



TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Herausgegeben von

Gerhard Dobesch, Bernhard Palme
Peter Siewert und Ekkehard Weber

Band 22, 2007

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HOLZHAUSEN



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KIRSTEN HARSHMAN LENGYEL

Athenaeus on Spartan Diaita

“When someone inquired why they put their fields in the hands of the Helots, and did not take care of them themselves, he said, ‘It was by not taking care of the fields, but of ourselves, that we acquired those fields’.”

Anaxandridas II, Agiad King of Sparta, c. 560–520 B.C.E. (Plut. Apoph. Lac. 216,14–217,3)

Athenaeus and the *Deipnosophists*

Athenaeus’ work, the *Deipnosophists*, is approached by historians with trepidation for many reasons: the comic literary style, complex presentation of citations and informational inconsistencies name a few. He was a scholar though and had access to many erudite works of his time. His effort therefore, however unwieldy and unusual to the modern historian, has inherent worth.

In 200 C.E., the approximate time Athenaeus wrote the *Deipnosophists*¹, books were a costly and rare commodity. Committing books accurately to memory was therefore practiced among the educated², to whom Athenaeus belonged³. Awareness of the scholars’ working habits and conditions at that time supports the quality of Athenaeus’ ability and sources. It is also relevant preliminary information when extracting references from the *Deipnosophists*.

Athenaeus’ time of composition was the Hellenistic-Roman period and the place of composition was Rome. The text can therefore not to be considered a source emanating from Greece. Far from detracting from its eligibility for historians of ancient Greece, this fact simply provides a fixed point from which to consider the contents. A consequential issue, however, involved in all aspects of utilizing Athenaeus’ work, is the state of the surviving text: the reader encounters inconsistencies and errors throughout⁴. This clearly influences the way the contained information can be used.

¹ G. Wentzel, *Athenaios*, RE 2, 2 (1896) 2026–2033; G. Arnott, *Athenaeus and the Epitome*, in: D. Braund, J. Wilkins (eds.), *Athenaeus and his World*, Exeter 2000, 42.

² Y. L. Too, *The Walking Library: The Performance of Cultural Memories*, in: Braund, Wilkins (eds.), *Athenaeus* (note 1) 111–123; Ch. Jacob, *Athenaeus the Librarian*, in: Braund, Wilkins (*loc. cit.*) 109.

³ Jacob, *Athenaeus* (note 2) 89. Jacob assumes that this accomplishment came, in part, from acquaintance with the scholarship of the Alexandrian librarians, so close to his home town Naucratis. It is important to know his scholarly background and not to equate the comic structure of the work solely with artistic effort.

⁴ Wentzel, *Athenaios* (note 1) 2026; Ch. B. Gulick, *Introduction*, Cambridge, Mass. 1993, xi; Arnott, *Athenaeus* (note 1) 42–47. The manuscript *Venetus Marcianus* 447 is recognized as a copy of the original work. It is described as “mutilated” (“verstümmelt”) and

Diaita — δίαίτα

The word *diaita* appears often in the citations Athenaeus uses. The ancient Greek definition of the word differs from our general understanding of “diet”, its rough equivalent in modern English usage. *Diaita* is defined broadly as “way of living”, “mode of life” and as “dwelling, abode”. The corresponding verb *diaitao* means to “lead one’s life, live”. In working usage, *diaita* describes manner of life as well as actual place where life occurs⁵. It is a concept which evolved over time, interwoven with Greek mentality and tradition, and seems to have varied in meaning throughout the different regions of ancient Greece⁶. That the idea was originally closely linked with gymnastics is particularly relevant to the state education for girls and boys, as well as the ideals for daily living of all (female and male) adults in Sparta⁷.

Spartan way of life has intrigued scholars since antiquity and is an issue of enduring interest. It is a point of erudition in the “inner dialogue” of the *Deipnosophists*, most notably in Book four (Athen. 4,138b–143a)⁸, but occurs, true to Athenaeus’ singular literary style⁹, in later discussion as well. As mentioned before, Athenaeus culled information on daily habits in Sparta from several different sources to use in his work. Close attention to the content of this material conveys information concerning the place¹⁰ eating and dining had in that culture.

The literary structure of the *Deipnosophists*

The codex Marcianus¹¹, the oldest known manuscript of the *Deipnosophists* in full length, is divided into fifteen Books and believed to reflect Athenaeus’ original framework. The codex is damaged however, and Books one, two and part of Book three have only survived from another manuscript which is a summary of the original. In this “epitomized” version nearly all Book titles are deleted, citations are rearranged, paraphrased or abridged, and other citations are simply omitted. This helps to explain the unwieldy flow of information encountered on beginning the extant work.

it is simply unknown to what degree Athenaeus’ sources, the *Marcianus* scribe or an unknown epitomizer are to be held responsible for the errors found in the text.

⁵ W. H. Groß, *Diaeta*, KIP 1 (1964) 1505–1506; “Das griechische δίαίτα bezeichnet neben der Lebensführung auch ein Wohnhaus oder einen Raum in einem solchen”.

⁶ F. Kudlien, *Diätetik*, KIP 1 (1964) 1506–1507; “Eine umfassende und ausgeformte Lehre von der gesunden δίαίτα (‘Lebensführung’) ist spätestens bei den alten Pythagoreern, und besonders in der sogenannten westgriechischen Heilkunde, rational begründet und entwickelt worden. Sie ist ursprünglich eng verknüpft mit der Gymnastik und umfasste, zumindest im 4. Jh. v. Chr., auch einiges von dem, was wir heute ‘Hygiene’ nennen”.

⁷ Philostr. *Gymn.* 27; 28.

⁸ The material of this passage is the main focus of this paper.

⁹ Wentzel, *Athenaios* (note 1) 2033. Athenaeus distributes parts of sources throughout his work and sometimes repeats the same references in multiple places.

¹⁰ J. Wilkins, *Dialogue and Comedy: The Structure of the “Deipnosophistae”*, in: Braund, Wilkins (eds.), *Athenaeus* (note 1) 24.

¹¹ Arnott, *Athenaeus* (note 1) 42. Believed to have been copied by John the Calligrapher from the original papyrus of Athenaeus’ work in Constantinople between 895–917 C.E.

Book four of the text begins, as almost all Books do, with Athenaeus addressing Timocrates. He explains an agreement between Hippolochus the Macedonian and the Samian Lynceus, to describe exquisite banquets to one another by letter (Athen. 4,128a–134d). But at Athen. 4,134d, the character Plutarch suddenly speaks and puts a very abrupt end to the “banquet letter” discussion. The “inner dialogue” among the *Deipnosophists*, or dinner scholars, begins again at this point and is related to the immediately prior outer dialogue. Plutarch continues the theme of describing varied eating habits, first describing Attic dinners and then, at Athen. 4,138b, Spartan symposia. This passage on Sparta directly follows discussion of Athens and is within the larger literary context of detailed knowledge of Greek customs and social history. The references to Spartans and Spartan habits all concern the dominating population sector in the Spartan, or Lacedaemonian, state, the Spartiates.

Daily life in Sparta: Simple food and way of living

As introduction to Spartan eating practices, Plutarch begins by quoting a passage from Herodotus (Athen. 4,138b–d)¹² describing Pausanias’ reaction to the abandoned Persian encampment following the Greek victory at Plataea. It is Mardonios’, the Persian commander’s, tent specifically and described as arrayed in gold and silver. Awed by the ornate living conditions, Pausanias orders the Persian cooks and bakers, who remained in camp, to prepare a dinner just as they would have for Mardonios. He demonstrates with this action that *what* was eaten is of (at least) equal interest to him, in his assessment of the scene, as the surroundings in which it was consumed.

Thereafter he orders helots to prepare a Spartan evening meal in order to compare the *way of life* of the two cultures. After calling the other Greek generals to conjoin and observe the disparity between the two, he points to the foolishness of the Persian commander, who, although he enjoyed such *toiauten diaiten*, “luxurious way of living”, came nevertheless to attack those who are so *echontas*, “poor” (the Spartans, as demonstrated by their daily dinner spread). This well-known reference, reduced to its basic content, gives subtle information. It indicates that the Spartans considered food (what could be considered daily diet) commensurate with manner of living.

Continuing, Plutarch reports of a Sybarite who had dined in one of the Spartan public messes and could therefore express a personal opinion. No bibliographical information or further detail concerning the traveller is given. The term “Sybarite” exists alone as orientation and comprehension guide, because Sybaris was associated with over-indulgence of every kind. Over-indulgence meant immoderation and therefore represented a radical contrast to Sparta.

This Sybarite is quoted as saying: “It is no wonder that Spartans are the bravest men in the world; for anyone in his right mind would prefer to die ten thousand times rather than share in such poor living” (Athen. 4,138d). Athenaeus thus begins portrayal of Spartan customs with illustrations of their *diaita*. He selects examples of

¹² Hdt. 9,82.

dining habits which epitomize an aspect of the Spartan “myth”¹³ poor food and a manner of living to match.

The components of daily fare

a) *aiklon* — ἄικλον

Plutarch continues his speech by moving initially on to the subject of the Cleaver feast at Sparta. His source of information is Polemon from Ilion, who researched and wrote on a very wide variety of Greek subjects, including table manners, at approximately 200/180 B.C.E.¹⁴ Polemon remains the authority from Athen. 4,138e until Athen. 4,139d. Within the depiction of the feast *kopis*, or Cleaver¹⁵, we find the information: “The Cleaver is a dinner of a special sort, as is also that which is called the *aiklon*” (Athen. 4,138f).

Aiklon, the evening meal at Sparta, has this honorary introduction in the text, in a quote which describes it as special as well as directly associating its importance to that of a religious feast.

Following a detailed account of Cleaver, Plutarch continues the Polemon quotation with a discussion of the term *aiklon*. Polemon relates: “By the other Dorians the chief meal is called *aiklon*” (Athen. 4,139b).

Other Dorians use the term *aiklon* for their evening meal (Athen. 4,139b), and Plutarch employs a citation from Epicharmus¹⁶, a playwright of Doric comedy, to prove his point (Athen. 4,139b). Another reference follows seamlessly, giving contradicting information to what has already been stated: “But in Sparta the so-called *aiklon* comes after the dinner; they serve it to those who are admitted to the mess, being bread loaves (*artous*) in baskets and a piece of meat for each. The attendant who accompanies the distributor of the meat announces the *aiklon*, adding the name of the donor” (Athen. 4,139c)¹⁷.

Upon completion of the reference, Plutarch attributes the information again to Polemon, though remarking that it differs in content from what he has learned from

¹³ Distortion of tradition, events and historical transmission owing to uncritical appreciation of the Spartan state. Research of the myth was first done by F. Ollier, *Le mirage spartiate. Étude sur l'idéalisation de Sparte dans l'antiquité grecque I–II*, Paris 1933–1943.

¹⁴ K. Deichgräber, *Polemon*, RE 21, 2 (1952) 1288–1320, an hellenistic geographer whose lifetime is estimated as having been between 220–160 B.C.E.

¹⁵ Plutarch's various sources combine information on daily food and life together with that of religious feasts. Because this study concentrates on information regarding daily living habits, special holidays are not considered.

¹⁶ G. Kaibel, *Epicharmos*, RE 6, 1 (1907) 34–41. Although there is no mention of date in the information regarding Epicharmos, it is known that Aristotle knew his work, which would theoretically place him, at latest, during Aristotle's time.

¹⁷ This seems to be a textual error: the term *aiklon* is clearly defined in the text as the main evening meal. Further, the mention of an attendant to the meat distributor, who publicly identifies the donor, appears to be a summary of Molpis' description of *mattye*: Athen. 4,141d–e. And finally, the bread loaves are written as *artous* (wheat bread). All other quotations assembled here from Athenaeus, pertaining to the after-dinner portion, describe the bread as *maza*, made from barley meal.

the writings of Didymus¹⁸. The reader, fully expecting this contrasting information to be given directly, instead encounters in the surviving text a long passage from Didymus (Athen. 4,139d–f) on an altogether different topic¹⁹, the Hyacinthia ritual in Sparta. This is in fact the beginning of Plutarch’s use of Didymus as a reference. He quotes him from Athen. 4,139d until 4,141f. It is not until further on, when Didymus cites other sources on the subject of the Cleaver, that the issue of *aiklon* is again discussed. At that point, however, the text resumes with a weighty inconsistency: “Further, Polemon says that the chief meal is called *aiklon* by the Spartans, all Dorians alike calling it the same” (Athen. 4,140c).

The aforementioned contrast from Didymus is thus technically fulfilled, though, that it is achieved with information from the originally quoted source, Polemon, again instigates suspicion of textual error at Athen. 4,139c. Didymus cites Polemon as writing converse information to the prior, direct reference taken from him! The reader of Athenaeus is aware of this problem: there are contradictions, inconsistencies and errors throughout the work which can be easily overlooked when quotations are extracted singularly for use.

Alcman is then cited twice by Polemon, symbolizing, perhaps, the expert authority and last word on the matter in question: “Whether at the mill or at the common meal (*synaikliai*), he tears his hair ...” and “Alcmaon has prepared the meal” (Athen. 4, 140c).

Directly following these two quotations, Didymus evidently states his own opinion: “Spartans do not say *aiklon* for the portion following dinner ...” (Athen. 4,140c).

Whatever contrasting information is presented in his account, it is closed with this definition which brings the specific topic of the evening meal in Sparta to an end.

b) *epaikla* — ἐπαίικλα

“Spartans do not say *aiklon* for the portion following dinner; and what is more, the word as they use it does not signify the doles given to messmates after the dinner; for it means bread and meat. These, on the contrary, are called *epaikla*, being, as it were, additional viands served to messmates after the regular *aiklon*, or meal” (Athen. 4, 140c).

Didymus’ excerpt makes the logical and fluid transition from description of *aiklon* to that of *epaikla*. Additionally, his knowledge of this daily custom is evidenced in

¹⁸ F. Montanari, *Didymos*, DNP 3 (1997) 550–552, a grammarian living in the second half of the first century B.C.E. in Alexandria, whose body of work is estimated between 3,500 and 4,000 volumes (Athen. 4,139c). His work is judged to have been the intellectual foundation for the knowledge of following generations for, in addition to original scholarship, he collected and copied important erudite works and then passed them on to other places of safe keeping.

¹⁹ Wentzel, *Athenaios* (note 1) 2033: “Eigentümlich ist es, dass er (Athenaeus) häufig ein Thema mit Nachdruck ankündigt, es aber nicht sofort behandelt, sondern, ehe er dazu kommt, irgendwelche Kleinigkeiten einschleibt”. Although the Hyacinthia ritual cannot be considered a “Kleinigkeit”, the general pattern, and complexity, of his literary style is evident here.

some detail. He declares pointedly that Polemon is misinformed, asserting that there are *epaikla* of two distinct types (Athen. 4,140d). What is meant here is explained in a following sentence as being a differentiation between that what boys received in their communal meals²⁰ and, several sentences later, what the custom was for men.

“... that, namely, which they give to the boys is very simple and frugal, being merely barley-meal soaked in oil, which the Spartan Nicocles²¹ says they greedily gulp down after dinner on laurel leaves, whence, he says, the leaves are called *kammataides* but the meal-cakes themselves are called *kammata*” (Athen. 4,140d).

Barley-meal soaked in cold-pressed olive-oil closely resembles the basic description of the staple bread/food *maza*, (though apparently not being baked or fried) ubiquitous in ancient Greek nutrition. The statement also indicates that this part of the meal, which was, as will be shown, a meaningful custom in the Spartan men’s messes, the *phiditia*, or more commonly described as *syssitia*, was practiced in the boy’s meals. There was, however, the significant contrast that it was *provided* for the boys, therefore differing in this aspect from the adult practice. The information given explains that food had, and conveyed, meaning in Spartan society. It also indicates the youth were initiated in this particular ritual during the years of their education.

Before going on to the men’s *epaikla*, Didymus elaborates briefly on the history of the use of laurel leaves: “And that it was a practice among the men of long ago even to munch laurel leaves as a dessert is shown by Callias (or Diocles), who says, in *The Cyclopians*: ‘Here comes the dish of leaves, which means an end to our dinners and our dances as well.’” (Athen. 4,140e).

This brief statement attests to a traditional consumption of laurel leaves at the end of meals in Sparta. After consuming onions or garlic, which were commonly used in daily cooking, the spicy essential oils of the fresh laurel leaves would have freshened the breath.

Afterward, Didymus describes the *epaiklon* tradition for men in the *syssitia*: “But that which they bring in for the men’s mess is prepared from certain definite animals, which are given as a present to messmates by one, sometimes even several, among the rich members” (Athen. 4,140e).

Didymus does not specify the source of his knowledge for this quote nor the two preceding ones. No bibliographical information is given and the extant text reads as if this were common knowledge acquired over the course of his scholarly career.

He mentions “certain definite animals” being given by “rich members”: this seems most certainly to describe livestock bred for domestic and nutritional purposes as opposed to miscellaneous bounty from hunting. Wealthier members of Spartan society would have had the land and means for larger herds of animals and would thus have been able to donate such farm animals, specifically goats, sheep or geese, to their

²⁰ Xen. Lac. Pol. 2. Xenophon describes the food and importance of diet for boys in their common meals.

²¹ F.H.G. 4,464; R. Laqueur, *Nikokles*, RE 17, 1 (1936) 352. There exist only a few fragments from Nicocles, who is known as ‘the Laconian’. Athenaeus quotes his work here on Spartan eating habits.

mess. The *epaiklon* is thus initially introduced as a stock contribution on behalf of wealthier citizens to their dining group.

Enhancing his discussion of *epaikla*, Didymus refers to Molpis in the very next line: “Molpis says that these after-dishes are also called *mattyē*” (Athen. 4,140e).

Again, there is no bibliographical information given at this point: Didymus appears to speak from his own knowledge. He describes *epaikla* as additional food served after the *aiklon* (Athen. 4,140c) and termed *mattyē* by Molpis.

He then cites Persaeus’ *The Spartan State*²² on the matter, supplementing his own depiction: “And immediately he (the ephor) assesses the well-to-do in a sum sufficient to pay for the *epaikla*; these are desserts following the chief meal. But from the poor he requires a contribution of a reed or rush or laurel leaves, so that they may be able to gulp down their *epaikla* after dinner. These consist of barley-cakes mixed with oil” (Athen. 4,140f).

This is only the first half of the citation, but there are already several important issues to inspect. First mentioned is the ephor who, as a governing official in Sparta, is described as levying a tax as it were on the different members of a *sysition* according to their private wealth. *Sysition* members were all required to supply their mess with the same specified quantities of foodstuffs (Athen. 4,141c)²³ regardless of their private assets: their membership in the mess as well as their citizen status depended upon it²⁴. The tax mentioned here transcends these regulated dues.

This said tax is then reported as existing in two forms: the “desserts” to be contributed by the rich and “reed or rush or laurel leaves” from the poor. (Barley was a required mess contribution: Athen. 4,141c.) This indicates two distinct forms of *epaikla* contribution for adult men: desserts, or treats, provided by the affluent, and leaves given by the less prosperous.

Persaeus’ information does not so much clash with Didymus’ statement as it, on reflection, supplements it. The first impression of *epaikla*, given by Didymus, is that they are “presents” from wealthy members generously bestowed on their other mess-mates. Persaeus, however, describes the custom as a tax, one contingent on individual wealth. Each member pays the duty assigned to them by the ephor. In other words, each and every person is assigned an extra contribution: they are simply not uniform, but rather based on private assets.

Finally, the wording of this reference raises suspicion in its uncanny similarity to that of the Didymus passage referring to the boys’ *epaikla* at Athen. 4,140d. Whether this is an indication of textual corruptness or a coincidence in historical writing cannot be decisively determined. The citation continues: “The whole proceeding, trifling to be sure, has become an act of governmental administration. Whoever is appointed to take the first or second place on the couch, or to sit upon the bed, must in all cases do the same at the *epaikla*” (Athen. 4,140f).

²² F.H.G. 2,623; K. Deichgräber, *Persaios*, RE 19, 1 (1937) 926–931. Persaios was a pupil of Zenon from Kition in Athens. He was born 307/6 B.C.E. in Kition.

²³ Plut. *Lyc.* 12.

²⁴ Aristot. *Pol.* 1271a.

Persaeus explains further how this custom had indeed become a closely regulated part of the shared meal tradition. That it was a significant component of the dinner is evident in his assertion that whoever enjoyed a position of honor during the main meal remained in that place for this sequence as well.

After all these glimpses of the mess dinner, a clear, detailed description of the evening meal is then recorded as being given by Dicaearchus of Messene²⁵ in his work *Tri-Statesman*²⁶:

“The dinner is at first served separately to each member, and there is no sharing of any kind with one’s neighbour. Afterwards there is a barely-cake (*maza*) as large as each desires, and for drinking, again, a cup is set beside him to use whenever he is thirsty” (Athen. 4,141b).

This overview of the mess meal simply names a main course being followed by barley bread. The sharing of neither food or drink²⁷ is underscored, demonstrating (ideal) state regulation for general moderate consumption. Attention to the nutritional needs of citizens, in order to ensure fit and healthy soldiers, is therefore a planned, regulated and logical aspect of the common dinner²⁸.

Following this summary introduction to the Spartan meal, Dicaearchus illustrates in closer detail: “The same meat dish is given to all on every occasion, a piece of boiled pork; sometimes, however, not even so much as that is served, beyond a small bit of meat weighing not over a quarter of a pound. Besides this there is nothing whatsoever, except, of course the broth made from this meat, enough to go round among the entire company throughout the whole dinner; there may possibly be an olive or a cheese or a fig, or they may even get something especially added, a fish or a hare or a ring-dove or something similar” (Athen. 4,141b).

The famous “black broth” is introduced at this point as being a daily staple food, available in unlimited quantity and supplementing the ration of meat. Together they constituted the main course in the mess. Olives, cheese and figs are mentioned as being possibly *added* to the main course, though the impression conveyed is that these cultivated foodstuffs (perhaps carefully rationed?) were the exception to the daily rule. Hare, ring-dove and fish, however, were hunting (fishing) prey, not required mess contributions²⁹. They are also mentioned as perhaps being *added* to the main course,

²⁵ F.H.G. 2,242, fr. 23; E. Martini, *Dikaiarchos*, RE 5, 1 (1903) 546–563, a student of Aristotle and a productive writer whose works were much used by later generations.

²⁶ F.H.G. 2,242; *Tripolitikos*. This fragment explains the *phiditia* within a larger description of the Spartan state and constitution.

²⁷ Athen. 10,432d; Athen. 11,463f: both citations declare that Spartans do not share cups of wine during a meal, rather each man has his own. The amount he drinks from his own cup is refilled by attendants, thus being (technically) obvious to himself as well as to his mess members.

²⁸ Plut. Lyc. 12 suggests a possible etymological explanation for *phiditia* may have been the arbitrary addition of the first letter “ph” to *editia*, which indicates eating and way of life. Though Plutarch himself was uncertain as to the etymological origin, Athenaeus’ portrait does point to a link between nutrition and health.

²⁹ Athen. 4,141c lists the required mess contributions as being barley, wine, cheese, figs and Aeginetan money to purchase the meat. See also: Plut. Lyc. 12,3. The Aeginetan coins, as before with the use of Sybaris, reveal Athenaeus’ own leanings. They symbolize

not the *epaikla*. The very next sentence indicates this differentiation clearly: "Afterwards, when they have finished their dinner in haste, there are passed round these so-called *epaikla*" (Athen. 4,141c).

What has been mentioned just up until this point evidently belongs to the main meal. To close his description on Spartan *epaikla*, Didymus uses a quote from Sphaerus'³⁰ *Spartan State*:

"The members of the mess also contribute *epaikla* to them. Sometimes the common people bring whatever is caught in the chase; but the rich contribute wheat bread (*artos*) and anything from the fields which the season permits, in quantities sufficient for the one meeting alone, because they believe that to provide more than is enough is uncalled for, if the food is not going to be eaten" (Athen. 4,141c–d).

Most interesting here is the *i n v e r s e* attribution of foodstuffs: the less affluent are recorded as giving meat from the hunt, while to the wealthy, donations of grain products or anything from the "fields"³¹ are assigned. Hunting was a prestigious activity and one of only two reasons a Spartiate was excused inattendance at his *syssition*³². Additionally, proof of the noble and purposeful pastime³³, in form of a rich and tasty dish, cooked at home with the spoils of the hunt, is recorded as being a contribution held by all in high esteem. Wheat was also an highly prized delicacy in the form of wheat bread, *artos*. This could demonstrate the superior economic assets of a particular citizen as wheat required a more fertile soil, as well as more water, to grow than barley, usually translating into larger arable land holdings.

The passage also attests to Spartan moderation. It renders this ethic less in the standard, frugal tradition and more in coupling it with nutritional consideration. To provide more food than would be consumed at one meal was undesirable³⁴: the emphasis of the meeting lay not on the impact a bountiful array could elicit, but rather elsewhere. Due to their very physical, athletic way of life, Spartiates required sufficient food of quality for energy and good health: adequate portions of food regularly was essential. Overeating on the other hand and immoderate consumption of wine was discouraged. Overindulgence was detrimental not only to the mind but to the body as

old tradition, being the very first coins to be minted in Greece, and thus emphasize the good of old-fashioned ways.

³⁰ F.H.G. 3,20; H. Hobein, *Sphairos*, RE 3A, 2 (1929) 1683–1693, who, after relocating to Sparta, became the teacher of the young Kleomenes.

³¹ Plut. Lyc. 12 tells us that a part of an offering of "first fruits" was contributed to the mess. Athenaeus names, among several scattered references, a source which describes the Peloponnese as having abundant pear trees, Athen. 14,650b; he also quotes a *Farmers' Handbook* as saying Laconian figs are among the best varieties: Athen. 3,75d.

³² Plut. Lyc. 12.

³³ Xen. Lac. Pol. 4,5. Hunting (ideally) kept adult men physically fit and prepared for war as well as evidently enabling the hunter to gain prestige by offering specialty dishes to his mess members.

³⁴ Xen. Lac. Pol. 5 says that Lycurgus fixed the rations for the men's mess specifically so they would have neither too much or too little. This statement is made in the context of the daily dinner rations, not one regarding the contributions required by law to belong to one of these institutions.

well, and in Greek thought, both these spheres formed an indivisible whole. Damage to one sphere thus equated to damage to both.

Overeating was also an indication of greed. It led to weight gain, sluggishness and loss of physical fitness³⁵. Due to its intoxicating effects, wine was an important cultural factor, but there also existed general, strict rules regarding its consumption³⁶. Among the numerous negative side-effects which excess wine drinking caused were impaired control of motor ability³⁷, weakness and ill-health³⁸ as well as *hybris*, or hybriotic behavior³⁹.

c) *mattye* — ματτύη

Mattye has been mentioned above in this paper as it is inserted at Athen. 4,140e in the midst of the discussion of *epaikla*. Didymus had just described the men's *epaiklon* as being a meat dish presented by wealthier members to their messmates and so differing from the barley/olive-oil *epaiklon* the boys received. He then explains that Molpis⁴⁰ calls these dishes *mattye*. The general definition of *mattye* describes it as being a spicy stew which is in keeping with Didymus' portrayal.

"Following the meal, it is customary always for something to be provided by some person, sometimes even by several persons, a dish (*mattye*) prepared in their own homes, and called *epaiklon*. No one is in the habit of contributing anything which he has bought by purchase in the market, for they contribute not to satisfy their pleasure or the greed of the stomach, but to give evidence of their own prowess in the hunt. Many of them, too, who keep flocks, give a liberal share of the offspring. And so the *mattye* may consist of ring-doves, geese, turtle-doves, thrushes, blackbirds, hares, lambs, and kids. The cooks announce to the company the names of those who bring in anything for the occasion, in order that all may realize the labour spent upon the chase and the zeal manifested for themselves" (Athen. 4,141d–e).

Molpis equates *mattye* with the *epaiklon* and explains the tradition, as he knows it, carefully and in detail. He asserts, in essence, that *mattye* is a symbolic contribution: it serves neither to please the taste or to satiate the palate. He emphasizes its signifi-

³⁵ Xen. Lac. Pol. 5 relates Lycurgus' intention that athletic exercise be rigorous enough to burn the daily food intake of each individual man. Law was, therefore, that nutritional consumption match physical output.

³⁶ A. Gutsfeld, *Wein*, DNP 12/2 (2002) 435–436.

³⁷ Plut. Lyc. 28. In addition to other demeaning practices, the forced ingestion of large amounts of undiluted wine was a central practice in the abuse of Helots and, significantly, served as instructional demonstration for young Spartiates. This resulted not only in a display of imprecise movements, but in a considerable loss of control over muscular coordination as well.

³⁸ Athen. 10,432f–433b.

³⁹ N. R. E. Fisher, *Drink, Hybris and the Promotion of Harmony in Sparta*, in: C. A. Powell (ed.), *Classical Sparta: Techniques Behind her Success*, London 1989, 30.

⁴⁰ E. Bux, *Molpis*, RE 16, 1 (1933) 28; he wrote a *Politeia Lakedaimonion* (F.H.G. 4,453) from which Athenaeus used the description of Spartan eating traditions. Because Molpis explains *kopis* (Athen. 4,140a) and *epaikla* (Athen. 4,140d), Bux purports his, Molpis', assumption that his readers had no knowledge of Spartan habits. This means, in turn, that he must have lived and wrote at a time when the Spartan tradition was defunct.

cance in exemplifying the hunting skills, and overall effort, of the contributor. Indeed, this is evident not only in his words but in his very description of the ingredients of *mattyē*. Ring-doves, turtle-doves, blackbirds and hares are all game, though very small game. The prized hunting prey of the forefathers, boar, is absent. (With no restrictions on the hunting season, quarry was obviously scarce in the region and the actual nutritional value of *mattyē* to the overall meal must therefore be considered as low.) In this respect, the dish truly represented the symbolic contribution of the individual, being the time and effort spent on the hunt. Considering the quarry in question, there was most likely more luck involved in the hunting than skill.

Afterwards, he mentions members who own large flocks donating liberally from these. This also accounts for the varying ingredients, and most probably size of contribution, of the stew. He continues, naming the usual types of meat used and listing the hunting quarry first.

The next and final sentence accentuates the symbolic and social character of this extra contribution. Molpis explains that the cooks proclaim the names of the donors for two reasons, the first being that all may be aware of the work involved in the hunt. The second is that the zeal involved on behalf of all other mess companions be evidenced. The *mattyē*, therefore, demonstrated the active participation of members in the common meal of their *syssition*. Further, it symbolized effort and enthusiasm in sustaining the group. Dining together was an integral part of Spartan way-of-living, *diata*, and the active contribution to the maintenance of this system was required and highly valued. That Molpis emphasizes the donation from the hunt as opposed to that from wealthier land owners would seem to indicate the higher value of the former contribution⁴¹.

In Book fourteen, the diner Aemilianus states that *mattyē* was the last dish to be consumed in a dinner setting, giving five citations to support his claim (Athen. 14,664b–d).

After this he says: “Again, Molpis of Lacedaemon says that the *epaikleia* of the Spartans, a word which means ‘eaten after dinner (*epideipnis*)’, are called *mattyes* among other peoples” (Athen. 14,664e).

At this point the information from Molpis indicates a distinction between *epaikla* and *mattya*: what the Spartans eat following dinner is known as *epaikla* (while they have a distinct, other stew dish, contributed by mess members as described in this paper, named *mattyē*). The food, or course of a meal, known as *epaikla* to the Spartans, is called *mattyes* by other people.

Athenaeus’ preoccupation with food thus yields many points of interest concerning social customs in Sparta. The historical references he compiles attest to a differentiation between meal courses, a concern with nutrition and the active, regular participation of *all* members in the shared evening meal.

⁴¹ Xen. Lac. Pol. 7. relates Lycurgus’ praise of mess donations stemming from physical labor as coming from the heart, while judging those coming from (land) holdings to be merely a function of wealth.

Courses of the meal

Aiklon is defined as the evening meal in Sparta. Didymus explains more closely, in an effort to differentiate between *aiklon* and *epaiklon*, that the word actually means “bread and meat” (Athen. 4,140c). Dicaearchus’ information on dinner (Athen. 4,141b) is essentially the same, being a piece of pork followed by a barley-cake (*maza*). This plausibly fulfills the bread and meat definition of *aiklon*.

Epaikla are of great social interest, and historical study, and are treated in much more detail in the *Deipnosophists* as is *aiklon*. They are broadly defined by Didymus as additional foods served after the *aiklon* (Athen. 4,140c). The question arises as to what exactly *epaikla* consisted of as Athenaeus’ extant information is neither consistent nor definite, and in truth, lends itself to further interpretation. First, Didymus tells of the old tradition in Sparta of chewing on laurel leaves as a dessert (*tragemata*) after dinner (Athen. 4,140e). Thereafter he quotes Persaeus as explicitly describing *epaikla* as barley-cakes mixed with oil and served on the laurel leaves, rushes or reeds contributed by poorer mess members (Athen. 4,140f). These illustrations match the meal overview by Dicaearchus, cited above, giving a clear outline of the components of the dinner. This reference goes on to say that the meal comprised nothing else whatsoever, except the black broth which was liberally available. However, and this is the interesting point, Dicaearchus is then quoted as writing that there may “even be something especially added, a fish or a hare or a ring-dove or something similar”, as *part of the dinner*, in the context of the main meal. These ingredients, fish, hare, ring-dove, have been described by Molpis as Spartan *mattyē* (Athen. 4,141d–e). Because at Athen. 14,664e Molpis is quoted as saying Spartan *epaikleia*, meaning “eaten after dinner”, are called *mattyēs* among other people, along with the other references collected here, a viable argument can be made to placing the Spartan *mattyē* as a regular, if not daily, part of the main course. This in turn could explain why Dicaearchus wrote that sometimes not even the usual piece of boiled pork is served: when the rich and high-protein dish of *mattyē* was contributed, the usual ration of meat could have conceivably been deemed unnecessary for dietary intake⁴². This would naturally depend upon the size of the contribution, as before mentioned, for a stew made from a kid would be much larger in quantity than that made from various small birds.

Supporting this idea is the quote from Persaeus at Athen. 4,140f. At this point Persaeus describes the ephor’s assessment and tax of the prosperous for the *epaikla*, here called dessert, *tragemata*, which follows the chief meal. From the less affluent, the ephor requires as contribution some sort of leafy green on which to place barley-cakes. This passage does in fact describe two separate forms of so-called *epaikla*. Due to the information given before this point in Athenaeus’ treatment of Sparta, it does read as if the barley-cake on the leaf is the standard form of *epaikla*, served at the very end of the meal.

⁴² A. Andrews, *Ernährung*, RAC 6 (1966) 224: “Erst recht hat natürlich das militärische Gepräge des spartanischen Staats, das immer auch die Ernährung des gesamten Volkes mitbestimmt hatte, für Maßhaltung in diesem Land gesorgt ...”.

Athenaeus' references indicate a more complex *syssition* tradition than what is understood today. They remain, unfortunately, only hints of an elusive custom as they are often counterbalanced with uncertain or even contradictory information. Woven between the citations written just above, for example, are quotations from Molpis which, when considered in their complete presentation, do not follow one another logically. The first quote, for instance, at Athen. 4,140e, has Molpis saying that *epaikla* are also called *mattyē*. Does he mean in Greece generally? Or is he referring to Sparta? It must be remembered that Didymus is actually Athenaeus' source at this point and is illustrating custom in Sparta. He draws, however, from Molpis and inserts the information at this particular point, therefore we cannot be certain of the context in which Molpis himself wrote this statement.

This same information is repeated at Athen. 4,141d, where a more descriptive reference on the symbolic meaning of the dish appears from Molpis. This suggests Didymus' use of Molpis above at Athen. 4,140e, one sentence alone, to be a literary device of sorts, inserted perhaps for emphasis.

A strange, though thought provoking, inconsistency occurs in the final Molpis citation at Athen. 14,664. Here the diner Aemilianus, in the course of his monologue on the subject of *mattyē*, claims that Molpis has defined *epaikleia* as the *mattyēs* of other peoples. Is this in fact the inconsistency it at first glance seems? He has clearly written *mattyē* and *epaiklon* to be synonyms: or has he? In his Reallexikon article, Ernst Bux points out that Molpis explains the terms *kopis* and *epaikla* to his audience, indicating a defunct Spartan tradition⁴³. Could Molpis have been using concepts familiar to his audience in order to facilitate general comprehension? Also possible could be the transformation of tradition over time: *epaikla* could have begun in the archaic period indeed as barley-cakes on laurel-leaves for both men and boys, and perhaps with the passage of time, retained only for the boy's common meals. During this period, the custom could have developed into comprising more elaborate dishes for the men. This could be a possible explanation for the confusing inconsistencies referring to the terms *mattyē* and *epaikla*: at one time they may have been distinct, though through the course of years they became interchangeable.

Spartan nutrition

Both Xenophon (Lac. Pol. 2; 5) and Plutarch (Inst. Lac. 237F) remark specifically on the food diet and nutritional practices of the Spartans. These authors, whatever their presentation of the information, state clearly that this aspect of life was very closely attended to by the Spartan state⁴⁴. Dietary considerations evidently played a role in their ascetic, highly physical, military way of life. Athenaeus corroborates this claim with the fragments he assembled in his text. He begins his description of Spartan eating traditions not in a Spartan dining hall, but on the battlefield, where the Tegeans and Spartans won a prestigious victory over the vast Persian army. This battle, fought

⁴³ Bux, *Molpis* (note 40) 28.

⁴⁴ Athen. 4,140f: Persaeus, quoted by Didymus, implies thorough governmental administration of meal details.

at Plataea in 479 B.C.E. (c. 680 years before Athenaeus wrote), was a great achievement at that time which solidified Sparta's reputation as predominant military power among the Greeks. It seems, therefore, purposely selected by Athenaeus to indicate the Spartans' superior physical ability.

These men gathered together nightly to share a meal in organized groups. The gathering was *deipnon*, the evening meal, and each man received a portion of food from which he did not share. The food is recorded by Athenaeus to have always consisted of a piece of boiled pork, unlimited black broth, *maza*, a barley biscuit 'as large as each man wanted', and wine (Athen. 4,141b). Viewed from a nutritional standpoint, these foodstuffs fulfill not only the needs of the body but of the highly active body as well. They comprise, in addition to water, the three major (macro-) as well as the minor (micro-) nutrients required for healthy functioning: protein, fat, carbohydrates, and vitamins and minerals.

a) Protein

Pork was boiled in water and the resulting soup was seasoned to make the black broth (Athen. 4,141b)⁴⁵. The vitamins and minerals from the pork were thus retained in cooking, enriching the broth, and the meat would be prepared without added fat. This produced a lean, high protein pork⁴⁶ as well as nutrient rich liquid food. The most important minerals for bodily function, and even more so for rigorous physical exercise, sodium, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium and iron⁴⁷, are all contained in varying degrees in pork. Vitamins also exist in pork and cooked together with the minerals would have produced a truly high quality broth. Whatever the other ingredients of the soup may have been, the broth was an optimal basis. Plutarch (Lyc. 12,10) emphasizes the role black broth played in Spartan nutrition, though Athenaeus, unfortunately, does not give more specific ingredients.

Being an animal protein, pork is a complete protein source, meaning it contains all of the essential amino acids necessary for sustained body function. The body requires protein for the maintenance, repair and development of cells and tissue, and is therefore the decisive nutrient responsible for the strengthening and regeneration of muscle tissue. Animal protein represents the most important element in the diet of athletes of martial arts and strength sports (essentially what was practiced by Spartans) because of its contribution to strength development and muscular coordination, as well as the modern belief that it strengthens the psychological abilities of concentration, courage and fighting spirit, *Kampfgeist*.

Spartan men were required to maintain a high level of physical fitness. This would only have been possible with a constant supply of food and of complete protein. Considered in contrast to the rest of the Greek world, this was remarkable. The great

⁴⁵ Athen. 9,379e: Athenaeus attributes its creation to Lamprias.

⁴⁶ I. Schwarz, *Diaita. Ernährung der Griechen und Römer im klassischen Altertum*, Innsbruck 1995, 202. The nutritional table shows pork to be high in protein (21,1g of protein in 100g pork) in ratio to calories (114 Kcal in 100g pork), while being very low (3,3g of fat in 100g of pork) in fat.

⁴⁷ R. Donath, K.-P. Schüler, *Ernährung der Sportler*, Berlin 1979, 81.

majority of the population ate very little meat: most people consumed meat only at sacrificial celebrations⁴⁸. Fish was an important protein source, as were pulses, though for most people this meant small fish varieties, predominantly herring and sardines. Large fish were considered a luxury and not enjoyed by many. Meat was an extravagance in the diet of the overwhelming majority of people who could acquire protein from other, less costly sources.

b) Water

Because the body is largely composed of water⁴⁹, adequate fluid intake, especially in warm environments, is important for all people, though critically so for physically active ones who lose more fluid through perspiration.

The average person loses roughly 2,5 liters of water a day. This total amount would naturally need to be adjusted to account for differing circumstances and conditions, for instance to calculate the effects of moderate, or very active, physical exercise, as well as the climate in which this effort took place.

In general, the Spartan spring begins in March, summer begins in June and temperatures do not drop appreciably, marking winter, until December. Sparta's mean temperature in July is 27°C, which is the hottest in Greece when adjusted to account for the height of the meteorological station above sea level (c. 200 m)⁵⁰. Training throughout the year⁵¹ in warm, and at some periods very hot, temperatures meant a heightened loss of body fluids through increased perspiration and breathing. Modern knowledge on sport nutrition and performance emphasizes the fundamental importance which hydration and fluid replacement have in athletic exercise⁵². Water, therefore, and fluid intake generally, was essential for the well-being and performance of Spartiates throughout the course of the day and would have certainly totalled a daily amount in excess of three liters⁵³.

⁴⁸ Andrews, *Ernährung* (note 42) 222–223.

⁴⁹ Donath, Schüler, *Ernährung* (note 47) 78. In adults, water composes 60 percent of the body, while in children this percentage is even higher. Bodily fluid is essential for normal cell functioning and other fundamental body processes.

⁵⁰ See P. Cartledge, *Sparta and Lakonia. A regional history 1300–362 BC*, London 2002, 22.

⁵¹ Xen. Lac. Pol. 5; Athen. 12,550c: "... among the Lacedaemonians it was accounted no ordinary disgrace to a man if he was seen to have either a figure somewhat lacking in virility or a corpulence that made his belly prominent; hence, every ten days, the young warriors were made to stand naked before the ephors".

⁵² M. Eastwood, *Principles of Human Nutrition*, Oxford 2003, 636: "The most consistent item of nutrition that is ignored in sport is water intake". Eastwood goes on to write that fluid loss and its need of replacement depend greatly on the temperature and humidity prevailing.

⁵³ Donath, Schüler, *Ernährung* (note 47) 80: "Nach und in besonderen Fällen sogar schon während der Belastung ist aber die Zufuhr einer adäquaten Flüssigkeitsmenge notwendig. Wir wissen, dass die Sportler im Training und im Wettkampf in wenigen Stunden große Mengen Schweiß verlieren können. Unter entsprechenden Bedingungen können die Verluste 5 bis 6 l betragen".

Adequate ingestion of water in the Spartan climate was necessary to sustaining physical performance and health, both of which were required by the Spartan state of its warrior citizens. In this meal context however, Athenaeus only writes of fluid intake during the evening meal and does not give detailed information. He merely quotes Dicaearchus as writing that a cup is provided for each man to quench his thirst (Athen. 4,141b). In the next paragraph, though, the monthly mess contribution amounts are listed (Athen. 4,141c). Here, wine is recorded as being required in an amount of eleven or twelve pitchers, *khoes*, Attic measure. This amount roughly translates into eight pitchers Spartan measure⁵⁴, the amount itemized in Plutarch's record of mess contributions⁵⁵. In modern equivalents, the monthly wine requirement equalled c. 37,2 liters, which would have supplied each member with c. 1,25 liters of wine daily⁵⁶. Actual consumption amount, drinking habits, as well as time of consumption, though not conclusively known, must have been substantial considering the physical activity performed and the local climate. Whether the mess members ate or drank in the *syssition* during the course of the day is unknown.

Of pertinance to this discussion is the *kothon* or *lakaina*⁵⁷, a Laconian cup made for drinking and especially constructed to make the most of suboptimal water. Athenaeus remarks: "... the Lacedaemonian *kothon* is a drinking-vessel most suitable for military service and most easily carried in a knapsack. It is adapted to military purposes for the reason that it is often necessary to drink water that is not pure. In the first place it was useful in that the water drunk could not be too clearly seen; and in the second place, since the *kothon* had inward-curving edges, it retained a residue of the impurities inside it" (Athen. 11,483b).

c) Other liquids

This information indicates the *kothon's* creation and implementation in Sparta⁵⁸, and it relates the habit of drinking water often, during military campaigns and duty, as well as the obvious necessity of making due with what was at hand. The creation of such a handy vessel to somewhat purify available water demonstrates pragmatic innovation in meeting daily hydration needs of the soldiers. As mentioned, the cup could easily fit into a knapsack and was thus easily available for use.

⁵⁴ T. J. Figueira, *Mess Contributions and Subsistence at Sparta*, TAPhA 114 (1984) 89.

⁵⁵ Plut. Lyc. 12,3.

⁵⁶ Thuk. 4,16; writes that the Spartans captured on Sphakteria received the equivalent of one-half liter of wine a day and thus offers contradictory information to Dicaearchus. M. Lavrencic, *Spartanische Küche. Das Gemeinschaftsmahl der Männer in Sparta*, Vienna 1993, 39–40, gives a brief overview of the sources regarding Spartan wine consumption as well as the accompanying scholarly debate.

⁵⁷ Athen. 11,484f; 12,527c. *Lakainai* (the feminine form of Laconian), is described as a kind of cylix which was customary in Laconia.

⁵⁸ E. Kirsten, *Kothon in Sparta und Karthago*, in: *Landschaft und Geschichte in der antiken Welt* (Geographica Historica 3), Bonn 1984, 66.

Wine mixed with water, in a ratio of one part wine to two or three parts water, was the usual⁵⁹, daily beverage for all levels of society in Greece. As has been mentioned, there existed strict rules regarding wine consumption throughout Greece: it was not a notion confined to Sparta. The ideal was to consume the drink moderately. When drunk sufficiently diluted, in combination with adequate food and daily, hard physical exercise or labor, wine does not have a powerfully intoxicating influence on the body. In fact, in consideration of its beneficial characteristics, it most likely represented a generally healthful measure in overall water consumption, which was not necessarily so pure.

Black broth also represented a fluid which the Spartans consumed, an exceedingly nutritious one. The broth would have been greatly enriched by the vitamins and minerals the pork released during the cooking. Any addition of pulses, vegetables, innards or blood, all possible ingredients, would have increased the nutritional value of the broth immensely without adding fat. Athenaeus conveys the information that this broth existed in such a quantity nightly as to be served among the whole company throughout the duration of dinner. A thinner broth would have represented more a fluid food while a thicker soup would have been tending toward a stew. Both dishes would have nevertheless contributed, in varying degrees, to the water requirements of the active body.

d) Carbohydrates

According to Athenaeus' sources, *maza*, made from the barley meal *alphita*, was the third regular component of the meal. It was mentioned by Dicaearchus as being available in as large a portion as desired. From a nutritional standpoint, a generous portion would be very important as carbohydrates are the body's constant energy source⁶⁰.

Made from whole barley flour⁶¹, water and varying other ingredients, *maza* was the staple food for the great majority of people in ancient Greece. Termed "the marrow of men" by Homer (Od. 20,107), *maza* was highly regarded in the Spartan literary tradition as well. The diner Magnus quotes the third book on Alcman from the Spartan historian Sosibius⁶²:

⁵⁹ M. Köhnlechner, *Heilkräfte des Weines. Ein medizinisches Weinbrevier*, Munich, Zürich 1978, 132–143. Köhnlechner describes numerous positive influences which wine has on the health of the body, *when consumed in moderation*. Wine increases, for instance, digestive juices in the stomach and so aids in digestion; it increases absorption of Vitamin B12, which in turn is essential to blood formation; wine has a prophylactic function in regard to colon disease as it kills bacteria; it also has an antibiotic effect as it increases the body's defences; wines' effect on healthy kidneys is to increase the excretion capacity above the normal level, thus aiding in optimal body detoxification.

⁶⁰ Donath, Schüler, *Ernährung* (note 47) 39.

⁶¹ Whole grain, hand ground to meal, would have been coarse. It contained the germ and in all likelihood a considerable part of the bran. The germ of the grain is rich in vitamins and minerals while the bran contains indigestible roughage and thus aids digestion.

⁶² R. Laqueur, *Sosibios*, RE 3A, 1 (1927) 1146–1149; S. Matthaïos, *Sosibios*, DNP 11 (2001) 742–743. Described as 'the Lakonian' and estimated to have lived between 250 and 150 B.C.E., he wrote a commentary on Alcman as well as several works on Sparta's cults.

“*Health (Hygieia)* is the name of the barley-cakes (*maza*) distributed at festivals for all to taste” (Athen. 3,115a).

The simple, traditional food of barley bread was equated with general physical health. Whole grain barley is rich in vitamins and minerals. In contrast to other grains, barley contains an high level of sodium. Barley cake/biscuit, most likely with olive-oil (Athen. 4,140f), was a complex carbohydrate which, when broken down in the digestive tract, would furnish the body with glucose and reserves of glycogen, thereafter enabling a steady flow of glucose into the blood stream over an extended period of time.

Carbohydrate consumption is usually associated with endurance activities, where a constant output of energy must be sustained over long duration. The information given by Xenophon and Philostratus on Spartan training, however, describes them as practicing strength sports and activities. Xenophon doubts there to be men more healthy or physically able than the Spartiates, because they exercise their neck, arms and legs equally (Xen. Lac. Pol. 5). Considering the military duties, daily walking, marches afield, hiking about the Taygetos, patrols on foot, as well as hunting, all in the local climate, endurance was fundamental to daily life in Sparta.

e) Fat

Fat plays an important role in the body, complementing the functions of protein and carbohydrates, though it is only required in a small amount. It does not dissolve in water and is thus ideal for storing and transporting certain substances which cannot be carried by the blood. There are different types of fat and they have differing effects on the body⁶³. Fat is stored in the hypodermis as well as in the muscle cells and supplies the slowly moving body with constant energy. The body manages all activities of duration, though of little strain, with the energy released from fat. The relationship existing between carbohydrates and fat as energy providers depends, however, on a variety of factors: the activity concerned, physical fitness of the person, as well as the adequate and regular supply of nutrition.

In Athenaeus’ description of the daily dinner, olive oil is the only fat specifically mentioned. As has been seen, pork is low in fat and was cooked in a non-fat way. Olive oil alone, a polyunsaturated fat, is mentioned as part of the daily diet, being mixed with the barley meal for *maza*. It is very rich in vitamin E, which has great healing abilities, and has qualities which prevent infections⁶⁴. Being a polyunsaturated fat, it was easily absorbed by the body and provided a feeling of satiation to the diners at the end of the meal.

f) Herbs

Laurel leaves are said to have accompanied the *maza* at meal’s end (Athen. 4,140d–e). The practice is explained as extending from long tradition and marking the end of a

⁶³ L. Robertson, C. Flinders, B. Ruppenthal, *The New Laurel’s Kitchen. A Handbook for Vegetarian Cookery and Nutrition*, Berkeley 1986, 427–429.

⁶⁴ Schwarz, *Diaita* (note 46) 18–19.

meal. The laurel tree is intricately associated with the Greek god of healing and music, Apollo, who was especially worshipped and honored in Sparta. A byname for Apollo was *Daphnephoros*, the "laurel wearer". Fresh laurel leaves hold abundant, large rounded oil cells within their membranes, filled with a yellowish oil⁶⁵. This oil contains bitter principles and ethereal oil. The bitter principles activate the gastric juices in the stomach and thereby aid in digestion. They also have a generally invigorating, restorative effect on the body. Continued use of laurel leaves enhanced health and well-being, upheld an important link to the communal traditions of the past and represented a symbolic tie to their patron god Apollo. The laurel leaf contribution to the men's mess, therefore, had great social and medicinal value⁶⁶.

Sustenance

At the beginning of Book five, Athenaeus addresses Timocrates saying, while the preceding dinner conversation had exhausted the topic of symposia, the most meaningful elements of the meal were omitted. He explains his comment further as being "... those things which do not burden the spirit, but aid and edify it ..." (Athen. 5,185a). He draws attention in this way to another aspect of shared meals which he considers important and documents throughout his work. This is namely the emotional and spiritual facets involved in the communal meal experience. In this immediate literary context he has the diner Masurius speak on the subject commenting on Sparta: "The messes at Sparta, and the men's halls among the Cretans, are conducted by the States with all possible care. Wherefore someone has said, not badly: 'Friendly comrades should not abstain too long from the symposium; for that is the most delightful way to remember each other.'" (Athen. 5,186b-c)

"All possible care" stresses the conscious effort of the Spartan state in its organization of the *syssitia* as not merely a place to consume food, but one which provided emotional and spiritual support. Comradery, individual participation, religion and tradition are elements Athenaeus attests to for the nightly ritual of the men's dinner. The passage here further indicates the fact that official attention was paid not only to the health and performance of the body, but to the emotional health of the citizen/soldier as well.

"Friendly comrades" is the translation of the Greek word *philous*. These *philo*i, the warriors who had all shared the same upbringing, training and religious beliefs, and who prepared for war together and fought side by side in the phalanx, were also required to spend time together relaxing, sharing food, drink and as will be shown, music. It was mandatory for it was deemed beneficial for all concerned. In his work describing the place eating and drinking had in ancient Greek society, Athenaeus includes references on the emotional aspects of shared meals.

⁶⁵ B. P. Jackson, D. W. Snowdon, *Atlas of Microscopy of Medicinal Plants, Culinary Herbs and Spices*, Boca Raton 1990, 14-15.

⁶⁶ Although the social value was most likely acknowledged, it remains questionable whether the same can be said for the medicinal value.

Economic differences existed between Spartiates, which Athenaeus illustrates in his choice of quotations (Athen. 4,140e–f)⁶⁷. The negative effects and tension existing within the *syssitia* as a result of this social reality must have been considerable at times⁶⁸. Athenaeus, however, does not infer this, either individually in quoted references or in the larger portrait he draws of Spartan society, as has been explored above in this paper. Though the mess contributions made from wealthier citizens were appreciated, Athenaeus indicates the equally great cultural significance of laurel leaves, a contribution easily accessible to all. Hunting was, theoretically, also possible for all, though time, talent and luck were obviously more involved in that activity than in the harvesting of laurel leaves. Every single Spartiate therefore was able to contribute to the ritual of the communal meal. Despite economic differences, each *syssition* member could actively contribute to the maintenance of their group thereby generating a feeling of collective interest.

At Athen. 13,561a, the diners begin conversing on the subject of love and beauty. The diner Pontianus remarks that, "... Zeno of Citium conceived Eros to be a god who prepared the way for friendship and concord and even liberty, but nothing else. Hence in his *Republic*, Zeno has said that Eros is a god who stands ready to help in furthering the safety of the State" (Athen. 13,561c).

He continues several lines later saying: "Thus the Lacedaemonians offer preliminary sacrifices to Eros before the troops are drawn up in battle-line, because they think that their safe return and victory depend upon the friendship (*philia*) of the men drawn up" (Athen. 13,561e).

Philia was fostered in the daily dinner, and was therefore a component of *diaita*, in order to strengthen the emotional ties between the men⁶⁹. These ties were crucial in developing a sense of mutual responsibility, which in turn enabled the men to face the terrifying situation of combat.

Plutarch contributes to this theme with a saying from Archidamus II, king of Sparta from 469–427 B.C.E.: "When someone promised him to make the wine pleasant to the taste, he said, 'What for? For more of it will be used, and it will make the men's eating together less beneficial'." (Plut. Apoph. Lac. 218D).

Archidamus, like Athenaeus, stresses the action of sharing meals. He states the habit of communal meals exerts a positive influence. The benefit of this would be lost if wine was consumed excessively and sober interaction between the members blurred. The communication and bonding between the men was evidently held to be an important aspect of the men's eating together.

Apollo was the god of healing and music. The Spartans incorporated the laurel tree, most intimately associated with him, into their daily meals in the form of chewing laurel leaves. Consumption of these leaves fostered health, thereby linking them

⁶⁷ See above p. 52–53, *epaikla*.

⁶⁸ S. Hodkinson, *Social Order and the Conflict of Values in Classical Sparta*, Chiron 13 (1983) 241–265.

⁶⁹ J. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam. Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, New York 1994, 23: "Men fight mainly for their comrades; this has become conventional wisdom even among civilians".

through daily ritual with an attribute of their patron god. By singing together, and making music with one another, they actively practiced Apollo's other attribute, music. The 'warlike spirit' mentioned by Plutarch⁷⁰, or in other words, aggressive emotions, found in this practice communal expression and release. The emotional support and social order established through this activity fostered goodness, harmony and bonding between the men⁷¹.

Conclusion

In his compilation of Greek eating habits, Athenaeus traces Spartan excellence and success to its humble yet healthful *diata*. As an antiquarian, a collector of materials and information from various periods in the distant past, he collected references which portray this way-of-life as nourishing the soldiers both physically and emotionally. He presents traditional, ancient foodstuffs as especially health promoting and as composing the Spartan diet, because he admired the simplicity of Spartan life, a *topos* in his days. Moderate consumption of both food and wine is emphasized as benefiting the human body, thus enabling their legendary military prowess. Although they lived without edible delicacies, notable comforts and leisure, all elements of upper class Roman life of 200 C.E. (and attested to in the literary scheme of the *Deipnosophists*), the Spartans' nightly meals fostered emotionally important ties of affection and collective interest. These aspects of life are highlighted by Athenaeus as promoting social cohesion and indeed harmony among the men. In essence, Athenaeus praises the benefits of living humbly and paying attention to the holistic health of each man.

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⁷⁰ Plut.Inst.Lac. 238B.

⁷¹ W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Cambridge, Mass., 1985, 336: "Music means that into the instinctive movements and sounds there comes order and delight in this order; thus rhythm and harmony are manifestations of the good".

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