

Ancient Greek Women: their Specific and Varied Roles in Family/Society

By:

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Family and Consumer Sciences

Quotes from Aristotle

- “The well-ordered wife will justly consider the behavior of her husband as a model of her own life” (ECO-Bk. 1.7.)
- “Neither splendor of vestments, nor pre-eminence of beauty, nor the amount of gold, contributes so much to the commendation of a woman, as good management in domestic affairs, and a noble and comely manner of life.” (CO-Bk.1.7.)
- “Females are naturally libidinous, incite the males to copulation, and cry out during the act of coition.”(DE HA-5.2. 540a11-13)
- “Woman is more compassionate than man, and has a greater propensity to tears.”(DE H A-9.1608 b 8-9)

Women in Ancient Greece

- In Ancient Greece, women were either slaves, wives, or Hetaira
- Hetaira were single women who served in an entertainment role similar to prostitution
- They were not citizens of Athens (“freeborn”) and usually started their lives as slaves
- Because they were not citizens, they were not permitted to marry

Invisibility

- The main role of wives in Ancient Greece was to be invisible
- They were supposed to stay out of sight and to remain within the home
- Here they were to keep the home, raise children, supervise slaves, and serve/obey their husbands
- When something was needed outside of the home, a slave was sent to obtain it
- When men were present in the home, women were to be silent

Hetaira

- Hetaira were supposed to be able to have conversations with men during festivals
- Their purpose was to entertain the men
- This involved being skilled in music and other arts
- Some were midwives
- Though unable to marry and thus of a lower status: Hetaira were the mostly highly educated women in Ancient Greece

Ownership

- Women in Ancient Greece were not viewed as human: They were viewed as property
- In childhood they were owned by their fathers who not only picked the husband for their daughter, but paid him a dowry prior to *giving* her away
- Upon marriage, women then became the property of their husband
- Whereas marriage was not an option for Hetaira, being single was not an option for citizens

Education

- Most women did not receive formal education
- The primary form of education received by women in Ancient Greece was on how to run the home
- This knowledge was passed from mother to daughter
- Any other knowledge was passed from husbands or brothers

Women in Ancient Greece

- Neolithic Age (6000-3300 BC)
- Bronze Age (3300-1050 BC)
- Dark Age (1050-750 BC)
- Archaic Age (750-479 BC)
- Classical Age (479-336 BC)
- Hellenistic Period (336-168 BC)

Family Life

- Ancient Greek Families
- Woman as wife and mother
- Women of Athens in a submissive role



The Women of Sparta

- Had more freedom
- Were able to read and write
- Athletic Skills
- Legal Rights
- Helped in Plantation



Ancient Greece



Now Greece



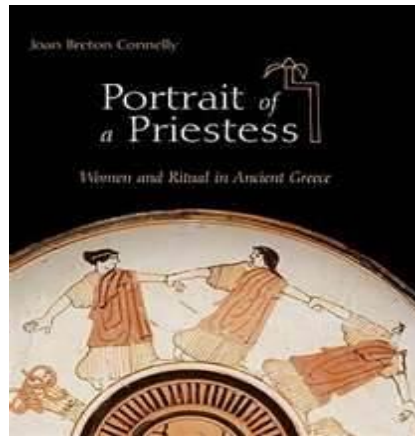
Social Role of Women in Ancient Greece

- Participation in religious and festive activities
- Courtesan, Concubine and Prostitute
- Priestess
- Politics
- Philosophers



Priestess

“Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Rituals in Ancient Greece”
by Joan Breton Connelly



Paths to Priesthood

- Paths to Priesthood: Preparation, Requirements, and Acquisition
- There were four 4 pathways to priesthood:
 - Inheritance
 - Allotment/appointment
 - Election/appointment
 - Purchase



The Prominent Priestesses

- The priestess of Athena Polias at Athens
- The priestess of Demeter & Kore at Eleusis



Politics

- Classical Greece Age (470--338 BCE)
 - No right to vote
 - No women ruler



Powerful Queens

- Amazon Queens
 - 13th c. BC/Greece/Lampedo/Queen of the Amazons
 - 13th c. BC/Greece/Martesia/Sister-Queen of the Amazons
- Mycenaean Queens (1300-1000 BC)
 - Leda, Queen of Sparta
 - Clytemnestra, Queen of Mycenae
 - Hecuba, Queen of Troy
 - Jocasta, Queen of Thebes
 - Penelope, Queen of Ithaca

- Historical Queens
 - 5th c. BC/Halicarnassus/Artemesia 1/ Ruler and naval strategist.
 - 4th c. BC/ Halicarnassus/Artemesia 11/ Ruler and commander.
 - 6th c. BC/Sythia/Tomris/Military woman and queen

Philosophers



- Search for wisdom
- Contributor to the work
- Pythagorean Society



- Theano



- Arete of Cyrene



Summary: Social Role of Women in Ancient Greece

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- Philosophers



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