Sparta: An Extraordinary City

Lecture ?: Hellenistic Sparta

Sparta after 362

- Peloponnese divided
- Sparta not dominate over southern half
- Agesilaus dies in 359
- Archidamas replaces him
- Same year Philip becomes de facto king in Macedon

3RD SACRED WAR - 356

- Control over Delphi
- Thebes had taken control after Leuctra of the Amphictyony
  - Fined Sparta (which it never pays)
- Archidamus gives 15 talents to Phocis to pursue the war

3RD SACRED WAR

- Phocis occupies Delphi in 356
- 353 Phocis defeats Philip in a battle
- 352 Philip marches south of Thermopylae and meets a combined force of Athens, Sparta and Phocis. There is no battle and Philip retreats

Activity in the Peloponnese

- 351 Archidamus and Agis attack Megalopolis with 3000 mercenaries
- No real success
- Hippodamus dies in the battle, he is in his 80s

Chaeronea 338

- Sparta does not take part
- Sparta is not included in the “League of Corinth”

Philip's Invasion of Laconia 337

- No uprisings
- No attempt to capture Sparta
- Removal of northern Laconian border lands

Spartan Territory

Resistance to Alexander

- Agis III and Darius
- Darius sends large amounts of money and mercenaries to support Agis in Greece
- 331 Antipater defeats Agis at Megalopolis
  - Battle of Mice (muomakhia)
- Troop numbers:

	Mercs	Spartans	Allies	Macedonians	Total
Agis	10,000	6,000	16,000		30,000
Antipater			23,000	12,000 + 5,000 Thracians/ Illyrians	40,000

Sparta: 331 - 301

- Irrelevant
- Supplies mercenaries
- c. 315 first fortifications around Sparta

Areus

- King from 308 onwards
- 281: New Spartan Alliance
  - 4 Achaean towns
  - Boeotia
  - Megara
  - Arcadia (except Megalopolis)
- Attack the Aetolian league for control of Delphi
- Humiliating defeat

Agis IV (r. c.244-1)

- Proposal of Reforms
- Removal of Leonidas
- Aid to Achaea
- Return of Leonidas

Proposal of Reforms

However, Agis procured Lysander's election as ephor, and at once employed him to introduce a bill into the senate, the chief provisions of which were that debtors should be relieved of their debts, and that the land should be divided up, that which lay between the water-course at Pellene and Taÿgetus, Malea, and Sellasia, into forty-five hundred lots, and that which lay outside this into fifteen thousand; that this larger land should be apportioned among those of the provincials who were capable of bearing arms, and the smaller among the genuine Spartans; that the number of these Spartans should be filled up from the provincials and foreigners who had received the rearing of freemen and were, besides, of vigorous bodies and in the prime of life; and that these should be formed into fifteen public messes by four hundreds and two hundreds, and should practise the mode of life which the ancient Spartans had followed.

Plutarch *Life of Agis* 8

Removal of Leonidas

Lysander, however, who was still ephor, set on foot an indictment of Leonidas by virtue of an ancient law which forbade any descendant of Heracles to beget children by a foreign woman, and ordained that anyone who left Sparta to settle among foreigners should be put to death. After instructing others to spread these charges against Leonidas, he himself, with his colleagues, proceeded to observe the traditional sign from heaven. This is observed as follows. Every ninth year the ephors select a clear and moonless night, and in silent session watch the face of the heavens. If, then, a star shoots across the sky, they decide that their kings have transgressed in their dealings with the gods, and suspend them from their office, until an oracle from Delphi or Olympia comes to the succour of the kings thus found guilty. This sign Lysander now declared had been given him, and indicted Leonidas, and produced witnesses showing that he was the father of two children by a woman of Asia who had been given him to wife by one of the lieutenants of Seleucus; and that owing to the woman's dislike and hatred of him he had come back home against his own wishes, where he had assumed the royal dignity, to which there was then no direct successor. 5 Besides bringing this indictment, Lysander tried to persuade Cleombrotus to lay claim to the royal dignity. Cleombrotus was a son-in-law of Leonidas, and one of the royal line. Leonidas, accordingly, took fright, and fled as a suppliant to the temple of Athena of the Brazen House. His daughter also forsook Cleombrotus and became a suppliant with her father. When Leonidas was summoned to the trial and did not appear, he was deposed, and Cleombrotus was made king in his place.

Plutarch *Life of Agis* 11

Reforms

And now the multitude demanded also that the land should at once be divided, and the kings gave orders that this should be done; but Agesilaüs would always interpose some obstacle or make some excuse, and so consumed time until it became the duty of Agis to head a military expedition, when the Achaeans, who were their allies, sent for aid from Sparta. For the Aetolians were expected to invade Peloponnesus by way of Megara; and Aratus, the general of the Achaeans, in an effort to prevent this, was assembling a force and wrote a letter to the ephors.

Plutarch *Life of Agis* 13

Aid to Achaea

These at once sent out Agis, who was exalted in spirit by the ambition and ardour of the soldiers under him. For being young men for the most part and poor, and having now immunity from their debts and absolution, and expecting that they would receive allotments of land if they returned from the expedition, their devotion to Agis was astonishing. And they were a spectacle to the cities as they marched through the Peloponnesus without doing any injury, without rudeness, and almost without noise, so that the other Greeks were amazed and asked themselves what must have been the discipline of a Spartan army under the command of the great Agesilaüs, or the famous Lysander, or Leonidas of old, since towards a stripling who was almost the youngest of the whole army so great reverence and fear were felt by his soldiers. And indeed the young man himself, owing to his simplicity, his love of hardships, and the pride he took in clothing and arming himself with no more splendour than a common soldier, won the admiration and devotion of the multitudes; for to the rich, certainly, his innovating ways were not pleasing, owing to a fear that they might prove a disturbing force and set a bad example among the common people everywhere

Plutarch *Life of Agis* 14

Return of Leonidas

Now Agis spent most of his time in the sanctuary, but was wont to go down from time to time to his bath. There, then, they determined to seize him, when he was outside the sanctuary. So they waited till he had finished his bath, and then came to meet him with friendly greetings, and walked along with him, conversing and jesting with him after the manner of youthful comrades. But at a certain point the road branched off towards the prison, and when they were come to that place, Amphares, by virtue of his office, laid hands on Agis and said: "I shall lead thee, Agis, to the ephors, to answer for thy measures of state"; and Damochares, who was tall and robust, threw his cloak about the king's neck and dragged him along. Others pushed him along from behind, as had been agreed, and since he had no helper but was without a friend, they thrust him into the prison. At once Leonidas was at hand with a large band of mercenaries and surrounded the prison, while the ephors went in to Agis. After sending for those of the senators who were of the same mind as themselves, as though the king were to have a trial, the ephors ordered Agis to defend his conduct of affairs. The young king laughed at their dissimulation, whereupon Amphares threatened that he would rue the day and be punished for his temerity; but another ephor, as though plainly offering Agis a way of escape from the charges against him, asked him if he had done what he did under compulsion from Lysander and Agesilaüs. And when Agis answered that he had suffered compulsion from no one, but that in admiration and imitation of Lycurgus he had adopted the same public policy as his, the same ephor asked again if he repented of what he had done. But the young king declared that he had no repentance for what he had most excellently planned, and would not have, even if he saw that he was to suffer the extremest penalty. So they condemned him to death, and ordered the officers to lead him into the "Dechas," as it was called.

Plutarch *Life of Agis* 19

Cleomenes III (r. 235-222)

Upon the death of Agis his brother Archidamus at once took to flight, and thus escaped arrest at the hands of Leonidas; but his wife, who had an infant son, was taken from her home by Leonidas and compelled to marry his son Cleomenes. Cleomenes was too young for marriage, but Leonidas was unwilling to have Agiatis marry anyone else. For she was heir to the great estate of her father Gylippus, in youthful beauty she far surpassed the other women of Greece, and she had an excellent disposition. Therefore she begged most earnestly, we are told, that she should not be forced into this marriage, but after she was united to Cleomenes, though she hated Leonidas, to the young man himself she was a good and affectionate wife. And he, as soon as Agiatis was his, became passionately fond of her, and in a way sympathized with her devotion to the memory of Agis, so that he would often ask her about the career of Agis, and listen attentively as she told of the plans and purposes which Agis had formed.

Plutarch *Life of Cleomenes* 1

Achaean League

- 235: Megalopolis joins the Achaean league
- Achaean policy now turns anti-Spartan

Cleomenic War

- 229/9-222
- Historians – main account in Polybius
- Polybius is from Megalopolis
- HATES Cleomenes

Cleomenic War

- 229/8 Argos joins the Achean league
- Phlius, Hermione and Aegina go over to the league
- Similar to 370 with the potential of an incursion into Laconia.
- Arcadians start to move towards Sparta and allow Sparta to take control of 4 towns, including Mantinea
- Elis allies with Sparta

Removal of the Ephors 227

Cleomenes, when day came, published a list of eighty citizens who must go into exile, and removed all the ephoral chairs except one; in this he purposed to sit himself for the transaction of public business. Then he called a general assembly and made a defence of his proceedings. He said that Lycurgus had blended the powers of senate and kings, and that for a long time the state was administered in this way and had no need of other officials. But later, when the Messenian war proved to be long, the kings, since their campaigns abroad left them no time to administer justice themselves, chose out some of their friends and left them behind to serve the citizens in their stead. These were called ephors, or *guardians*, and as a matter of fact they continued at first to be assistants of the kings, but then gradually diverted the power into their own hands, and so, ere men were aware, established a magistracy of their own. As proof of this, Cleomenes cited the fact that down to that day, when the ephors summoned a king to appear before them, he refused to go at the first summons, and at the second, but at the third rose up and went with them; and he said that the one who first added weight to this office, and extended its powers, Asteropus, was ephor many generations later. As long, then, he said, as the ephors kept within bounds, it had been better to bear with them; but when with their assumed power they subverted the ancient form of government to such an extent as to drive away some kings, put others to death without a trial, and threaten such as desired to behold again in Sparta her fairest and most divinely appointed constitution, it was not to be endured.

Plutarch *Life of Cleomenes* 10

Removal of the Ephors 227

If, then, it had been possible without bloodshed to rid Sparta of her imported curses, namely luxury and extravagance, and debts and usury, and those elder evils than these, namely, poverty and wealth, he would have thought himself the most fortunate king in the world to have cured the disease of his country like a wise physician, without pain; but as it was, he said, in support of the necessity that had been laid upon him, he could cite Lycurgus, who, though he was neither king nor magistrate, but a private person attempting to act as king, proceeded with an armed retinue into the market-place, so that Charillus the king took fright and fled for refuge to an altar. That king, however, Cleomenes said, since he was an excellent man and a lover of his country, speedily concurred in the measures of Lycurgus and accepted the change of constitution; still, as a matter of fact Lycurgus by his own acts bore witness to the difficulty of changing a constitution without violence and fear. To these, Cleomenes said, he had himself resorted with the greatest moderation, for he had but put out of the way the men who were opposed to the salvation of Sparta. For all the rest, he said, the whole land should be common property, debtors should be set free from their debts, and foreigners should be examined and rated, in order that the strongest of them might be made Spartan citizens and help to preserve the state by their arms. "In this way," he said, "we shall cease to behold Sparta the booty of Aetolians and Illyrians through lack of men to defend her."

Plutarch *Life of Cleomenes* 10

Constitutional Reform

After this, to begin with, Cleomenes himself placed his property in the common stock, as did Megistonoüs his step-father and every one of his friends besides; next, all the rest of the citizens did the same, and the land was parcelled out. Cleomenes also assigned a portion of land to each man who had been exiled by him, and promised to bring them all home after matters had become quiet. Then he filled up the body of citizens with the most promising of the free provincials, and thus raised a body of four thousand men-at-arms, whom he taught to use a long pike, held in both hands, instead of a short spear, and to carry their shields by a strap instead of by a fixed handle. Next he devoted himself to the training of the young men and to the "agoge," or ancient discipline, most of the details of which Sphaerus, who was then in Sparta, helped him in arranging. And quickly was the proper system of bodily training and public messes resumed, a few out of necessity, but most with a willing spirit, subjecting themselves to the old Spartan regime with all its simplicity. And yet, desiring to give the name of absolute power a less offensive sound, he associated with himself in royal power his brother Eucleidas. And this was the only time when the Spartans had two kings from the same house.

Plutarch *Life of Cleomenes* 11

Constitutional Reform

- Cancelation of debts
- Civic Land redistributed in 4,000 lots to citizens (new and old)
- Further 2,500 to existing citizens
- 1,400 to deserving Perioikoi
- Membership in mess and minimal contributions
- Helot contributions by number
- Macedonian equipping of the army

Campaigns after 227

- Successful in field and “winning hearts and minds”
- Restoration of Peloponnesian League?
- 226: Ptolemy III switches support to Cleomenes from Aratus
- 224: Aratus leads the Achaean league into an alliance with Macedon

Cleomenes and Doson

- 222 BC: Antigonus Doson invades Laconia
- Cleomenes decides to make a stand at Sellasia
- Sellasia
  - perioikoic community
  - 14 km north of Sparta

Ptolemaic Support?

- Ptolemy III withdraws his support before the battle

Battle at Sellasia

- Cleomenes is outnumbered 3:2
- All but 200 Spartans perish (Plutarch)

Cleomenes as Tresas

- Flees the battle
- Goes to Gytheum → Cythera → Antikythera → Alexandria
- Dies in an uprising against Ptolemy IV in 219

Seizure of Sparta

- Doson captures Sparta!
- Brachyllas is installed as governor (Theban)
- Loss of territory

Sparta and the Coming of Rome

- 207 – Sparta defeated by the Achaean league at Mantinea
- Between 222 and 207: *stasis* in Sparta

207: Nabis takes consolidates power in Sparta

Nabis

- Polybius: Tyrant
- Name: Semitic?
- Son of Demaratus
- Connection to the royal house? (Eurypontid)
- Styles himself King on his coinage
- Palace
- Mercenary bodyguards
- Marriage to Apia of Argos

Nabis Reforms

- Liberation and enfranchisement of *douloi/servi*
- How many? All the helots?
- Link to reduction/killing of Spartans "distinguished for their wealth and lineage" (Polybius 13.6.3)
- Encouragement of loans
- Urbanization of Sparta
- 188 City wall completed
- Increase in pottery production

2ND MACEDONIAN WAR

- 197: Achaean league defects from Philip to Rome
- Philip offers Argos to Nabis
- Nabis takes control and implements similar reforms in Argos
- Nabis negotiates with Flamininus

Freedom of the Greeks

- 196 Isthmian Games: Flamininus declares all the Greek cities free
- War against Nabis: Declared by a panhellenic congress at Corinth
- Agreed by Flamininus, Achaea, Philip, Eumenes II, Rhodes
- Aetolia opts out

Terms with Rome

- Withdraw from all extra-Laconian territories
  - Argos, Crete
- Restore moveable plunder taken (if identifiable)
- Reversal of his social measures in Argos
- Surrender fleet to the Perioikoi
- Perioikoic towns to be placed under Achaean control
- No warfare, external alliances
- No new fortifications
- 5 hostages
- 500 talent indemnity (100 at start, rest in 8 annual installments)
- No return of exiles

Capture of Sparta

- 192: Philopoemen captures Sparta
- Sparta joins the Achaean league
- Pro-Philopoemen oligarchy
- Revolts in 191

Return of Philopoemen: 188

- Restoration of Exiles
- Destruction of city wall
- Destruction of the constitution
- Achaean laws and institutions

The Spartan State, unmanned as it were by these measures, was for a long time at the mercy of the Achaeans, but nothing did that people so much harm as the abrogation of the discipline of Lycurgus, to which they had been accustomed for more than 800 years.

Livy 38.34.9

Follow-up Reading

- Plutarch's Lives of Agis and Cleomenes
- Cartledge, P. and A. Spaworth. 2002. Hellenistic and Roman Sparta: A tale of two cities. 2nd edition. Routledge. 3-90.