

# 404-354 IMPERIALISM AND CHAOS: SPARTAN DECLINE

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# THE SPARTAN DECLINE

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# The Spartan Decline

- The battle of Leuktra was the end of Spartan imperial ambition.
- After Leuktra, Sparta becomes a third-rate power in the Greek world.
- REMEMBER, more than half (possibly as much as  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population of Sparta were not enfranchised at all, but were helots and other non-homoioi).

# Why did Sparta decline?

- There are many potential reasons why Sparta declined so quickly between the seizure of the Kadmeia and Leuktra.
- It had population problems, since the inheritance system was such that if a citizen fell under a certain property threshold, he lost his citizenship.
- For more than 2 centuries, Sparta had the only professional army in the Greek world, which gave it an advantage over any other polis. The Theban Sacred Band showed that any other polis could also build a professional army.

# The Loss of Messenia

- Sparta was politically and economically dependent upon the helots.
- The helots were an un-free, serf-like population that were the main source of income for the Spartan polis and the Spartan citizens.
- Most of the helots were Messenians.
- With the liberation of Messenia, Sparta lost its economic basis and could no longer field a large army.



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Consider the handout.

What is the evidence for a Spartan decline? Economic?  
Social? Military?