

Lacedemoniers, this is Sparta

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FOREWORD

After finishing my books Gorki in the Netherlands, Kiy, Sjtsjek and Curvy, Paarelketting, Francesco and Bianca (de Medici), Liliyana Gadyka and the Essays, I had resolved to stop writing for the time being and to concentrate only on the promotion of the said books. However, I had spent 10 days working almost non-stop to complete these six books and allowed myself only a short night's sleep during that period.

I had built up quite a high adrenaline level in those days and started to miss writing after only 2 days of rest. Nothing came of promoting the books for over 1.5 years because of the Corona crisis. Coincidentally, at the time I was involved in an employment project in which Sparta Rotterdam football club played a significant role.

As a youth footballer, I regularly played against that club and my last tournament in Breda with Excelsior Rotterdam, I played in a pool with the regional youth of Sparta, Feyenoord, PSV, and Ajax with players up to 19 years old. Sparta made by far the best impression on me of the 10 football clubs participating in this tournament. Elan, creativity, joie de vivre and attractive sparkling football was their trademark.

After all these years, when I thought back to the time when football had played such a prominent role in my life (from my 5^e to my 19^e), all kinds of memories shot through my mind. The best goals I scored in my dreams after I had stopped. From an early age, I have also always had a passion for (ancient) history and let's be honest, what history can top that of classical Greece?

By way of rehab, I had to set about finishing the three remaining manuscripts, which were in my head but had not yet been committed to paper. Although I can in no way measure up to the top genius Tesla, I know that his inventions came to him in a split second and were in his head in detail even before he committed them to paper.

My explanation is that when our antenna is pointed at the right frequency, information comes to us from some kind of universal Cloud. It seems far-fetched, but I have no better explanation. In that sense, geniuses like Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci and Mozart are just receivers and conduits.

One of those manuscripts was about ancient Sparta and the classical world and I thought it would be a nice idea to dovetail it with the history of football club Sparta Rotterdam 1888, the oldest paid football club in our country. Because so much has already been written about this legendary club, I will limit myself to just a few highs and lows.

There is no doubt that Sparta - and certainly the youth academy - enjoy and enjoyed profound respect and esteem among footballing Holland. Hanging on the wall of Sparta's press room are pictures of big names, from the recently deceased and in every way fantastic and amiable Barry Hughes to luminaries like Frank Rijkaard and Louis van Gaal.

Although Louis is reviled by legions of people, it cannot be denied that he has had great successes as a coach. It was his prickly way of operating towards the press that provoked irritations. Even though I had not paid any attention to football for over 30 years, I knew intuitively years ago that he would be able to achieve impressive results with the Dutch national team, because he added the ingredient ruthlessness, instilled Spartan discipline and a killer mentality.

As I once again cycled from the Castle to my home in Rotterdam-Zuid on a rainy afternoon, I thought why not, why not try to intertwine the history of both these giants, the city-state of Sparta and the football club Sparta? As for the style of play of Sparta's youth, it was often as daring, bold and scintillating as the fighting style of the young Spartans, say the first commandos of yesteryear.

Classic Sparta from 1888 BC is the focus of this booklet and from 1888 AD there is the intertwining of the story with the similarly named football club. Names matter in life and for that reason alone, Sparta should excel again, also there is a lot of talent that carried the team sold in recent years.

For me, the latter is also an excellent opportunity to reflect on my childhood passion, which football certainly was for me for about 15 years. In that period, everything revolved around this beautiful sport and my school just hung around. I was the prototype of a street footballer, and my anarchistic nature made me, by definition, for the straitjacket that is professional football. One week I was playing the stars of heaven, the following week I was playing like a wet newspaper.

When I "saw the light" as far as learning was concerned around the age of 18 and fast-tracked from the lowest school level to the highest, my passion for football was extinguished without realising it, and around the age of 20 I

hung up my Adidas football boots made of kangaroo leather in Rotterdam-Zuid, where I was living at the time with singer Sade's doppelganger.

It is my firm belief that you cannot serve 2 let alone 3 gentlemen at the same time to reach the top and maintain that level, so intuitively and rationally I rightly tied that knot at the time. Top sport requires absolute dedication. My surroundings and friends did not understand my choice at the time, but I was totally out of motivation.

From one moment to the next, I played very poorly, even though I could play good football and was physically extraordinarily strong, but I have known so much better talent that never reached the top, also for all sorts of reasons. I played together with Eddy Poppelaars and Hans Lapré, who were extremely gifted footballers.

I was lightning fast, always the fastest of the clubs I played at. But when the inner drive dies down, nothing can stand up to it. The battles mentioned in passing in this book were decided by that factor in addition to ingenuity and courage. Football, like warfare, is a question of mentality and fearlessness.

Together with my friends, we played street football every day from the age of 5, and we often had no shortage of spectators in the Burchten district in Rotterdam-Zuid, as the balconies of the opposite flats formed a veritable grandstand for interested neighbours, and the level was usually high, very high, as our commitment was phenomenal, just like that of the classic Spartiates.

Not surprisingly, some of us reached the top in football after 10 years of total dedication and enthusiasm. Internationally, the Netherlands was among the absolute world leaders at the time. Some of us even made it to the first team of Feyenoord or the national team at a time when big prizes were being won. The Spartans proved that boundless commitment and disciplined years of practice with a tight mission in mind could lead to stunning results on the battlefield. For football, the exact same applies. Practice makes perfect.

Because at the age of 20 I went to several university studies at Erasmus University and I was living with the 16-year-old gorgeous Dutch version of the singer Sade, it dawned on me that I could not serve several gentlemen at the same time, and my motivation for football slowly ebbed away because at that stage of my life I started to enjoy studying more and more, and there was also no click at all with my then coach at Excelsior one van Bommel.

The year before, under a different coach, this club had become national champions in the under-19s and in fact, in retrospect, I made the wrong choice when I was asked by a scout for that club. It can only disappoint under those circumstances.

Besides, I was a so-called 1-legged and therefore limited footballer, did not play consistently and I lacked a real killer instinct which the Spartans (Sparta's elite soldiers) emphatically did have, but yes, they had been trained for that for at least 12 years. All things considered, I chose to study and for my sweetheart, and I remember many dreams afterwards in which I scored the most beautiful goals, but which was not my strength.

I had an excellent feel for the ball, a sense of timing, extreme speed and a good understanding of the game, but above all I had to rely on my unbridled dedication and motivation, and from birth I was like a Duracell battery and had the energy of 10 Germans, a kind of Lucy starring Scarlett Ingrid Johansson.

With ease, I could place a ball at full speed at the right moment over 40 metres at a few centimetres' accuracy for a fellow player to score. I was primarily a serving player. When, in my last game, I passively allowed the Ajax striker with ball straight at my goal, without intervening significantly, I knew my expiry date had passed.

I had had a fantastic time playing football and I can assure all parents that I learned as much from sport as I did at school, but it had been nice. You learn to work together, discipline, organise and plan et cetera through team sports. Later, I benefited from my intense physical efforts for decades because throughout my life I was sick for maybe a few weeks in total and my physique remained the same and after 40 years people recognised immediately that I had been a footballer.

I was at the same elevated level in all ball sports, which is inherent to footballers. In Bodrum recently, when I was voted the hotel's best volleyball player out of a large group of very sporty men aged 20 and over, I did not tell anyone that I had last played volleyball 40 years ago. So, like ice skating and swimming, you don't seem to lose that.

It did have one drawback: I was unable to walk for two days in Bodrum and had muscle ache all over and the security in the hotel thought I was loopy because my legs were shaking. Sport not only fraternises, but it also makes and keeps you extremely healthy, both mentally and physically and the ancient Greeks knew that better than anyone else. A healthy mind in a

healthy body.

Because so many people today are mentally unbalanced, the number of diseases is also increasing exponentially. Passion for history has been central to my life from the age of 15, and my knowledge of ancient and modern world history surpassed my knowledge of the formal university studies I took in my life, such as law, economics and public administration.

Multidisciplinary history is so fascinating because world history is intertwined like the threads of a spider's web. Past, present, and future are intricately linked and those who fail to realise this live like headless chickens. The only constant is the human psyche and when I see the ingredients of a modus operandi, I can make reliable predictions.

This is not sorcery, but common sense and insight. I not only read countless sources, I feel history, empathise with the subject matter and get into a kind of flow or trance if you like and if you weigh all the facts, you almost always come close to what must have actually taken place because human nature does not change much, if at all. And similarly, you can make reliable predictions about the future.

Let's start in 1888 BC when the original inhabitants of Sparta were farming and ranching in their village in the making, where later Sparta grew into the most feared fighting machine of antiquity, against which for more than 400 years no spice proved to be effective, and as a result, sizeable armies were blighted and decimated that were many times stronger in numbers, sometimes as much as 40 times larger as at Thermopylae.

Come and read what absolute devotion and perfection can lead to and consider that even our current society and sayings-unless we always realise it-are steeped in those Greek influences of yesteryear. The Constitution of Sparta, which Lycurgus devised, provided the basis for Sparta's success, and as the first city-state, citizens were granted civil rights.

Our language, proverbs and customs are full of references to glorious ancient Spartan times. For those of you who think that ancient Sparta has been dug up and archaeologically and thematically chewed out for many hundreds of years, I inform you that Sparta has only been foraged for since 1906 and that in 1925, an impressive bust of a Spartan soldier was found for the first time in an area where Sparta was once situated.

Of course, much has been written about it by various historians, but in this booklet, I try to succinctly interpret the core of Sparta with the fresh glasses of today, and where possible, I will use the society of Sparta of that time to show what is fundamentally wrong in our modern society. In particular, the distorted our man-woman relationship appears to be disastrous.

It has become clear to me that history is neither trivial nor appealing to most people, and if you are presented with a subject like this in, say, 800 pages or more - and that is what most historians do, including those from ancient times - the uninterested and uninitiated reader soon gives up or doesn't even start.

That is why I have tried to keep this little book as compact as possible. Everything I claim in this book is purely for my own responsibility and I hope Herodotos, Thucydides and Plutarchus will not be too sorry if I have occasionally used surprising details from their fantastic, collected works for my booklet to clarify a few things.

I read that impressive work *Historia* again in 1 jerk in June 2019. Thucydides is cold-hearted and says he filled in or added to numerous dialogues himself according to his best insights, and he played a vital role as a general of Athens during the Peloponnesian War, no less. How can one judge that hard on Herodotos who was barely born when Xerxes, with his 1,200 ships and more than half a million soldiers inclusive (facility service) in 480 BC, was about to give the Greeks a heads-up?

His magnificent work is breathtaking, and I find the vicious criticism of him by the much later living Plutarchus, who himself possessed a thick thumb, laughable. When we think of Greece, that image is often limited to Athens and Sparta, but it was teeming with extremely powerful Greek city-states, as many as 700, both on the Greek mainland and on the Greek islands or far beyond.

If you add up all those city-states you arrive at an immense empire, about which more later. True, they were often divided to the bone, but when it came down to it, they were capable of impressive joint achievements.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

In June 2019, I finally had time again, after 2 years, to refuel as far as reading serious books is concerned, and I started with the collected works of the Athenian writer and general Thucydides, which was still in my unopened digital library among many other books. What immediately struck me was the author's clear mind and his extraordinarily honest and authentic narrative style.

The collected works of Plutarchus also came in very handy for me to get a true picture of the essence of the city-state of Sparta and, of course, I still had the collected works of my Greek hero Herodotos from 20 years ago, with fine scribbles in the margin made by me at the time that I could barely decipher. I read that impressive work *Histories* again in one go in June 2019.

According to my mother, unlike myself, my grandfather seemed to have had exceptionally beautiful handwriting and he was also a deserving painter, but according to my mother, he did little or nothing with that talent. Since time immemorial, my family came from Rotterdam, Dordrecht and Scheveningen although everyone thought we were Italian because of our dark appearance.

In summer, I always turned dark bronze within an hour and my four sisters were all brunettes. It was clear to me that the people of Sparta's formative period (roughly 3,100 years ago) were nothing inferior to us in terms of intellect; on the contrary, I am convinced that, on average, people back then had reached a much higher level of personal development and self-reliance than we do now.

In addition, they had thought carefully about their society. This society, which appears extreme to us, contained some substantial advantages - including in terms of the male-female relationship - to which I will return later in this book. Yet most of us have the mistaken (implicit) assumption that anything old must be inferior.

Thucydides' work centres on the so-called Peloponnesian Wars, which raged (incidentally, with interruptions sometimes lasting years) between 431 and 404 BC and completely exhausted the protagonists Athens and Sparta. 50 years after Xerxes' crushing defeat at Thermopylae and Salamis (480 BC), the once good relations between the antagonists Sparta and Athens had soured considerably and turned into deep mutual distrust, rivalry and even hatred.

Their views on how best to organise a state were miles apart, but that was not the reason for the bitter struggle between them. It was Athens that wanted to outmanoeuvre others, including Sparta, and pursued an expansionist policy much like extortion and the current arrogant geopolitics of the US.

If the other city-states did not do what Athens demanded, the increasingly powerful fleet was soon threatened. Look at the US now and you get a nice picture to compare. Besides, my general view is that it was Athens that cheated Sparta repeatedly via concise with other city-states, shooting Sparta under their pigeons and trying to humiliate them.

For Spartan culture, honour, power, and loyalty were everything. Against that backdrop, the titanic struggle between Sparta and Athens was automatically embedded in history and to some extent inevitable, and it was driven by Fortuna. It was only a matter of time before the flame would catch fire.

Civil wars have only losers and I know of nothing more hideous and infamous than civil wars. There is no honour in it and in those kinds of wars people show their worst side. While the victories against the Persians inspire much awe and these phenomenal feats are immortalised in the history books, I have never heard a positive story about the many lootings and orgies of violence during the Greek civil war.

In our culture, we attribute far too much importance to free will, which is an illusion, and if you don't believe me, you could answer the question how many real choices have you had in your life? When we modern people think about classical Greece, most people don't get much further than Sparta and Athens.

Even in secondary schools, those 2 city-states take centre stage. Here, it is often forgotten that in ancient times, there was an impressive collection of Greek City-States both on the Greek mainland and on the numerous Greek Islands, from the many City-States on the west and north coasts of present-day Turkey and Libya, to the Greek City-States and colonies around the Black Sea, Corsica, Sardinia, Illyria, the Sea of Azov and the trio of Greek City-States and colonies in and outside the boot of present-day Italy, also known as Magna Graecia.

Though there was often a lot of rivalry and strife among themselves, people could muster phenomenal strength when it came down to it at times of crises if differences were put aside for a moment.

People then essentially struggled with the same problems and issues as we do now because the "Gods" or Fortuna are constantly testing us, then and still today. Unprecedented successes alternated with disastrous lows even then, and pride and too much success were no blessing even then. The "Gods" or spiritual shadow world, if you like, put new heroes on the horse only to knock them off just as quickly and mercilessly. So don't walk outside your shoes because your fate will be identical. Pride comes before a fall.

Civilisations such as Sparta rose and eventually lost again, noting immediately that of all the city-states, Sparta lasted the longest and when Sparta in fact ceased to exist as a power it was due to a series of factors such as general attrition, demographic decline, social instability and new emerging powers such as Carthage and Rome.

With Athens it was different. The Athenians had overplayed their hand in the war with Sparta and Syracuse and their hegemonic and treacherous policies towards others began to take their toll, and in addition, decadence and arrogance crept into their once successful system of government.

For this they were severely "punished" and apart from the terrible war against Sparta, they were taunted by the Black Death. In our time too, we know such a dominant, aggressive, and domineering power in the form of the US. Their arrogance drips from it. Inflated, manipulated economic performance figures and their military supremacy and countless bases in 160 countries contribute significantly to a false sense of invincibility.

It is strong legs that can carry power and opulence and this attitude of who makes me what is often a harbinger of coming doom, and you don't have to be a Pythia of Delphi for that. I am not anti-American, quite the contrary, but this pandering and domineering behaviour is the fate of any superpower who wants to dominate others. It is totally unrelated to race, and the victims of yesteryear can now be the perpetrators and vice versa. This is how Fortuna plays with destiny.

27 years of warfare between Sparta and Athens (albeit with intervals and truces) had by no means proved to be a sinecure, led to attrition, as mentioned above, offered opportunities to other emerging powers, and The War on Terror (with no notable successes) has also almost reached such an insane time span.

A relatively small group of people in my country have been taught history at school about the ancient wise Greeks, who are undoubtedly the cradle of our current modern society and civilisation, but even gymnasts have only been taught a limited part of that history in the subject of Greek, because in our hectic superficial time, we don't really have time for anything anymore, especially history and culture.

Many people are chronically stressed without realising it themselves. The mediocre overall result is therefore -if you really look at it closely- a bit sad. I describe this process of mediocrity and volatility in passing in my recent book *Gorky in the Netherlands*. The average Dutchman knows extremely little about this in all respects fascinating classical history, with their many intellectual giants and their superhuman achievements, of which King Leonidas of Sparta is only 1 good example.

The Spartans were not very fond of intellectual finery, because in their eyes it only led to effeminacy and weakness, unlike their Athenian counterparts, who, besides physical achievements, were more interested in science and fine arts and were open to the pleasures of Dionysus. The Spartans went for pure nature and functional austerity that a convinced Calvinist could learn a point from.

I have no doubt that today's women in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus could have been the direct descendants of the extremely beautiful, strong, and intelligent Spartan women in terms of behaviour and appearance. I see so many similarities between the two and that is not surprising historically either because apart from the genetic mix, via the transmission of the cultural heritage of Byzantium, Russia, Belarus, and Russia are steeped in Greek influences.

The theme of strong usually beautiful Spartan women is also covered in this book because it is essential for understanding the socio-psychological deficiencies in our society today. In the so-called Dark Ages (1200-800 BC), relatively many Hellenes, as the Greeks called themselves, as a result of invading and marauding tribes from outside or because of poor harvests, or as a result of overpopulation, left for the south-western coast of present-day Turkey and founded numerous city-states there, collectively referred to as Ionia (roughly 750-500 BC).

They also fanned out throughout the Balkans and Italy. Halicarnassus, the

birthplace of the legendary Herodotos, the father of history, or present-day Bodrum was a good example of such a thriving city-state.

Coincidentally, my daughters booked a holiday trip for us to Bodrum in June 2019 without me knowing about it but how much I enjoyed myself there at hotel Asteria. I was unable to write anything there because I had forgotten my laptop's cable at the last minute, and it was only after returning a few acclimatization days later that I picked up the thread of this little book. Bodrum is without a doubt one of the most beautiful areas of Turkey and if at all possible I want to go there more often, next to my beloved Kiev, Odessa, St Petersburg and Colombia because there I experience the positive energy that I miss so much in our petty bourgeois little country.

9 years earlier, I had visited Bodrum for the first time with my very friendly and stunningly beautiful "nurse" Monique, whom I lived with for 3 years. Back then, however, the beauty of this area had completely eluded me, and that is also because most love affairs can be stifling and gaze-jarring. Any kind of adventure and freedom is squeezed out of you and deadly drudgery becomes the course of action, no matter how good your intentions to avoid it.

The historian Herodotos was born and raised in Halicarnassus, and even though on a number of issues he recorded numbers and facts incorrectly or sometimes deliberately exaggerated them to attract the attention of the audience, his work is an almost inexhaustible historical source of inestimable value. He did not own the internet and could not go to a library like Alexandria's, and what he accomplished in the field of history with the limited resources of his time borders on the unbelievable.

He is therefore rightly considered the founding father of the discipline of history. Against the background outlined, I find the criticism of him by some modern historians, as well as Plutarchus, to be misplaced and cheap. Regularly, he had to rely on sources that had visited certain areas, and their things sometimes went wrong, but we in our small world, which you can easily scour by plane or PC, have easy talk.

He argues that Egyptians had concluded that the Phrygians in central Turkey had the oldest civilisation, also older than the Egyptians themselves, and they, by their own admission (priest Manetho), had been keeping their own history in archives for almost 30,000 years. Whether that is factually correct remains to be seen, but for me it is certain that human civilisation is much older than the official history books state.

So always keep an open mind! Egypt was older than Phrygia, and the Sphinx is much older than commonly believed and dates from a period when there was a lot of rain in Egypt and the desert was fertile green land and the sea had a different course.

It is also known that very ancient civilisations existed in south-eastern Turkey such as around Köbekle Tepi. Everything in me also says that Turkish history is among the oldest in the world and only their numerous delicious dishes betray a rich history. As there are still too many gaps in the very ancient history, I will not dwell too much in this book on the history before 11,700 years ago (Köbekle Tepi), when a huge comet wiped-out mankind and is reported in legions of myths.

In fact, that era forms the basis for the restart of the human species and consider that there are over 6,000 years between this disaster period and the rise of Crete's remarkably high civilisation, or 3 times the period between Christ and now. Because we are talking about such long-time spans, I have noticed that the human brain has trouble grasping that properly.

Herodotos was born just before the invasion of Xerxes in 480 BC in Halicarnassus, as present-day Bodrum was then called. Xerxes was the son of King Darius and his predecessor Cyrus had united the Medes and Persians and forged them into an unimaginably large Persian empire that stretched from the Indus to the Aegean Sea and had been divided into 20 Satraps, say provinces of convenience.

He tightly organised the state system and built impressive roads from Sousa to Sardis, and he conquered the Lydian Empire and Babylon. The Greeks of "Ionian Greece", threatened and, in their eyes, milked by the Persians, rebelled against his successor Darius I and sought the help of the mainland Greek city-states, which were autonomous and only exceptionally joined forces at times of crisis and then capable of phenomenal military feats.

One can, with a little imagination, compare the Persia of the time with the present-day self-asserting US. According to Herodotos, Xerxes sent a force to the Greek mainland of 1.7 million soldiers, auxiliary and engineer troops, including the "logistical and facility service", which included prostitutes. Bridges were not needed at the time because Xerxes had his 1,200 boats tied together width wise, turning his fleet into a mobile bridge to transport his soldiers and horses.

Other sources speak of 300,000 soldiers and for the sake of convenience let