



# ATHENS AND SPARTA

The birth of democracy

# Athens & Sparta Life in the City States:

## Athens & Sparta: Powerful City States

### What is a city-state?

A city-state is a city and surrounding region that is also an independent nation with its own army, currency, laws, and elected leaders.



## Forms of Government

**Oligarchy** – a system in which a few powerful, wealthy individuals rule

**Tyranny** – rule by a single person who took control of the government against the wishes of the community

**Democracy**- a system in which citizens take part in the government

**Democracy a type of government in which people rule themselves.**

It comes from two Greek words «δῆμος» και «κράτος» meaning “rule of the people.”

But Greek city-states didn't start as democracies, and not all became democracies.

**Athens the city where democracy was born began** with kings who ruled the city state.  
Gradually the king lost his power.

**Athens aristocrats dominated Athenian society and run the city's economy.**  
They served as its generals and judges.  
Common people had little say in the government.

**Then a government called an oligarchy** was established were a group named the «ολίγοι» which means the “few rich” were those who held the power in the city.



**600s BC a group of rebels tried to overthrow the aristocrats.** A man named Draco created a new set of laws for Athens. Laws were very harsh. For example, Draco's laws made minor crimes such as loitering punishable by death

**Solon's laws 590s BC created a set of laws that were much less harsh and gave more rights to non aristocrats.** Under Solon's laws, all free men living in Athens became citizens people who had the right to participate in government. His efforts were not enough and unrest in the city continued.

**Peisistratus Brought peace and prosperity to the city Athens**

He began new policies meant to unify the city, created new festivals and built temples and monuments. After Peisistratus died, his son took over as tyrant. Today the word tyrant means a ruler who is harsh, but the word had a different meaning in ancient Greece. Athenian tyrants were usually good leaders. Tyrants were able to stay in power because they had strong armies and because the people supported them.

**Father of Democracy Under Cleisthenes' leadership, Athens**

developed the world's first democracy. He is called the father of democracy

**Cleisthenes Around 500 BC became a new leader**

As a member of one of the most powerful families in Athens, Cleisthenes didn't want aristocrats to run the government Called on the support of the people, to overthrow the aristocracy once and for all. He established a new form of government, "democracy".

## **Democracy under Cleisthenes**

Under Cleisthenes, all citizens in Athens had the right to participate in the assembly, or gathering of citizens

Limited to adult males whose fathers were citizens of Athens

Women, slaves, and foreign residents could not partake met outdoors on a hillside

During meetings, people stood before the crowd and gave speeches on political issues.

Every citizen had the right to speak his opinion.

After the speeches were over, the assembly voted. Voting was usually done by a show of hands.

## **Changes in Athenian Democracy**

As time passed, citizens gained more powers. For example, they served on juries to decide court cases. Juries had anywhere from 200 to 6,000 people, although juries of about 500 people were much more common. Most juries had an odd number of members to prevent ties.

## **Pericles 460 BC until his death in 429 BC.**

encouraged Athenians to take pride in their city. Believed that participating in government was just as important as defending Athens in war. Encouraged the people of Athens to introduce democracy into other parts of Greece.

## **Government in Athens**

Athens' Government ruled as a democracy. They were the FIRST to ever do this Council—made up of 500 citizens chosen each year ! The citizens (men) all belonged to the Assembly and met weekly to discuss problems or issues and come up with solutions

### **Athenian Military**

Athens had a strong navy . At age 18, all boys received one to two years military training

### **Athenian Social Structure**

#### **1 CITIZENS/FREEMEN**

- Had full citizenship and rights
- Divided into sub-classes based on wealth

#### **2 METICS**

- Men that were NOT born in Athens • Not allowed to own land but could run businesses

#### **3 SLAVES**

- 1/3 of the population
- Had no rights/freedoms
- Owned by their masters until death

## **Women in Athens**

- Expected to be good wives and mothers
- not valued or respected ! Little freedom
- Did not formally attend school
- Rarely left the house
- Responsible for weaving and “domestic arts”

## **Education in Athens**

- Girls did not receive formal education
- Boys started school at age 7
- Educated in reading, writing, mathematics, gymnastics, poetry, and public speaking

## **Lifestyle/Values in Athens**

- Very creative city state with lots of opportunities for MALES
- Valued theatre, art, philosophy, science
- Believed in the “good life” – wealth and luxury



## Direct Democracy

- Each person's decision directly affects the outcome of a vote.

## Republic or Representative Democracy

Type of democracy where citizens elect officials to represent them in the government. Elected officials then meet to make the country's laws and to enforce them.

## Athenian vs. Modern Democracy

**Then** All citizens met as a group to debate and vote directly on every

**Now** Citizens elect representatives to debate and vote on issues for them.

**Then** Only free male citizens could vote. Women and slaves could not vote."

**Now** Men and women who are citizens have the right to vote.

**Then** There was no separation of powers. Citizens created laws, enforced laws, and acted as judges.

**Now** There is a separation of powers. Citizens elect some people to create laws, others to enforce laws, and others to be judges.

## Government in Sparta

The Doric state of Sparta, instituted a mixed governmental state: it was composed of elements of monarchical, oligarchical, and democratic systems.

Isocrates refers to the Spartans as "subject to an oligarchy at home, to a kingship on campaign"

- Oligarchy
- Elements of Monarchy (2 Kings) generals in command of the armies, some religious duties
- Elements of Aristocracy (rule by the upper class)
- Elements of Democracy (election of Council & Senators)
- 5 Overseers (ephors): elected every year, ran the day- to-day operations of Sparta.
- Council/Gerousia: 28 councilmen and the 2 kings. They acted as judges and proposed laws.
- Assembly: all Spartan males aged 30 or over could support or veto the council's recommendations.

## Dual Kingship

The state was ruled by two hereditary kings, both descendants of Heracles and equal in authority so that one could not act against the power and political enactments of his colleague

The duties of the kings were primarily religious, judicial, and militaristic.

They were the chief priests of the state, and performed certain sacrifices and also maintained communication with the Delphic sanctuary, which always exercised great authority in Spartan politics.

## Ephors

The ephors, chosen by popular election from the whole body of citizens, represented a democratic element in the constitution.

After the ephors were introduced, they, together with the two kings, were the government of the state. Ephors themselves had more power than anyone in Sparta, although the fact that they only stayed in power for a single year reduced their ability to conflict with already established powers in the state. Reelection was not possible, an ephor who abused his power, or confronted an established power center, would have to suffer retaliation.

## Gerousia

Sparta had a special policy maker, the Gerousia, a council consisting of 28 elders over the age of 60, elected for life and usually part of the royal households, and the two kings.

High state policy decisions were discussed by this council who could then propose action alternatives to the *demos*.

## Apella

The collective body of Spartan citizenry would select one of the alternatives by voting. Unlike most Greek *poleis*, the Spartan citizen assembly (Apella), could neither set the agenda of issues to be decided, nor debate them, merely vote on the alternatives presented to them. Neither could foreign embassies or emissaries address the assembly; they had to present their case to the Gerousia, which would then consult with the Ephors. Sparta considered all discourse from outside as a potential threat and all other states as past, present, or future enemies, to be treated with caution in the very least, even when bound with alliance treaties

# Social Structure

- **3 Classes**

- **1st = Spartiates:** Spartan men; warriors and professional citizens
  - Military professionals who lived mostly in barracks and whose land was farmed by serfs;
  - They served in the army and could vote.
  - Had full citizenship and rights
- **2nd = Perioeci:** "neighbors/outsideers".
  - Foreigners (people born outside of Sparta)
  - Considered to be free men but could NOT vote or serve in the army
- **3rd = Helots:**
  - Serfs descended from those peoples who had resisted enslavement by Sparta.
  - They were treated like slaves.

## **Everyday Life**

- **Militaristic values.**

- Children of citizens were raised to be "Spartan", taught to get along with almost nothing.
- Spartiate citizens were not permitted to own gold or silver or luxuries.
- Spartan children were taught to respect elderly, women, and warriors.
- Spartan mothers would say to their sons, "Either come back with your shield or on it“.

## **Family**

- Children were children of the state more than of their parents.
- They were raised to be soldiers, loyal to the state, strong and self-disciplined.
- When a Spartan baby was born, soldiers came to the house and examined it carefully to determine its strength.
- The baby was bathed in wine to see its reaction. If a baby was weak, the Spartans exposed it on the hillside or took it away to become a slave (helot).

## Education

- Soldiers took the boys from their mothers at age 7, housed them in a dormitory with other boys and trained them as soldiers.
- The boys endured harsh physical discipline.
- The marched without shoes and went without food.
- They learned to fight, endure pain and survive with their minds.
- The older boys beat the younger boys to toughen them up.
- Spartan children were taught stories of courage and fortitude.
- Self-denial, simplicity, the warrior code, and loyalty to the city- state.
- At 20, the boys had to pass a hard test to graduate and become full citizens.
- If they failed their tests they never became citizens, but became perioeci.
- Soldiers lived in the barracks and trained as soldiers but were required to marry to produce new young Spartans.
- The state gave them a piece of land which was farmed by slaves and which they did nothing to tend.
- At 30 they were allowed to live with their families, but kept training until they were 60.



## The life of women in Sparta

- Women underwent similar training
- Young Spartan women exercised rigorously and were and were taught the same ideals of duty, loyalty and self-sacrifice as were young men.
- To develop a deeply loyal female population who were responsible for maintaining the home while the adult male Spartans were away fighting.
- The role of Spartan women as the bearers of children was paramount.
- Their training taught them to be tough, resilient and supportive of the State.
- Spartan women had a role in the early education of infants prior to the State taking formal control at age seven.
- Spartan women were an important part of Spartan society. They had their own property which they could bequeath to their daughters. They could also inherit their husband's property which could then be inherited by the daughters.
- This way Spartan women became rich and came to wield considerable power by virtue of their control of property.
- Spartan women possessed incredible freedom when compared with their Athenian counterparts.