

PLATAEAE

Plataeae is an important and historical city of Boeotia. Homer and Herodotus mention the city with the name "Plataea" and Thucydides and Stravon with the name Plataeae.

It was built on the borderline of Attica, between the mountain of Kithaeron and the river Assopos, that formed a natural border with the other major city of the time, Thebes. The ruins of the ancient city are situated near the present community of Plataeae, in the prefecture of Boeotia.

Foundation and history of the city

According to the Thebans (Aeolian Boeotians) the city was built by the citizens of Thebes. Pausanias mentions instead, that the inhabitants of Plataeae were natives (i.e. Ionians), which originated in accordance with the Greek mythology, from the daughter of Assopos, Plataea, hence the name of the city.

The inhabitants of Plataeae and Thespia as well as those of all the other villages and towns of the area of Assopos river stubbornly opposed to join the Theban federation because of their innate sympathy for the Athenians.(they were Ionians as well). In 519 BC they made an alliance with the Athenians and helped them in their conflict with the Thebans. After their victory, the Athenians expanded their borders up to Assopos river.

The grateful Plataeans rushed, first of all Greeks, to provide their assistance against the Persians in the "Battle of Plataea" by sending 1000 warriors at the side of the Athenians. On the battlefield a particular tomb had been erected for the brave Plataeans. It is worth mentioning that during the expedition of the Persian king Xerxes against the Greek mainland, from all cities of Boeotia, only Plataeae and Thespia did not ally with the Persian enemy. Indeed, after the victory of the Greeks, Plataeae were considered "Holy City", it was not allowed to the rest of the Greeks to attack it and every other year celebrations were taking place in honour of the particular battle.

The Plateans took even part at the sea fight of Artemissio. After the final victory of the Greeks against the Persians, the city was renovated –it was in the meantime burned by the Persians- and was inhabited until the Peloponnesian war, when it was destroyed by the Peloponnesians and looted by the Thebans. The few Plateans that survived, found refuge in Athens. Plataeae revived and destroyed once more by the Thebans. In 338 BC, their eternal enemy, the Thebans were defeated at the battle of Chaeroneia.

The currency of Plataeae showed the bust of Goddess Hera in right profile. She was wearing crown, palmette, necklace and earrings. On it there was the inscription [Π]ΛΑ and had a diameter of 13 mm.



A few words about the important battle of Plataeae

In 479 BC Plataeae was the site of the final battle that repelled the second Persian invasion of Greece. According to Herodotus, the Spartan general Pausanias led an allied Greek defense against general Mardonius' Persian forces. Although they were vastly outnumbered, the Greeks were able to kill Mardonius; his death precipitated the Persian rout that followed. Accounts vary, but there is general agreement that the battle resulted in a significant number of Persian dead, with many more put to flight. This battle would mark the last time a Persian army invaded mainland Greece. The Greek victory at Plataea is commemorated by the so-called «Serpent Column» erected at Delphi.



