotte Perrin.
[29] Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Priestess in the Text, Theano Menonos Agrylethen," *Greece and Rome* 35 no.1, (1988).

We know that it was the priestess's job to ensure the laws were followed within the sanctuary, as we see with the incident involving the Spartan king Kleomenes (Herodotus 5.72), and epigraphic evidence further proves that they took that role seriously and at times took to legal action to punish the transgressors. Such was the case in one fourth-century dispute which details a quarrel between the priestess of Demeter at Eleusis and the hierophant Archias. The hierophant in question was accused of sacrificing upon the sacred altar during the Haloa festival even though that right belonged to the priestess alone. Archias had an attractive pedigree, belonging to the Eumolpid family, and his prominent family lobbied heavily in his favor, yet the case went to the priestess and Archias was convicted of impiety.[30] Similarly, during the fourth century at Arkesine on Amorgos, the priestess of Demeter took to the Council and the Assembly to complain of the women breaking sanctuary laws by entering the sanctuary at forbidden times. She asked for a penalty be made for those who violated this, and the Council and Assembly acquiesced, passing a decree at the priestess's suggestion.[31] Following the decree, the sanctuary was only accessible at times when the priestess was present. This inscription, in addition to depicting the authority of the priestess in the legal arena, demonstrates the unprecedented access to sacred space enjoyed by priestesses.

The presence of the cult statues in sanctuaries transformed that space into essentially a residence for the gods[32], and as attendants of the deities, priestly officials received special privileges regarding the sacred space ordinary citizens would not dare dream of. In certain cases, the priest or priestess may even be granted the honor of living within the sacred space. Such may have been the case at Eleusis, as one 329/328 BCE expense account for the sanctuary mentions

[30] Apollodoros, *Against Neaira* (= Demosthenes 59) 116.
[31] *LSCG* 102.
[32] Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 202.

"the house of the priestess," "the sacred houses of the priestesses," and "the sacred house where the priestesses live".[33] While this does not necessarily mean they lived within the temple itself, living within the holy precinct does bring an individual quite close to the diety. At some sites, the priestesses did not live in the sanctuary, but enjoyed other exclusive privileges pertaining to the sanctuary and/or temple, such as being the only individuals allowed to look upon the cult statues. Pausanias (7.23.9, 2.35.11) gives two examples of this at the Temple of Hera at Aigion and at the sanctuary of Eileithyia at Hermione. This exclusive right gives the priestess a very intimate relationship with the deity that could have translated into some symbolic or social wealth that comes with such a close bond to the god attainable only by priestly officials. With the relationship between the priestess and the god being an intimate one with, in some cases, the priestess and the deity sharing physical space, the line between mortal and divine may have at times been a bit thin when it came to the priestly officials, as they inhabited a plain that was largely inaccessible and sometimes even entirely unknown to most of the population.

The final piece of evidence for feminine priestly authority I will speak to is the positioning of priestesses as "important custodians of local knowledge and cult history".[34] Many historical accounts relay tales of high-status male figures seeking out the knowledge of priestesses and admiring them for their intellect. In fact, the image of the priestess as a wise teacher being sought out by philosophers becomes very commonplace and extends from the time of Herodotus well into the Roman period. Herodotus tells us of his trip to Dodona, where he was educated on the origin of the shrine by priestesses Promeneia, Timarete, and Nikandra.[35] Aristoxenos, as recorded by Diogenes Laertius, tells us that Pythagoras studied philosophy under

[33] *IG* II^2 1672.17, 74, 293, 127, 305.
[34] Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 219.
[35] Herodotus 2.55.

Themistokleia, a Delphic priestess[36] and in Plato's *Symposium*, Sokrates is enlightened on the subject of love by Diotima, a religious expert from Mantineia.[37] In the Roman period, even the emperor Julian recognized the intelligence and wisdom of the priestesses. He wrote to the priestess Theodora, thanking her for sending him books and letters; in this correspondence Julian addresses her as a "most revered" woman who had devoted her life to piety.[38]

Although there are sadly no surviving historical or epigraphic accounts of Lysimache herself intervening in politics like we have for the women mentioned above, it can be said with relative certainty that as priestess of Athena Polias, Lysimache would have been a powerful woman. This is especially true when one considers the contemporary story of priestess Theano going against her colleagues and apparently having her decision to do so respected by the others. With the incredible authority and influence of priestesses now firmly established, I turn my focus toward the surviving epigraphic evidence for Lysimache as priestess of Athena Polias in the late fifth century, possibly early fourth century, BCE.

Epigraphic evidence for Lysimache as priestess of Athena Polias

While evidence directly relating to Lysimache is quite limited, it provides a steady enough foundation on which we can build. It was David Lewis who first proposed in 1955 not only the possibility of a fifth century BCE priestess of Athena Polias named Lysimache, but also that the titular heroine of Aristophanes' 411 BCE comedy, *Lysistrata* may have been inspired by that very priestess of Athena Polias.[39] He builds on the prior work of Papademetriou, who,

[36] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 8.1.21.
[37] Plato, *Symposium* 201-02.
[38] Letters 32-34 in *The Works of Emperor Julian* vol. 3, trans. Wilmer Cave Wright. (1923) 109-115.
[39] David Lewis, "Notes on Attic Inscriptions (II): XXIII. Who Was Lysistrata?", *Annual of the British School at Athens* 50 (1955).

employing a grave-inscription[40] for a woman by the name of Myrrhine, suggested the idea of Myrrhine, priestess of Athena Nike in the second half of the fifth century, as inspiration for the character of Myrrhine in *Lysistrata*.[41] Lewis noted that if this is to be true, there must be another historical priestess in *Lysistrata*, specifically there must be one who outranks Myrrhine. The habit of the family which supplied priestesses for Athena Polias, the Eteoboutadai family of the Bate deme, to give their children names like Lysistrate and Lysistratos is mentioned by Lewis as circumstantial evidence linking Lysimache to the priesthood of Athena Polias.[42] He points to Pliny the Elder's *Natural History,* which states that the sculptor Demetrios of Alopeke made a bronze statue for Lysimache, priestess of Athena.[43] Lewis dates Demetrios' working life from 400-360 BCE, plausibly within Lysimache's tenure or just after her death.[44] It is very possible that the statue mentioned by Pliny once sat atop a circular base found west of the Parthenon towards the south wall of the Acropolis. The statue base has an inscription[45] which reads as follows:

> [Λυσιμάχη? . . . . ἥδ]ε Δρακο[ντί]δο ἦν [τὸ γέ]νος μέν,
> [ὀγδώκοντ' ὀκτ]ὼ δ' ἐξεπέρασεν ἔτη·
> [- - $^{3-4}$ -]ιν [ἑξή]κοντα δ' ἔτη καὶ τέσσαρα Ἀθάναι
> [λατρεύσ' ἠδὲ γένη] τέσσαρ' ἐπεῖδε τέκνων.
> *vacat*
> [Λυσιμάχη - - -]έος Φλυέως μήτηρ.

[40] *IG* I^3 1330.
[41] For more information on the historical priestess Myrrhine, see: Michailidou, Eugenia. "The Lekythos of Myrrhine: Funerary and Honorific Commemoration of Priestesses in Ancient Athens." *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 89, no. 3 (2020): 551-579.
[42] The priestess of Athena Polias in the first cen. BCE is named Lysistrate; IG II^2 1036.34. Priestess of Athena Polias in 255 BCE is named Lysistrate; PA 9585; IG II^2 776. The father of the priestess of Athena Polias in 270 BCE is named Lysistratos PA 9615; IG II^2 3455. Her name may have been Lysimache II.
[43] Pliny the Elder, *NH* 34.76.
[44] Lewis, "Notes on Attic Inscriptions," 4.
[45] *IG* II² 3453 trans. Stephen Lambert.

vacat
[Δημήτριος ἐ]ποίησεν.

[This . . . Lysimache] was by her descent (daughter) of Drakontides;
she completed [eighty-eight] years;
. . . sixty-four years she [served] Athena
and lived to see four [generations] of children.
Uninscribed space
[Lysimache] mother of - of Phlya.
Uninscribed space
[Demetrios] made it.

We know of a man by the name of Drakontides who was the father of the secretary of the *tamiai,* or treasurers, of Athena in 416/415. This son, Lysikles, carries the distinctive family root of '*lys'* in his name that we see in Lysimache and other members of the Bate deme. Lysikles was identified as such in a stele[46] which lists payments from the treasury of Athena between 418/7-415/4 BCE.

[Ἀθεναῖοι ἀνέλοσαν ἐπὶ Ἀριμνέστο ἄρχοντος *(416/5)* καὶ ἐπὶ τε͂ς βολε͂ς *h*ε͂ι Ἀρ . . . [6] . . . προ͂τος] ἐγραμμάτευε· ταμίαι [*h*]-[ιερο͂ν χρεμάτον τε͂ς Ἀθεναίας Δεχσίθεος Φυλ- *or* Θριάσιος καὶ χσυνάρχοντες, *h*οῖς Λυσικλε͂ς Δ]ρακοντίδο Βατε͂θ[εν][ἐγραμμάτευε . . . . . [61] . . . . .] Παλλενεῖ [. . . [5] . .]

[The Athenians expended in the archonship of Arimnestos *(416/5)*] and under the Council for which Ar- was first secretary. We the treasurers of the sacred monies of Athena, [Dexitheos of Phlya *or* Thria and his colleagues, for whom Lysikles] son of Drakontides of Bate was secretary . . . of Pallene . . .

[46] *IG* I[3] 370, trans. Stephen Lambert, P.J. Rhodes.

Not much else is known about Lysimache or her family, but Judy Ann Turner has reconstructed a stemma that follows the priesthood of Athena Polias in attempt to identify the women who served in this post and their relations to one another. In this stemma, she identifies the priestess of Athena Polias in 341/340 BCE as Lysikles' eldest son's eldest daughter, Phanostrate and the priestess of Athena Polias in 270 BCE as Lysimache's nephew's son's daughter, the aforementioned Lysimache II.[47] Additionally, there has been recent scholarship concerning a statue base for a woman by the name of Syeris who was a *diakonos*, a female sacred official, to the priestess of Athena Polias.[48] Syeris is usually associated with the later, third century BCE Lysimache II, but Keesling argues for Syeris as the diakonos to our fifth century Lysimache.[49]

Evidence for Lysimache as a model for Aristophanes' heroine in Lysistrata & the implications of that association

Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, first performed in 411 BCE, is a wealth of information regarding classical Greek rel*ig*ion, culture, and politics. On its own, the play represents a master work of comedic theater that sheds light onto the personal lives of Greek men and women. However, when read through the lens of female religious participation, in particular one female, Lysimache, it can tell us so much more. Both the identification of Lysimache as priestess of Athena Polias by Lewis in 1955 and the tentative proposal to name her the possible inspiration for Aristophanes' comedic heroine, Lysistrata, have the possibility to reveal much about the mobility, independence, and authority available to women at this time. First, I will speak to the elements of the play that point to Lysimache as the possible model for the heroine, Lysistrata,

[47] Turner, "*Hiereiai*", 251.
[48] Catherine Keesling, "Syeris, Diakonos to the Priestess Lysimache on the Athenian Acropolis," *Hesperia* 81, no. 3 (2012).
[49] For further discussion of statue base IG II^2 3464 see Keesling (2012).

then I will consider the implications of Aristophanes drawing inspiration for this character from the priestess of Athena Polias.

Within the first few lines of the play, it becomes quite clear that Lysistrata inhabits a very unique place within the cast of characters in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. In his analysis of the play, Faraone argues that the female characters are placed into one of two groups, either the pious, brave older women or the irresponsible, wanton young wives.[50] However, the titular character is the only female character who seems to jump freely between the two categories. Aristophanes often paints Lysistrata as a dignified and intelligent character who is very invested in the wellbeing of her city and country, much like the old women characters, as one may expect a religious official to be. This is exemplified in the interaction between Kalonike and Lysistrata at the beginning of the play. Lysistrata has just begun bemoaning the women she had called to meet her and their inability to leave the house for anything other than extravagant religious festivals. To that Kalonike responds:

> 'Ah, my dear, they'll come. It's not so easy for wives to get away. We've got to fuss about our husbands, wake up the servants, calm and wash the babies, then give them food' (15-19).[51]

However, Lysistrata does not seem similarly concerned with her wifely duties, replying "But there are other things they need to do−more important issues" (20). By portraying Lysistrata as not overly concerned with the matters of house a woman typically had to tend to before going out to do anything else, Aristophanes highlights her dedication to the plan she has

[50] Faraone, "Priestess and Courtesan, " 2006.
[51] All lines from Lysistrata are drawn from Ian Johnston's translation, excluding the passage discussed by Edith Hall in the introduction; that passage is taken directly from Hall's chapter in in *Looking at Lysistrata,* ed. David Stuttard (2010).

conceived: saving Greece from the ravages of the Peloponnesian War. At first thought, showing Lysistrata as indifferent to household management may look like a slight to her character. However, I do not see it that way. Lysistrata is arguably the most respected woman in the production and is consistently praised for her bravery and dedication to Greece, not once is she slighted by a male character for lack of attention to household matters. In showing her as more concerned with the matters of the state than the household, Aristophanes casts her in a masculine light, underscoring the respect to which she is owed. Of course, her being a respected character is not near enough to claim she is supposed to represent the priestess of Athena Polias.

Once the women finally gather with Lysistrata, she explains her plan to them and orders them all to take an oath to swear their allegiance to abstinence for the time being. Throughout this interaction, Lysistrata is shown to be the only one of them with any knowledge in oath-making and the act of ritual, or at least the individual with the most knowledge of it out of the group. Kalonike asks “Then how will we make our oath?”, demonstrating her lack of knowledge on the subject (187). Lysistrata explains the ritual in detail and leads the women through the oath-taking process. As the plot picks up and the men and women become embroiled in conflict, Lysistrata is always seen as the spokeswoman for her side of the dispute. Male characters address her directly and expect her to speak for all the women. After the female and male choruses join as one and the Spartan ambassador arrives, the Athenian ambassador seeks out Lysistrata to explain to the men what is going on, asking “Where’s Lysistrata? Can someone tell me?” (1086). In having both the men and the women look to Lysistrata as a leader and source of information, her exceptional level of authority within the play is further strengthened. She is also shown interpreting oracles (770-780) and is the only woman of the group capable of doing such. Additionally, just prior to Lysistrata’s interpretation of the oracle, the women complain of their

inability to sleep while in the Acropolis as they are frightened by the snake which guards the structure and the noises of owls flitting about. In contrast Lysistrata is shown as quite comfortable in the Acropolis and is very familiar with its layout as she dictates their actions and delegates jobs to the women. If Lysistrata represents the priestess of Athena Polias this would make sense as in many sanctuaries and temples priestly officials had unprecedented access to the sacred area and would have been quite familiar with it. Finally, at the end of the play, Lysistrata calls for the men to purify themselves in preparation for a feast that the women will host for them on the Acropolis (1182-85). This not unlike a priestess and her attendants hosting a feast with the meat of the freshly slaughtered sacrificial animal following a successful ritual, such as the priestess of Demeter and Kore at the summertime Kalamaia feast.[52]

In addition to characteristics and traits displayed by Lysistrata that point to Lysimache as a model for her character, a few lines spoken by other characters draw attention to her background and family, perhaps serving as reminders of the hereditary nature of the priesthood of Athena Polias.[53] On their own, the lines' claim as evidence for this connection between Lysistrata and Lysimache is tentative but coupled with that mentioned above they further strengthen the possibility. Just after Lysistrata's humiliation of the Proboulos by trussing him up in a headscarf and basket, the female chorus addresses the group by calling them "You grandchildren of the bravest women" (549-50). This could be thought of as a reference back to the long line of priestesses that came before Lysimache in the Eteoboutadai line. Further along in the play, after the personification of Reconciliation has led the Spartans and Athenians to Lysistrata, she begins her speech by saying:

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[52] Although, of course, many of Aristophanes' plays end in feasting.
Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 65.
[53] Ibid., 45.

> ‘All of you, listen to my words. I am a woman, but I have a brain, and my common sense is not so bad−I picked it up quite well from listening to my father and to speeches from our senior men’ (1124-27).

The mention of her father calls to mind to the Eteoboutadai clan which controlled the priesthood that Lysimache occupied. Not much is known about Lysimache’s father other than that his name was Drakontides.[54] Another allusion to her father, Drakontides, can be found in Lysistrata’s mention that she acquired her oratorial skills in part by listening to speeches from her father and the ‘senior men’. With all the evidence for Lysimache as a model for Aristophanes’ titular character laid out, now the question becomes: *what does it all mean, and why does it matter?*

Following Lewis’ identification of Lysimache as the priestess of Athena Polias, some attention has been given to Lysimache by scholars studying Aristophanic comedy, but the possibility of her connection with the fictional Lysistrata having any real implications on the play’s broader historical context is often dismissed and the connection relegated to simply yet another instance of Aristophanes poking fun at real people in his works. Westlake describes the connection between both Lysistrata and Lysimache and the character Myrrhine and the priestess Myrrhine as such:

> “He chooses only to give them the same names, thereby devising an admirable joke, which must have been all the more effective because his characters, as they appeared on stage, were doubtless much younger and perhaps more personable than the august ladies whose name they shared, just as they are likely to have differed from them in being so largely preoccupied with sex”.[55]

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[54] Turner, “*Hiereiai*“, 247.
[55] Westlake, “Lysistrata and the War,“ 52.

However, Westlake seems to have forgotten that Aristophanes' did *not* give Lysistrata the same name as the historical priestess. Additionally, one cannot assume the age of the men playing the roles of Lysistrata and Myrrhine as younger than the ages of the two priestesses, we do not know when Lysimache or Myrrhine were born, nor can one assume how personable or non-personable they would have appeared on stage as compared to their 'real life' counterparts. It is in my opinion that if the reasoning behind the ties between Lysistrata and Lysimache truly is just to poke fun at the priestess, as Aristophanes is known to do with public figures, it would be a lot clearer that that was what he was doing. If he wanted to make jokes about Lysimache, why change the name of her character and not the names of other real people mentioned in this play? Additionally, Lysistrata really is a rather 'unfunny' heroine. She is respected, well-spoken, and, once the conflict had been resolved, praised by all. If the naming of the comedic heroine so similarly to that of the priestess of Athena was truly only to 'cause amusement' one might expect Lysimache to be a bit more comical than she is, perhaps looking a bit more like what we see of the priest in Aristophanes' *Birds*, who was often the butt of Aristophanes' jokes. Such is the case when Pisthetaerus belittles the priest mid-sacrifice for listing too many things in his prayer, saying:

> 'Hold on, dammit — stop calling all these birds. You idiot! In what sort of sacrifice does one call for ospreys and for vultures?' (889-890)[56]

Deeming the priest's presence pointless and unnecessary, Pisthetaerus dismisses the priest from the proceedings, demanding "Get out of here, you and your garlands, too. I'll do it myself" (893-94). Remember, it is quite possible that the front row of the theater in which *Birds* was

[56] trans. Ian Johnston.

performed was filled with priests and priestesses, watching stone-faced as Pisthetaerus declares them essentially superfluous. Lysistrata's, and by proxy Lysimache's, portrayal shows a clear departure from the amusing portrayal of the religious figures of Aristophanes' earlier comedy. While she takes part in her fair share of comedic scenarios, such as her instructing Myrrhine on how to best tease her husband, Kinesias, she is never the butt of the joke. His decision to focus his comedy around an 'unfunny' heroine, when he was clearly not shy about poking fun at religious figures, may have deeper implications about who Lysimache really was. How I choose to interpret this connection between Lysimache and Lysistrata is as a reflection of the historical context in which this play was composed and, perhaps, as a reflection of the woman herself.

The connection between Lysimache and Lysistrata does not exist in a vacuum, to brush it off as a comedic quirk and deny its possible implications on the broader historical context of the play's composition is simply not enough. Even if the meaning behind it is not some profound realization that will forever change the view of feminine priesthoods and priestly authority, to reject outright the idea that it could reflect something about the character and actions of Lysimache is to be naive. If one is to accept the possibility that Lysistrata was modeled after the priestess Lysimache, one must also consider the possibility that other themes and events in the production were likewise inspired by a historical reality. While of course the women's anger at the prolonged years of war and death are comedically exaggerated, they represent a very real anger that the Athenian women no doubt felt. As I mentioned earlier, is it not true that women "bear war's burden twice over: in the first place by giving birth to our sons and then by sending

them out as hoplites...and then, at the age when we ought to be having fun and enjoying our prime, we have to sleep alone because of the campaigns" (587-93)?[57]

Throughout history women have banded together to protest war and the suffering it brings, with explicit focus on the distinctive way that women suffer; they suffer not by offering up their own bodies as cannon fodder to whatever cause is being fought, but by watching as their families shrink around them, first their husbands, then their brothers, then their sons, their fathers, and so on. If they are unlucky enough to find themselves in a city under siege, or in a demographic under persecution, then not only must they watch as their loved ones die, but they themselves must also face the cruelties of war head on like their husbands, brothers, sons, and fathers did. In World War I, women across the globe gathered in the Netherlands in protest of the war and formed what would become the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.[58] In 1961, during the height of Cold War tensions, over 50,000 American women marched in 60 cities across the country to protest the development and use of nuclear weapons in what was the nation's largest women's peace protest of the twentieth century.[59] Women scorned can accomplish truly stunning feats, and there is no reason to believe that this is a phenomenon restricted to the twentieth century and onward.

Of course, this is not to suggest that the women of Athens formed an anti-war coalition and marched on the Acropolis to protest the Peloponnesian War like what we see in *Lysistrata.* Rather it is to suggest that they used the resources available to them in the only way they knew

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[57] trans. Edith Hall.
[58] John Paull, "The Women Who Tried to Stop the Great War: The International Congress of Women at The Hague 1915" in *Global Leadership Initiatives for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding,* ed. Andrew Campbell (IGI Global, 2018).
[59] Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

how and were able to, and that the female anti-war coalition in *Lysistrata* is perhaps Aristophanes' comedic representation of this. After all, who better to voice the hardships, struggles, and traumas endured as a result of the Peloponnesian War to than the priestess of Athena Polias? As the priestess of the highest feminine religious office in Athens, Lysimache was likely a very public and well-known figure in the city; she led rituals, presided over sacrifices, had a bronze portrait statue in the Acropolis, supervised the Plynteria and Kallynteria festivals, and headed the procession of the Skira festival alongside the priests of Poseidon-Erechtheus and Helios.[60] Not only did she do all of that, but she did it for sixty-four years.[61] People would have known who she was and where to find her. So, let us imagine a scenario wherein the Athenian women, fed up with twenty years of war, looked to the priestess of Athena Polias, the woman with the most intimate relationship possible with the protectress of their city, as some sort of advocate for them. Perhaps they aired their hardships to her, asking her if there was *anything* at all she could to do help them.

If we are to ride this speculative wave and say 'Yes! I believe the women of Athens could have done something like this!' then it is interesting to note that if such an event had happened, if the women went to Lysimache and Lysimache agreed to help, it must have been recognized by others in the city if Aristophanes wrote a fictionalized version of the event into his *Lysistrata*. For Aristophanes to portray the leader of this hypothetical protest in such an august and respected light, uncharacteristic of his usual portrayals of real people and religious figures, perhaps he thought that Lysimache had the right idea. If any of this is true, we will likely never know. Either way, whether people like it or not, women had a place in ancient Athens. They

[60] Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 61.
[61] *IG* II² 3453.

were not constantly sequestered away in their homes, isolated from each other and the outside world. Poor women worked, went to the market, and collected water. Rich, aristocratic women vied for prestigious cult attendant positions in their youth and priestly office in their maturity, both which would put them in the public eye. Following this thread of analyzing Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* through the lens of its historical context, the next section will examine the history of familial domination in ancient Greek religion and government. Additionally, I will speculate on the possibility of a more direct political intervention by Lysimache, using Thonemann's recent investigation of the play and its connections with the Athenian Iron Reserve, with emphasis on her brother, Lysikles', position within the Athenian government.

Lysimache & the historical context of her life in connection with Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*

Familial pairs working jointly in important religious offices are not unheard of in the ancient Mediterranean world, and in fact one might even say they were common. At Didyma in Hellenistic Asia Minor we see this pattern in the office of the priestess of Artemis Pythia, the *hydrophoros* tasked with overseeing the celebration of the Mysteries. Complementary to the hydrophoros was the prophet of Apollo, a post which was always held by a man. In the first century CE, this post was held by Artemon, who in 5/6 CE was joined by his eldest daughter, Batios as hydrophoros and then later in 10/11 CE by his younger daughter, Theodoris.[62] Even more relevant to our discussion of Lysimache are the brother-sister duos in religious and political offices. Such was the case with Philippe II and Medeios in late second/early first century BCE Athens. Being great-great-great-great-great-great grandchildren of the legendary lawgiver, Lykourgos, this brother-sister pair boasted a quite illustrious lineage.[63] With Philippe in the seat

[62] Riet Van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation: Women & the Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic & Roman Periods* (J.C. Gieben, 1996), 91.
[63] Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 60.

of priestess of Athena Polias and Medeios as priest of Poseidon-Erechtheus, the most esteemed priesthoods in Athens, these two reflect a long history of religious domination by one family on the Acropolis. These strong familial pairs would have held much power in their communities, and it is not unusual that we can see something similar happening in late fifth century Athens with our priestess of Athena Polias, Lysimache. While the seat of priest of Poseidon-Erechtheus was not held by a relative of Lysimache, a member of her family did hold quite a distinguished position on the Acropolis at the same time as she. Lysimache's brother, Lysikles, was secretary of the tamiai of Athena in 416/415.[64] Lysikles' two-year tenure as secretary was far shorter than that of Lysimache's decades long role as priestess, however we would expect that this brother-sister duo would have enjoyed considerable authority on the Acropolis in those years. It is curious too when one considers the timeline of Lysikles' position as secretary in the broader context of those years and the years that follow. For this I look back to Thonemann's analysis of the events of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* within their broader historical and political context.

In the first half of the play, much emphasis is put on poor financial planning as the reasoning behind the women's decision to occupy the Acropolis. First, it is important to note the duality of *Lysistrata*'s plot. The story's focus shifts between the sex-strike plot and the Acropolis occupation plot in an almost contradictory way, at times such as when the occupation is announced by Lysistrata, the presumed *at-home* sex-strike is shifted in setting to a physical segregation on the Acropolis. And so, the women say they are denying their husbands sex so that the men are forced to end the war out of pure desperation, but the reasoning behind the occupation is quite different. The clearest connection between the driving force of the Acropolis occupation and the women's disdain for the men's poor financial planning is seen when the

[64] *APF* 170.

Proboulos asks Lysistrata “What do you mean by barricading our Acropolis?” (487). She replies, “To keep the money safe and to keep *you* from using it to finance the war” (488). Following this is Lysistrata's critique of male decision-making. She tells a familiar tale of husbands returning home from the assembly to tell their wives of “another project, even stupider than before” (506-528), only to dismiss and threaten their wives when they speak up and question what seems to them to be the most foolish of schemes. For Lysistrata, the time had come to no longer force a smile when faced with the plans of men who will surely only speed up the destruction of Greece if given the opportunity. For Lysistrata, the time had come to take the reins and save the warring city whether the men liked it or not, starting with cutting off their access to the treasury. With finances established as a driving point behind the women's Acropolis plot, let us go back in time to the mid-fifth century BC, at the dawn of the Peloponnesian War.

In 431, the decision was made on behalf of the Athenians to set aside a financial reserve of 1,000 talents of silver which would be stored on the Acropolis.[65] The language of the decree reported by Thucydides is quite strong, stating that the death penalty be the punishment for anyone who suggests that the reserve be broached for any purpose other than to repel a naval attack.[66] Indeed, the reserve lay untouched for twenty years, even throughout the devastating failure of the Sicilian Expedition. The next definitive mention of the reserve comes years later in the summer of 412 BCE when, following a revolt on the island of Chios, the Athenians voted to open the reserve and use its funds to staff their ships.[67] However, Thonemann has identified a fragmentary set of financial documents dated 415 BCE that he argues should be associated with

[65] Thonemann, “Lysimache and Lysistrata“, 10.
[66] Thucydides 2.24.1-2.
[67] Thucydides 8.15.

the Iron Reserve. The lines Thonemann has focused on in these fragmentary documents read as follows:

[— — — — — τ]ρισχιλίον· ἐ[ὰν δέ τιν εἴπει] ἢ ἐπιφσ-

[εφίσει — — — — — —]ς ἐχσαιρ[……14……]ον μ[.]

He believes these lines include the phrases '[...apart f]rom the 1,000(?); and i[f anyone proposes] or puts to the vote [...] reserv[ed…]'.[68] Thonemann notes the similarities between the language used in these documents and the 'entrenchment clause' reported by Thucydides, which stated the penalties for any suggestion to use the Iron Reserve for anything other than an imminent Spartan naval attack, such as the term used for 'reserved' (*exairetos*) and the phrase 'if anyone proposes or puts to a vote'. With this he argues that these documents may represent a possible reaffirmation of the reserve's untouchability, perhaps after a cautious proposal to open it had been suggested.[69]

But what does this reserve have to do with Lysimache? Well, one must ask the question of what exactly was going on with the treasury in the years during and directly following Lysikles' tenure as secretary of the tamiai in 416/15. Lysistrata, our theatrical representation of the priestess of Athena Polias, is depicted as a dignified, pious woman concerned with both matters of religion and ritual and proper state administration. It is possible to suggest that Lysimache would have been opposed to the opening of the Iron Reserve, in part since the location of the Iron Reserve in the Treasury of Athena makes this silver the property of Athena if it truly were *anyone*'s to claim. I propose the following sequence of events. Since its inception,

[68] *IG* I^3 93, lines 48-49.
[69] Thonemann, "Lysimache and Lysistrata", 10.

Lysimache was intent on protecting the silver belonging to Athena. The war dragged on, seemingly with no end, and perhaps she had been approached by the angered Athenian women, had been asked if there was anything at all she could do. When one Athenian dared propose taking that silver into use, Lysimache may have seen her chance to both cut off the men's access to the money, restricting their ability to prolong the war even further through irresponsible spending *and* protect the sanctity of Athena's silver. So, Lysimache, aided by her brother's post within the Treasury in the year 415, was able to wield both her authority and her brother's authority to have the untouchability of the reserve strengthened. Lysikles would not be secretary of the tamiai forever of course, and once Lysimache's 'man on the inside', so to speak, was no longer able to brandish his influence the reserve was finally broached in 412. Naturally, this is all speculation, and the decision to broach the reserve could have been just as plausibly linked to the devastating failure of the Sicilian Expedition. However, this evidence coupled with the characterization of Lysistrata as a commanding woman embroiled in Athenian politics could point to a possibility of such an event.

The quasi-historical figure of Lysistrata is a woman endowed with an unusual level of authority and respect by her peers, she has a firm command of ritual, *and* she has something to say about the way that men in charge spend their money. Whether or not Lysimache did use her brother's position to intervene in political matters and keep the silver out of the Athenians' hands, I propose that she certainly did *something* to voice her dissent. The highly controversial nature of the decision to open the reserve, made obvious by the language used by Thucydides who voices his disapproval in his note that the Athenians voted to open the reserve only due to a fleeting shock (*ekplēxis)*, suggests that objections would not have been raised by only Lysimache. His use of this specific word implies a certain level of judgment on the officials who voted to open

the treasury, suggesting that they allowed themselves to be controlled by fear and shock, rather than coming to a levelheaded resolution. The vote to open the reserve came after the revolt on the island of Chios in 412, at a time when things were looking quite bleak for Athens as the city continued to bleed money and manpower, and this event certainly would have sent shockwaves throughout the city. However, the revolt fell rather short from an imminent Spartan naval attack, which had previously been the requirement to even suggest opening the treasury. It is not a stretch to pose the idea of Thucydides disapproving of not saving the money to fend off a future Spartan attack. This disapproval recalls Lysistrata's critique of male decision making discussed earlier.

Aristophanes is no stranger to employing historical events and figures in his plays. If we are to believe that Lysistrata is modeled after Lysimache, then we must too suspend whatever preconceived notions had about a 'woman's place' in ancient Greek society and consider the possibility of Lysistrata's rage at the men's irresponsible spending and impiety as a reflection of a concerted effort on Lysimache's part to use her authority to intervene in politics. Of course, this effort was not entirely successful, but it and the depiction of Lysimache as a respected, authoritative figure in *Lysistrata* does reveal much not only about the position and jurisdiction of priestesses within the broader political world of fifth-century Athens but also how those commanding women were perceived by their peers when they did step forward and declare their opinions. However speculative in nature my suggestions of Lysimache intervening in the political sphere, whether to advocate for the women of Athens, protect the sanctity of Athena's silver, or both, may be, there is evidence pointing to an unusual level of authority for priestesses as well as historical accounts of priestesses intervening in the political sphere.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was not to prove definitively whether or not Lysimache was seen as a representative of the women of Athens or if she directly intervened in politics during her time as priestess of Athena Polias. Rather it was to challenge views held about women in Athens living their lives in sequestered isolation with no hope for any sort of independence using accounts of feminine priestly authority as evidence for the contrary. Some may say that while poor women would have been more mobile and visible as they often had to work and do daily chores that took them outside the home, it was the aristocratic ideal to have enough wealth to cloister your wife and daughters away in the home. This investigation into Lysimache and feminine priesthoods has shown the exact opposite of that. The women who held priesthoods, and the young girls who often served as their attendants, were generally wealthy and aristocratic. It was highly desirable to have a wife or daughter in the service of a deity, especially if that deity was Athena Polias or another equally as distinguished. Fathers *wanted* their daughters to serve priests and priestesses, and the high honors bestowed upon those girls who did so is clearly outlined by the chorus of elderly women in *Lysistrata*:

> 'As soon as I turned seven I was an *arrephoros*, then, I was an *aletris*; when I was ten I shed my saffron robe for the Foundress, being a bear at the Brauronia; And once, when I was a beautiful maiden, I was a *kanephoro*s, wearing a necklace of dried figs' (641-47).

Many of these positions were highly visible in nature, especially that of the kanephoros. If it were the aristocratic ideal to sequester women and girls because they had the money to do so, why would the role of the kanephoros, the beautiful maiden dressed in a necklace of figs, leading the procession to the sacrifice at festivals, be such a desired position for young girls? Standing at the head of a procession is an incredibly visible position for a girl to be in, and it certainly does

not fit in line with the common view of female seclusion as an aristocratic ideal. Additionally, not only did fathers want their daughters to serve as religious attendants but having a wife who was a priestess would be desirable as well, as marrying into a priestly family would often mean marrying into an esteemed lineage. What I aimed to show with this analysis was that women in ancient Greece were not isolated, that they did have avenues, however scarce, for some semblance of authority and autonomy in their lives. Herodotus shows us that priestesses did have political authority, priestess Theano shows us that if a priestly woman wanted to go against her colleagues and voice her own opinion, that opinion would be respected and not chastised. Lysimache shows us that maybe, just maybe, it was possible for a priestess to act as a kind of spokeswoman for the women of Athens and stealthily wield her influence over the political sphere to try and make their lives a little bit better.

It is my hope that more critical and less biased examinations of women's lives in Ancient Greece will continue, and that more female stories such as that of Lysimache's will be revealed. To further illuminate the realities of womanhood in ancient Greece and the ways in which they were able to find independence for themselves, future studies would do well to address the role that prostitution may have played in female independence at this time. In his investigation of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, Faraone notes that women in ancient Greece were primarily able to find leadership roles or avenues for independence through either religious service or prostitution. Additionally, he argues that Lysistrata should be seen not only as embodying the figure of a priestess but also that of a *hetaira,* or high-end courtesan.[70] He points to two specific episodes in the play that he suggests should be viewed as Aristophanes' attempts to link the titular heroine to

[70] Faraone, "Priestess and Courtesan."
For more information on the differences between hetairai ('high-end courtesans') and pornai ('prostitutes') see Leslie Kurke, "Inventing the "Hetaira": Sex, Politics, and Discursive Conflict in Archaic Greece." *Classical Antiquity* 16, no. 1 (1997).

the figure of either a hetaira or a madam. The first being Lysistrata's interactions with Myrrhine as she instructs the other woman on how to best seduce her husband. In this interaction, Lysistrata embodies the role of madam and Myrrhine her charge when the heroine instructs as so:

> 'All right, your job is to torment him, be a tease, make him hot, offer to have sex with him and then refuse, trying everything you can, except the things you swore to on the cup' (839-41).

Faraone also proposes an interesting argument that the comment 'most manly', translated by some as 'bravest', made in the play in regard to Lysistrata should be understood not just as a reference to the 'manly' power she gains from close association with Athena, but rather as a reference to her ability to co-opt "a traditionally male weapon of erotic magic" in her role as madam or courtesan and turn said male weapon of magic "on all the men of Greece".[71] This 'male weapon of erotic magic' in question is an allusion to the following passage:

> 'Hail to the bravest[72] woman of them all. You must now show that you're resilient−stern but yielding, with a good heart but mean, stately but down-to-earth. The foremost men in all of Greece in deference to your charms have come together here before you so you can arbitrate all their complaints' (1108-1111).

The specific word to look at here is 'charms', in the original Greek *iunx*. Translators generally prefer to translate this word to 'charm' or 'allure', but the original and foremost meaning of the word is 'erotic love spell'.[73] If a love spell is indeed what Aristophanes meant when he wrote the

[71] Faraone, "Priestess and Courtesan", 219.
[72] Faraone translates *ἀνδρειοτάτη* as 'most manly', Ian Johnston, whose translation I employ when quoting passages from Lysistrata, translates *ἀνδρειοτάτη* as 'bravest'.
[73] Faraone, "Priestess and Courtesan", 217.

play, which is plausible considering the word chosen for this passage, here iunx would refer to her successful sex strike. Faraone argues that iunx spells and other invasive erotic magic were primarily used by men to lure women from their homes.[74] The one exception to that standard is the courtesans who employed erotic magic to draw men into their nets.[75] The example employed by Faraone is the interaction between Socrates and Athenian hetaira Theodote in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Awed at the extravagance of Theodote's clothing and home, Socrates inquires about her profession and the two engage in a playful discussion about how one goes about making 'male friends', including the use of love magic. Socrates claims love potions are the only way he is able to keep his wide circle of male friends, to which Theodote retorts "Do, then, lend me your *iunx*, so that I may draw it against you first!"[76] The wealthy, witty, and entertaining courtesan is not an uncommon fixture in Greek literature.

And so, Faraone argues that Lysistrata successfully inhabits both spheres of female independence, as the cunning and clever madam and as the august and conscientious priestess. If we are to believe that Athenians not only would have looked upon that stage and through Lysistrata seen their priestess, Lysimache, but also caught the comparisons to prostitution that Faraone argues are quite blatant, what does that mean? As I have previously discussed, there is no real reason to believe that Lysimache was meant to be the butt of Aristophanes' grand joke through his representation of her in the character of Lysistrata. So, perhaps a reevaluation of the position of hetairai and madams within broader ancient Greek society must take place if we are to fully understand why Aristophanes would portray this caricature of the priestess of the most distinguished cult on the Acropolis in part as a courtesan or a madam. It is clear from this

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Xenophon, *Memorabilia,* 3.11.16-17.

connection between priestly Lysistrata and a witty madam that sex workers were thought of in a very different way than how they are viewed by our modern society. Perhaps, much like priestesses, courtesans and madams were able to achieve some level of authority and influence within their communities.

In delving into the life of Lysimache, our priestess of Athena Polias, what emerged over the months of research was a portrait of a stately, faithful woman duly dedicated to her work as the intermediary between human and divine. Of her eighty-eight years on this earth, she spent sixty-four of them in the service of Athena and her city and was followed in this fine tradition by her nieces, grand nieces, great-grand nieces, and so on. While her power and influence over Athens does not change the reality of the disenfranchised position most women in ancient Greece inhabited, it does alter the popular notion of seclusion and isolation as an ideal for aristocratic families. A close reading of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* illuminates not only the possibility of a political intervention by Lysimache, spurred on by the anger and sorrow of the city's women, but also how such an intervention may have been received by the public should it have happened.

Despite the vulnerable and persecuted position of women throughout history, if one looks close enough it becomes obvious that women of antiquity were not the meek, passive shrinking violets nor the villainous, flighty harlots that they are often made out to be by scholars both ancient and modern. They were just people. People with desires and ambitions, ambitions that were all too often overlooked and suppressed, they were people who did remarkable things and, if they were blessed by lineage or luck, could hold influence and power over their communities and the individuals that lived within them. Even though we do not have extant literature or inscriptions that can help tell their stories, it does not mean that they did not exist. They did exist but, like with Lysimache, we need to look closer in order to find them.

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Abbreviations:

APF: J.K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families.* Oxford 1971.

CAH: Cambridge Ancient History. Cambridge, 1961-.

IG: Inscriptiones Graecae. Berlin, 1877-.

LSCG: F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques.* Paris 1969.

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