



Judith Leyster, Self-Portrait, 1633

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Dr. Charissa N. Terranova  
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Women in the Art of the Classical and  
Medieval World in the West  
07/11/2023



Barbara Kruger, Untitled, 1997

# Women in the Art of the Classical World of the West

The term "**Classical Antiquity**" refers to the period of classical civilizations (c.1500 BCE - 450 CE), centered upon the cultures of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, as well as their prototypes (Aegean and Etruscan cultures) and derivatives (eg. the effect of Greek culture on Turkey, Persia, Central Asia, India and Egypt, a process known as Hellenism; Celtic culture, Early Christian culture). Classical Antiquity is generally focused on the Mediterranean Sea.





Crete  
Cyprus  
Athens  
Rome



The population of the areas of Greek settlement from the western Mediterranean to Asia Minor and the Black Sea in the 4th century BC has been estimated at up to 7.5-10 million. Today, the Mediterranean Sea region — the largest of the semi-enclosed European seas — is surrounded by 22 countries, which together share a coastline of 46 000 km. It is also home to around 480 million people living across its three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe.



Crete  
Cyprus  
Athens  
Rome

S A H A R A

ARABIAN  
DESERT



# Crete: The Minoan Civilization





Minoan Seals  
2700 -1400 BCE





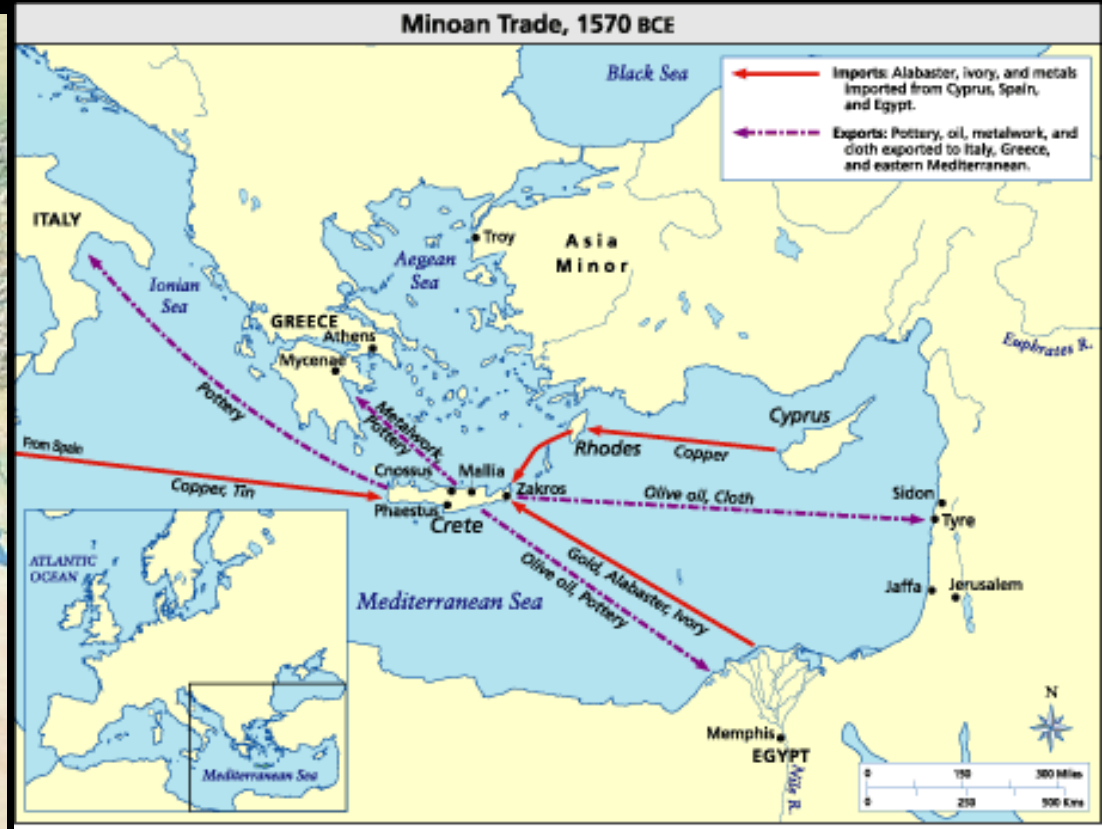
# Minoan Seals

2700 -1400 BCE



Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos





© 2001 Facts On File, Inc.





Fig. 2.1 Snake Goddess from the palace at Knossos, ca 1600 BCE







“Wadjet” with animals later associated with later Greek Maenads whose cult worshiped Dionysos

## Snake, Regeneration, and Ouroboros





Minoan Poppy Goddesses  
1400-1100 BCE





1.1 Venus of Willendorf front view, ca 28,000-25,000 BCE



Fig. 2.1 Snake Goddess from the palace at Knossos, ca 1600 BCE

# Was Crete a Matriarchy?



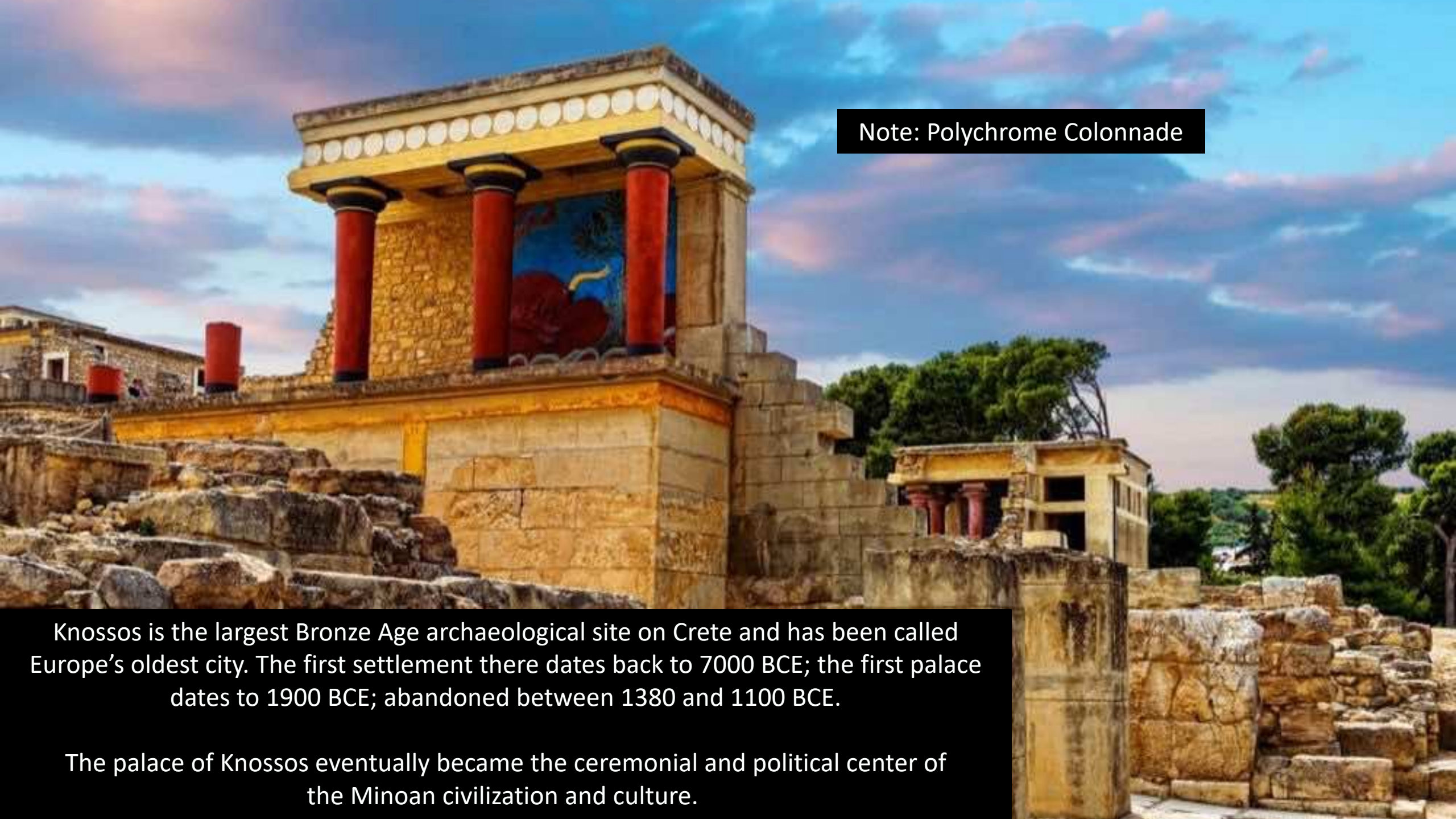
Objects from the temple repositories at Knossos after its discovery in 1903





Female figures in wall painting of grandstand or sacred grove and shrine from Knossos (north end of central court)





Note: Polychrome Colonnade

Knossos is the largest Bronze Age archaeological site on Crete and has been called Europe's oldest city. The first settlement there dates back to 7000 BCE; the first palace dates to 1900 BCE; abandoned between 1380 and 1100 BCE.

The palace of Knossos eventually became the ceremonial and political center of the Minoan civilization and culture.





Knossos is the largest of the “palaces” erected by the Bronze Age Minoan civilization on Crete. Our present interactions with Knossos are the result of the work of Arthur Evans, who excavated the site beginning in 1899. His and later works revealed a highly complex civilization, of which previous material evidence was almost nonexistent.

[https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky\\_Institute/courses/greekpast/4796.html](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/greekpast/4796.html)









One aspect of the palaces that is undeniable, however, is their chosen physical location. Vincent Scully has argued that the selection of Minoan palace sites and their architectural orientation were dependent on the relationship of the surrounding landscape to the “body” of the Earth Mother. All Cretan palaces were located in an enclosing valley oriented toward a conical hill and double-peaked or cleft mountain in the distance. The closer cone was perceived as the body of the Great Mother Goddess. The horns of the more distant mountain created a profile evocative of a pair of horns sacred to the goddess. Thus, locations of Cretan palaces were determined by their proximity to the center of life and the divine powers of the Earth Mother Goddess.

-- Wendy Slatkin





Bull-leaping Fresco from the Palace at Knossos at Crete, 1450 BCE. There are three individuals, two women (one at the front, one at the back), and a male youth shown balancing on the bull.

















"Marine Style" flask with Octopus,  
1500-1450 BCE





Minoan maiden with prayer beads











# Cyprus



“crossroads of the world”



Kourion archaeological site, Cypress





Fig. 2.2 Terracotta Statuette of Woman with Bird Face, 1450-1200 BCE

This figurine is typical of Cypriot coroplastic art. A coroplast was a modeler of terracotta figurines in Greek antiquity.

Kourotrophos – Greek for “child-nurturer”  
Term for sculptures of women holding babies





1.1 Venus of Willendorf front view, ca 28,000-25,000 BCE



Fig. 2.2 Terracotta Statuette of Woman with Bird Face, 1450-1200 BCE



# Ancient Greece and Rome



- Public versus Private Spaces in the Polis
- Symposia
- Age differences between husband and wife contributed to further separation of sexes.
- Legal rights of women?
- Women and literacy?
- Infant girls versus infant boys (infanticide)
- How did girls fare in Greek culture?



Archeological evidence indicates that the Greeks practiced female infanticide and that males outnumbered females by at least two to one. This smaller proportion of females surviving infancy extends from the Greek Dark Ages (1100-800 BCE) through the classical and Hellenistic periods. By the Hellenistic era (fourth to first centuries BCE) even fewer children of either sex were raised to maturity, and a Greek girl who survived infancy was fed an inferior diet.

-- Wendy Slatkin

There was one job for women....



Fig. 2.3 Dipylon amphora close front, prothesis scene, ca 740 BCE

- What is the prothesis?

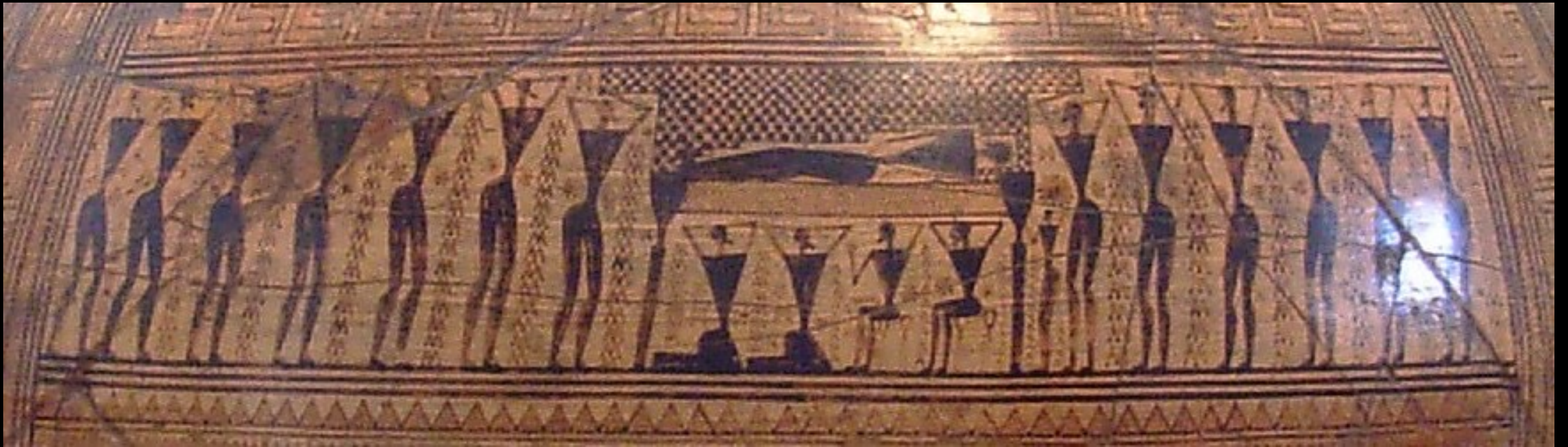




Fig. 2.3 Dipylon amphora close front, prothesis scene, ca 740 BCE









## Process for Black-figure vases

- Levigation: purifying clay by letting impurities sink to the bottom
- Wedging: kneading
- Pulled on the potter's wheel
- Sections dried and joined with *slip*
- Decorated
  - With slips containing pigments from metal
    - (black glaze); purple-red; white
    - Applied with brushes
    - Fired in kilns
- In firing, the pots turned red and the painted parts black
- Three stages, to oxidize, vitrify the black slip, and reoxidize the rest of the pot





Fig. 2.3 Dipylon amphora close front, prothesis scene, ca 740 BCE

- The prothesis is the space between the handles on the vase.
- What does this scene tell us about the role of women in mourning?
- What kind of jobs did women do in relation to the dead and funerals?
- The depiction of human bodies here is rendered in the late geometric style.

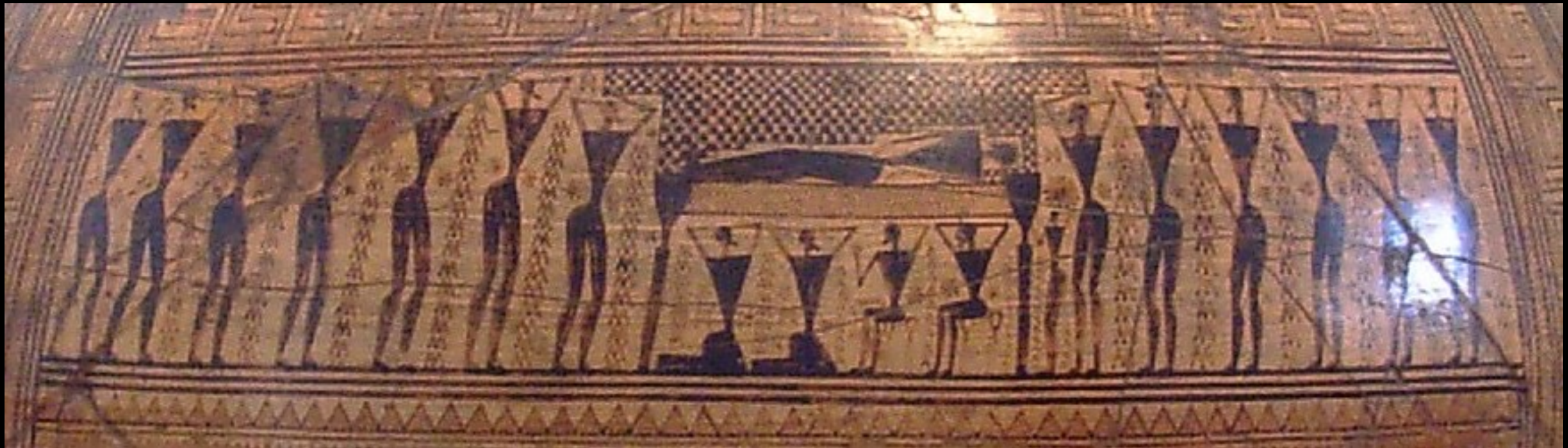
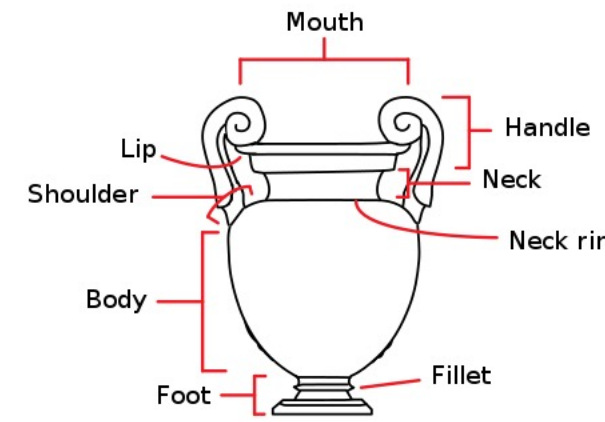


Fig. 2.4 Amasis Painter, ca 560 BCE

Black figure painting

What are the women  
doing in this painted  
decoration on this vase?



31.11.10



Fig. 2.4 Amasis Painter, ca 560 BCE

## Women and Weaving

- What exactly are they weaving?



Amasis paints an everyday scene of women weaving  
In the centre of the scene, two women work the upright loom



**Peplos**  
**Panathenaia**

One woman (unseen), loads wool onto the scales, while her partner holds the scales to weigh the wool.





On the shoulder of the vase, a seated woman, perhaps a goddess, is approached by four youths and eight dancing maidens. To what does Slatkin say this scenery relates?



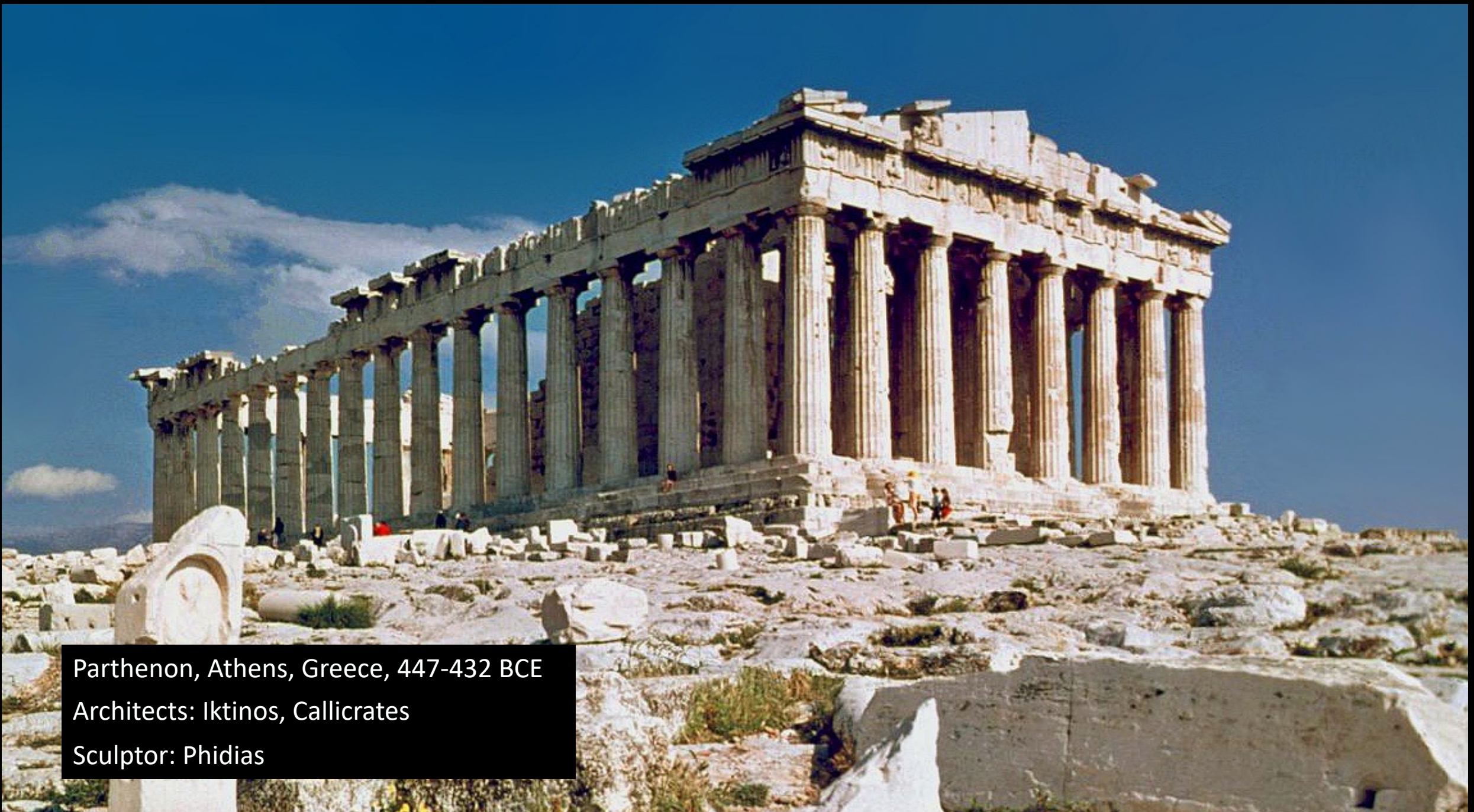
# Women and the Panathenaia

- What is the Panathenaia?



# Women and the Panathenaia

- The Panathenaia was an annual festival to honor the goddess Athena, the Goddess of War, the female counterpart of Ares, and patron goddess of Athens. Every four years a larger celebration was held called the “Greater Panathenaia.”

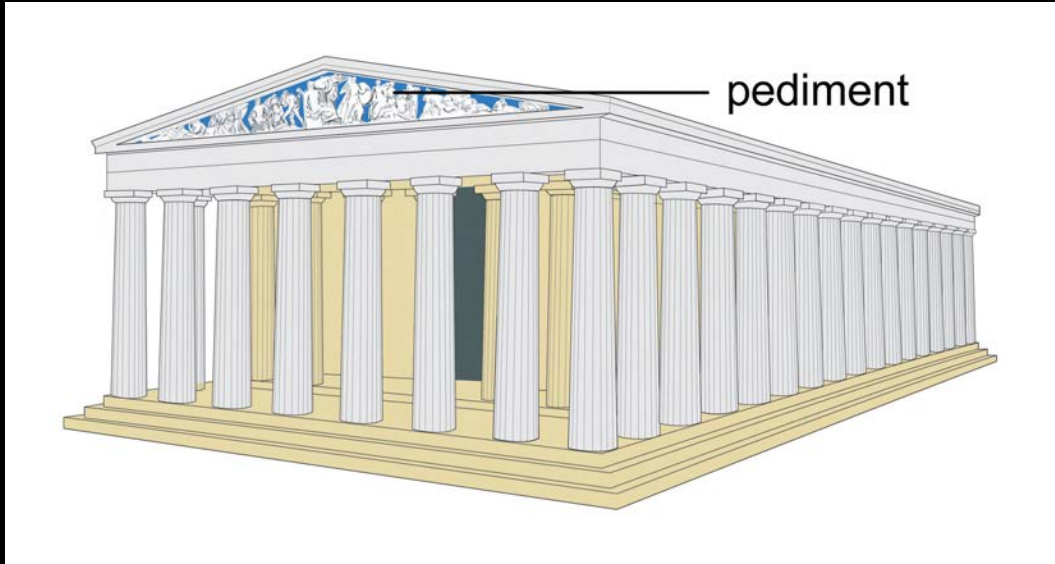


Parthenon, Athens, Greece, 447-432 BCE

Architects: Iktinos, Callicrates

Sculptor: Phidias





Left: Elgin  
Marbles,  
British  
Museum,  
447-438  
BCE/1801-12  
British  
Museum





Many of the examples of images of women and evidence of women's activities from the period are from the Greek city-state of Athens. -- Wendy Slatkin

What is a city-state?



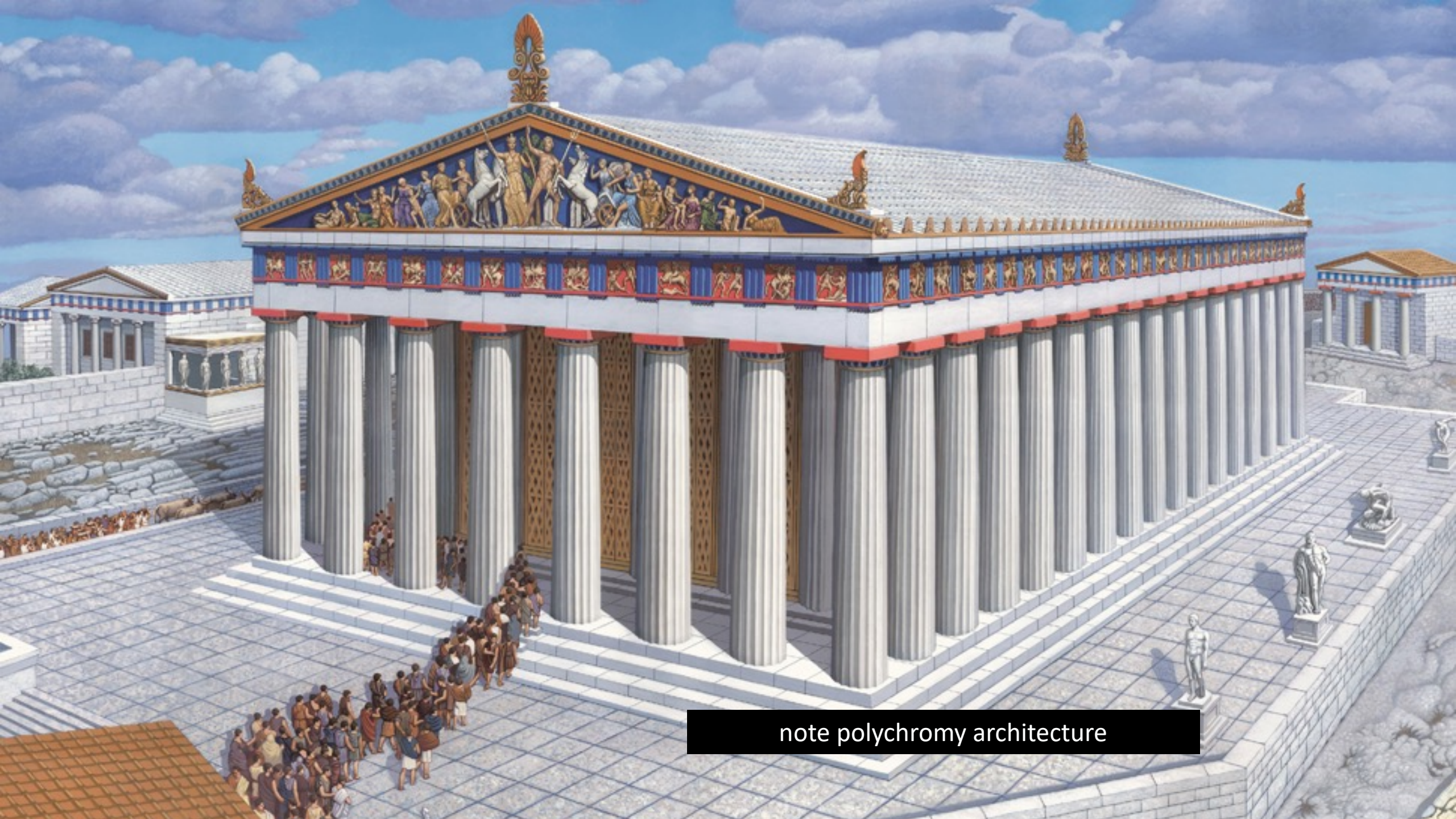


city-state: An independent self-governing urban community.  
Greek term is *polis*.









note polychromy architecture





Athena Parthenos inside the center of the Parthenon, reconstruction in Nashville from 1897

The Athena Parthenos is a massive chryselephantine (gold and ivory) sculpture of the Greek goddess Athena made by Phidias and his assistants housed in the Parthenon. It was the focal point of the building.





PARTHENON AND LAKE—CENTENNIAL PARK—NASHVILLE—TENN.—5

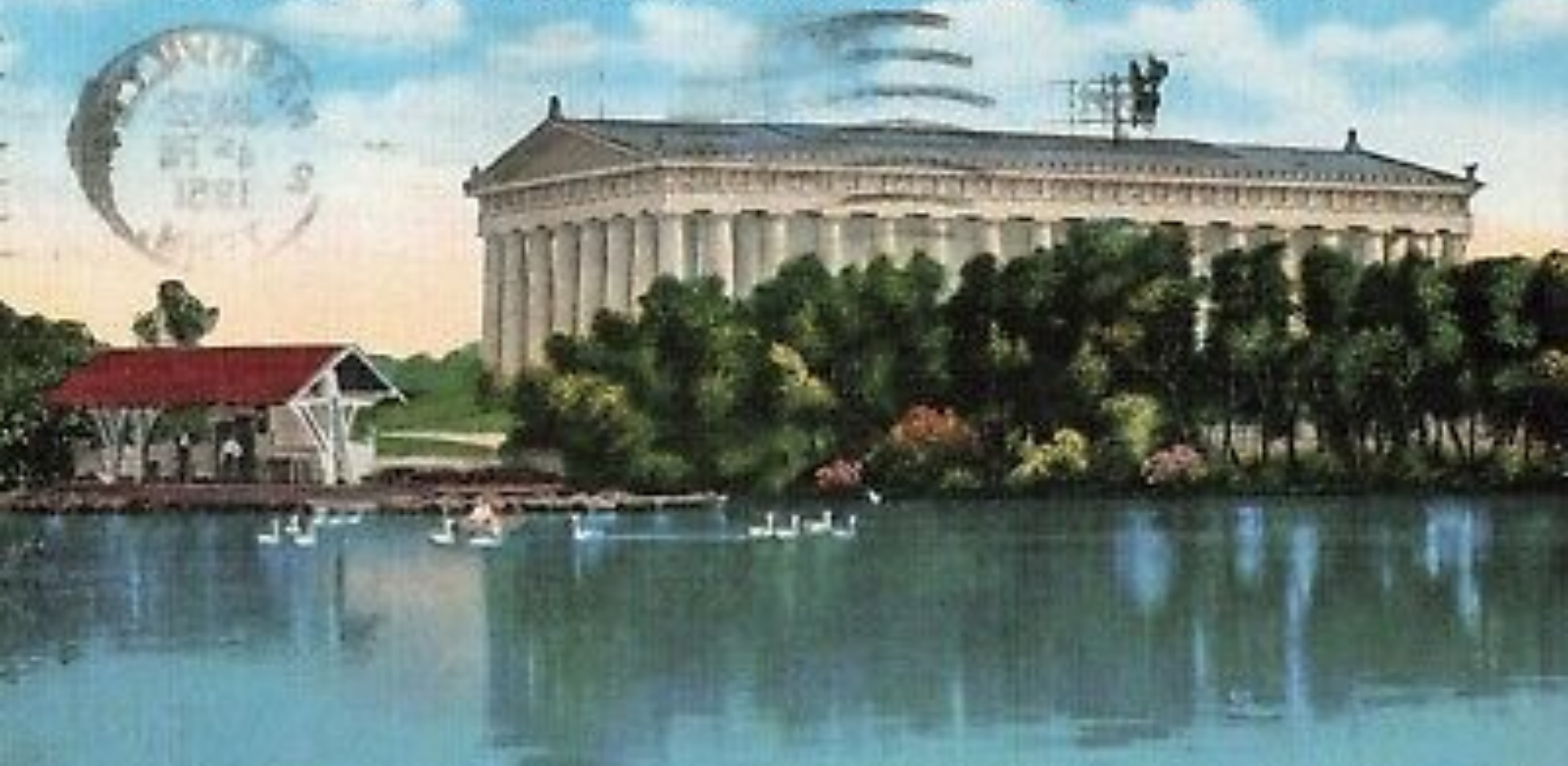






Fig. 2.5 Peplos scene from the Parthenon, East Frieze, ca. 447-438 BCE







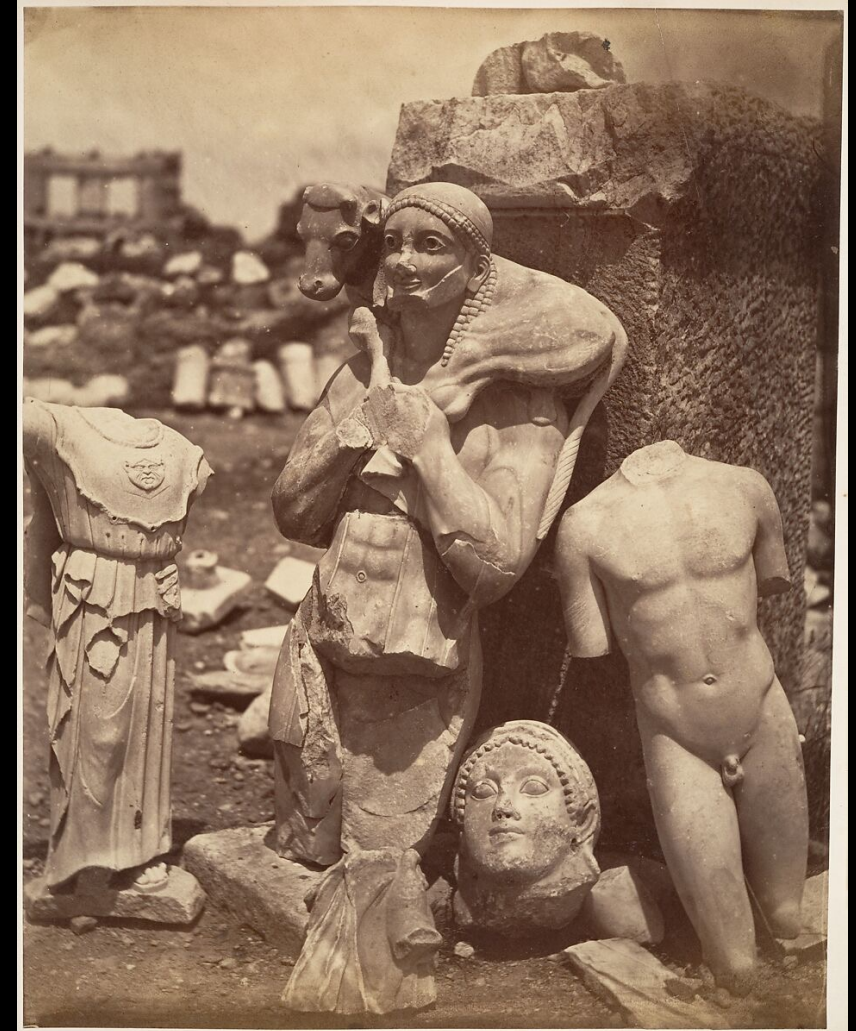
- The “History of Sexuality” and Classical Sculpture in Athens
- Michel Foucault
- “sexuality”
- Sex and Gender
- The Female Nude



# Sex, Sexuality, Gender pp. 26-27



Kritios Boy, c. 480 BCE: Agape, Eros, Philia



The Calf-Bearer and the Kritios Boy Shortly After Exhumation on the Acropolis

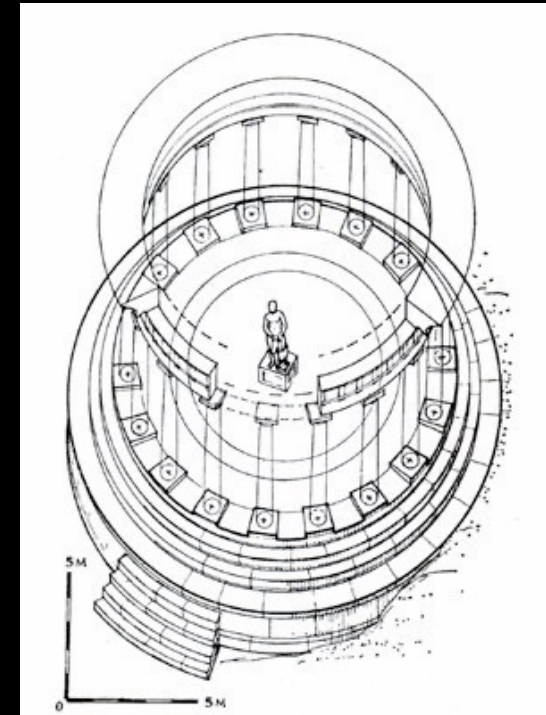


Fig. 2.6 Praxiteles, Aphrodite of Knidos, ca 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE / 350-340 BCE; Goddess of Love; a bather; "aphrodisiac"





Kritios Boy ca 480 BCE



A well-preserved Roman period copy of the Doryphoros of Polykleitos. The original was in Bronze and cast ca 440 BCE

What does Slatkin say about sculptures like these from antiquity?



Kritios Boy ca 480 BCE



A well-preserved Roman period copy of the Doryphoros of Polykleitos. The original was in Bronze and cast ca 440 BCE

Michel Foucault is one of the most important scholars who analyzed surviving written texts to study the history of sexuality in Greek and Roman culture. Foucault identifies the relationship between adult men and adolescent boys as the location or “site” of classical Athens’s “problematizations” of sexual relations. -- Wendy Slatkin





Fig. 2.6 Praxiteles, Aphrodite of Knidos, ca 350-340 BCE

**Contrapposto** (Italian: “**opposite**”), in the visual arts, a sculptural scheme, originated by the ancient Greeks, in which the standing human figure is poised such that the weight rests on one leg (called the engaged leg), freeing the other leg, which is bent at the knee.

**Verisimilitude** A work of art, or any part of a work of art, has verisimilitude if it seems realistic. The word verisimilitude is derived from the Latin words verum and similis meaning “truth” and “similar.” A verisimilitudinous story has **details, subjects, and characters that seem similar or true to real life.**



Fig. 2.6 Praxiteles, Aphrodite of Knidos, ca 350-340 BCE



1.1 Venus of Willendorf front view, ca 28,000-25,000 BCE





1.1 Venus of Willendorf front view, ca 28,000-25,000 BCE

Fig. 2.7 Colossal statue of Artemisia from the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, around 350 BCE

- Women Artists in Greece and Rome
- What do we know about Ancient Greek and Roman women painters?
- How do we know this information?



# Pliny the Elder on Ancient Greek and Roman Painters

Women too have painters: Timarte the daughter of Mikon painted Artemis at Ephesos in a picture of very archaic style. Eirene, the daughter of the pupil of the painter Kratinos, painted a maiden at Eleusis ... Iaia of Kyzikos, who remained single all her life, worked at Rome ... both with the brush and with the cestrum on ivory. She painted chiefly portraits of women, and also a large picture of an old woman at Naples, and a portrait of herself, executed with the help of a mirror. No artist worked more rapidly than she did and her picture had such merit that they sold for higher prices than those of Sopolis and Dionysios, well-known contemporary painters.



Alcaeus (left) and Sappho. Side A of an Attic red-figure kalathos, circa 470 BC. The poet Sappho (ca 600 BCE) hailed from the island of Lesbos, whose culture incorporated a high regard for women.



Hypatia (350-415 CE) Greek NeoPlatonist philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician  
She is known to have constructed plane astrolabes (an ancient handheld model of the universe) like this one from the 11<sup>th</sup> century.



What according to Slatkin is the relationship between women and the origin of painting? pp. 29-30



Left: Benjamin West, *The Origin of Painting*, 1795

This is a pen and ink drawing illustrating the story of the origin of painting, also known as 'The Dawn of Portraiture'. West depicted two entwined figures sharing a seat. The male figure on the left holds up a lamp while his female companion paints the outline of his shadow on the wall. This refers to the myth of the 'Corinthian Maid', Dibutades, who drew around her lover's shadow on a wall in order to preserve his image as a memento while he was away. This poetic explanation for the origin of painting was recounted by Pliny the Elder after a Greek myth.





Joseph Wright, *The Corinthian Maid*, 1782-1784

Painted for Josiah Wedgwood, a pioneer of pottery manufacturing in England. His pottery copied the shapes of ancient vessels as well as their decoration, borrowing motifs from ancient glass, cameos, and relief carvings.

<https://www.nga.gov/education/teachers/lessons-activities/origin-myths/corinthian-maid.html>

Jean Baptiste Regnault,  
Origin of Painting, 1785





Left: Joseph Benoit  
Suvee, Invention of Art  
of Drawing, 1793

Right: Karl Friedrich  
Schinkel, Origin of  
Painting, 1830







Joseph Wright, *The Corinthian Maid*, 1782-1784 – based on Pliny the Elder's 1<sup>st</sup>-century ideas



Bird-man and the disemboweled bison, Cave at Lascaux, France, 40,000-17,000 BCE



# Rome

- Images of Women on Historical Reliefs
- Elite Women Patrons
  - Livia, wife of Augustus
  - Plancia Magna



Fig. 2.8 Family of emperor group on Ara pacis, 13-9 BCE



Ara Pacis Augustae, 13-9 BCE, originally in Rome  
Pax Romana





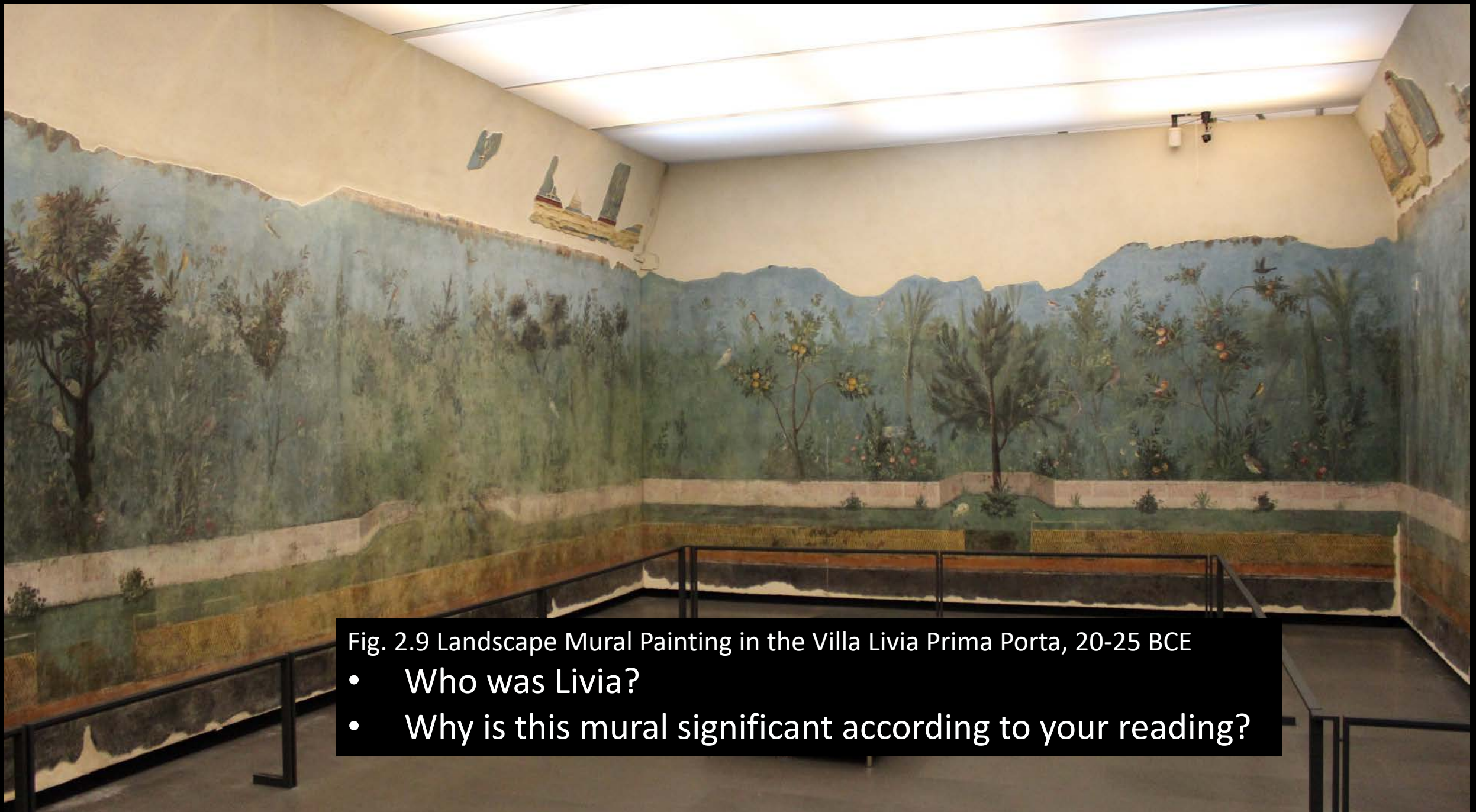
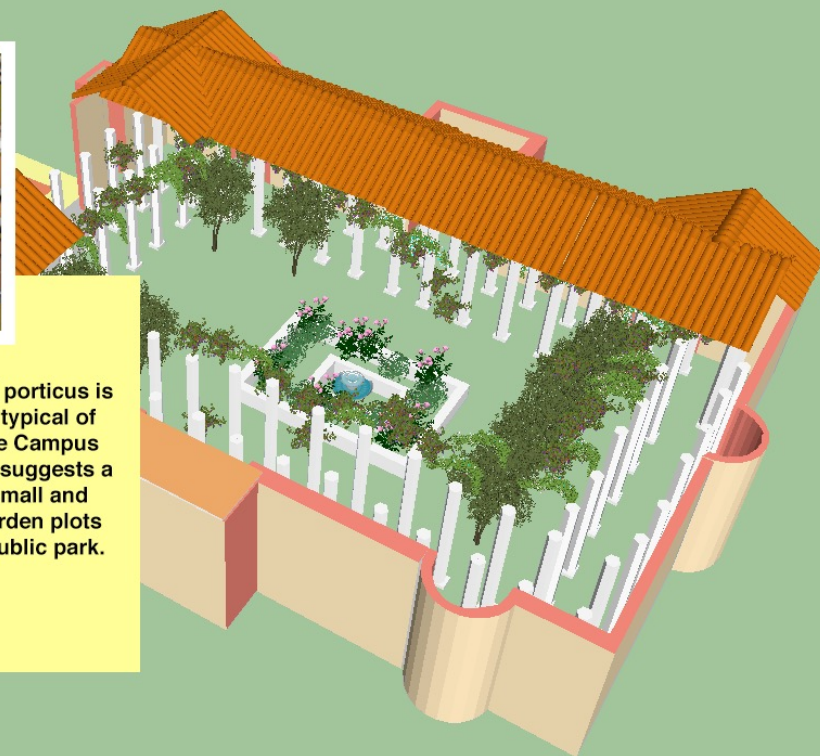
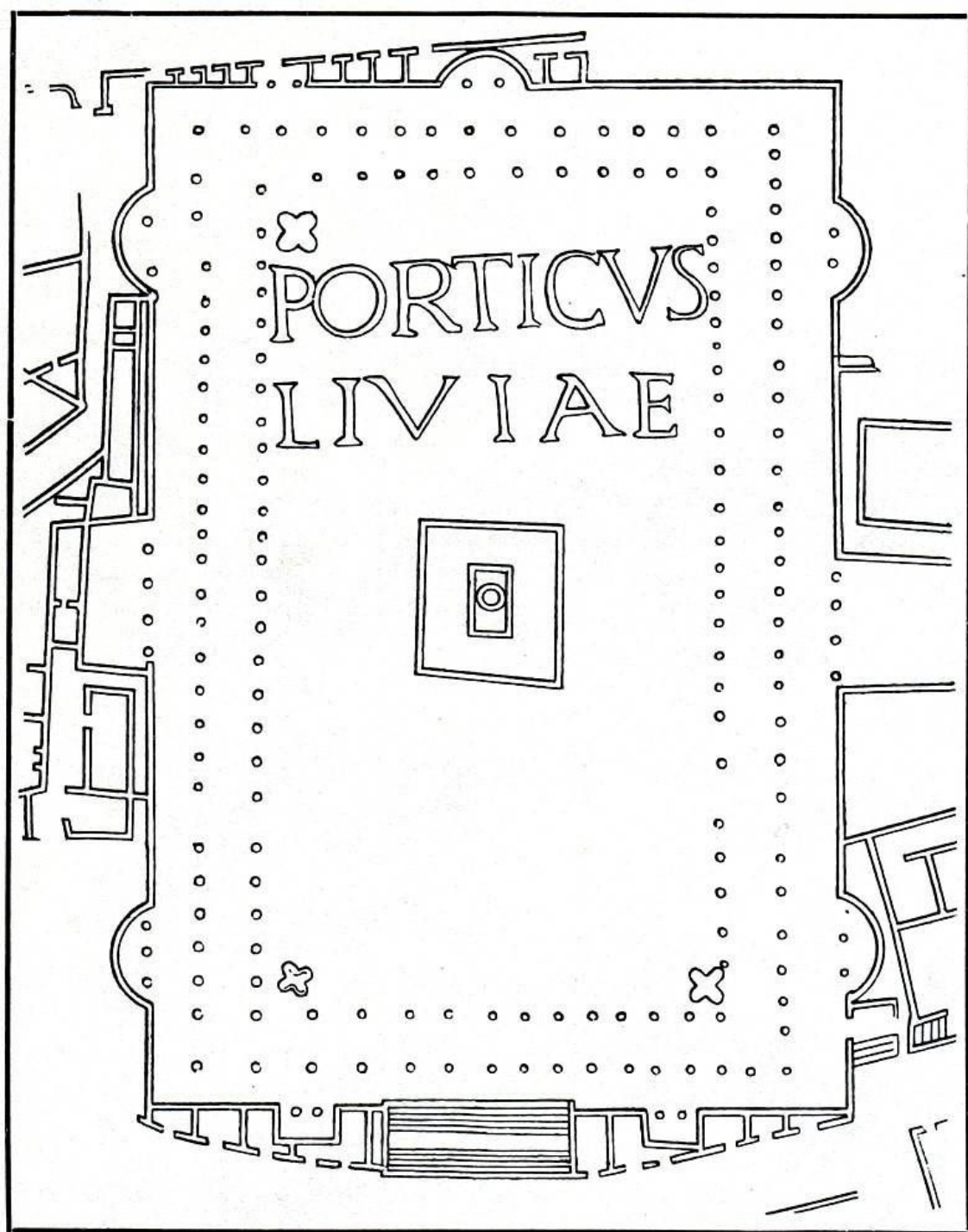


Fig. 2.9 Landscape Mural Painting in the Villa Livia Prima Porta, 20-25 BCE

- Who was Livia?
- Why is this mural significant according to your reading?

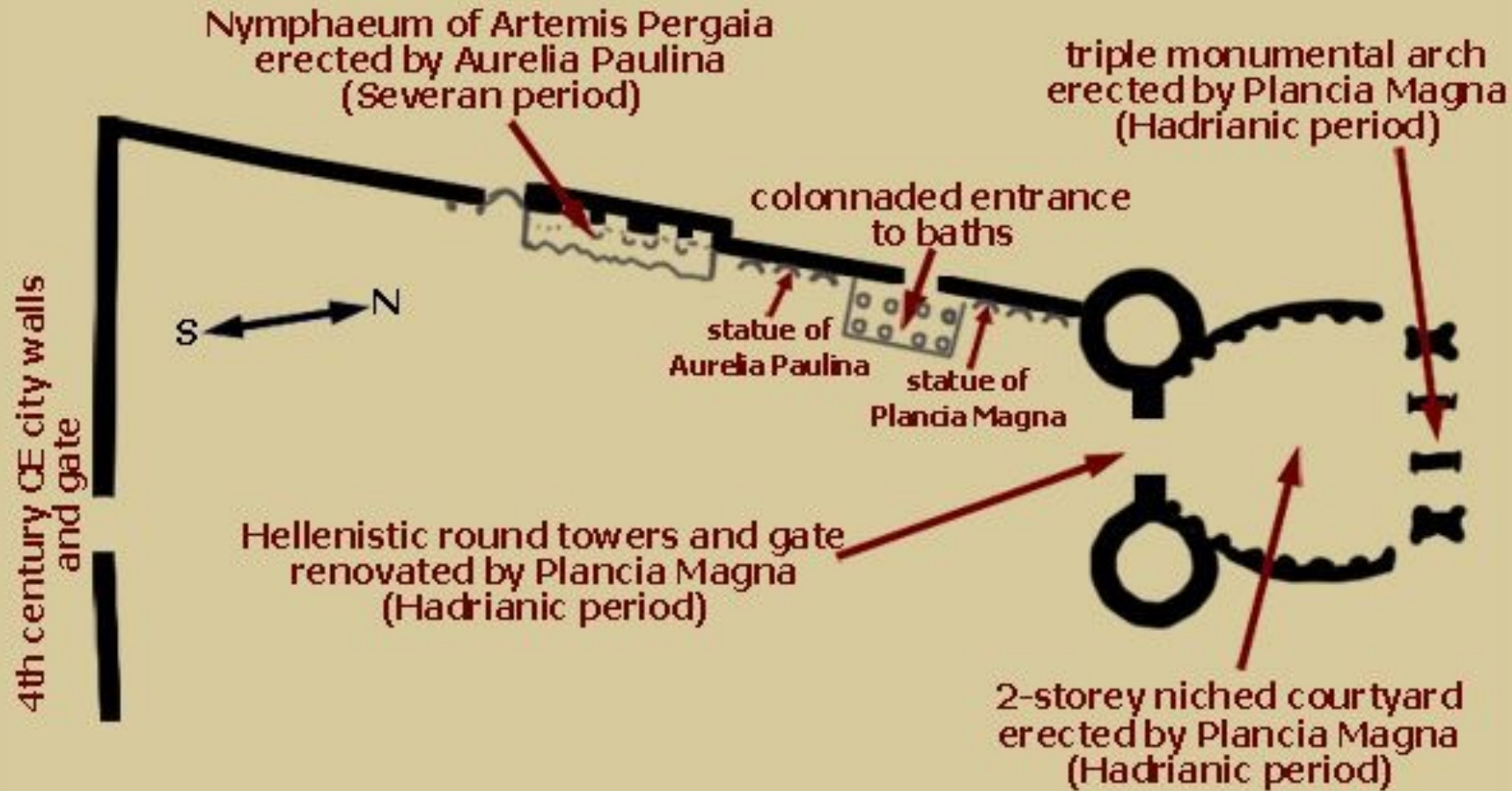




The isolated porticus is (probably) typical of those in the Campus Martius and suggests a taste for small and finished garden plots even as a public park.

The Porticus Liviae, a recreational space for the Roman people surrounded by gardens

# Perge City Gate Complex



Plancia Magna was a prominent woman of Perge in the Roman provinces, today modern Turkey. She lived in the the 1st and 2nd centuries.





Fig. 2.10 Funerary Monument for Sextus Maelius Stabilio, Vesinia Lucunda, and Sextus Maelius Faustus

# Women in the Art of the Medieval World in the West

- Byzantine Empire
- Western Europe from the Carolingian era (750-887 CE) to later Middle Ages (1300-1500)
- Women working in scriptoria
- Women writers
- Opus Anglicanum in England



# Division Of The Roman Empire By The Emperor Theodosios

Pars occidentalis

395 A.D.

Pars orientis

Western Roman Empire

Rome

Constantinople

Eastern Roman Empire  
(Byzantine Empire)

- Provincia
- Diocesis
- Provincia proconsularis

PARTITIO IMPERII  
AD 395

## THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

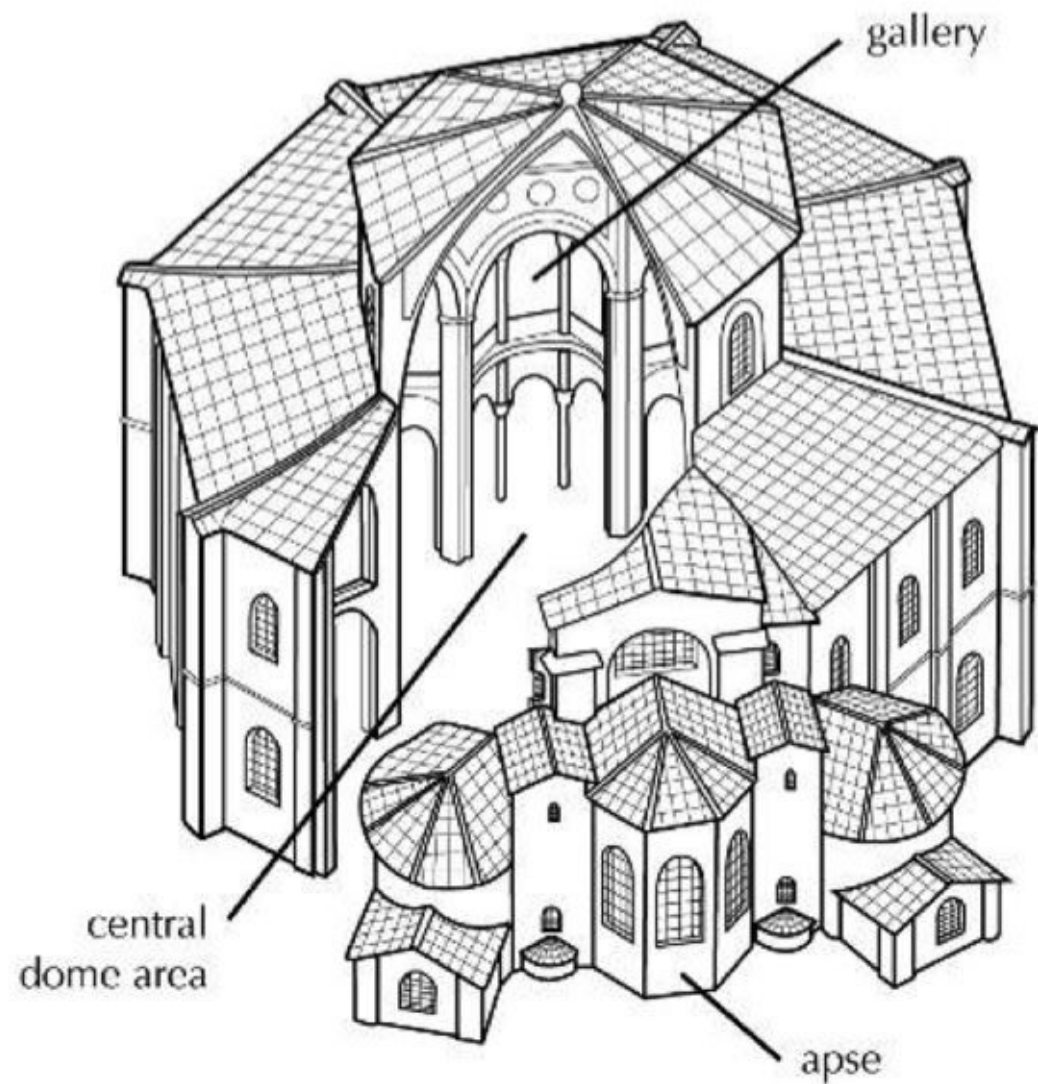
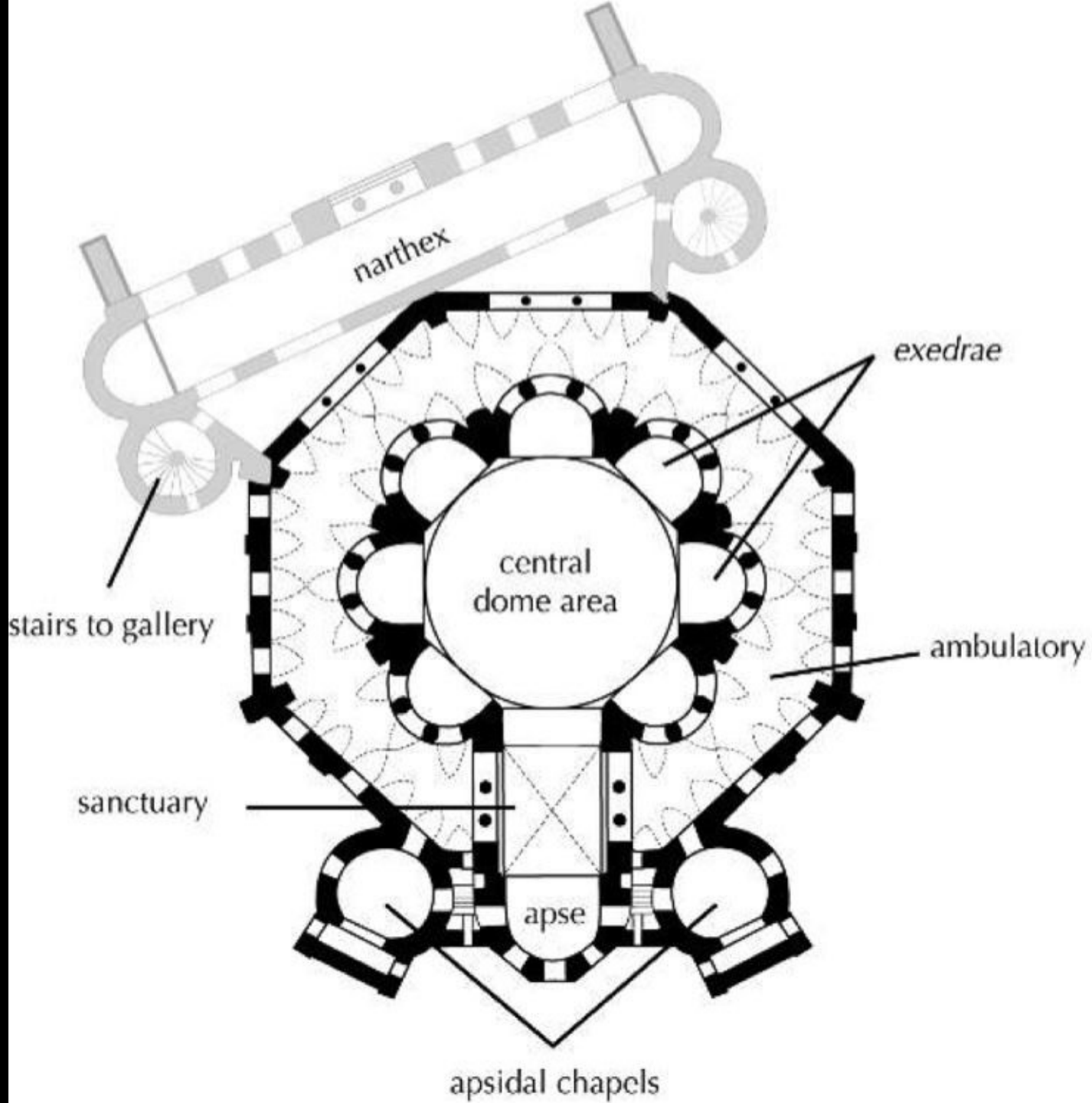






Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna, 547

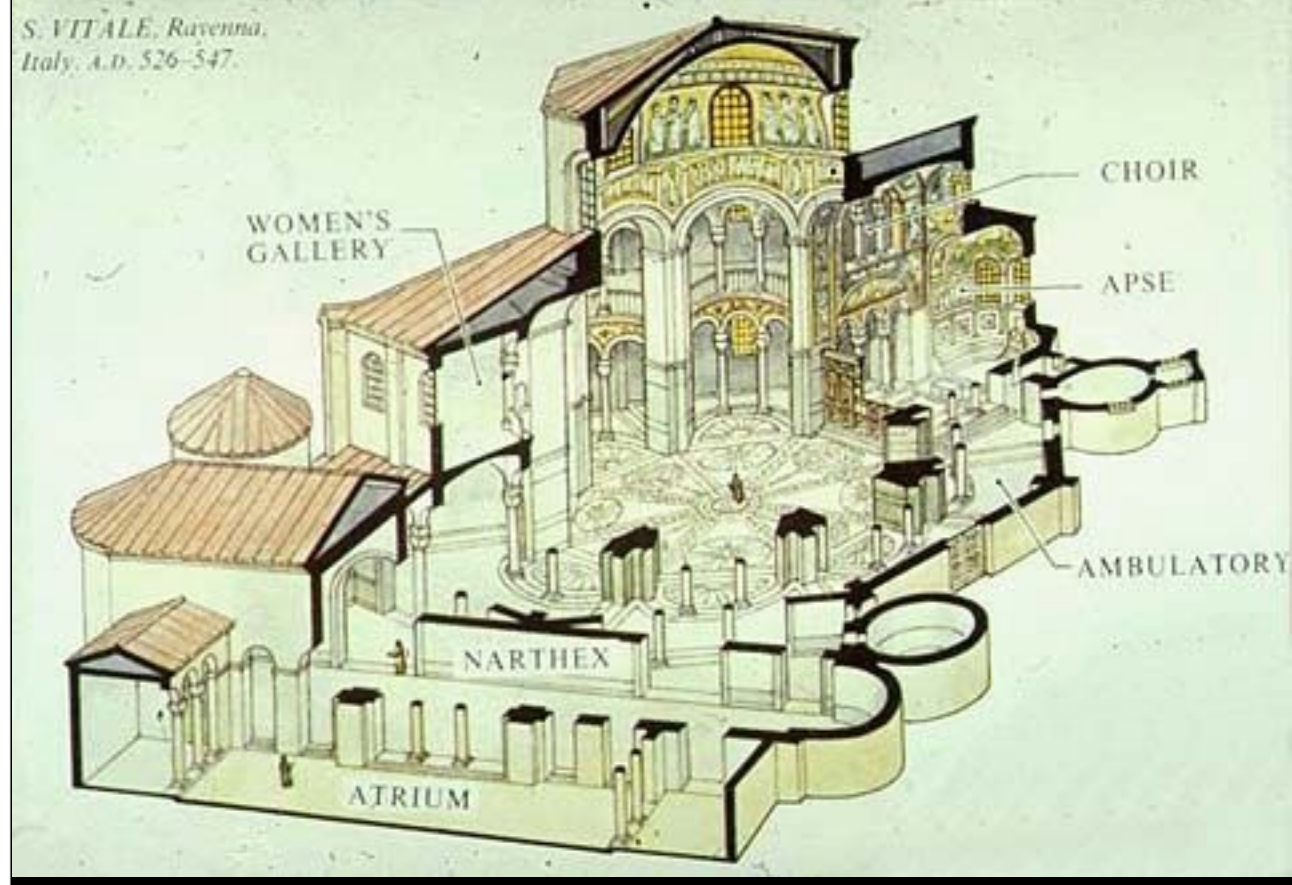
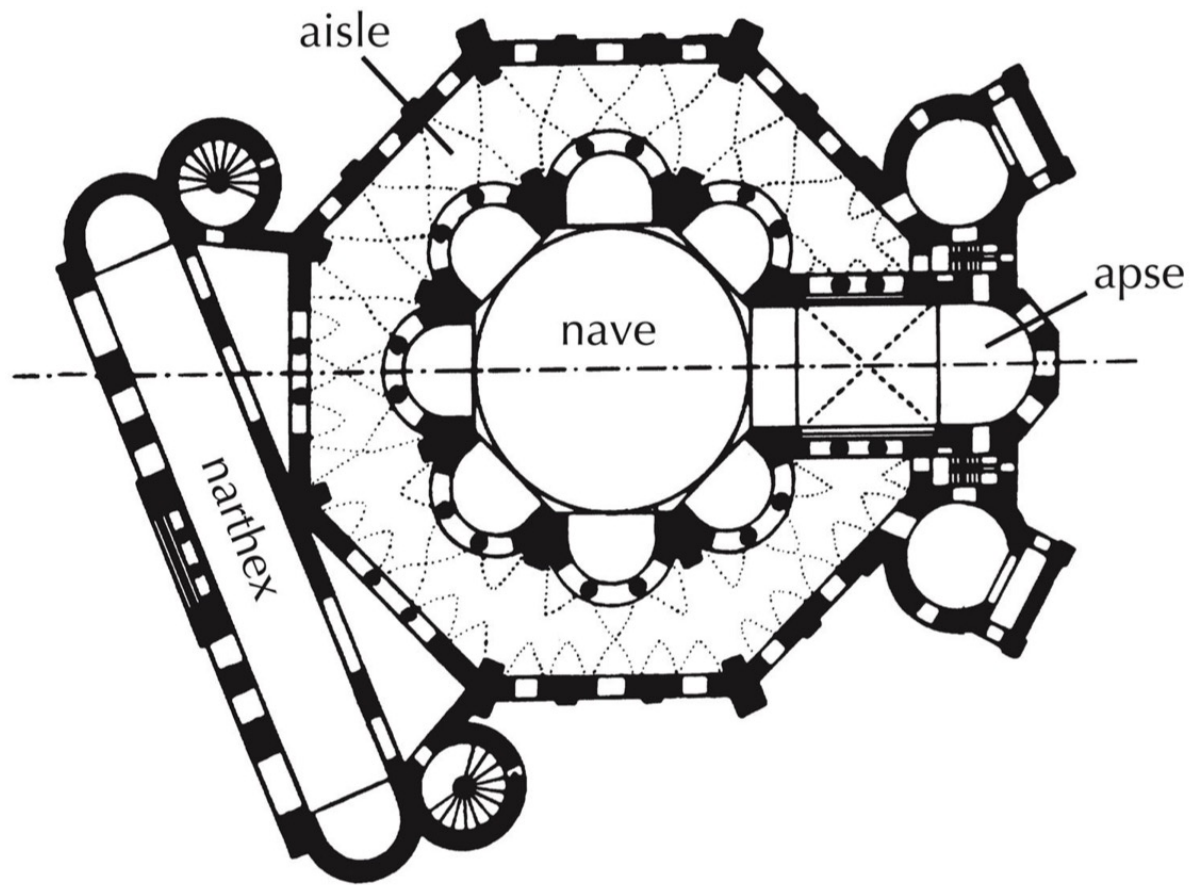




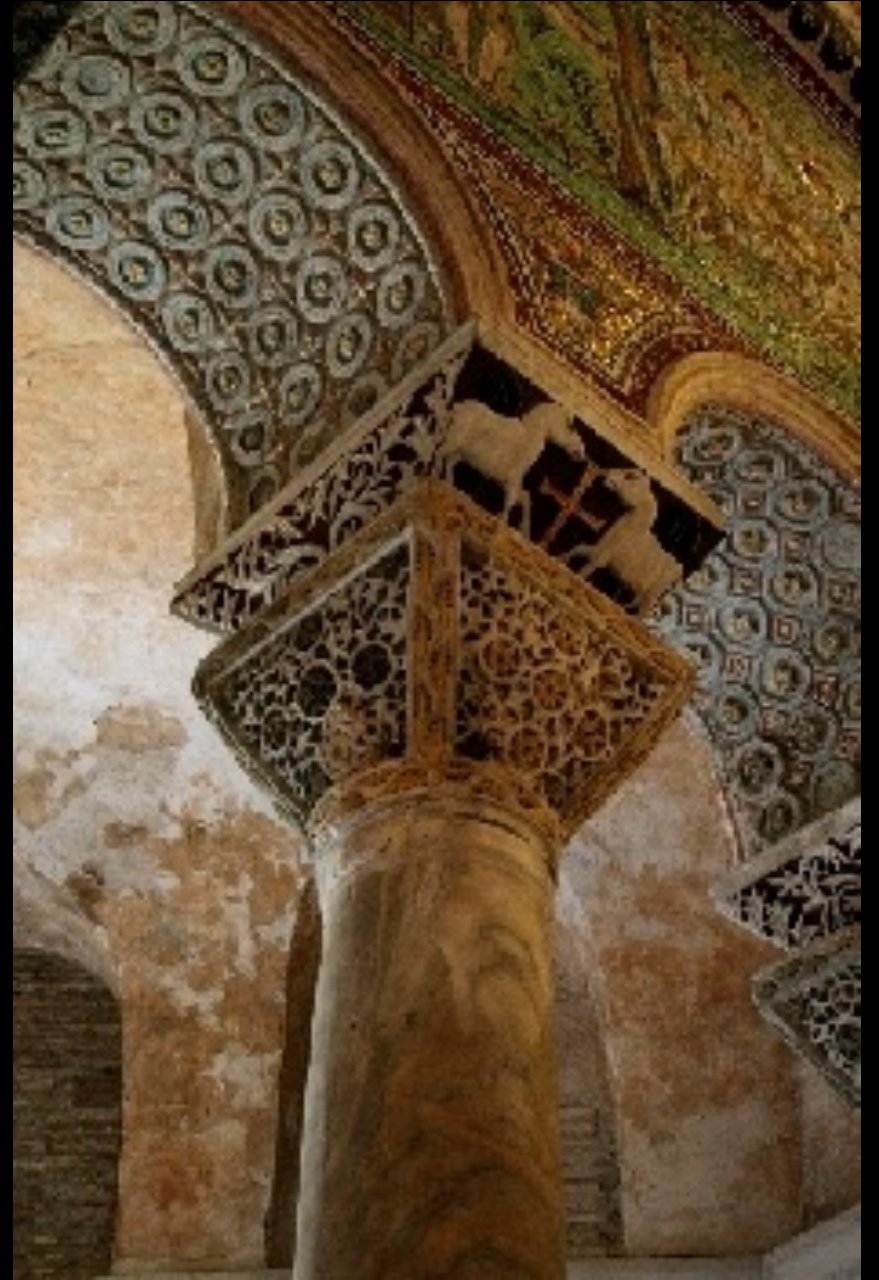
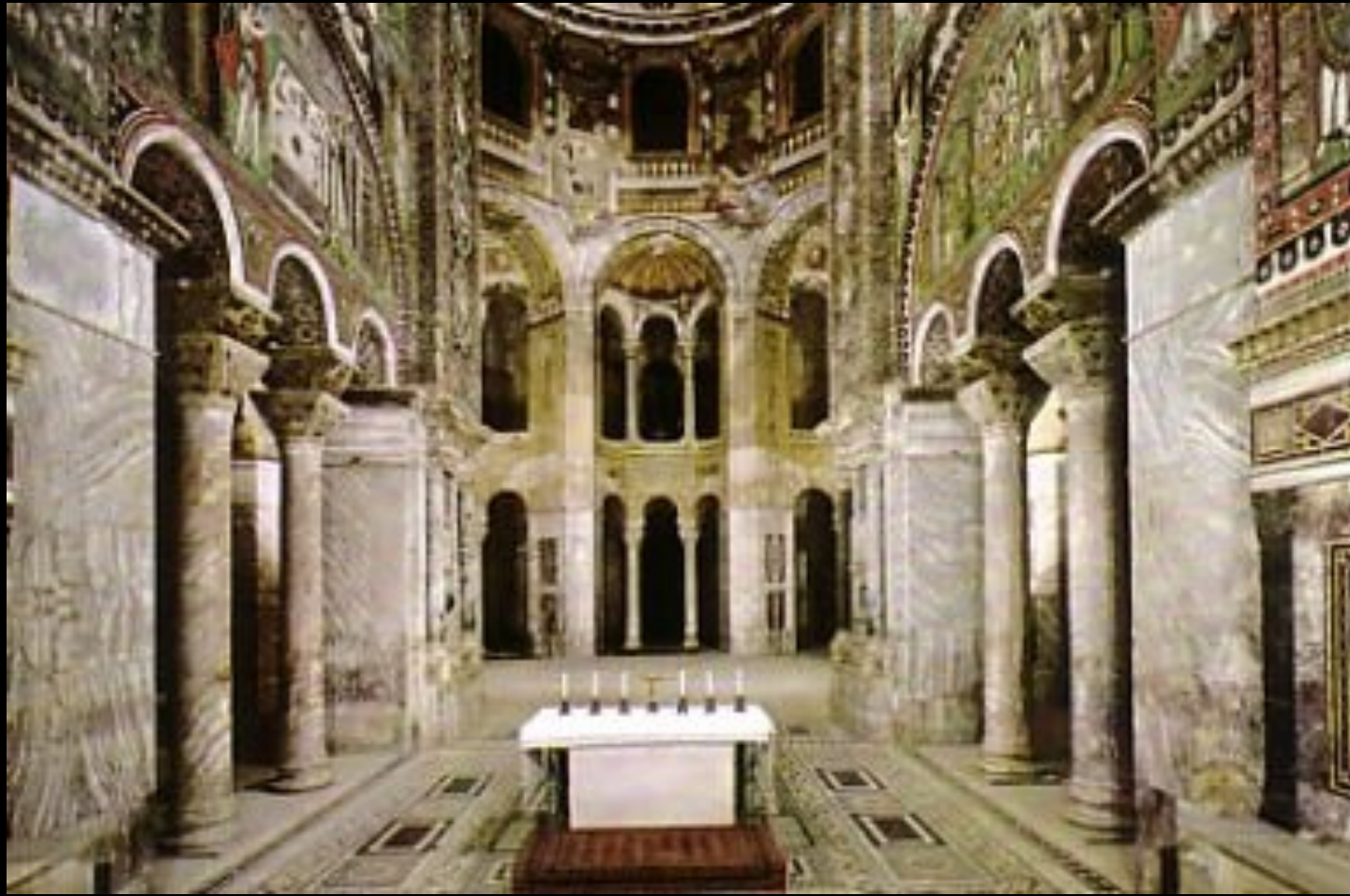


Flying Buttresses











“byzantine”

- 1.) relating to Byzantium (now Istanbul), the Byzantine Empire, or the Eastern Orthodox Church.
2. (of a system or situation) excessively complicated, and typically involving a great deal of administrative detail.

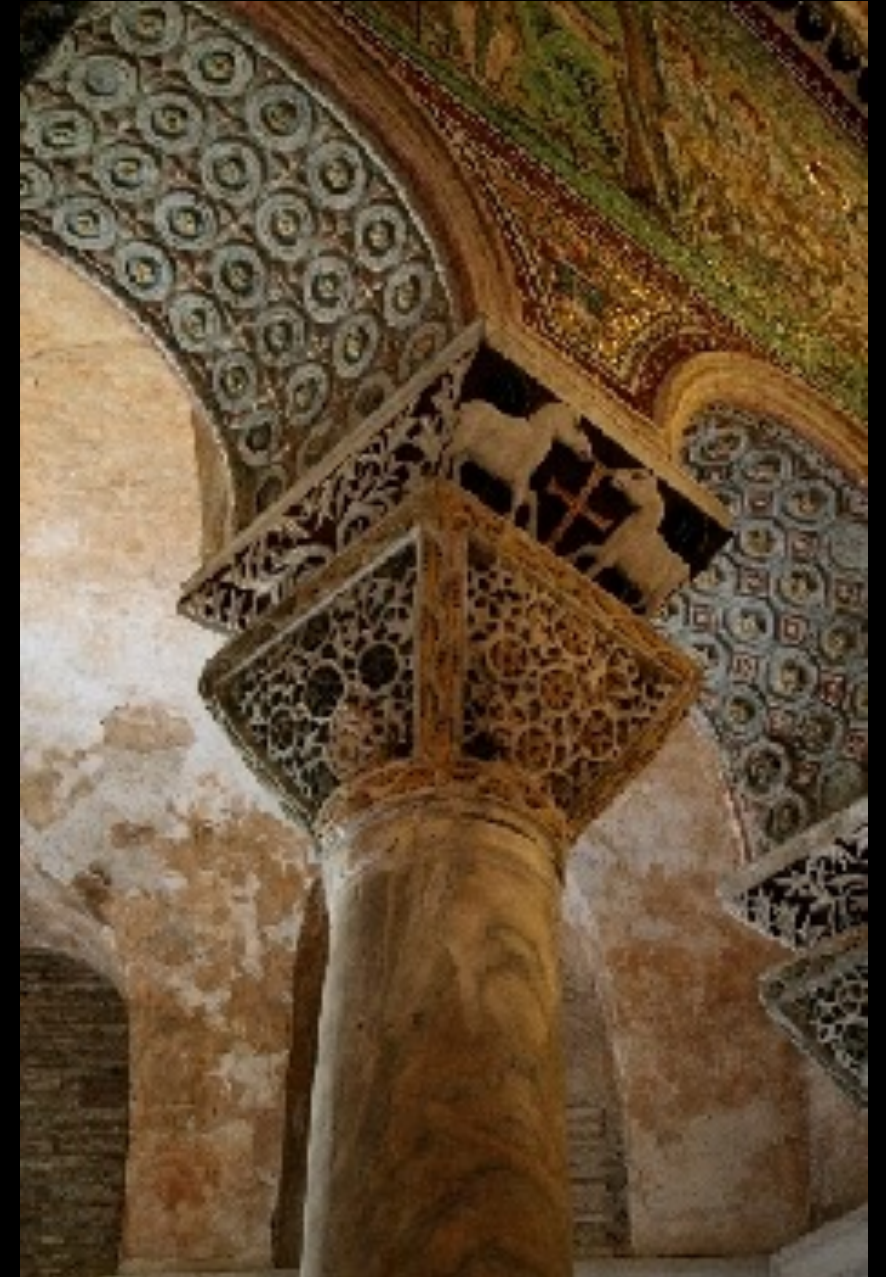






Figure 3.1 Mosaic of Empress Theodora, San Vitale, Ravenna, ca. 547





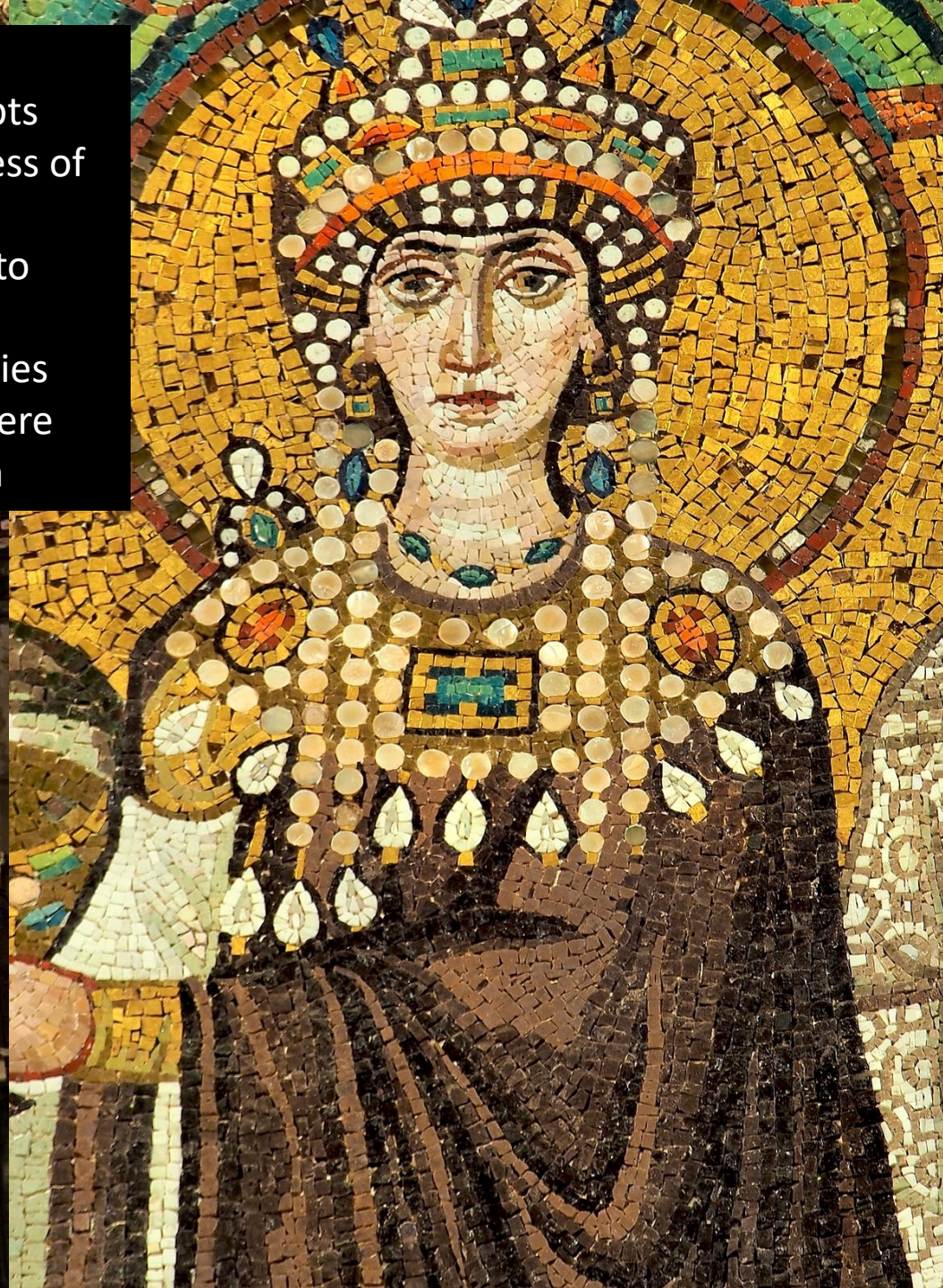
Theodora

What were some of the legal transformations under the reign of Justinian and Theodora?

Monophysitism



- New laws strengthened the punishment of rape
- Prevented women from being imprisoned for debts
- Stopped women being forced onto stage regardless of their status, free or slave
- Passed laws preventing girls from being forced into prostitution
- Monophysitism = Christian sect 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries believed the divine and human nature of Jesus were united into a single entity; championed Theodora



Theodora

What were some of the legal transformations under the reign of Justinian and Theodora?

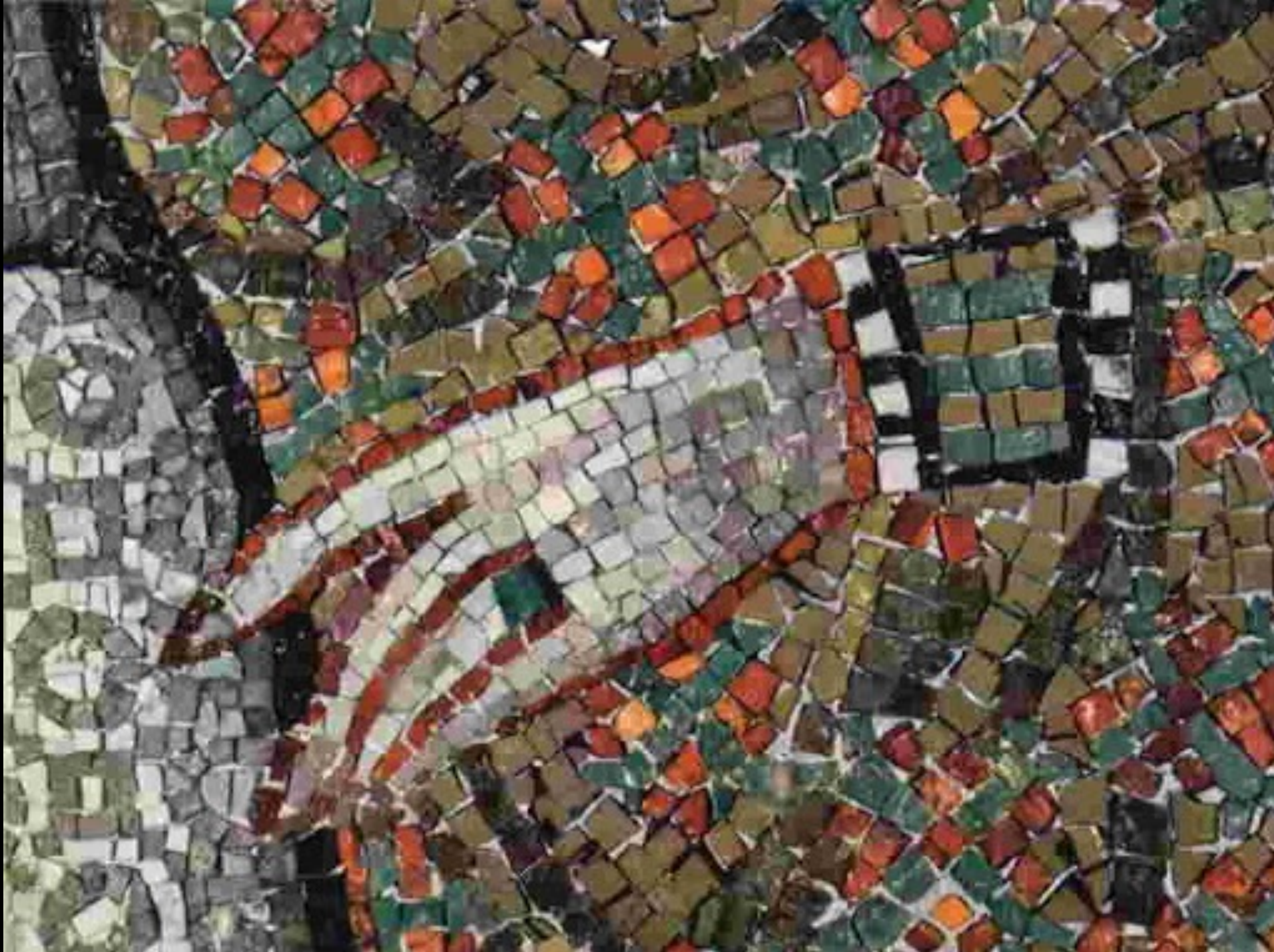
Monophysitism





Figure 3.1 Details of Mosaic of Empress Theodora, San Vitale, Ravenna, ca. 547





Tesserae





Photo by Abbie Weinberg

164-  
529q

THE  
Secret History  
OF THE  
C O U R T  
Of the Emperor  
JUSTINIAN:

WRITTEN  
By *PROCOPIUS* of *Cesarea* ;  
Faithfully rendred into *Englisb*.

L O N D O N :  
Printed for *John Barksdale* Bookbinder,  
over against the Five Bells in *New-  
street*, between *Fetterlane*  
and *Shooelane*. 1674.

Procopius, The Secret History of the Court of the Emperor Justinian, written 550 or 558, or maybe even as late as 562; discovered in the Vatican library and published in 1623

Procopius on Justinian mosaic, Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna, 527-457 CE





Fig. 3.2 Dormition, Birth of the Virgin, Daphni , ca 1000 A mosaic from the monastery, depicting the bathing of new-born Virgin Mary.

- The Midwife



## Monastery at Daphni

This is an eleventh-century Byzantine monastery northwest of central Athens, Greece in the suburb of Chaidari







Fig. 3.2 Dormition, Birth of the Virgin, Daphni , ca 1000 A mosaic from the monastery, depicting the bathing of new-born Virgin Mary.





Ancient Roman relief carvings of a midwife attending a woman giving birth, 2nd century CE, Wellcome Collection







Fig. 3.2 Dormition, Birth of the Virgin, Daphni , ca 1000 A mosaic from the monastery, depicting the bathing of new-born Virgin Mary.

What according to Wendy Slatkin were some of the other privileges of midwives during the Middle Ages?



# Visual Culture of Convents

- Carolingian Era
- Hildegard of Bingen 1098-1179 CE
  - *Viriditas* – “greenness,” the cosmic life force infusing the natural world
  - *Sapientia* – divine wisdom, specifically immanent feminine wisdom
- The Poor Clares of Italy
- Nuns in Northern Europe
  - Mysticism
  - Manuscript illustration
  - Scriptoria



- The term “Carolingian” refers to the Frankish dynasty, founded by Charlemagne's father (Pepin III), that ruled in western Europe from 750 to 987.
- Charlemagne (742-814), or Charles the Great, was king of the Franks, 768-814, and emperor of the West, 800-814. He founded the Holy Roman Empire, stimulated European economic and political life, and fostered the cultural revival known as the Carolingian Renaissance.





- How did nunneries or convents function during the Middle Ages?
- What was their role in cultural life?
- What is manuscript illumination?
- What is a convent scriptoria?





Fig. 3.3 Hildegard von Bingen, an Illumination from Scivias (Know the Ways), ca. 1150-1179

- Mysticism
- Manuscript illumination
- Scriptoria
- Abbesses



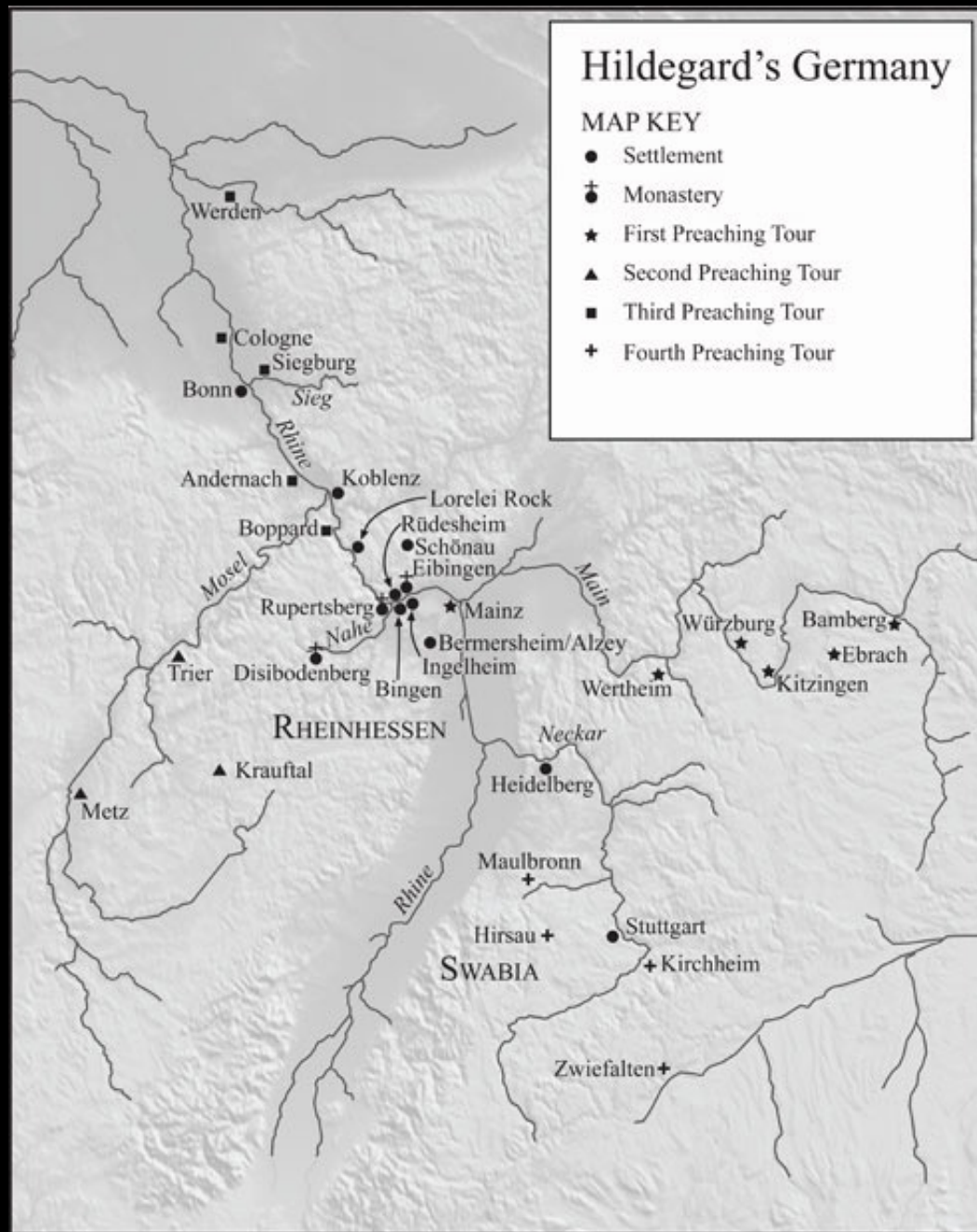
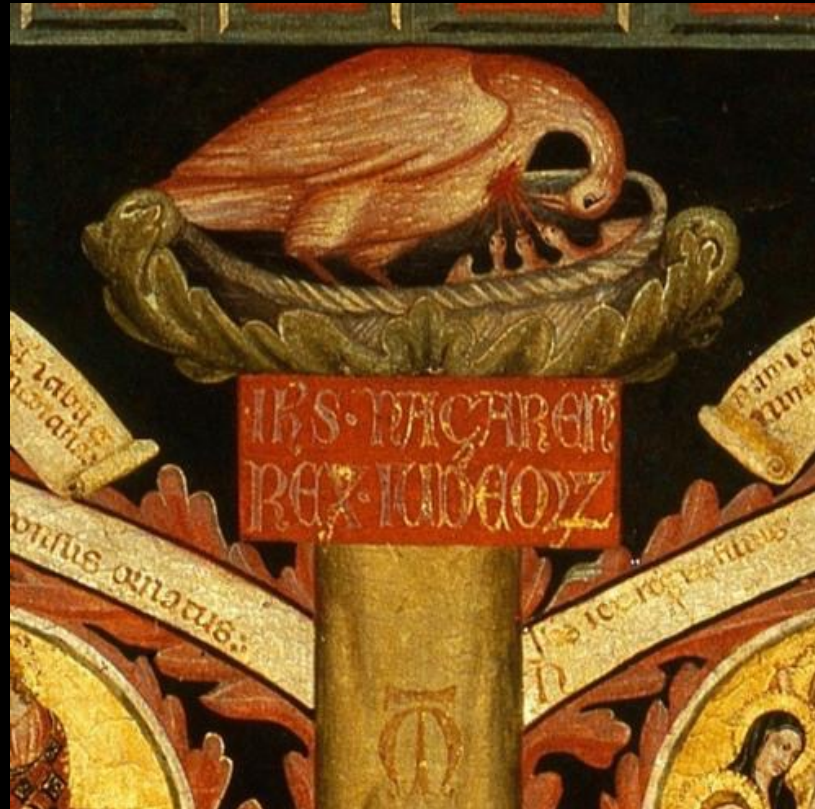


Fig. 3.3 Hildegard von Bingen, an Illumination from Scivias, ca. 1150-117



Fig. 3.4 Pacino di Bonaguida, Tree of Life, ca. 1310-1315 The center of the painting depicts the crucified Christ, while the devil is depicted in the cave at the base, indicating that Christ's death is the result of Adam and Eve's sin. From the trunk sprout twelve branches (six branches from each side), are to be read from left to right and from bottom to top, symbolizing the twelve Apostles of Jesus. From each branch hang in turn four medallions representing biblical events. The mother bird at the top of the tree pierces her breast to feed its young with blood. The maternal figure is self-sacrificing and life-giving.

- The Poor Clares of Italy
- Clausturation
- Eucharist





# Women in Representations

- The Compassio of Mary



Fig. 3.5 Giovanni Pisano, Pistoia pulpit, Crucifixion crop, ca. 1300

- Compassio of Mary
- Compassion







Giovanni Pisano, Pulpit of Sant' Andrea, Pistoia, ca. 1300





Facade - Church of Sant' Andrea, (Pieve di Sant'Andrea), is a church from 8th century in Pistoia, Tuscany, central Italy



Fig. 3.5 Giovanni Pisano, Pistoia pulpit, Crucifixion crop, ca. 1300

- Compassio of Mary
- Compassion
- How does this type of portrayal change our ideas of the figure of Mary?





# Women as Readers and Patrons of Books

- Secular Manuscript Illumination
  - Vernacular

There were many ways women were engaged with books in the Middle Ages.



Saint Anne Teaching the Virgin to Read, 1343  
Painters: Ramon Destorrents (Spain, active 1351-1391),  
Arnau Bassa (Spain, active 1345-1348), Ferrer Bassa  
(Spain, †1348)



IOANNIS BOCCATII  
DE CERTALDO INSIGNE OPVS  
de Claris Mulieribus.

TYPOGRAPHVS LECTORI S. D.

En Candide Lector offerimus tibi opus illustre Io: Bocca: de claris mulieribus, in quo recensentur, illae quae & honestate & turpitudine excellere, ubi simul intelliges, qui ex honestis prauisque studijs euentus consequantur, quicquid etiam Poëticis fabulis de mulieribus inuolutum est, hic ad liquidum traditur, ut facile colligas, unde fabula duxerit originem, & quid deinde artificij Rhetorici à Poëta accesserit, quae omnia bona fide tradita, succincta lepidaque, & ob Historiae rerumque gestarum uarietatem comoda & utilia sunt lectu, ut opere perlustrato, te decuplo plus precij impendere malle iures, quam tanto thesauro carere, Eme & fruire mecum uera dixisse experieris, Vale.



BERNAE HELVET  
Excudebat Mathias Apicarius.

\*

A

Giovanni Boccaccio on Ancient  
Greek and Roman Women  
Painters from *Famous Women*  
(1361)

The First Book Written  
Exclusively About Women

Left: Title page from Boccaccio,  
Concerning Famous Women



# IOANNIS BOCCATII

DE CERTALDO INSIGNE OPVS  
de Claris Mulieribus.

TYPOGRAPHVS LECTORI S. D.

En Candide Lector offerimus tibi opus illustre Io: Bocca: de claris mulieribus, in quo recensentur, illae quae & honestate & turpitudine excellere, ubi simul intelliges, qui ex honestis prauisque studijs euentus consequantur, quicquid etiam Poeticis fabulis de mulieribus inuolutum est, hic ad liquidum traditur, ut facile colligas, unde fabula duxerit originem, & quid deinde artificij Rhetorici à Poëta accesserit, quae omnia bona fide tradita, succincta lepidaque, & ob Historiae rerumque gestarum uarietatem comoda & utilia sunt lectu, ut opere perlustrato, te decuplo plus precij impendere malle iures, quam tanto thesauro carere, Eme & fruere mecum uera dixisse experieris, Vale.



B E R N A E H E L V E T  
Excudebat Mathias Apicarius.

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Eve, the first woman in the Bible

Semiramis, queen of the Assyrians

Opis, wife of Saturn

Juno, goddess of the Kingdoms

Ceres, goddess of the harvest and queen of Sicily

Minerva

Venus

Isis, queen and goddess of Egypt





Fig. 3.6 Marcia, Self-Portrait from a Mirror, ca. 1403

*speculum dominarum*

Another woman Boccaccio writes about is a certain Marcia, Daughter of Varro:

“It has long been known that in Rome there was a woman named Marcia, daughter of Varro, who remained a virgin all her life. But I do not remember having found out which Varro it was or even when she lived. I believe that this woman should be extolled all the more because she was legally independent and preserved her virginity in its full integrity of her own free will, not because of the coercion of a higher authority. As a matter of fact, I do not find that she was bound by holy orders to Vesta or subject to a vow made to Diana or entangled in another commitment – all reasons which curb and restrain women. I believe it was through purity of mind alone that she conquered the sting of the flesh, which occasionally overcomes even the most illustrious men, and she kept her body unblemished by any relations with men until her death.”



# Embroidery

- The Bayeux Tapestry
- Opus Anglicanum
  - Mabel of Bury St. Edmonds
  - Rose of Buford





Fig. 3.7 The Bayeux Tapestry scene 43 banquet (ca. 1070-1080)

Bishop Odo blesses the first banquet that Duke William and the Norman Barons hold on English soil. The bishop is recognisable by his tonsure and also by the fish in front of him. The Latin translates to "And here the bishop blesses the food and drink".





- cope

Fig. 3.8 Opus Anglicanum, Syon Cope, 1310-1320



- Quatrefoils
- What do we see at the center of the four quatrefoils here?







The Toledo Cope, England, circa 1320-30. Cabildo Catedral Primada, Toledo



King David, detail from an orphrey panel depicting the Tree of Jesse, England, circa 1310-25. MTMAD, Lyons







The Vatican Cope, England, circa 1280-1300. Musei Vaticani





The Clare Chasuble, Persia (?) (satin weave ground cloth),  
England (silk, silver and silver-gilt embroidery), circa 1270-  
1294. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 673-1864



- How does the demand for *Opus Anglicanum* change the political economy of embroidery? How does it transform where and how the labor of embroidery happened?



# Urban Working Women 1200-1600

- Christine de Pizan

Who was this woman?!?!





Fig. 3.9 Christine de Pisan presenting her work to Queen Isabel of Bavaria, ca. 1414

- Family production unit
- Matronage



# *The Book of the City of Ladies*

- What is this book about and who wrote it?



# *The Book of the City of Ladies*

This is a book by Christine de Pizan. It is the first defense of women written by a woman. She is considered "the first feminist," meaning that she was the first writer who understood gender roles as a cultural, not primarily a biological, issue.

Widowed at the age of twenty-five, Christine de Pizan was able to support herself, her children, and her widowed mother through the income derived from her writing of over thirty texts and the sale of manuscripts of her work.

-- Wendy Slatkin



Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Peace*, 1412-1414 This copy of the book features a miniature by the Flemish artist Jean Hennecart (fl. 1454–1475) in which Christine presents a copy of her work to the Dauphin, or Crown Prince of France, Louis de Guyenne (1397–1415)



What was the *Querelle des Femmes*?



Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Peace*, 1412-1414 This copy of the book features a miniature by the Flemish artist Jean Hennecart (fl. 1454–1475) in which Christine presents a copy of her work to the Dauphin, or Crown Prince of France, Louis de Guyenne (1397–1415)



The French phrase **querelle des femmes**, meaning "the woman question," refers to a literary debate about the nature and status of women. This debate began around 1500 and continued beyond the end of the Renaissance.

Slatkin defines it as a discourse that argued for equality of women. Beginning ca 1400, a number of writers, both male and female, presented arguments for the education and virtuous character of women to counter the dominant gender ideology of misogyny.