



This piece of pottery shows two women deep in conversation. It was made in Asia Minor (Turkey) in about 100BC.

Women in ancient Greece led very sheltered lives - even by the standards of other ancient civilizations. They couldn't take part in politics, or own property. Their lives were always under the control of male relatives: fathers, husbands, brothers, and even sons.

This painting of a wedding procession has been magnified hugely, as it was painted on a tiny pottery box. A bride is being driven to her new home in a chariot.

WOMEN AND THE HOME

MARRIAGE

A girl usually married when she was only about 15 years old, but her husband could be much older than she was. The philosopher Plato suggested that 30-35 was the best age for a man to marry. The

husband was chosen by the girl's father, who provided her dowry. This was a gift of money and goods, which was looked after by the husband.

CHILDHOOD ENDS

The day before the wedding, the bride sacrificed her toys to the goddess Artemis, to symbolize the end of her childhood. Then she bathed in water from a sacred spring, carried to the bath in a special vase called a *loutrophoros*.

These vases were often decorated with scenes of the wedding ceremony.

THE WEDDING DAY

On the day, both families made sacrifices to the gods and held feasts in separate houses. Then, in the evening, the groom went to his bride's home. This was often the first time that they had met.

The couple then made their way back to the groom's house. If they were rich, they were driven by chariot, led by torch-bearers and musicians. Poorer people had to make do with a simple cart.

The bride was carried over the threshold, as a symbol that she was joining the religious life of the new family. The family scattered fruits and nuts over them for luck.



INTERNET LINK

For links to websites with information on the lives of women in ancient Greece, go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com

