

431-421 – Battle of Amphipolis

The battle of Amphipolis was fought during the Peloponnesian War. The battle was between Sparta and Athens in 422 BCE.



Figure 1; A map demonstrating the battle arrangements according to Thucydides. (Image from; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Amphipolis).

In 424/3 BCE the Spartan General and Officer Brasidas sieged Amphipolis. This was an Athenian colony in Thrace (Thuc, 4.102.1). As a reaction to this siege, the Athenian General, Eucles, sent for help from Thasos, where Thucydides, who was at this time a general, stationed there (Thuc, 4.104.4-5).

On the hearing of this, Brasidas came up with the tactical idea of offering safe passage to anyone who wanted to leave the city and the promise to those who wanted to stay, they could keep their own properties when he would take the city (Thuc, 4.105.1-2). This had a huge effect as Amphipolis surrendered before Thucydides could arrive (Thuc, 4.105.1-2). Of course, this would have scared the Athenians, as many more of their allies and colonies could be captured by the Spartans. If the Spartans could take Amphipolis so quickly, she could do it to the others as well.

This battle was the last major battle between Sparta and Athens (Foster E. 2017, p.310). Brasidas' plan for the battle was to send 150 men as his first attack in order to panic the Athenians who were unprepared. His second attack would be his main force, which would come across a now panicked and disorganized army (Foster E. 2017, p.310). This plan was perfectly executed and worked. Cleon, the Athenian general, did not predict this or organize his troops, showing his incapability to lead as well as showing Brasidas' intelligence when it came to military strategies and execution.

Figure 2; Map of Ancient Greece and her Polies (Image from; <http://www.whoosh.org/issue18/dickson1.html>)

Due to Cleon's inexperience and impatience, the Athenian army retreats which leads to a double attack (Foster E. 2017, p.310). The Athenians are blown with side attacks from the left and creates even more confusion for Cleon and his men (Foster E. 2017, p.310). During this final attack, Brasidas is wounded and Cleon is killed (Foster E. 2017, p.310).



The victorious side was Brasidas and the Spartans. Brasidas died after the battle however, lived long enough to hear of his victory (Thuc, 5.10). After the death of Brasidas, the people of Amphipolis honored him with games, sacrifice and named him the founder of their colony. Brasidas was buried in the city (Thuc, 5.11).

After this battle, both the Athenians and Spartans called for a discontinuation of the war and thus followed by the Peace of Nicias in 421BCE (Thuc, 521.34).