

There are a number of major differences in the status and treatment of women among the Egyptian, Athenian and Roman civilizations. In addition, there are obvious similarities in how women were regarded as a whole and their position in society among these different civilizations.

Egyptian women exercised many freedoms and rights unknown to women in other ancient cultures.

Women were free to go about in public and interact socially. As mothers, they were respected as keepers of the home and educators of the children. In addition, women retained their property rights after marriage. Certain artwork acts as evidence showing that within the family both sons and daughters were loved and cared for by the parents.

Outside of the family, there are records which indicate that some women worked as scribes, treasurers, and even managed estates. Common women who worked on a farm earned the same wages as a man doing the same job.

Legally, a woman held the same status as a man of the same social class. A woman could testify as a witness in court and could also bring cases to court. Within the religion of Egypt women could serve as priestesses.

What is perhaps even more remarkable than these rights and freedoms is the power that some women came to hold within the royal house. The power of the throne was passed on through the mother's line. Therefore, a pharaoh had to marry

a princess. Various women acted as Regent and ~~also~~ exercised considerable power. Hatshepsut even rose to be Pharaoh taking the power from her weaker son. What is interesting, is that even though she held the position of pharaoh as a woman, in artwork she is portrayed with a beard and she was referred to as "His Majesty".

It was perhaps the stability of the Egyptian Civilization that explains why women were able to hold such a status. There was much less dissension and distrust than among the Athenians and Romans.

The subjugation of Athenian can in part be explained by the civilization's shift from an aristocracy to a democracy. With the rise of commerce and democratic ideals the Athenian household became an important

excellent

unit in society. As a result, the position of the husband as head of the household was elevated.

Property rights were passed from the father to the legitimate male heir. To ensure that he had one, restrictions were placed on women.

Other than attendance at activities such as religious festivals, women were not to go about in public. According to the writings of Xenophon, God made women to stay at home. That is what they were fit for and that is where they belonged.

Greek men spent time with courtesans and prostitutes, but Athenian wives were to simply ~~give~~ give birth to legitimate heirs. As mothers, they were respected but misogyny was the prevailing attitude among men.

Athenian women could not hold

political office and could not vote.

In reality, their subjugation began at birth. Female babies were more likely to be abandoned than males. No formal education was provided for them and

they were usually married through an arranged marriage in their early teens. Their dowry became their husband's and in the case of divorce, the dowry was paid back to the father.

An Athenian woman had no land property of her own, ~~but she had~~ ~~her own~~ ~~male guardian~~ just personal items.

The reason for the status of women in Athenian society is evident in their philosophy. According to Aristotle, women are simply deformed men. They <sup>provide</sup> have no soul <sup>to their offspring</sup> and contribute ~~nothing~~ nothing other than matter to a child when it is born. ~~of course the rest~~

The rest, of course, is from the father.

Comparably, Roman women had more rights and freedoms than Athenian ~~women~~ <sup>women</sup>. For example, Roman women often accompanied their husbands in public. Unlike Athenian women, they were also present when guests were in the home.

A Roman woman's most important role was that of a mother, but records do indicate that some women worked in positions outside of the home and even managed estates.

Like Athenian women, Roman women were married around 14 or 15 years of age through arranged marriages to middle-aged men. Originally, the marriage was arranged so that the husband had legal <sup>rights</sup> over the dowry. Later, because of increasing divorces, the father still ~~had~~ had legal right <sup>over</sup> the dowry, and

his daughter was married.

Roman women were never able to vote or hold public office, but some, such as emperors's wives, were able to influence political decisions.

At one point, a large group of women assembled to demand that a certain law be repealed. The law limited how much gold they could carry, what they could wear, as well as their rides in carriages. Cato the Elder used their protest as an example of women's uncontrollable nature. He felt that Roman men were growing weak by letting their wives assemble and unite in such an outrageous fashion.

Eventually, women gained several more rights within the Roman Empire. After some time they were even able to retain property and acquire their

own wealth. The male guardian became simply a formality.

It is clear that Roman women had a higher status than Athenian women. Rather than the Athenian city-state, Rome was a vast empire with a much more cosmopolitan world view. As a result, women were able to better their status over a period of time. Although ~~the~~ Roman women never did attain the same status and treatment that Egyptian ~~women~~ women enjoyed.

pleasure to read

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