

## ANCIENT HISTORY: SPARTA

**With reference to Source A below and other sources, what does the evidence reveal about everyday life of people in Spartan society?**

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### Source A: The Rider kylix

Although Sparta was viewed by outsiders as quite disciplined and austere, completely focused on the military, Spartiates also enjoyed a variety of leisure and religious activities, which even the lower classes were occasionally part of. This is illustrated by a variety of written and archaeological sources, including Source A, an inscription from Kyniska and words from various ancient and modern historians.

Although Spartiates only made up 5% of the population and never numbered more than ten thousand, their lives are the most commonly documented in archaeological and written sources. Music and religious festivals were seen as key to the Spartan lifestyle, as it provided a sense of community, an institution of socialisation and a break from their rigid way of life. Music was allegedly established by Terpander, and Spartans were known in the Greek world for the quality of their music. It was used predominantly in the youth of both males and females. Males would learn particular chants and songs in the agoge system, encouraging them to learn how to play a part, as well as cooperate with others. Chants of poet Tyrtaeus, accompanied by a bone flute, evidence of which has been uncovered, would be played with a kylic dance as psychological preparation for battle. Lyrics included "Fear not the throng of men, turn not to flight". From this it is evident that despite the rigidity of their military occupation, music helped encourage cohesiveness. In addition, women and girls would perform in choirs, mainly 'Maiden Songs' by poet Alkman that emphasised aesthetic beauty and was a product of 'swinging Sparta' (Fitzhardinge).

Religious festivals provided a break from work and training, and brought together much of the city, including perioikoi and inferiors, though they were usually still ridiculed. Festivals such as the Hyakinthos would take place at certain times as a dedication to the gods and insurance of good luck and prosperity. Herodotus even states that military endeavours would be placed as secondary to a current religious festival. Overall, this evidence reveals that, as most of the Spartan constitution was based on a religious oracle, religion was a key element in everyday life.

Spartiates also participated in a wide variety of leisure activities. As depicted in Source A, equestrian sport was an important part of life for wealthier male and female Spartaites. The kylix reveals that horse riding often took place, but there was also chariot racing. Kyniska was a famous woman who trained men and horses for the Olympics, another leisurely sport event. Despite the fact that she was a woman, her statue and inscription at Sparta illustrate her importance in society.

In youth, girls and boys usually exercised together, although females did not undergo the intensive agoge education system. Boys wore light clothing to enable them to survive harsh conditions (Plutarch), and girls and women wore slit peplos skirts and were thus often ridiculed by Athenian writers as nymphomaniacs (Euripides). An example of the women's toned bodies and clothing is seen in the bronze 'running girl' figurine, revealing that a woman's eugenic purpose was highly important and the belief that fit women would produce healthy children, echoed by Xenophon. Aristotle commented that women had too much freedom and power in their everyday life, and that this would lead to Sparta's downfall.

Though the main occupation was seen as being a Spartiate, there were many others. Helots were state-owned agricultural serfs appointed to kleroi and were "asses exhausted under great loads" (Tyrtaeus). This source, as well as the fact that little was written about them, reveals the lack of importance of their everyday lives. Their roles were mainly to service the lives of Spartiates.

Perioikoi were considered the merchants of Sparta, and produced pottery, ivory carvings and the red cloaks for Spartan soldiers. Although they were still looked down upon as Hephaestus, god of manufacturing and metalwork was, “there is nothing to show that they treated the perioikoi with more than a ‘haughty roughness’ “ (Michell). Their lives were key to Sparta’s military prowess, as they enabled more time to be devoted to the military, and they were among the wealthiest of Sparta.

Ultimately, though the lives of Sparta’s different classes were widely varied, archaeological and written evidence communicate that it fostered a sense of community and inculcated various values.