

THE ATTIC GENOS¹

I. GENOS THEORY

Over twenty years since the influential revisionist studies of Roussel² and Bourriot,³ agreement on a satisfactory theory of the Attic *genos* seems as elusive as ever. Although they differed on details, these two scholars were agreed in their rejection of the old monolithic account of the *genos* as aristocratic family whose institutionalized control over state cults and phratry admissions in the historical period was a relic of a wider political dominance. Roussel and Bourriot instead proposed a tripartite model according to which the formal *genos-kome*—a more or less localized community similar to the later *deme*, with hereditary but socio-economically diverse membership, and enjoying, as a tighter community well placed to regulate its own admissions, automatic access to the wider phratry⁴—was distinguishable both from aristocratic families, such as the Peisistratidai or Alkmeonidai, and priestly houses, such as the Kerykes and Eumolpidai of Eleusis. Subsequent discussion has moved in several directions. My analysis of the relationship between phratry and *genos* followed a broadly revisionist line.⁵ I found no good evidence for *gene* controlling the access to phratries of persons who were not *genos* members and presented a new interpretation of the crucial Demotionidai decrees⁶ in which, contrary to prevailing theories, neither of the two groups mentioned in them—the Demotionidai and the House (*oikos*) of the Dekeleis—was a privileged subgroup dominating the whole. Rather, I suggested that the Demotionidai were a phratry in process of fission, the Dekelean House a product of this process. Others, however, have taken the debate in the other direction, as it were reprivilaging the *genos*. Rhodes, in presenting counter-arguments to mine, has reasserted the old view of Wade-Gery that the Dekelean House was a phratry, the Demotionidai a privileged family within it (whether or not a formal *genos*), exercising control based in religious authority.⁷ On a more general level, Humphreys, while accepting that Bourriot and Roussel succeeded in destroying the old stereotype, has been developing a theory which nevertheless owes a good deal to it: the formal *genos* was a privileged descent group, originating perhaps in the seventh century from the need to secure rights of access to hereditary offices and sustained mainly by those rights thereafter. In the pre-Solonian aristocratic state this meant access to the generality of public offices, by the fourth century to the only category of public office which remained hereditary in the democratic state, priest-hoods.⁸

¹ I am grateful to Robert Parker and Peter Rhodes for reading a draft of this paper. I abbreviate two of my works as follows: *Phratries: The Phratries of Attica* (Ann Arbor, 1993; 2nd edn 1998); *Salaminiot*: ZPE 119 (1997), 85–106.

² D. Roussel, *Tribu et Cité* (Paris, 1976).

³ F. Bourriot, *Recherches sur la nature du genos* (Lille, 1976).

⁴ FGH 328 Philochoros F 35.

⁵ *Phratries*, especially chs. 2 and 3.

⁶ *Phratries*, T 3 (cf. IG ii² 1237).

⁷ P. J. Rhodes, CQ n.s. 47 (1997), 109–20.

⁸ S. Humphreys, *Sociologia del diritto* 8 (1983), 35–44, and in as yet unpublished work. See R. Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 5, nn. 1, 15, and 27; qualified support for Humphreys's view at 62–66. Humphreys acknowledges a debt to Fustel de Coulanges in her

One point on which some agreement seems to be emerging is that the revisionist distinction between priestly *genos* and *genos-kome* is unsatisfactory; for it seems that at least some of the priests of the Salaminioi, for example, best documented of all *gene* and archetypal *genos-kome*, served state cult,⁹ and that the Kerykes, archetypal priestly house, enjoyed the automatic access to phratries supposedly characteristic of the *genos-kome*.¹⁰ On the one hand, this certainly leaves some ‘*gene*’ out of the formal system. No one suggests that ‘Peisistratidai’ was anything more than the name of a family; and, for lack of evidence, we do not know whether ‘Alkmeonidai’, for example, merely designated such a family or a formal *genos*. On the other hand, we do seem to need a unified theory of the formal *genos* that will account for its *kome*-like characteristics (at least in some cases) and its function of supplying state priests (which seems general). Neither of the two approaches underlying recent scholarship seems satisfactory by itself. A privilege-based theory (whether or not precisely as formulated by Humphreys) struggles to find evidence that *gene* ever had privileges outside the cult sphere; and to account for the Aristotelian analysis of *gennetai* as *homogalaktes*, members of the same village (*kome*),¹¹ for the community-like features of *gene* such as the Salaminioi and the immigrant Gephyraioi (from whose cult other Athenians were, unusually, excluded¹²), and for the demonstrable existence of non-privileged *gennetai* in the fourth century—men like Phrastor of the *genos* Brytidai in Demosthenes 59, of whom it is implausible to claim that their ancestors might have belonged to a pre-Solonian aristocracy.¹³ As for the community-based approach underlying the revisionist theory of the *genos-kome*, it is an important point, not yet acknowledged in post-revisionist scholarship on the *genos*, that it can be modified to account for state priesthoods. Communities generated cult for which they supplied priests. Later, when a cult became polis cult (i.e. attracting participation from outside the *genos* and/or receiving state funding and/or becoming subject to a measure of state control¹⁴), the original community might plausibly have maintained its traditional priest-supplying role. It is also scarcely problematic that not all Athenians were in a *genos* in the fourth century.¹⁵ However this came about in fact, the contemporary view seems to have been

emphasis on property/privilege as sustaining the *genos*; but her view also has much in common with other pre-revisionist theories, e.g. that of A. Andrewes, *Hermes* 89 (1961), 129–40, that the *genos* was a leading family, the phratry a means by which its power was formalized among its retainers in the Dark Ages.

⁹ Most clearly the priestess of Athena Skiras, in whose festival, the *Oschophoria*, the Salaminioi played a role which parallels that of other demonstrably priestly *gene*. *Salaminioi*, T 1 (state funding at T 1, 20–21 and 87); Parker (n. 8), 57–8. On the other Salaminioi priesthoods, see Parker (n. 8), 308–16; S. D. Lambert, *ZPE* 125 (1999), 114–15, and works cited there.

¹⁰ Andocides 1.125–27 with *Phratries*, 70; see further below.

¹¹ References at n. 16; *Phratries*, 60.

¹² Hdt. 5.57–61; Parker (n. 8), 288–9. They were a formal *genos* in the Roman period and there seems no good reason to doubt that they had this status earlier.

¹³ ἄνδρα ἐργάτην καὶ ἀκριβῶς τὸν βλὸν συνελεγμένον, Dem. 59.50. Throughout, the impression of Phrastor is rather that of the country bumpkin; there is no hint of the decayed aristocrat. Whether Phrastor actually corresponded to this image is less important than that Demosthenes’ audience must have found it credible that a formal *genos* might contain such a man. Note also Thuc. 6.54.2 (Aristogeiton, member of the *genos* Gephyraioi, described as μέσος πολίτης). Euxitheos, speaker of Dem. 57, whose background was dubious enough for his citizenship to be challenged, also claimed to be a *genos* member (cf. *Phratries*, 62). On the general point, see H. T. Wade-Gery, *CQ* 25 (1931), 4 = *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford, 1958), 90.

¹⁴ On the definition of ‘state-cult’, see S. B. Aleshire in R. Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence* (Stockholm, 1994), 9–16.

¹⁵ *Phratries*, 61, n. 12.

that *genos*-membership implied descent from the original inhabitants of Attica, not membership of a privileged aristocracy.¹⁶ There are, however, other difficulties. The privileged *gennetai* who pepper the written record can be explained as leading members of socially diverse communities;¹⁷ and the prestige of some whole *gene* such as the Eteoboutadai¹⁸ as deriving from the prominence of the cults they served. But it is not very plausible that those cults, in this case those of Athena Polias and Poseidon Erechtheus on the acropolis, quintessentially polis cults, were once the private religion of a local community;¹⁹ nor does the approach sit easily with participation of multiple *gene* in a single cult, for example the Kerykes, Eumolpidai and Philleidai (among others) in the Mysteries at Eleusis.²⁰

What we seem to need is a theory that would unify the community-based and privilege-based approaches. I am not sure that what follows is the only possible such theory; or even that it is optimally economical; but perhaps it at least has the advantage of explaining all observable features of formal *gene* without the special pleading to which adherents of either approach must currently resort.

Its starting point would be the community-based model sketched above, which interprets the *genos* as a socially diverse community which preserved its priest-supplying role when its cult became polis cult. In such a situation it might become a mark of a proper Attic community (or a mark of honour among such communities?) that it had such a role in polis religion. When new communities were founded (or old ones reorganized), they might therefore be endowed with a role in polis cult, whether pre-existing or newly created, and whether or not there were other *gene* which already had a role in the cult in question. A process of this sort might explain the *genos* Salaminioi, who, I have suggested elsewhere,²¹ were perhaps members of the Athenian community established on Salamis in the sixth century. Similarly, when a new cult was founded, or an existing cult reorganized, it might be natural enough to seek one or more existing *gene* or to establish one or more new ones, possibly even by appointing an individual to head a future *genos*, to supply cult personnel; if the new *genos*-head was an aristocrat, such a *genos* might from the start have been a privileged group in a rather strong sense.²² Alternatively, an originally community-based *genos* might wither as the basis of community shifted, for example after Cleisthenes to the demes, leaving only a rump of one or more leading families to fill the priestly offices. By one of these two routes an originally community-based model might produce *gene* of privileged

¹⁶ Ath. Pol. F 3, cf. Aristot. *Pol.* 1.1252b, 16–18; also suggested by the term *ithageneis* applied to Attic *gene* by Hesychius, see Parker (n. 8), 284–5. While newly enfranchised citizens were normally given phratry membership, they were never admitted to a *genos*; and citizen non-*gennetai* in the fourth century would perhaps have been explained as non-autochthonous. The *eugeneia* to which Euxitheos lays claim at Dem. 57.46 is probably meant to be suggestive not of aristocracy so much as this ‘straight descent’ from Ur-Athenians which his alleged *genos* membership and tenure of a priesthood implied.

¹⁷ For example, Kallias at Xen. *Symp.* 8.40 is an aristocrat (*eupatrides*) *qua* priest, not simply *qua* member of the Kerykes. Several Salaminioi families in the fourth century were also distinguished (see Lambert [n. 9], Part III), but we know mainly about those who represented the *genos* in the arbitration of 363/2, probably not a representative cross-section.

¹⁸ Implicit, for example, at Aeschin. 2.147; Dem. 21.182; Hesych. s.v. *Ἐτεοβουτάδαι*.

¹⁹ Parker (n. 8), 24, 61.

²⁰ Parker (n. 8), 62.

²¹ *Salaminioi*, Part 2; Lambert (n. 9), 128–30.

²² (Em)baros, by a ruse, was said to have obtained for his ‘*genos*’ (i.e. apparently a *genos* headed by him) the priesthood of Artemis Mounichia; other *genos* eponyms were also thought to be cult-founders, e.g. Boutes and Phytalos. For details, see Parker (n. 8), Appendix 2. Such cases at least show us what was conceivable; note that while Boutes was brother of an Athenian king, Erechtheus, *genos* eponyms of this type do not generally have an aristocratic aura.

aspect. In turn such a privileged *genos* might, over generations, expand to the point where it had some characteristics of a broader, socially diverse, community.²³

II. DEMOTIONIDAI AND DEKELEIEIS AGAIN

From the general I turn to the specific and to Rhodes's contribution to the debate about the Demotionidai and the Dekeleieis in the decrees, *Phratries*, T 3.

Rhodes argues that the text implies that the Dekelean House was a whole phratry throughout the decrees; the Demotionidai, therefore, must have been a subgroup. I agree that the Dekelean House had many of the attributes of a whole phratry, but I do not accept the implication that there could not have been a residual link to a parent phratry, the Demotionidai. Thus when the prescript states, 'these things were decided by the *phrateres*' (T 3, 9–12), I do not share Rhodes's strong discomfort with taking '*phrateres*' unqualified to refer to a 'subgroup' (i.e. the Dekelean House). The usage seems to me natural enough in a case where the House was a group of *phrateres* sufficiently independent to make its own decrees; the members were '*phrateres*' whether or not they were in every way a whole phratry; and while the absence of specificity may be frustrating to the historian, members of the Dekelean House and others with an interest at the time would of course have known perfectly well what *phrateres* were referred to in this decree, set up at Dekeleia.²⁴

Rhodes also objects to my interpretation of the phrase 'all the *phrateres*' in the second decree as pointing a contrast with the Demotionidai, from whom the Dekelean House is asserting independence. He prefers to see the contrast as with the *thiasoi* which feature in the admissions process stipulated in this decree, and thinks that mine is 'too militant an interpretation of a decree which says nothing at all about the Demotionidai and is inscribed below decree I'. But I acknowledged in *Phratries*²⁵ that 'all the *phrateres*' might point a contrast with the *thiasotai*; and if it did rather point a contrast with the Demotionidai, the final break, on my theory, would have taken place in the lost decree on admissions procedures, the existence of which is implicit in the wording of decree II (lines 71–72). There would be no need to read implausible militancy into 'all the *phrateres*', because the break would already have been completed and no (further) 'militancy' was necessary.

There are several unaddressed problems with the interpretation Rhodes supports. One is the usage, unique in relation to a group of *phrateres*, of 'House' to refer to the Dekeleieis, a term suggesting a subgroup of a larger entity. If they were an ordinary phratry, why not refer to themselves as such? More seriously, Rhodes does not give an account of the position of the Demotionidai *vis-à-vis* the admissions procedures provided for in the decrees. If the Demotionidai were covered by those procedures, then contrary to the law in Philochoros F 35 and abundant other evidence for phratry admissions, they would have been subject to initial scrutiny by *phrateres* who did not belong to the *genos*; and equally implausibly they would be the final court of appeal for their own admissions. If, on the other hand, the Demotionidai were not covered by these procedures, that would contradict the explicit wording of the decrees to the effect

²³ On this analysis the Eleusinian *gene* might have been some (even all?) of the sub-communities of old Eleusis, each with a role in the major cult of their polis.

²⁴ Such lack of specificity is not unparalleled. *Phratries* are never referred to by name in contemporary literary evidence; note also *Phratries*, T 16 (decree of unnamed *phrateres*) and T 18 (list of a phratry or phratry subgroup beginning οἷδε φράτρες, cf. *Phratries*, 79–91).

²⁵ *Phratries*, 137–9.

that all members of the Dekelean House should be scrutinized (e.g. T 3, 13–14, and ‘all the *phrateres*’ in decree II).

Rhodes’s final argument proceeds from the observation that priestly families were aristocratic in character and that it could not therefore be ruled out that the Demotionidai were such a family, exercising special responsibility for membership of their phratry. There are, I think, two main problems with this.

First, it is questionable (I now think) whether formal priestly-aristocratic families of the sort posited by Rhodes existed. Rather, the supply of priestly personnel was a characteristic feature of the formal *genos tout court*. Those from the *genos* who actually served as priests might be aristocrats and/or otherwise socio-economically privileged, but in no specific case (and despite the theoretical possibilities of ‘privileged’ *gene*, mentioned above) is there clear evidence that, in the mature democracy, the priest and his immediate family formed an entire *genos*.

Second, even if one were to concede that, say, the Eteoboutadai might have been such a family, there is a *prima facie* implausibility that, in the fourth-century democratic state, a priestly-aristocratic family would have exercised control over access to the citizen rights which phratry membership entailed. To make a plausible case that this happened Rhodes needs good parallels; but they are lacking. He adduces the law of the Eumolpidai, deriving from their religious authority and binding on all participants in the Mysteries, not just Eumolpidai;²⁶ but on any theory of the *genos* one would expect it to have responsibilities for the regulation of its own cults: it scarcely follows that it would have controlled access to their phratry of candidates from outside the *genos*.

Might other parallels, not adduced by Rhodes, help his case?²⁷ Andocides 1.125–27 seems to imply that Kallias, dadouch from the *genos* Kerykes, also held office in the phratry to which the Kerykes belonged.²⁸ But there is no implication that this office gave Kallias control over entry to the phratry of anyone, let alone non-members of the *genos*, and the passage shows an individual aristocratic member of a *genos* holding phratry office; it does not imply that the *genos* as a whole exercised power in the phratry. Some, perhaps all, *gene* had people like Phrastor in them; it seems implausible that such a *genos* would, as a whole, have possessed priestly-aristocratic powers of the sort envisaged by Rhodes. Aeschines proudly claims that his father’s phratry shared altars with the Eteoboutadai, who supplied the priestess of Athena Polias.²⁹ But there is no implication here that the Eteoboutadai exercised control over membership of this phratry; they probably formed a *genos* within (and were in that sense a subgroup of) the phratry to which Aeschines’ father belonged. Hence *genos* and *phrateres* who were not *genos* members shared altars; and Aeschines is simply claiming reflected prestige. The illuminating parallel here is the role that some *gene* played in the Cleisthenic *phylai*, supplying priestly personnel and/or premises for cult of *phyle* eponyms. Members of the *phyle* Kekropis, for example, might no doubt similarly have been proud to share altars with the *genos* which served the cult of Kekrops, the Amyndridai;³⁰ but there is no suggestion that such a *genos* exercised any sort of control over ‘its’ *phylai*, in regard to admissions (which flowed, of course, from entry

²⁶ For example, Andoc. 1.115, Lysias 6.10. Rhodes (n. 7), 119.

²⁷ Rhodes does not question the case I raised (*Phratries*, ch. 2) against earlier attempts to argue that certain passages of the orators showed *gene* exercising power over the admission of non-*gennetai* to their phratry.

²⁸ See *Phratries*, 68–71.

²⁹ Aeschin. 2.147.

³⁰ Cf. Parker (n. 8), 118–19 and 285–6.

to a deme within the *phyle*) or in any other respect. In any case, both Kerykes and Eteoboutadai were *gene* of high prestige, whether or not derived wholly from the prominent cults they served; in contrast the Demotionidai are entirely unknown outside these decrees.

In summary, it would seem questionable to impute in the fourth century to the entirety of an otherwise unknown *genos*, quite possibly including non-aristocrats, powers which extend far beyond those attested for even the most aristocratic families of the most prestigious *gene*.

On my account of the Demotionidai decrees, neither group mentioned in them, Demotionidai or Dekelean House, was a *genos*; and we should not, therefore, look to these decrees in our search for a satisfactory theory of Attic *gene*. I continue to be uncertain that my account is correct. On current evidence, we are necessarily in the realm of probabilities and plausibilities; but Rhodes has not persuaded me away from the view that it is likely to be closer to the truth than any other so far proposed.

British School at Athens

S. D. LAMBERT
bsambrs@eexi.gr