Aimee Hinds, "Entry on: Princess of Ancient Greece™ Barbie® Doll by Mattel, Inc. ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1491. Entry version as of September 14, 2026.

Mattel, Inc.

Princess of Ancient Greece™ Barbie® Doll

United Stetes (2003)

TAGS: Athens Greek History Moirai

We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Princess of Ancient Greece™ Barbie® Doll
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2003
First Edition Details	Mattel, *Princess of Ancient Greece™ Barbie® Doll*, 2003.
Official Website	barbie.mattel.com (accessed: August 2, 2022).
Genre	Collectables*, Dolls*
Target Audience	Young adults (Mattel suggest that this doll is for adult collectors, which they define as those aged 14 and up)
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This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators

Logo retrieved from Wikipedia, public domain (accessed: January 11, 2022).

Mattel, Inc. (Company)

Mattel Barbie

Originally launched in 1959, Barbie was founded by businesswoman, inventor, and co-owner of Mattel, Ruth Handler as an opportunity for girls to play with dolls that allowed them a wider range of imaginative roles, in line with the range of toys available to boys at the time. From the early 1960s, Barbie has had over 200 careers to date.

Source:

barbie.mattel.com (accessed: January 27, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

This collector's edition doll depicts the 'Princess of Ancient Greece'. Unlike many of the ancient Greece inspired dolls produced by Barbie (including three versions of Athena (here, here and here), two versions of Aphrodite (here and here), Medusa, and Flora/Chloris, all also surveyed on this database), this doll does not depict a mythical character but a representation of a real (royal) woman. The doll is dressed in a tight-fitting coppery pleated dress (identified by the box text as a chiton) with a sheer white cloak-like garment with a gold patterned border draped over the top and fixed at one shoulder. Her clothes are fixed with large golden buttons in the shape of lion heads. She wears a laurel crown around her hair, described on the website as a "classic Grecian chignon". She also wears large golden hoop style earrings and a golden snake wrist cuff.

The box is relatively sparsely decorated: the backgrounds of box the inside and outside illustrate the same image of a colonnaded building and some countryside. The back of the box also features two images of the doll's character in different scenes: in one she sits weaving at a loom, in the other – highly reminiscent of some of Lawrence Alma-Tadema's paintings of similar scenes – she stands next to two seated women under a tree, against the backdrop of the sea. The box text focuses on specific historical "facts", including a description of the Greek landscape; a distinction between democratic and monarchic states; past-times for (royal) women, including weaving and its relationship to myth; and, like the other classical-adjacent doll in the series (the *Princess of the Nile*, also surveyed on this database), a description and explanation of her clothing and cosmetics.

Analysis

Like other dolls in the Dolls of the World Princess series (including the *Princess of the Nile*, also surveyed on this database), the *Princess of Ancient Greece* is presented as being grounded in history rather than fantasy or myth. However, the box text is non-specific about her time period or geographical region, despite making certain distinctions clear ("Here flourishes a great civilization that will last over a thousand years. Democracy flourishes in many city-states, but some places are ruled by a king"). While the text also refers to a "classical age", we cannot be sure that it is the classical period that is being referred to, given the information about the long life of ancient Greek

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civilisation as asserted elsewhere. Mattel recognise the limits of where the doll can be representative of – for example, she is not likely to be representative of Athens, a city famously democratic from the fifth century B.C. (although her identification with Athens is not ruled out by the specified thousand-year time period). However, it is also not likely to occur to a non-specialist that Athens might have not been democratic for the entire millennium. The idea of the doll as the 'Princess of Ancient Greece' has a flattening effect on the spatial and temporal framework that is set up by the history presented on the box, eliding the many Greek city-states and their various types of rule and presenting 'ancient Greece' as a homogenous culture across time and space (Milnor 2005: 225). There are thus even fewer clues to any definitive identity derived from real figures for this doll than its Egyptian counterpart, the *Princess of the Nile*, given the lack of identifying features and the many different versions of royal rule across ancient Greece through time.

As with the *Princess of the Nile* doll, education is apparently an important facet of this doll. The collectible dolls are not supposed to provide an education through role-playing. Instead they teach the consumer through the information on the box, a part of the product that is meant to be intricately linked with the doll; indeed, the doll is incomprehensible as a 'Princess of Ancient Greece' (as opposed to a goddess, mythical figure and/or from a different culture) without the box. As Milnor (2005: 218) points out, historicity is crucial to these dolls as a way of rethinking the educational potential of Barbie and marketing it to adult collectors.

The historicity itself feeds Barbie's familiar links with stereotypical ideas of womanliness and femininity. The box text defines the difference between men's and women's experience in ancient Greece almost immediately: "Her palace is divided into the *andron*, an area for the men, and the *gynaikon*, an area for the women". The princess can read and write but spends most of her time playing games. Of paramount importance is her wool-working (As the box text states, "In Greece, spinning wool and weaving it into cloth are so important even noblewomen and queens weave"), and her looks: "It is fashionable for women to look pale and delicate, so the princess wears white powder. Her beauty regime includes rubbing olive oil into her skin to soften and cleanse it." Similar to her earlier Great Eras counterpart (*Grecian Goddess*), the text positions the *Princess of Ancient Greece* comfortably into a patriarchal world where women look and behave in particular, stereotypical ways.

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	The doll's dress is clearly historically inspired, and largely accurate within the confines of Barbie's own presentation. The chiton is, as described on the box, fixed at the shoulders as the real garment would have been, although Barbie's version is tightly fitted like a sheath dress rather than representing the loose-fitting historical garment. The doll's hairstyle is described as a 'Grecian chignon'. Ancient Greek hairstyles were similar to the modern chignon, although the doll's hair is more like contemporary hairstyles seen on popular celebrities, tying it into popular culture and making it more attractive as a consumer item by giving the doll a modern twist that can be passed off as a historically-inspired feature. The doll's modern appearance may also attract the younger consumer by offsetting the overtly educational nature of the box.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Athens Greek History Moirai
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Expectations Family Fashion Femininity Gender Gender expectations/construction Gender, female Girls Historical figures History Learning Play* Political changes Pop culture references
Further Reading	Barbie, *About Barbie* (accessed January 27, 2020). Barbie, *Princess of Ancient Greece Barbie* (accessed September 20, 2020). Milnor, Kristina, "Barbie® as Grecian Goddess™ and Egyptian Queen™: Ancient Women's History by Mattel®", *Helios* 32.2 (2005): 215–233.

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