

## 27.6 Women and Slaves in Athens

Only men were considered citizens in Athens. Citizenship was not possible for women and slaves, so they had far fewer rights than free men did.

**Women** Athenian women could not inherit or own much property. They could not vote or attend the Assembly. Most could not even choose their own husbands.

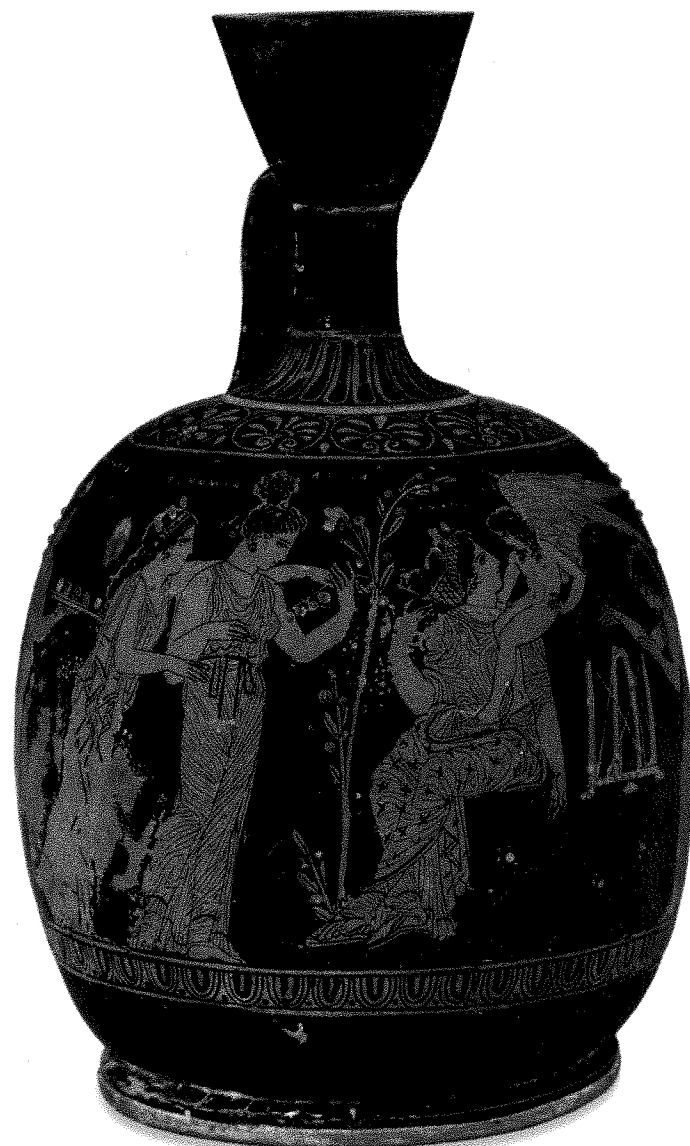
A few women had jobs. Some women sold goods in the market. A few very important women were priestesses. But most Athenian women had their greatest influence in the home. They spent their days managing the household and raising their children. An Athenian wife had separate rooms at home. Her responsibilities included spinning, weaving, and supervising the slaves. She never went out alone. She taught her sons until they were about 6 or 7 and ready for school. She educated her daughters until they were 15 and ready to be married.

**Slaves** There were many slaves in ancient Athens. Most Athenians who weren't poor owned at least one slave. Some people were born into slavery. Others were forced into slavery as captives of war.

Slaves performed a wide variety of jobs in Athens, including tasks that required a great deal of skill. Some ran households and taught Athenian children. A number of slaves were trained as artisans. Others worked on farms or in factories. Some slaves worked for the city as clerks.

Some slaves worked in the silver mines. They might work ten hours a day, in cramped tunnels 300 feet below the surface. They had little air to breathe and were often harshly punished if they stopped to rest.

The women of Athens had their greatest influence in the home.



## 27.7 Spartan Government

Sparta was different from Athens in almost every way, beginning with its government. While Athens was a democracy, Sparta was an oligarchy. In an oligarchy, the ruling power is in the hands of a few people.

Sparta's government—as well as Spartan society—was dedicated to military strength. Founded in the 800s B.C.E., Sparta was the leading military power in the Mediterranean area until about 370 B.C.E.

Like Athens, Sparta had an Assembly. But the important decisions were actually made by a much smaller group called the **Council of Elders**.

The Council of Elders consisted of two kings and 28 other men. The two kings inherited their position and shared equal powers. The other 28 members of the council were elected by members of the Assembly.

To be elected to the Council of Elders, men had to be at least 60 years old and from a noble family. Some scholars believe that members of the Assembly voted for candidates by shouting. Those men who received the loudest support were elected. Once elected, they served for life.

The Council of Elders held the real power in Sparta. It prepared laws for the Assembly to vote on, and it had the power to stop any laws passed by the Assembly that council members didn't like.

The Assembly in Sparta was made up of male citizens. Because the Assembly was large, it met in a spacious outdoor area away from the center of the city. The Assembly had little power. Unlike the Assembly in Athens, it did not debate issues. Members of the Assembly could only vote yes or no on laws suggested by the Council of Elders.

**Council of Elders** a small group of Spartans who made all the important governing decisions

The agora in Sparta was a place where people could gather. The men of Sparta often debated government issues there.

