



Women and the Athenian Polis

Women in Antiquity | Meeting #6

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Upcoming Dates

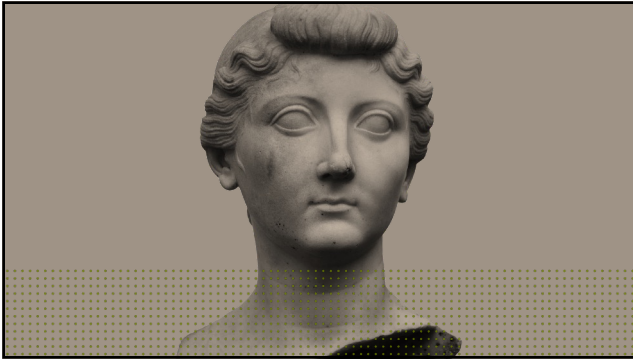
- Monday, October 12
 - Images essay due
- Tuesday, October 13
 - No class meeting (Monday classes meet)
- Monday, October 26
 - Proposal due
- Sunday, October 11
 - Responses for Week 6 Due

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Five things today

- Sparta
- Classical Athens
- Greek theater
- Orestes and the Fates
- Women in Herodotos

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Quiz #4 | Women and the Athenian Polis

- For an Athenian woman from a wealthy family, marriage typically
 - was arranged by her guardian and the groom
 - included a dowry for her support
 - could be easily ended without stigma
 - ☒ all of the above
- Modern historians have disagreed about the status of women in Athens. According to Pomeroy, conflicting scholarly opinions about Athenian wives have included all of the following **EXCEPT**:
 - They were respected and enjoyed freedom
 - They were despised and kept hidden
 - ☒ They were proud and shared between neighbors
 - They were secluded but revered in the home
- In the play *Eumenides*, Orestes is tormented by the Furies for killing a parent (his mother, **Myraemestra**). All of the following beings oppose the Furies' torment of Orestes **EXCEPT**:
 - Orestes, because he was ordered to kill her, and because his mother was "twice afflicted with pollution" for killing a husband and father
 - Apollo, because "the mother ... is not the parent, but the nurse of the newly sown embryo"
 - Athena, because she had no mother and "in all things, except for marriage, wholeheartedly I am for the male and entirely on the father's side"
 - ☒ Bacchus, because Orestes was "filled with the sweet wealth of wine" at the time of the murder
- Athenian religious cults in which women played an important role included all of the following **EXCEPT**:
 - the festival of the Spargan Yenas
 - the cult of the Olympian goddess Athena
 - the mysteries of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis
 - the exclusively female celebration of the Thesmophoria
- Education for propertied women in Athens normally consisted of
 - tutoring in art and music by the father's patron
 - ☒ instruction in domestic arts by the older women of the household
 - physical education with the soldiers
 - training in rhetoric by the city actors

Extra Credit

EC: Which story from Herodotus in today's reading did you find most interesting or surprising?

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Questions from the Responses

- What exactly was Plutarch trying to contrast against other contemporary Greek women?
- How much of the Spartan mother's apparent indifference was for show? Did they truly prefer that their sons die than return dishonorably, or did they grieve in private in some way?
- When their sons choose to run away from battle, what happens to the women? What happens when their son was first in line and dies without trying to fight first?

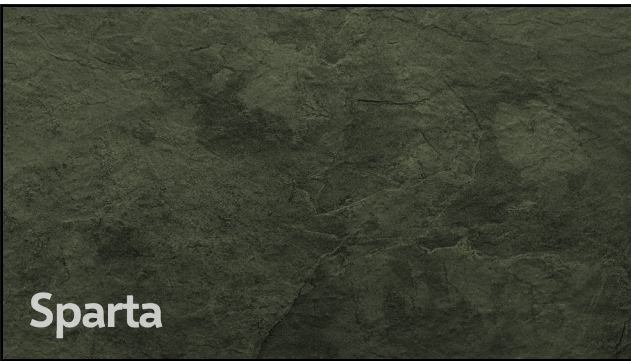
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Questions about whatever

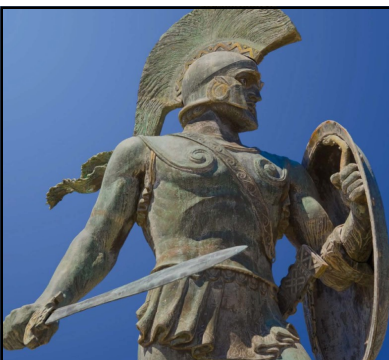


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Sparta



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Sparta as a "warrior society"

- Spartan men solely devoted to war
- Lack of direct evidence about Sparta

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Spartan social hierarchy

- *homoioi* "men of equal status," peers
Spartan citizen/warrior elite
- *periokoi* "dwellers nearby"
Laconians who were free, but disenfranchised
- *helots* heilotes, "prisoners of war"
State-owned serfs

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Agogē

- Begin training from age 7
- Bond with older boy who guides through training
- Eat at mess with the men
- Rituals to toughen and train

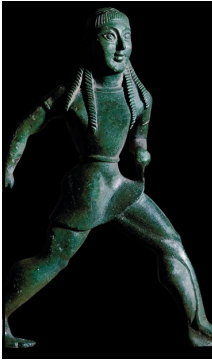
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Spartan women

- Property management
- Housework and clothes-making were performed by lower classes
- Physical fitness and training
- Infanticide

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Women and property in Sparta

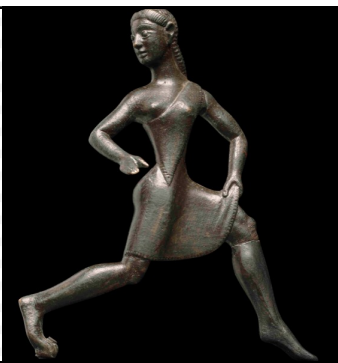
- Women controlled their dowries and inheritances
- By the 4th century two-fifths of Spartan land and property was controlled by women
- Originally austere
- Later Spartan women displayed their wealth
 - Clothing
 - Purchases like racehorses
 - Jewelry and cosmetics
 - Resistance to archaic austerity

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Primary Source Reading

Plutarch
Sayings of Spartan Women

- Enforcement of Spartan expectations from birth to age 7
- Spartan patriotism begins with the matron



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How "good" do Spartan women have it?

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Courtship and marriage in Sparta

- Spartan warriors were held to be equal = no arranged marriage for status
- Focus on compatibility and the ability to produce children
- Weddings were often secret
 - Unproductive marriages quietly annulled
 - Young men and women in a dark room)
 - Groom carrying the bride away in secret
- Bride with male clothing, hair cut short
 - Possibly a transition from homosexual relations in the barracks

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Adultery and children

- Women could bear children of men other than their husbands
- Helots' children could not be citizens
- Adultery was not as strictly proscribed as elsewhere

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Classical Athens

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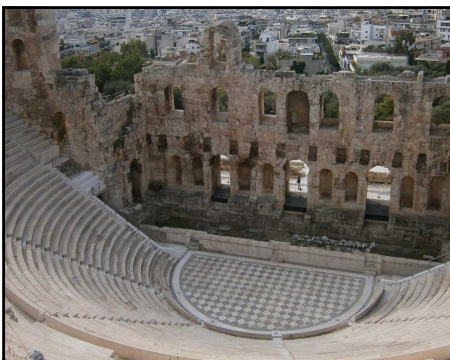
The Polis

- City-state
- Synoecism
- Replacement of basileus with magistrates
- Council of "elders" (aristoi)
- Citizen assembly (demos)

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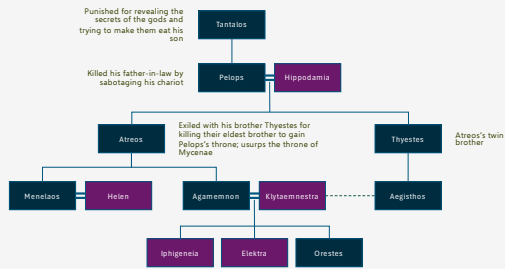


Athenian theater

- Extension of epic poetry and performative rituals
- Community interaction
- Promotion of creative expression

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The cursed house of Atreos



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Primary Source Reading

Aeschylus
from Eumenides



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The Furies

- Furies as primitive, inflexible goddesses
- Must punish Orestes for matricide regardless of circumstances

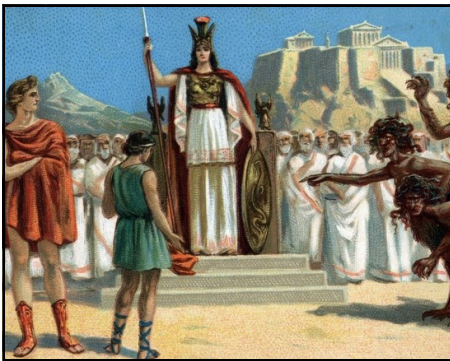
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Athena

- Master of wisdom and reason, is more evolved
- True justice must be decided according to both principles and the case at hand
- Athena creates the jury: justice should be in the hands of the citizen community, not the gods

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The loophole

- Apollo argues that the mother is not the "parent"
- Athena uses herself as an example
- Truth or stratagem?

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Athenian democracy

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Athenian Democracy

- Citizen Assembly
 - Quorum of 6,000
 - Legislation, election, decrees, trials
- Council of 500
 - Prepares measures for the Assembly
 - Executes will of Assembly (administration)
 - Chosen by lot
- Archons
 - Chosen by lot
- Military magistrates
 - Elected by Assembly

ekklesia

boule

archontes

strategoi

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How might democracy have affected gender expectations in Athens?

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Effects of democracy

- Advantages and drawbacks
- Faction
- Demagoguery
- "Tyranny of the majority"
- Ostracism

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Secondary Source Reading

Sarah B. Pomeroy

"Women's Identity and the Family in the Classical Polis"

- Tangible and concrete ideas of women in Athenian society
- Visibility of women in funerals
 - Public funerals by men
 - Reinforce public/private divide
 - Private rituals and gatherings in the hands of women and are about female society
- In this society a much sharper divide between public & private
 - Also manifested in literature as we'll see next time



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Why do the Athenians value female seclusion?

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Athenian female seclusion

- Women have a place of isolation within the home
- Women should not be left alone with men who are not members of their own family

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Secondary Source Reading

Susan Walker

"Women and Housing in Classical Greece: The Archaeological Evidence"

- Seclusion only partially supported by archaeology
- Held to be an ideal rather than something occurs without fail or exception
- Why is this something the Athenians focus on?
- Must set aside assumptions and look at the evidence



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Woman in Herodotos

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Historiography and ancient Athens

- Early Greeks melded history, legend, and myth
- Athenians develop history as a form of philosophy

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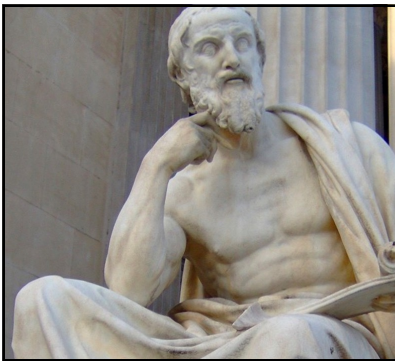
Secondary Source Reading

Marilyn A. Katz
 "Ideology and the 'Status of Women' in Ancient Greece"

- History has focused on the deeds of men
 - Women's studies as a reaction to that - disinterring the unheard female voice
 - Does it mean anything to talk about the status of women divorced from
 - On the way to which address relate to binary and
 - On the way to which address relate to binary and
- More useful approach might be to talk about history of gender
- Talk about historical situations in terms of the relationships between and within genders



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The art of history

- Using stories of the past to make assertions about human identities
- Authenticity of evidence strengthens the case being made

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Primary Source Reading

Herodotus
 from The Histories

- The Amazons: gender expectations are culturally conditioned
- Artemisia of Halicarnassus: Wise and successful Persian admiral
 - "My men have become women, and my women men"
- Gorgo of Sparta: Discovered wax tablet trick
- Candaules of Sardis: Exposes wife to Gyges
 - She recruits him to kill Candaules
- The brooches of Athens: Used to slay sole survivor of disastrous battle



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Secondary Source Reading

Carolyn Dewald

"Women and Culture in Herodotus's Histories"

- Herodotus is one of the fathers of history
 - Narrating the Persian wars
 - Sociological – motivations of cultures – how things are done
 - What customs say about human experience
- For Herodotus, the central story of humanity is human connection
 - Bonds between individuals
 - Parity of the marital bond
 - Similar to ideas discussed in Homer



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