

= Battle of Lechaenum =

The Battle of Lechaenum (391 BC) was an Athenian victory in the Corinthian War . In the battle , the Athenian general Iphicrates took advantage of the fact that a Spartan hoplite regiment operating near Corinth was moving in the open without the protection of any missile throwing troops . He decided to ambush it with his force of javelin throwers , or peltasts . By launching repeated hit @-@ and @-@ run attacks against the Spartan formation , Iphicrates and his men were able to wear the Spartans down , eventually routing them and killing just under half . This marked one of the first occasions in Greek military history on which a force of peltasts had defeated a force of hoplites (heavy infantry) .

= = Prelude = =

In 392 BC , a civil war had taken place at Corinth , in which a group of pro @-@ Spartan oligarchs was defeated and exiled by anti @-@ Spartan democrats . Those exiles cooperated with Spartan forces in the region to gain control of Corinth 's port on the Corinthian Gulf , Lechaenum . They then repulsed several attacks on the port by the democrats at Corinth and their Theban and Argive allies and secured their hold over the port .

The Athenians then sent out a force to assist in garrisoning Corinth , with Iphicrates commanding the peltasts . The Spartans and the exiles , meanwhile , raided Corinthian territory from Lechaenum , and in 391 BC King Agesilaus led a large Spartan army to the area and attacked a number of strongpoints , winning a number of successes . The Athenians and their allies were largely bottled up in Corinth , but eventually found an opportunity to take advantage of Spartan negligence .

= = Battle = =

While Agesilaus moved about Corinthian territory with the bulk of his army , he left a sizable force at Lechaenum to guard the port . Part of this force at Lechaenum was composed of men from the city of Amyclae , who traditionally returned home for a certain religious festival when on campaign . With this festival approaching , the Spartan commander at Lechaenum marched out with a force of hoplites and cavalry to escort the Amyclaeans past Corinth on their way home . After successfully leading his force well past the city , the commander ordered his hoplites to turn and return to Lechaenum , while the cavalry continued on with the Amyclaeans . Although he would be marching near the walls of the city of Corinth with his force , he expected no trouble , believing that the men in the city were thoroughly cowed and unwilling to march out .

The Athenian commanders in Corinth , Iphicrates , who commanded the peltasts , and Callias , who commanded the hoplites , saw that an entire Spartan mora , or regiment , of 600 men was marching past the city unprotected by either peltasts or cavalry , and decided to take advantage of this fact . Accordingly , the Athenian hoplites drew up a little outside Corinth , while the peltasts went after the Spartan force in pursuit , flinging javelins at the Spartan hoplites .

To stop this , the Spartan commander ordered some of his men to charge the Athenians , but the peltasts fell back , easily outrunning the hoplites , and then , when the Spartans turned to return to the regiment , the peltasts fell upon them , flinging spears at them as they fled , and inflicted casualties . This process was repeated several times , with similar results . Even when a group of Spartan cavalrymen arrived , the Spartan commander made the curious decision that they should keep pace with the hoplites in pursuit , instead of racing ahead to ride down the fleeing peltasts . Unable to drive off the peltasts , and suffering losses all the while , the Spartans were driven back to a hilltop overlooking Lechaenum . The men in Lechaenum , seeing their predicament , sailed out in small boats to as close as to the hill as they could reach , about a half mile away . The Athenians , meanwhile , began to bring up their hoplites , and the Spartans , seeing these two developments , broke and ran for the boats , pursued by the peltasts all the way . All in all , in the fighting and pursuit , 250 of the 600 men in the regiment were killed .

= = Aftermath = =

News of the Spartan defeat , accordingly , was a profound shock to Agesilaus , who soon returned home to Sparta . In the months following Agesilaus ' departure , Iphicrates reversed many of the gains that the Spartans had made near Corinth , recapturing three of the forts that the Spartans had previously seized and garrisoned . He also launched several successful raids against Spartan allies in the region . Although the Spartans and their oligarchic allies continued to hold Lechaeum for the duration of the war , they curtailed their operations around Corinth , and no further major fighting occurred in the region .