

AGLAONICE, THE FIRST WOMAN ASTRONOMER OF ANCIENT GREECE

- a paradigm of its mythological, cultural and scientific fate

Astronomy, as one of the most ancient sciences, has a long tradition of women who knew and studied the discipline. By expanding and applying their knowledge, and some by sacrificing their lives, women gained a place in history - a place that cannot be ignored simply because they were women. The intellectual capacity of ancient female scientists, such as Enheduanna, Aglaonice, and Hypatia provided women an indisputable place in the history of astronomy.

This paper is about Aglaonice of Thessaly, whose name translates as “Luminescent Victory”, was a first recorded female Greek astronomer who predicted lunar eclipses, to “bring down the moon.” Not much is known of Aglaonice, except that she was the daughter of a certain Hegetor of Thessaly; her dates are uncertain. But the few times she is mentioned, the ancient sources allow us to believe that she was not only a high priest of Hekata's temple, she is part of an unknown myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. It may be argued that Aglaonike is not an historical figure.

But to omit her name when trying to trace the history of ancient women astronomers would be a mistake.

Key words: History of astronomy, Astronomy in culture, wife-astronomer, Hekata, Orpheus cult, Menade, Chaldean cycle, eclipse of the Moon