World History NB # \_\_\_\_\_

**Sparta: A Warrior Society**

Dorian invaders from the north conquered Laconia, in the southern part of the Peloponnesus. The Dorians settled here and built a city-state of Sparta. The invaders turned the conquered people into state-owned slaves, called Helots, and made them work the land. Because the helots greatly outnumbered their rulers, Spartans set up a brutal system of strict control.

The Spartan government included 2 Kings and a council of elders who advised the monarchs. An assembly made up of all citizens approved major decisions. Citizens were male, native-born Spartans over the age of 30 years old. The assembly also elected 5 ephors, or officials, who ran day to day affairs.

**Daily Life**

From childhood, a Spartan prepared to be part of the military state. Officials examined every newborn, and sickly children were abandoned to die. Spartans wanted future soldiers and the future mothers of soldiers to be healthy.

At the age of 7 years old, boys began training for a lifetime in the military. They moved into barracks, where they were toughened by a coarse diet, hard exercise, and rigid discipline. This strict and harsh discipline made Spartan youths excellent soldiers. To develop cunning and supplement their diet, boys were even encouraged to steal food. If caught, though, they were beaten severely.

At the age of 20, a man could marry, but he continued to live in the barracks for another 10 years and to eat there for another 40 years. At the age of 30, after further training, he took his place in the government assembly.

**Women of Sparta**

Girls, too, had rigorous upbringing. As part of a warrior society, they were expected to produce healthy sons for the army. They therefore were required to exercise and strengthen their bodies.

Like other Greek Women, Spartan women had to obey their fathers and husbands. Yet under Spartan law, they had the right to inherit property. Because men were occupied with war, some women took on responsibilities such as running the family’s estate.

**Sparta Stands Alone**

The Spartans isolated themselves from other Greeks. They looked down on trade and wealth, forbade their citizens to travel, and had little use for new ideas or the arts. While other Greeks admired the Spartans’ military skills, no other city-state imitated their rigorous way of life. “Spartans are willing to die for their city,” some said, “because they have no reason to live.”

**Athens: A Democracy**

Athens was located in Attica, just north of the Sparta. As in many Greek city-states, Athenian government evolved from a monarchy into an aristocracy. By 700 B.C., landowners held power. They chose the chief officials, judged major court cases, and dominated the assembly.

**Demands for Change**

Under the aristocracy, Athenian wealth and power grew. Yet discontent spread among ordinary people. Merchants and soldiers resented the power of the nobles. They argued that their service to Athens entitled them to more rights. Foreign artisans, who produced many goods that Athens traded abroad, were resentful that foreigners were barred from becoming citizens. Farmers, too, demanded change. During hard times, many farmers were forced to sell their land to nobles. A growing number even sold themselves and their families into slavery to pay their debts.

As discontent spread, Athens moved slowly toward democracy, or a government by the people.

**Solon Reforms Government**

Solon, a wise and trusted leader, was appointed archon, or chief official, in 594 B.C. Athenians gave Solon a free hand to make any reforms necessary. He outlawed debt slavery and freed those who had already been sold into slavery from debt. He opened high offices to more citizens, granted citizenship to some foreigners, and gave the Athenian assembly more say in important decisions.

Despite solon’s reforms, citizenship remained limited, and many positions were open only to the wealthy. Continued and widespread unrest led to the rise of tyrants, or people who gained power by force. Tyrants often won support from the merchant classes and poor by imposing reforms that helped these groups. Although Greek tyrants often governed well, the word tyrant has come to mean a vicious and brutal ruler.

In 507 B.C., another reformer, Cleisthenes, broadened the role of ordinary citizens in government. He set up the Council of 500, whose members were chosen by lot from among all citizens over the age of 30. The council prepared laws considered by the assembly and supervised the day to day activities of the government. Cleisthenes made the assembly a genuine legislature, or law-making body, that debated laws before deciding to approve or reject them. All male citizens were members of the assembly and were expected to participate.

**A Limited Democracy**

By modern standards, Athenian democracy was quite limited. Only citizens could participate in government, and citizenship was restricted to landowning men. Women were excluded along with merchants and foreigners. So were the tens of thousands of Athenian slaves who lacked political rights as well as professional freedom. Still, Athens gave more people a say in decision making than any other ancient civilization.

**Women in Athens**

As in other Greek City-states, women in Athens had no share in political life. According to Aristotle, “the man is by nature fitter to command than the female just as an older person is superior to a younger, more immature person.” Although some men disagreed, most Greeks accepted the view that women must be guided by men.

Women played their most significant public role in religion. Their participation in sacred processions and ceremonies was considered essential for the city’s well-being. In well-to-do Athenian homes, women managed the entire household. They spun and wove, cared for their children, and public. Poorer women worked outside the home, tending sheep or working as spinners, weavers, or potters.

**Educating the Youth**

Unlike girls, who received little to no formal education, boys attended school if their families could afford it. Besides learning to read and write, they studied music, poetry, and studied public speaking. Although they received military training and participated in Athletic contests, Athens encouraged young men to explore many areas of knowledge.