



Women and Law in Classical Greece

Raphael Sealey

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Based on a sophisticated reading of legal evidence, this book offers a balanced assessment of the status of women in classical Greece. Raphael Sealey analyzes the rights of women in marriage, in the control of property, and in questions of inheritance. He advances the theory that the legal disabilities of Greek women occurred because they were prohibited from bearing arms.

Sealey demonstrates that, with some local differences, there was a general uniformity in the legal treatment of women in the Greek cities. For Athens, the law of the family has been preserved in some detail in the scrupulous records of speeches delivered in lawsuits. These records show that Athenian women could testify, own property, and be tried for crime, but a male guardian had to administer their property and represent them at law. Gortyn allowed relatively more independence to the female than did Athens, and in Sparta, although women were allowed to have more than one husband, the laws were similar to those of Athens. Sealey's subsequent comparison of the law of these cities with Roman law throws into relief the common concepts and aims of Greek law of the family.

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