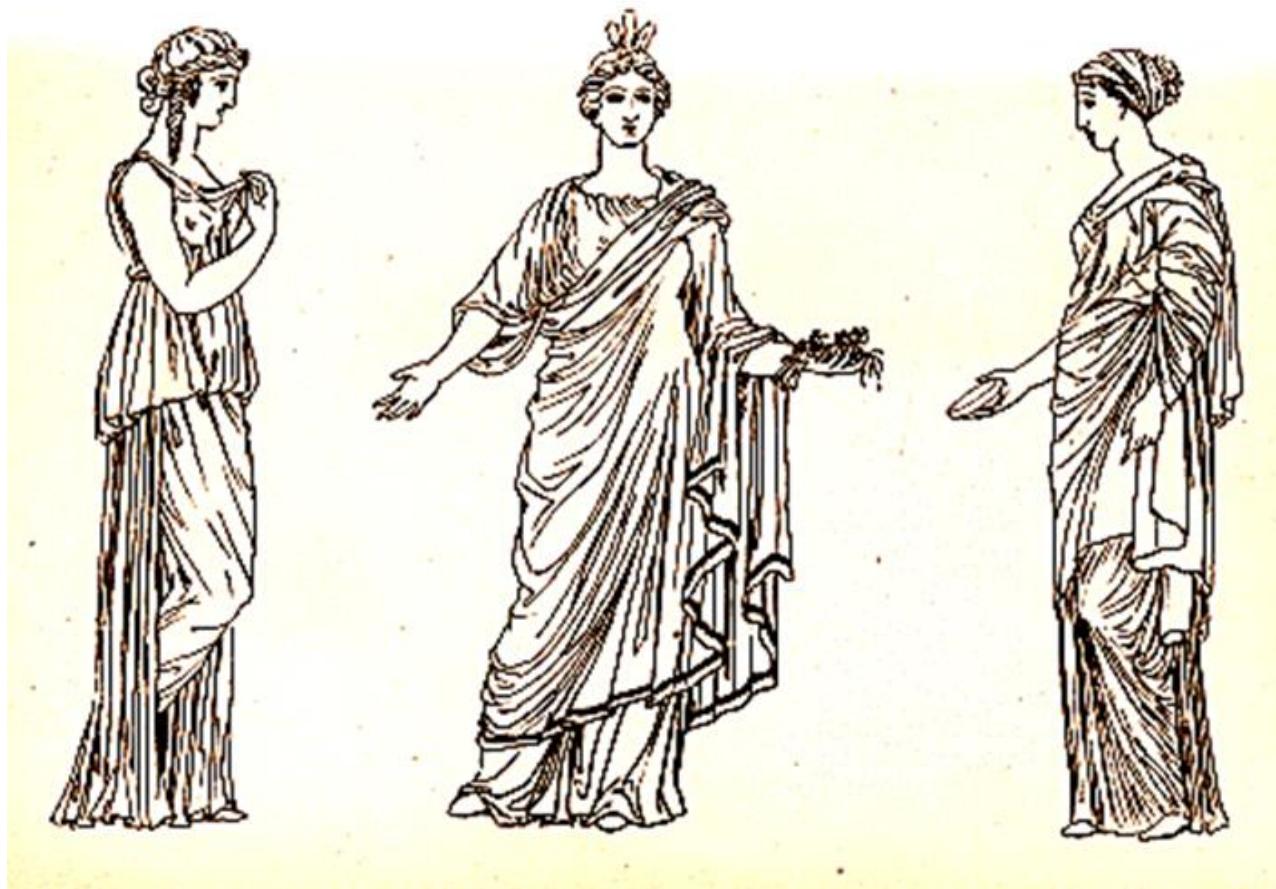


Women in Ancient Greece and Rome



Women in Ancient Athens, Sparta and Rome



Athens during the Hellenic period around 500-300 BCE



300.000 residents. (around one third were slaves) but only 20.000 citizens - no women...

In general



- ▶ Democracy/Republic meant that the situation for women got worse (especially women of higher social classes)
- ▶ Why: the family (aristocracy) became less important

Athens



- ▶ Polis - city, state, urban centre - a male sphere
- ▶ Oikos - private sphere (family/the house/family property)
- ▶ Men - full citizen / women - not a citizen (no rights)
- ▶ Women's education short - usually only “home economics”
- ▶ Married young to elderly citizens
- ▶ Could only stay in the private quarters of the house - Gynaikon (Gynaikon - linked to work at home - cooking + textile work)

Married Women



- ▶ Wife - married woman, no political rights, task - to give birth to children (preferably sons)
- ▶ A woman lacks the protection of laws other than through her Kyrios (the head of the family, the guardian)
- ▶ A deficit of women
- ▶ Short life expectancy 35 years women, (men 40) infectious diseases, plague, death giving birth, abortions...
- ▶ Malnutrition
- ▶ Abandon children - unwanted or disabled children were abandoned and put out to die

Married Women



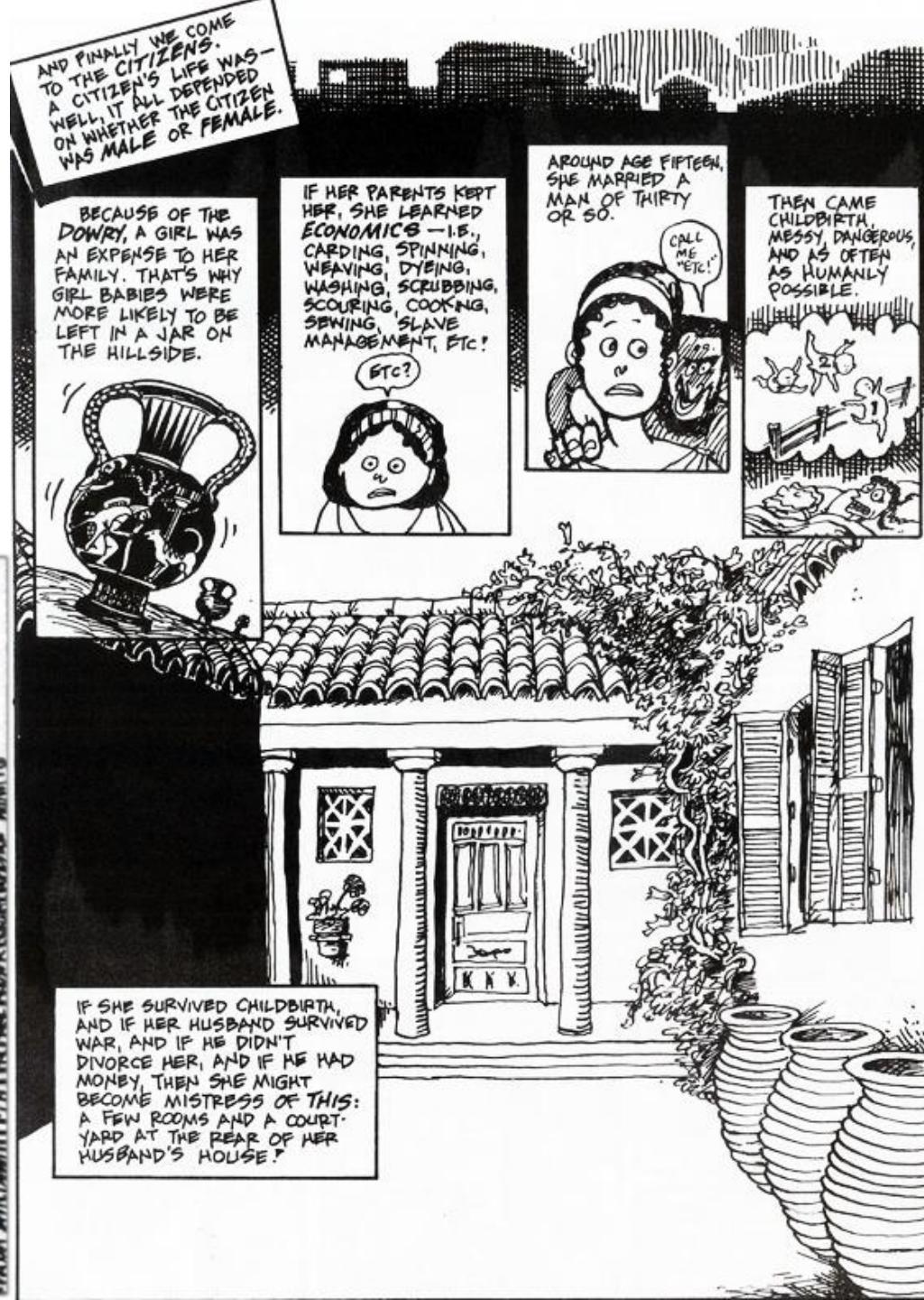
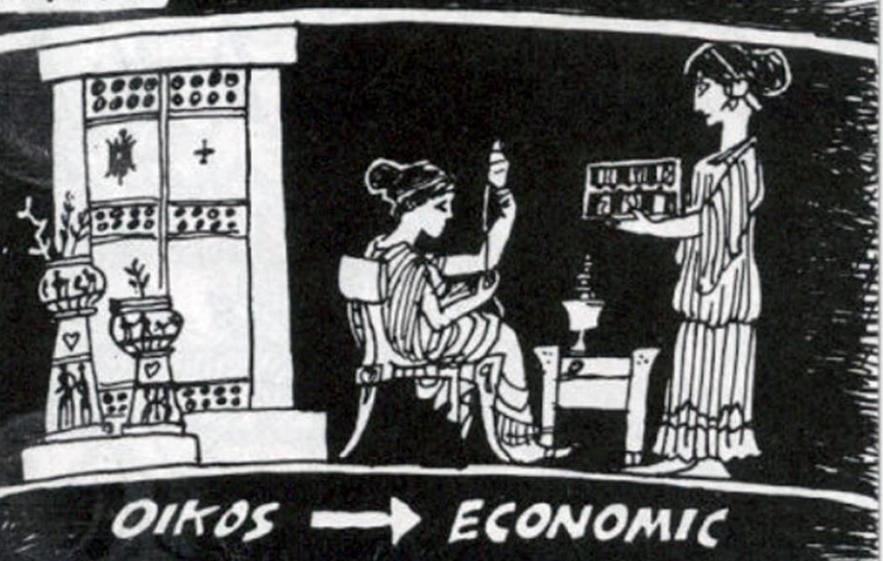
Wealthier women:

- Married early 13 - 15 år - very often to a much older man (often to a relative in the family - so the dowry stayed within the family...)
- Lacked political rights - no matter social status
- First and prime task was to give birth - especially to boys
- Locked up at home except for religious holidays. Women's quarters of the house: Gynaikeion. Married couples lived completely different lives!
- Protected/Supervised - no individual rights. Could never go out alone.
- Some middle and upper class girls got to learn to read and write, maybe play the lyre. Spinning, weaving, running a home was more important

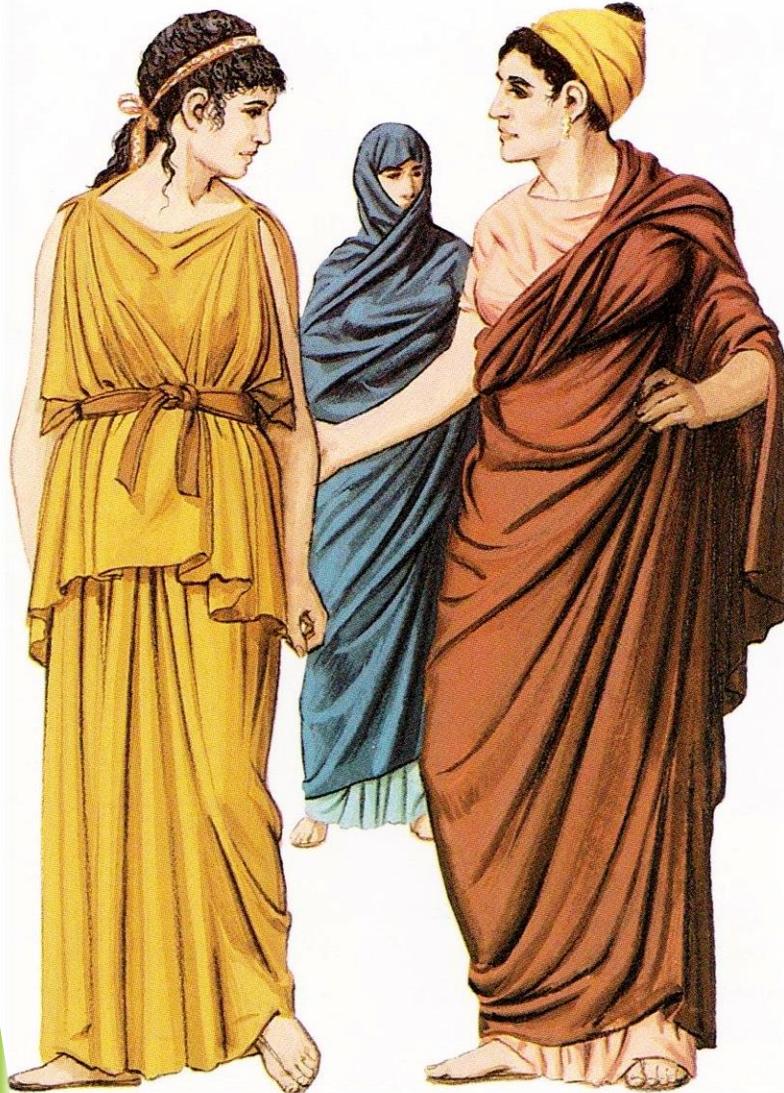
Working women had more freedom and a richer social life.

Cartoons - Women in Ancient Athens

EVERY BRIDE NEEDED A DOWRY: MONEY, CLOTH, AND WEAVING EQUIPMENT SHE WOULD BRING TO HER HUSBAND'S HOUSE. UNLIKE A MODERN CONSUMER HOUSEHOLD, THE GREEK HOUSE (OIKOS) WAS A PRODUCTION UNIT.



Prostitution - an alternative...



- ▶ Hetira (companion) - educated companion, non-citizens, often educated in dance/music
Often managed their own economy.
Role - to entertain - be refined and "witty"...
- ▶ Concubines - often slave women, non-citizens, supported by a married or unmarried man.
Role - to be a mistress
- ▶ Porne/Pornai - prostitutes. Furthest down on this scale

NOTE! Male prostitution also existed

NOTE! The general view of prostitution in Ancient Greece was very different from our general view today

Sparta - an exception...

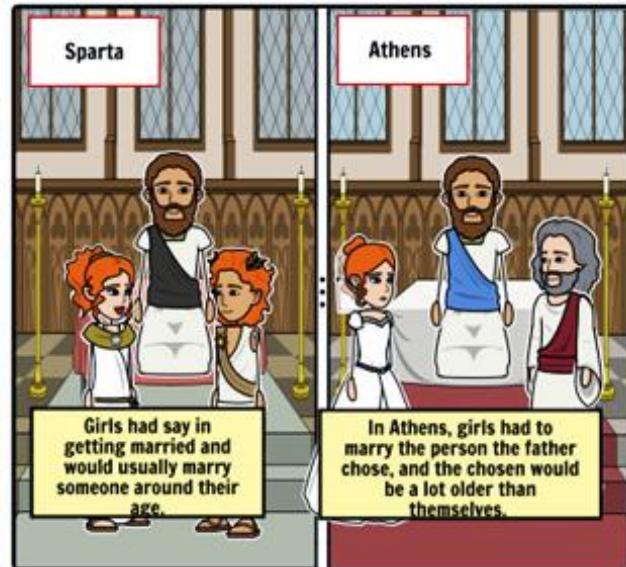
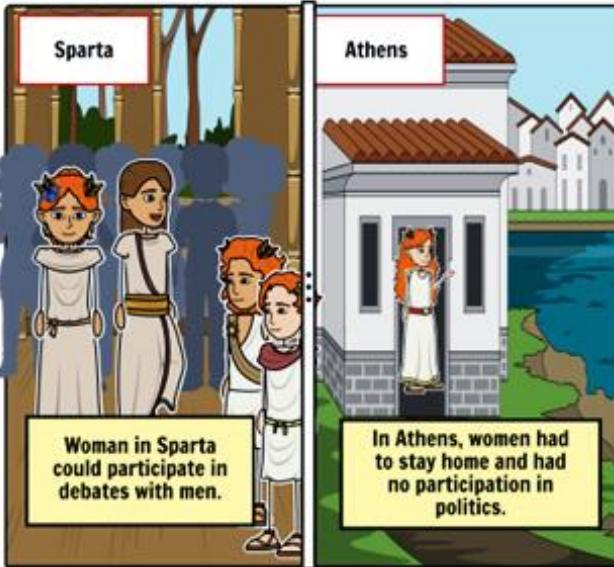
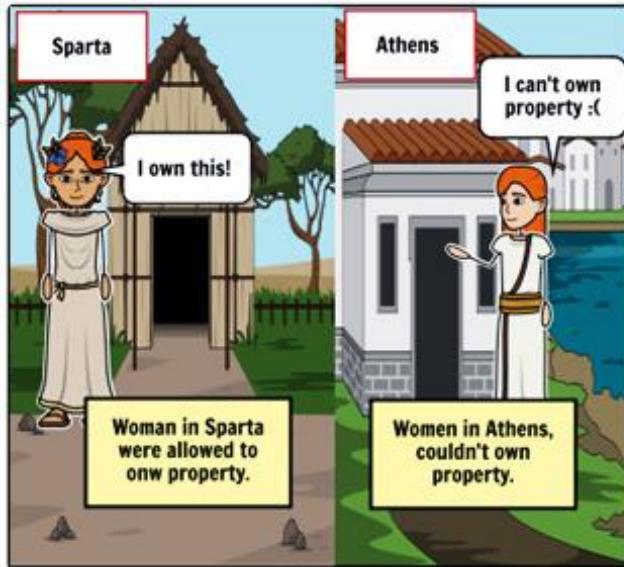
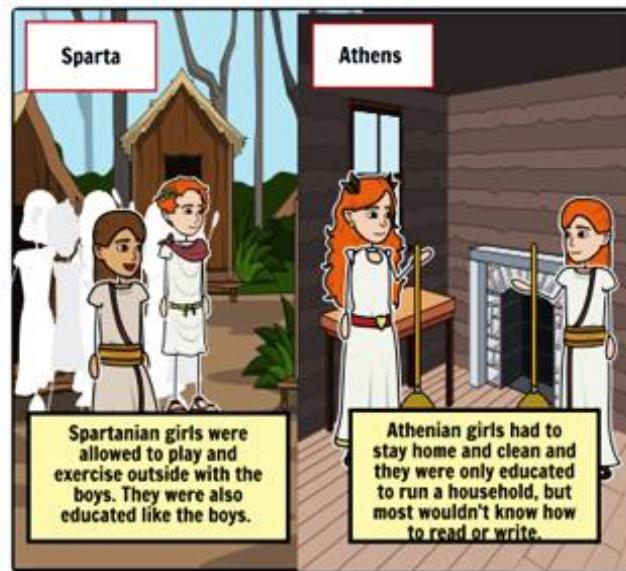


► Women in Sparta were considered to be most liberated throughout Greece:

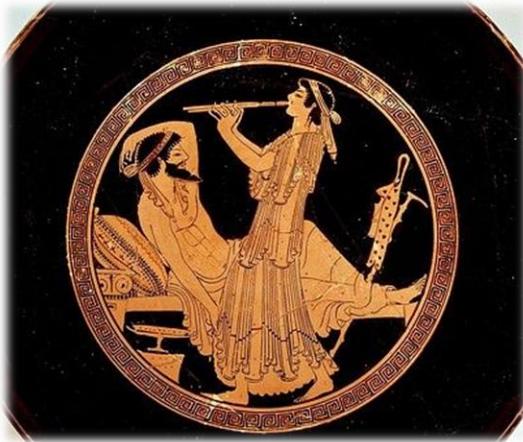
- Raised as boys to become strong mothers
- Got some basic education and would be able to read and write
- Marriage often around 18 years of age
- Spartan women that died giving birth were viewed as heroines
- Could be in public without a chaperone and debate with men, but did not participate in politics



Sparta - Athens - a cartoon comparison



Aristoteles...



- ▶ Male - Female
- ▶ Active - Passive
- ▶ Heat - Cold
- ▶ Rational - Emotional
- ▶ Perfection - half measure (an incomplete man)
- ▶ A man was the active life giver - a woman the passive recipient

NOTE! Plato had a more humane view of women, more equal ideas. The Christian Church would lean more towards Aristotle view of women...

Questions



- ▶ Hystera (uterus) -
Hippocrates -the uterus could moves through a woman's body, eventually strangling her and inducing disease...
- ▶ Was there any female seed?
Hippocrates - Yes, but it was weak - man's strong ...
Aristotle - No, she was only a passive recipient of man's seed



Amazons...

In Greek mythology, the Amazons were a tribe of Iranian women warriors in Sarmatia in Scythia. Amazon was said to live in a women's state completely without men. A neighboring tribe made the young girls pregnant two months a year. All boys who were born were put out in the woods or sent to their fathers after being made incapable of fighting. The girls were raised in a war cult where three enemies had to be killed in battle before they were allowed to have children...



ROME

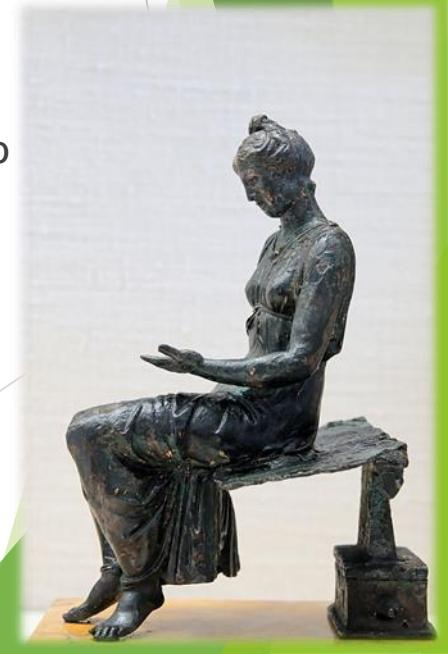
- ▶ Women are citizens but lack political rights
- ▶ Marriage is regulated by contract - only free men and women could be married under the law
- ▶ The meaning of the family returns - The woman's position linked to that of the family. Social class determines (Familia - Pater)
- ▶ A woman from a higher social class could get plenty of private influence in the old Roman society



ROME



- ▶ Boys and girls received some similar basic education
- ▶ Girls from a higher social class could receive higher education
- ▶ When girls reached the age of marriage (12 year) focus was more put to the education of home economics
- ▶ Daughters were legally entitled to the same inheritance as sons in the Roman Republic. She was also able to own property, write her own will and appear in court
- ▶ Divorce was relatively common in the latter republic. A divorce could be initiated by both men and women. If they were divorced, she was entitled to recover her dowry. Divorce was not viewed as something particularly negative in Roman society
- ▶ Women's situation became a bit worse during the Roman Empire



ROME

- ▶ The oldest Roman laws did not allow any form of domestic violence against the wife or children
- ▶ Although the Roman woman was not allowed to participate in politics, she was allowed to participate in trade and business
- ▶ Women in Rome seem to have done business to the same extent as men
- ▶ Women were allowed to own land and property
- ▶ Prostitution was fairly common in Roman society. Concubines were well regarded and protected by Roman law



Compared to ancient Athens it seems like the Roman woman had a more pleasant life ...



Hate against women in Rome



- ▶ Juvenal - first-second century CE
- ▶ Satires - Indignation makes verse "*facit indignatio versum*" - a powerful reaction against the society in Rome
- ▶ Juvenal was very hateful towards women, but his writing is valuable as a description of daily life in the Roman Empire
- ▶ Juvenal influence the early Christian view of the depraved Rome - and thus his view of women also influenced Christianity...