

Lecture 6: Families and Households

Demography

- Life expectancy relevant to a discussion of the Roman family
- Funerary inscriptions are primary source of information
- Refer to table on this slide
- ^ So many children died at birth or young that it would bring it down, so they starting counting the ones that made it to age 10 because it meant they were more likely to reach adulthood

Roman Families

- Roman society was patriarchal
- Lineage was traced through the fathers family
- Middle name in Roman nomenclature was family name
- Eg., Gaius Julius Caesar, Marcus Tullius Cicero
- If you become a plebian you had to change your name (if you could)

Paterfamilias

- Head of Roman family known as the paterfamilias (father of the family; head of the household)
- Oldest living male
- They controlled everything – like wealth
- Refer to slide for the quote (“Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2.26–27”)

Osteria dell’Osa

- Early Iron Age cemetery near Rome may shed light on origins of paterfamilias
- Like Rome, associated with Latial culture of Italy (Latin speaking culture)
- Cemetery comprises clusters of burials (family groups?)
- At centre of cluster tends to be wealthier burial of a male
- Refer to picture on slide
- Central male burial typically an inhumation
- Surrounded by cremation burials (immediate family members?)

Marriage

- Expected that all Roman citizens would get married
- Remarriage could also occur after divorce or death of a spouse
- Divorce was permitted → under certain circumstances (adultery etc.)
- Certain restrictions in place:
 - Citizens could only marry citizens
 - Slaves could not marry each other or citizens ... unless they were eventually freed (could not marry a citizen however)
 - Social standing often relevant
 - If you were a senator, you could only marry another senator or into a senator's family
- Traditional age at marriage difficult to determine
- Women likely married younger than men (12–16 years old?)

Sabine Women

- Apparently no women when Rome was first created
- Romulus stole women, as people wanted wives and families to continue to have Rome ... took them from the Sabines
- It was the women that stopped the war, saying they wanted to stay in Rome with their Roman husbands and Roman families, when the Sabine men attacked to get back their wives, sisters, daughters etc.
→ refer to picture (painting)

Children

- Children were expected from a family
- Possible for young male child to be paterfamilias
- If parents to be separated, the children would most likely stay with the paterfamilias (the father)
- Even though the mother/sister would be making the decisions for her son/brother who is too young to make decisions, it would still be him to get the recognition for their decisions even if he was 6

Ancestors

- Roman families placed great emphasis on revering their ancestors
- Busts and portraits would be common sights in a house
- Would often talk about them, and tell stories

Gendered Space

- Some debate centers around possible segregation of rooms in ancient houses along gender lines
- Were women confined to certain parts of a house? ... said to be confined to the second floor of a house etc
- Topic better studied in Greek world, but results are relevant to Roman civilization
- At Olynthus, attempt made to divide groups of rooms and artifact types based on associated gender (red= andron [men]; blue = kitchen [women]) ... refer to a house layout on the slide
- A lot of different functions for spaces, depends on the time and what it was used for, therefore not gender specific (courtyard – male may have business meeting, children and women may use it later, or have family dinners there)

Family or Rome?

- Brutus, founder of the Republic, condemned his sons to death for conspiring to return the king to Rome
- Titus Manlius Torquatus (Consul, 347 BC)
- Executed his son after he stepped away from his post during a battle to attack several of the enemy, then stepped back
- Adherence to Roman law more important than family ties (at least during early Republic)

Augustus

- Among Augustus' many reforms were programs aimed at strengthening the family
- Saw many problems with Roman family
- Lack of respect for marriage: too many bachelors, adultery prevalent; many families were childless

- Legislation: punishments for unmarried man and women, or for couples with no children (ages 25–60 for men, 25–50 for women)
- Some punishments: bachelors were forbidden to receive inheritances, adulterers could be banished from Rome, have their estate confiscated