

Youth Agoge- Education, in Ancient Sparta A Field Survey Researching Both "That Time" and "Present" Periods with Specific Reference to the Agoge-Education of Junior Girls

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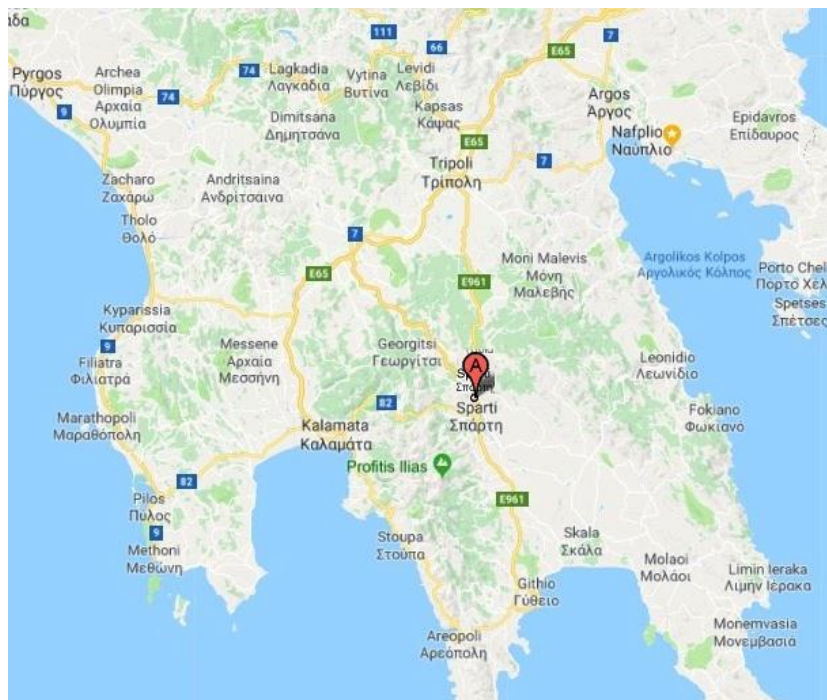
Abstract

Our project is not a historical research, but based on secondary sources of historical information, it aims at probing Youth Agoge-Education in ancient Sparta. It seeks objectivity, describing aspects of the Spartan State. It compares the terms: "Agoge and education" of Sparta against the present terms. To support the project, a field survey shall be also used. The ultimate objective is the integrated scientific interpretation based on the findings of the field survey we have conducted in Athens.

Keywords:

1. Introduction

Sparta dates back to the 12th century BC. A time of rapid change for the ancient world, when Egypt was declining and the Second Babylonian Empire was emerging. According to a Greek legend, Sparta was violently established in 1152 BC, when the Dorians from the North who believed they were descendants of Hercules, invaded the south, claiming (according to their beliefs) that it was the land of their ancestors. As soon as the central peninsula of the Peloponnese was occupied, the king named it Laconia, and its capital "Sparta", after his queen.



For achieving better understanding of the organizational structure of Sparta, we should point out the following: In ancient Greece, there was a total of 1.000 autonomous communities, the so-called "city-states". The "city-state" was, in fact, a city operating like a "state", that is to say: It had its own government, army, navy, and its own laws. Such states were everywhere established, many of which were admirable, for their culture. Likewise, Sparta was a city-state, which for that time was considered to be quite prominent! From the 12th century BC until 700 BC, Sparta used to be the religious, administrative and military center of the region. (Giarenis Eug, 2012) The city of citizens was, by default, Sparta. Each Spartan citizen was whensoever wholly available for the civilian, military needs of his/her city.

Still arts and music were flourishing there, and at that time, "Sparta" was indeed both an emblem of respect and fright. Further, a recruitment center was established there and care was taken for public education and agoge. The

agoge in Sparta was of particular aesthetics standing, so far, in its name, being positive for some people and negative for others. (Giannorou, 2012) Views certainly differ today and we will also take into account our project findings from the quantitative field survey conducted upon modern Greeks, in order to create an overall view of the object under research.

2. The Agoge in "Sparta"

At the present time, the term "agoge" shall mean: all the instruments and methods, in order the intellectual heritage and experience be transferred to young people. (Surelis, 1975) In another scientific point of view, agoge shall mean: guidance, upbringing and education. (Greek Dictionary: Fytrakis - Tegopoulos, 1993)

Entering into matters of Sparta, a formal qualification for obtaining citizenship in Sparta, for instance, was the possibility for the citizen to contribute in kind to the communal ration meals. On the other hand, if a young Spartan was cowering and did not respond to the agoge needs, he/she was excluded from civil rights, losing the status of "homoios" (Cartledge, 2004) Therefore, the important thing was that participation and success in the agoge was not a way of socialization, but also a political criterion in one's effort to become an "homoios". And, of course, in case someone "refused" to participate or "failed" to become an "homoios" was definitively excluded from the citizen class, and hereto our sources mention that in Sparta, no one was born Spartan, but was made. This is also evidenced by the politics of the Greek world as prerequisite and necessary condition for the exercise of civil rights. (Giannakaki et al., 2011)

The Spartans forged a tough, militant civilization, which the descendants found: either admirable or repulsive, and this will be also issued from our research.

The Spartan mothers were telling their sons, pointing to the shield: "Either this or on this". Another mother, when she found out about the cowardice of her son, she said: "You worthless, miserable stub, clear out and go to Hades. Go away: There is no way I gave birth to such a son, so unworthy of the city of Sparta!"

It is said that Spartan women ever since they were born, they were intended for reproduction, but they were also exercising along with men, whereas they were receiving quite satisfying portions of food to be able to give birth to strong children who would defend Sparta. The training of women was compulsory and was carried out under the care of the city-state in order to give birth to healthy children. (National Geographic, 2017) However, the term "Spartan agoge" was a public-state education system. There has been a wide-ranging discussion about the role, nature and purposes of Spartanism.

3. Education in Ancient Sparta

In the present age, the term education shall be defined as: the development of the physical, mental and moral potentials of the young intellectual (Tegopoulos - Fytrakis Dictionary, 1993). We could glean out of secondary sources of historical information that "Youth education in ancient Sparta" was carried out in compliance with the Spartan ideals. Physical education was, therefore, a means of (youth) education of ancient Sparta and even enabled the Philosophy of Educational Systems in Ancient Sparta. Moreover, education was a product for every child of Spartan citizen. Besides, the Spartan education system was rigid, inflexible, demanding and utilitarian. An unusual and extremely interesting feature of the system was the entry and admission of young girls to the education system. In the case of young girls, the primary purpose was still utilitarian, as the youths growing up would primarily become mothers of Spartan warriors. That's why they took part in military dances, songs, musical-choral performances and they acquainted with the poems of Tyrtaeus. (Mouratidou, 2016) Further to, we notice that education in Sparta is compulsory, homogeneous and equable for all, boys and girls.

Education ranged from about the age of 7 to 18 years. The young people lived mostly together a collective life (mainly after their 12th birthday), divided into three "school" cycles and were distinguished, according to their physical age, in infants, striplings and teenagers. Each cycle represented specific tests and a different educational program. At the same time, the program included, in addition to physical exercise being inherent to the collective way of life, tests and contests, as well as: writing, reading, music, poetry, dancing. Celebrations were regarded as various fields of expression, acquisition and application of the acquired knowledge, as well as tools used for youth socialization. Their time was shared in: physical exercise, hunting, public affairs, and 'clubs'. It should be noted that the Spartan schools were only for the "homoioi" ones, i.e. those who could pay the registration in kind. However, more children were also admitted thereto, as long as someone from their family could contribute the required price on their behalf.

4. An Epitome of Junior girls' Education in Ancient Sparta

Greek historians claim that the legislator of Sparta Lycurgus traveled all over the then-known world (Crete, Ionia and Egypt) collecting the most exquisite military. It is also worth noting that he received a prediction from the Delphic oracle, which conveyed him instructions from God Apollo for his legislation. With regard to Lycurgus, he may have been or was the subject of a legend, but the important thing is that the Spartans believed that he embodied the divine wisdom of Apollo, which led them to a strategic planning of Sparta. (Ernst, 2003) Gradually, these instructions were modified to discipline instructions and eventually Sparta changed into a military society as the laws were complied with because they had the authority of Delphi.

All the reforms of Lycurgus on behalf of Sparta were addressed to the three virtues of the Spartans: equality (among citizens), military capability and austerity. In addition, (Lycurgus) (Anastasios, 1998) defined for the junior girls to exercise themselves within due care in: running, wrestling, discus and javelin throwing, for being able to give

birth to healthy children and to suffer vigorously the labor pains. This was also the way to fight against: softness and closed life. The nakedness of the young females had the effect of getting accustomed to simplicity and to pursue of health, and at the same time it was generating a noble feeling of excellence, because it made them perceive that they were not inferior at all and they were enabled to have virtue and diligence. (Karabagia, 2001) Junior girls' education was similar and took place in particular places. According to historians, the education was military and the purpose thereof was to provide the city-state with worthy warriors. (Katsoulis, 2010)

The main features were strict discipline and blind allegiance to seniors. Considerable was the freedom given to the young females, including training alongside boys and their education from the age of 20 to 30 years, was military (Haniotis Ang, 1987; Tsougaraki, 1987). That is why the Spartan women were considered to be the most beautiful and healthy women of that age. Furthermore, the care for the household was almost entirely left in their hands, and their position in society was more free and respectable than all. (Egon, 2013; Flaceliere, 1965) The Spartan society in the classical era also included the concept of ownership status of Sparta, which Aristotle refers to, and gives rise to information about the situation of women. (Renee, 2012)

We moreover gleaned out of the bibliographical references the distribution of work depending on the sex. At the same time, we detected the registration for the most important female tasks such as: childcare, fruit collecting, light duty farming, livestock breeding and food preparation. Indeed, this is also based on the ethos that women were owners of 2/5 of the land for two reasons. Firstly: There was a large number of heirs and secondly: the size of the dowry. Meanwhile, the Spartan women could, within strict limits, inherit the ancestral property and define the dowry, which consisted of properties. (Claude and Annie Schnapp-Gourbeillon, 2012) The peculiar for us nowadays is that the woman was always owned by a man: her father, husband, brother, father's brother, etc. Hence, there was no possibility of self-determination or personal choice, since everything was decided and ordered by her male head. It was expected that, even for the dissolution of a marriage, the law was in favor of the strong and in this case in favor of the man. (Parthenopi, 2011) Despite the abovementioned, the Spartan women were treated differently from any other city in Greece. However, because of the oliganthropia encountered by Spartans, maternity was of prominent importance. It is bibliographically supported that the appropriate marriageable age for a Spartan woman was around twenty years meaning that she had biologically completed her growth. Once she reached this age, the father took over to find the groom for the marital arrangement. It was also practiced the bride kidnapping by men.

5. Identity of survey

The survey was conducted in Athens from September 2017 to March 2018. The total sample number is 314 all-aged individuals. The questionnaires were sent electronically, and the names were found through the phone book. The questionnaire included a total of 18 single and multiple choice, closed queries, processed at excel.

6. Survey Findings

It appears from the analysis of the survey, that the total sample of respondents included 180 Males and 134 Females, since they were all valid. We noticed that men were more cooperative than women. The sample age scale which mostly responded to the completion and sending of the questionnaires was aged from 27-35 years, at a rate of 29.6%, and right after come those aged from 36-44 years at 19.7% followed by the age scale from 45-53 years at a rate of 16.6% and henceforth by lower rates. The three age scales which accepted to answer are approaching more people with academic knowledge and full awareness of the purpose of a field survey.

After the questionnaires were processed, the following findings were summarized. It should be noted that all sample responses shall be analyzed below and we shall quote well-considered responses with their depiction, some being considered as more representative for field survey.

Thus, after the demographic characteristics, we come to the multiple choice question: how do you understand the term "agoge" (=educational system) today? The majority considers the education as a "spiritual heritage" at 38%, whereas the 28% as "experience of physical skills" and 13% of the respondents support the agoge: as a systematic, physical effect on each young individual.

The next question posed was: whether the term "agoge" in ancient Spartan period could be conceived, under present conditions. The answer shall considerably vary in substance and content for actual Greeks, since the 66.9% claims it is quite distinct, whereas the 33,15% disagrees.

Right afterwards, we ask for the assessment of the picture of the Spartan youth doctrine that included: physical and mental exercise, writing, reading, music, poetry, dancing, exercises, group life, trials, competitions, etc. in relation to today. The answers were indicative, since the 39.8% consider it moderate, the 35.6% bad and the 10.5% very bad. Besides, the question arises whether this form of education embodied the ideal of Spartan youths. The answers are indicative with the 39.9% being agree, the 30.2% not agree and the 29.9% being irrespective.

We further ask whether they would agree with activities such as: spiritual culture, education, exercise, school, being free from the enrichment requirement: The majority of the sample believes that they had all the time for education, since there was no other way according to the 62.3%, whereas the 17.2% claimed that the young men were forced to follow the father and the 14.3% opts for the Spartan school.

As per the question whether they agree with the Spartan way of education upon the permanent production of heroes, the 72% disagrees and the 28% agrees with.

Thereafter, we concentrated on young females asking whether the way of education suited a Spartan girl. The 40% agrees given that this was the educational Spartan system, whereas the 31% agrees from the point of view that the young females were staying at home, and the 29% claims that it was proper to get trained in simplicity, creating thus a noble feeling of excellence, with virtue and distinction.

The following question was whether the cruel discipline and the blind allegiance to superiors were considered appropriate for the young females. The 72% disagrees and the 28% agrees with.

Afterwards we posed the question whether the Spartan women could have the opportunity to participate directly in the civil events of their city, since the historical sources confirm that Sparta was a woman-owned city. The answer of the majority was negative with 99.4% and only the 0.6% agreed.

Moreover, we questioned if the respondents agreed in case the only daughter enjoined the right to inherit her father's property, on the grounds of dowry. The 89% of the respondents were also negative and only the 11% agreed.

In addition, we put the question whether they believed that the junior girls had no possibility of self-determination or no right of personal choice, since everything was decided and ordered by their male head. The 97% disagreed and the 3% agreed.

At the same time, it was posed the question whether the dowry institution was suited the Spartan women: the 98% disagreed and the 2% agreed.

And finally, whether the most appropriate marriageable age for Spartan young people shall be considered the 30th year for men, whereas the women did not usually get married, before they reached puberty. Here, the 57% disagreed and the 43% agreed, although the views seem to be divided in the last question.

6.1. Epilogue-Commentary

In terms of realistic representation of the project, we think that we have tried at least to point out the picture size of the survey by outlining the characteristics of the Spartan system and quoting the views of modern Greeks. It is obvious that the "Good Legislation" policies of ancient Sparta were not adopted everywhere. At present, we are unable to fully assess the attitudes of the young people of our country, since after interpreting the abovementioned, there is no comparison of the old with the modern legislative framework of our country.

It is, however, known that sport was passionately loved by the ancient Spartans. The fighting spirit, the spirit of emulation for victory, or the idea that the pain and the sweat of the contestant were considered honored deeds. That is why they found or were forced to find pleasure in fight, in exercise and in the effort for the final victory. On the other hand, the expression of virtue, for example, was considered to be the rivalry encountered in all aspects of our lives such as in: arts, social behavior, love for the nice, etc. Each young individual aspired under his/her strenuous and painstaking exercise, to become a competent defender of his/her homeland; whereupon I think today's young people do not have largely the same motivation and the same goals.

In general terms, the athletic life was something pretty essential for the Spartans. The fact that it was considered as a path leading to virtue, it is in our view opposed to the present days where the same efforts are being rewarded with significant economic benefits based on sponsors and other economic agents of sports marketing. We think that today is considered inconceivable, what the Spartans measured as great prize for victory: that is, only a branch of olive, laurel or pine. This could only be the case in a militant society where sporting activity is their unique experience.

On the other hand, we consider it necessary to comment on the position of women in Sparta, as accompanied by interesting survey references. Obviously, we cannot understand why women in Sparta facing a demographic problem, were intended for reproduction and the unmarried were punishable by law and both the unmarried and those who concluded a later or not a suitable marriage paid a fine. It had been even established a feast where women were dragging the unmarried around the altar, mocking and hitting them. Today, we are not met with such conditions, even in the most underdeveloped countries on the planet. Although we read from time to time that in some societies of the Far East minor children are getting married to each other or even the most awful for minor girls getting married to adults. Accordingly, there was the view in Sparta that the ideal for youth females was prudence. So far, so good. But prudence under the motto: see less, hear even less, and ask as few questions as possible, this goes beyond the toughest laws of the military legions of the planet. Thereby, on the one hand, the Spartan state was solely preparing "low-blown" women and on the other hand, robust, strong and tough mothers. This was due to the fact that they would bring the world and raise the soldiers to be admirable all over the rest of the world. In fact, they ought to have the courage to give the shield to their child and to say: "Either this, or upon this." For this reason both agoge and education reminisce of an inhuman, debilitating and perhaps of the most primitive behavior towards women.

It was not just that. Afterwards, we come across something even more woeful: whenever the young woman reached the age of marriage, then her father, brother or her guardian would choose the man she would given as husband. This may be the case today in countries where absurdity or even religious fanaticism prevails.

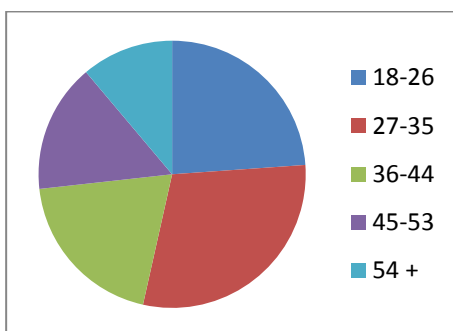
Summing up, we would like to draw attention to the private conversations with young Greek and non-Greek women where all of them are skeptical about almost the total of the above mentioned and are unfavorably disposed to similar behaviors. However, it is indicative that the vast majority of respondents disagree with the term of Spartan agoge and education in practice. Notwithstanding a percentage disagrees with all that, there is also an interpretation: either the questions were not duly understandable or the respondents wanted to be opposed to the prevailing opinion of the others.

Unless the absurdity of Spartan State was considered to be a display of bravery or lack of women's right and opportunity to self-determination in respect of their future choices, as well as of the imposed marriageable age, in contrast with the present, not even questioned time-limits relatively.

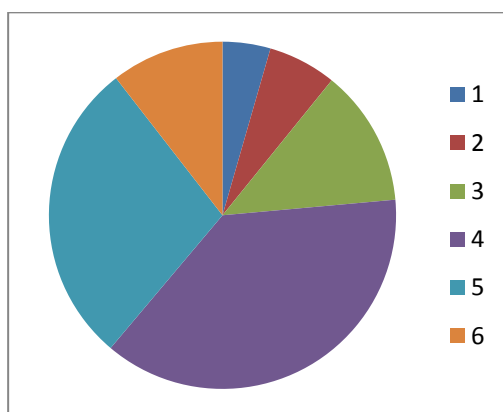
Part of Processed Questions

| Sample Population | | |
|-------------------|--------|-------|
| Greeks | NUMBER | RATE |
| Men | 180 | 57,4% |
| Women | 134 | 42,6% |
| Total | 314 | 100 |

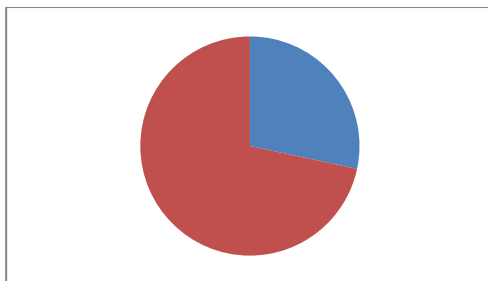
| Sample Age Scales | | |
|-------------------|---------------|----------|
| | SAMPLE BY AGE | RATE (%) |
| 18-26 | 75 | 23% |
| 27-35 | 93 | 29,6% |
| 36-44 | 62 | 19,7% |
| 45-53 | 49 | 16,6% |
| 54 + | 35 | 11,1% |
| TOTAL | 314 | 100 |



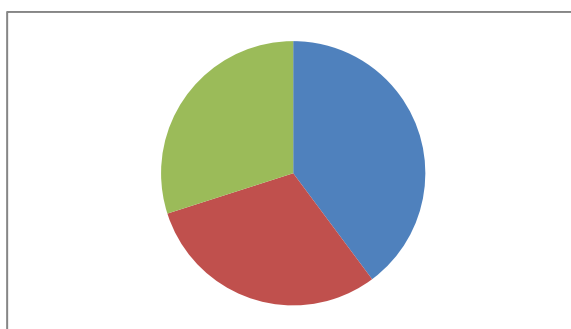
| At present time, the term “agoge” shall be defined as: | | |
|--|--------|----------|
| | SAMPLE | RATE (%) |
| Means and methods for individual and social life. | 14 | 4% |
| Deliberate exercise | 20 | 6% |
| Systematic effect on each young individual | 40 | 13% |
| Intellectual heritage | 118 | 38% |
| Experience of physical skills | 89 | 28% |
| Experience of physico-mental skills | 33 | 11% |
| TOTAL | 314 | 100,00 |



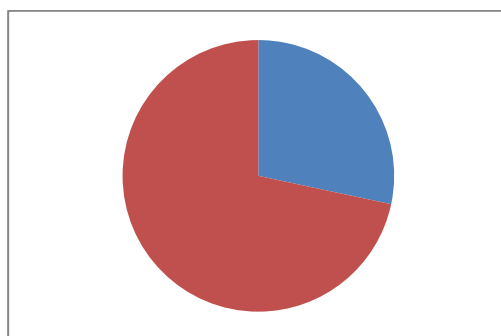
| Would you agree with the Spartan way of education aimed for permanently producing heroes? | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| | SAMPLE | RATE |
| YES | 89 | 28% |
| NO | 225 | 72% |
| TOTAL | 314 | 100,00 |



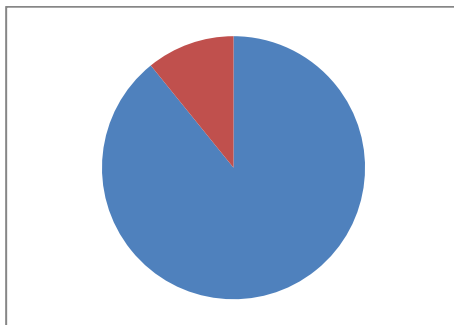
| Which educational system suits the Spartan girl? | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| | SAMPLE | RATE |
| The Spartan system was something distinctive | 125 | 40% |
| The girls stayed home with their mother. | 95 | 31% |
| They were trained in nakedness to become accustomed to simplicity, creating, thus, supremacy, with virtue and distinction. | 94 | 29% |
| TOTAL | 314 | 100,00 |



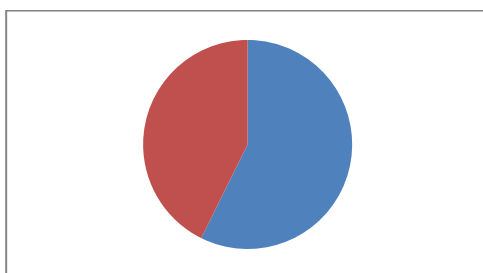
| e Do you think that hard discipline and blind allegiance to superiors matched the Spartan girls? | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| | SAMPLE | RATE |
| YES | 89 | 28% |
| NO | 225 | 72% |
| TOTAL | 314 | 100,00 |



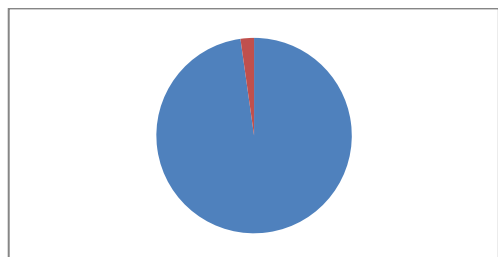
| Do you agree that the only daughter could inherit her father's property for creating a dowry? | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| | Sample | Rate |
| NO | 280 | 89% |
| YES | 34 | 11% |
| TOTAL | 314 | 100,00 |



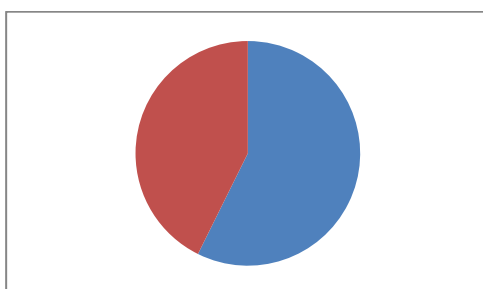
| Do you agree with the fact that the woman had no possibility of self-determination or personal choices? | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| | SAMPLE | RATE |
| NO | 304 | 3% |
| YES | 10 | 97% |
| TOTAL | 314 | 100,00 |



| Do you think that the dowry institution was well-suited to Spartan women? | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| | SAMPLE | RATE |
| NO | 307 | 98% |
| YES | 7 | 2% |
| TOTAL | 314 | 100,00 |



| Do you think that the appropriate marriageable age for males was the 30th year and for females before they reached puberty? | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| | Sample | Rate |
| Yes | 180 | 43% |
| No | 134 | 57% |
| Total | 314 | 100,00 |



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