Gender Roles in Marriage in Ancient Greece

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Introduction
In every ancient society, there were marriages, divorces, and adultery. Ancient Greece was the same every other society in that time period. Marriages in Ancient Greece were arranged by the parents of the intended bride and groom. A financial arrangement was made between the families in the form of a dowry. Girls married between the ages of 14-18 while typically men married in their 20-30s. Usually the men and women played different roles in the marriage. Divorces were easily arranged. The man would have to pay back the remaining dowry money to his wife's parents. Divorces were granted on many grounds: one example is if the wife could not bear children. When a wife committed adultery, divorce was legally required.

Marriage
Marriage played a really important role in Greek culture. Girls were often married off at a young age to older men. A woman was married young because their “jobs” were to produce children and keep the family going. Typically, dowry is wealth transferred from the bride’s family to the groom. In Ancient Greece, it was different. The father of the groom had to give a dowry to the bride’s family as an acceptance of the marriage. The wedding ceremony consisted of family members gathering.

Art depicting acceptable gender roles:
- Women managed the household and slaves.
- Wives would cook the food and weave cloth.
- Also, they would take care of the children.
- Married women did not leave the house much.
- Main focus was domestic labor and religion.

Adultery in Greece
Adultery is voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not his or her spouse. Adultery in Greece was almost acceptable if men did it. Men did not get severely punished. However, if it were women who committed adultery, they could be killed for it.

Divorce
There were many reasons that people would want a divorce in Ancient Greece. If a woman could not bear a child, that was a valid reason for a man to have a divorce with her. Once the divorce happened, the husband or ex-husband was responsible for giving the wife’s family the dowry they received. One of the most obvious reasons for divorce was the act of adultery, which is further explained below.

Bibliography


This picture shows how marriages were in Ancient Greece. The bride and groom just got happily married and hopefully had a good marriage without cheating and ending in a divorce. It was preferably arranged by matchmakers.

Athene serves Herakles with wine. The goddess is depicted with spear, snake-trimmed aigis cloak, and a small owl in her hand. The owl represents wisdom. Her helm sits on a small plinth. Herakles has his usual attributes: lion-skin cape and club. The lion resembles fierceness, and the lion is typically the king of the jungle. Here, he is referred as the head of the household.