

INTERNATIONAL
SPARTAN STUDIES FORUM
Sparti | 8–11 June 2023



ABSTRACTS

INTERNATIONAL SPARTAN STUDIES FORUM

ANCIENT SPARTA IN THE 21ST CENTURY: RECENT TRENDS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

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An international academic, networking, policymaking and public engagement event (hybrid)

Sparti | 8–11 June 2023



ΔΙΕΘΝΕΣ ΦΟΡΟΥΜ ΣΠΑΡΤΙΑΤΙΚΩΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ

Η ΑΡΧΑΙΑ ΣΠΑΡΤΗ ΣΤΟΝ 21^Ο ΑΙΩΝΑ: ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΕΣ ΤΑΣΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΝΕΕΣ ΕΞΕΛΙΞΕΙΣ

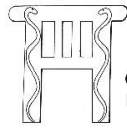
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ABSTRACTS

(in alphabetical order)

Dr Andy Bayliss (University of Birmingham)

“Starved. Driven to steal and fight and kill”: The Spartan upbringing in modern popular culture

One of the most striking aspects of Classical Spartan society was the compulsory upbringing for the sons of citizens, known in later sources as the *agōgē*. With the ancient sources painting a vivid image of a Spartan upbringing as an institution that was atypical in its state-organization, communality, and brutality, it is hardly surprising that it has garnered considerable attention in modern popular culture and thought. But which Spartan upbringing are these modern works depicting? Is it the upbringing described in considerable detail by Plutarch, the upbringing Xenophon describes in surprising brevity in his *Lacedaimonion Politeia*, or something altogether more imaginary? What do the choices made by modern philosophers, artists, writers, and film-makers about which sources to follow, and which to ignore when exploring the upbringing, tell us about their methodologies, aims and agendas?

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Gabriel Cabral Bernardo (University of São Paulo)

Communists and Freedom Fighters: The Reception of Sparta by the Brazilian Far-Right

During the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, between 2018 and 2022, the country saw a resurgence of demonstrations in favour of far-right agendas, and in many of them Spartans and, more specifically, their role in the Battle of Thermopylae figured as examples of conduct in face of an enemy threat. However, this is only one of the instances in which the tradition about ancient Sparta was used to forward far-right goals in the Brazilian political history. This paper will consider this moment and an earlier one (one from the 1930s, when Sparta was pictured as a model for anticommunism), intending to better understand the different settings that produced both images of ancient Sparta. This will be done by analysing journal articles from the 1930s and a set of more than 200 Twitter posts during the 2017–2022 period. This presentation shall demonstrate that changes in the sources that inform the popular idea about Sparta and in the organisation and context of far-right groups can create, even when pursuing similar goals, very contrasting Spartas. This highlights that Sparta (or any element of the past) is not static, something that must be accessed and discovered from the present, but something that is transformed (albeit with limitations) in the present – especially when the goal is to change the future.

Myke Cole (popular historian)

Why the Spartans Lost: Strategic and Tactical Factors in a Chequered Battlefield Record

Just six months ago, Republican candidate Don Bolduc made headlines using ancient Spartan iconography in his unsuccessful bid for the United State's senate. Bolduc is one of a legion of modern political agitators, ideologues, and serious candidates for office who lean on Sparta's popular reputation for military greatness to advance their agenda. But this reputation is not supported by the record. In almost 60% of the 126 Spartan battles, raids, sieges, and skirmishes that I examined in *The Bronze Lie*, the Spartans lost - on all terrain, day and night, on land and sea. The important question is - why? What lies behind Sparta's tepid military record? This paper will address this question from the strategic and tactical lens, looking at Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Sparta's military priorities, tactical successes and failures, its efforts to keep pace with reformations in military technology and culture, and how its social and political priorities may have impacted its ability to win in the field. The paper will not seek to tarnish the Spartan reputation, but to humanize it, and by showing their ability to rise above defeat and adapt in the face a dynamic world, dispel their mythic status and make them more accessible to all.

Dr Andreas Darlas (Hellenic Ministry of Culture & Sports)

Caves of Laconia: arks of cultural heritage preservation and a source of sustainable economic development

Laconia, which mostly consists of limestone, is home to numerous caves, including some of the most important in Greece, such as those of Diros. These caves, of various types and sizes, have seen a wide variety of uses in almost all periods, from the Palaeolithic Age to the recent past. In fact, as by their nature caves serve as protective shells that favour the accumulation of deposits of past human activity and the preservation of archaeological remains, the caves of Laconia constitute ancient monuments, real "arks", that have preserved abundant elements of cultural heritage through time.

Most of these caves are small although, among them, there are some larger ones that classify as insurmountable monuments of Nature. These caves have attracted visitors from very early on and were developed as accessible monuments, becoming key factors in tourism development. Their misuse, however, has caused serious damage to them. Today, with the experience gained and the possibilities provided by technological progress, it is not only possible to reverse this damage but also, by changing the way and conditions of cave exploitation, to transform Laconian caves into significant sources of sustainable local and regional development.

Dr Chrysanthi Gallou (University of Nottingham) and David Sanderson (University of Nottingham, and Senior Associate Consultant, THE Knowledge Partnership [Higher Education development consultancy])

What does an ancient Spartan heritage mean to Sparta's citizens and stakeholders? An opportunity or handicap?

Sparta has a key role in a vision of Greece that has shaped western thought for five centuries. But despite being the site of one of the two most important city-states of Classical Greece, surrounded by a breath-taking natural landscape, the modern city of Sparta remains an unexploited treasure of touristic development. Its eco-environment is largely detached from its cultural heritage. The *Rebranding Sparta Together Initiative*, a collaboration between the Centre for Spartan & Peloponnesian Studies of the University of Nottingham and the City of Sparta, aims to capitalise on the brand name 'Sparta' regionally and globally for the benefit of its community. The Initiative will support the local city council in connecting the local community to its historical environment and unite it in a shared appreciation of Sparta's locality, culture and heritage. The *Rebranding Sparta Together Initiative's* mission is to secure long-term cultural, touristic and economic benefits for the city. This presentation will briefly present the initiative's vision. It will then discuss the results of a series of in depth interviews with Sparta's citizens and stakeholders locally and internationally, exploring what an ancient Spartan heritage means to them. The presentation will address a fundamental question. Do they see it as an opportunity or a handicap for Sparta's social and economic development?

Dr Martina Gatto (Università di Roma 'Tor Vergata')

Through the Looking Glass: Distorted Images of Sparta (and China) from Nazi Germany to the 21st Century

This paper examines distorted representations of the Spartan political model in the 20th and 21st centuries, focusing on peculiar comparisons with the Chinese state. The starting point will be a pamphlet on Lycurgus and Confucius from the National Socialist perspective of Richard Walther Darré. Interestingly, some references to Sparta in the early 1930s can also be found in Chinese nationalist propaganda, mainly concerning military reform in the southern China Province called Guangxi and nicknamed "New Sparta". Making a leap forward in time, the last section of the paper will be devoted to Sparta and China in the 21st century, focusing on the so-called "Thucydides' Trap". The political scientist Graham Allison introduced the concept for interpreting a future US–China conflict, considered as inevitable as the confrontation between Sparta and Athens described by the ancient historian. However, in interpreting this model, China is not only associated with Athens as an emerging economic power but also with Sparta as an autocratic political model.

Professor Edward M. Harris (University of Durham and University of Edinburgh)

Sparta's Contribution to Greek Ideas about Freedom

During the Archaic period, there was a transition from personalized forms of rule (seen in the Homeric poems) to government under the rule of law (*eunomia*) protecting the freedom of citizens against the slavery of a tyrant. The aims of this form of government are articulated by Solon in his poems and seen in the laws of Greek communities in the Archaic period. Sparta was not only the first Greek city–state to become a hegemonic power leading a league of allies in Archaic Greece, but also the first city–state to legitimize its role by claiming to promote political freedom under the rule of law by driving out tyrants ([Plut.] Mor. 859d). The most famous example was the expulsion of Hippias by Cleomenes in 510 BCE. But when Cleomenes attempted to reinstate Hippias, he lost legitimacy, and his Peloponnesian allies deserted him. And when the allies of Sparta claimed in 432 that the Athenians were threatening the freedom of the Greeks, the Spartans went to war to retain their legitimacy as hegemon.

Professor Stephen Hodkinson (University of Nottingham)

Spartans on the Capitol: Recent Far–Right Misuses of Sparta in the USA and their Transnational Historical Roots

The display of ‘Spartan’ symbols during the Capitol insurrection on 6 January 2021 represented the culmination of an increasing trend during the 2010s in which the U.S. Far Right appropriated martial images of the Spartans, linked especially to the battle of Thermopylae. Three strands have been prominent: (1) exploitation of the phrase *MOLON LABE*, supposedly uttered by King Leonidas, by gun-rights activists and by the firearms industry; (2) use of imagery from Zack Snyder’s film *300* (2006) by supporters of Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign; (3) invocations of ‘Spartan’ military symbols and its martial reputation to mobilise public violence. The short-term contexts for these appropriations are *300*’s popular appeal and its valorisation of white masculine violence, amidst the growing polarisation of U.S. politics and rise of new Far-Right groups during the presidencies of Barack Obama (2009-2017) and Donald Trump (2017-2021). However, Zack Snyder’s film was closely dependent on its source-text, Frank Miller’s 1998 graphic novel. Miller’s depiction of the Spartans, although influenced by the hyper-masculine superhero genre of American comics, was also rooted in a longer-term phenomenon, the ‘modern mirage of Spartan militarism’, deeply ingrained in Western thinking since the late 18th century. This erroneous consensus that Sparta was a militaristic society, produced by the reciprocal relationship between Western politics and scholarship since the

American and French revolutions, spans the political spectrum and embraces both intellectual and popular culture.

Professor Noreen Humble (University of Calgary)

Sparta in ancient political thought: good to think with, not to imitate

Xenophon states in his *Lacedaimonion Politeia* (10.8) that 'all praise such practices but no polis wishes to imitate them'. This statement is read in various ways by commentators on this work. My own particular reading is that Xenophon is talking about a particular type of laconophile who wouldn't last a day under the harsh realities of Sparta's system, such as the social laconophiles mocked by Aristophanes (Av. 1280–3). But more broadly the statement does beg the question that if Sparta was so very admired, why indeed did no other polis imitate its practices, political or social? I will concentrate my analysis on Sparta in 4th century BCE political thought, to argue that for non-Spartan political thinkers, Sparta was good to think with, but even if general principles such as state education were admired, the way Sparta instituted them was not and that she was never really considered a viable system to imitate.

Dr James Kierstead (The New Zealand Initiative and Victoria University of Wellington)

Mixed Blessings: Mixed Constitutions, Citizen Sovereignty, and Ancient Sparta

Theorists have often seen Sparta, with its citizen Assembly, Council of Elders, and dual kingship, as the *fons et origo* of the 'mixed constitution', thought to combine the best features of democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy. But how well does the ancient evidence bear this idea out? And what might this have to tell us about the way we view constitutions as citizens of modern, representative democracies?

Dr Eleni Kolaiti (AKTES – Society for the Study of Ancient Coastlines; University of Nottingham; National Hellenic Research Foundation)

Climate change and coastal landscape: Tracing ancient coastlines in the Laconic Gulf

The acceleration in average sea level rise in recent years, along with the rise in global temperature, is one of the most serious effects of climate change that we are being called upon to face in the coming years. The submerged geomorphic features and ancient coastal remains scattered throughout the Laconian shoreline are valuable indicators of sea level changes and the time these took place. The

study of sea level changes during the Late Holocene, the systematic research of coastal geomorphs and landscapes, the geoarchaeological study of coasts, and the apprehension of coastlines as dynamic natural and cultural systems, contribute to a precise reconstruction of the ancient shorelines and a deeper understanding of the interaction between human and coastal environment during prehistoric times and historical antiquity to date.

The submergence of the coast of Laconia implies environmental change in the coastal landscape, marine flooding, shoreline retreat and land loss, with ancient coastal structures being lost under the sea. Understanding of the local sea level change history and determining of former sea level stands combined with accurate coastal topography and climatic modelling aid in predicting sea level rise in the near future, which is a key factor in planning of coastal infrastructure and imposition of civil protection measures. Further action to better identify, research and protect the underwater traces of human existence while ensuring their preservation, in parallel with their ecotouristic utilization promoting the natural seascape and the historical context to which they belong, will enhance the regional sustainable development strategy.

Dr Ian Macgregor Morris (Paris Lodron Universität Salzburg) – keynote speaker

History, Memory, Tradition

Sparta has been an intermittent presence in political culture since the classical age. Recent right-wing appropriations reflect long-running patterns of engagement with the ancient city, a cyclical rise and fall of interest, from the crusades to the French Revolution and beyond. The “Spartan Tradition” (E. Rawson) is revealing precisely because it embraces cultural, social, economic, theological, athletic and (anti)aesthetic features, that drive engagements with Sparta and Spartans in a diverse range of ideas, uses and practices; many of which are, perhaps like the Spartans themselves, both sublime and ridiculous. Perhaps no other ancient polity has inspired such diverse responses, especially in terms of ‘second hand’ engagements – that is, uses of and responses to Sparta that are not based on any reading of sources or specific cultural productions, but are nevertheless key in certain (sub)cultural practices and identities. When taken together, these examples reveal a rich tapestry of engagement with the classical that defies any straightforward categorisation, but is best approached as an incohesive, but overlapping, whole. In this lecture I will provide an overview of the competing visions that constitute and drive the idea(s) of Sparta; consider the generation of these ideas in conflicts over cultural memory, both ancient and modern; and situate them within “history” on the one hand, and cultural politics on the other.

Professor Ellen Millender (Reed College)

A Cuckoo in the Nest? The Dyarchy in the Spartan Politeia

Ancient sources on Sparta suggest that the dyarchy (double kingship) was something of an alien implant – and even a hostile implant, especially when one considers its odd relationship to the Lyncurgan Sparta that Xenophon describes in his Lacedaemoniōn Politeia. My paper argues that while the dyarchy was a central component of Sparta's famed constitution, it inevitably undermined the stability not only of the Lacedaemonians' political organization but also of their politeia itself. It considers the many ways in which the dyarchy was inherently at odds with core Spartan institutions, practices, and ideology, especially the intertwined values of egalitarianism and cooperation that underpinned the Spartan politeia. Scholars, of course, have demonstrated that the Spartan system was fundamentally fractured in many respects. Competition, patronage, and wealth were among several societal factors that worked against the communal solidarity that lay at the heart of the ideology of the Homoioi. I argue, however, that the kingship proved over time to be the most dangerous threat to the very fabric of Spartan society. As I will show, this institution was at the center of all of the major fissures that both continuous warfare and oliganthrōpia exacerbated in the fifth and fourth centuries BC.

Fotis Pantopoulos (Educator - Researcher - Strategic Communication Consultant)

Sparta: Pioneering Green Tourism and the role of Strategic Communication in spreading the vision

The aim of this presentation is to explore how Sparta, rich in history and culture, could embrace sustainability and pioneer green tourism practices, and how Strategic Communication could play a critical and decisive role in the dissemination of Sparta's vision for green tourism. To this end, it is proposed that the city's policymakers could employ various communication channels to raise awareness of its sustainability initiatives and to enhance engagement with tourists and stakeholders. A Strategic Communication plan could ensure that these communication channels represent the same consistent and unified "voice". In this way, the city of Sparta will effectively communicate its commitment to green tourism, highlighting the benefits of sustainable practices, showcasing success stories, and involving local communities in the decision-making process. Strategic Communication will help create a positive image of Sparta as a pioneer in green tourism, attracting tourists who value sustainability and environmental conservation, resulting in revenue generation and empowerment of the local community.

Sparta's "journey" to pioneering green tourism and the role of Strategic Communication in spreading this vision will become a remarkable example of how a destination can embrace sustainability and create a positive impact on its environment, society and economy. Similarly, with the appropriate promotion tools

this experience of Sparta could inspire other destinations to follow similar practices to create a more sustainable and responsible tourism industry in the modern era.

Dr Anastasia Papathanasiou (Hellenic Ministry of Culture & Sports)

Cultural heritage, environmental responsibility and sustainable tourism: the case of the Mani

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Although the promotion of the cultural history of Sparta has focused mainly on the Classical and Byzantine eras, Laconia in general, especially its southernmost part, showcases a cultural heritage that has flourished since the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods. It is interesting to review the economy at the beginning of its modern form, as documented in the Neolithic Alepotrypa Cave, Diros, and compare it with its current saturated form. The aim of this presentation is to demonstrate the value of promoting the significant stock of cultural heritage within a framework of environmental change, awareness and responsibility as well as of sustainable tourism development and future reflection. It will particularly emphasize the problems in the modern reality of the Mani, the concept of economic and touristic development in the area, the comparative advantage of the combination of the uniqueness of the natural environment and culture of the Mani, the lurking dangers and the need to showcase and promote its particularity in modern terms and in a sustainable way for the local eco-community.

Dr Ioannis Poullos (Ionian University) and Thanasis Papavlasopoulos (Ionian University)

Sustainable Tourism and Local Economies: international developments – insights into South Peloponnese

The presentation deals with the relationship between sustainable tourism and local economies. The first part reviews the international developments focusing on the concepts of green tourism, sustainable tourism and circular economy in connection with the local economies. The key questions addressed relate to the benefits brought by sustainable tourism initiatives to the local economies, and to the methodologies of the involvement of the local communities in these initiatives. The second part attempts to apply the international developments to the area of South Peloponnese reviewing existing initiatives mostly associated to the exploitation of local heritage expressions, and exploring further potentials.

Professor Selene Psoma (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

Revising the Spartan Krypteia

The Spartan krypteia has been a long subject of debate. From the 18th c. and the abbé Barthélémy to 2018, scholarly approaches differ and can be summarised as follows: a military one that considers the krypteia as part of territorial defence and training for endurance, and an anthropological one that considers the krypteia as – *grosso modo* – an initiation rite with the aim to terrorize the helots. Both approaches can be detected in the more recent bibliography. My own approach takes the military one.

Professor Nicholas Richer (Université de Lyon) – keynote speaker

Dikè kai poinë: justice et châtement à Sparte à l'époque archaïque et à l'époque classique

Dike kai poine: justice and punishment in Sparta in the Archaic and Classical periods

La Grèce archaïque a vu se développer des pratiques permettant la formulation et la mise en œuvre de sentences judiciaires dans un cadre collectif. C'est en particulier dans l'Illiade qu'apparaissent les éléments constitutifs d'un droit grec. Or les passages homériques montrent une terminologie, des conceptions, une logique qui semblent aussi avoir existé à Sparte, où des pratiques judiciaires organisées sont bien attestées par ailleurs. Cependant, à Sparte, ou plutôt à Lacédémone, si les droits des individus doivent être respectés sans que soit négligée la prise en compte des intérêts de la collectivité, ce sont aussi des droits personnels divers qui existent, et qui caractérisent les diverses catégories de la population. Celles-ci s'intègrent de façon différenciée dans la collectivité sociale, puisque leurs membres peuvent être sanctionnés de façon différente selon leurs statuts.

Archaic Greece saw the development of practices allowing the formulation and implementation of judicial sentences in a collective framework. It is in particular in the Iliad that the constitutive elements of a Greek law appear. Now the Homeric passages show a terminology, conceptions, and logic that also seem to have existed in Sparta, where organized judicial practices are well attested. However, in Sparta, or rather in Lakedaimon, if the rights of the individuals must be respected without neglecting the taking into account of the interests of the community, it is also various personal rights which exist, and which characterize the various categories of the population. These are differently integrated in the social community, since their members can be punished in a different way according to their status.

Dr Jeremy Swist (Brandeis University)

Laconophilia: A Countercultural Current from Ancient Literature to Modern Music

Unfortunately, most ancient literary sources for Spartan society come from non-Spartans such as Herodotus, Xenophon and Plutarch, and, ironically, were written during or after the period of Sparta's decline. These accounts merit much scepticism not only as bases of the "the Spartan mirage"; they also tend to look back on Sparta through quasi-romantic lenses as an alternative to their authors' contemporary societies, whether democratic Athens or imperial Rome. Narratives nostalgic for the military prowess and order of the Spartans thus created a sort of canon appropriated by Laconophiles throughout subsequent history, the Spartans becoming the spiritual ancestors of what sociologists may term as countercultures. This presentation focuses on contemporary countercultures formed around genres of popular music, especially the heavy metal scene in Greece, the West, and globally, and their prolific reception of Sparta in its musical, lyrical, and visual themes. Whether consulting the aforementioned ancient sources directly or filtered through Hollywood productions, hundreds of heavy metal bands throughout the world have adopted and adapted romanticized conceptions of the Spartans as reflections of their own counterculture, as the valiant few against the many, the champions of liberty against all institutions of political, social, and religious conformity and control. Sparta becomes a symbol of metal's core value: transgression. As a musical genre fascinated with the extremes of sound, emotion, and humanity, it is also inevitable that several bands have also used Sparta to channel extreme politics, even fascism. That fact alone merits critical examination by scholars.

Dr Stavros Vlizon (Ionian University)

Eco–environment and cultural landscape: Sparta as a case study for new approaches in cultural heritage management

The constant interaction between man and nature, and the coexistence of monuments and nature resulted in the creation of an aesthetic where these elements are identified and understood as a unity. The location of a site was not accidental in antiquity, since it was determined by landscape and socio–political factors, the purpose of which was to strengthen links between different areas of interest and their inhabitants. UNESCO understood early on the need to link nature and culture, and for this reason cultural landscapes have been recognised since 1992 in the first article of the UNESCO treaty as combined works of nature and man. In Sparta and Laconia too, cultural landscapes are "illustrative" of the evolution of human society and settlements over the centuries. The study of the landscape in this direction will provide an opportunity to formulate specific proposals for the proper management of the area, which combines monumental and natural wealth. The objectives should focus on transforming

the area into a modern network of cultural and environmental reference points on cultural routes. For the first time, organized cultural and environmental routes in the Municipality of Sparta will be seen as tools for the development of cultural tourism, economy and access to cultural goods. In addition, the aim is to exploit all the parameters of a cultural and environmental route that can positively influence the lifestyle of the local community.

Dr George Zachos (Academy of Athens)

The enhancement of Thermopylae by the Modern Greek State

Thermopylae, as an archaeological site and as a symbol, has undergone various forms of management since antiquity. The Greek State kept on the same track from the first years of its foundation until today. Thermopylae during the 19th century was one of the symbols that were used to connect the newly formed Greek State with its ancient heritage, while towards the end of the century the site was also connected with the ideology of the Great Idea. This ideological–symbolic aspect dominated until WW II. From the 1950s onwards, Thermopylae and its monument have been exploited not only ideologically but also economically, within a framework formed by the Marshall Plan, Greece's integration into NATO and the American sphere of influence on the one hand, and the reconstruction of the country and the touristic exploitation of its cultural stock on the other. The form of management planned today is a result of the economic crisis and is primarily related to the utilization of thermal tourism. New technologies and the Thermopylae Information Centre are expected to become the "vehicle" and the space where the site's cultural heritage will be showcased, an important part of which is the ideological load they bear.