

Athens vs. Sparta

Even though the ancient Greek cities of Athens and Sparta were geographically close to each other, they had very distinct cultures, lifestyles, values, and political systems that defined them. The following paper compares and contrasts the cultural impacts of the two cities by examining some of the duties and responsibilities of the citizenry, as well as the different values that were deemed important. The paper further evaluates the impact of accomplishments left by both city-states on the history of Western civilization.

One of the major similarities between the two cities revolved around their systems of governance. Both cities had a legislative assembly whose members were elected by the citizens. However, the Spartan government was more oligarchic and monarchical, as it was ruled by two kings who reigned until their death or were ejected from office (Kennell, 2011). Athens, on the other hand, had a democratic government that was ruled by archons who were elected annually (Dierckx & Mark Twain Media, 2012). As such, Athens is considered by most historians to be the birthplace of democracy.

Historians affirm that the Spartan mode of living was simple and emphasized obedience to authority as well as war. Young Spartan men were exempted from household and industrial duties, thereby allowing them to focus on their military profession, while girls were trained on how to take care of the warriors (Bradford, 2013). Athenian life can be described as a creative wonderland. This is due to the sheer fact that every Athenian was entitled to education, thereby allowing them to pursue arts or sciences (Budin, 2014). Furthermore, Athenians could also serve in the navy or army, but it was not compulsory as it was in Sparta.

Another significant distinction between the two Greek cities was how they got along with other Greek cities. While Athens was focused on gaining more control of other Greek states, Sparta kept itself separate from other states and only provided military assistance when needed. Athens's desire to gain more control of other Greek states eventually culminated in the Peloponnesian War, which pitted Sparta against Athens (Roberts, 2017). After years of fighting, Sparta won the war but spared Athens from being razed, as was the tradition in Greece. Thus, Athens's culture was allowed to live on as long as Athens did not interfere with the other Greek states.

In summary, the Spartan decision not to burn down the city of Athens resulted in the spread of Athenian influence and culture to other Greek city-states. For instance, the other states adopted Athenian architectural designs in their temples and buildings, as well as their democratic system of governance, which played an integral role in the history of Western civilization. Today, Athens is the economic and political hub of Greece and an important educational frontier, particularly in the fields of medicine, mathematics, physics, and philosophy.

References

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