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# The Nuptial Ceremony of Ancient Greece and the Articulation of Male Control Through Ritual

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# The Nuptial Ceremony of Ancient Greece and the Articulation of Male Control Through Ritual

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Classics  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
The Betrothal and Dowry	8
The Participants	14
Chronology	20
Proaulia	22
Gamos	27
Epaulia	52
Metaphors for Marriage	56
Conclusion	61
List of Figures	63
Glossary	67
Bibliography	70
Ancient Sources	75

## INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship has provoked a renewed dialogue concerning the status of women in Classical Athens. This work is a part of this dialogue, and attempts to explore the rituals of the nuptial ceremony for the purpose of defining the status of women in Classical Athens. The wedding ceremony was the pivotal coming-of-age rite for young women, and thus provides ample opportunity to assess societal ideals for women in Classical Athens. Furthermore, these ideals and metaphors for womanhood in Classical Athens give us insight into why men found it necessary to control their lives. Using this ritual articulation of the status of women, we are able to explore more fully both how and why the lives of women were restricted by men.

My first task within the scope of this work is to produce a sound reconstruction of the Athenian wedding ceremony. While some aspects of the wedding ritual are well-defined and understood, other aspects are not; additionally, ancient evidence from literature and art and archaeology does not always agree. As a consequence, it is difficult for modern scholarship to produce a completely sound reconstruction or interpretation of the wedding ceremony. Despite these challenges, John Oakley and Rebecca Sinos have created an excellent restoration of the wedding ceremony in their work *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*. Although still useful for our understanding of the wedding ceremony, it fails to account for recent scholarship, and ignores a great deal of literary evidence. In many ways, this work is reflection and magnification of their own, and is written with the intent to expand upon their collection of vase-painting and literary evidence.

My second task within this work is to interpret the wedding ceremony. The seemingly arbitrary rituals of the Athenian wedding ceremony were actually filled with

meaning for the community of Athens. In fact, each element of the Athenian wedding ceremony is symbolic of the masculine control exercised over females in Classical Athens. As Ellen Reeder writes, in her article “Women and Men in Classical Greece,” “To transcend her innate nature was the goal every woman was supposed to strive for with the help of learned behavior, such as modest dress and downcast eyes, and such institutions as marriage.”<sup>1</sup> The institution of marriage had many functions in Athenian society, but perhaps the most important was to maintain control over proper Athenian women and their reproductive abilities. It is my hope that through this examination of the Athenian nuptial ritual, and the system of male control which it embodies and propagates, we will be better able to understand the circumstances of women living in Classical Athens, and in so doing society as a whole.

Of our two types of ancient evidence for the Athenian nuptial ceremony, vase-paintings by far contain the most useful and interesting evidence. Andrew J. Clark, Maya Elston, and Mary Louise Hart in their work, Understanding Greek Vases: A Guide to Terms, Styles, and Techniques, name six types of vases which were associated with weddings in some way: *alabastra*, *exaleiptra*, *lebetes gamikoi*, *lekythoi*, *loutrophoroi*, and *pyxides*.<sup>2</sup> An account of the uses associated with these vessels can be found in the glossary at the end of this work, but all are used in the home by women. In addition, the *exaleiptron*, *lebes gamikos*, *lekythos*, and *loutrophoros* are further associated with funerary ritual. These vessels are often found on vase-painting depictions of weddings, and their presence can help identify a ritual situation.

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen D. Reeder, “Women and Men in Classical Greece,” in Pandora: Women in Classical Greece, ed. Ellen D. Reeder (Baltimore, Maryland: Walters Art Gallery, 1995), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew J. Clark, Maya Elston, and Mary Louise Hart, Understanding Greek Vases: A Guide to Terms, Styles, and Techniques (Los Angeles, California: Getty Publications, 2002), 111.

These same vases were often decorated with depictions of wedding rituals. A selection of images from Athenian vase-paintings can be found after the main text and is referred to throughout this work. Vases painted with wedding themes are ubiquitous in the archaeological record. The three wedding scenes most often depicted on Athenian vases are the bridal bath, the adornment of the bride, and the wedding procession. The first extant depiction of a wedding scene on a Athenian vase is from the seventh century BCE, and these scenes begin occurring even more frequently in the middle of the fifth century BCE in Athens.<sup>3</sup> These depictions would have sold well and served as an appropriate purchase for at least two occasions: a wedding or the funeral of a young, unmarried woman. Additionally, interpretations of wedding scenes have led scholars to venture that vase-paintings of wedding scenes may have been given only to the bride.<sup>4</sup> If this is true, then depictions of the wedding on vase-paintings may prove to be an excellent source of information on how women understood their identities and perceived their ideals. The vase in Figures 1-4 may have been given, along with the vase in Figures 5-6, to the bride as a pair of wedding presents.<sup>5</sup> Figures 1-4 depict the wedding procession in the fairly typical black-figure style, which will be explored in more detail later. Figures 5-6 depict women in various stages of making cloth. The function of both of these vases would have been to remind the young woman of her new role and duties within the household,<sup>6</sup> and to validate her identity as a wife. When interpreting vase-paintings we must not only ask ourselves what the vase-painting is meant to depict, but also how the audience was meant to read it.

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<sup>3</sup> Brian A. Sparkes, *The Red and the Black: Studies in Greek Pottery*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 21.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen D. Reeder, ed., *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece* (Baltimore, Maryland: Walters Art Gallery, 1995), 128.

<sup>5</sup> Sparkes, *The Red*, 74.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 74

Of course there are several precautionary statements which must be made prior to using vase-paintings as evidence for the Athenian ritual of marriage. It is important to remember that vase-paintings are not necessarily true reflections of daily life in Classical Athens. Additionally, several stages of the wedding ceremony are often crammed into one scene or blended into a completely different non-wedding scene. Vases which depict two or three separate rituals occurring all at once must be corroborated with the literary evidence if we are to make sense of them. Despite these difficulties, a study of the Athenian marriage ritual would be incomplete if divorced from the vase-painting evidence and it is with these caveats in mind that we may move forward.

In addition to evidence from vase-paintings, I have utilized the works of numerous ancient Greek authors. In particular, the works of Athenian playwrights and the legal arguments of orators have proven to be the most useful. Of course, any use of ancient sources written in an ancient language requires close examination. A large number of Greek words, carrying connotations which our translation does not convey, cannot be translated accurately into one English word. For instance, the ancient Greek word for marriage is *gamos*, but this word can also refer to abduction. The verbal equivalent of *gamos* was *gamein*, a word which represented actions of the groom but also could refer to a purely sexual relationship rather than to be legally married.<sup>7</sup> In addition to these problems, certain words such as *anakalypterion* could refer to just one aspect of the entire ritual, in this case the unveiling, or to the entire wedding ritual.<sup>8</sup> These multiple meanings and nuances can make it difficult to determine the true meaning of an

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<sup>7</sup> John H. Oakley and Rebecca H. Sinos, The Wedding in Ancient Athens (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Sissa, Virginity, 99.

ancient author's usage. At the same time these shades of meaning help us to interpret the ways in which the Greeks viewed their own nuptial traditions.

Before we undertake this task of examination and interpretation, we must first define ritual and its use in human culture. A ritual, as defined by Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz in her book Wedding as Text, is the repetitive use of symbols intended to express important cultural and community ideas.<sup>9</sup> Symbols are intended to stand in for a greater idea, although the connection may not be obvious or natural.<sup>10</sup> As a result of this, a high level of understanding is required between ritual participants and the audience. Accordingly, if both the participants and audience interpret the symbolism of the ritual in the same way, they exist in a community with a shared identity; thus ritual allows a community to validate their shared status as members of the same group.<sup>11</sup> Ada Cohen in her article "Portrayals of Abduction in Greek Art: Rape or Metaphor?" states that "certainly, gestures and actions [...] hold symbolic meaning and serve to legitimize social attitudes and hierarchies for which the ritual order can act as a powerful weapon."<sup>12</sup> In this way, rituals not only broadcast ideas about the shared culture, but also legitimize them.

Rituals are often used to express life transitions and the participants usually exist for some set amount of time in a liminal state. The concept of a transitional ritual is readily applied to the Athenian nuptial ceremony. The most important aspect of the Athenian wedding was the ritual process of the *parthenos* becoming a *nymphé*, a

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<sup>9</sup> Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, Wedding as Text: Communicating Cultural Identities Through Ritual (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 87.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>12</sup> Ada Cohen, "Portrayals of Abduction in Greek Art: Rape or Metaphor?" in Sexuality in Ancient Art, ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 131-132.



progression which ultimately provided momentum toward becoming a *gyne*. As we shall see, it was this evolution of the bride which formed the foundation of the wedding ceremony. The wedding ceremony represented the alteration of a woman's life, as she would be moving from her father's house to her new husband's home and would become sexually active for the first time in her life. This concept is demonstrated many times throughout the nuptial ceremony.

Beginning with the betrothal ceremony and an analysis of the dowry, we shall move forward into the day before the wedding ceremony, the *proaulia*. The *proaulia* was the day for sacrifices and dedications, and it led directly into the day of the wedding, the *gamos*. The *gamos* consisted of many rituals: feasting and singing, the wedding procession, the *katachysmata* and *anakalypterion* ceremonies, and the consummation of the marriage. The following day, the *epaulia*, was a day for more feasting and for the giving of gifts. Each of these days will be reconstructed in their entirety, and will be accompanied by an interpretation of the rituals as they reflect the status of women in Classical Athens. Separate sections devoted to the role of the participants, metaphors for marriage, and the timing of Greek nuptial ceremonies will be included to enhance our understanding of marriage, and of womanhood, in ancient Greece.

## BETROTHAL AND DOWRY

The first step toward the wedding ceremony was a separate ritual in its own right, the betrothal. Marriages were often arranged for political reasons, and two wealthy and powerful families would share a very strong and influential bond once joined by the marriage of a daughter and a son. In Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis, Clytemnestra asks her husband if he has scrutinized the economic status and pedigree of the groom, saying:

τούνομα μὲν οὖν παιδ' οἶδ' ὅτω κατήνεσας, γένους δὲ ποίου χῶποθεν  
μαθεῖν θέλω<sup>13</sup>

'Tell me of the groom: His name I know, but tell me of his race'

(Euripides, Iphigenia at Aulis, 694-695).<sup>14</sup>

That these were important deciding factors indicates to us that marriage arrangements were heavily influenced by wealth and prestige. Some scholars believe that marriage among the Athenian upper classes was highly endogamic, and that this provided a way for a father to keep his wealth in his own family while still marrying off his daughter.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes a family with few political ties and little wealth would have great difficulty in betrothing a daughter, in which case they may turn to a matchmaker for assistance.<sup>16</sup>

The betrothal ritual was a relatively informal ceremony performed by the legal guardian of the prospective bride and the groom or his legal guardian.<sup>17</sup> The Greek word for this betrothal ritual was *engye*, a word refers to something being placed in the hand

<sup>13</sup> David Kovacs, Iphigenia at Aulis (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 238.

<sup>14</sup> F.M. Stawell, trans, "Iphigenia in Aulis," in The Complete Greek Drama, Volume Two, ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938), 306.

<sup>15</sup> George Pilitsis, The Dramas of Euripides: A Study in the Institution of Marriage and a Reconstruction of Marriage Customs in Fifth Century B.C. Athens (New Brunswick, New Jersey, May 1981), 85.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>17</sup> Sue Blundell, Women in Ancient Greece (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 122.

and perhaps confirms that a handshake between men often sealed the betrothal agreement.<sup>18</sup> This idea is reflected in Herodotus, who, in discussing the marriage of Croesus' son, writes:

ἔχοντος δέ οἱ ἐν χερσὶ τοῦ παιδὸς τὸν γάμον

‘Having the marriage of the child in hand’

(Herodotus, Histories I, 35).<sup>19</sup>

The handshake was accompanied by a fairly formulaic saying:

ταύτην γνησίων παίδων ἐπ' ἀρότῳ σοι δίδωμι

‘I offer her to thee to wife, to get thee lawful children’

(Menander, Perikeiromene, 894-895).<sup>20</sup>

A number of vase-paintings depict the betrothal agreement in addition to various other wedding scenes. The vase-painting shown in Figures 7-8 is an excellent example of this. It depicts a bearded man on the left shaking hands in agreement with a youthful man on the right. A faded wreath hangs between them; wreaths were often signs of a ritual situation.<sup>21</sup> While Oakley and Sinos interpret this particular scene as the moment of betrothal, other scholars do not. In particular, Robert F. Sutton, Jr. finds it more problematic. In his article “On the Classical Athenian Wedding: Two Red-figure Loutrophoroi in Boston,” he allows that this might be a depiction of the *engye*, but believes that the dress of the two men suggests they are mythological figures and that this

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<sup>18</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Amy L. Barbour, ed., Selections from Herodotus (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 60.

<sup>20</sup> Francis G. Allinson, trans., Menander: The Principal Fragments (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964), 278-279. Also see Herodotus 6.130.

<sup>21</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 7.

vase-painting is meant to signify friendship between men.<sup>22</sup> As we shall see, vase-paintings of human weddings often take on a mythological character as a way of uplifting the status of the bride and groom. This seems an obvious depiction of the *engye* when one considers that the surrounding figures are very obviously involved in a marriage ceremony.

A girl had no legal power in the arrangement of her marriage, and the formalities which sealed her fate occurred in her absence. In fact, the *engye* could have taken place quite a few years before the marriage, even while the bride was very young and had not yet reached menarche.<sup>23</sup> This disregard for the bride's consent in her own betrothal is indicative of a very important facet of womanhood in Classical Athens: male guardianship. Women in Athens were always maintained under the protection of a *kyrios*, first their father, then their husband, then their sons. In the absence of all of these figures, a woman would remain under the control of a close male relative. Plato outlines who has the right to betroth a girl if her father is dead, and it is clear that the bride herself should never be allowed control over this very important decision (Plato, Laws VI, 774). Indeed a girl who gave herself in marriage without the authority of her legal guardian was truly no more than a concubine.<sup>24</sup> This reduction in status of a woman who has taken control of her own life makes it clear the Athenian society viewed women as incapable of regulating their own lives.

This *engye* ceremony would typically have been accompanied by the transfer of a dowry from the girl's legal guardian to her future husband. The dowry was usually

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<sup>22</sup> Robert F. Sutton, Jr., "On the Classical Athenian Wedding: Two Red-figure Loutrophoroi in Boston," in Daidalikon: Studies in Memory of Raymond V. Schoder, S.J., ed. Robert F. Sutton, Jr., (Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1989), 347.

<sup>23</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant, Myth and Society in Ancient Greece (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 57.

composed of a combination of things: land, money and goods, including slaves and servants (c.f. the Old Servant in Iphigenia in Aulis as part of Clytemnestra's dowry).

While a *kyrios* was not legally obliged to provide a dowry for the bride, the dowry was an important way to display the affluence of an Athenian family and certainly an impressive dowry would raise the status of a wealthy family.<sup>25</sup> Oakley and Sinos refer to the dowry as “the last part of [the legal guardian's] responsibility for his daughter's support.”<sup>26</sup> It does seem that if a father died before giving away his daughter in marriage, his sons were legally obliged to provide a dowry worth one-tenth of their father's whole assets for any sisters.<sup>27</sup> It also would not be unheard of for a wealthy relative to donate a dowry to a less-prosperous female member of his extended family; and it seems that the government provided dowries for the very poorest class of citizens.<sup>28</sup>

The betrothal and subsequent dowry were integral aspects of a lawful marriage. The dowry was often cited in legal arguments to provide evidence for an official marriage and to confirm the legitimacy of children. In Isaeus' oration On the Estate of Pyrrhus, he attempts to define a legitimate heir to inherit an estate, and states:

ἦν τινά ποτε προϊκά φησιν ἐπιδούς ἐκξοῦναι τὴν ἀδελφὴν ὁ μεμαρτυρηκῶς  
τῶ τὸν τριτάλαντον οἶκον κεκτημένῳ...

‘He has deposed that he married his sister to a man who possessed a fortune of three talents; what dowry does he allege that he gave with her?’

(Isaeus, On the Estate of Pyrrhus 8).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Blundell, Women, 115.

<sup>26</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Pilitsis, Drama of Euripides, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 81-82.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Seymour Forster, trans., Isaeus (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 81.

Plato suggests that a large dowry upsets the balance of power (that of husband over wife) in a marriage and recommends setting a limit of fifty drachmae on the dowry.

This, he says, will be the result:

ὑβρις δὲ ἦττον γυναιξὶ καὶ δουλεία ταπεινὴ καὶ ανελεύθερος διὰ χρήματα τοῖς γήμασι γίγνοιτ' ἄν.

‘less insolence on the part of the wives and less humiliation and servility on the part of the husband because of money.’

(Plato, Laws VI 774 C).<sup>30</sup>

Plato’s observation seems to state that the dowry was a source of power for a woman within her own *oikos*. Indeed, the full dowry must be returned in the event of divorce and surely this should prevent verbal and physical abuse by the husband. Yet a woman’s dowry, although held in her name, was not her own; the men in her life had control over it. If a woman’s husband died, her dowry was passed on to her sons. If a woman died before producing heirs for her husband, the dowry was returned to her father. If divorce occurred the dowry would be returned to her father. Furthermore, the father of the bride could initiate divorce proceedings if the need arose and reclaim his daughter’s dowry, whether or not his daughter desired a divorce.<sup>31</sup> Demosthenes’ oration Against Aphobus makes it clear that the dowry was the property of men:

μὴ γήμαντος δ’ αὐτοῦ τὴν μητέρα τὴν ἐμήν, ὁ μὲν νόμος κελεύει τὴν προῖκ’ ὀφείλιν ἐπ’ ἐννέ’ ὀβολοῖς

‘But in the event of his not marrying my mother the law declares that he owes me the amount of the dowry with interest at nine obols a month’

<sup>30</sup> R. G. Bury, trans., Laws, Volume I, Books I-VI (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 466-467.

<sup>31</sup> Blundell, Women, 116.

(Demosthenes, Against Aphobus I 17).<sup>32</sup>

In fact, if a father died leaving no male heirs, his daughter was termed an *epikleros*, and would be forced to marry a male relative of her father, even if she was already wedded to another man. This ensured that male heirs of the father's line would inherit his wealth. Sue Blundell, in her book Women in Ancient Greece, writes that a woman's status, even after she has been married, remains "liminal" as her dowry will retain the connection to her father's house.<sup>33</sup> In this way the dowry merely symbolized the prosperity of the bride's natal family, it did not afford her any sort of economic independence.

The betrothal ceremony, the *engye*, was an agreement made between men for their own purposes. Although we have no way of ascertaining to what extent a young girl's wishes were taken into account in this agreement, it is her father's consent, not hers, which makes the marriage a legally binding contract. Furthermore, although the dowry is held in the woman's name, it is never truly hers to control. Indeed it often seems its only function is to validate legal marriages, that is, marriages agreed upon by men. Even at the inception of the wedding ceremony the bride has no power in deciding her fate.

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<sup>32</sup> A. T. Murray, trans., Private Orations XXVII-XL (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 19.

<sup>33</sup> Blundell, Women, 118.

## THE PARTICIPANTS

At the time of their wedding, the groom would likely be twice as old as the bride and the two would be in very different stages of their lives. Plato states that it is a man's duty to marry and procreate, and in fact recommends imposing a fine on any man who remains unmarried after the age of thirty-five (Plato, Laws VI, 774).<sup>34</sup> Girls in Classical Athens were probably married off between fourteen and eighteen, although literary evidence seems to favor the earlier age.<sup>35</sup> In Demosthenes' oration Against Aphobus, he states that Demophon would marry his sister at the age of fifteen and thus receive a dowry of two talents (Against Aphobus III 43).<sup>36</sup> Plato states that girls should be married between the ages of sixteen and twenty (Laws, Book VI 785).<sup>37</sup> Unlike the groom, the bride would typically have been sexually inexperienced, and her virginity would have been of great importance. Sections from Xenophon's Oeconomicus confirm this, and note the wide-ranging innocence which a young bride would bring to her marriage.

Ἄλλὰ καὶ τοῦτο, ἔφην, ἔγωγε, ὦ Ἰσχύμαχε, πάνυ ἂν ἡδέως σου πυθοίμην, πότερα αὐτὸς σὺ ἐπαίδευσας τὴν γυναῖκα, ὥστε εἶναι οἷαν δεῖ, ἢ ἐπισταμένην ἔλαβες παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῆς μητρὸς διοικεῖν τὰ προσήκοντα αὐτῇ. Καὶ τί ἂν, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐπισταμένην αὐτὴν παρέλαβον, ἢ ἔτη μὲν οὐπω πεντεκαίδεκα γεγονυῖα ἦλθε πρὸς ἐμέ, τὸν δ' ἔμπροσθεν χρόνον ἔζη ὑπὸ πολλῆς ἐπιμελείας, ὅπως ὡς ἐλάχιστα μὲν ὄψοιτο, ἐλάχιστα δὲ ἀκούσοιτο, ἐλάχιστα δ' ἐρποίῃ ;<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Bury, Laws, 465.

<sup>35</sup> Blundell, Women, 119.

<sup>36</sup> Murray, Private Orations, 111.

<sup>37</sup> Bury, Laws, 501.

<sup>38</sup> E.C. Marchant, Memorabilia and Oeconomicus, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953), 414.



“It would please me very much Isomaches,” I said, “if I might also inquire about this – whether you yourself educated your wife to be the way she ought to be, or whether, when you took her from her mother and father, she already knew how to manage the things that are appropriate to her.”

“How, Socrates,” he said, “could she have known anything when I took her, since she came to me when she was not yet fifteen, and had lived previously under diligent supervision in order that she might see and hear as little as possible and ask the fewest possible questions?”

(Xenophon, Oeconomicus VII, 4-5).<sup>39</sup>

While the ancient sources seem to be in agreement with each other concerning the age of the bride, vase-paintings tend to depict the girl as older and more mature. It seems likely that in this case our ancient literary sources are correct, and that vase-painters found it necessary to depict the bride as older than she actually was if only to highlight her sexual maturity and fertility. Likewise, images of the groom on vase-paintings do not seem to support the idea that the groom was in his thirties or older; he often looks nearly the same age as his youthful bride! This is likely because of the Greek tendency to idealize human depictions, and a younger, more virile groom would augment the romantic feel of a wedding scene.<sup>40</sup>

While certainly the wedding ceremony was an important event in the life of the groom, it did not represent the rite of passage into adulthood as it did for the bride. The bride’s dedication of a lock of hair which occurred on the day before the wedding

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<sup>39</sup> Carnes Lord, trans., Oeconomicus (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), 29.

<sup>40</sup> Sutton, “Loutrophoroi,” 344.

ceremony had already been performed by the groom many years ago when he became an adult himself.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, in a discussion concerning the virginity of the bride, Oakley and Sinos note that the groom was “past this stage”<sup>42</sup> and we may assume that the virginity of the groom was not an issue. Raising a young woman was often likened to breaking in a young horse, and the marriage ceremony was seen as the final step in the process of taming a young woman.<sup>43</sup> It is notable that the identity of the bride, as *parthenos*, *nymphe*, or *gyne*, is irrevocably connected to her marital status. Sue Blundell in her article “Marriage and the Maiden: Narratives on the Parthenon” states that “just as warfare was seen as the determining activity of the young male, so marriage was regarded as the female’s ultimate and definitive destination.”<sup>44</sup> A man becomes a man on his own, but a girl becomes a woman only through her relationship with her husband.

So why were girls married off so young? This practice was not simply for convenience, but also to ensure the safety of the young woman, by aiding her quick promotion from the dangerous status of *parthenos* to the settled *nymphe*. We have noted the three conditions defined by the ancient Greeks for a sexually mature woman: *parthenos*, *nymphe*, and *gyne*. Of these, the unmarried *parthenos* was seen as the most dangerous because her body was not sexually controlled by a man and she was prone to act irrationally.<sup>45</sup> Hippocratic treatises find that *parthenoi* are vulnerable to hallucinations because the uterus has not been “opened” by marital intercourse. A woman could only be physically healthy if she were having relatively frequent sexual

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<sup>41</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Helen King, “Bound to Bleed: Artemis and Greek Women,” in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 111.

<sup>44</sup> Sue Blundell, “Marriage and the Maiden: Narratives on the Parthenon,” in *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*, ed. Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 49.

<sup>45</sup> Isabella Clark, “The Gamos of Hera: Myth and Ritual,” in *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*, ed. Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 14.

intercourse and giving birth to children. Hippocratic writers over and over again prescribe sexual intercourse and pregnancy as a cure-all for many illnesses of women. This would make early marriage the healthiest and safest route for a young *parthenos*.

The *parthenos* was also the most active and able of women, and many mythical female *parthenoi* like Cyrene, Atlanta, and Antigone were adventurous and brave.<sup>46</sup> However, the lives of these adventurous mythical female figures often end in tragedy. Blundell notes that these stories may have served as cautionary tales for the young woman; clearly the untamed *parthenos* can only fall into the hands of trouble should she remain outside the sexual and societal control of a husband.<sup>47</sup> *Parthenoi* were under the continuing protection of Artemis until the time of their marriage, and this may provide an explanation for the way in which they were perceived by others, wild and free like their protector goddess.

It is clear that the fathers of the bride and groom played an important role in arranging and financing the marriage, but the mothers played their own important role in the wedding ceremony. Both the mother-of-the-bride and the mother-of-the-groom had a special part in lighting and carrying the torches for the chariot procession. The bride may also have been conveyed to the sacrifices and to her future husband by her own mother.<sup>48</sup> It was the responsibility of the groom's mother not only to greet the couple as they approached their new home after the chariot procession, but also to decorate the bridal chamber in preparation for the consummation of the marriage.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Athenian vases

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<sup>46</sup> Mary R. Lefkowitz, "The Last Hours of the Parthenos," in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. Ellen D. Reeder (Baltimore, MD: Walters Art Gallery, 1995), 32.

<sup>47</sup> Blundell, *Women*, 101.

<sup>48</sup> Pilitsis, *Drama of Euripides*, 112.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

often show the mother of the groom waiting at the door to receive her new daughter-in-law. In Euripides' The Phoenissae, Jocasta laments her son's fate in this way:

ἔγω δ' οὔτε πυρὸς ἀνήψα φῶς νόμιμον ἐν γάμοις [ὡς πρέπει] ματέρι  
μακαρία<sup>50</sup>

'Twas no hand of mine that lit for thee the marriage-torch, as custom ordains and  
as a happy mother ought'

(Euripides, Phoenissae 344-346).<sup>51</sup>

More evidence for the importance of the mother's role is found in the words of Clytemnestra in Iphigenia in Aulis:

λιπούσα παῖδα; τίς δ' ανασχήσει φλόγα;

'Leaving my girl? Who then shall raise the torch?'

(Euripides, Iphigenia at Aulis 732).<sup>52</sup>

All of the mother's roles in the wedding are evident in Euripide's Medea, when Medea enumerates the motherly duties which she will never perform for her ill-fated children:

πρὶν σφῶν ὀνάσθαι κάπιδεῖν εὐδαίμονας, πρὶν λέκτρα καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ  
γαμηλίους εὐνάς ἀγῆλαι λαμπάδας τ' ανασχεθεῖν.<sup>53</sup>

'lived to see you happy, or ever I have graced your marriage couch, your bride,  
your bridal bower, or lifted high the wedding torch,'

(Euripides, Medea 1025-1027).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Craik, trans., Phoenician Women (England: Aris & Phillips, 1988), 80.

<sup>51</sup> E. P. Coleridge, trans., "The Phoenissae." in The Complete Greek Drama, Volume Two, ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., (New York: Random House, 1938), 178.

<sup>52</sup> Kovacs, Iphigenia, 244-245.

<sup>53</sup> Denys L. Page, ed., Medea (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), ?.

<sup>54</sup> E. P. Coleridge, trans., "Medea," in The Complete Greek Drama, Volume One, ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938), 748.

Several scholars have pointed out that a girl who became married at the age of fourteen, could, conceivably, find herself giving her own child away in marriage at as young as twenty-nine. Eva Keuls in her book The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens writes that we should look to the myth of Demeter and Persephone to understand the role of the mother in the wedding ceremony, and believes that the bond between mother and daughter would have been strong.<sup>55</sup> The high level of involvement of the mothers in the wedding ceremony perhaps indicates that this wedding ceremony represented the fulfillment of a mother's vocation, and was thus significant to more than just the married couple. If the ultimate purpose of marriage was to raise legitimate children and continue the family line, then a child's marriage would be yet another step in that process.

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<sup>55</sup> Eva C. Keuls, The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 112.

## CHRONOLOGY

The Athenian wedding was a sequence of events spanning three days, the day before the wedding (*proaulia*), the day of the wedding (*gamos*), and the day after the wedding (*epaulia*). These words *proaulia* and *epaulia* come from the Greek verb *aulizesthai* which means “to pass the night.”<sup>56</sup> Although the three-day celebration may have been preferred, there certainly would have been variations.

The most popular month for a wedding was called *gamelion* and is roughly equivalent to January in our modern calendar.<sup>57</sup> The name itself contains an obvious reference to the Greek word *gamos*. *Gamelion* was the month in which the *hieros gamos* was celebrated, and this likely influenced its popularity for wedding ceremonies. The *hieros gamos* festival was a festival of marriage meant to celebrate the marriage of Zeus and Hera. Isabelle Clark in her article “The gamos of Hera: myth and ritual” records a section of one of Menander’s comedies which suggests that the *hieros gamos* was celebrated by staying in with the family, and that the festival served as a universal anniversary date for Greek couples.<sup>58</sup> This communal celebration of wedding anniversaries would not have emphasized the importance of marriage to individual couples, but would have signified the importance of marriage to society. Marriage was not an institution focused on the benefits of the couple, but rather an institution designed to contribute to the greater good of society, regardless of the couples’ experience.

While we know that weddings were likely to occur during this time, it is unknown exactly when betrothals occurred. It seems that the time allowed to pass between the *engye* and the actual wedding varies greatly. We know that in some cases years would

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<sup>56</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 10.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 10,

<sup>58</sup> Clark, “Gamos,” 19-20.

have passed to allow the girl to become sexually mature, but in Menanders' Dyscolus the wedding ritual seems to be scheduled immediately following the betrothal.

τὴν νύκτα [ταύτην ἐνθάδ' ἐστιώμενος] πάντες μεν[οῦμεν· αὔριον δὲ το]ῦς  
γάμους ποήσομεν<sup>59</sup>

'We'll stay here all night together and celebrate the wedding tomorrow'

(Menander, Dyscolus 849-850).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Warren E. Black, trans., Dyscolus (New York: The American Philological Association, 1966), 99.

<sup>60</sup> L.A. Post, trans., "Dyscolus," in The Complete Greek Drama, Volume Two, ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938), 1241.

## PROAULIA

The day before the wedding was a day of preparation. This stage of the wedding, the *proaulia*, involved a number of activities: sacrifices, dedications, baths, and the *pais amphitales* tradition. In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the typical pre-wedding excitement is recorded in the words of a messenger:

ἀλλὰ' εἶα, τὰπὶ τοισίδ' ἐξάρχου κανᾶ, στεφανοῦσθε κρᾶτα, καὶ σύ,  
 Μενέλεως ἄναξ, ὑμέναιον εὐτρέπιζε, καὶ κατὰ στέγας λωτὸς βοάσθω καὶ  
 ποδῶν ἔστω κτύπος· φῶς γὰρ τόδ' ἦκει μακάριον τῇ παρθένω  
 'But come now, in view of these things prepare the basket, garland your heads,  
 and you lord Menelaus, get ready the Hymen song! Let the pipe sound in the tents  
 and let there be the sound of dancing feet! This day is a blessed one for the girl'  
 (Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 435-439).<sup>61</sup>

Before the nuptial ceremony could take place, sacrifices would be made on behalf of the bride and groom to propitiate the gods. These particular sacrifices before a wedding were called *proteleia* and would have occurred outside of the local temple.<sup>62</sup> Artemis, Aphrodite, Hera, Athena, local deities, and ancestral deities all receive wedding sacrifices, although certainly different areas of Greece maintained different traditions in this respect. Although we are not certain exactly who performed the sacrifices, the sacrifices made by the father of the bride may have been the most significant. Richard Seaford states that “the normal role of the *proteleia* appears to have been to give to the deity the life of an animal as a substitute for the life of the bride.”<sup>63</sup> A wedding was a

<sup>61</sup> Kovacs, *Iphigenia*, 210-211.

<sup>62</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 11.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Seaford, “The Tragic Wedding,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 107 (1987): 108.



dangerous time for both the bride and groom, as rituals often are in world cultures, and these sacrifices likely acted as a form of protection against misfortune.

Art from Classical Athens has no shortage of scenes of sacrifice, and often the difficulty is in distinguishing between *proteleia* and other types of sacrifices. Oakley and Sinos only identify one vase-painting as a depiction of a wedding sacrifice. Figure 9 shows an obscure fragment of a *krater* by the Talos Painter. The characters around the altar are identified as Theseus and Perithous, and the two women standing to the side are Leda and Helen. The youthful Perithous carries a bowl and a basket, both items which would be used during sacrifices.<sup>64</sup> The Erotes, and Helen's fine dress and *stephane*, suggest that this is a *proaulia* sacrifice.<sup>65</sup>

The Athenian bride was often likened to an animal being led to slaughter. Athenian dramas are particularly fond of this metaphor and it is impossible to forget the myth of Iphigenia, who, at once believing herself to be a bride, was led to slaughter by her own father. Avagianou agrees, stating that the wedding ritual is linked very closely to a sacred ritual of sacrifice, and that the bride herself would here be the "sacrificial victim."<sup>66</sup> The healthy menstrual flow of a woman was often compared to the blood which pours from a sacrificial animal. Additionally, the word *amnion* in Greek, from which our word "amniotic fluid" is derived, could refer to a bowl used to catch the blood of a sacrificial animal.<sup>67</sup>

Although many sacrifices were given on behalf of the bride and groom, only the bride performed dedications. The dedications given to Artemis on the eve of a girl's

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<sup>64</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 12.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>66</sup> Avagianou, *Sacred Marriage*, 16.

<sup>67</sup> Keuls, *Phallus*, 131.

marriage had two purposes: the first, to recognize the protection of Artemis which had been enjoyed by the bride throughout her girlhood, the second, to ensure Artemis' continuing protection during later childbirth.<sup>68</sup> Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, in his book Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece, posits that these offerings of childhood toys and garments made to Artemis would leave the bride "metaphorically naked" and prepared to take the next step into womanhood.<sup>69</sup> Oakley and Sinos note that the offerings were probably meant to ask for Artemis' permission to leave her sphere of protection.<sup>70</sup> As the story of Callisto illustrates, leaving the protection of Artemis without her permission is dangerous.<sup>71</sup>

The bride often dedicated a lock of hair, or "some other symbol of past or future status."<sup>72</sup> In particular, the bride's virginal girdle, or *zone*, a garment charged with sexual energy, was dedicated to Artemis. Figure 10 depicts this particular dedication. The bride on the right unties her girdle, and Artemis, identified on the left with her bow, waits to accept it. Other objects dedicated to Artemis may have been old toys or childhood clothing. Athena and Hera often received a lock of hair from the young bride, and in some places, for example Megara and Delos, brides would make dedications to local heroine virgins who had died before their own weddings.<sup>73</sup>

The bride's dedication of her childhood toys and playthings to Artemis seems an obvious reference to the end of her childhood and beginning of adulthood. Yet Eva

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<sup>68</sup> Susan Guettel Cole, "Domesticating Artemis," in The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece, ed. Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 34.

<sup>69</sup> Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones. Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2003), 219.

<sup>70</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 12.

<sup>71</sup> Callisto, a nymph and follower of Artemis who had sworn to keep her virginity, was raped by Zeus and then turned into a bear by Artemis as punishment.

<sup>72</sup> Clark, "Gamos," 15.

<sup>73</sup> Matthew Dillon, Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion (New York, New York: Routledge, 2002), 215.

Keuls likens the situation of the married Athenian woman to that of a perpetual child. Evidence of this may be found in Figure 11, a cup which depicts a seemingly fully-grown woman passing the time by playing with some sort of top. Like young children of either sex, a married woman remains at home and does not participate in public life like her husband. A married woman does not attend school, and Keuls quotes several ancient authors who note that allowing a woman to receive an education disrupts the flow of the household.<sup>74</sup> In a legal sense, the bride did remain a child her whole life, under the protection of a *kyrios* as we have seen earlier. Aristotle writes:

καὶ πᾶσιν ἐνυπάρχει μὲν τὰ μόρια τῆς ψυχῆς, ἀλλ' ἐνυπάρχει  
 διαφερόντως· ὁ μὲν γὰρ δούλος ὅλως οὐκ ἔχει τὸ βουλευτικόν, τὸ δὲ θῆλυ  
 ἔχει μὲν, ἀλλ' ἄκυρον, ὁ δὲ παῖς ἔχει μὲν, ἀλλ' ἀτελής

‘And all possess the various parts of the soul, but possess them in different ways ;  
 for the slave has not got the deliberative part at all, and the female has it, but  
 without full authority, while the child has it, but in an undeveloped form’

(Aristotle, The Politics I 1260a 11-14).<sup>75</sup>

Although she may be a wedded wife and mother, she would never be a full citizen, and this in its own way could be defined as a child-like existence.

Scholars agree that often a *pais amphitales*, a male child with two living parents, would sleep with the bride in the groom’s house on the night before her wedding.<sup>76</sup> The ritual was intended to ensure the fertility of the bride. Indeed on many painted vases there are depictions of brides holding small children, likely an allusion to this ritual.

Figure 12 depicts the involvement of the *pais amphialtes* in the wedding preparations.

<sup>74</sup> Keuls, Phallus, 104.

<sup>75</sup> H. Rackham, trans., The Politics (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1932), 62-63.

<sup>76</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 37.

The bride, seated in the center, hands a small boy-child to the attendant standing before her. The wreath on the wall, the *loutrophoros*, the attendant with the bridal veil, and the young servant bringing jewelry or cosmetic boxes identify this as a wedding scene.

Although this tradition formed a very small, and certainly fairly private aspect of the wedding ceremony, it demonstrates the true purpose of a lawful marriage, to produce legitimate heirs. Just as we have seen in the ritual betrothal agreement, the married woman's first priority would be to give her husband male children to inherit his wealth and *oikos*.

## GAMOS

The bride's ritual bath took place on the morning of the wedding ceremony itself.<sup>77</sup> The bathing ritual was a pivotal coming-of-age rite for the young bride. Indeed, if a girl died before being married, she would undergo this ritual of bathing after her death. The *loutrophoros* was used in this ritual ceremony to carry water. Vase-paintings seem to suggest that the groom did not bathe or that his bath was less important than the bride's. Water from a specific source had to be used for this particular bathing ceremony, perhaps because the ritual baths were meant to enhance the fertility of the couple.<sup>78</sup> It is also likely that the bath was meant to protect the bride as she underwent the transformation from *parthenos* to *nymphe*.<sup>79</sup>

Figure 13 depicts the procession fetching the water for the bridal bath. The scene wraps around the vase, but the most prominent characters are the young girl carrying the *loutrophoros* filled with bathwater and the bride following behind her. The bride is identified because of her modestly bowed face, the presence of Eros, and the ritual wreath.<sup>80</sup> Figure 14 is a red-figure *pyxis* which, according to Oakley and Sinos, depicts the bride's actual bath. The bathing bride and her ever-present assistant, Eros, consume only a small portion of the scene, the rest of which is concerned with the various preparations for the adornment of the bride.<sup>81</sup>

After the ritual bathing, the bride would be dressed in the most expensive clothing possible. The adornment of the bride is frequently depicted on vase-paintings, and indicates that it must have been of great importance in Athenian culture. It was an

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<sup>77</sup> Avagianou, *Sacred Marriage*, 6.

<sup>78</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 15.

<sup>79</sup> Pilitsis, *Dramas of Euripides*, 106.

<sup>80</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 15-16.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

occasion of many emotions, an anticipation of the wedding and the lost childhood of the bride. It must have taken some amount of skill to dress the bride; indeed the family often hired a professional assistant, called the *nymphokomos*, to dress the bride.<sup>82</sup> The elements of the bridal outfit seem to have been fairly standard.

ἑώνητο δὲ τῇ κόρῃ τὰ πρὸς τὸν γάμον· περιδέραιον μὲν λίθων ποικίλων·  
 ἐσθῆτα δὲ τὸ πᾶν μὲν πορφυρᾶν, ἔνθα δὲ ταῖς ἄλλαις ἐσθῆσιν ἡ χώρα τῆς  
 πορφυρᾶς, ἐκεῖ χρυσὸς ἦν

‘All the bridal ornaments had been bought for the maiden: she had a necklace of various precious stones and a dress of which the whole ground was purple; where, on ordinary dresses there would be braidings of purple, on this they were of gold’ (Achilles Tatius, The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon II, 11.2).<sup>83</sup>

The bride would have worn a crown, called a *stephane*. The material used for this *stephane* must have varied. Vase-paintings almost always depict a *stephane* of metal, but ancient authors claim that the *stephane* could also be made of asparagus or other sorts of greenery such as myrtle, poppy, thyme, and flowers. This conflict is likely due to changing tastes across the Greek world, both geographically, and chronologically. Plutarch describes the crowns of Boetian brides as made from asparagus, and gives this reason for its use:

ἐκείνη τε γὰρ ἥδιστον ἐκ τραχυτάτης ἀκάνθης καρπὸν ἀναδίδωσιν, ἥ τε  
 νύμφη τῶ μὴ φυγόντι μηδὲ δυσχεράναντι τὴν πρώτην χαλεπότητα καὶ  
 ἀηδῖαν αὐτῆς ἡμερον καὶ γλυκεῖαν παρέξει συμβίωσιν

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>83</sup> S. Gaselee, trans., The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1917), 74-75.

‘For this plant yields the finest flavoured fruit from the roughest thorns, and so the bride will provide for him who does not run away or feel annoyed at her first display of peevishness and unpleasantness a docile and sweet life together’ (Plutarch, Moralia 138 D).<sup>84</sup>

Figure 15 shows a bridal adornment scene. Here, we see the *nymphokomos* holding the bride on her lap and placing a metal *stephane* on her hair. Eros flutters above, and seems about to place a wreath on her head in addition to the *stephane*. This is not necessarily evidence that the bride wore both the wreath and the *stephane* as part of her attire. It seems likely that the actions of Eros are significant only for the identification of this as a bridal adornment scene, and not a reflection of reality.

Perhaps the most significant component of the bridal attire was the wedding veil. Every bride wore a veil, to be lifted at the appropriate time. This wedding veil would have been different from the daily veil, richly decorated and highly symbolic.<sup>85</sup> The veil was dyed with saffron likely because of the association with the menstrual cycle, as saffron was used to cure “menstrual ills.”<sup>86</sup> Llewellyn-Jones catalogues the many types of veils extant in Classical Athens, but is unable to describe the appearance of the wedding veil exactly. The veil is understood by most scholars to represent the liminal state of the bride and that it would have facilitated her temporary separation from society. In many cultures, the liminal state is thought to be a dangerous one; therefore, the veil could exist in order to protect the bride from the guests, or vice versa.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Frank Cole Babbitt, trans., Moralia (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 300-301.

<sup>85</sup> Llewellyn-Jones, Aphrodite’s Tortoise, 220.

<sup>86</sup> Reeder, Pandora, 127.

<sup>87</sup> Llewellyn-Jones, Aphrodite’s Tortoise, 244.

The bride also wore the *zone*, the girdle mentioned previously as part of the dedications to Artemis. Blundell, in her article “Clutching at Clothes,” states that the *zone* would have been a very potent symbol of femininity and that the consummation of the marriage was often alluded to in literature by stating that the groom loosened the *zone* of his bride.<sup>88</sup> Young women are often depicted in the process of tying their *zone* on vase-painting, and the connotations of this gesture would have been clear to all Athenian viewers.<sup>89</sup> Figure 16 shows a red-figure *loutrophoros* which likely depicts the later wedding procession. The bride here is easily identified by her *stephane*, and her husband grasps her hand. Her *zone* is very well-defined in the folds of her dress, and appears to be decorated with baubles at its ends. The highlighted girdle, the fruit in the bride’s hand, and the gaze between the bride and groom are interpreted by Sutton as a highly sexualized scene, suggestive of the consummation which will occur shortly.<sup>90</sup>

How are we to explain the importance of the adornment of the bride? Judith Lynn Sebesta, in her article “Visions of Gleaming Textiles and a Clay Core: Textiles, Greek Women, and Pandora,” describes it as thus: “Dressed in saffron-dyed veil and purple-dyed gown (both exceedingly expensive dyes), crowned with a diadem fashioned like a chaplet of leaves, and adorned with earrings, necklace, and bracelets, she was commodified as an object of desire, as a pleasing gift, part of the dowry that the father gave to promote his own prestige and to bestow prestige on her husband.”<sup>91</sup> Llewellyn-Jones agrees and states that the bride’s role as “a silent passive object of male control [...]

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<sup>88</sup> Sue Blundell, “Clutching at Clothes,” in *Women’s Dress in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2002), 156.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>90</sup> Robert F. Sutton, Jr., “Pornography and Persuasion on Attic Pottery,” in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. Amy Richlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 26.

<sup>91</sup> Judith Lynn Sebesta, “Visions of Gleaming Textiles and a Clay Core: Textiles, Greek Women, and Pandora,” in *Women’s Dress in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2002), 135.



was emphasized by placing her beneath the confines of the wedding veil.”<sup>92</sup> An alternate interpretation is that the bride’s attire may have been her most active form of communication between herself and the audience. This whole dress was a way for her to express her value to her husband and the new household, both economically and reproductively. The bride and her adornment were charged with culturally significant sexual power; although brides were depicted clothed often it is possible to discern the outline of a nipple and other sexual visuals.<sup>93</sup> In addition, her highlighted sexuality carried connotations of her future reproductive role which would be beneficial to both her new *oikos* and her own personal status within it.

The groom would also wear special clothing to signify his role. His *himation* would have been of the highest quality available.<sup>94</sup> In Euripides’ *Alcestis*, the character Admetus compares his current sorrow to his joyful wedding day and states:

ἄνδρ' ὑμεναίων γόος ἀντίπαλος λευκῶν τε πέπλων μέλανες στολμοὶ  
πέμπουσί μ' ἔσω λέκτρων κοίτας ἐς ἐρήμους<sup>95</sup>

‘Today, in place of marriage-songs are lamentations; instead of white garments I am clad in mourning, to return to my house and a solitary bed’

(Euripides, *Alcestis* 915).<sup>96</sup>

This suggests that white was the preferred color for the groom’s garment, if only because it carried connotations of happiness and joy. Vase-paintings, although not the best source of information concerning color, seem to corroborate this idea. Like the bride, the groom

<sup>92</sup> Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite’s Tortoise*, 220.

<sup>93</sup> Sebesta, “Gleaming Textiles,” 129.

<sup>94</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 16.

<sup>95</sup> A.M. Dale, ed., *Alcestis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), ?.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Aldington, trans., “Alcestis,” in *The Complete Greek Drama, Volume One*, ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O’Neill, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938), 708.

would have worn perfume, most likely myrrh.<sup>97</sup> While he would not wear a *stephane*, his head would be covered with a garland of sesame or some other plant signifying fertility.<sup>98</sup>

Reeder records that the bride and groom both wore myrtle wreaths on their heads, and quotes Oakley's statement that these wreaths, normally associated with the Panathenaic games and heroes, would have added a mythological quality to the wedding.<sup>99</sup>

Mythological connections are seen throughout the wedding, and will be discussed in more detail later.

Of course the homes of both the bride and groom would have been decorated for this auspicious occasion. Although the iconographic evidence for it is practically nonexistent, we believe that branches and wreaths were the main form of decoration.<sup>100</sup> Vase-paintings often portray hanging wreaths and fabrics in the background, meant to indicate that a ritual or ceremony was taking place. The groom's house was additionally decorated with wool, also used when a baby girl was born into the family.<sup>101</sup> The bridal chamber, or *thalamos* would have been decorated with fabrics of the saffron color and a bed canopy called the *pastos* would have been used.<sup>102</sup> Pollux (3.43) writes that often a second bed was present in the chamber so that the new couple may sleep separately if need be.<sup>103</sup>

A feast full of wine, food, dancing, song, and a general party atmosphere signified the beginning of the wedding ceremony. The feast could be held at either family's home,

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<sup>97</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 16.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>99</sup> Reeder, Pandora, 127.

<sup>100</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 21.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>102</sup> Llewellyn-Jones, Aphrodite's Tortoise, 236.

<sup>103</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 35.

or even in a sanctuary or shrine.<sup>104</sup> Many foods would have been served, including sesame cake, the staple wedding fare. Guests would have been separated by sex for both the feasting and the dancing.<sup>105</sup> A statement made in Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis seems to confirm this. Clytemnestra asks her husband:

ἡμεῖς δὲ θοίνην ποῦ γυσαίξῃ θήσομεν;

‘And we women, where hold we our banquet?’

(Euripides, Iphigenia in Aulis 723-724).<sup>106</sup>

Even the bride and the groom would sit with their own families as eating together in public was still forbidden despite their impending marriage.<sup>107</sup>

It seems that the guests at a wedding had a role in ensuring the couple's future happiness and procreative success. Plato, in his discussion of laws and social regulations, states that anyone who is found guilty of infidelity should not be allowed to attend marriage ceremonies (Plato, Laws VI 784).<sup>108</sup> We cannot confirm the inspiration behind this: whether this is because the cheating party would be considered bad luck at the wedding ceremony, or if this is simply a form of punishment meant to prevent guilty men and women from attending important public events. The *pais amphitales* would attend the feast wearing acorns and oak branches and chanting “I have fled the bad, I have found the better” throughout the feast.<sup>109</sup> Reeder notes that this phrase associates the wedding ceremony, transition from unmarried to married status, with the transition from an agricultural to non-agricultural society, that of civilization.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>106</sup> Stawell, Iphigenia, 308.

<sup>107</sup> Pilitsis, Dramas of Euripides, 116.

<sup>108</sup> Bury, Laws, 499.

<sup>109</sup> Pilitsis, Dramas of Euripides, 118.

<sup>110</sup> Reeder, Pandora, 127.

The songs sung at the wedding were called *hymen hymenaios*, and must have been distinctive and easily recognizable.

αὐτὰρ θεῖος ἀοιδὸς ἔχων φόρμιγγα λίγειαν ἡμῖν ἡγείσθω φιλοπαίγμονος  
 ὀρχηθμοῖο, ὥς κέν τις φαίη γάμον ἔμμεναι ἐκτὸς ἀκούων, ἢ ἄν' ὁδὸν  
 στείχων, ἢ οἱ περιναιετάουσι·

‘But let the divine minstrel with his clear-toned lyre in hand be our leader in the merry dance, that any man who hears the sound from without, whether a passerby or one of those who dwell around, may say that it is a wedding feast’

(Homer, The Odyssey XXIII 133-136).<sup>111</sup>

Unfortunately, modern scholars have great difficulty in reconstructing the words and sounds of the *hymen hymenaios*. Rebecca Hague, in her article “Ancient Greek Wedding Songs: The Tradition of Praise,” states that different variations of the wedding song were sung throughout the ritual and reflect the different stages of the ceremony.<sup>112</sup> Each wedding song was similar, and was based on singing *eikons* which auspiciously compared the bride and groom to a divine being or idea.<sup>113</sup> For instance, often the beauty of the bride would be compared to Helen or Aphrodite, and the valor of the groom compared to Achilles or Ares.<sup>114</sup> The wedding participants were also often compared to plants and fruit, such as a cypress tree or an apple.<sup>115</sup> This would be an apt comparison to invoke fertility, as scenes from literature involving sexual intercourse often took place in

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<sup>111</sup> A.T. Murray, trans., The Odyssey, Books 13-24 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 394-395.

<sup>112</sup> Rebecca H. Hague, “Ancient Greek Wedding Songs: The Tradition of Praise,” Journal of Folklore Research 20 (1983): 132.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 135.

a meadow or field, as with Zeus and Hera in The Iliad.<sup>116</sup> Although scholars are unable to identify the words to true wedding songs, many extant works of ancient authors seem to imitate the wedding song in their form. Perhaps the most famous is Theocritus' idyll for Helen's bridal procession. Furthermore, many fragments of Sappho's poetry seem to have been based on the wedding songs.

Τίω σ', ὦ φίλε γάμβρε, κάλως εἰκάσδω;

ὄρπακι βραδίνω σε κάλιστ' εἰκάσδω.

'Dear Bridegroom, in what likeness were it well

Thy praise in song to tell?

To the fresh tender sapling of a tree

I best may liken thee.'

(Sappho, Fragment 125)<sup>117</sup>

Hague believes that Odysseus' speech to Nausicaa in The Odyssey is meant to reflect the wedding songs, although the words have been changed by Odysseus so as to put Nausicaa's mind at rest in regards to his intentions.<sup>118</sup>

γουνουμαί σε, ἄνασσα · θεός νύ τις, ἢ βροτός ἐσσι; εἰ μὲν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοῖ

οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν, Ἄρτεμιδί σε ἐγὼ γε, Διὸς κούρη μέγαλοιο, εἶδός

τε μέγεθός τε φυῆν τ' ἄγχιστα εἶσκω

'I clasp your knees, my queen – are you a goddess, or are you mortal? If you are a

goddess, one of those who hold broad heaven, to Artemis, the daughter of great

Zeus, I liken you most nearly in looks and in stature and in form'

(Homer, The Odyssey VI, 149-152).<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 135-136. See also Song of Songs.

<sup>117</sup> C.R. Haines, Sappho: The Poems and Fragments (London: Routledge, 1926), 155.

<sup>118</sup> Hague, "Wedding Songs," 137.

So with songs of praise, the feasting gave way to the next step in the Athenian ritual of marriage, the wedding procession. The wedding procession is most often referred to by modern scholars as the “chariot procession.” Robert Sutton, in his article “Pornography and Persuasion on Attic Pottery,” notes that it is likely that a chariot was not used at all, but rather a “rustic cart” and that depictions of this procession shown with a chariot were meant to add to the epic feel of the vase-painting.<sup>120</sup> In fact, many red-figure depictions of the wedding procession completely lack the “chariot,” and instead depict the bride and groom on foot. Because the term “chariot procession” is perhaps misleading, I will refer to this aspect of the ritual simply as the wedding procession.

The wedding procession was one of the most popular wedding scenes to depict on vase-paintings, suggesting that this was the most distinctive aspect of the entire ritual. The procession would have indeed been important, likely because it would have been viewed or heard by many members of the community and would have been a familiar sight and sound to all citizens of Classical Athens. Homer uses the wedding procession in his description of civilized society on Achilles’ shield.

ἐν τῇ μὲν ρά γάμοι τ’ ἔσαν εἰλαπίνας τε, νύμφας δ’ ἐκ θαλάμων δαΐδων  
 ὑπο λαμπομενάων ἠγίεον ἀνὰ ἄστῃ, πολὺς δ’ ὑμέναιος ὀρώρει. κούροι δ’  
 ὀρχηστῆρες ἐδίνεον, ἐν δ’ ἄρα τοῖσιν αὐλοὶ φόρμιγγές τε βοὴν ἔχον· αἱ δὲ  
 γυναῖκες ἰστάμεναι θαύμασον ἐπὶ προθύροισιν ἐκάστη

‘In the one there were marriages and feasting, and by the light of the blazing torches they were leading the brides from their bowers through the city, and loud rose the bridal song. And young men were whirling in dance, and in their midst

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<sup>119</sup> A.T. Murray, trans., *The Odyssey, Books 1-12* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 230-231.

<sup>120</sup> Sutton, “Pornography,” 26.

flutes and lyres sounded continually; and there the women stood each before her door and marveled'

(Homer, The Iliad XVIII, 491-496).<sup>121</sup>

Homer's use of the wedding procession in a passage meant to contrast peaceful civilization with warring anarchy emphasizes its importance both as the defining aspect of a wedding and as a marker of a healthy society. The wedding procession is also described vaguely by Euripides' Alcestis by the character Admetus.

τότε μὲν πεύκαις σὺν Πηλιάσιν σὺν θ' ὕμεναίοις ἔστειχον ἔσω, φιλίας  
ἀλόχου χέρα βαστάζων, πολυάχητος δ' εἶπετο κῶμος, τήν τε θανοῦσαν  
κάμ' ὀλβίζων, ὡς εὐπατρίδαι καὶ ἀπ' ἀμφοτέρων ὄντες ἀρίστων σύζυγες  
εἶμεν.

'One, of old, I entered my house with marriage-songs and the torches of Pelion, holding a loved woman by the hand, followed by a merry crowd shouting good wishes to her who is dead and to me, because we had joined our lives, being both noble and born of noble lines'

(Euripides, Alcestis 910-914).<sup>123</sup>

The procession would have been rather raucous and would have included all the guests at the wedding feast; there would have been singing and shouting and music, and torches were heaved high in the air. Oakley and Sinos posit that both the noise and the torch-fires during this procession were meant to ward off the evil spirits and to protect the

<sup>121</sup> A.T. Murray, trans., The Iliad, Vol II, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1934), 324-325.

<sup>122</sup> Dale, Alcestis, ?.

<sup>123</sup> Aldington, "Alcestis," 708.

bride and groom.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, the wedding procession represented the most dangerous stage for the bride, the liminal state between her childhood home and her new home as a wife. The torches also served a secondary purpose in providing light for the procession, which likely took place after dark. Some sources record that objects such as quinces and violets were thrown at the bride and groom, probably to augment their fertility.<sup>125</sup> The chariot procession can be likened to the triumphant chariot procession of a hero or athlete, and could be interpreted as the feminine version of this ritual.<sup>126</sup> Often the bride carried a symbol of her willingness to contribute to the household, possibly a pan for cooking or a sieve.<sup>127</sup>

The wedding procession was frequently depicted on both black-figure and red-figure vase-paintings, and these two styles exhibit several differences in iconography. Black-figure processions focus on the raucous mythological nature of the procession, while red-figure processions emphasize the experience of the bride and groom. Figure 17 shows a black-figure hydria depicting the wedding procession of an unidentified couple attended by various gods. Black-figure wedding processions of non-mythological weddings often included mythological figures, usually named or identified by an attribute. Much like the *hymen hymenaios*, the depiction of heroes and gods at a mortal couple's wedding was meant to raise the esteem of the bride and the groom.<sup>128</sup> In this painting, the eye is drawn first to the beautifully-rendered horses and then to the attendant gods. Although the couple stands taller than any of the other figures, their role is unimportant in

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<sup>124</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 27.

<sup>125</sup> Avagianou, *Sacred Marriage*, 12.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>127</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 27.

<sup>128</sup> John H. Oakley, "Nuptial Nuances: Wedding Images in Non-Wedding Scenes of Myth," in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. Ellen D. Reeder (Baltimore, MD: Walters Art Gallery, 1995), 63.



comparison to the guest-deities. In fact, it is difficult to pick out the wedded couple among the many dark figures surrounding them. It is the procession itself which is of greatest substance in this vase-painting. Likewise, Figure 18 includes a myriad of dark figures. Because they are named, we are able to identify Peleus and Thetis in the chariot and the gods and goddesses who surround them, but it is almost impossible to distinguish one figure from another. Additionally, Peleus and Thetis trail behind the rest of their entourage, almost as an afterthought.

Figure 19 is fairly typical of the red-figure depictions of wedding processions. The groom lifts his bride into the waiting chariot. While the bride and groom do not gaze at each other, every other figure stares intently at the action occurring; it is clearly of great import to those in attendance. Although the vase is fragmentary, we can easily identify both mothers holding torches on either side of the couple. The child standing behind the groom must be the *pais amphitales*. A joyful Eros crowns the bride with a wreath. Unlike the black-figure processions we have seen which avoid depicting emotions, the mood here is joyous, yet also apprehensive. Rather than simply painting a scene, this artist has created a mood.

Let us return to Figures 7-8, the red-figure *loutrophoros* dated to the early part of the fifth century BCE, which represents a fairly conventional Athenian wedding scene.<sup>129</sup> The groom gazes back at his bride in a serious manner. The bride is gorgeously dressed in a *chiton* and *himation*, but in addition to the *stephane* she also wears a veil decorated with stars. At least one of the figures standing by the door can easily be recognized as a mother, as she is raising her torches high. Behind the bride is her attendant, the *nymphokomosi*, and behind her stand wedding guests bearing gifts. Tiny Erotes circle

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<sup>129</sup> Sutton, "Loutrophoroi," 335.

about the bride's head. The Eros sitting at the door is a symbol of the act of lust about to take place between the bride and groom behind those doors.<sup>130</sup> Sutton posits that this vision of the bride surrounded by so many Erotes would have inspired her to accept her role as the sexually submissive wife of her citizen-husband.<sup>131</sup>

Figures 20-22 provide an interesting contrast to the previously mentioned red-figure vases. As on many vases, a partially-open door and altar represent the bride's new home, the destination of this procession. The bride wears the typical bridal dress, an exquisite *chiton* and *himation* and *stephane*, yet she is unveiled. The groom is seen approaching the door from the right; he holds a fillet in his hand and seems to prance with anticipation for what is to come. A child, undoubtedly the *pais amphitales*, is in the procession. The unseemly excitement of the groom and the absence of Eros are unusual in this kind of depiction. This is because this vase was painted by a Boiotian artist as an imitation of the very popular wedding procession iconography from Athens in the last part of the fifth century BCE.<sup>132</sup> While interesting for these strange characteristics, it also indicates the widespread appreciation for vase-paintings of wedding scenes and Attic iconography.

Examining in detail several black-figure and red-figure vase-paintings shows an intriguing contrast. While chariot processions full of guests and fanfare are oft-depicted on black-figure vases, processions on foot with very few guests were more popular for the later red-figure vases. The black-figure "chariot" processions emphasize the public aspect of this ritual, and connote the importance of marriage to Athenian society. These vases, much like those in Figures 1-4 and 5-6, would remind the new bride of her duties

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 343-344.

<sup>131</sup> Sutton, "Pornography," 27.

<sup>132</sup> Victoria Sabetai, "Marriage Boiotian Style," *Hesperia* 67, no. 3 (July-Sept. 1998): 328.

to society and her new husband. The walking scenes, wherein the groom grasps the bride's wrist and the two gaze at each other, are filled with emotion. A bride admiring this vase even weeks after her wedding day would be reminded of both the joy and apprehension she felt as her life changed forever. While these scenes technically represent the same ritual within the larger wedding ceremony, the focus is completely different. These changing approaches in vase-paintings may reflect shifting tastes in brides for whom these vases were bought. Perhaps the emotional aspect of the wedding procession was more and more appealing for the female population.

Despite the seemingly kinder and softer imagery associated with the red-figure wedding processions, the iconography of male control over the feminine is perhaps more evident in the red-figure vase-paintings. The image of the bride, being led by the groom who clutches her hand, is indicative of a woman's status in Classical Athens. The bride does not willfully lead the way toward her new home. Instead she is conveyed by both her new husband and the entire wedding party. As we have discussed, the adornment of the bride turns her into a symbol of her own family's wealth, and thus chattel which is transferred from one household to the other. She is once again objectified by her passive position within the wedding procession. Despite the gaze between husband and bride, and despite the new emphasis on the experience of the bride and groom, she remains a simple object en route from one *kyrios* to the next.

Upon her arrival in the groom's family home, the bride would be installed into the new family by means of several short rituals. The hearth of a home is the center of the *oikos*, and it is around the hearth which the new bride was led to signify her new status.<sup>133</sup> Avagianou describes the happy cries of the audience as the bride arrives at her new home

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<sup>133</sup> Blundell, Women, 32.

as “an expression of triumph” for leading the bride through the liminal stage, yet also “it calls to mind [the] imminent sacrifice” of her virginity at the hands of her new husband.<sup>134</sup> Often the bride would be given a ripe fruit to eat, and her receipt of this food was one more step integrating her into the household.<sup>135</sup> Sutton recognizes the connection between this ritual and the story of Persephone’s inability to break her ties with Hades after she had eaten the pomegranate offered to her.<sup>136</sup> Plutarch also records this ritual, although he understands a different effect of the fruit.

Ὁ Σόλων ἐκέλευε τὴν νύμφην τῷ νυμφίῳ συγκατακλίνεσθαι μήλου  
 κυδωνίου κατατραγοῦσαν, αἰνιπτόμενος ὡς ἔοικεν ὅτι δεῖ τὴν ἀπὸ  
 στόματος καὶ φωνῆς χάριν εὐάρμοστον εἶναι πρῶτον καὶ ἡδεῖαν  
 ‘Solon directed that the bride should nibble a quince before getting into bed,  
 intimating, presumably, that the delight from lips and speech should be  
 harmonious and pleasant at the outset’

(Plutarch, Moralia 138 D).<sup>137</sup>

Evidence for the offering of a fruit can be found in Figures 23-24 show a vase from the middle of the fifth century BCE in Athens. The procession to the couple’s new home is depicted in the usual way; the groom leads the bride by the wrist while the two gaze at each other. Two torch-bearing figures represent the mothers, and the altar in the center represents the hearth of the new home. The figure standing directly to the right of the altar, and a member of the groom’s household, holds a circular fruit up toward the new couple.

<sup>134</sup> Avagianou, Sacred Marriage, 12.

<sup>135</sup> Sabetai, “Boiotian,” 328.

<sup>136</sup> Sutton, “Loutrophoroi,” 357.

<sup>137</sup> Babbitt, Moralia, 300-301.

Another ritual of incorporation is recorded by ancient sources. Upon arrival in the groom's home and in front of the hearth both the bride and groom would be showered with the *katachysmata*, items symbolizing prosperity and fertility.<sup>138</sup> Oakley and Sinos name "dates, coins, dried fruits, figs, and nuts" as the elements of the *katachysmata*.<sup>139</sup> Ellen Reeder believes that the *katachysmata* occurred in front of guests who would have gathered up these dates, nuts, and figs in much the same way a modern piñata is used.<sup>140</sup>

φέρει νυν ἰοῦσ' εἴσω κομίσω καταχύσματα ὥσπερ νεωνήτοισιν ὀφθαλμοῖς  
ἐγώ

'Very well, I'll go inside and bring out sweetmeats to shower, as it were, on a newly-bought pair of eyes'

(Aristophanes, Wealth 768-769).<sup>141</sup>

The instance of *katachysmata*, and other rituals which will be discussed later, is illustrated on Figure 25, a fragment of a *loutrophoros*. Eros hovers next to a *loutrophoros*, both obvious signs of a wedding. A basket full of ovoid objects held out by an unidentified arm is about to be inverted on the groom's head. Evidence for the *katachysmata* ritual may also be found on some depictions of the wedding procession. On the vases in both Figures 20-22 and Figures 7-8 a guest carrying a plate full of fruits and nuts, undoubtedly for the *katachysmata*, walks in the wedding procession.

The *katachysmata* is meant to suggest the bride's future fertility and industrious contributions to the household. It is no surprise that so many aspects of the wedding ritual (the *katachysmata*, the *pais amphitales*, the pronouncement of the engagement)

<sup>138</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 34.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>140</sup> Reeder, Pandora, 170.

<sup>141</sup> Alan H. Sommerstein, trans., Wealth (England: Aris & Phillips, 2001), 100-101.

allude to the fertility of the bride. The purpose of marriage was to create legitimate heirs to inherit the father's estate, and thus the ability of the lawful wife to conceive was of utmost importance. In fact, the most common reason for divorce may have been infertility.<sup>142</sup> Infertility was a concern for many, and Hippocratic writers are famous for their strange cures for female infertility. Blundell records that fertility issues made up many of the requests in the sanctuary of Asclepius in Epidaurus.<sup>143</sup> Male infertility, it seems, was not a concern; the Athenians did not believe such a problem existed.

After the *katachysmata* came the ritual unveiling, the *anakalypterion*. Llewellyn-Jones writes that "the act of unveiling was, conceptually if not technically, the pivotal moment of the wedding."<sup>144</sup> The ceremony of unveiling was called the *anakalypterion*,<sup>145</sup> a word which carries a meaning of "disclosure." The timing of the *anakalypterion* is one of the most problematic issues within the Athenian wedding ritual. Evidence for this is vague, but the ancient writers Hesychius and Pherekydes, although a century apart, agree that the ritual unveiling and giving of gifts happened on the third day.<sup>146</sup> Modern scholars, taking their notes from Athenian drama and vase-paintings, continue to disagree on this issue. Some believe that the *anakalypterion* occurred before the wedding procession. Others believe it occurred upon the bride's arrival at the groom's home. Still others assert that it happened on the *epaulia*, the morning after the marriage had been consummated.

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<sup>142</sup> Blundell, Women, 127.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>144</sup> Llewellyn-Jones, Aphrodite's Tortoise, 228.

<sup>145</sup> We must be careful to acknowledge the difference between the *anakalypsis* gesture, used frequently in ancient art to depict a married woman, and the *anakalypterion*, the nuptial ritual of unveiling.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

Llewellyn-Jones has suggested that there were three unveilings, public and private, throughout the wedding ceremony rather than just the one.<sup>147</sup> The bride would first be unveiled at the initial wedding banquet in full view of the banquet guests and her husband.<sup>148</sup> She would then be covered again for the chariot procession to her new husband's home.<sup>149</sup> This re-veiling seems appropriate considering the believed protection offered by the veil and the dangerous liminal nature of the wedding procession. The bride would then remain veiled throughout the *katachysmata* ceremony and would not unveil again until she had been conducted into the bridal chamber by her new husband.<sup>150</sup> This final unveiling would be the first sexual intercourse between husband and wife when the bride is fully unveiled and penetrated by her husband.<sup>151</sup>

The issue of the *anakalypterion* is made even more complicated by the vase-painting evidence. Figure 25, discussed above, seems to depict the *katachysmata* and *anakalypterion* simultaneously. If we could interpret this as fact, we could state with confidence that the *anakalypterion* occurred upon the bride's arrival in her new home. Unfortunately, vase-painters tend to depict several separate rituals concurrently. In fact, in many of the vase-paintings thus far discussed the bride seems to be in the process of veiling or unveiling. If the *anakalypterion* was truly the most pivotal ritual within the wedding ceremony, its presence in a vase-painting would easily identify it as a wedding scene. Figure 26 depicts multiple aspects of the wedding ceremony, among them the *anakalypteria*. On the right of this drawing, the groom is evident leading his bride by

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 241.

clasping her wrist in the usual manner. The bride follows obediently, and Eros stands behind her, either adjusting her veil or removing it for the *anakalypterion* ceremony.

The practice of veiling in Classical Athens implies a system of separation between the sexes. Archaeologists and classicists have long believed that upper-class women of Classical Athens were confined to the *gynaikon*, the women's quarters. According to this theory, most of an upper-class woman's time would have been spent within the *gynaikon* and the walls of the house, unless she was out for a public festival, a wedding, or to fetch water. Although vase-paintings sometimes depict unrelated men and women interacting in public, literature makes it very clear that interactions between unmarried women and men were not tolerated. There may have even been a *gynakionomoi*, the women's police force, which ensured that proper women remained within their homes.<sup>152</sup>

Certain scholars believe that the veil is ideologically an extension of the *gynaikon*, serving to separate women from the male public sphere of society even when they are in a public space. While this analysis is based on the use of an everyday veil, it is an excellent interpretation of the bridal veil. Hidden behind her veil, the bride would be protected within the confines of purely feminine space in an appropriate manner. Additionally, the veil would serve to highlight her sexual purity, modesty and noble birth for the audience. It would also serve to protect the young woman on her dangerous journey through her liminal state from the guardianship of her father to the guardianship of her new husband.

Although the wedding procession and *anakalypterion* may have been the pivotal moments for the audience, the consummation of the marriage was the critical, although not necessarily private, phase for the couple. The vase in Figure 27 may depict the

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<sup>152</sup> Kuels, Phallus, 209.



moments before the consummation of the marriage. The bride, wearing her *stephane*, and the groom, with his wreath of myrtle, hold hands and gaze at each other. The furniture and decorations indicate that this scene takes place indoors. Oakley and Sinos interpret this vase-painting not as a narrative scene, but mood-setting situational scene meant to evoke feelings of happiness or excitement.<sup>153</sup> Perhaps it was a gift for a young bride, meant to induce a feeling of excitement and anticipation for her forthcoming sexual initiation.

While the act of consummation did occur behind closed doors, certain guests would keep vigil all night. A friend of the groom was stationed outside the doors to the bridal chamber to prevent interruptions and the attempted escape of either bride or groom. Guests of the wedding feast, likely female, would also stand outside the door and sing loudly, possibly through the entire night.<sup>154</sup> Avagianou also records the custom of *ktupia*, or knocking loudly on the door of the chamber to scare off demons, although she posits that this rite was probably just an excuse to make lewd jokes.<sup>155</sup>

The distaste which modern scholars feel for this consummation of an arranged marriage is obvious in their writings. The bride is often compared to a young animal being led to slaughter or some other sort of sacrificial victim. Oakley and Sinos suggest that the guard prevented the bride's friends from coming to her rescue should her cries of pain become too much to bear.<sup>156</sup> Words associated with rape and violence are frequently used in describing this part of the ceremony. It is difficult for modern scholars to set aside our own modern values for the sake of examining an ancient ritual. Nobody

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<sup>153</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 39.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>155</sup> Avagianou, Sacred Marriage, 14.

<sup>156</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 37.

can deny the strong emotions of both the bride and the groom that night. Yet we must remember that in Classical Athens a young woman of noble birth would spend her whole life expecting to be married in this way. Mothers, sisters, friends and daughters would all share this experience, and I believe that in our reconstruction of this particular aspect of the ritual, the pain and suffering of the young bride should not be overemphasized.

Athenian men found it necessary to control the sexuality of women in order to ensure the paternity of heirs. The virginity of a young bride was highly prized, as was the fidelity of a married woman. A young girl who had had premarital sex could be sold into slavery by her father. A wife who has had extramarital sex must be divorced. Although men in Classical Athens were limited to one legal wife, they were not subject to the same standards of sexual practice. It was both acceptable and legal for a man to have sex with *hetairai*, concubines, their own slaves, and resident foreign women. However, it was illegal for a man to have sex out of wedlock with the wife or daughter of another citizen. While superficially this seems to protect Athenian women, in reality it would have legally prevented them from engaging in adultery or pre-marital sex. Reeder records that a *parthenos* who was raped could demand a large monetary recompense for her lost virginity, and this provision may have made her more attractive to suitors despite her lost innocence.<sup>157</sup> While Reeder portrays this as a positive outcome, we should remember that the dowry in truth never belonged to the woman, and that this recompense would be paid directly to her male *kyrios* and not to the violated woman herself. A woman's virtue affected the legitimacy of her future children, and legitimate noble children were needed to ensure the ongoing success of Athenian society.

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<sup>157</sup> Reeder, Pandora, 23.

It may seem strange to us that Athenian men, so fascinated with their own sexual pleasure, were woefully indifferent to their own wives' sexual satisfaction. Truly, Athenian men did understand that women could take pleasure in sex just as they did.

οὐδε γὰρ ὁ παῖς τῷ ἀνδρὶ ὡσπερ γυνὴ κοινωνεῖ τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἀφροδισίοις  
εὐφροσυνῶν, ἀλλὰ νήφων μεθύοντα ὑπὸ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης θεᾶται

‘For a youth does not share in the pleasure of the intercourse as a woman does,  
but looks on, sober, at another in love’s intoxication’

(Xenophon, Symposium VIII 21).<sup>158</sup>

Quite a few vase-paintings exist which depict highly satisfied women engaging in a variety of sex acts, but these satisfied women can always be identified as *hetairai*. It would be inappropriate for a proper Athenian wife to be depicted having intercourse, even with her husband. However, vase-painters did try to depict marital sexual relations in an appropriate manner. In many wedding scenes, the pending sexual relationship of the bride and groom is subtly suggested by means of exhibiting the *zone*, or perhaps the gaze between bride and groom. Keuls notes that the sight of a “half-opened door” in vase-paintings is an understated symbol of marital sex.<sup>159</sup>

Athenian men seemed far more concerned with the ability of a wife to conceive, rather than her ability to be aroused or enjoy sex.

ὅτι πολλάκις τὸ θῆλυ συλλαμβάνει οὐ γενομένης αὐτῆ τῆς ἐν τῇ ὀμιλίᾳ  
ἡδονῆς· καὶ γιγνομένης πάλιν οὐδὲν ἦττον, καὶ ἰσοδρομησάντων [παρὰ]  
τοῦ θήλεος, οὐ γεννᾷ

<sup>158</sup> Carleton L. Brownson, trans., Anabasis: Books IV-VII and Symposium and Apology (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1947), 466-467.

<sup>159</sup> Keuls, Phallus, 118.

‘Very often the female conceives although she has derived no pleasure from the act of coitus; and, on the contrary side, when the female derives as much pleasure as the male, and they both keep the same pace, the female does not bear’

(Aristotle, Generation of Animals I XIX 727b).<sup>160</sup>

Many Hippocratic writers stumble around the subject, unsure as to the connection between pleasure and conception, if there was any. Blundell also reminds us that any sign of a woman’s sexual pleasure could be indicative, at least to Athenian men, of their innate uncontrollable lust and possible infidelity.<sup>161</sup> It is possible that wives who did enjoy sex were under cultural pressure to conceal this situation. And perhaps a wife’s pleasure did not matter at all, as long as the husband was sated, either by her or by others.

καὶ μὴν οὐ τῶν γε ἀφροδισίων ἔνεκα παιδοποιεῖσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους  
ὑπολαμβάνεις, ἐπεὶ τούτου γε τῶν ἀπολυσόντων μεστὰ μὲν αἱ ὁδοί,  
μεστὰ δὲ τὰ οἰκήματα.

‘Of course you don’t suppose that lust provokes men to beget children, when the streets and stews are full of means to satisfy that?’

(Xenophon, Memorabilia II 2.4-7).<sup>162</sup>

The bride plays two roles during the *gamos*, that of a fertile *nymphē* and a simple object. Her sexuality is highlighted through her adornment and alludes to the upcoming consummation of the marriage. At the same time, her veil serves as an extension of the *gynaikon* and validates her role as a virtuous Greek wife. Upon entering her new *oikos* she is showered with fruits and nuts, indicative of her future fertility and contributions to

<sup>160</sup> A.L. Peck, trans., Generation of Animals (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 98-99.

<sup>161</sup> Blundell, Women, 101.

<sup>162</sup> Marchant, Memorabilia and Oeconomicus, 106-107.

the family. Behind a closed door she submits sexually to her husband, a man who likely cares only for what will issue from her womb, and little for her pleasure. Her bridal adornment is that of an object, symbolic of the wealth of both her old and new families. She is lead through the streets of Athens, grasped on the wrist by her new husband and surrounded by an entourage of guests and friends to encourage her. She is not a full person moving toward her future by her own accord but a piece of property being transferred from one *kyrios* to the next.

## EPAULIA

The day after the consummation of the marriage called for even more feasting and dancing and the giving of the *epaulia*. Gifts would be received by the bride and groom, and often the bride is the recipient of specific gifts given by her father; these may include soaps and fragrances and items intended to increase her beauty.<sup>163</sup> The bride would have this morning given the groom a *chlanis*, and Avagianou asserts that this symbolizes the aspect of the initiation rite in the ritual of marriage, the initiate giving a gift to her initiator.<sup>164</sup> Reeder suggests that this *chlanis*, woven by the bride herself, was meant to represent her future contribution to the household by means of weaving, her feminine task.<sup>165</sup>

Some scholars interpret the *epaulia* gifts as a compensation for the bride's lost virginity. They may also have been a way for the husband's family to welcome their newest family member, or for her natal family to ensure she was well-equipped in her new household. It is likely that many layers of meaning were assigned to the *epaulia* gifts and we should not attempt to assign one simple reason for their existence. Many scholars note the connection between the gifts given to Pandora and the *epaulia* gifts. Perhaps the *epaulia*, much like the wedding songs, are meant to lift the status of the bride to that of the beautiful Pandora.

The red-figure *pelike* in Figure 28 is supposed by Philippaki to be the ritual of *epaulia*.<sup>166</sup> The bride is seated and wears her nuptial finery, Erotes float about and women approach her from all angles, some with what looks like gifts. Figure 29 is

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<sup>163</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 38.

<sup>164</sup> Avagianou, *Sacred Marriage*, 18.

<sup>165</sup> Reeder, *Pandora*, 128.

<sup>166</sup> Barbara Philippaki. *Vases of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens*. Spain: Apollo Editions, 1970), 136.

another depiction of the *epaulia*. On one side, the newly-wedded woman plays her harp and friends and relatives approach from both sides bearing gifts. The woman who stands behind the bride carries a *loutrophoros*, allowing us to identify this as some aspect of the Athenian wedding. The other figures carry box-like containers, perhaps for the new wife's jewelry and cosmetics.

The giving of vessels and boxes alludes to a common metaphor for women in Classical Athens, that of women as containers. Women were associated with empty vessels for several reasons. Although we have noted the pressure for fertility placed on women, Athenian men believed that the semen formed the whole being of the child, and that the mother was simply a vessel which allowed gestation. In fact, a woman's children were not considered to be her own, as she was simply the vehicle by which they developed. Consequently, the opening into a woman's body, from which a child would issue forth, was like the neck of a jar, and a woman was seen as empty space which must be filled. Several myths, such as the story of Danae and Perseus confirm this. Perseus' confinement within a container mirrors that of a child's gestation in the womb. Additionally, because vessels are associated with the inside of an *oikos*, they are also associated with women and women's space.<sup>167</sup> François Lissarrague, in her article "Women, Boxes, Containers: Some Signs and Metaphors," uses the image in Figure 30 as an example of the connection between women and containers. In this vase-painting a woman's space is represented through the depiction of containers stacked about. Although the woman is absent the viewer would immediately identify female space.<sup>168</sup> The *epaulia* gifts depicted on vase-paintings were also often boxes, vases, and other such

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<sup>167</sup> François Lissarrague, "Women, Boxes, Containers: Some Signs and Metaphors," in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. Ellen D. Reeder (Baltimore, MD: Walters Art Gallery, 1995), 93.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

containers. In nearly all depictions of the wedding, containers and vessels are carried by the bride's attendants or family members. The connection between femininity and an empty vessel is unmistakable.

George Pilitsis, in his work, The Dramas of Euripides: A Study in the Institution of Marriage and a Reconstruction of Marriage Customs in Fifth Century B.C. Athens, records that the final stage in the marriage ceremony was another banquet, this one attended by men alone and prepared by the new bride.<sup>169</sup> This meal took place in the groom's father's house, the residence of the new bride, and "had to be witnessed by as many male members as possible."<sup>170</sup> This final ceremony may have been the formal introduction of the new bride, by means of her cooking, to the men of her new family, and would have been an important way for them to accept her and her future offspring as one of their own.

This final banquet, cooked by the bride, is indicative of the important role women played in ensuring the economic prosperity of the *oikos*. In Classical Athens, the ideal *oikos* would be headed by the husband, but the ideal wife would also manage the household resources and contribute to the family finances. In addition to bearing children, Athenian women were expected to make use of their time in the *gynaikon* by weaving. Xenophon devotes a large portion of his work Oeconomicus to a discussion of Ischomachus' well-trained and industrious wife (Xenophon, Oeconomicus VII 4-43).<sup>171</sup> The economic contributions of women have been highlighted throughout the wedding ceremony in many forms; for instance, the cooking vessel carried by the bride during the wedding procession. And indeed, any aspect of the ceremony which highlighted her

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<sup>169</sup> Pilitsis, Dramas of Euripides, 136.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>171</sup> Lord, Oeconomicus, 415-429.



fertility, her adornment and the *katachysmata* to name a few, drew attention to her future production of male citizen heirs for the *oikos*, certainly a very valuable contribution.

The very last ritual of the wedding ceremony, the dedication of a *loutrophoros* to a nymph, was performed by the bride alone.<sup>172</sup> Just south of the Acropolis in Athens there was a shrine to Nymphe, and archaeologists have recovered a large number of *loutrophoroi* fragments.<sup>173</sup> Caves throughout Greece known to have been sacred to certain nymphs have also turned up an unusually large number of *loutrophoroi* fragments.<sup>174</sup> Now that the bride had successfully made the transition to *nymphē*, the dedication of the *loutrophoros* would serve as both thanks for the completed ceremony and a prayer for a fortunate life to come. This would be an auspicious end to the nuptial ceremony, and a fitting beginning to a woman's new life as a *nymphē* and later *gyne*.

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<sup>172</sup> Oakley and Sinos, *Wedding*, 6.

<sup>173</sup> Dillon, *Girls and Women*, 219.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

## METAPHORS FOR MARRIAGE

As we have seen, men and women in Classical Athens had very characteristic roles assigned to them both in society and within their marriage. The role of love in these marriages, however, is less obviously defined. The very fact that Athenian marriages were arranged seems to preclude any initial feelings of love between the couple, especially considering the apparent separation between the sexes in Classical Athens. The myths surrounding Artemis and her followers seem to paint a vivid picture of marriage as a form of subjugation, and marital discord between gods such as Zeus and Hera may portray marriage as one very large irritation. Yet certainly there were other mythological figures, such as Hector and Andromache in the *Iliad*, who exemplified a loving, happily married couple. Married people are sometimes called *teleioi*, a word which clearly connotes accomplishment, perfection, and fulfillment. Furthermore, it seems that if by nothing other than chance, love-matches must have occurred, especially among the lower classes in which the gender division in everyday life was far less extreme. Perhaps then, the question we should ask is not whether love was a reality in marriage, but whether or not love was an ideal to be sought in marriage.

Modern scholars may interpret the abundant illustrations of Eros in wedding scenes as proof that love was indeed an ideal for an Athenian marriage. Sutton argues that these Eros depictions may simply have served as “[encouragement for] many an uneasy bride and groom as they approached an arranged marriage, serving as both something to expect and a model to emulate.”<sup>175</sup> Sutton finds proof of the ideal of love in a marriage in the vase-painting in Figure 31, which he believes depicts a scene of

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<sup>175</sup> Sutton, “Loutrophoroi,” 359.

courtship before marriage.<sup>176</sup> The young man holds out a cloth, possibly a bridal veil with the typical starry design, while the woman demurely gazes at her hands. The young girl standing behind her holding a container is perhaps suggestive of the bridal bath which will take place soon. Eros is strangely missing from this scene, a detail which makes Sutton's interpretation questionable. Sutton notes that the depiction of "courting" was relegated to scenes of *hetarai*, *symposia*, and pederasty until the early Classical period when proper marriages became a source of depictions of romance and love. Sian Lewis, in her book The Athenian Woman: An Iconographic Handbook, reminds us that apart from wedding scenes, it is often very difficult to identify a husband-wife relationship on a vase-painting and far more difficult to determine if any concept of "love" is exhibited between them.<sup>177</sup> However, she finds it difficult simply to dismiss these "courtship" scenes and theorizes that these vases were for a female audience, many of whom would "aspire to the condition of being courted."<sup>178</sup> My first instinct is to dismiss this explanation because it utilizes a modern ideal to interpret ancient thought. However, because our knowledge of love, courtship, and marriage in Classical Athens is so ill-defined, who can state for certain that men and women did not wish to experience love and courtship within the context of marriage?

While we cannot confirm that marriage was an institution for love in Classical Athens, there are several facets of Greek thought which seem to connect marriage to death. Richard Seaford, in his article "The Tragic Wedding," discusses the relationship between Greek funeral rites for an unmarried girl and the ritual of marriage. He states,

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<sup>176</sup> Sutton, "Pornography," 20.

<sup>177</sup> Sian Lewis, The Athenian Woman: An Iconographic Handbook (New York, New York: Routledge, 2002), 176.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

“In both wedding and funeral the girl is washed, anointed, and given special *peploi* and a special *stephanos* in order to be conveyed on an irreversible, torch-lit journey accompanied by song, and to be abandoned by her kin to an unknown male.”<sup>179</sup> Seaford also notes the well-known stories of Iphigenia, Antigone, and Glauke, all young girls who died in the midst of or directly before their wedding preparations. It is also interesting to note that the Greek god of marriage, Hymen, was a young man who had died on the night of his wedding. Oakley and Sinos note that a young woman who died unmarried would have a *loutrophoros* placed on her grave.<sup>180</sup> Figure 32 shows a red-figure *loutrophoros* which depicts people mourning over a woman who has died. In this particular fragment, it is possible to see that the dead woman is crowned with a *stephane* of the same style such as a bride would wear. If we consider that marriage and child-bearing were considered the fulfillment of a woman’s existence, then a life that ended early would be mourned in terms of what she and her family has lost. Her parents, having never given her a proper wedding ceremony, would do so now while mourning her death. Perhaps the connection which scholars make between death and marriage is truly a misinterpretation of a reaction to grief.

A number of scholars have suggested that the Athenian marriage ceremony may have been meant to suggest abduction or rape. Rape was a very powerful idea in Classical Athens. The mightiest of gods, Zeus, makes the rape of lovely young females a sort of hobby and many mythological figures are born of Zeus’ sexual conquests. Eva C. Keuls, in her book The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens, notes that rape is not about the sexual act, but related to the dominance of male over female, the

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<sup>179</sup> Seaford, “Tragic Wedding,” 107.

<sup>180</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 6.

penetrator over the penetrated.<sup>181</sup> The great division in Greek sexuality was that of the active role versus the passive role in the sex act. Women, slaves, and young boys always played the passive role, that of the penetrated. The citizen male would perform the penetration, and thus play the active role. If we were to relate this to marital intercourse, every sex act between husband and wife would be an exercise of power over the woman. A female does not have the same biological ability to penetrate as a man does, and will always play the passive role. Thus we may interpret not just the wedding ceremony, but the marriage itself as a form of abduction and rape.

Oakley and Sinos write that “to try to distinguish between weddings and abductions may be a modern rather than an ancient concern, one that requires drawing a clearer boundary than ancient iconography permits.”<sup>182</sup> Cohen purports that the wedding procession in particular would have involved false struggling on the part of the bride and false abduction on the part of the groom.<sup>183</sup> She later goes on to note that the Greek verb *damazein* besides meaning “to make subject to a husband” also means “to tame an animal.”<sup>184</sup> As we have seen in vase-paintings of the wedding procession, the groom often grasped his new bride’s wrist as he led her homeward. The manner in which he did this was called *xeir epi karpw*.<sup>185</sup> Homer uses this same phrase in The Iliad outside of a nuptial context.

“Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας ἐπὶ καπῶ χεῖρα γέροντος ἔλλαβε δεξιτερὴν, μή πως  
δείσει’ ἐνὶ θυμῶ

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<sup>181</sup> Keuls, Phallus, 52.

<sup>182</sup> Oakley and Sinos, Wedding, 13.

<sup>183</sup> Cohen, “Portrayals,” 131.

<sup>184</sup> Sebesta, “Gleaming Textiles,” 127.

<sup>185</sup> Avagianou, Sacred Marriage, 9.

‘When he had thus spoken he clasped the old man’s right had by the wrist, lest his heart should any wise wax fearful’

(Homer, The Iliad XXIV 671-672).<sup>186</sup>

Homer’s use of this phrase to describe interaction between two men of equal honor, Achilles and Priam, gives this action a new connotation. In this context it is not a grip of force, but a clasp of comfort.

Victims of rape and abduction are often depicted on vase-paintings wearing pseudo-bridal attire and engaged in wedding-like ritual. Figure 33 provides a good example of this. Here Persephone rises from the underworld with attendants Hermes, Hecate, and Persephone. We must note that Persephone wears the *stephane* associated with wedding, and perhaps a heavy *chiton*. Hecate, who has connections to death and the underworld, acts in the role of the mother and carries the ceremonial torches which will protect Persephone, the “bride,” in her liminal state. Demeter stands ready to receive her daughter back into living world. Figure 34 depicts two incidences of rape in mythology. On the upper register, the rape of Thetis by Peleus is portrayed, and the related figures could be interpreted as the wedding guests. Indeed, the bridal connotations are unmistakable in this scene, as is Thetis’ unwillingness. In the lower register, the lesser-known myth of the rape of Oreithyia is portrayed, along with the end result of her happily spinning and living out her days as a wife within the *gynaikon*.

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<sup>186</sup> Murray, Iliad, 612-613.

## CONCLUSION

From her birth, and the moment when her father decided whether or not to raise her, an Athenian girl's life was not her own to live. Sheltered in the *gynaikon*, she was allowed no formal education beyond reading and writing. At puberty, she may have been forced to veil herself whenever she went out for public festivals or rituals, and was allowed no contact with unrelated males. Around this same time her father would have chosen for her a husband. She could not own property or land. She could not make purchases over a certain amount. She could not defend herself in court, but rather must find a man to represent her. Her children were not her own, and would stay with her husband's family in the event of a divorce.

Women were subject to these controls by men because of their procreative powers. Paternity was not easily determined in Classical Athens, and to control the production of heirs it was necessary to control the female population. Every aspect of control over women was meant to control their reproductive capacities. The seclusion of women prevented illicit sexual encounters. The power of a *kyrios* passed control of reproduction to men, allowing them to choose their daughters' sexual partners. Indeed, a daughter who engaged in sexual intercourse before marriage could be sold by her father into prostitution or slavery, a clear indicator that a woman's entire worth was derived from her ability to produce legitimate heirs. Women's work, raising children and weaving, kept them in the house. Women were viewed as empty vessels, no more than a container from which something useful may issue forth. Women were seen as children, unformed and in need of direction from grown men. Women were highly sexual beings, incapable

of controlling their urges. Women were inferior to men in every possible sense, and in need of supervision.

Helen King, in her article “Bound to Bleed: Artemis and Greek Women,” notes that the many steps taken by a girl to become a woman – menstruation, marriage, the loss of virginity, and the birth of a child – are all controlled either by nature or by men; a young woman has no control over her destiny.<sup>187</sup> The Athenian nuptial ceremony is a reflection of this fact. Her *kyrios* made the arrangements without her consent. Although she was the focus of the ceremony, in truth she was a passive object. She adorned herself with the family wealth, and became an object, valued for her beauty. For her own protection, and to protect her expensive virtue, she was veiled. As an object, she was placed in the hand of her new husband. As an object, she passively attended the feasts and was lead through the streets to her new home. Like the abducted Persephone, she accepted an offering of fruit. She did not participate, but rather submitted to the *katachysmata*. She would submit herself to her new husband, and then receive gifts to acknowledge what she had lost. All of these things represent her inferiority as a woman. The entire Athenian wedding ceremony, from the betrothal to the dedication of the *loutrophoros*, confirmed her identity as a second-rate citizen, a woman.

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<sup>187</sup> King, “Bound to Bleed,” 111.



## List of Figures

## Figures 1-4

Athenian Black-Figure Lekythos

575-525 BCE

Amasis Painter

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 56.11.1

Beazley Archive #350478

## Figures 5-6

Athenian Black-Figure Lekythos

575-525 BCE

Amasis Painter

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 31.11.10

Beazley Archive #310485

## Figures 7-8

Athenian Red-Figure Loutrophoros

450-400 BCE

Boston Museum of Fine Arts 03.802

Beazley Archive #15815

## Figure 9

Attic Red-Figure Krater (fragmentary)

Talos Painter

Serra Di Vaglio

## Figure 10

Athenian Red-Figure Lekythos

475-425 BCE

Achilles Painter

Syracuse, Museo Archaeological Regionale Paolo Orsi 21186

Beazley Archive #213901

## Figure 11

Brussels A 891

## Figure 12

Attic Red-Figure Loutrophoros

440-430 BCE

Washing Painter

Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen München 7578

## Figure 13

Athenian Red-Figure Loutrophoros

450-400 BCE

Washing Painter  
Athens National Museum 1453  
Beazley Archive #214899

Figure 14  
Athenian Red-Figure Pyxis  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 06.1021.123  
Beazley Archive #2094

Figure 15  
Athenian Red-Figure Lebes  
450-400 BCE  
Painter of Athens 1454  
Athens, National Museum 1454  
Beazley Archive #215616

Figure 16  
Athenian Red-Figure Loutrophoros  
475-425 BCE  
Polygnotos  
Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum 929.22.3  
Beazley Archive #213434

Figure 17  
Athenian Black-Figure Hydria  
550-500 BCE  
Priam Painter  
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 1965.108  
Beazley Archive #301803

Figure 18  
Athenian Black-Figure Hydria  
550-500 BCE  
In the manner of the Lysippides Painter  
Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco 3790  
Beazley Archive # 302262

Figure 19  
Athenian Red-Figure Loutrophoros  
450-400 BCE  
Berlin, Antikensammlung F2372  
Beazley Archive #9603

Figures 20-22  
Boeotian Red-Figure Pyxis  
Thebes, Archaeological Museum

Beazley Archive #1012283

Figures 23-24

Athenian Red-Figure, White Ground Pyxis

475-425 BCE

Splanchnopt Painter

London, British Museum D11

Beazley Archive #211904

Figure 25

Athenian Red-Figure Loutrophoros

475-425 BCE

Phiale Painter

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 10.223

Beazley Archive #214222

Figure 26

Attic Red-Figure Pyxis

Berlin, Staatliche Museen 3373

Figure 27

Athenian Red-Figure Loutrophoros

425-375 BCE

Buffalo, Museum of Science C23262

Beazley Archive #20337

Figure 28

Athenian Red-Figure Pelike

400-300 BCE

Kerch

Athens, National Museum 1718

Beazley Archive #5702

Figure 29

Athenian Red-Figure Lebes

450-400 BCE

Washing Painter

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 07.286.35

Beazley Archive #214881

Figure 30

Athenian Red-Figure Skyphos

475-425 BCE

Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum 86.AE.265

Beazley Archive #10146

Figure 31  
Athenian Red-Figure Alabastron  
475-425 BCE  
Painter of Copenhagen 3830  
Paris, Cabinet des Medailles 507  
Beazley Archive #208895

Figure 32  
Athenian Red-Figure Loutrophoros  
500-450 BCE  
Painter of Bologna 228  
Athens, National Museum 1170  
Beazley Archive #205750

Figure 33  
Athenian Red-Figure Bell Krater  
475-425 BCE  
Persephone Painter  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 28.57.23  
Beazley Archive #214158

Figure 34  
Athenian Red-Figure Kalyx Krater  
475-425 BCE  
Niobid Painter  
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 1972.850  
Beazley Archive #5958

## Glossary of Terms

*alabastrov*: Vessel used for perfumes and expensive oils.

*anakalypterion*: The ritual of unveiling within the nuptial ceremony.

*aulizesthai*: Verb meaning “to pass the night.”

*chiton*: Garment made primarily of folded cloth worn by both men and women in ancient Greece.

*chlanis*: A garment shorter than the *chiton* and used as an overcoat.

*damazein*: Verb meaning to tame an animal, work metal, make a maiden subject to a husband, or to subdue or conquer.

*engye*: The betrothal agreement.

*epaulia*: Word referring to both the third day of the wedding, and the gifts given on that day.

*epikleros*: A woman whose father has died without male heirs and thus brings his entire estate to her marriage.

*exaleiptrov*: Vessel used for perfumes and expensive oils.

*gamein*: Verb meaning to marry, to give one’s child in marriage, or to engage in sexual intercourse.

*gamelion*: A month in the Greek calendar, popular for weddings.

*gamos*: The wedding proper.

*gynaikon*: The supposed women’s quarters within the house.

*gyne*: The full-fledged woman, both wife and mother.

*hetairai*: Prostitutes who provided entertainment through music, song, and sex at Greek drinking parties.

*hieros gamos*: Festival celebrating the marriage of Hera and Zeus.

*himation*: Folded cloak.

*hymen hymenaios*: Wedding songs sung throughout the nuptial ceremony.

*katachysmata*: Ritual of showering the bride with nuts and dates upon her entrance into her new household.

*krater*: Large vessel used for mixing wine at drinking parties.

*ktupia*: Ritual of yelling and knocking loudly on the door to the *thalamos* during the consummation of the marriage.

*kyrios*: The male legal guardian of a woman.

*lebetes gamikos*: A vessel used in the wedding ritual itself, possibly to hold bathwater or to serve food.

*lekythos*: A vessel which held oils, possibly for sacrifices.

*loutrophoros*: A long-necked vessel used to hold the bride's bathwater.

*nymphē*: A young wife who is not yet a mother.

*nymphokomos*: The bride's assistant in her adornment, hired by the family.

*oikos*: The physical house or dwelling, also alludes to the wealth of an estate.

*pais amphitales*: A male child with both parents still living.

*parthenos*: A physically mature, unmarried woman.

*pastos*: The special bed canopy for the wedding night.

*peplos*: Garment of folded cloth worn only by women.

*proaulia*: Denotes the pre-wedding activities.

*proteleia*: The pre-wedding sacrifices.

*pyxis*: A vessel used to store jewelry or cosmetics.

*stephane*: A crown.

*teleioi*: The word for married people, carries connotations of completeness and perfection.

*thamos*: The inner bed-chamber.

*xeir epi karpw*: The way in which the groom grasps the hand of the bride during the wedding procession, arguably carries connotations of either force or comfort.

*zone*: A belt or girdle regularly worn by ancient Greek women.

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