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Politicians and Priestesses. Networks of Elite Families in Pompeii

Virginia L. Campbell

The city of Pompeii is at once both entirely typical of an ancient Roman city and entirely unique – not just because of its destruction and preservation – but because every town, every city, as much as it is representative of the time and culture in which it originates, has its own development, characteristics, and composition. As such, studying any aspect of life in Pompeii both informs the historian of daily life in the Roman world, and of the idiosyncrasies and facets that make Pompeii Pompeii. One feature of Pompeii that makes it function in such a way is the abundant writing found on the walls of the city – whether carved monumentally, painted professionally, or scratched by an idle passer-by – that allows an examination of the city in a way that is nearly impossible for any other place. The written remains of the city allow the examination of named individuals, to the point that many who work in Pompeii for any period of time can gain a sense of feeling like they personally know some of the cities inhabitants. At the same time, these texts allow groups – not just families but larger social groups – to be identified and studied.

It is this material that allows a new methodology to be applied to the city: social network analysis (SNA).¹ SNA is a methodology utilised in sociology and anthropology – and now increasingly in ancient history and archaeology – as a means to map and measure the relationships, interactions and connections between people who form part of a group or community. Network theory is based on the idea that an individual's actions in life depend, in part, on how that individual is tied into a larger web of social connections, and that the success or failure of the society as a whole can be determined by the patterns of their internal structure. Using these measures allows the analyst to distinguish between the primary connectors, the core members who bridge the links of the community between various clusters, and those who are isolated or on the periphery of the network. Developing this type of map of a community not only allows the larger network to be analysed, but also allows smaller connections and groups to be examined, thus providing a detailed understanding of how a community functions

¹ For a general introduction to SNA see: C. Prell, *Social Network Analysis: History, Theory and Methodology* (London 2011).

socially. Using inscriptions, it is possible to map the way individuals are connected to each other, how certain parts of daily life function, and to what extent certain families dominated civic, political or religious life. It is the tie between religious and political life that is the focus of this study.

Religion and politics went hand in hand in the ancient world, as honouring the gods was inexorably tied to every aspect of life, determining the success and well-being of country, city, family, and individual. From the Empire-wide Pantheon of gods focused around the Capitoline triad to the *lares* worshipped in the home, demonstrations of piety were a cornerstone of Roman life. To this end, the priests and priestesses charged with overseeing dedications to the gods had an important place in the social structure of the ancient city, and were therefore closely tied to political life. Certainly in Republican Rome, the most influential priesthoods were filled by those who had been, or would be, consul. The lists of priestly colleges that survive from Rome demonstrate that the priesthoods were monopolized by elite families, and that the names of those occupying priestly offices were virtually identical to the leading politicians and generals of the time.² The priesthoods and secular magistracies were never clearly separated, and thus there is an assumption that 'the actions of the colleges and their members were entirely motivated by politics'.³ This was not simply a matter of politicians using religion to gain power, but was, in fact, believed to be a mandate that originated with the very founding of the Republic:

Among the many divinely-inspired expedients of government established by our ancestors, there is none more striking than that whereby they expressed their intention that the worship of the gods and the vital interests of the state should be entrusted to the direction of the same individuals, to the end that citizens of the highest distinction and the brightest fame might achieve the welfare of religion by a wise administration of the state, and of the state by a sage interpretation of religion.⁴

In Pompeii, however, this connection is less clear. There are a number of men who do serve both as politicians and priests, but there are also a

² M. Beard et al., *Religions of Rome*, Volume I (Cambridge 1998) 103.

³ Beard et al. *Religions*, 104; P. Castrén, *Ordo Populusque Pompeianus: Polity and Society in Roman Pompeii* (Rome 1975, 1983) 68.

⁴ Cicero, *De Domo Sua*, 1.

number of women holding office as priestesses who are tied to political families. In essence, it appears that there are a number of elite families (particularly in the Augustan period) who provide a significant number of magistrates (male) and priestesses (female). Using the epigraphic material and the principles of SNA, the familial connections between magistrates and known religious representatives will be explored in order to determine whether or not this link was a normative approach to maintaining power amongst elite families.

Religion in Pompeii

Temples abound in Pompeii – both within the city limits and in the extramural environment. Those within the urban centre are concentrated in two areas – around the Forum in Regio VII and between the Triangular Forum and theatre district in Regio VIII, and date to both the pre- and post-colonial periods.⁵ The earliest sanctuary, that dedicated to Apollo, dates to the sixth century BC and shows continued use until the eruption in AD 79.⁶ Other early religious foundations include a temple to Minerva/Hercules in the area of the Triangular Forum, built in the sixth century and renovated in the fourth century BC, and Jupiter, Isis, and Asclepius gain temples in a flurry of building activity in the second century.⁷ Stamper argues the dedication to Jupiter was an example of the self-Romanisation taking place in Pompeii decades prior to actual colonization, which was then re-dedicated to the Capitoline Triad upon the establishment of the colony in 80 BC.⁸ What may seem to be the most important temple complex (certainly the largest) sits just beyond the city walls, that which is

⁵ The extra-mural temples, however, are all dated to the pre-Roman period. A.M. Small, 'Religion in the Roman Period' in: J. Dobbins and P. Foss ed., *The World of Pompeii* (London 2007) 184-211: 184-185.

⁶ S. De Caro, 'The First Sanctuaries,' in: J. Dobbins and P. Foss ed., *The World of Pompeii* (London 2007) 73-78: 73.

⁷ De Caro, 'First Sanctuaries', 74-75, 77-79; W. van Andringa, 'Statues in the Temples of Pompeii: Combinations of Gods, Local Definitions of Cults, and Memory of the city' in: B. Dignas and R.R.R. Smith ed., *Historical and Religious Memory in the Ancient World* (Oxford 2012) 83-115: 90.

⁸ J. Stamper, 'The Capitoline Temples of Rome and its Colonies: Cosa and Pompeii' in: T. Kaizer et al. ed., *Cities and Gods: Religious Space in Transition* (Leuven 2013) 9-20: 15-16; Small, 'Roman Period', 184-185.

dedicated (or rather, re-dedicated) to Venus.⁹ The importance of this particular goddess is a reflection of her role as patron deity of the city, which is evident in the official name of Pompeii: *Colonia Veneria Cornelia*.¹⁰ In the Augustan period two more temples are constructed, one the Temple of Augustan Fortune, and the other (most likely) dedicated to the Genius of Augustus.¹¹ Despite the number of temple complexes found in Pompeii, there is some difficulty in understanding religious practice due to the inability to completely reconcile the temples with known priesthoods. There is very little epigraphic evidence that attests the worship that would have taken place in the temples scattered throughout the city. No priests of Jupiter, Isis, or Minerva are known. There are priestesses of Ceres, and two priests dedicated to Mars, but no known location for either of these gods worship. Perhaps most surprising is the case of Apollo: his temple is the oldest and longest standing in Pompeii, yet the only evidence for direct worship of this god is a mention of the sponsorship of games given in honour of Apollo (*Iudi Apollinones*) in a funerary inscription.¹²

There are three common names used to denote a religious role as fulfilled by a specific person found in Pompeii.¹³ These are *sacerdos*, *flamen*,

⁹ The original temple foundations pre-date colonization, but debate remains as to the exact deity worshipped. It is generally accepted that this was likely a sanctuary for a goddess of local, Italianate origin, possibly Mefitis, with whom Venus was later amalgamated. The re-dedication and renovation of the temple took place in the colonial period, with Venus chosen as the patron goddess of the city because of the close ties Sulla had to her. See M. Carroll, 'Exploring the sanctuary of Venus and its sacred grove: politics, cult and identity in Roman Pompeii', *PBSR* 78 (2010) 63-106.

¹⁰ *CIL* X 787; also found in its abbreviated form 'c.c.V.C.' in *CIL* IV 3340.28, 3340.141, 3340.142, 3340.143, 3340.144, 3340.147, and 3340.148.

¹¹ There is some debate if this was in fact dedicated to the Genius of the colony or to the Genius of Augustus. However, renovations in the Vespasianic period seem to suggest it was used for the emperor cult, even if that was not the original intention. See I. Gradel, 'Mamia's dedication: emperor and Genius: the imperial cult in Italy and the Genius Coloniae in Pompeii', *ARID* XX (1992) 43-58.

¹² *CIL* X 1974d; V. Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii: Organisation, Space, and Society* (London 2015) 338; Small, *Roman Period*, 186.

¹³ Other terms used to denote lower offices have been excluded from this study such as the *ministri* who oversaw the shrines in neighbourhoods and crossroads, commonly posts held by freedmen, and *auguri* who were charged with reading signs, thus not serving any one particular god.

and *pontifex*.¹⁴ The terms of *sacerdos* and *flamen* appear to be interchangeable.¹⁵ Marcus Holconius Rufus, for example, is listed as a *sacerdos* of Augustus in two texts (*CIL* X 830, 837), but as a *flamen* of Augustus in three others (*CIL* X 838, 947, 948).¹⁶ Likewise, both a *flamen* and a *sacerdos* of Mars are attested epigraphically.¹⁷ Searching for these terms (both male and female) in the epigraphic record, twenty-two named individuals have been identified that held one (or more) of these three titles (see Table 1).¹⁸ For four of them, the text that names them to this office is the only evidence for them or someone bearing their family name, and thus little can be done in terms of exploring their wider political or religious network.¹⁹ One, Amandus, is slightly problematic because it is only a *cognomen* (the third part of a Roman name). An additional inscription (*CIL* X 8071) attests an Helvius Amandus, which when taken into consideration with an electoral *dipinto* in which an Amandus supports the election of Gnaeus Helvius Sabinus (*CIL* IV 7213), may provide evidence that he was a member of this family, although it is impossible to say if he was a *libertus* or citizen. He does appear to be quite busy as a *rogator* (collector of votes), additionally supporting at least four other candidates. This might lend some weight to the idea of his status as a freedman, being lent to associates of his former owner for purposes of campaigning. Chiavria speculates that his

¹⁴ These terms are all defined as priests, and are only distinguished by the divinity being worshipped and membership in different priestly colleges. Whilst this is of consequence in Rome, there seems to be little differentiation present in Pompeii.

¹⁵ These terms are somewhat problematic, however, as *Flamines* appear, from epigraphic testimony elsewhere in Italy, to be held for a term of one year, unless specifically attested as *flamen perpetuus*. Furthermore, the title *flamen Caesaris Augusti* was used to indicate any reigning emperor. H. Mouritsen and I. Gradel, 'Nero in Pompeian Politics: Edicta Munerum and Imperial Flamines in Late Pompeii', *ZPE* 87 (1991) 145-155: 149; Mouritsen and Gradel, 'Imperial Flamines', 149.

¹⁶ The Latin inscriptions of Pompeii are primarily compiled in volumes IV (parietal inscriptions) and X (lapidary inscriptions) of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. Additional texts are published in *L'Année Épigraphique* (*AE*) or *Ephemeris Epigraphica* (*EE*).

¹⁷ *CIL* IV 879 = *ILS* 6364, *CIL* X 797 = *ILS* 5004 = *AE* 2000: 243, and *CIL* IV 1266.

¹⁸ There are six further texts that name either *sacerdoti* or *flamini* but are fragmentary and thus do not contain a name. *CIL* IV 3882, 7349, 7996, 8968, *CIL* X 798, 974.

¹⁹ Aquiva Quarta, Heia Rufula, daughter of Marcus, and Heia Rufula, daughter of Lucius (*CIL* X 812) and Lassia (*CIL* X 1074b = *ILS* 5053.2).

priesthood might be one dedicated to Isis, but the evidence for this is somewhat tenuous, based entirely on *dipinti* (a painted inscription). Amandus independently serves as rogator for both Gaius Cuspius Pansa and Gnaeus Helvius Sabinus (*CIL* IV 1011, 787), who are also supported collectively by worshippers of Isis.²⁰ The one remaining person whose network cannot be further expanded is Valerius. Though there are numerous other members of this gens attested in Pompeii, including Lucius Valerius Flaccus who served as duovir (official style of two joint magistrates) in AD 1-2 (*CIL* X 884, 891), without a *praenomen* (Roman personal name), filiation, or further attestations it is impossible to either date this text or place him properly within his familial group.²¹

The inscriptions naming the twenty-two individuals who occupied religious offices were thus compared and analysed in order to determine familial associations, date and title of office and divinity served. This information was then used to map relationships between members of the same gens, with the aim of connecting religious and political personages. The results, presented in table 1, demonstrate that the majority of those who held a priestly appointment were related to someone serving as a magistrate.

Table 1: Epigraphic Attestations of Priests & Priestesses

	Name	Title	References	Date	Network
1	Alleia	<i>sacerdos Veneris et Cereris</i>	<i>EE</i> VIII.315 = <i>EE</i> VIII.855 = <i>ILS</i> 06371 = <i>AE</i> 1891: 113	Neronian /Flavian	daughter of 3, relative of 2?
2	Alleia Decimilla	<i>sacerdos publica Cereris</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 1036	Tiberian	daughter, wife of magistrates, mother of decurion
3	Cn. Alleius Nigidius Maius	<i>flamin Caesar Augustus</i>	<i>CIL</i> IV 1180 = <i>AE</i> 1949: 9	Neronian - Flavian	father of 1, relative of 2?

²⁰ C. Chiavria, 'Programmata': *Manifesti Elettorali nella Colonia Romana di Pompei* (Torino 2002) 195.

²¹ Castrén, *Ordo Populusque*, 233.

4	Amandus	<i>sacerdos</i>	<i>CIL</i> IV 7231 = <i>AE</i> 1913: 80; <i>CIL</i> IV 7900 = <i>AE</i> 1913: 87	Flavian	possible freedman of magistrate
5	Aquvia Quarta	<i>sacerdos publica Cereris</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 812	Augustan /Tiberian	n/a
6	Clodia	<i>sacerdos publica Cereris/ sacerdos publica</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 1074a = <i>ILS</i> 5053.1; Campbell 2015: PNC37	Augustan	daughter of magistrate
7	C. Cuspius Pansa (II)	<i>pontifex</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 791 = <i>ILS</i> 6360a	Neronian	father & son of magistrates
8	Eumachia	<i>sacerdos publica</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 810 = <i>ILS</i> 3785 = <i>AE</i> 2001: 793 = <i>AE</i> 2006: 249; <i>CIL</i> X 811; <i>CIL</i> X 812; <i>CIL</i> X 813 = <i>ILS</i> 6368 = <i>AE</i> 2006: 249	Augustan	wife & mother of magistrates
9	Heia Rufula (daughter of Marcus)	<i>sacerdos publica Cereris</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 812	Augustan	relative of 10?
10	Heia Rufula (daughter of Lucius)	<i>sacerdos publica Cereris</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 812	Augustan	relative of 9?
11	Holconia	<i>sacerdos publica</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 950 = <i>CIL</i> X 951	Augustan	sister of 12 & 13
12	M. Holconius Celer	<i>Augustus sacerdos/ sacerdos divus Augustus</i> ²²	<i>CIL</i> X 840 = <i>ILS</i> 6362; <i>CIL</i> X 943-944; <i>CIL</i> X 945 = <i>ILS</i> 6362a; <i>CIL</i> X 946	Augustan	brother of 11 & 13

²² Change in name for Augustus demonstrates chronology: *CIL* X 840, X 943-44 are sacerdos Augusti but *CIL* X 945-46 are for sacerdos divi Augusti, indicating that Augustus has died and the title of his priesthood has subsequently changed. Mouritsen and Gradel, 'Imperial Flamines', 149.

13	M. Holconius Rufus	<i>Augustus Caesar sacerdos</i> ²³ / <i>Augustus sacerdos/ flamin Augustus/ flamin Caesar Augustus</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 830 = <i>ILS</i> 6361b; <i>CIL</i> X 837 = <i>ILS</i> 6361; <i>CIL</i> X 838 = <i>ILS</i> 6361a; <i>CIL</i> X 947; <i>CIL</i> X 948	Augustan	brother of 11 & 12
14	Istacidia Rufilla	<i>sacerdos publica</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 999 = <i>ILS</i> 6370	Augustan	relative of magistrate
15	Lassia	<i>sacerdos publica Cereris</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 1074b = <i>ILS</i> 5053.2	Augustan (?)	related to 6? ²⁴
16	D. Lucretius Satri Valens	<i>flaminis Neronius perpetui</i> ²⁵	<i>CIL</i> IV 7992 = <i>AE</i> 1915: 61a = <i>AE</i> 1991: 433; <i>CIL</i> IV 1185 = <i>AE</i> 1991: 433; <i>CIL</i> IV 3884 = <i>ILS</i> 5145 = <i>AE</i> 1991: 433; <i>CIL</i> IV 7995 = <i>AE</i> 1937: 126 = <i>AE</i> 1991: 433	Neronian - Flavian	relative of 17 & 18 & other magistrates

²³ Dated to 2 BC, earliest attestation for this office in Pompeii. Mouritsen and Gradel, 'Imperial Flamines', 149.

²⁴ Castrén, *Ordo Populusque*, 71, 181 states that the Lassii were one of the most important wine producing families of Campania, and further concludes that someone in the family married into that of the Clodii, thus transferring their lands to the Clodii family. This appears to be conjecture based on nothing more than the inclusion of Lassia in the funerary inscription of the Clodii. See: Campbell, *Tombs of Pompeii*, 338-339.

²⁵ This is an unusual title, and Satri Valens is the only person known to hold a *flamine* in perpetuity in Pompeii. It is likely he received the title sometime between AD 50 and 54 when Nero bore the named titles: he was adopted in 50 and Claudius died in 54 thus changing his titles. It has been argued that the priesthood of the living emperor was something separate from this post, thus making it impossible for him to update the title of his *flamine* after Nero became emperor in AD 54. Mouritsen and Gradel, 'Imperial Flamines', 149-150.

17	M. Lucretius	<i>flamin Martis</i>	<i>CIL</i> IV 879 = <i>ILS</i> 6364	unknown	decurion/ relative of 16 & 18 & other magistrates
18	M. Lucretius Decidianus	<i>pontifex</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 788 = <i>ILS</i> 6363b = <i>AE</i> 2000: 296; <i>CIL</i> X 789 = <i>ILS</i> 6363c = <i>AE</i> 2000: 296	Flavian	relative of 16 & 18 & other magistrates
19	Mammia	<i>sacerdos publica</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 998 = <i>ILS</i> 6369; <i>CIL</i> X 816 = <i>AE</i> 1992: 271 = 1995: 298 = 2001: 793 = 2002: 333 = 2003: 276 = 2003: 315	Augustan	n/a
20	Sp. Turranius Proculus Gellanius	<i>flamen Dialis, flamen Martialis, pontifex</i>	<i>CIL</i> X 797 = <i>ILS</i> 5004 = <i>AE</i> 2000: 243	Claudian	magistrate
21	Valerius	<i>sacerdos Martialis</i>	<i>CIL</i> IV 1266	unknown	relative of magistrate?
22	Vibia Sabia	<i>sacerdos Iulia Augusta</i> ²⁶	<i>CIL</i> X 961	Neronian	relative of magistrate

Religious and Political Families

For all of the evidence presented here, it is quite clear that, as in Rome, politics and magistrates go hand in hand. The exception, where an individual holding a religious office cannot be linked to an elected official or a larger family network that is politically active, it is due to lack of the necessary evidence. The close relationship between politics and priestesses

²⁶ Castrén, *Ordo Populusque*, 72 suggests this refers to Agrippina, not Livia.

is particularly evident in the worship of Venus. Only one woman, Alleia, in office in the Neronian or Flavian period, is named specifically as a *sacerdos Veneris*, which seems a tad bit odd in a city that worshipped Venus as their patron goddess. There are, however, four women who are identified as *sacerdos publica* in inscriptions that do not specify the deity worshipped. The logical conclusion reached by many Pompeian scholars, is that any woman named as a ‘public priestess’ was in fact charged with honouring Venus on behalf of the city.²⁷ That the women known to us who bore this title – Eumachia, Mammia, Holconia, and Istacidia Rufilla – all come from prominent families of the Augustan period lends weight to this theory. Eumachia and Mammia, (and Holconia, via the association of her brothers’ works) in particular, were responsible for large-scale building programmes in the Forum that were viewed as promoting Augustan ideology – piety especially.²⁸

However, what is particularly interesting, and perhaps somewhat unexpected considering the fundamental nature of interdependence of politics and religion in Rome, is that the evidence, whilst it does show strong connections between religious and political personages, does not demonstrate longevity in these connections. The political lives of these families barely last more than a single generation. The Holconii family, for example, are viewed as one of the leading families of Pompeii, yet the three most prominent members of the family, simultaneously holding multiple political and religious appointments between them, are siblings. Although the family continues to be visible in the epigraphic record,²⁹ it is not until the Flavian period, a generation later, that another Holconius holds political office, but none hold priesthoods again.³⁰ In fact, the only family that demonstrates a multi-generation ability to influence politics and religion simultaneously is the Alleii.³¹ This success, may, however, be in part due to the fact that there appear to be at least two distinct groups of the gens. Earliest attestation of the family comes from the Augustan period, with two inscriptions naming Marci Alleii. The first is Marcus Alleius Ferox, named

²⁷ Castrén, *Ordo Populusque*, 70-72; M. Beard, *Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town* (London 2015) 215.

²⁸ Campbell, *Tombs of Pompeii*, 114-119; Gradel, ‘Mamia’s Dedication’.

²⁹ See: Castrén, *Ordo Populusque*, 176.

³⁰ Marcus Holconius Priscus is known entirely from electoral dipinti, running for both *aedile* and *duovir*.

³¹ See: Castrén, *Ordo Populusque*, 133.

in a dedicatory inscription to *Fortunae Augusta* in AD 8.³² The tomb of Marcus Alleius Minius, a *schola* found outside the Porta di Stabia, names a second Augustan man of this family, perhaps the brother of Ferox.³³

EE VIII.318 = AE 1891: 166

M(arco) Alleio Q(uinti) f(ilio) Men(enia tribu) Minio II v(iro) i(ure) d(icundo) locus sepulturae publice datus ex d(ecreto) d(ecurionum).

To Marcus Alleius Minius, son of Quintus, member of the Menenian tribe, duovir with judicial powers, the place for burial was given publicly by decree of the decurions.

A duovir in the early Augustan period, he adopted a man of the gens Luccii, who married his daughter, Alleia Decimilla. He was a magistrate, she was a priestess of Ceres, and their son was a member of the *ordo* of decurions. This information is contained in the funeral epitaph she dedicated for the family, on their tomb, located beyond the Porta di Ercolano.³⁴

CIL X 1036

M(arco) Alleio Luccio Libellae patri aedili / Iiur(o) praefecto quinq(uennali) et M(arco) Alleio Libellae f(ilio) / decurioni. Vixit annis XVII. Locus monumenti / publice datus est. Alleia M(arci) f(ilia) Decimilla sacerdos / publica Cereris faciundum curavit viro et filio.

To Marcus Alleius Luccius Libella senior, aedile, duovir, prefect, quinquennial, and to Marcus Alleius Libella junior, decurion. He lived 17 years. The place for the monument was given publicly. Alleia Decimilla, daughter of Marcus, public priestess of Ceres, oversaw the building on behalf of her husband and son.

His term as *quinquennalis* (colonial magistrate) took place in AD 25-26, which is used to date the tomb approximately to the reign of Tiberius. From the offices he held, the priesthood of his wife, and his young son's admittance to the town council, it is clear they were a fairly prominent family, undoubtedly carrying on from the legacy of her father. Because their son, Marcus Alleius Libella died at a relatively young age, it is most probable that this particular branch of the family ended with him in terms of blood relations. There are two further Marci Alleii, appearing on the wax tablets of

³² AE 2008: 330

³³ Campbell, *Tombs of Pompeii*, 301-302.

³⁴ Ibidem, 183-184.

Iucundus in AD 56. Marcus Alleius Carpus (*CIL* IV 3340.02 and 3340.21) serves as a witness, and Marcus Alleius Hyginus (*CIL* IV 3340.46) as a seller. Although it is not a certainty, in considering nomenclature and the date of their appearance, it is likely these men were freedmen of the family of Marcus Alleius Luccius Libella and his wife, and thus were responsible for carrying on the family name.

At the same time, the rise of another group of the gens Alleii was taking place. Sometime before the AD 50s, Gnaeus Alleius Nobilis, who was most likely a freedman (or the son of a freedman), and his wife Pomponia, a freedwoman, adopted a man of the gens Nigidii.³⁵ Gnaeus Alleius Nigidius Maius is by far the best attested member of the Alleii gens, appearing in nearly twenty inscriptions, including advertisements for games, the wax tablets of Iucundus, electoral dipinti, and by filiation, a number of funerary texts.³⁶ He was a magistrate, serving as quinquennalis in AD 55-56, and his public career is thought to have culminated with his appointment as a *flamen Vespasiani*.³⁷

CIL IV 1180 = *AE* 1949: 9

*Pro salute / [Imp(eratoris) Vespasiani] Caesaris Augu[sti] li[b]e[ro]rumqu[e]
/ [eius ob] dedicationem arae [glad(iatorum) par(ia) -- -] Cn(aei) [All]ei Nigidi
Mai / flami[nis] Caesaris Augusti pugn(abunt) Pompeis sine ulla dilatione /
III Non(as) Iul(ias) venatio [sparsiones] vela erunt.*

For the well-being of the [emperor Vespasian] Caesar Augustus and of his children, and [for the] dedication of the altar, [the gladiatorial troupe] of Gnaeus [All]eius Nigidius Maius, priest of Caesar Augustus, will fight at Pompeii, without delay, on the 4 July; there will be a hunt and awnings.

It is likely he was still alive – though well into his sixties – close to the time of Vesuvius’ eruption, when the advertisement for a property he owned, the *Insula Arriana Polliana* (*CIL* IV 138) was painted. His daughter, Alleia, is the only woman attested to have served as priestesses of both Ceres and Venus, which must have been an honour indeed.³⁸

³⁵ See Castrén, *Ordo Populusque*, 109, 195; Campbell, *Tombs of Pompeii*, 118.

³⁶ *CIL* IV 138, 499, 504, 512, 1177, 1179, 1180, 1493, 3453, 3785, 3883, 7690, 7990, 7991, 7993. See J.L. Franklin, Jr., ‘Cn. Alleius Nigidius Maius and the Amphitheatre: “Munera” and a Distinguished Career at Ancient Pompeii’, *Historia* (1997) 434-447.

³⁷ Franklin, ‘Nigidius Maius’, 444-446.

³⁸ *NSA* 1890: 333.

EE VIII.315 = EE VIII.855 = ILS 06371 = AE 1891: 113
[A]lleia Mai f(ilia) / [s]acerd(os) Veneris / et Cereris sibi / ex
dec(urionum) decr(eto) pe[c(unia) pub(lica)]
Alleia, daughter of Maius, priestess of Venus and Ceres, to herself,
in accordance with a decree of the decurions, with [public] money.

There is a further, albeit tenuous link, to another family with political and religious connections. Gnaeus Alleius Nigidius Maius' family have a number of *columellae* placed within the tomb of Eumachia. This has led numerous scholars to suggest that he was somehow linked to the Eumachii family, who seemingly died out in the Tiberian/Claudian period, despite the fact that there is no onomastic or epigraphic link between the two families whatsoever.³⁹ It seems just as likely that the family simply took advantage of a very grand but abandoned tomb to re-purpose as their own. Regardless, the remains of his adoptive mother and two freedmen are located within the tomb.⁴⁰ One of the men attested in the tomb, Gnaeus Alleius Logus, also appears as a witness on a wax tablet dated to AD 55 (*CIL* IV 3340.83), and another likely freedman, Gnaeus Alleius Chryseros, signed tablet 35 in AD 57.

What is lacking from the epigraphic record, however, is how the Marci Alleii of the Augustan/Claudian period and the extended family of Gnaeus Alleius Nigidius Maius dominant in the Neronian/Flavian era were linked, if indeed they were at all. That there appear to be freedmen of both branches of the gens circulating in the AD 50s when Lucius Caecilius Iucundus was collecting signatures suggests that, on some level, there was a continuous family line, even if perpetuated by a number of freedmen, thus leading to the use of different praenomen. There are other attestations of Alleii that do not help shed any light on this, as many are singular occurrences of a name and rarely provide the useful tool of filiation. The fact that the group in the AD 50s comes into prominence after an adoption, in conjunction with the known early death of a son in the AD 20s-30s, suggests that the family may have lost some of its prominence as a result of an untimely death, and needed those intervening years to rebuild, perhaps financially as well as in terms of heirs eligible for seeking political office. For

³⁹ Franklin, 'Nigidius Maius', 436.

⁴⁰ A. D'Ambrosio and S. De Caro, *Un Impegno per Pompei*, 11 OS (Milano 1983); Campbell, *Tombs of Pompeii*, 118-119, 257-259.

that reason, it becomes understandable that there is no epigraphic evidence that details the transition from the earlier to the later branch, and that some of the history of the Alleii, thus remains a mystery.

Regardless of the difficulties of linking the earlier and later family groups of the Alleii, the fact remains that they are the only concrete example of a gens that has members simultaneously serving the political and religious realms across multiple generations. Why this family and no others, such as the Holconii or the Lucretii, is impossible to determine. However, the lack of multiple gens achieving the type of longevity shown by the Alleii is remarkable, as it demonstrates unequivocally that although there are strong ties between religious and political offices, seldom do they last long enough for any one elite family to dominate these positions of power. The transition from one family to the next is relatively quick. This rapid turnover is contrary to our general concept of how Pompeian society operated, illustrating that the network of elite families was larger – or at the least – much more fluid, than has previously been believed. Using aspects of SNA to search for ties between named individuals in the epigraphic material allows the connections to be visualised in a manner that permits this type of analysis. By mapping the familial networks of those active in political and religious roles, the evidence is seen in a new way, and thus reveals a different perspective on some rather old material.