

III. Archaic Sparta

A. Spartan Society

1. Sparta is the second most important city-state in Greek history.
2. It had an aristocracy like the Eupatrids of Athens. In Sparta they were called the Spartiatai.
3. They ruled the commoners and slaves of Sparta like aristocrats did in other archaic city-states.

B. Spartan Government

1. Duarchy

- a) Early in their history, the conquering Spartiatai had belonged to two ruling tribes. So they decided to have one king from each tribe at the same time.
- b) One of the challenges of having two kings was that they had to rule together, and both of them had to agree in order to do it. Among the advantages was that there was always a “spare” king, when one went to war.
- c) There is a name for a kind of government with two kings. It is “duarchy.” But this may not be the best term to describe Sparta. There are are considerations...

2. The Five Ephors

- a) The two Spartan kings were monitored by five officials known as “ephors.”
- b) The kings swore an oath to the ephors to uphold the laws of Sparta, and in exchange the ephors swore to uphold the authority of the kings.
- c) If a king broke his oath, the ephors could arrest him, and put him on trial.
- d) If anyone from the Spartan population rebelled or conspired against the king, the ephors had the authority to kill them.
- e) The “separation of powers” between officials in Sparta was like the aristocracy of Athens. But it also involved a set of laws that the Founding Fathers of the United States called a “constitution.” In a way, then it was a constitutional duarchy, or perhaps a constitutional aristocracy. It’s not easy to choose the name...