



Ancient Sparta: A Template for Authoritarianism

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Thursday, September 19, 2024 – 6:45 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET

Timeline for Ancient Sparta

- 1200** B.C. Mycenaean Age or Bronze Age
Kingdoms of Mycenae and Lacedaemon (Agamemnon and Menelaus)
Trojan War (Helen of Troy or Helen of Sparta?)
- 1000** B.C. Greek Dark Ages or Dorian Invasions
- 800** B.C. End of the Dark Ages as five villages in the southernmost part of the Peloponnesus (Cynosura, Mesoa, Limnae, Pitana and Amyclae) come together to form what became known as Sparta.
The legendary date for Lycurgus, the founder of Sparta.
- 776** The Olympic Games begin
- 735** First Messenian War; Spartans move west over the Taygetus Mountains to invade Messenia and enslave its population
- 706** Spartans establish a penal colony at Tarentum (modern Taranto) for their wayward women.
- 700** Temple of Orthia and the Menelaion sanctuary established at Sparta. These two are the oldest remaining sites from ancient Sparta visible today. Everything else is Roman.
- 676** Religious festival of the Karneia established (The Karneia was a music festival, one of three that held so much importance for the Spartans that they delayed sending their army to Marathon to help hold back the Persian invasion until it was over.
- 670** Second Messenian War (Messenian Helots revolt against Spartan rule)
- 650** More likely date for the reforms of Lycurgus which transformed Spartan society
- 550** Cyrus the Great establishes the Persian Empire. Formation of the Peloponnesian League, an alliance of Greek city-states dominated by Sparta and centered on the Peloponnesus. League lasted from 550 B.C. to 366 B.C. and was rivaled by the Delian League dominated by Athens.
- 507** Reforms of Cleisthenes and the founding of the Athenian democracy.

- 506 Sparta and her allies (Peloponnesian League) invade Attica and challenge Athens.
- 490 First Persian invasion of Greece and Battle of Marathon. Spartans arrive late.
- 480 Second Persian invasion and Battle of Thermopylae (Leonidas and the three hundred)
- 464 Devastating Earthquake at Sparta and subsequent Helot revolt- start of the Third Messenian War.
- 461 Pericles and the apex of democratic rule at Athens.
- 431 The Peloponnesian War begins between Athens and Sparta.
- 425 The Spartan surrender at Sphacteria (a relatively minor battle in the far western reaches of the Peloponnesus) destroys the image of Spartan invincibility and the myth that they would rather die than surrender.
- 421 The Peace of Nicias ends the first Peloponnesian War. Sparta and Athens agree to a mutual defense pact for fifty years. The Peace lasts less than eight.
- 412 Spartan alliance with Persia against Athens.
- 404 Sparta wins the Peloponnesian War and becomes the most powerful city-state in Greece.
- 401 Spartan mercenaries march into the heart of the Persian Empire.
- 399 A Spartan army invades Persia a second time.
- 395 Sparta goes to war against Corinth.
- 386 The war with Corinth ends.
- 382 Spartans occupy Thebes.
- 379 Thebes is freed from Spartan control
- 371 Battle of Leuctra, the defeat of the Spartan army and the beginning of the end for Sparta.
- 370 The invasion of Laconia and the liberation of the Messenian Helots.
- 366 Greek city states leave the Spartan dominated Peloponnesian League.
- 331 "Battle of the Mice," the Spartans are defeated by a Macedonian army led by Alexander the Great's regent Antipater.

- 227 The Spartans end their practice of the dual kingship.
- 222 Sparta is occupied for the first time in its history by a Macedonian army.
- 146 The Romans establish a protectorate in Greece.
- 79 Cicero visits Sparta.
- 42 The Spartans participate in the battle of Philippi (Roman civil war)
- 40 Livia, the future wife of Augustus, takes refuge at Sparta during the Roman civil war
- 32 Sparta sides with Augustus in the civil war with Antony
- 27 Augustus becomes (de facto) the first Roman emperor. Sparta will prosper under Roman rule because the Romans admired Spartan traditions of discipline, military organization and their adherence to the rule of law.
- 21 Augustus visits Sparta which becomes a Roman tourist destination.

A.D. 14 The death of Augustus.

A.D. 395 Sparta is devastated by the Gothic invasions and the site abandoned.

The Byzantines eventually repopulate the area, giving it the Homeric name Lacedaemon.

A.D. 1200 The Franks build the hillside city of Mistra near Sparta which becomes a center of culture and learning in the ancient world.

A.D. 1460-1821 Sparta is under Ottoman Rule.

A.D. 1822 Greek independence and in 1832 the modern city of Sparta is built on the foundation of the old site. The remains of ancient Sparta today are buried beneath Roman ruins and modern buildings.