

Sparta

After the Mycenaean civilization weakened, the people went back to a simpler way of life. Then about 800 B.C. settlements and villages began to grow up again in Greece. In the southern Peloponnese five small villages joined together to form a city-state. This city-state is now known as Sparta.

Sparta did not have enough natural resources to feed its growing population. To gain more farmland, the Spartans invaded other nearby communities. The people of these communities became **helots** (HEL•l•its), or slaves owned by the Spartan city-state.

Sparta had many more slaves than citizens. Fear of the slaves fighting for their freedom led the Spartans to adopt a war-like way of life.

At the age of seven, Spartan boys were sent to camps where they learned to be good soldiers. At these camps they were taught leadership skills and loyalty to the group. Most importantly, they learned never to give up during a battle. Most boys had to serve in the Spartan army until they were 60.

The lives of Spartan girls took a different path. When Spartan girls turned seven, they studied gymnastics and running. Like Spartan boys, the girls were training for their role in life. Spartan girls were taught at an early age that their main job was to raise strong children.

Spartan women had more rights than women in other Greek city-states. For example, they were allowed to own property. However, Spartan women were not allowed to take part in the government.

Sparta had two kings who served as generals. These kings were part of a 30-member council. The council helped decide Sparta's laws. The members of Sparta's council were elected by an assembly, or a group of people. All male Spartan citizens over the age of 30 could be part of the assembly.

The Spartan government had strict control over its citizens' lives. Spartan laws told people how to cut their hair, when they could be married, and whether to have children.

Review

CHECK UNDERSTANDING

1. What training were Spartan boys given? What training were Spartan girls given?

THINK CRITICALLY

2. Why do you think Spartan boys were taught to never give up in battle?

SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

Table Activity Make a table that shows the difference between the lives of Spartan men and Spartan women. You can use information from this lesson and from other resources to complete your table.