



**NUPTIAE**

## BETROTHAL - *SPONSALIA*

- ❖ Both bride and groom must be Roman citizens in order for *conubium* to occur.
  - Dowry had to be negotiated prior to the engagement
  - Both bride and groom had to consent to the engagement, as well as the *paterfamilias* of each
- ❖ Minimum legal age for marriage
  - 14 for males
  - 12 for females
  - Girls were often married in their teens and their husbands were usually much older



# SPONSALIA

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- ❖ Engagements could be made between families very early in a child's life, even at birth, for political or financial reasons
- ❖ In upper-class families, a party was usually given by the girl's father to celebrate the engagement and inform friends

# CUM MANU

## ❖ Legal consequences of marriage for the Roman bride:

- The wife ceased to be a member of her birth family and became a legal member of her husband's family, under the control and guardianship (*manus*) of her husband; modern scholars call this "*marriage cum manu.*"
- The transfer of control went from the *paterfamilias* to the *maritus*

## ❖ There were three ways for this transfer to occur

# CONFARREATIO (CUM MANU)

- ❖ Typically used by the upper class
- ❖ Family hosted a lavish and expensive wedding
- ❖ Special ritual involving an ancient type of grain called far, which was made into a special cake (farreum)
- ❖ This ritual immediately transferred the bride from the control (*potestas*) of her *paterfamilias* to the control (*manus*) of her *maritus*

# COEMPTIO (CUM MANU)

- ❖ “*Bride purchase*”
- ❖ Used by all classes
- ❖ Legal procedure involving a fictional "sale," where the groom paid a copper coin of low value for bride
- ❖ This procedure immediately transferred the bride from the control (*potestas*) of her *paterfamilias* to the control (*manus*) of her *maritus*

## *USUS (CUM MANU)*

- ❖ Used by all classes
- ❖ Automatic, passive transfer of the wife from the *potestas* of her *paterfamilias* to the *manus* of her *maritus* after the wife had remained with her husband for a full year without interruption
  - This was based on an ancient law transferring ownership of an object to the person who remained in uninterrupted possession of that object for a full year
- ❖ Wife could prevent the transfer of control by spending three consecutive nights away from her husband's home during the year (*trinoctium*)

# SINE MANU

- ❖ Wife remained a member of her birth family and not legal member of husband's family
- ❖ Therefore, the wife remained under *potestas* of *paterfamilias*
  - By the last century of the Republic, this was by far the most common type of marriage; by the Empire, *confarreatio*, *coemptio*, and *usus* had become effectively obsolete.



# WEDDING PREPARATIONS

## Materials Required:

- ❖ *Annulus pronubus* – wedding ring
- ❖ *Tabulae nuptiales* – marriage contract specifying dowry arrangements (if applicable)



# BRIDAL WEAR (VESTIS NUPTAE)

- ❖ *Velum* or *Flammeum* – saffron veil
- ❖ *Corona* – crown of flowers
- ❖ *Tunica recta* – straight tunic
- ❖ *Nodus Herculis* – belt tied in the knot of Hercules
- ❖ *Seni crines* – hairstyle (usually divided into six braids)





This fresco depicts a ritual preparation for marriage. An attendant begins the special arrangement of the bride's hair. Beside the seated bride, Eros holds up a mirror in which her face is reflected. The bride wears a saffron-colored gown, bound with a cloth belt tied in a Herculean knot; she wears yellow sandals, jewelry, and has a transparent veil wrapped around her and resting on her lap

# CONUBIUM

- ❖ Most weddings in June
  - Juno- protected marriage bonds
- ❖ No weddings on feast days, holidays or “unlucky” days
- ❖ *Nuptiae* took place at home of *paterfamilias*

# CONUBIUM

## ❖ Vows

- *Ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia* (used for all couples, brought good luck)
- Clasp of Right Hand : *dextrarum iunctio*
  - *Pronuba* – a married woman in a stable marriage joined the hands
- After the words of consent were given, the couple sat on stools facing the *aedes*
- Then they sealed their *nuptiae* with an *osculum*



# CONUBIUM

- ❖ Friends & Family (the witnesses) sealed the *tabulae nuptiales*
  - Confarreatio – 10 witnesses
  - Coemptio – 5 witnesses
- ❖ Ritual Sacrifice (usually a pig or a cow)

# CONUBIUM

- ❖ *Pompa nuptialis*— procession of *deductiones* from bride's father's house to groom's house
- ❖ Proceeded by boys with torches (*taeda nuptialis*) and a *tibicen* playing a *tibia*
- ❖ Guests yelled insults at the bride as she walked, supposedly for good luck



# CONUBIUM



## ❖ Entering her new house

- Rub doorway with lard
- Wreath hanging on the door (*serta*)
- Bride carried over threshold by attendants
- Receives fire & water from groom



# CONUBIUM

- ❖ *Matrona* or *pronuba* escorted bride to bridal chamber
  - Prayers for blessings over the marriage
  - Removes all jewelry
  - Puts the bride in the bed
  - Offers a sacrifice to hopefully have children
  - *Pronuba* leaves
  - Husband enters
- ❖ Guests still party outside the bedroom

## Bridal Procession

Four women are pictured: the mother at left , *pronuba* at right , musician with drum and the anxious-looking veiled *nupta* in the center.

The urn was made for a tomb.  
Centuripe, 3-2 century BCE. NY:  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.





Philonoe about to wed Bellerophon;  
The shy bride, assisted by her  
mother or a *pronuba*, is dressed in a  
saffron tunic with a wedding wreath  
hovering symbolically over her head.  
The groom stands on the right  
holding Pegasus, the winged horse.  
Between them stands Philonoe's  
father, Iobates, king of Lycia.  
Roman Tunisia.  
From the "House of the Nymphs."  
4th century CE. Nabeul  
Archaeological Museum.



Cinerary urn in marble for Helius Afinianus, dedicated by his wife. He is dressed in a *toga*, holding a scroll; she wears a *stola* and *palla*. They stand in front of open doors, holding hands before an altar in the marriage pose *dextrarum iunctio*. Inscription: D[is] M[anibus] HELIO AFIN[iano] PUB[lico] AUG[urum] SEXTIA PSYCHE CONIUGI B[ene] M[erenti] [fecit].

Rome, 2nd century CE. Berlin, Pergamon Museum.



Sestertius of Antoninus Pius, portraying two couples of the imperial family in the marriage gesture before an altar. Antoninus holds a statuette of Concordia while his wife holds a scepter. Inscribed: CONCORDIAE S(enatus) C(onsulto). Rome, 140-4 CE. Berlin: Bode Museum.

A veiled bride, followed by the *pronuba*, clasping hands (*dextrarum iunctio*) with the groom before an altar; on the left a huge male carries the sacrificial bull on his shoulder, on the right a maenad dances.

Rome: Vatican, Bracchio Nuovo.

