

MANTINEA

Mantineia is one of the oldest towns of Arcadia, mentioned even by Homer as the “terpni hora” – pleasant country.

In accordance with the legend, the city took its name by the hero Mantinea, son of Lykaeon, who is mentioned to be the first king of Arcadia.

The ruins of ancient Mantinea are spread on the valley around Tripoli, today under the name Palaiopoli (old city). The ancient theater of Mantinea is one of the few of Greece’s mainland built in completely flat soil. Its construction started after 371 B.C



History

Poseidon was the patron god of Mantinea.

The First Battle of Mantinea, in 418 BC, was the largest land battle of the Peloponnesian War. On one side were Sparta and its remaining allies, and on the other were Athens, its allies, plus the cities that had revolted against the Spartans. After Laches the Athenian commander was killed, the battle turned into a rout of the Athenian and allied armies, a result attributed to greater Spartan courage.

Mantineia had been a member of the Peloponnesian League, but during the Peloponnesian War, the city joined Athens. After the war, it was forced to rejoin the Peloponnese. Later, Sparta used the Peace of Antalcidas as a pretext to break Mantinea into its constituent villages. In response, the Mantineans expelled pro-Spartans from the city. After the Spartan defeat at the end of the Corinthian War, Mantinea re-formed into a single city.

The Second Battle of Mantinea, in 362 BC, led to the fall of Theban hegemony. In that battle, Athens and Sparta were allied. Thebes won the battle, but its greatest general, Epaminondas, was killed in the fighting.

Macedonian king Antigonos III Doson renamed the city Antigonía; Mantinea's name was restored by the Roman Hadrian.

Modern-day Mantinea is the region around the city of Tripoli in Arcadia, and was named after the namesake city of old. It is also the name of a Protected designation of origin of Greek blanc de gris wine, made of the moschofilero grape traditionally grown in the region. The seat of Mantinea is Nestani, home to about one-fifth (20%) of the population.

Mountains surround the valley, including the Lyrkeia mountains as well as the Mainalo mountains to the southwest. The valley consists of vineyards, potato and wheat farms, as well as other crops, and covers about half of the municipality. Several floods ravaged Mantinea in the mid-20th century, even to the extent of forming a lake that has since been drained. Forests dominate the mountains. Rocks and grasslands cover most of the northeast.

The Mantinea Marble, dated to the 4th century BC and now exhibited at National Archaeological Museum of Athens, depicts the mythical contest between Apollo and Marsyas, with a Greek “pandouris” being played by a muse seated on a rock. This is important to researchers into the history of musical instruments. Lutes have been present in ancient Greece as well.

