The Geographical Setting

**Geography of Greece**
- Rugged with a few limestone mountains
- Few large plains for farming
- Highly indented coastline
- Effects of Geography
- Difficult communication

**Climate of Greece**
- Sever winter in the mountains
- Mainland plains extremely hot
- South east generally sunny and fine
- Little rain in summer

**Spartan Geography**
- Area of 4,000 km²
- In fertile Eurotus valley, surrounded by steep, high and continuous mountain ranges such as mount Tygetus
- Important defensive position

**Significant Geographical features**
- Mt Taygetus
- Mt Parnon
- Eurotus River
- Eurotus Valley
Social Structure and Political Organization

Development of Sparta - Background info
(Just have a rough idea of this - not that important but good to know)

< 900 BC:
Four adjacent villages existed in Lacodonia
- Limnai
- Pitana
- Kynosoura
- Mesoa

900 BC:
Synoestism (joining together) saw these four villages united under a single city - Sparta
The system of Dual Kingship evolved

800 BC:
A fifth village was incorporated into Sparta: Amayklai

750 BC:
Spartans had complete control over Laconia, conquering Messinia. The Messinians became helots.

Second Messinia war - 650 BC:
The Messinians revolted, it took 17 years for the Spartan government to regain control over the region. Sparta defeated Messinia.

Lycurgus and the Great Rheta
Lycurgus: Man/God/Myth???
The great Rheta: a series of laws brought in after the second messina war - bringing about changes to Spartan life

M FINLEY - Once the war was won, a number of profound changes were introduced

Lycurgus did some of the following:
- Established the duties of the kings
- Redistributed land so citizens had a kleros and helots to farm it
- Set up the syssition
- Outlawed the use of coinage to deter greed
- Organized the army
- Outlawed crafts

Lycurgus was believed to be a god by the Spartans

The opinions of ancient historians varies:
Modern historians generally reject the idea of a single lawgiver:

MICHEL - ‘... the very existence of Lycurgus is strongly open to doubt’

Xenophon - ‘I do admire Lycurgus... consider him a remarkably wise man’

Plutarch - ‘of... Lycurgus, absolutely nothing can be said that is not controvertial’

HERODOTUS and ARISTOTLE wrote of Lycurgus as a historical figure who consulted with the gods before passing these laws

**Dual Kingship**

Origen:

- One king for each royal house
  - Agiad
  - Eurypontid
- They had equal powers
- Hereditary monarchy

Succession:

- King succeeded by eldest son. ARISTOTLE refers to the kings as ‘hereditary generals’
- A son born prior to his father taking the thrown had to give way to the first born son after his father becoming king

Function/role:

Military-

- Supreme commanders of the army
- Had the right to declare war although never did
- HERODOTUS tells us that only one was selected to go on campaign, the other remained in Sparta
- Two ephors accompanied the king, keeping supervision over the king
- Accompanied by a bodyguard of 100, inclusion in this was a great honor
- Each man had a bodyguard of 100 men known as hippies, inclusion in this was a great honor
- Punished if a campaign failed

Religious-

- Seen as between gods and men, held office as long as the gods are pleased
- Kings were priests of Zeus Lacadanomians and Zeus Uranios, the gods of their respective families
- Gave sacrifices to Apollo every month for the polis (city/state)
- Before leaving on campaign the king sacrificed to Zues, if the omens were favorable the army could proceed to the frontier where more sacrifices were made to Zues and Athena, when the opposing army was in site they would sacrifice a she goat- only proceeding with favorable omens. Fire from these sacrifices was carried with them throughout the campaign
- The kings appointed two phythioi to consult the oracle of Delphi and to report on the oracles directions
- They were responsible for the safeguarding of the oracles
ARISTOTLE proposed that Spartans viewed their kings as demi-gods.

Judicial:
- Had limited judicial duties
- Decided mirages for orphaned heiresses
- Controlled all matters concerning highways and the adoption of children
- Unable to finalize a peace treaty but could establish arrangements and conditions for ratification by the Ecclesia.

Limitation of Powers:
- Duality ensured they could keep check on each other
- Monthly oath taken jointly by kings and ephors, whereby the kings office was guaranteed as long as they acted constitutionally
- Kings reported to the ephors during campiegn
- Could be disposed by the people

Honors and marks of distinction and privileges:
- Supported at the expense of the state, were on military service, HERODOTUS allowed for their own use as many cows as they wish.
- Given the skin of all sacrificed animals and the spoils of war.
- At the session they were served first and given double proportions.
- Seat of honor at religious festivals. When they entered assembly, everyone stood, except the ephors.
- On their death special ceremonies were observed. A man and woman from every house had to wear a sign of mourning. People from all over Lacadonia attended the ceremony, all declaring he was the best king they had ever had. No public meetings/elections could be held for the next ten days.
Government

The Spartan constitution contained elements of monarchy, oligarchy (gerousia and ephorate) and democracy (Appella/Ecclesia). It was described by Cicero as a ‘mixed constitution’.

Gerousia - Oligarchy (ruled by a few)

Council of elders, membership was restricted to Spartans over 60

Origen:
- Probably as a result of a conflict between the two kings and the nobles at the time of the first Messenian war
- PLUTARCH opines that the Gerousia was part of Lycurgus's attempt to safeguard the state by ‘allaying and qualifying the fiery genius of the royal office’.

Membership (members were gerontes):
- 28 Spartiates over 60 and two kings of any age
- Members held office for life
- Highly sought after and respected position

PLUTARCH recalled members had to be, ‘the best and most deserving men past 60 years old’

BURY and MEIGGS said that ‘though they were elected by the people they were not elected for the people. Nobility of birth retained at Sparta its political significance; and only men from noble families could be chosen members of the council’

Selection:
- Selected by acclamation - clapping
- According to PLUTARCH the candidates were brought in one by one, their order of appearance decided by lot (drawing a name out of a hat)
- ARISTOTLE describe this method as ‘childish’

Function:
- Prepared and deliberated on the bills to be presented to the Ecclesia for voting
- If it was not happy with the assemblies vote on an issue it could decline to accept it, by adjourning
- Together with the kings and ephors acted as a court of justice for criminal cases involving murder and treason. They imposed punishments ranging from death to banishment to fines
- Received foreign embassies
- Discussed matters of state
- Could overrule the kings on matters of peace and war within Sparta
- XENOPHON said the gerontes displayed ‘nobility of character’

Overall they had a great influence in political affairs

Ephorate (5 ephors) (Oligarchy)

Origins:
- Unknown
- Herodotus attributed them to Lycurgus
- During the 7th C BC the ephors won their power, which slowly increased
Had formidable power as representative of the people

Election:
- Any Spartiates over 30 could stand for office
- 5 were elected annually

Functions/roles:
- Keep check on the kings- exchanged oaths with the kings monthly and would look to the sky to see if the gods were pleased with the kings
- Dealt with foreign embassies. XENOPHON accounts of how before foreign representatives could enter Sparta they had to wait at the border to receive permission from the ephors
- Decided which age/class should fight if war was declared
- At the end of each magistrate's year in office the ephors would decide his punishment for any laws broken during their time in power
- Control over the agoge
- Control over the Krypteia and their control of the helots. According to ARISTOTLE upon entering office the ephors would declare war on the helots so they could be massacred without offending the gods
- Presided over the Gerousia and the assembly, could initiate legislation
- Acted as a court of criminal justice
- Controlled state finances
- Summoned meetings of the Gerousia and the Ecclesia
- Devised state policy

Limitations:
- Elected for one year only
- When they became citizens again they could be held accountable for their actions while in power
- Monthly oaths with kings

RUBUCH- ‘The ephors held a prominent position in the constitution and by 560 B.C. apparently enjoyed virtual control of the state’
ARISTOTLE claimed they, ‘enjoyed supreme authority in matters of the highest importance’. He also claimed ‘the office is extremely powerful and equal to that of a tyrant’

Apella/Ecclesia (assembly)- Democratic

Membership:
- All Spartiates over 30
- Those who had lost their citizenship could not attend

Function/roles:
- Met once a month- every full moon in open air
- Chaired by an ephor who introduced proposed legislation
- Could not discuss/amend proposals, but could vote against them by acclamation. BURY and MEIGGS stated, “it allowed them to be dissenters if the people made a crooked decree”
- Elected the ephors and gerousia - acclamation

Involved in-
- Question war or peace
- Signing of treaties
- Appointment of generals
Election of the gerousia
Election of other magistrate
Succession to the thrown
Freeing of helots (Neodomades)

Limitations:
- If the ephors or gerontes disapproved of a motion passed by the assembly they could refuse to proclaim it (seceding). This was the one undemocratic feature of the Spartan constitution.
- Voted on proposals to change the law but could not forward their bills.
- Was not allowed to discuss or amend bills.

A. Andrews: "regular method of settling important questions in classical times in Sparta, Athens or almost any city.
A. Andrews: it could 'give of withhold a final blessing to decisions taken'.

Social Structure
Spartiates/ Homoioi/ Peers/ Equals
Privileged class holding all political power.

Qualifications:
- Dorian decent
- Subject to the agoge
- Members of a Syssition/phydion

Small numbers:
- Outnumbered by helots 1:20
- Never numbered over 9,000-10,000

Militaristic lifestyle:
- Full time soldiers
- Subject to the Agoge
- Forbidden to engage in farming, trade of industry

Equality
- All equal under the law
Some differences in wealth
The Kleros received by all was the same size—some land may have been more fertile than others

High Code of Honour
Total loyalty to the state
Preferred death in battle to defeat
Involved—
Courage
Loyalty
Endurance
Obedience

Austere life style
Lived without luxuries
Frugal diet
Minimum of clothing

Perioeci—Dwellers around
Dorian in origin
Lived in C. 100 scattered communities in the area controlled by Sparta
Controlled all passes and waterways into Lacadonia
Participated in trade, industry and farming
Autonomus (self governing) in their own communities, had local citizenship but owed allegiance to Sparta
Not permitted to intermarry with Spartans or take part in Spartan religious festivals
Those along the coast were fishermen, shipbuilders and the best scribes in the navy
If involved in a case with a Peer were brought before the ephors for trial
Spartan kings revenue came from their estates in the land of the perioeci lands
Adult male Perioeci were expected to serve as hoplites in the Spartan army, though not involved in training
Had no share in formulating Spartan policy

HERODOTUS mentions them making shoes and objects of wood and iron

PLUTARCH—'(the perioeci) enjoyed free status and managed the internal affairs of their own communities... the economic role of the Perioeci must have been an important one.'

MICHEO—'The Spartans could not get one without the Perioeci or the helots'
As tradesmen they must have been useful'

GROTE—'Spartans were bound to them, certainly by no tie of affection'
Inferiors:
- Were alienated from the rest of society
- They were free but had no political rights.
- Were unshaven
- Wore special clothing
- Exercised alone
- Could not vote or attend Ecclesia

Included:
- Hypomeneiones: Spartans who had lost citizenship due to failure to meet requirements such as supplying food to the Sysision/Phydition
- Neodamodes: Helots who had been rewarded with freedom for military service or service to the polis
- Parthenai: illegitimate child of a Spartan father and Helot mother
- Tresantes: Spartans who had lost citizenship due to cowardly actions, also known as ‘tremblers’
- Mothaces/Mothones: the sons inferior who had been adopted as playmates for Spartan boys, shared the same training
- Trophimoi: Sons of foreigners- sent to Sparta to receive their education

Helots:
- 70% of the population
- A constant threat to the Spartan constitution
- The original inhabitance of Lacadonia and Messenia
- State owned serfs, issued to each Peer when they reached the age of 20 to work their kleros
- They worked the kleros to supply annual fixed amount of produce to their Spartan masters free to keep any left over
- Engaged in agricultural activities and household chores
- Acted as servants to Spartan soldiers during war, also served as light skirmished during battle
- A few freed for bravery or service to the state- neodamodes

Treatment:
- Kryptia would kill Helots who showed bravery, physical fitness or leadership qualities
- Constant threat to Spartan security- outnumbered Spartans 20:1
- Politically and legally had no rights
- Often treated harshly and humiliatingly
- Could not move without government permission

ARISTOTLE tells that immediately after taking office each year the ephors would declare war on the Helotes.
TYRTAUS- ‘Like donkeys, weighed down by heavy burdens, bringing to their masters... half of the crop that the tilled land bears’
MICHEL- ‘Whenever the Spartan state was in danger, trouble might be expected from Helots’
The Role of the Spartan Army

Spartan hoplites

Foot soldier
- Wore/had:
  - Corinthian helmet
  - Hoplon (shield)
  - Greaves (shin pads)
  - Distinctive red cloak (discarded in battle)
  - Spear
  - Long hair
  - Curass (breast plate)

Passed the time in battle by combing their hair before battle

- The Spartan hoplite was a unique throughout Greece as being a full time soldier, their life dedicated to war. Compared to other Greek soldiers who were citizen soldiers, called up in times of need.
- They had a reputation throughout Greece for being fearsome warriors, considered invincible. They were both feared and admired throughout Greece.
- Exclusively a land army - relied on allies for ships. Perioeci were sailors and navigators and Helots were rowers.
- HERODOTUS believed the Spartan hoplite had courage that no other Greek had and that every Spartan soldier would fight to the death for his country. He said, ‘fighting together they are the best army in the world.’
- PERECLES believed the Spartan militaristic skill was a product of ‘state induced courage’
- MICHEL ‘The Spartans were courageous beyond all other peoples’

Phalanx:
- Hoplites marched in a solid formation, shoulder to shoulder, moving as one. Only the rear was unprotected.
- The Spartan phalanx was superior to other Greek states.

Role of other Lacedanions/support forces:
- Helots - each Spartan was accompanied by 1 or 2 helots, who carried their baggage.
- Perioeci - served as foot soldiers but did not share the agoge.
- Inferiors - took domestic duties of the camp.
- Priests to read the omens and took care of the wounded.
- Musicians - pipe the army into battle.

Religion:
- Very important in the Spartan army.
  - Before leaving:
    - Consulted oracles such as the oracle of Delphi
    - Kings sacrificed to Zues - proceeded to the frontier if the omens were favorable.
  - At frontier:
    - Sacrificed to Zues and Athena
    - Fire for this sacrifice would be carried with them for the remainder of the campaign.
  - When enemy was close enough to see:
    - A she-goat was sacrificed.
Camps:
- Not fortified
- Offensive rather than defensive

Marching into battle:
- Would only start marching into battle when favorable omens were received after sacrificing to a she-goat
  
  **PLUTARCH** - 'It was a sight at once solemn and terrifying to see... (they) approached the confrontations calmly and happily in time to the music'

Weaknesses of Spartan army:
- Lacked sufficient cavalry
- Training and tactics were inflexible
- Vulnerable to archers, slingers and javelin throwers
- Lack of skill in attacking fortified positions
- Manpower shortages especially in the 4th C B.C

Thermopolis - 480 B.C:

‘There was not a nation in Asia that he did not take with him against the Greeks’ **HERODOTUS**

Provides evidence of:
- Leadership of a Spartan king
- Preparation for battle
- Spartan tactics
- Link between religion and warfare

Background info:
In 590 BC the Persians invaded Greece by sea. They landed at Marathon where they were met by a smaller force of Greeks who defeated them.
The Spartans were unable to participate in this battle as they were celebrating the Carnean festival of Apollo, in this festival the Dorians were forbidden to engage in warfare.

After their defeat at Marathon the Persians ‘ransacked every corner of the Asian continent to prepare another attack on the Greece’ **HERODOTUS**.

The Greeks held a meeting at the isthmus of Corinth in 482 to decide on what to do. They agreed that:
- Sparta would lead the army and navy
- They would face the Persian army only in constricted areas such as mountain passes or narrow waterways - the pass of Thermopoli was decided as an ideal location

Leonidas, king of Sparta, led his force of 300 (only 300 were aloud by the ephors) Spartans and other forces from all over Greece (Sparta lead rest of Greece against Persians) to the pass at Thermopylae to stop the Persian advance from the north.

In Sparta the Carnean festival was taking place, which forbided them from going to war at this time, however the Hippeis - the kings 300 men bodyguard - were exempt, so they marched to Thermoly believing more troops would arrive.
HERODOTUS - at the conclusion of the Karneia the Spartans would march with all the troops at their disposal.

The 300 Spartans along with Perioeci, helots, and other Greeks fought against the much larger force of Persians lead by Xerxes. They held the pass at Thermopoli until they were betrayed by the Greek Ephialtes, who showed the Persians the other way around the pass. The Spartans were given the choice of surrendering or dying, they choice to die and were shot down by arrows.

MICHEL - 'such feats as that of Leonedus and his 300... give... examples of devotion to duty and fearlessness in the face of certain death'

Control of Helots
The helots vastly outnumbered the Spartans and as a result were a constant threat to the Spartans. The Spartan system was designed to keep them under control.

Military
- One of the roles of the military was to keep the helots under control
- Helots did not have military power of their own because they were working the kleros
- Measures and laws were imposed to keep the helots in submission

Syssition
- Helots produced food for the syssition so were kept constantly farming the land

Krypteia
- Knowledge of the Kryptia is limited
- Purpose to keep the helots in a state of a fear and subjection
- Some historians believed that the krypteia would only murder helots who might revolt
- Assigned young Spartans armed with daggers roamed the county side at night and murdered any helots they found
- PLATO believed membership was part of the Spartan military training

The military
The Spartan military was known throughout Greece for being powerful. The Spartans tended never to venture too far from Sparta, due to fear of a Spartan revolt.

Syssitia/Phyditia
The Syssitions were designed to unify the Spartans. A unified force being harder to make revolt.

Kryptia
Boys could join the kryptia from the age of 18, they would be forced to live of in the wild, hunting and stealing. From time to time they would kill helots who showed signs of strength or leadership qualities.

The Agoge
PLUTARCH believed, 'the main purpose of their education was to teach them to endure pain and to be successful soldiers and good citizens'
The Spartan system of education... imposed a greater tyranny than any man-made depot ever imposed

Birth:
A child would be taken before the Agoge to inspect for deformeties, if it did it would be placed on Mount Tygetus (the place of rejection). If the child passed it would be dumped in a vat of cold wine to see if it had good lungs.
If the child survived it would be taken home where it lived for the next six years

0-6:
A child would be raised by their mother with the help from helot nurses.
Plutarch describes their upbringing: 'the women did not bath their bodies in water, but in wine, making it a sort of test of their strength... they also made them sensible and not fuss about their food, not afraid of the dark or frightened of being left alone, not inclined to awkwardness or wining'... ‘their whole education was aimed at developing smarter obedience, perseverance under stress and victory in battle’

7-12
At the age of seven a boy would leave their home and go to live at the barracks, they would be brought up in ‘packs’. They would be supervised by the eiren’s or prefects, who were permitted to discipline the boys. The Paidonomos was the supervisor of education and also supervised them, having absolute authority over the boys.

12-18
The boys no longer wore tunics but got one cloak a year and went barefoot. They were fed minimum rations of food and encouraged to steal or hunt for extra, but were punished if caught.

18-20
Military training intensified. Boys could become eirenes to supervise the younger boys. They could also join the krypteia, in charge of keeping the helots under control. They would live alone, stealing and living of the land as well as controlling helots.
Boys could also join a Syssition/Phydition, or a dining mess. A ballot would be held to determine if the person would be rejected or accepted. It only took one negative vote to reject a candidate, once rejected a boy would become an inferior. To vote each member of the syssition would place a piece of doe into a caddichus, round to accept the candidate or flat to regret the. If accepted they would eat with their syssition until they retired at 60, providing a monthly share of food to their syssition.
They were eligible to serve in battle, but not the front line.
Boys were permitted to marry, but had to visit their wives in secret as they still had to live at the barracks.

24- 30
The boys received their hoplite amour and became eligible to serve on the front line. Their military training continued, now as a full time soldier.

30- 60
Boys became full citizens, known as Peers/Equals/Homoioi/Spartiate, they were given voting rights at the Ecclesia. They were also aloud to grow their hair long, as PLUTARCH states, "...they took care over their hair from the times they were youth". HERODOTUS accounts that on the eve of the battle of Thermopylae Leonatus and his 300 spent time curling and adorning their hair. They could live at home, but had meals at the Syssition. They continued military service until they were 60

Could retire and live at home

Disadvantages of Spartan education:
The Agoge did not encourage resilience to cope with change. during the fourth century it became obvious that Spartans were unable to adapt satisfactory to changing conditions.

Spartan Women
Spartan women were emancipated, they had considerably more freedom than women in Athens:

— They were encouraged to play an active social role
  — BLUNDELL ‘Silence does not appear to have been one of the virtues cultivated in Spartan women’
  — They grew up in physical freedom
  — They were aloud to mingle freely with men and exercise with them
  — They were taught basic reading and writing just as the men were
  — Did not spin or weave; regarded these tasks as fit for slaves

Spartan mothers:
The main function of Spartan women was to be wives and mothers of citizens. Cartage ‘The goal of her life was childbearing’

Women would bring up children with the help of helot nurses.

PLUTARCH accounts that as a woman was burying her son she said, ‘by the two gods, a piece of good fortune... because I bore him so he might die for Sparta, and that is what has happened’

Spartan women’s education:
— Women were educated just as boys until the age of 7 when the boys left for the Baracks and the women remained at home, but were still expected to be educated.
— Just as boys were they were organized into bands and participated in team games and charol singing.
— Girls were expected to remain physically fit for child bearing, rump jumps/babasis is an example of how they exercised (used to streanhten their body’s for child birth)

XENOPHON claimed that Lycurgus, ‘prescribed physical training for the female sex no less than the male... thinking that if both parents were strong their children would be more robust’

Women and property:
— Men were often of at war, leaving women with the job of managing their husbands estates, they could also own and inherit land. ARISTOTLE claimed that at the 5th C BC, Spartan women owned 2/5 of the land. PLUTARCH stated that by the 3rd C BC the more than half of the land was owned by women, this was probably due to the declining number of male citizens.

Spartan beauty:
— Spartan women were forbidden to wear jewelry, perfume, make up or dying their cloths.
— They wore a Peplos, a short dress fastened at the shoulders. This was vastly different from Athenian women.
— Spartan women were known for their natural beauty

Religious roles:
• Women who were barren, pregnant or had survived child birth would take offerings to the goddess Artemis Orthia.
• Spartan mothers made sacrifices to the goddess Aphrodite Hera.
• At festivals Spartan women would perform religious dances.

Spartan women through the eyes of the Ancient writers:

ARISTOTLE disapproved of their freedom, claiming it was one of the reasons for Spartans downfall.
PLATO believed the women were aloud to ‘wallow in expensive luxury’, while the men were redulated.

Some Spartan Women:

Damatria- after learning her son was a coward killed him

Gorgo- wife of leodedus, when asked by an Athenian women why Spartan women are the only once who rule over men she replied, ‘Because we are the only women who bring forth men’

Cynisca- ‘My father and brothers were kings of Sparta. I Cynisca won a victory with my swift running horses and set up this statue. I claim I am the only women in Greece to have won this crown.’

Perioeci Women
• Little is known about Perioeci women
• They were involved in trade and craft

Helot Women
• Helot women would take care of Spartan children and other household chores. They gained a reputation throughout Greece for being great nurses so were sometimes used by those outside Greece
The economy

Industries

- Armour/weapons
- Lead figurines
- Wool/Flax
- Pottery
- Shoes
- Bronze-work
- Ivory and bone-work
- Dye production
- Charriots

Land ownership

- Each Spartan was given a Kleros as well as helots to work it. The helots had to half of what they produced to their Spartan mothers. When a Spartan died the kleros would be reverted to the state.
- Spartans could own more land which could be inherited by his next of kin

Technology

The Perioeci produced metals and manufactured the weapons that kept the Spartan war machine going.

Economic roles of the pereoeci and helots

- Helots- farmed the land and took care of domestic duties
- Perioece/Periokoi- engaged in industry, crafts and trade

PLUTARCH- "(the perioeci) enjoyed free status and managed the internal affairs of their own communities... the economic role of the Perioeci must have been an important one."

MICHEL- "the Spartans could not get one without the Perioeci or the helots. As tradesmen they must have been useful"

Due to this Spartans did not have to concern themselves with making a living, they could focus on being soldiers- Spartans were prohibited from pursuing any other profession other than the military.

Economic exchange

- In Sparta the use of gold or Attica owls was forbidden, instead iron bars were used- as Lycurgus had ordered
- This was so the Spartans were not corrupted by greed
Religion, death and burial

The gods and goddesses worshiped by the Spartans: Artemis Orthia, Poseidon, Apollo and Zeus

The Spartans worshiped the twelve Olympian gods and goddesses as did the rest of Greece. They also worshiped other local gods.

Artemis Orthia:

In Sparta the goddesses Artemis and Orthia combined to form Atenis Orthia. Artemis was the goddess of birth, wild animals and untamed places and was believed to be the protector of women and the health of children. Orthia was a local Spartan goddess, there is little known about her.

There was a festival held from May-June in the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia. Bettany Hughes describes this festival as a 'brutal right of passage'. Boys of 12 were separated from the community for a period of time and forced to live in the wild. On their return they had to steal cheese from the altar of Atenis Orthia which was protected by men with whips. The boys had to grab the cheese and get out, if they cried or flinched they would be dishonored in front of their families. It is believed many died during this festival. At the conclusion of this there were joyful songs and dances were held and cultic masks were worn, many of these have been found at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia today.

Poseidon:

Poseidon was the god of the sea, also associated with earthquakes.

Xenophon recounts that in 388/7 when King Agis was invading Agros, an earth tremor was believed to have been encouragement from Poseidon to advance.

Apollo:

Apollo was associated with the sun, music, poetry and the harmony of the world

The shrine of Apollo at Delphi was believed to be the site where Apollo killed the Dragon Python. Sparta would consult the oracle of Delphi before making any major decisions.

Zeus:

Zeus was considered to be the most important god, believed to be the ruler of Mount Olympus, and he was associated with the sky, clouds and thunder.

Each king acted as a priest of Zeus Lacadanomians and Zeus Uranios, the gods of their respective families. The kings would also sacrifice to Zeus before embarking on a campaign and if the omens were unfavorable the army would not proceed. The same would occur at the frontier.

The Spartans claimed to be descendants from Herakles, Zeus’s favourite son.

Myths and Legends

Lycurgus
(see above)

The diosuris

The Dioscuri were called Castor and Polydeuces, or Pollux.

Exactly who their parents were is uncertain. Some claimed that they had a different father each, while others believed them to be the twin sons of Zeus and Leda. Leda was a queen of Sparta.
who had been seduced by Zeus when he came to her as a swan. They were also the brothers of Helen of Troy.

- They are often represented as being born from an egg, and legend states that Leda bore them on the peak of Mount Tygetus.
- Castor was mortal, while Pollux was immortal and they both swapped their immortality each day.
- Often they were associated with the constellation Gemini, as well as young men, horsemen ship, athletics and warfare
- Pollux was known for his skills as a boxer, whilst Castor was a horseman.
- The Spartan kings could trace their ancestry back to Zeus and were often associated with the Dioscuri. According to legend the Dioscuri took turns protecting Sparta as well as being the special protectors of the two kings.

Festivals:
Spartan religious festivals were important in bringing Spartiates together as well as promoting unity and a sense of identity among Spartiates. Three examples of important Spartan festivals are the Hyakinthia, Gymnopaedia and Karneia.

Hyakinthia
- Hyakinthia, which took place over three days.
- This was dedicated to the youth, Hyakinthos, who had been Apollo's lover until Apollo accidently killed him with a discus. Apollo had declared the festival of Hyakinthia in his honor.
- Hooker asserted that the festival was a ritual for the dead and a thanksgiving of life. It also had a strong theme of youth and beauty as well as an endorsement for male-male relationships.
- There were two stages to the festival:
  - Firstly, there was mourning for Hyakinthos. The singing of joyful songs and the wearing of wreaths were banned, as well as the eating of cakes. There was a day of grief and a funerary meal.
  - During the second stage there was rejoicing for Apollo. People would wear wreaths, sing songs and made sacrifices to Apollo. There was a festival meal and a procession to Amyclae. Also, the Spartiates would entertain their Helots. ‘The whole city is full of delight at the spectacle’

Gymnopaedia
- The Gymnopaedia was aimed at generating military skills and spirits in the youth of Sparta, it initiated young soldiers to a life of physical fineness, as a ‘right of passage’.
- It was held in the agora (market place) during July, the hottest part of the year. There were competitive dances and choral performances performance,
- Agamoi were excluded from the festival as they had not produced sons as the state requires.

Robert Parker - ‘It looks like Spartans have transformed even choral dancing into a test of endurance and an ordeal!’ There was also boxing between the boys and men. Boys were to dance and run in the intense heat in endurance competitions.

Plutarch described this as a ‘terrific endurance’

Karneia
- The Karneia was held in August over nine days and concerned with divination as well as being a celebration of Dorian migration and colonization of Sparta.
- During the time the festival was held, it was forbidden for Spartans to engage in warfare. It was because of this festival the Spartans were unable to attend the battle of Marathon.
- In this festival the men were divided into nine groups and would dine together. Some citizens would carry models of rafts, symbolic of the coming of the Durians.
One man decorated in ribbons would be chased by Straphylodromoi, other young men. He would pray to the city gods before beginning to run. If the Straphylodromoi caught him it was a good omen for the city, if they did not it was a bad omen.

Religious roles of the kings
See above

Funerary customs and rituals

Our knowledge of Spartan funerary customs is limited due to the lack of surviving evidence.

The amount of recognition a death would receive depended largely on the achievements of a person during their lifetime. According to Plutarch, only women who died in childbirth, men who died during battle or kings had a marked grave, as Lycurgus had ordered. However, archeological evidence suggests this was not always the case.

Unlike other Greek states, in Sparta the dead were buried within the city. This was to get people used to the idea of death and ensure they did not fear it - they were encouraged to view death as normal.

Female relatives of the diseased were usually the ones who conducted funerary rituals.

According to Herodotus, at the death of a king, horsemen would travel all over Lakonia, giving news of the kings death. Women would walk through the streets beating caldrons. A man and a woman from each household would strike their head as a sign of mourning. Spartiates and perioecie from all over Lakonia attended the funeral and everyone would proclaim the deceased was the best king they have ever had. If a king died in battle there would be a statue built in his honor. There was a period of ten days for mourning and during this time public meetings or elections were not permitted.

Pausanias accounted how after Leonidas’s bones were brought back to Sparta, games were held in which only Spartiates could participate and the Spartans would make speeches over his remains, these took place annually.
Cultural Life

PAUL - “...our knowledge of Spartan art and archeology and their chronological development remains far from perfect”

Art:
In the 7th C BC, Sparta was like most Greek states, displaying interest in poetry and music:
   ➔ Excavations have revealed that Sparta, at this time, imported:
      ➔ ivory and scarabs from Egypt
      ➔ amber from northern Greece
      ➔ gold from Lybia
   ➔ The Perioeci were renowned for their skills in carving ivory and bone
   ➔ Laconia pottery was highly sought after and exported throughout the Mediterranean

Sculpture
   • Can be found at Spartan shrines
    painted vases
     • Can compare with the rest of Greece
     • Famous ivory carving shows a Spartan mother waving soldiers off to war

Bronzes
   • Carthage acknowledges that the Spartan bronze workers were the best in the world
   • Of such high quality they were viewed as diplomatic gifts

Lycurgus in his great rhetra did not ban the arts, they continued but not with the same artistic flare as before. The evidence of this is that only mediocre pottery exited pottery, bronzes and carving existed in the fourth C BC and there is a distinct lack of variety, this could be the course of a change in society, not a ban.

FITZHARDINGE established that Spartan culture did not vanish suddenly, it eroded slowly

Architecture:
The physical remains of architecture in Sparta are limited, Pausanius offers a description of individual buildings

Amyklaion
   • A shrine dedicated to Apollo and Hyakinthos
   • Carvings of lotus flowers
   • Many resources were spent on the shrine- indicating how important these gods were

Menelaion

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Shrine to Helen and Menelaus
Overlooked Mt Tygetus and the Eurotus valley
Had a square step pyramid structure in the style of a herb shrine

Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia
Close to Eurotus River
Had temple close to an altar
Archeologists have discovered that the altar contained the ashes of sacrifices

Writing and literature

Alcman
- Wrote songs for Spartan boys and girls to sing at festivals
- Poetry is full of nature
- Depicts Sparta as a care free, beauty-loving society

Tyrtaeus
- Urged the Spartans into battle
- Propaganda poetry
- Wrote patriotic and martial poems that were sung by Spartans marching into battle

Greek writers views of Sparta
The Spartans left very few written records, they were secretive and did not encourage visitors. They were known as masters of deception and propaganda. They lied about their past, claiming their way of life

Herodotus
- Wrote during a time where relations between Athens and Sparta were tense, he was pro-Athenian in his work although not openly anti-Spartan
- Praised them Spartans for their heroic stand at Thermopylae
- Criticized the constitution

‘...fighting singly they are as good as any, but fighting together they are the best soldiers in the world’

Thucydides
- Athenian general, but was exiled- during this time he wrote of the war between Athens and Sparta
- Wrote when Athens and Sparta were at war and the whole of Greece was ever on one side or the other
- Wrote from personal observations from a generals perspective
- Tried to be objective- attempting to differentiate between Sparta’s reputation and real events

‘If Lakedaimon ever laid waste and there remained only the foundations of temples and the public buildings, those born into the world of the far future would find it difficult to believe that the power of Sparta had deserved it’s reputation’

Xenophon
- Lived among the Spartans after being exiled from Greece
- Made little attempt to analyze the Spartan way of life
- Admired the Spartans- his works were an attempt to show the rest of Greece how Spartan supremacy was inevitable, and possibly to justify his defection from Athens
- Created a Myth of Spartans which later writers continued

‘I must admire this legislator, Lycurgus, and hold him to be one of the wisest of mankind’
Aristotle
- Lived in Athens during a time where Sparta was changing and declining
- Wrote about Spartan politics
- Disliked the Spartans- treated them with a mix of respect and severe criticism (especially Spartan women)

>And so long as they were at war, their power was preserved, but when they had attained an empire they fell; for of the arts of peace they knew nothing...<

Pausanius
- Described many buildings- providing a useful supplement to the lack of surviving archeology
- Drew on many other sources
- Provides a background and explanation for early Sparta

Plutarch
- Responsible for the most extensive writings available to modern historians
- Drew on many other sources and tried to make sense of them
Everyday Life

The Spartans organized every aspect of their lives with a view to the community rather than the individual e.g.

- when a party of men went hunting it was a practice to leave any left over food from meals in jars and to leave it in some obvious but protected place, for another party that may pass that way
- Any Spartan could use any Helot if he needed him regardless of who’s Kleros he was attached to- this was also applied to hunting hounds and horses

Daily life and leisure activities

- Traditional song and dance were used as leisure activities and also in religious festivals
- Spartans would go out hunting, to get enough food to take to the Syssition, but it was also considered a leisure activity- the Spartans hunted on foot with hounds (famous throughout Greece for their keen scent)
- Occasional games were made no with no rules, such as a ball game, with the aim of keeping position of the ball- these were used to build up resistance and to keep people healthy
- Chariot racing and horse riding
- Women participated in athletics until they were married

Music

- Dancing to the flute or Lyre by boys and girls
- Religious dances

PLUTACH ‘had a life and spirit in them that enflames and possessed men’s minds with an enthusiasm.’

Food

- PLUTACH recalls the reaction of a visitor who ate a bowl of Zamos ‘now I understand why the Spartans do not fear death’

Most of the food produced came from the Kleros

- Radishes
- Celery
- Cheese
- There was also game killed in regular hunts
- Barley
- Beans
- Olives
- Fruit
- Wild Boar
- Wine
- Bread
- Hears

Clothing

- Adult Spartan Women- wore clothing similar to other Greek women, except their peplos was split at the side to allow ease of movement- this earned them the name ‘thy showers’
- Young Spartan Girls- short dresses or tunics with a top that exposed one breast
- Spartan men- are usually depicted dressed for battle, or sometimes they were dressed for hunting wearing a short tunic

Marriage customs:

- According to PLUTACH girls were married when, ‘when they were in their prime and fully mature’ this was probably in their late teens. Compared to girls in Athens who married in their early teens
- Expected to marry within their own social class
- The purpose of a marriage was to create children

Ceremony-
• The women would eat cakes in the shape of breasts
• A man would choose a bride and capture her
• A.J. Ball states that Spartan mothers ‘did, have some say in whom their daughters would marry. The actual capture was probably just a symbolic act’
• According to Plutarch the bridesmaid would then shaved the girl’s head off and dressed her in men’s clothing. Then laying her down in the dark room, the man would come in, sleep with her and leave directly after to go back to the barracks. The girls may have been dressed as men because:
  o It implies chastity
  o It may have been to ‘ease’ the bridegroom into relationships with women rather than men
• The ceremony was kept secret until they had a child was produced, the time before that was ‘trial marriage’
  o Married life-
• Men slept at the barracks until they were 30, men visited their wives secretly, this heightened sexual desire which was thought to produce healthy babies
• Men would often lend out their wife to another man who had an infertile wife
  o Occupations
    o All Spartans were soldiers- their economy and social system was structured so they did not have to concern themselves with trade or industry, they could focus on war
The Downfall of Sparta

The Peloponnesian League

Features of the league:
• Included all Peloponnesian states except Argos and Achaea
• Constructed in purpose to questions of war
• Recognized the autonomy and territorial integrity of it’s members
• Opposed Tyrannies (ruled by one person) and favored oligarchy (ruled by a few)

Organization:
• Council of allies met when questions of war arose
• The assembly of Satiates representing Lacadonia was head of the alliance
• Each state had one vote and the majority vote was binding on all members
• Sparta kept the interests of allies at hand and other states did not always agree but were loyal to Sparta

Stable and solid organization

Purpose:
• Defend Greek against the Persians in 480 BC;

The Peloponnesian war: 431-404 BC

Athens fought against Sparta and their allies

404BC- Spartan blockade; Athens surrounded

After Sparta tool over Athens empire, Sparta became hegemon (leader) of Greece

Sparta- although victorious- after the war was on the brink of decline

Victory brought internal decay:
• Individuals amassed gold and many grew at expense of their peers (many lost land and so were unable to pay their dept to the syssition)
  • The amount of inferiors increased
• Wealth corrupted many of the Spartans who lost their frugal ways
• The amount of inferiors increased
• Inferiors, helots and Perioeci became a constant threat to Spartan society
  • PLUTARCH recounts the exile of Cylippus, the Spartan war commander in Sicily, he stole a large amount of ‘Attica Owls’ rather than handing them over to the ephors. He hid them under the tiles of his roof. ‘He tarnished his brilliant reputation by mean and inoble actions’

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Example of corruption - Pausanias (not the writer):

- According to Thucydides he 'Could no longer bear to live in the ordinary way'.
- Examples of this:
  - Inscribed a plaque promoting his own role in the battle (compare to Leonedas)
  - Plutarch and Thucydides comment on his arrogant behavior. Plutarch - 'He treated his own allies harshly and arrogantly and scattered insults far and wide."
  - Adopted Persian ways and communicated with the Persians
  - Unauthorized departure for Hellespont, the ephors recalled him- he assumed he could use bribery on his return to clear his name, but on his return:
    - He was thrown into prison, but released when not enough evidence was found against him
    - The ephors arranged for him to confess- they herd his confession and came to arrest him
    - When approaching him in the street one of the ephors gave him a sign to show he was in trouble
    - Pausanias fled to a small room in a temple
    - The ephors gave orders for him to be walled in and for sentries to be placed around the temple
    - When he was on the brink of death they brought him out and buried him

Battle of Leuctra

- The battle -
  - Note: by this time the Spartan army was made up largely of Perioecia and allies
  - Sparta came into conflict with Thebes
  - The Spartan king lead an attack on Thebes, at Leuctra on Theban soil
  - The Spartans outnumbered the Thebens
  - The Thebens used a new strategy: a slanting phalanx
  - This and a cavalry attack disoriented the Spartans who were not used to change
  - Due to their conservative nature the Spartan kings did not alter Spartan strategies
    - The Spartans were defeated, loosing more than half of their Spartiates including their king
• The Thebans invaded Sparta and freed the Messinians/Helots
  o
• Sparta was no longer a major power in Greece:
  o Lost so many Spartiates in battle and had a low birth rate
  o Without the Helots their economic foundation was destroyed
  o Throughout Greece pro-Sparta oligarchy’s were replaced with anti-Spartan democracies
  o
  o Other reasons for Sparta’s decline
• ARISTOTLE blames Sparta’s decline on the decline of its population, its narrowness and militarism as well as the power held by women
• Increased gap between the rich and poor
• Failure to adapt to change
  o Myths about Sparta
  o
  o Myth the Spartan system was created to stop a helot revolt
  o
  o JANE and BRUCE DENNERT - ‘...to isolate a single cause for so significant event are unsound historically’
  o
  o Fear of a Helot revolt was one factor leading to the Spartan system but not the only factor, for example:
    • The rise of Athens
    • Development of hoplite warfare
    o
    o Myth about Sparta’s cultural disappearance in its history was sudden
    o
    o LF FITZHARDINGE establishes that this change was a slow one
    o
    o Exaples:
    • Painted Pottery from c. 630-500 BC
    • Terracotta from c. 650
    o
    o Myth of Sparta equality
      (mentioned above)