

Chapter 7

Women's identity and the family in the classical *polis*

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Knowledge of the family and kin groups is fundamental to understanding the development of the political and legal framework of the *polis*, and the study of the family as an institution has always been part of the mainstream of Athenian history.¹ Since W.K.Lacey (1968), and other scholars including myself, first published our views on women and the family in Athens, a different scenario for the creation of the *polis* has been envisioned. Many historians have abandoned the evolutionary view which had posited that social structures such as phratry and *genos* were vestiges of an early tribal society whose members were linked by descent from male ancestors.² According to the revisionist view, phratry and *genos*, like deme, are part of the political fabric of the mature *polis* traceable back to the Cleisthenic reorganization. Using the old evolutionary framework based on actual family relationships, scholars were obliged to carve out a place for women. This framework was made able to accommodate women by importing ideas about early Roman history. Roman historians have now discarded most of these ideas, but the Greek version persists. The new historical model not only provides a better explanation of the development of the Athenian *polis*, but is more consistent with what is known about women. The revised view also sheds light on the subject of the identity of individual Athenian women and on the difficulties facing the historian of women. In this paper I will discuss some of the important implications of the paradigm shift for women's history and historiography.

FAMILY IDENTITY AT FUNERALS

It was not unusual for the *polis* to dictate the parameters of funerals to be conducted by private families. Our most detailed legal

information comes from Athens and from cities that adopted Athenian laws. The legislation, which was attributed to Solon, included these provisions:³

- the *prothesis* must be held indoors;
- the *ekphora* must be held before sunrise on the succeeding day with men walking in front of the cart; and women behind;
- only women over the age of 60 or related to the deceased within the degree of second cousin are permitted to participate, with the latter also permitted to return to the house after the burial;
- women must not wear more than three *himatia*, nor must the dead be interred in more than three;
- food and drink brought in the procession must not be worth more than one obol;
- the offering basket must not be longer than one cubit;
- laceration of the flesh, singing of prepared dirges, or bewailing anyone except the person whose funeral is being held is forbidden;
- visiting the tombs of non-relatives except at their funerals is forbidden.

Previous discussions have emphasized the negative aspects of the legislation governing funerals.⁴ A hypothesis behind these interpretations is that Solon's laws were designed not merely to record, publicize, or normalize existing practices, but rather to alter them substantially. The assumption here is that the prohibitions are a negative image of actual behaviour. For example, we could suppose that previously the *prothesis* could be held out of doors and last longer than one day; the *ekphora* could take place in the daytime with women walking in front; non-related women of all ages and women whose relationship to the deceased was more distant than that of second cousin participated, and so on. Such deductions from ancient lawcodes, however, are naive. Without further information, we can have no confidence about the relationship, if any, between law and historical reality. The problem is increased by the fact that laws attributed to Solon present specific questions concerning authenticity and dating.

A second hypothesis of those who emphasize the restrictive element in the funerary legislation is that aristocratic *gene* controlled political and religious affairs in archaic Athens, and that Solon's legislation was intended to curb their dominance. Accordingly the funerary laws limited opportunities for powerful clans to advertise

their importance by parading in a huge, noisy cortege and thereby to intimidate less fortunate citizens. Lavish expenditures for grave offerings, used by the wealthy *gene* to flaunt their prosperity, were proscribed. The family was defined as a smaller unit than the *genos* as far as the number of members directly affected by the death were concerned. The notion of the *genos* had led to the hypothesis that numerous women who were distant relatives of the deceased would gather at funerals to participate in deliberations over the fate of widow, orphans, and property. To historians of Athenian women it seemed to be a golden age in comparison to the post-Solonian *polis* whose restrictions are well known.⁵ There is, however, at least one flaw in this line of reasoning. Since the number of male participants was not restricted, and since they marched in front of the hearse, it was still possible for the bereaved to display their potential to use force in attaining objectives that may have been divisive in terms of the public good. Such a group of men parading through the city had to be of more concern to the legislator than women's lamentations and conversations.

The major problem with the interpretations just outlined above is that they rest on a foundation that historians are currently questioning, if not actively dismantling. Fustel de Coulanges (1980), and other historians based their ideas about aristocratic clans in control of political and religious life and engaged in competition and strife largely on analogies with archaic Rome. From this construct followed the notion that Solon destroyed the social structure resting on the *gene*. Similar reasoning attributed to Cleisthenes a change in the composition of phratries from blood kin to pseudo-kin. Felix Bourriot has reviewed the so-called textual evidence for an Athenian social structure based on huge archaic clans and found it unconvincing.⁶ There were some large and powerful groups of kin, but the premise that clans based on blood relationship were fundamental to social organization is questionable. Bourriot found few references to any kin group larger than the *anchisteia* ('all descendants of a common great-grandfather'), and he argues that in the time of Solon the *gene* were being created, not destroyed.⁷ Archaeological evidence indicates that Athenians were buried in small groups or as individuals. *Prothesis* and *ekphora* scenes on geometric and archaic vases and funerary plaques likewise portray small groups of mourners.

Considered together with the limitation on trousseaux attributed to Solon, the funerary legislation affecting women appears to be

principally sumptuary in nature. Cicero and Plutarch understood them as sumptuary.⁸ Like the laws affecting trousseaux, those concerning funerals affected individual families, not huge clans. The legislation was definitely effective, at least for a while. Large decorated gravestones went out of fashion during the first three-quarters of the fifth century BC when the democracy flourished. Although we know of no specific legislation curbing the use of such monuments until the enactments of Demetrius of Phaleron, their avoidance is consistent with the intention of the Solonian sumptuary laws. In compliance with this legislation, the *prothesis* (in which women were prominent) was brief and private. Moreover, in the *ekphora* (the public stage of the funeral) the family would be represented chiefly by its male members.

IDENTITY AS DAUGHTER AND WIFE

Membership in the family group precedes the identity supplied by an individual name. Admission to the cult of the hearth signified membership. The head of the household was the chief priest for his family and determined who was to be admitted to its cults. Worshipping the same gods as their father established infants as members of the family, and inclusion in a cult that excluded others confirmed such affiliation. In the *Laws* (729c) Plato refers to all the members who share the worship of the family gods and who have the same natural blood. It is important to keep Plato's second point in mind when considering the family affiliation of a married woman.

When the father decided to rear the infant it was carried around the hearth at the Amphidromia. Friends and relatives attended and sent gifts, and thus became witnesses to the existence of the baby and to its family membership. The various words for 'baby' that appear in the sources do not differentiate between girls and boys. Therefore we deduce that the Amphidromia was the same for a daughter as for a son.

Unless they were adopted, children were lifelong members of their father's family, and even upon marriage the daughter did not relinquish her membership. For example, after a woman was married and living in her husband's house, she was polluted by the death of her blood relatives. It is often asserted that when they entered a new household, brides and slaves were regularly introduced to the family cults, but I have not found any evidence for this. Fustel de Coulanges

was probably influenced by the Roman law of marriage with *manus* when he wrote erroneously of the bride:⁹

She must abandon the paternal fire, and henceforth invoke that of the husband.... She must give up the god of her infancy, and put herself under the protection of a god whom she knows not. Let her not hope to remain faithful to the one while honouring the other; for in this religion it is an immutable principle that the same person cannot invoke two sacred fires or two series of ancestors.

The idea that an Athenian could have ties to only one family is based on the male model. The woman's situation is more ambivalent.

Inasmuch as a wife's sojourn in her husband's house was more tentative than that of a child born in the house, the incorporation ceremonies were less elaborate than those for infants, and we know less about them. Although antiquarians record many diverse customs, no complete description of a classical wedding is extant. We are told that a shower of dates, sweets, and nuts marked the entrance of the bridegroom and bride when they came home after the wedding procession. Such a shower also marked the admission of a new slave. As I have mentioned, the hearth and the family cults, like the rest of the household, belonged to the husband, but he might invite his wife or slaves or other persons to participate. For example, in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* (7.8) a husband and wife offer sacrifices together at home, but he initiates these, though she is often the leader in other activities. The Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica* notes that the Pythagoreans stated a common custom directed that the husband was not to harm his wife, but to treat her as if she were a suppliant raised from the hearth.¹⁰ Literary references to the hearth are found, as in descriptions of the Amphidromia, but archaeological evidence for a fixed hearth in private homes is virtually nil. Practical considerations, however, make it likely that it was situated on the ground floor or even in the courtyard. Despite symbolic associations of women with the hearth,¹¹ in Athens it was not upstairs in the women's quarters. (Hestia, goddess of the hearth, was not married.)

Names were an indication of family membership. Children were identified by their own name and patronymic. Matronymics were not normally used, except in derogatory contexts such as accusations and curses. Because rules of etiquette required the suppression of respectable women's names, at least while they were living, the quantity of evidence available for the study of their names is far less

than that for men of the same social class. Moreover, because a married woman was often buried alone, or with her husband's family, it is sometimes impossible to detect links between her name and those in her natal family. Available evidence indicates that, like a boy, a girl was given a name that was derived from those in the patriline, skipping a generation. Thus the oldest daughter would be named after her paternal grandmother. Few families had more than one daughter, and rarely are the names of more than one known. Nevertheless we do find the same names, or names constructed on the same stem, repeated in families through generations. For example, women in the family that supplied priestesses of Athena Polias often bore a name beginning with 'Lys-.' Agariste was a common name for an Alcmaeonid woman, and the name Coisyra was also used.

Naming patterns sometimes reflect the more tentative quality of girls' ties to their natal family, and when this occurs it becomes more difficult for the historian to identify them. A cursory examination of some 448 Athenian epitaphs yielded eighty-one in which the name of a father and his daughter were clearly identifiable.¹² In only eleven of these, or 14 per cent, was there any correlation,¹³ for example, Cleo, daughter of Cleon¹⁴ and Chairestrate, daughter of Chairephanes.¹⁵ These epitaphs do not record the mother's name, so it is not possible to determine how often a woman's name reflected her matrilineage. In the same group of epitaphs there were 153 in which the name of a father and son could be identified. In this sample the names of forty men, or 26 per cent, correlated with that of their father,¹⁶ for example, Eubius, son of Eubius¹⁷ and Euxitheus, son of Euxithius.¹⁸ In brief, naming patterns linked 26 per cent of men and 14 per cent of women with the patriline.

POLITICAL IDENTITY

Membership in phratry and deme was inherited from the father. The father enrolled his baby in his phratry as being legitimate and his own, and presented him at the festival of the Apaturia held annually by the deme. Some Byzantine lexica mention the introduction and enrolment of both boys and girls: perhaps this occurred in the Hellenistic period or in cities other than Athens. Classical sources, which must be considered more reliable inasmuch as they are contemporaneous, refer to the enrolment of males.¹⁹ The name 'phratry' ('brotherhood') implies that women are peripheral. Only one text indicates that a father had the option of letting his

phratry know that he had a daughter, but even she was not enrolled. The speaker in Isaeus 3.73 alludes to the possibility of introducing (*eisagonti*) a daughter to a phratry if she was destined to be an *epikleros* and eventually to produce a son who was to be enrolled in the phratry as the adopted son of his grandfather. The speaker in Isaeus 3 is describing an event which did not occur, contentiously asking why a certain father did not introduce his daughter into his phratry, and the case is special inasmuch as the girl was potentially an *epikleros*?²⁰ The decree of the Demotionid phratry, the only extant complete decree describing admission, describes the introduction of a son and does not mention daughters.²¹ In his edition of the Scholia to Aristophanes, *Acharn.* 146 Dindorf²² had cited the Suda s.v. *meiagogein* and expanded the Greek text so as to give the impression that both girls and boys were inscribed in the phratry lists. This emendation, which became a crucial bit of evidence for the registration of girls,²³ is now properly omitted in Wilson's edition.²⁴ Plato (*Laws* 785a) mentions the enrolment of women in phratries. He is not describing Athens, however, but rather an idealized state where women do participate to a limited extent in politics. Inasmuch as a phratry was a 'brotherhood' with political responsibilities it is difficult to conceptualize why a girl would be admitted or even how membership might be exercised. For boys, in contrast, admission to the phratry was the principal route to full membership in the *polis*. Age, birth, and sex criteria for membership in the phratry were the same as those for deme membership. In Pseudo-Demosthenes 59.122 the speaker distinguishes between male and female progeny: 'This is what marriage is: when a man engenders children and presents his sons to the phrateres and demesmen and gives his daughters as being his own in marriage to husbands.'

Some scholars have assumed, without justification, that a girl belonged to her father's phratry, and have debated whether she remained in it throughout her lifetime as a boy did, or whether she was transferred to her husband's upon marriage.²⁵ Yet if the father did not introduce his baby daughter to his phratry, it is even less likely that the bridegroom introduced his wife. The notion that a wife was introduced to her husband's phratry at the *gamelia* is not supported by the most trustworthy ancient sources.²⁶ Harpocration (s.v. *gamelia* Dindorf) declares that Didymus stated that Phanedemus' definition of *gamelia* was erroneous (*FGrH* 325 F 17). Although Didymus reported that Phanedemus had said that wives were introduced to the phratry at the *gamelia*, in fact he said no such thing.

Furthermore Didymus had not been able to cite any evidence from the orators. In fact Isaeus (3.79.8) and Demosthenes (57.43) speak of presenting the marriage feast to the phratry (*gamelia*) on behalf of (*huper*) a wife.²⁷ In other words, the *gamelia* served as an occasion at which a marriage was made public and created witnesses to the legitimacy of the children born as a result of it. In view of the obscurity of respectable women that we have mentioned briefly on p. 115, it is extremely unlikely that a bride was introduced at the *gamelia* which was apparently a festive party of the 'brotherhood.'²⁸ According to the most reasonable estimates, the average phratry consisted of several hundred members.²⁹ If an entire phratry knew a woman, such familiarity would be *prima facie* evidence of her lack of respectability, and if she were introduced to a series of phratries (her father's, then each husband's at subsequent marriages),³⁰ she would be quite notorious. It is more likely that the bridegroom announced that he was marrying the daughter of so and so, and did not specify the woman's name but gave the name and demotic of his bride's father, as in the decree of the Demotionid phratry concerning the introduction of sons (*IG II² 1237* lines 119–20): 'let a deposition be made to the phratriarch...of his name, patronymic, demotic, and the name and demotic of his mother's father'. Moreover, the consequence of the view that the phrateres were not relatives at all, but only pseudo-kin is that it is even more unlikely that a husband would introduce his bride to them. In two speeches where it would have been useful to call as witnesses a woman's phrateres (had such existed), this step is not taken. A man whose citizen status had been challenged partially on the allegation that his mother was not a citizen did not call his mother's phrateres as witnesses, but he did call phrateres of his mother's male kin (*Ps.–Demos. 57.20–3, 40, 67*). Another man who had to verify the identity of his mother and prove that she was married to his father argued that his father had offered the *gamelia* to his phratry upon the marriage, and had subsequently introduced the speaker and his brother as his sons to his phratry (*Isaeus 8.18–20*).

Women are not identified by their own demotic until post-classical times, and even then such identification is not common. I have found only eight examples.³¹ Because the phratry system became extinct, the women with demotics were not also members of phratries. Instead, in the classical and Hellenistic periods their family roles are recorded as essential features of their identity, but the repertoire is strictly limited. In the index of 'Significant Greek Words', in the

most recent catalogue of funerary monuments in the Athenian agora, there are more entries for *gune* (ninety-nine) and *thugater* (eighty-eight) than for any other word.³² In contrast, no man is commemorated as a husband, and the word *huios* appears only twice. There are no citations for the actual word *pater*, for fathers are referred to by the patronymic. In view of the importance of women's reproductive role, it is interesting to find only two appearances of *meter* (cf. p. 119). To have identified a dead woman as a mother of a daughter would have compromised the reputation of a daughter (if she were still living, as was likely), whereas to refer to her as the mother of a son would perhaps have suggested that she wielded authority over him. The fantasy of descent from male to male found its way into a wide range of documents.

The girl's membership in her natal family is declared only at the Amphidromia in the presence of close friends and relatives, whereas a series of ceremonies at the phratry level make the boy's family membership indelible in the minds of a large group of men. It has also been noted that naming patterns are more likely to tie boys than girls to their ancestors. Indeed, it is precisely the lack of explicit identity in her natal family that permits a bride to leave it and join another. Nevertheless, she does not become a permanent member of her husband's family, for if she is divorced or widowed she may join the family of another husband, or return to her family of birth.

IDENTIFYING WOMEN

The lack of enrolment of daughters and wives in phratry and deme has important implications for historiography, for it contributes to the obscurity of women. One of the most useful books on the Greek family is J.K.Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families*.³³ Davies provides elaborate genealogical charts frequently showing descent directly through males. Sometimes male kin on the mother's side are known, and the woman is referred to in a primary source. She is not, however, identified by name, but only as a daughter, wife, and mother. Davies includes such a woman on his charts as *hede* ('that female'). The charts also reflect the Athenian practice of regarding the married woman as an invisible link between two families of men. Such genealogical charts are a reflection of the primary sources. We know more about the elite whom Davies studied than about less fortunate members of Greek society, but upper-class women are those who can best afford to avoid the public eye.

The Athenian family has several versions. One, as we saw in the discussion of the phratry, is a pseudo-kinship group restricted to male citizens. Families comprised of both women and men manifest themselves in two versions, one oriented toward the public, the other more intimate and private. As we have seen in the discussion of the funeral, though the first of these admits some women, men predominate. Only the private version accommodates women, though men are not necessarily excluded. The several versions of the Athenian family that have been discussed make it clear that although women were identified with the family and identified by their family roles, the family's identity depended on men.

NOTES

- 1 For further documentation and discussion of the material in this paper see Pomeroy forthcoming.
- 2 Following Bourriot 1976 and Roussel 1976.
- 3 The following list is assembled from the testimony in Ps.-Demos. 43.62 =Ruschenbusch 1966 F 109; Cic. *de Leg.* 2.63–4=Ruschenbusch F 72a; from Demetrius of Phaleron, F 135 (Wehrli)=Jacoby *FGrH* 228 F 9; Plut. *Solon* 21.5=Ruschenbusch F 72c.
- 4 Thus, e.g. Alexiou 1974:6–7, 14–18.
- 5 See further Pomeroy 1975:43–5, 80.
- 6 Bourriot 1976.
- 7 Bourriot 1976:325–6, 338–9, and *passim*.
- 8 See note 3, above.
- 9 Fustel de Coulanges 1980 (1864): bk 2, ch. 2, 35.
- 10 Ps.-Arist. *Oec.* 1344a10–12, Iambl. *Vit. Pyth.* 84.
- 11 For these see Vernant 1955.
- 12 Bradeen 1974:35–90, nos 31, 36, 54, 56, 59, 79, 80, 82, 88, 103, 112, 120, 121, 128, 132, 139, 141, 142, 145, 150, 153, 155, 157, 158, 162, 164, 166, 168, 172, 186, 192, 200, 213, 224, 231, 243, 258, 285, 304, 320, 329, 332, 333, 342; Osborne 1988: nos 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 25, 26, 30, 32, 37, 38, 39, 41, 44, 46, 51, 56, 57, 60, 62, 66, 67, 69, 79, 82; and see note 13.
- 13 Bradeen 1974: nos 69, 81, 135, 140, 151, 191, 194(?), 346, 357; and Osborne 1988: nos 35, 59.
- 14 Osborne 1988:13, no. 35.
- 15 Bradeen 1974: no. 81.
- 16 Bradeen 1974:35–90, correlation: nos 28, 35, 48, 51, 53, 65, 138, 147, 152, 159, 170, 179, 188, 189, 216, 218, 237, 252, 264, 289, 312, 324, 350; and see notes 17 and 18; no correlation: nos 27, 29, 30, 34, 46, 52, 55, 59, 66, 72, 77, 81, 83, 84, 89, 91, 96, 101, 106, 113, 114, 125, 129, 133, 136, 148, 149, 160, 163, 164, 165, 167, 178, 183, 185, 187, 188, 197–9, 202, 205, 212, 225, 231, 233, 240, 241, 259–61, 263, 275, 277, 279, 284, 290–6, 298, 302, 303, 306–9, 314, 321, 323, 327, 341, 344, 345, 347, 353–5, 363, 364. Osborne 1988: correlation: nos 2, 9, 10, 15–17, 19, 23,

- 47, 59, 63, 68, 70, 80, 85; no correlation: nos 1, 3, 12, 14, 20–2, 24, 27, 29, 33, 42, 45, 48, 49, 52–4, 58, 65, 71–9, 86.
- 17 Third to second century: Bradeen 1974: no. 47.
- 18 Fourth century: Bradeen 1974: no. 174. Naming for the father became more common in the Roman period, in imitation of the Roman practice.
- 19 Pollux 8.107 s.v. *phratores* and the *Suda* s.v. *Apatouria* (Adler) mention both boys and girls. See also note 24 below.
- 20 On Isaeus 3, see Ledl 1907:173–96. Ledl argues that women were not registered.
- 21 *IG* II² 1237, line 10=*SIG*³ 921=*LSCG* 19. Women are not named in other extant phratry lists: *IG* II–III.2.2, 2344–5.
- 22 Dindorf, Scholia: 346, lines 5–7.
- 23 Cited most recently by Kearns 1985.
- 24 Wilson 1975:29, 146b.
- 25 On the debate Collignon 1904:ii, pt 2, 1642, 1644. Collignon decides that the wife remains in her original phratry.
- 26 Mikalson 1983:85; Burkert 1984:255; and Golden 1985 retain the notion that the bridegroom introduced the bride to his phratry, contra Collignon 1904:1642, 1644–5, and most recently Davies 1988:380. Stengel 1910: cols 691–2, asserts incorrectly that the *gamelia* was an offering at the Apatouria when a son was introduced to his phratry. The latter notion is based on *Anek. Gr.* 1.228.5 and *Etym. Magn.* s.v., among the least reliable of all the sources on the *gamelia*.
- 27 Sim. Pollux 8.107 s.v. *phratores*.
- 28 According to Pollux 3.42 the *gamelia* was a sacrifice; according to Hesych. s.v. a banquet; according to Harp, s.v., *Anek. Gr.* 1, p. 233.31, and the *Suda* s.v., a donation (probably for a banquet).
- 29 Roussel 1976:143, suggests that the size varied from several dozens to several hundred. Flower 1985:234, gives an average of 133. The statement of Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* F 3, that there were twelve phratries would indicate far larger memberships, but Aristotle must be incorrect: see Rhodes 1981:69.
- 30 So Golden 1985:13, n. 26.
- 31 In inscriptions that are undated or dated to the Roman period a few women have demotics: *IG* II² 5276, 5428, 6255, 6780, 6781, 6810, 7764; Bradeen 1974:47, no. 107. I would see these as further evidence of the increase of women's political role in the Hellenistic world. Previously the father's demotic is given, or, more rarely, the deme name with the suffix *-then* ('from').
- 32 Bradeen 1974:238–4, index 11. Vestergaard *et al.* 1985:181, found 121 examples of women named with uxorial status, and almost 500 with filial status.
- 33 Davies 1971.