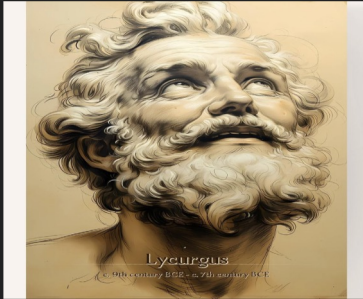


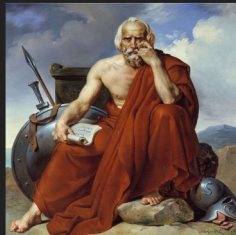
Plutarch , The Great Rhetra Of Sparta



1

Background For The Great Rhetra

- The Great Rhetra is a set of laws and oral traditions followed by the Spartans
- The Great Rhetra is believed to be the foundation of Sparta's constitution
- A notable historical figure that gives us insight into " The Great Rhetra " is Plutarch , who described a Spartan named Lycurgus laying down the foundation of future spartan society through a series of laws .
- Written during the Archaic period around 7th-8th century BCE



Painting of Lycurgus (right)

2

Who Was Lycurgus ?

- Many details about Lycurgus' personal history remain a mystery to this day
- Lycurgus is seen as a important figure from throughout Greek history as he had a lot of involvement in shaping one of the most recognizable and successful city states
- Lycurgus believed in " Eunomia " or " Good Order " and believed it could be achieved through reform
- Politically, Economically, and Socially
- Lycurgus consulted with an oracle at Delphi, where he received knowledge that would lead him to transform Sparta into the Sparta we are most familiar with today
- Created Militaristic society

Words to know :

- Archagetai- Kings
- Knakion - River
- Babyka- Bridge
- appellazein - Assembly of people
- eubouleia - Good Counsel
- Oracle - Messenger / vessel for the gods
- Gerontes - Members of the council of elders

3

What Were Lycurgus Laws Proposed In "The Great Rhetra"?

According to Plutarch, the Rhetra delivered by Lycurgus (after Lycurgus was done consulting with the oracle) attempted to address multiple different axioms within spartan life

- Lycurgus through the great Rhetra sought the formation of a "Gerousia" which is a council of elders consisting of 30 men , 60 years old or older , 2 of whom were kings
- Lycurgus called for the redistribution of land among Spartans
- Lycurgus held the view that " good counsel" was discouraged at the time , as opposed to his belief it should be encouraged
- In Plutarch's account its stated " since the serious purposes of an assembly were rendered foolish and futile by vain thoughts, as they gazed upon statues, and paintings, or scenic embellishments" . In analyzing this statement, one can conclude that Lycurgus took issues with citizen priorities at the time , specifically things like architecture and art being the reason many were blind to the importance of good counsel.

4

Conclusion : Why Was The Great Rhetra So Important ?

Shaped Spartan society as we know it today as previously mentioned (shift towards military centered society) (ORDER)

Since Lycurgus consulted with an oracle in order to create his vision for government , it highlights the value Greeks placed on insight received from the Divine , or very spiritual individuals who believed to serve as messengers for the gods

Provided a piece of Land for Spartan Citizens

Council of elders served as a early form of checks and balances on the Kings and vice versa

Specified the power and status of different societal groups within Sparta

Kings had an explicit duty under the Rhetra's law to prioritize interest of the state

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