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## THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE OF ANCIENT ATHEN

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**Summary.** *The role of women in the social and political life of Ancient Athens has been studied. The views of ancient authors on the situation of women in the polis were analyzed. It is noted that they did not have any civil rights. Athenian women were under total control not only of the men of their family, but also of the state, because it was interested in the birth of healthy citizens capable of participating in the management of the policy.*

**Key words:** *woman, man, gender, Ancient Greece, Athens, polis.*

In the ancient world, women have never been equal to men.

In general, the question of the role and importance of women in the functioning of ancient society was ambiguous.

The main attributes of Athenian society were the domination of men over women. Throughout their lives, women were completely dependent on males, first on their father and brother and then on their husbands. Since society was patriarchal, women had no rights in it. It was a purely male society. Women were deprived of the right to vote and rights to be elected to any position. Men completely controlled women as if they were their property.

Even ancient authors raised the question of the role of women in the social and political life of the ancient polis.

In most cases, ancient authors supported the idea of existing gender inequality, they considered the natural (biological) difference between women and men to be its basis. Yes, Aristotle argued that a woman by nature is a slave to a man who must submit to her master. A man is by nature superior to a woman, so he rules and a woman obeys him [1, p. 15-34]. Aristotle claimed that it is both natural and appropriate when a man in the family manages his wife [2, p. 43]. Because a woman was incapable of managing and making decisions, she needed a man's power over herself. A woman, being completely dependent on her husband, was not considered a full citizen of the policy. And it was considered a social norm.

Aristotle saw the main purpose of a woman in serving her husband, benefiting the family and the state. The thinker considered the sphere of realization of women's abilities exclusively private life.

A woman could not have her own desires other than to serve her husband. Proper performance of the functions of the wife was monitored in the family and in the state. He notes what activities ancient Greek women could do, at what age to get married and have children, and so on.

In the works of Aristotle, women are given the role of passive, insignificant, side characters, who have a place only behind closed doors. However, his ideal was the intellectually mature citizens of the polis, both men and women. He did not demand the exploitation of women, he believed that they should be allowed into civilian life.

The thinker argued that the future of society depends on woman, on her position in society. Because an oppressed woman will raise and educate oppressed people. Only a free woman, aware of her dignity, properly respected in the family and community, can raise worthy people.

In his work *The Republic*, Plato described the model of the ideal state. It has no private property, no family, no individual households, and the whole nation cares for the common good. According to the ancient Greek philosopher, women who were relieved of domestic responsibilities could participate in public affairs on an equal footing with men [3]. According to their abilities, women could even be philosophers and warriors, and raising children was entrusted to the community. In Plato's ideal state, women, like men, are educated, engaged in music, gymnastics, military affairs, but in public affairs are considered weaker than men, so they need to be entrusted with easier things [3, p. 152]. But we should not exaggerate Plato's views on gender equality. Note the contradiction of his statements, because he wrote that a woman was created from the souls of the most sinful and foolish men. Granting equal rights to women and men in *The Republic* is only a consequence of the abolition of the family and family upbringing of children.

The social life of women in Ancient Athens was governed by laws and customs. Thus, Archon Solon issued laws on the departure of women from the city, their mourning clothes, participation in holidays, prohibiting intemperance. When leaving the city, women were allowed to take with them no more than three himations, food and water no more than obol. They could go at night only if there was a lantern on the cart. According to Solon's laws, women were forbidden to scratch their faces, beat themselves in the chest, lament too much, arrange hysteria at funerals [4, p. 25].

The woman, having no civil rights, occupied a rather modest place in the house. The woman could leave the house only accompanied by slaves and eunuchs, covering her face and head with a cloak. Laws and customs strictly regulated the behavior of Athenians. Before marriage, Athenian girls lived in solitude. And even after marriage, the less often women appeared in public, the more proud of them were father and husband.

Athenians could go out and visit the homes of friends and were able to participate in public religious ceremonies and festivals. Whether women could attend theatre performances or not is still disputed amongst scholars. More clear is that women could not attend public assemblies, vote, or hold public office. Even a woman's name was not to be mentioned in public – for good reasons or bad.

We will pay special attention to Pericles' second wife, hetaira Aspasia. She was not like most Athenian women who were engaged exclusively in household chores [6, p. 32]. Aspasia had an excellent education, her house was visited by philosophers Socrates, Protagoras and Anaxagoras, historian Herodotus and poet Sophocles. Husbands of famous Athenian families often brought their wives to her to listen to her reasoning. This is stated by Plato in *The Menexenus* [7].

In the speech of Pericles recorded by Thucydides (II, 45.2), the speaker calls the best woman the one who is least talked about in men's society, not only in a bad way, but also in a good sense.

The scientific literature has repeatedly noted the significant influence of his wife on Pericles in making important political decisions.

Ideas about the need for gender equality, changing the position of women were voiced in the Ancient Greek tragedy. In their works, playwrights showed that in the real history of Ancient Greece, women did not correspond to the image outlined by the «male» tradition.

The playwright of the crisis of Athenian democracy, Euripides, portrays strong female characters in his tragedies. He admires the infinite strength of women's spirit, the courage of their hearts, the desire to protect their degraded dignity, to achieve the goal [8].

In the «female» comedies of Aristophanes traced changes in the position of women in Athenian society in the late 5th and early 4th centuries BC, the crisis of social stereotypes in the gender context. Incidentally, this is a time when changes affected all spheres of ancient society, which led to the crisis of the polis system [9]. We can assume that the artistic women images depicted by Aristophanes could not have appeared without prototypes in real life, even with the author's fiction.

The problem of the relationship between the sexes, raised by Aristophanes, can be seen as his attempt to start a discussion about the role of women in Ancient Greek politics.

**Conclusions.** Thus, the woman in Athens obeyed her husband in everything. She was completely dependent on her husband and was not a full-fledged citizen of the polis. And this was considered a social norm. It is likely that the woman was happy, because she played the role of wife and mother, to which she was prepared since childhood. Despite her obvious subordination to her husband, women have always been a very important part of society. Some Athenian women became advisers to prominent men.

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