

GEROUSIA ELECTIONS

MORE INFORMATION

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Plutarch (*Life of Lycurgus 26*) gives us more detail about elections to the Gerousia and the associated rituals:

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For it was not the swiftest of the swift, nor the strongest of the strong, but the best and wisest of the good and wise who was to be elected, and have for the rest of his life, as a victor's prize for excellence, what I may call the supreme power in the state, lord as he was of life and death, honour and dishonour, and all the greatest issues of life.

The election was made in the following manner. An assembly of the people having been convened ... the cries of the assembly decided between the competitors. ... Whoever was greeted with the most and loudest shouting, him they declared elected. The victor then set a wreath upon his head and visited in order the temples of the gods. He was followed by great numbers of young men, who praised and extolled him, as well as by many women, who celebrated his excellence in songs, and dwelt on the happiness of his life. Each of his relations and friend set a repast before him, saying: "The city honours thee with this table." When he had finished his circuit, he went off to his mess-table. Here he fared in other ways as usual, but a second portion of food was set before him, which he took and put by.

After the supper was over, the women who were related to him being now assembled at the door of the mess-hall, he called to him the one whom he most esteemed and gave her the portion he had saved, saying that he had received it as a meed of excellence, and as such gave it to her. Upon this, she too was lauded by the rest of the women and escorted by them to her home

SOURCE

Plutarch, Life of Lycurgus 26, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1914).