

Family in Classical and Early Hellenistic Sparta

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SUMMARY

This work has the ambition to make a substantial contribution to the studies concerning ancient Sparta by focusing on an important aspect of her history that still requires to be revised. The main goal is to demonstrate that, in contrary to the popular opinion, the sphere of Spartan family life was not marginalised, but constituted natural and integral element of the reality of ancient Spartans, in which regard they did not differ substantially from what used to be recognised as the 'ancient Greek norm'. In a broader context, the study has been aimed at challenging one of the basic assumptions underlying the false stereotype of the Spartan *polis* and, in consequence, at changing the common (mis)conception of its social history.

The basis of conducted analysis consists of critical re-reading of the available ancient evidence in order to revise the traditional views, which have none or meagre support in that evidence. The source material comprises mainly, although not exclusively, of the ancient literary works.

The chronological range of the dissertation begins with the earliest times for which we have any source information concerning Spartan family, and in the case of this particular topic it is the poetry of Tyrtaios (7th century BC). It ends, on the other hand, with the final year of the reign of Nabis in Sparta, when the *polis* ultimately lost its independence (192 BC).

The work is composed of three main chapters:

The first one is intended to expose the causes and scope of the undertaken research problem. The initial section has been dedicated to the scholarship relevant to the topic of family life in ancient Sparta. Due to the polemic character of the dissertation it was especially important to adequately present all the scholarly opinions and theories that were to be challenged, as well as those that remain in accordance with or support the author's working hypotheses. The second section concerns the specific nature of the source material, which causes so much trouble not only with the perception of the discussed matter but also with the entire history of the ancient Sparta. In the third section of this chapter has been outlined the broader issue of the complicated relation between the 'private' and the 'public' spheres of life in the ancient Greek *poleis*. For it is an extremely problematic subject not only in relation to the Spartan society, but also to other Greek communities and its thorough

elaboration allows considering the Spartan case in much broader context. In the last section the author analyses the information of those laws and state regulations that in some way could have interfered with the sphere of the family life in Sparta. For that could have been the basis of the prevailing view of the marginalised role of the family in that *polis*.

The second chapter has been devoted to all manifestations of the family life of ancient Spartans in the classical period. In the first section the author has gathered and discussed all information related to the instances of specific families present in Sparta such as: the two royal houses, the rest of the Heraclids and at least several other distinctive families registered in our sources. This part is essential since it constitutes probably the most obvious and strongest argument supporting the main assumption of this work. The second section regards various traditions cultivated by the Spartan families in consecutive generations such as: involvement in sport competitions, breeding certain species of animals, 'ritual friendships', serving certain offices and giving specific names to the family members. In the next section the author describes these laws existing in Sparta that seem to sanction some family prerogatives. The fourth section concerns the position of women in Spartan society and its possible consequences for the life of the family. The fifth section is dedicated to the issues of polyandry and pederasty. While the last section, contains a case study of the king Agesilaos II as an example illustrating the approach of an individual Spartan towards his familial matters.

The third chapter has been dedicated to the situation of the Spartan family in the early Hellenistic period (understood as the time between the battle of Leuctra and the Achaean intervention in Sparta). In the first two sections have been discussed the issues of social changes in Sparta at the turn of the classical and Hellenistic periods, as well as the way in which these changes were perceived and recorded by the relevant ancient authors. The next section concerns the phenomenon of Spartan *oligantropia* and its possible connections with the family life of the Spartans. The fourth section contains the analysis of the presence of family matters in the politics of the reformer kings: Agis IV and Cleomenes III. The last part of the chapter has been dedicated to the institution of *proxenia* which can serve as the example of certain continuity related to the family sphere of life in Sparta between the classical and Hellenistic periods.

The main content of the work is supplemented by the appendix containing the list of those Spartans mentioned in our sources in whose cases there are any information concerning their family background.