**The role of women in Ancient Greece**

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Read the extract and locate information regarding the status of women in Ancient Greece

Status of women in the family

In ancient Greece, women were expected to rear children and manage the daily requirements of the household the family home. In fulfilling these home duties, they had the help of slaves if the husband could afford them. A kind of contact with non-family males was discouraged and women largely occupied their time with indoor activities such as wool-work and weaving. Women 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 (Cartwright, 2016). It is obvious that women could not attend public assemblies, vote, or hold public office, and even a woman’s name was not to be mentioned in public. What was the status of married women in ancient Greece? The married women were, at least in the eyes of the law, under the complete authority of their husbands. It can be seen that writers as Aristotle have no doubts that women were intellectually incapable of making important decisions for themselves (McKeown, 2018). From todays’ points of view, it represented clear established gender discrimination. In practice, of course, individual couples may well have shared their lives more equitably. Women were expected to be faithful to their husbands, but the reverse was not the case as husbands could freely engage the services of prostitutes, live-in lovers, and courtesans (Cartwright, 2016). It was accepted by the law that any woman who did not preserve the honor of the family, was guilty of the serious crime of moicheia which would lead to her being banned from practicing in public religious ceremonies. A husband who discovered that his wife was engaging in sexual relations with another man could murder the lover without fear of prosecution, and it was in accordance with custom law. This fact about cheating is also proof of clear discrimination in status of men and women in ancient Greece. Concerning possibilities to inherit property from parents, there we also elements of discrimination between men and women. If a woman’s father died, she usually inherited nothing if she had any brothers. If she were a single child, then either her guardian or husband, whenmarried, took control of the inheritance. About this issue, Cartwright (2016) writes the following: “In some cases when a single female inherited her father’s estate, she was obliged to marry her nearest male relative, typically an uncle. Females could inherit from the death of other male relatives, providing there was no male relative in line. Women did have some personal property, typically acquired as gifts from family members, which was usually in the form of clothes and jewelry. Women could not make a will and, on death, all of their property would go to their husband.” It is obvious that there was discriminations in rights of men and women, also in this area of everyday life in ancient Greece.

Read the extract and discuss the way girls were educated in Ancient Greece

Position of girls

The ancient Greek society was clearly man-centered society, in many aspects of societal and family life (McKeown, 2018). As in many other male-dominated and agrarian cultures, female babies were at a much higher risk of being abandoned at birth by their parents than male offspring. “Children of citizens attended schools where the curriculum covered reading, writing, and mathematics. After these basics were mastered, studies turned to literature (for example, Homer), poetry, and music (especially the lyre). Athletics was also an essential element in a young person’s education. Girls were educated in a similar manner to boys but with a greater emphasis on dancing, gymnastics, and musical accomplishment which could be shown off in musical competitions and at religious festivals and ceremonies” (Cartwright, 2016). Based on this description of the role of girls’ education, it was accepted in society that the ultimate goal of a girl’s education was to prepare her for her role in rearing a family and not directly to stimulate intellectual development, or for takes part in the public life.

Read the extract and discuss the life of young women in Ancient Greece

Position of young women It was common accepted custom in ancient Greece that young women were expected to marry as a virgin. Moreover, the marriage was usually organized by their father, who chose the husband and accepted from him a dowry. If a woman had no father, then her interests (marriage prospects and property management) were looked after by a guardian (kyrios or kurios), perhaps an uncle or another male relative (Cartwright, 2016). Married at the typical age of 13 or 14, love had little to do with the matching of husband and wife (damar). Of course, love may have developed between the couple, but the best that might be hoped for was philia – a general friendship/love sentiment; eros, the love of desire, was often sought elsewhere by the husband. All women were expected to marry, there was no provision and no role in Greek society for single mature females.

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Further material to watch:

[The Roles, Rights and Lives of Women in Ancient Greece](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-ASzrpGZ-k&t=7s)

[A day in the life of an ancient Athenian - Robert Garland](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ar8S6virCwM)