



## Relief of Ancient Greek Women

In ancient Greece, men and women wore a *chiton* which is basically a sleeveless shirt. The chiton was made from a rectangular piece of linen (*Ionic chiton*) or wool (*Doric chiton*) which was draped by the wearer in various ways and kept in place at the shoulders by brooches (*fibulae*) and at the waist by a belt. Excess fabric (the chiton was longer than the wearer was tall) was pulled up under the belt.

The women would always wear the chiton at ankle length. During the *Archaic period*, Greek men wore a long chiton; thereafter, except for charioteers, priests, and the elderly, they wore a knee-length version. Sleeved chitons were worn by actors and priests.

The ancient Greeks could buy cloth and clothes in the *agora* (marketplace), but that was expensive. As a consequence, many of the clothes were made by the mother of the family, her daughters, and female slaves. Wealthy people had tunics made of coloured cloth. They were often decorated to represent the city-state in which they lived.

The chiton is well illustrated in the stone relief carvings and statues of the time. In this particular relief we can see two women both wearing chitons. The one seated is the lady of the house and the one standing is her slave. The lady of the house is choosing some jewellery from a box which the slave has bought to her.

Greek women would often wear rings and earrings which they bought from travelling pedlars. They would also buy hairpins and the fibulae needed to hold up their chitons.

Women would curl or braid their hair (which was always kept long) and arrange it into interesting and carefully designed styles on the top of their head. The hair would be held in place with scented waxes and lotions and hairpins. Sometimes they would wear it braided in pony-tails. Headbands, made of ribbon or metal, were also very popular. Both men and women used perfume which would be made by boiling flowers and herbs.

Interestingly the first real hat, the broad-brimmed *petasos*, was invented by the ancient Greeks. It was worn only for travelling. A chin strap held it on, so when it was not needed as protection from the weather, it could hang down ones back.



Two bowed broaches decorated with cylindrical golden beads, about 510 B.C.,  
Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum