

SPARTA

Sparta (in Doric Greek or Sparti in Attic) or Lacedaemon, was a prominent city-state in ancient Greece, situated on the banks of the Eurotas River in Laconia – south eastern Peloponnese. It emerged as a political entity around the 10th century BC, when the invading Dorians subjugated the local, non Dorian, population. Around 650 BC, it rose to become the dominant military land-power in ancient Greece.

Given its military pre-eminence, Sparta was recognized as the overall leader of the combined Greek forces during the Greco-Persian Wars. Between 431 and 404 BC, Sparta was the principal enemy of Athens during the Peloponnesian War, from which it emerged victorious, though at great cost. Sparta's defeat by Thebes (371 BC) ended its prominent role in Greece. However, it maintained its political independence until the Roman conquest in 146 BC. It then underwent a long period of decline, especially in the Middle Ages when many Spartans moved to live in Mystras. In our days Sparta, is the capital of the Greek regional unit of Laconia and a center for the processing of goods such as citrus and olives.

Sparta was unique in ancient Greece for its social system and constitution, which completely focused on military training and excellence. Spartiates underwent the rigorous “agoge” - training that involved learning stealth, cultivating loyalty to the Spartan group, military training (e.g., pain tolerance), hunting, dancing, singing and social communicating preparation. The Spartan phalange, rectangular mass military formation, was widely considered to be among the best in battle. Spartan women enjoyed considerably more rights and equality to men than elsewhere in the classical world.

Sparta was the subject of fascination in its own day, as well as in the West following the revival of classical learning. This love or admiration of Sparta is known as Laconism or Laconophilia.



