

THE SETTLEMENT ORGANIZATION OF SPARTA, FROM THE BRONZE AGE TO THE ROMAN PERIOD

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Introduction

The settlement organization of ancient Sparta has long remained something of an enigma.¹ For example, the *Companion to Ancient Sparta*, edited by Anton Powell and published in 2018, runs to 836 pages but has no chapter on Sparta as an urban center and does not include a single plan of the city. Compare that to the significantly shorter *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens*, edited by Jenifer Neils and Dylan Rogers and published in 2021, which includes eight chapters on the urban fabric of Athens and multiple plans of the city.

That discrepancy can be attributed to lacunae in both the literary and archaeological sources for the settlement organization of Sparta. The literary evidence bearing on the layout of Sparta is, given the city's importance, limited, and even the sources we do have are less informative than one might hope. The sole extant, detailed description of the city of Sparta – that provided by Pausanias² – has been an ongoing source of frustration for modern scholars. Pausanias' movements through the urban fabric are difficult to reconstruct, and, other than a handful of sites such as the sanctuaries of Athena Chalkioikos and Artemis Orthia, most of the architectural features he mentions cannot be connected to extant

1 The term 'Sparta' is used here to refer to the urban center, located in the geographic region of Lakonia, that was the primary urban center of the *polis* of Lakedaimon. On the complicated terminology pertaining to Sparta and associated geographic and political entities, see Cartledge 2002: 4-5; Shipley 2004: 570-71.

2 Paus. 3.11-18.

remains.³ Moreover, the relatively late date at which Pausanias visited Sparta means that we cannot blithely apply his description of Sparta to earlier periods.

The archaeological evidence is problematic because of the nature of the relevant excavations and how the results have been published. As will become apparent, there is a great deal of material evidence for the settlement organization of Sparta, but it has been uncovered and published in a piecemeal fashion over a long period of time and has, as a result, been underutilized.

This article presents the results of a research program intended to enhance our knowledge of the realities of the city of Sparta. We have built a spatially enabled database linked to Geographic Information System (GIS) software to compile, analyze, and visualize all the finds from excavations in Sparta that have been treated in excavation reports and other scholarly publications. We are, as a result, in a position to offer a more detailed diachronic history of the settlement organization of Sparta than has heretofore been possible.⁴

The text that follows is divided into ten parts. We begin with the topography of, and major landmarks in, Sparta and then turn to the history of excavations in Sparta and research on its topography. Next, we discuss the data used in our study and the format of the GIS database that we constructed before presenting a description of the settlement organization of Sparta during six different chronological phases: the Bronze Age and Submycenaean period, the Protogeometric and Geometric periods, the Archaic period, the Classical period, the Hellenistic period, and the Roman period.

The scholarly consensus on dates for those periods within the bounds of Lakonia is shown in Table 1.⁵

3 See, for example, Gengler 2008; Sanders 2009; Tosti 2017.

4 We discuss the results of this program of research in another article – Christesen and Kramer Forthcoming – that focuses on the process of constructing the GIS database and methodologies for leveraging its capacities. There is a certain degree of overlap between the introductory sections of the two articles, but the focus here is on what the database can tell us about the settlement organization of Sparta rather than the database itself.

5 All dates in the table and in the text as a whole are BCE unless otherwise specified. We have, in the interests of brevity, not specified CE for obviously modern dates such

Table 1: Periods and Chronology in Lakonia

<i>period</i>	<i>dates</i>
Early Helladic	c. 3100-c. 2000
Middle Helladic	c. 2000-c.1600
Late Helladic	c. 1600-c. 1100
Protogeometric	c. 950-c. 775
Geometric	c. 775-c. 650 ⁶
Archaic	c. 650-480
Classical	480-323
Hellenistic	323-31
Roman	31 BCE-c. 600 CE

The gap in the middle of the table responds to ongoing difficulties in establishing a ceramic chronology in Lakonia for the period between approximately 1100 and 950. There was a local Submycenaean style, but, due to a paucity of stratified deposits, it is not clear when it came into and went out of production. In addition, it is possible that the earliest Lakonian Protogeometric ceramics should be dated to the late 11th or early tenth century.⁷ Those issues are well beyond the scope of this article, not least because there is very little Submycenaean material from Sparta.

as 1805. Greek words and names have here been transliterated in such a way as to be as faithful as possible to original spellings while taking into account established usages for well-known individuals and places.

- 6 The suggested dates for the beginning and end of the Lakonian Geometric pottery sequence vary somewhat, and there is some discussion as to whether the final phase (690-650) should be classified as sub-Geometric rather than Geometric (Boardman 1963; Coulson 1985; Pipili 2018). The date for the start of the Archaic period given here is linked to the end of the Geometric pottery sequence and the beginning of the orientalizing pottery style known as Lakonian 1. This chronology, which diverges from the starting date of c. 750 or c. 700 typically assigned to the Archaic period, reflects the fact that the discussion here relies on evidence from archaeological excavations in Sparta that in turn rely heavily on pottery sequences for dating purposes.

- 7 Demakopoulou 2009; Vlachou 2015: 114 and *passim*.

The chronological end point of our analysis is not precise because of the blurred boundaries between ‘Late Roman’ and ‘Early Byzantine’ material and because there is no firm scholarly consensus on the dates that should be assigned to either of those periods.⁸ We follow the Lakonia Survey in setting the end date for the Late Roman period at c. 600 CE.⁹

Two notes on the parameters of our analysis are in order. First, our description of the settlement organization of Sparta relies heavily on archaeological data. We bring in epigraphic and literary texts at some points, but we make no attempt to reconcile Pausanias’ description of Sparta with the archaeological evidence.¹⁰ Second, we limit our observations to the settlement organization of Sparta, the topic that our research program most directly illuminates. The settlement organization of Sparta should be placed in the larger context of the history of the region of Lakonia and of the *polis* of Lakedaimon. That would, however, require addressing a series of complicated questions pertaining to the origins and expansion of Lakedaimon, something that we expect to undertake in future publications.

Topography and Major Landmarks

Sparta lies on the west bank of the Eurotas River, which flows through a valley defined by the Taygetos mountains to the west and the Parnon mountains to the east (see Figure 1). Three rivers create natural boundaries for the city: the Mousga to the north, the Magoulitsa to the south and southwest, and the Eurotas to the east (see Figure 2). The ancient city center lay on the Palaiokastro plateau. The space within the city was broken up by hills that were neither high nor large but which, because of their steep sides, influenced movement patterns and road networks. The most important of those hills for present purposes are Gerokomeiou and

8 See, for example, Stewart 2013: 36 with Table 3.

9 Cavanagh 1996-2002.

10 There have been many such attempts (see the sources cited in n. 3), with significant but limited results. We do not believe that the newly available archaeological evidence, on which this article is based, makes possible substantial improvements in reading Pausanias against the archaeological evidence.

Xenia, to the south of the Palaiokastro plateau, and Evangelistria, alongside the Magoulitsa. Other than the Eurotas, the ancient names for the various features topographical features of Sparta are unknown, and all the standard nomenclature is modern.

The city was protected by two fortification walls, one constructed in the Hellenistic period (#1 in Figure 3) and another, smaller circuit (typically called the Late Roman fortification wall; #2 in Figure 3) that was built around the Palaiokastro plateau sometime in the fifth century CE. We know from Pausanias that the primary feature of the acropolis was the Sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos, the location of which has, on the basis of epigraphic evidence, been securely established on a low hill (236 masl) at the western edge of the Palaiokastro plateau (#3).¹¹ A massive theater, built in the Augustan period and typically called the Roman Theater (#4), was positioned on the slopes below the acropolis. The known structures on the Palaiokastro plateau include an Archaic stoa (sometimes called Christou's Stoa after the excavator; #5), a stoa built in the second century CE (typically referred to as the Roman Stoa, #6), and a semi-circular terrace wall that was built in the Archaic period and maintained for centuries thereafter (typically called the Round Building, #7).

The west bank of the Eurotas was the site of several cult places: the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (#8), a heroon (typically referred to as the Heroon of Astrabakos or the Astrabakos monument, #9), a stone platform (typically referred to as the Eurotas, Lycurgus, or Great Altar, #10), and the Stavropoulos sanctuary (named after the former owner of the plot in which it is located, #11). Another sanctuary (typically referred to as the Achilleion, #12) was located just to the north of the city.¹² Within the city itself, a small, rectangular structure (#13) was probably a cult building,

11 Paus. 3.17.1-4.

12 The terminology for the Astrabakos monument, the Eurotas/Lycurgus/Great Altar, and the Achilleion are all based on associations made between physical remains and cult sites mentioned by Pausanias. That terminology is retained here in the interest of simplicity, with the caveat that those associations are speculative and cannot be confirmed from epigraphic or other finds.



Figure 1: Sparta and its environs.

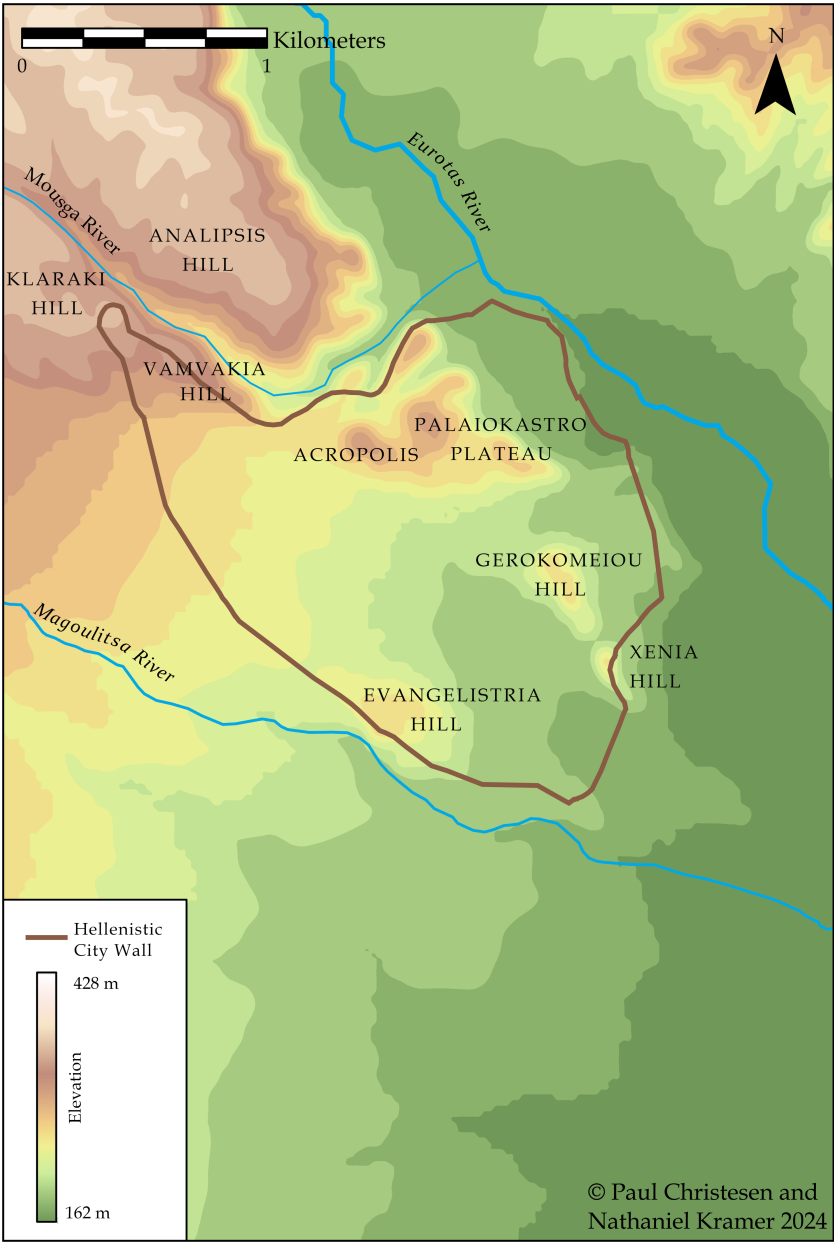


Figure 2: Topography of Sparta.

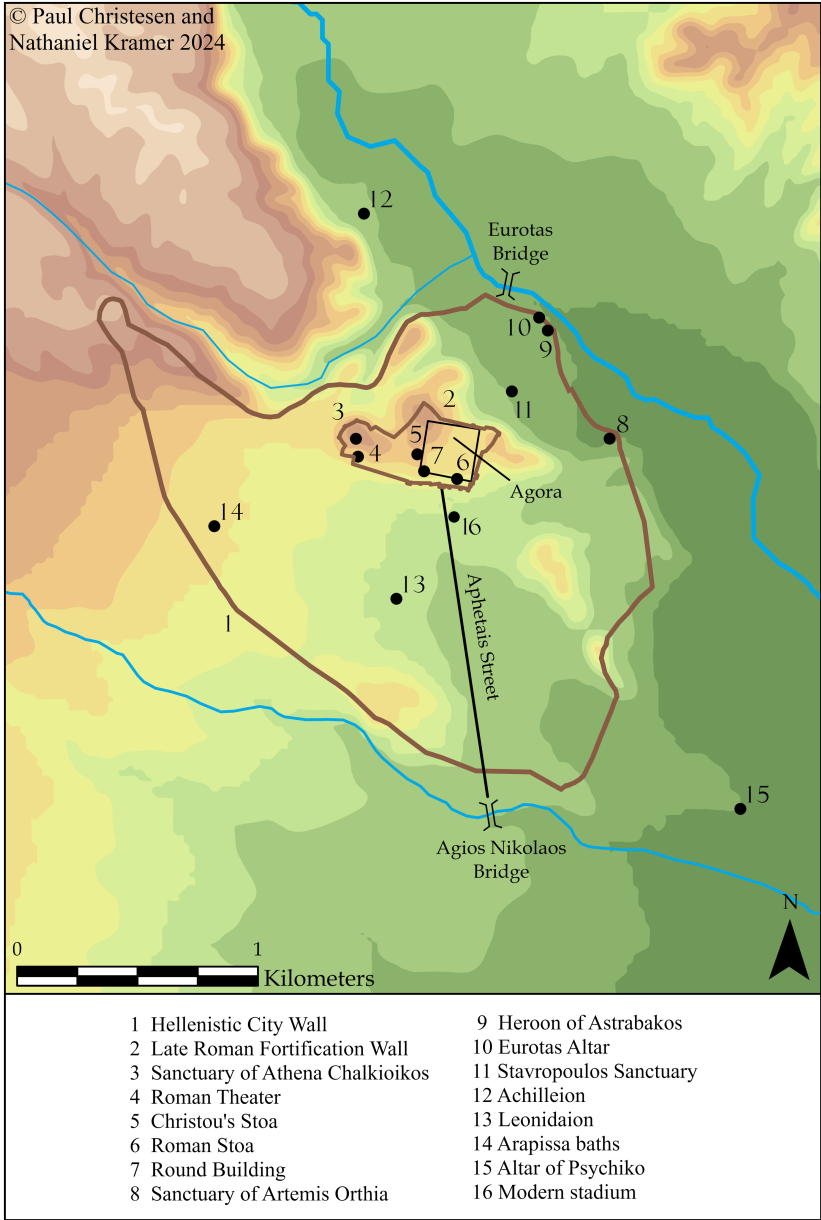


Figure 3: Landmarks in Sparta.

but is typically referred to as the Leonidaion based on the almost certainly erroneous belief that it is the tomb of King Leonidas. A Roman bathing complex (#14, typically called the Arapissa baths, because they were associated with a so-named figure in local legend) was located on the west side of the ancient city. The remains of a Roman burial monument (typically called the Altar of Psychiko, #15) are located in the south-eastern corner of the city.

The current scholarly consensus is that the city of Sparta was divided into four *ōbai* (villages or urban wards) – Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoia, Pitana – that were disposed around the west, south, and east sides of the Palaiokastro plateau.¹³ The evidentiary basis for that consensus is less firm than it might appear, and, as we will see, the available archaeological evidence does nothing to support it.

The location of the agora in Sparta has been the subject of much discussion. The literary sources suggest that the agora of Sparta was already by the Classical period an extensive space. Xenophon claims that more than 4,000 people could fit inside the agora, and Pausanias describes nearly 20 structures in it.¹⁴ However, the literary sources do not provide any certain indications about the precise location of the agora, and not one of the sites in the agora mentioned by Pausanias can be definitively connected with extant physical remains.

Pausanias begins his description of Sparta with the agora, after having entered the city from the north. Though Pausanias does not explicitly describe his path into the city, it seems probable that the agora was at the northern edge of the city. Later, he mentions going west from the agora and passing only one significant monument (the tomb of Brasidas) before reaching the theater.¹⁵ Two probable locations for the agora have been proposed from this information: (1) the area to the southeast of the Roman Theater, roughly around or in the modern stadium (#16 in Figure 3), and (2) the area to the east of the Roman Theater, on the Palaiokastro plateau. The evidence for the latter location is much more compelling,

13 See below, in the section on Sparta in the Classical period, for more on the *ōbai* in Sparta.

14 Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.5; Paus. 3.11.2–18.5.

15 Paus. 3.14.1.

not least because multiple excavations have been conducted in and around the stadium, and nothing indicating a commercial or public use of that area has been discovered.¹⁶

On the other hand, there are two stoas on the Palaiokastros plateau, precisely the structures one would expect to find in an agora. The Roman Stoa runs E-W along the southern edge of the plateau, while Christou's Stoa is oriented N-S and is situated where the Palaiokastros plateau transitions from a gentle slope to being nearly level (see Figure 16b).¹⁷ The space between the two stoas is occupied by the Round Building,¹⁸ and the two stoas are set at near-perfect right angles to each other. The two stoas, in conjunction with the Round Building, probably defined the southwestern corner of the agora. Andrea Baudini made the plausible argument that the agora extended to the northern and eastern edges of the Palaiokastros plateau and that the Late Roman fortification wall was built at the edge of the agora.¹⁹ If Baudini is correct, the agora in the Roman period occupied a square space measuring c. 200 m on a side. If there was an earlier agora located elsewhere in the city, little or no trace of it has survived.

The extant evidence indicates that the main bridge over the Eurotas in Sparta was located close to the modern bridge in the northeastern part of the city.²⁰ No remains of an ancient bridge have been found, but there do exist two piers from a Medieval bridge, situated just north of the modern bridge, that was constructed in the 11th century CE. Excavations carried out just to the southwest of the modern bridge uncovered a nearly 70 m long stretch of a major road from the Hellenistic and Roman periods; extrapolating the line of that road brings one almost precisely to the site of the Medieval bridge, suggesting that it had an ancient predecessor.²¹

16 Kourinou 2000: 104-8 n. 322; Baudini 2006: 22-23.

17 Paus. 3.11.1-2, 3.14.1; Waywell, Wilkes, Bailey et al. 1993; Waywell & Wilkes 1994; Waywell, Wilkes, Bland et al. 1997; Del Basso 2022.

18 Crosby 1893; Greco, Vasilogambrou & Voza 2009; Voza & Greco 2016.

19 Baudini 2006.

20 Xen. *Hell.* 5.27; Kourinou 2000: 78-84.

21 Maltezou 2011; Tsouli 2014. Wace, followed by Bölte and Armstrong, argued that the main bridge over the Eurotas was further to the south in antiquity (Wace 1907a: 9; Bölte 1929: 1370-71; Armstrong, Cavanagh & Shipley 1992: 306). The discovery of the

Pausanias makes it clear that the main road in Sparta was called Aphetais Street and that it ran south from the agora to the fortification wall at the southern edge of the city.²² Eleni Kourinou has made a strong case that, when the Late Roman fortification wall was constructed, it preserved the pre-existing lines of communication and that Aphetais Street began roughly where the main gate in the southern part of the Late Roman fortification wall was built. She traces the route of Aphetais Street southward based on the location of the remains of a pre-modern bridge over the Magoulitsa near the Church of Agios Nikolaos and the discovery of inscriptions relating to the cult of Apollo Taenarios, which Pausanias places alongside Aphetais Street.²³

History of Excavations in and Topographical Research on Sparta

A major break in the occupational history of Sparta came in the mid-13th century CE, when the city was abandoned because its inhabitants found it expedient, for reasons of security, to settle near the fortress of Mystras, c. 5 km to the west. A second pivotal moment came in the mid-1830s, when King Otto authorized the creation of a new city on top of the ancient city. The gradual erection of modern structures across much of the area covered by the ancient city has made systematic, large-scale excavation difficult.

Serious discussion of the topography of Sparta began with William Leake and the French Morea Expedition in the early decades of the 19th century CE. Working without the limitation of a modern city built on top of the ancient site, they were able to document the visible monuments. Leake visited Sparta on multiple occasions in the years 1805-1806 and devoted 40 pages of text in *Travels in the Morea* to a detailed description of the city that takes into account the topography, the extant remains, and the ancient textual sources. His published plan of the city (see Figure

long stretch of wide road leading to the proposed site of the ancient bridge makes that view untenable.

22 Paus. 3.12.5-8, cf. Livy 34.38.5; IG V.1.210-12.

23 Kourinou 2000: 131-39.

4) includes not only visible structures, but also the ‘conjectural position’ of the *ōbai*, other structures known solely from literary sources such as the tombs of the Eurypontid kings, and the possible routes of major thoroughfares in the ancient city. Leake showed a remarkably good understanding of the site; for example, he offered some astute speculation on the position of the acropolis and agora.²⁴

The report of the French Morea expedition on Sparta is more richly illustrated (nine pages of drawings accompany 20 pages of text) than Leake’s account, but also much less thorough and analytical about the layout of the ancient city. The members of the French team evinced more interest in sculpture and epigraphy (14 of the 20 pages of text are dedicated to inscriptions) than anything else.²⁵

The first formally organized archaeological excavations in Sparta were carried out by Ludwig Ross, after the creation of the modern city was authorized but before actual construction work began. The scope of Ross’ work was restricted by the limited funds at his disposal.²⁶ Very little was done in the way of archaeological exploration of the ancient city from the 1840s through the 1880s. The first formally organized archaeological excavations in Sparta after those of Ross were carried out by the American Charles Waldstein, who spent two seasons excavating the Round Building in the early 1890s.²⁷ Some topographical studies were published in the 1890s, but the authors in question contented themselves primarily with attempts to connect Pausanias’ account of the ancient city to the known topography and visible remains.²⁸

In 1903, the Greek government gave the British School at Athens rights to excavate in Lakonia.²⁹ In 1906, a small team of British archaeologists began excavating in Sparta. R.C. Bosanquet oversaw excavations for one year before being superseded by R.M. Dawkins, who was assisted, among others, by A.J.B. Wace, Guy Dickins, H.J.W. Tillyard, Ramsay Traquair, and A.M. Woodward. The British team conducted excavations

24 Leake 1830: vol. 1: 124–38, 144–87; vol. 2: 532–34; Macgregor Morris 2009.

25 Blouet 1833: 61–83.

26 Ross 1841; Moustaka 2005; Matalas 2017.

27 Waldstein 1892; Waldstein & Meader 1893; Waldstein 1894.

28 Stein 1890; Nestorides 1892; Crosby 1893.

29 For a detailed overview of the work of the British School in Lakonia, see Catling 1998.

in the Sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos, the Roman Theater, the Arapissa baths, the Roman Stoa, the Eurotas Altar, the Heroon of Astrabakos, and the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia.³⁰ The British planned to excavate widely in the city, but Artemis Orthia produced so many finds that the work there absorbed the majority of the available resources.

Despite the remarkable array of objects uncovered at the Orthia sanctuary, Dawkins and his colleagues were less than impressed with the results of their work in Sparta, and they terminated their excavations in the city after the 1910 campaign. The preliminary reports filed each year in the *Annual of the British School at Athens* (ABSA) remained the only published work on the British excavations in Sparta until 1929, when a single volume, edited by Dawkins, on the Orthia excavations appeared.³¹

The work done by British archaeologists from 1906 to 1910 resulted in important steps forward in our knowledge of the settlement organization of Sparta. The British team, working with an Austrian surveyor, Wassily Sejk, produced the first detailed, accurate plan of the topography of Sparta, the course of its fortification walls, and the location of some key structures (see Figure 5). Sejk's plan has remained to the present day the best available map of Sparta and forms the basis of the reference maps used and published by the Greek Archaeological Service.³² However, the aforementioned limitations on the British excavations left much of the city untouched.³³

A.M. Woodward, upon becoming director of the British School at Athens in 1923, decided to resume excavations in Sparta in 1924. Woodward's team consisted largely of women, including his wife, Jocelyn M.

30 On the Sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos, see Dickins 1907; Dickins 1908. On the Roman Theater, see Dickins 1906b. On the Arapissa baths, see Wace 1906b. On the Roman Stoa, see Traquair 1906. On the Eurotas Altar, see Dickins 1906a. On the Heroon of Astrabakos, see Wace 1906a.

31 Dawkins 1929d.

32 On Sejk's plan, see Wace 1907a.

33 Dickins 1906c; Wace & Hasluck 1909.

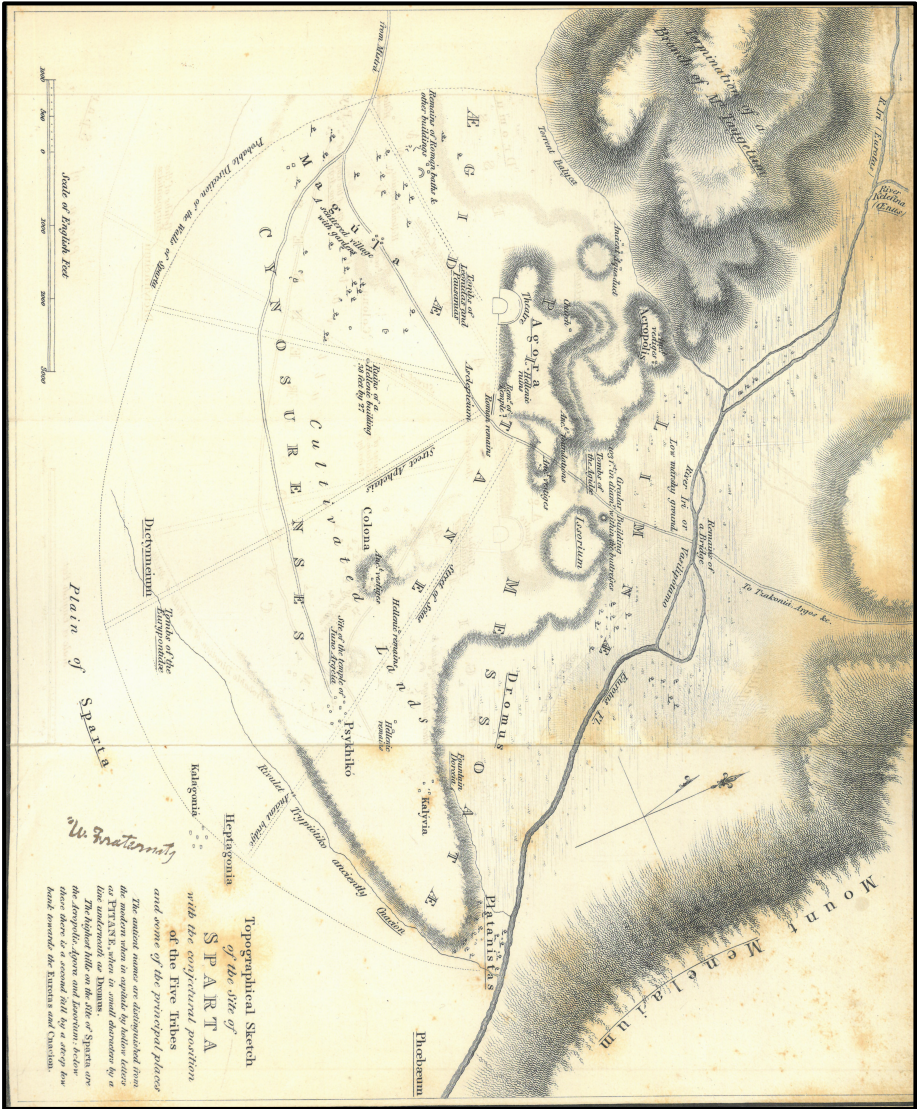


Figure 4: Leake's plan of Sparta.

Woodward (née Pybus), Margaret B. Hobling, and Winifred Lamb. This round of excavations, which continued through 1928, focused on the theater and the Sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos. The preliminary reports

filed in the *ABSA* are the only published accounts of this round of excavations.³⁴ When Woodward stepped down as director, the British work in Sparta ceased for an extended period, though Richard Nicholls did carry out a brief excavation in 1949 in advance of the construction of the modern stadium. In 1988, members of the British School, under the leadership of Geoffrey Waywell and John Wilkes, began four seasons of work on the Roman Stoa. Waywell and Wilkes subsequently turned their attention to the theater, where they excavated between 1992 and 1998. Further excavations were conducted in the theater in 2007-2008 as a *synergasia* of the British School and the Greek Archaeological Service to investigate Late Roman and Byzantine use of the space.³⁵

British excavations from 1924 onward thus concentrated on sites that had already been excavated between 1906 and 1910. The resulting lack of anything significant in the way of new evidence for the layout of the city meant that scholarship on the settlement organization of Sparta produced between the end of the British excavations in the early 20th century and 1995 provided little in the way of new insights.³⁶

Our knowledge of those portions of ancient Sparta not excavated by British archaeologists derives almost entirely from rescue excavations carried out by members of the Greek Archaeological Service. For an extended period, only a limited portion of the modern city had any significant degree of archaeological protection (see Figure 6), and few excavations were carried out in areas of the city that were not archaeologically protected.

That situation changed for the better in 1994-1995 when the Greek government made the entire area of the ancient city an archaeologically protected zone. This decision was taken during a period when there was quite a bit of construction activity in Sparta.³⁷ The result was a sudden,

34 See Woodward 1925: 116-273; Woodward 1926; Woodward 1927.

35 Cook and Nicholls 1950; Waywell, Wilkes, Bailey et al. 1993; Waywell & Wilkes 1994; Waywell & Wilkes 1995; Waywell, Wilkes, Bland et al. 1997; Waywell & Wilkes 1999; Waywell 2002. See also <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=311>; <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=879>.

36 See, for example, Bölte 1929; Stibbe 1989; Armstrong, Cavanagh & Shipley 1992; Waywell 1999.

37 Tsouli 2012.



Figure 5: British map of Sparta, 1906. From Wace 1907a.

sharp increase in the number of rescue excavations conducted in Sparta (see Table 2).

Table 2: Number of Rescue Excavations in Sparta
Reported in the *Archaiologikon Deltion*

years	number of excavations
1960s	19
1970s	26
1980s	42
1990s	165
2000s	90
2010s	135

Those excavations produced an assemblage of evidence that made possible major advances in our understanding of the settlement organization of Sparta. It is not coincidental that what Graham Shipley called ‘the most important contribution to the topography of Sparta since the British campaigns of the early 20th century’ – Eleni Kourinou’s *Σπάρτη: Συμβολή στη μνημειακή τοπογραφία της* – was published in 2000.³⁸ Kourinou drew on newly available archaeological and epigraphic evidence as well as the literary sources and finds from earlier excavations to study a wide range of features of the ancient city.

Greek archaeologists who have worked in Sparta have been responsible for much of the scholarship on Sparta’s settlement organization published in the last 20 years.³⁹ That scholarship takes the form of articles, published in journals and conference proceedings, that typically address specific issues arising from rescue excavations conducted by the author(s) in question. There has, in addition, been ongoing discussion of the locations and significance of sanctuaries and votive deposits.⁴⁰ Fi-

38 Kourinou 2000; Shipley 2003: 132.

39 See, for example, Raftopoulou 2002; Steinhauer 2009; Vasilogambrou, Tsouli & Maltezou 2018.

40 See, for example, Flouris 2000; Pavlides 2023.

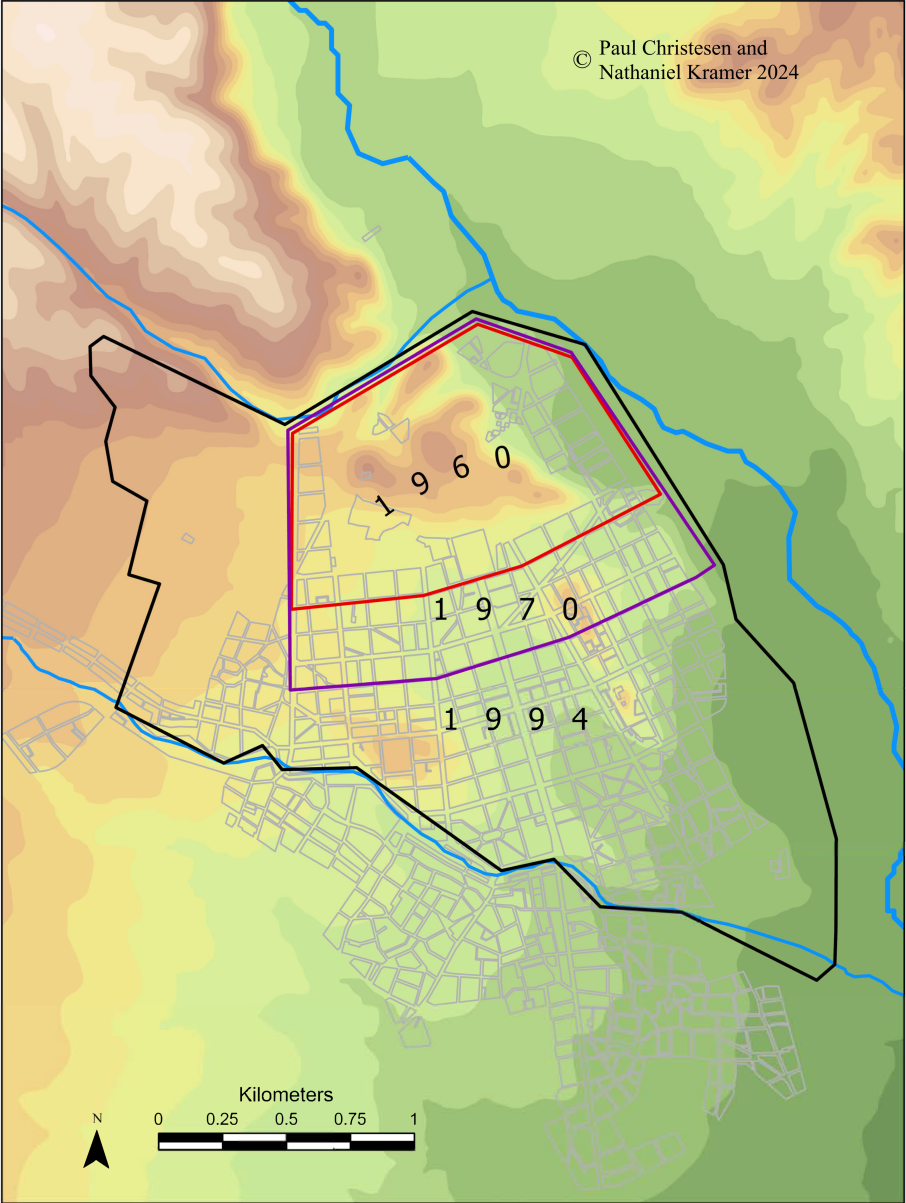


Figure 6: Extent of archaeological protection in Sparta.

nally, attempts to study the settlement organization of Sparta based on Pausanias have continued.⁴¹

One of the present authors, as part of a previous research project, compiled the first complete catalog of intramural burials in Sparta and published that material in an article that appeared in the *ABSA* in 2019.⁴² That article included some discussion of the settlement organization of Sparta, but its scope was limited, both because it took only burial evidence into account and because its visualizations were produced using pre-existing maps and a simple graphics program.

The Data, Its Limitations, and Its Potential

Our analysis of the settlement organization of Sparta is based on data from two main sources: systematic excavations (most of which were conducted under the aegis of the British School at Athens) and rescue excavations (conducted under the aegis of the Greek Archaeological Service). We undertook no fieldwork of any kind in or around Sparta and relied entirely on published reports of archaeological finds, publicly available mapping resources, and mapping resources that we constructed ourselves (see below for details).

The data with which we worked is, in many respects, less than ideal. To begin with, all archaeological contexts suffer from two problems: incompleteness and blurring. The inevitable loss of material from the past requires no discussion here.⁴³ The blurring of archaeological contexts emerged as an important concern starting in the mid-20th century with the work of Robert Ascher and was subsequently most fully addressed by Michael Schiffer.⁴⁴ Schiffer and others highlighted a series of post-depositional processes, both environmental and anthropogenic; the former includes faunalturbation, floralturbation, graviturbation, erosion, and

41 See, for example, Baudini 2006; Gengler 2008; Sanders 2009; Greco 2011; Greco 2016.

42 Christesen 2019.

43 Charles Lyell, writing in the first half of the 19th century, famously compared the fossil record to a census register with missing pages (Frank 1989: 378).

44 See Ascher 1968; Schiffer 1987 as well as the critiques and updates in Binford 1982; Lucas 2022.

sedimentation, while the latter includes re-use, recycling, plowing, and construction (this list is by no means exhaustive). Post-depositional processes not only destroy remnants of the past, but also disperse material that originally came from a single, distinct archaeological context. Objects are distributed over wider areas than they initially occupied, creating ‘smears’ across the fabric of a site or area. When that happens, material that originally came from separate temporal or spatial contexts can be jumbled together, resulting in contaminated fills.

The long, complicated settlement history of Sparta, which includes continuous occupation for centuries, an extended period of abandonment, and modern re-occupation, has heightened the destructive and blurring effects of both environmental and anthropogenic processes. For example, materials were intentionally moved and repurposed, as is evident in the Late Roman fortification wall, which is replete with spolia.⁴⁵ Objects from a single Archaic-period votive deposit from a sanctuary near the Eurotas River may have been dug up and dispersed by construction in the Roman period and subsequently further dispersed by flooding from the Eurotas River and modern construction.

The interpretive challenges created by post-depositional processes are particularly acute in Sparta because of the relative weighting of systematic versus rescue excavation and how the results of both types of excavation have been published. Systematic excavations have been carried out at a limited number of sites in Sparta, and the published reports of those excavations are less detailed than one might wish. For example, the assemblage of finds from Artemis Orthia has never been fully published, and the results of the excavations carried out in the 1920s are known only through preliminary reports.

Much of what we know about ancient Sparta comes from rescue excavations. The locations of rescue excavations and the area they cover are determined largely by modern-day construction projects rather than archaeological considerations, and the requisite work typically needs to take place in a compressed time frame. Leda Costaki has noted that rescue excavations are ‘incidental, fragmented, dispersed, and not initiated

45 Frey 2016: 87-89.

by a research question.⁴⁶ Exploration typically cannot be extended to identify the limits of a site, and multiple rescue excavations may, over years or decades, be carried out at different portions of a single site. As a result of post-depositional processes and the limitations inherent in rescue excavations, it can be difficult to trace 'smears' of objects back to their original context.

The excavations included in this study were all located using a grid of 100 × 100 m tiles (see below for more details). We have chosen to report function by tile rather than engaging in guesswork to reconstruct site boundaries, because we are concerned that visualizations showing hypothetical site boundaries are potentially misleading, while visualizations based on tiles provide a more accurate sense of the data and its limits. While this approach is, in our view, methodologically preferable, it can lead to overestimation of the number of discrete sites of a given type or of a given period.

Sampling is another issue that must be borne in mind when working with data from rescue excavations. Although all archaeological exploration involves some degree of sampling (it is impossible to excavate the entirety of a landscape), archaeologists conducting rescue excavations cannot develop a rational sampling plan, and excavations may be unevenly distributed over a given area. That is certainly the case in Sparta, where the density of rescue excavations is higher in some parts of the city than others (see Figure 7). If, for example, sites of a particular type or date are particularly prevalent in a part of the city that has been, relative to the rest of the city, over-sampled, it is possible to arrive at erroneous conclusions about settlement organization.

The nature of rescue excavation can also exaggerate distortions created by variations in archaeological visibility. The material remains of some periods are more easily recognized than others, most obviously due to variations in the nature and survival of ceramic assemblages and the degree to which those assemblages have been studied. In the same vein, some site types are more easily recognized than others due to the materials that were originally present and how they survive over time. For

46 Costaki 2021: 469. See also Karagiorga-Stathakopoulou 1988: 87 and Parlama 1996: 45–46.

example, residential sites, with a relatively low object density and a prevalence of ephemeral building materials, can be more difficult to recognize than sanctuary sites, which can have a relatively high object density and greater use of durable building materials. Philip Barker has pointed out that in rescue excavations it can, because of limited opportunities to study the surrounding stratigraphy, be particularly difficult to date structures,⁴⁷ and the same issues apply to recognizing more elusive site types. As a result, the data from rescue excavations may be particularly prone to overweight sites of certain periods and types.

Yet another issue is that the results of rescue excavations are typically published in less detail than systematic excavations, and this is certainly true for Sparta. The results of rescue excavations carried out by the Greek Archaeological Service are primarily reported in brief articles in the *Archaiologikon Deltion*. Each article in the *Deltion* focuses on a single site, and reports for all the excavations carried out in a single year appear together. Hence, for example, excavations carried out at adjoining sites in different years are reported separately in different volumes of the *Deltion*, sometimes without any cross-reference.

The evidence from rescue excavations in Sparta thus has to be compiled to fully realize its potential for studying settlement organization. The process of synthesis is, however, complicated because the data has to be 'standardised and homogenously recorded, in order to be usable for various purposes,'⁴⁸ but the excavation reports present the relevant information in a heterogeneous fashion. Individual articles in the *Deltion* vary in length and the level of detail they provide. Some key objects are sometimes illustrated, but full datasets are not presented, making it difficult to assess the validity of statements about site function(s) and chronology. Furthermore, the articles in the *Deltion* are written by many different authors, who follow different practices concerning terminology, quantification, etc. As a result, the process of compilation entails making a long series of decisions that are interpretive and to some degree subjective.

47 Barker 1993: 99-112.

48 Lampraki & Vakkas 2021: 74, describing the work done by the Mapping Ancient Athens project with evidence from rescue excavations in Athens; see below for discussion of that project.

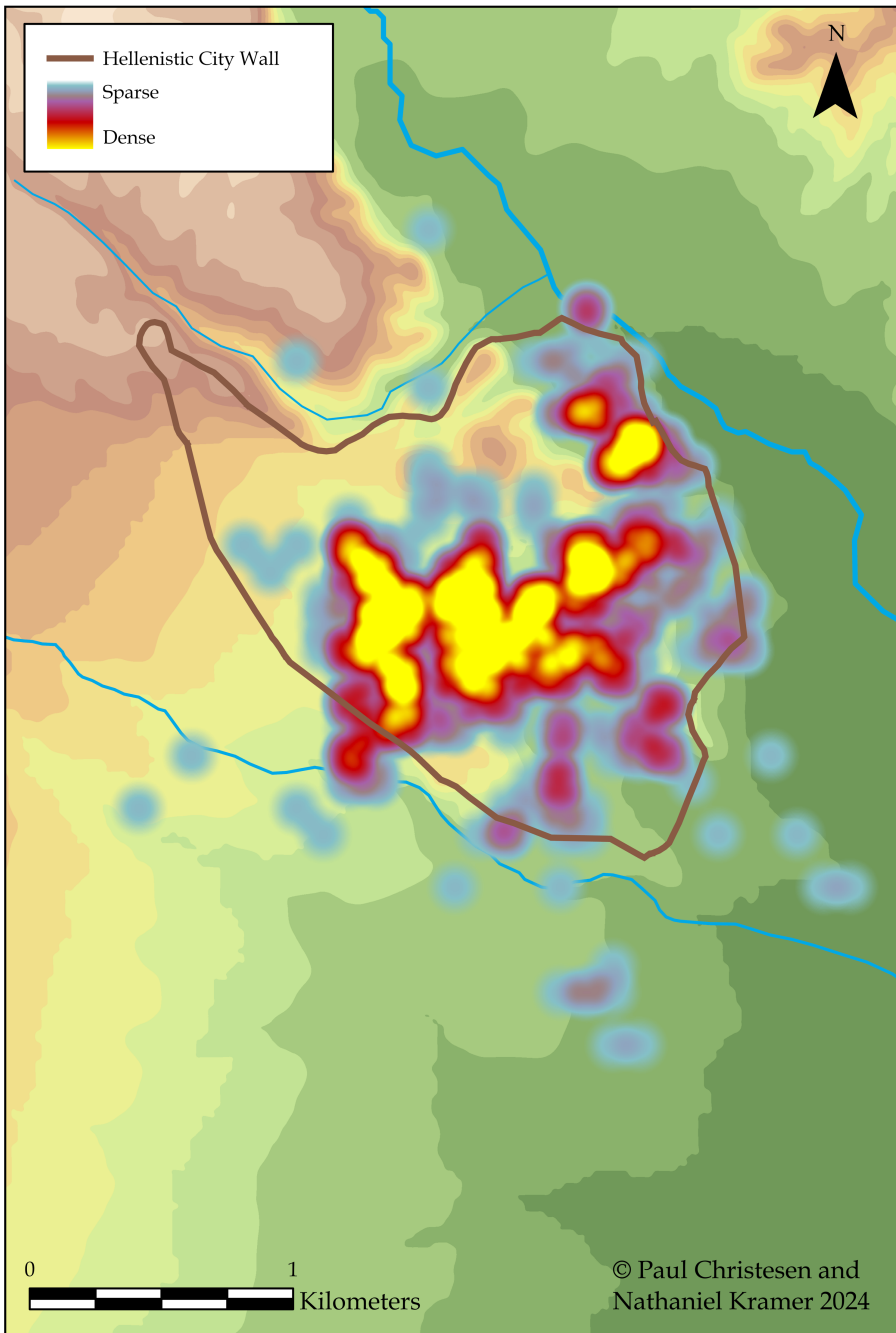


Figure 7: Heat map showing intensity of rescue excavations in Sparta.

All that said, rescue excavations can be an invaluable source of information about settlement organization; as Liana Parlama has observed, ‘rescue excavations contribute to the slow but steady emergence of the physical appearance of ancient Greek cities.’⁴⁹ Because they are constrained in space, time, and collection strategies, rescue excavations can be carried out in much larger numbers than systematic excavations; a significant body of evidence can accumulate when rescue excavations are carried out in large numbers across a considerable proportion of a single ancient settlement. In addition, the more or less random placement of rescue excavations can lead to the inadvertent exploration of archaeological contexts that might otherwise receive less attention than they merit. Anna Lagia has pointed out that ‘often it is on account of rescue excavations that the study of ordinary people and contexts can advance.’⁵⁰

The importance of rescue excavations has increased over time due to the shift from extensive excavation strategies intended to uncover entire sites to intensive strategies intended to address one or more research questions.⁵¹ Systematic excavations that study small areas in great detail are invaluable, but they leave major gaps in our knowledge of a site unless they are pursued over long periods in a limited space (e.g. the American excavations in the Athenian agora). At places where ambitious, long-term programs of systematic excavation have not been carried out, rescue excavations can be the only available means of arriving at some understanding of how the site developed over time. That is particularly the case at sites such as Sparta where the presence of a modern settlement precludes the use of intensive survey techniques.⁵²

The potential value of data from rescue excavations for the study of the settlement organization of an ancient Greek community is perhaps most clear in the case of Athens. Approximately 1,500 rescue excavations have been carried out in the area (6.7 sq km) within and just outside the

49 Parlama 1996: 46.

50 Lagia 2015: 164.

51 See, for example, Haggis 2015: 221–22.

52 As Alcock points out, ‘one basic prerequisite for urban survey is a lack of modern over-burden’ (Alcock 1991: 424).

city's ancient fortifications.⁵³ Much of our knowledge of the basic components of the settlement organization of ancient Athens, for example the course of the fortification wall and the locations of cemeteries, relies heavily on evidence from rescue excavations. Costaki is thus justified in stating that 'rescue excavations have contributed decisively to our knowledge of Athenian topography.'⁵⁴

The value of the evidence from rescue excavations in Athens has been enhanced through the efforts of the Mapping Ancient Athens project, which was carried out between 2018 and 2021 under the direction of Leda Costaki, Vanda Papaefthymiou, Maria Pigaki, and Anna Maria Theodoraki. Costaki and her colleagues were aware of the reservoir of data that had been generated by rescue excavations in Athens, the full potential of which could only be realized through painstaking compilation.⁵⁵ They drew on all the published reports from rescue excavations in Athens to document pre-modern architectural remains, their location within the modern city, and their likely function. The results of the project are presented in a Web GIS map that offers a detailed conspectus of the settlement organization of Athens and how it evolved that would not be possible without the evidence from rescue excavations.⁵⁶ Our project on rescue excavations in Sparta was inspired in part by Mapping Ancient Athens.

We believe that the nearly 500 rescue excavations that have been carried out in Sparta, when studied collectively, make it possible to discern many important features of the settlement organization of the ancient city. We are aware that the limitations of the evidence bring with it limitations on the conclusions it can support: our understanding of ancient Sparta at different periods is inevitably incomplete, because of lacunae in the available evidence; blurry, because original contexts and findspots are not identical in some unknowable percentage of instances; and tentative, because additional finds can always upend earlier conclusions. Moreover, there is an inescapable element of subjectivity in how the available data is assembled and analyzed. What follows is thus not by any

53 Lampraki & Vakkas 2021.

54 Costaki 2021: 472.

55 Lampraki & Vakkas 2021.

56 <https://mappingancientathens.org/en/home/>.

stretch of the imagination the final word on the settlement organization of Sparta, but we are now in a position to come to a deeper understanding of the diachronic development of the layout of the city than has heretofore been possible, and it behooves us to make good use of the evidence at our disposal to that end.

A GIS Database of Published Finds from Sparta

We have devoted much of the past two years to producing the first comprehensive database of reported excavations and related finds from Sparta.⁵⁷ In doing so, we have leveraged the sophisticated capacities offered by GIS systems, which consist of a combination of hardware and software designed to compile, store, display, and visualize data with a spatial component. That data is stored in a database with a tabular structure such that each row contains information about a specific location. The information in the database we compiled was drawn primarily from reports connected to the British excavations of 1906-1910 and 1924-1928 and articles published in the *Archaiologikon Deltion* (up through and including Volume 69 [2014]) about rescue excavations in Sparta.

While GIS databases can contain both qualitative and quantitative information, their analytical and visualization capacities are strongly oriented toward numerical data. Reports in the *Deltion* typically provide good information about architectural features (e.g. walls, mosaics) that can be easily quantified. The situation is more complicated with movable finds, which are sometimes reported with a high degree of numerical precision and sometimes characterized in a more impressionistic fashion (e.g. ‘several terracotta plaques’). In order to maintain as high a degree of consistency as possible, we established a system for translating qualitative descriptions of particular categories of objects into numerical counterparts (see Table 3). Quantities derived from qualitative descriptions are identifiable in the database because they all end in .1.

57 More precisely, if there is a comparable database in existence, we have found no trace of it anywhere.

Table 3: Quantitative Assessments of Qualitative Descriptions

number inputted into database	pottery	common items (e.g. figurines, miniature pottery)	less frequent items (e.g. terracotta plaques)	rare items (e.g. statuary)
5.1	N/A	'a few'	'some'	'were found'
15.1	'a little'	'a good amount'	'fragments'	'many items'
50.1	'was found'	'many'	'a large amount'	a deposit
250.1	'much'	a deposit	a deposit	N/A

The information in the database about finds is divided into 42 categories, as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Find Categories in the GIS Database

akroteria	coins	pipes
amphoras	domestic utensils	pottery
animal bones	glass objects	relief pithoi
architectural reliefs	hearth	road
architectural sculpture	inscriptions	roof tiles
architecture	iron objects	seals
bells	jewelry	statuary
bone carvings	lead figurines	stone objects
bone figurines	loom weights	stone reliefs
bone objects	miniature pottery	terracotta figurines
bronze figurines	mosaics	terracotta masks
bronze objects	musical instruments	terracotta plaques
bronze vessels	perirrhanteria	weapons
burial	pins	wells

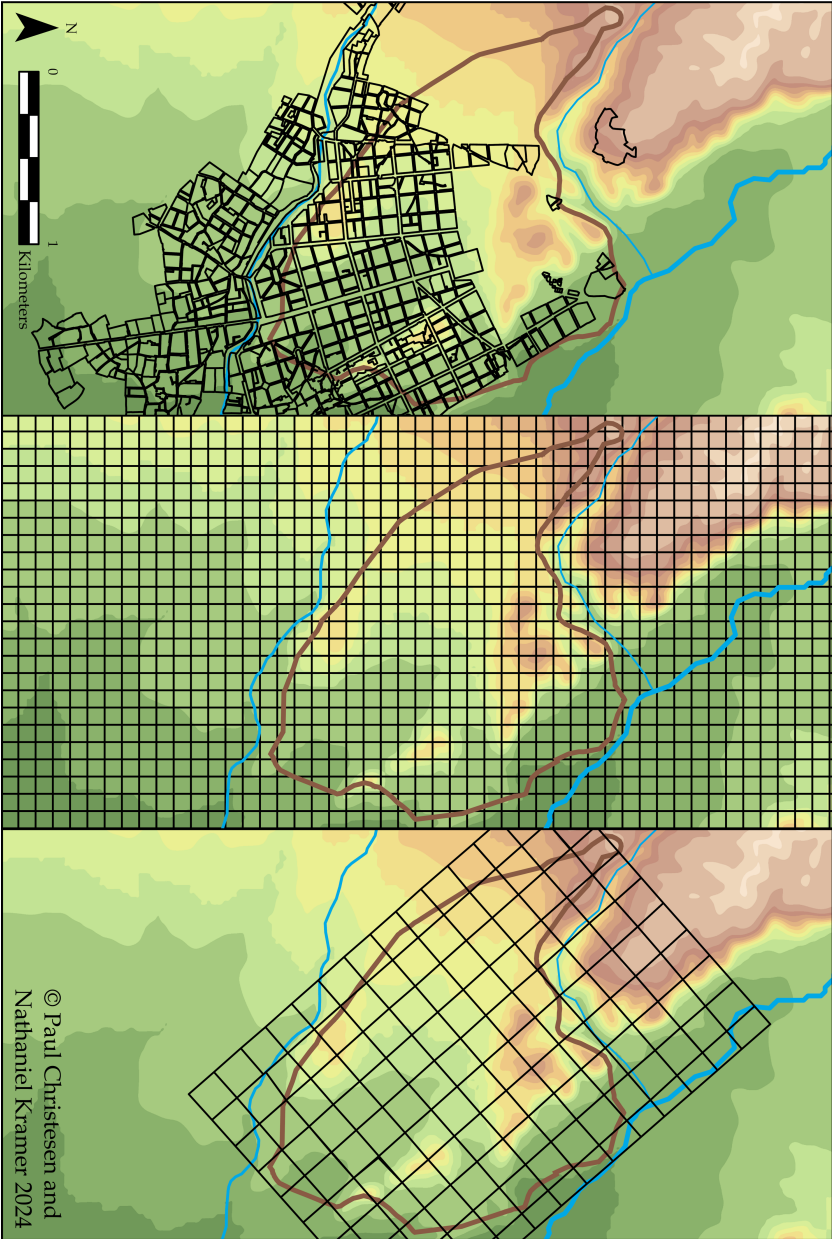


Figure 8: Spatial reference systems in Sparta:
Building blocks, 100-m tiles, British grid.

The finds are located within the text that follows using two different spatial reference systems: building blocks in the modern city of Sparta and 100-meter tiles (see Figure 8). The building blocks (typically referenced with the letters BB followed by a three-digit number) were initially laid out and numbered when the modern city was founded, and they are regularly used in the *Deltion* reports to indicate where a rescue excavation was carried out. They are, however, less than perfect spatial units (referred to in the GIS literature as ‘enumeration units’) because they vary in size and shape, do not cover the entirety of the area in Sparta that has been excavated, and can distort visualizations by making ancient Sparta look remarkably similar to modern Sparta. The British excavators of the early 20th century created a grid of squares (each 200 m on a side), but that grid does not cover the entirety of the area in Sparta that has been excavated, it is oriented NW-SE rather than N-S (which results in potentially confusing visualizations), and the squares are somewhat larger than are optimum for generating a detailed study of the settlement organization of an ancient Greek city. With that in mind, we created a grid system, oriented N-S and covering the entirety of the modern country of Greece, that contains four overlapping tiles of different sizes: 100 km square, 10 km square, 1 km square, and 100 m square. The excavated area in Sparta is covered by c. 3,600 of the 100 × 100 m tiles.⁵⁸

Each tile was assigned to one or more functional use categories derived from the Mapping Ancient Athens project, with some modifications. We employed ten categories of functional space in Sparta, plus an additional category for activity of unknown type. Those categories are: bathing, commerce, domestic, fortification, funerary, production, public, religion/cult, transport, and water supply/drainage. Some tiles were assigned multiple functions in the same period, and some tiles were assigned different functions in different periods; for example, some tiles that were categorized under the heading religion/cult for the Archaic period were categorized as domestic in the Roman period.

We took a variety of factors into account when assigning a tile to a functional category. If the excavators attributed one or more functions

58 We have discussed elsewhere, in considerable detail, the various spatial reference systems used in Sparta. See Christesen & Kramer forthcoming.

to a site, we adopted their attributions unless we found compelling evidence (typically from subsequent excavations at the same or a nearby site) to think otherwise. We were largely dependent on excavators' expressed views on function for tiles classed as Domestic or Fortification. In identifying structures as residences, excavators typically rely on the layout of the structure in question as well as pottery assemblages and the presence of particular types of movable objects. Fortifications in Sparta have been identified based on the presence of remains of unusually wide stone foundations with or without gates and location (bearing in mind that the general lines of the Hellenistic and late Roman walls were traced with considerable accuracy by British archaeologists in the early 20th century).

When the excavators did not offer a functional attribution, tiles were assigned a function through our own assessment of the built remains, movable finds, and available information from excavations at nearby sites. In order to achieve as high a degree of consistency as possible, we generated guidelines for assigning a tile to one or more functional categories.

The guidelines for the following five categories require little discussion:

- bathing: identified based on the presence of distinctive features such as hypocausts; only large baths that seem to have been public establishments were placed in this category; private residences with bathing rooms were categorized as domestic;
- funerary: identified based on the presence of one or more burials; a single burial in a tile was sufficient to classify it as funerary;
- production: identified based on the presence of kilns, molds, or by-products of production such as slag or pottery wasters;
- transport: identified based on the presence of a roadbed or what excavators identified as a retaining wall for a road;
- water supply/drainage: identified based on the presence of pipes or sewers, typically running alongside roads; as with bathing, this category includes only public facilities; private residences with wells or water supply infrastructure (e.g. cisterns) were categorized as domestic.

Two categories require somewhat more explanation. We placed just three unique tiles (other than the agora) under the heading of commerce and did so based on location, architecture, and finds. In one case (Tile 48.007.051.033, BB189), a stoa-like structure with pithoi in it was situated alongside the main road leading into Sparta. In the other two cases, the identification was based on the discovery of large quantities of bronze coins (Tile 48.007.041.024, BB045; Tile 48.006.050.039, BB136). Public spaces were identified on the basis of architecture – including a colon-naded street (Tile 48.006.050.049, BB126) and a pre-Christian basilica (Tile 48.006.050.019, BB016) – or epigraphic evidence in the form of official inscriptions (Tile 48.007.041.011, BB029).

A particularly complex set of guidelines was employed in the assignment of tiles to the category of religion/cult. The British excavations in the early part of the 20th century uncovered multiple sites that were – based in part on finds of inscribed objects – indubitably sanctuaries.⁵⁹ The most important of those sanctuaries for our purposes is Artemis Orthia, both because of the sheer number of objects that were recovered and because those objects were published in some detail. The finds from Artemis Orthia and other sites in Sparta and elsewhere in the Greek world make it possible to identify certain types of architecture and objects as diagnostic of the presence of a sanctuary.

Both archaeologists carrying out rescue excavations in Sparta and other scholars studying Sparta have used diagnostic architecture and objects to identify the sites of sanctuaries.⁶⁰ We have pursued the same methodology here, and hence our approach to assigning particular tiles to the category of religion/cult is in no way novel; we do, however, have at our disposal a larger and more comprehensive collection of evidence than has heretofore been utilized for this purpose.

A considerable proportion of the objects that have been uncovered in Sparta were certainly or probably votives, which in turn means that the evidence for religious activity is abundant. We therefore took particular care in deciding whether any given tile should be given the functional

59 See, for example, Woodward 1929.

60 See, for example, Delivorrias 1969a; Flouris 2000: 6–17; Pavlides 2023: 29–60.

assignment of religion/cult and used three separate sets of criteria for that purpose.

One set of criteria was holistic in the sense that we took the following, broad range of architecture and finds into account:

- long, narrow structures. Whereas the peripteral temple became a standard feature in much of the Greek world starting in the sixth century, the Spartans had a distinct preference – through the Classical period and beyond – for non-peripteral temples that were relatively narrow in relation to their length.⁶¹
- terracotta akroteria and antefixes of the Archaic period. Elaborate terracotta roofs were typically found only on temples and treasuries during the Archaic period.⁶² Lakonian Archaic terracotta roofs were frequently embellished with disk akroteria and antefixes that are distinctive, easy to identify, and survive well (at least in fragmentary form).⁶³ The elements of a temple's terracotta roof belonged to the deity in question, and hence were typically buried within the bounds of the sanctuary when they were taken out of active use.⁶⁴
- inscriptions. Although few in number, we took objects with a dedicatory inscription to a god or hero to be evidence for the presence of a sanctuary.⁶⁵
- lead figurines. Votives in the form of small (typically 2-6 cm tall) lead figurines were a distinctive feature of Lakonian sanctuaries in the Archaic and Classical periods (they are also found in small numbers in Peloponnesian sanctuaries outside of Lakonia).⁶⁶ These figurines are strong indications of religious/cult function because they do not seem to appear outside of sanctuaries (e.g. there is no evidence that they were deposited in graves), they

61 Stibbe 1989: 83-93; Catling 1995.

62 Sapirstein 2016: 47.

63 Winter 1993: 95-109; Skoog 1998: 29-40.

64 Sapirstein 2016: 46.

65 See, for example, Steinhauer 2020.

66 Wace 1929; Cavanagh & Laxton 1984; Boss 2000; Lloyd 2024.

were dedicated in significant numbers, and they do not seem to have been regularly collected and recycled in later periods.

- stone reliefs. Starting in the mid-sixth century BCE and continuing through the Roman period, stone reliefs were dedicated to heroes in various places in Lakonia, including Sparta. These reliefs made excellent building material and were regularly re-used for that purpose after they went out of use, so most have been found in secondary contexts. In a few instances, however, they have been found *in situ*.⁶⁷
- terracotta plaques. Between the late sixth and the late fourth century, thousands of mold-made terracotta plaques were produced and dedicated in Lakonia.⁶⁸ The documented find spots indicate they were primarily dedicated in sanctuaries (e.g. they were not regularly deposited in tombs).
- pottery and terracotta figurines. Certain types of vases (particularly finewares for drinking and dining and miniature vessels) and terracotta figurines represent a significant fraction of the votives found at Artemis Orthia.⁶⁹ They range in date from the Geometric through the Roman period. These categories of objects have been found in contexts other than sanctuaries in Sparta.⁷⁰ Their mere presence is, therefore, not diagnostic of a sanctuary, but they can be important indicators when they occur in large quantities or in conjunction with other objects that served as votives. For example, excavations in Tile 48.007.051.007 (Stauffert Street) uncovered, among much other material, c. 1,500 miniature vases and c. 800 terracotta figurines, which can only be plausibly understood as votives from a sanctuary.⁷¹

In assessing whether to assign a religion/cult function to any given tile, we took all these types of evidence into account, both singly and collectively, and we were mindful that various post-depositional processes

67 Steinhauer 1973b; Flouris 1996; Flouris 2000: 4, 14-18, 142.

68 Salapata 2014.

69 Dawkins 1929c; Droop 1929.

70 See, for example, Steinhauer 1973-1974b; Tsiangouris 2010a for relevant tomb finds.

71 Flouris 1996.

might have removed material from its original context. A handful of examples will provide some sense of how our evaluation process worked in practice. A rescue excavation in Tile 48.007.041.036 (BB058) revealed a long wall built from polygonal masonry. The movable finds include two Geometric bronze pins and unspecified numbers of lead and terracotta figurines and miniature pottery.⁷²

Two separate excavations within the same tile (48.007.041.095, BB104) revealed an impressive array of movable finds: three stone hero reliefs (two dating to the first quarter of the sixth century, one dating to the second quarter of the fifth century);⁷³ unspecified numbers of terracotta figurines and plaques and miniature pottery, and an Archaic limestone Doric capital.⁷⁴

Among the finds from Tile 48.007.041.054 (BB113) are c. 200 lead figurines, Geometric and Archaic bronze and bone pins, and a bone plaque of a type also found at Artemis Orthia.⁷⁵ Excavators who worked in Tile 48.007.041.068 (BB093A) found what they describe as a votive deposit containing a 'plethora' of terracotta plaques and figurines dating primarily to the Archaic and Classical periods.⁷⁶

The reported finds from Tile 48.007.051.006 (BB098) in any given category of object are not determinative, but they are collectively indicative. They include a perirrhanterion, Attic black- and red-figure drinking vessels, two miniature vases, two terracotta figurines, and two inscribed loom-weights.⁷⁷ Tile 48.006.040.039 (BBΓ202) was placed in the religion/cult category based solely on the discovery of fragments of multiple disk akroteria.⁷⁸

In assessing whether any given tile should be assigned the function of religion/cult, we also used a second, more restrictive set of criteria that were designed to assign greater weight to the possibility that votives had

72 Themis 2006; Maltezou 2010a.

73 Salapata 2014: R4, R5, R26.

74 Raftopoulou 1994; Themis & Flouris 1997.

75 Themis 1999.

76 Tsiangouris 2010d.

77 Themis 1996; Rammou 1997; Tsiangouris 2010b.

78 Kakorou 2010.

been dispersed from their original contexts by the various post-depositional processes discussed above. For the restrictive criteria, a tile was assigned to the religion/cult category based on the presence of:

- distinctive religious architecture, or;
- more than 100 (according to our coding of the data) of any combination of terracotta plaques, terracotta figurines, lead figurines, or miniature vases.

The numerical threshold built into the restrictive criteria reflects our view that the presence of significant quantities of votives at a single place increases the probability that the objects in question originated at or near that place.

Finally, we also assigned tiles to the category of religion/cult based solely on the presence of distinctive religious architecture. There are thus in our database three separate categories for religion/cult: religion/cult (holistic), religion/cult (restrictive), religion/cult (architecture). We have in the visualizations for this article created distinct symbolizations for all three codings of religion/cult (see Table 5). Unless otherwise indicated, all tile counts, both those just for religion/cult and those cumulative across all functions, are based on the holistic criteria.

With the basic background information in place, we turn our attention to a diachronic overview of the settlement organization of Sparta, starting in the Bronze Age.

Table 5: Number of Tiles with Attested Activity, by Period and Function

	EH	MH	LH	SM	PG	GM	AR	CL	HL	RO
bathing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
commerce	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
domestic	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	21	58
fortification	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
funerary	2	2	1	0	8	10	9	6	28	49
production	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	9	6
public	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	4	10
religion/cult – holistic crite- ria	0	0	0	0	4	8	43	37	27	17
religion/cult – restrictive cri- teria	0	0	0	0	3	6	30	29	17	11
religion/cult – architectural criteria	0	0	0	0	0	2	16	13	11	9
transport	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	36
water supply/ drainage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	34
unknown	9	2	6	1	16	33	51	36	82	92
total number of tiles with at- tested activ- ity ⁷⁹	9	2	5	1	16	44	85	66	117	141

79 This number is less than the sum of the rows above because in some cases the evidence from a single tile indicated multiple functions. The ‘total number of tiles with attested activity’ heading indicates how many tiles show evidence of activity in the

Bronze Age and Submycenaean Sparta

Activity in the area around Sparta in the Neolithic period was concentrated at Kouphovouno, c. 3 km southwest of the Palaiokastros plateau.⁸⁰ In the Early Helladic period what appears to have been a substantial settlement was founded alongside the Magoulitsa River (see Figure 9). Excavations uncovered large quantities of EH2 pottery, evidence of bronze working (Tile 48.006.040.076, BBΓ470), and three burials (Tile 48.006.040.095, BB147).⁸¹

(Excavations in the tiles shown in dotted outline in Figure 9 and in all following figures yielded only datable pottery that does not make it possible to determine the nature of the attested activity; those tiles are placed under the functional category of ‘unknown’ in our database. Tiles with attested activity of both known (e.g. burial) and unknown function are marked solely with the known function(s) in Figure 9 and all following figures.)

The location of this settlement – along the Magoulitsa rather than on the Palaiokastros plateau – is noteworthy. There is evidence, including pottery finds and a burial (Tile 48.007.051.016), of contemporary activity closer to the Palaiokastros plateau, but that evidence suggests nothing more than sparse occupation.⁸² Moreover, several excavations down to virgin soil in the area to the south of the Palaiokastros plateau revealed nothing from the Early Helladic period.⁸³ Thus, we can be reasonably

period in question in order to give some idea of the breadth of attested activity in the city as a whole.

80 Cavanagh, Mee & Renard 2007; Vasilogambrou, Tsouli & Maltezou 2018: 329–30.

81 See Zavvou and Themis 2009: 106–10 and Vasilogambrou, Tsouli & Maltezou 2018: 329–30 for summaries of the relevant finds and earlier bibliography and Tsiangouris 2020 on a kiln in the settlement. Given that some of the conclusions presented in this article are based on the compilation of data from many different rescue excavations, it is not possible to cite all the relevant publications for each and every point. We have done our best to be conscientious about source citations while keeping footnotes to a reasonable length. Details for most of the burials mentioned in this article can be found in the appendices in Christesen 2019.

82 Vlachakos 2010: 495.

83 Themis 1998; Maltezou 2012.

sure that the main nucleus of settlement was situated alongside the Magoulitsa.

The evidence for the Middle Helladic period (see Figure 10) consists primarily of nine burials found in a circumscribed area in the southeastern part of the city (Tiles 48.007.032.033, 48.007.032.052, BB079). A single LH1 burial was found in this same area; that burial (in a built chamber tomb) was equipped with some remarkable grave goods including a boars' tusk helmet and a terracotta ship model. The surrounding fills contained a large quantity of Middle Helladic pottery as well as a number of obsidian arrowheads or blades and an LH3 figurine head.⁸⁴

No evidence has as yet been uncovered of a Middle Helladic settlement to which these burials can be linked. There is attested Middle Helladic activity at the Menelaion,⁸⁵ c. 1 km to the southeast and on the other side of the Eurotas, but it is not clear if the activity at the Menelaion had any connection to the burials in question. The southeastern part of Sparta has not been heavily excavated (see Figure 7), and a Middle Helladic settlement may await discovery.

84 Zavvou 1999b; Vasilogambrou, Tsouli & Koulogeorgiou 2010; Zavvou 2010; Tsouli, Tisangouris & Maltezou 2022: 190-92.

85 H. W. Catling 2009; Wiersma and Tsouli 2022: 10-12.

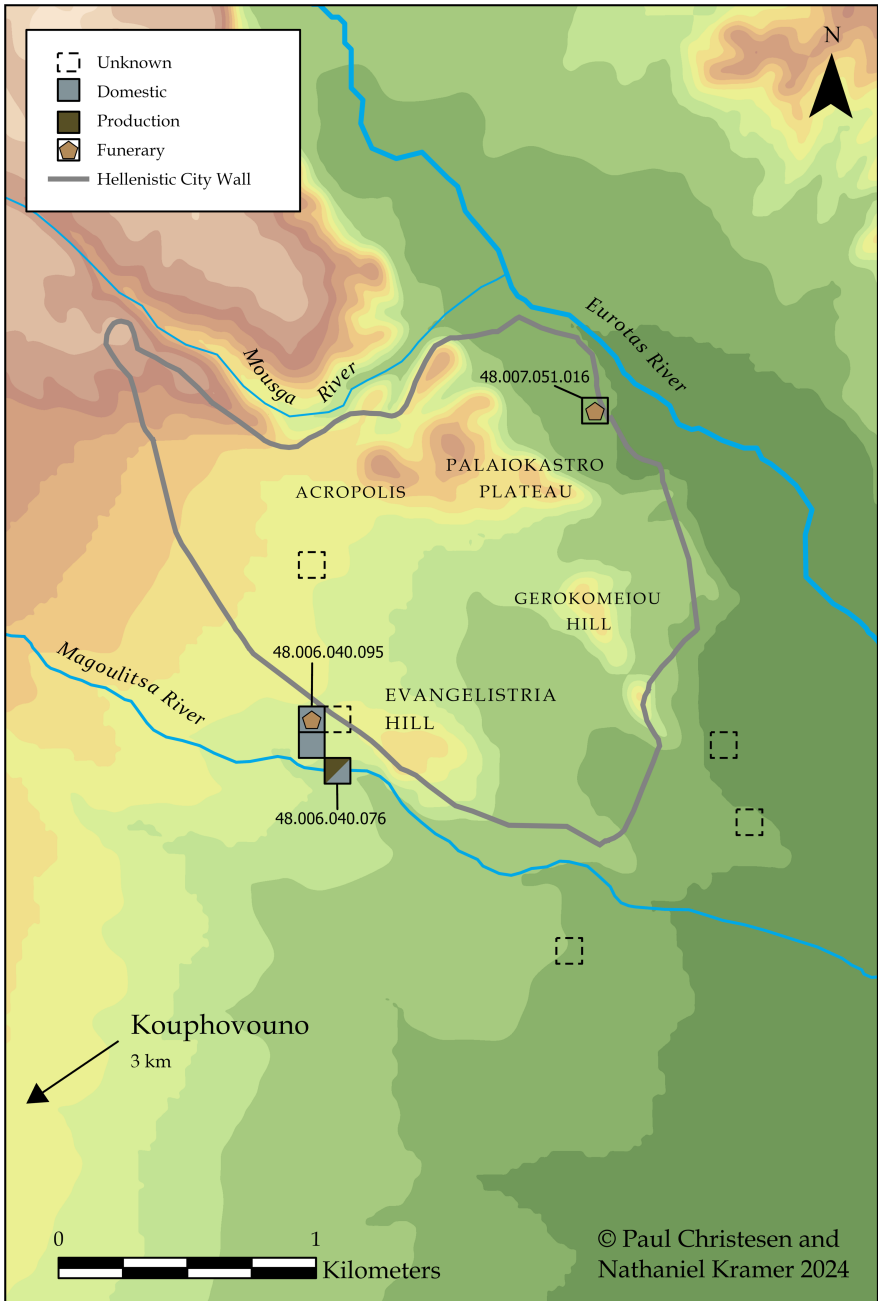


Figure 9: Sparta in the Early Bronze Age. The Hellenistic city wall is shown solely as a convenient landmark.

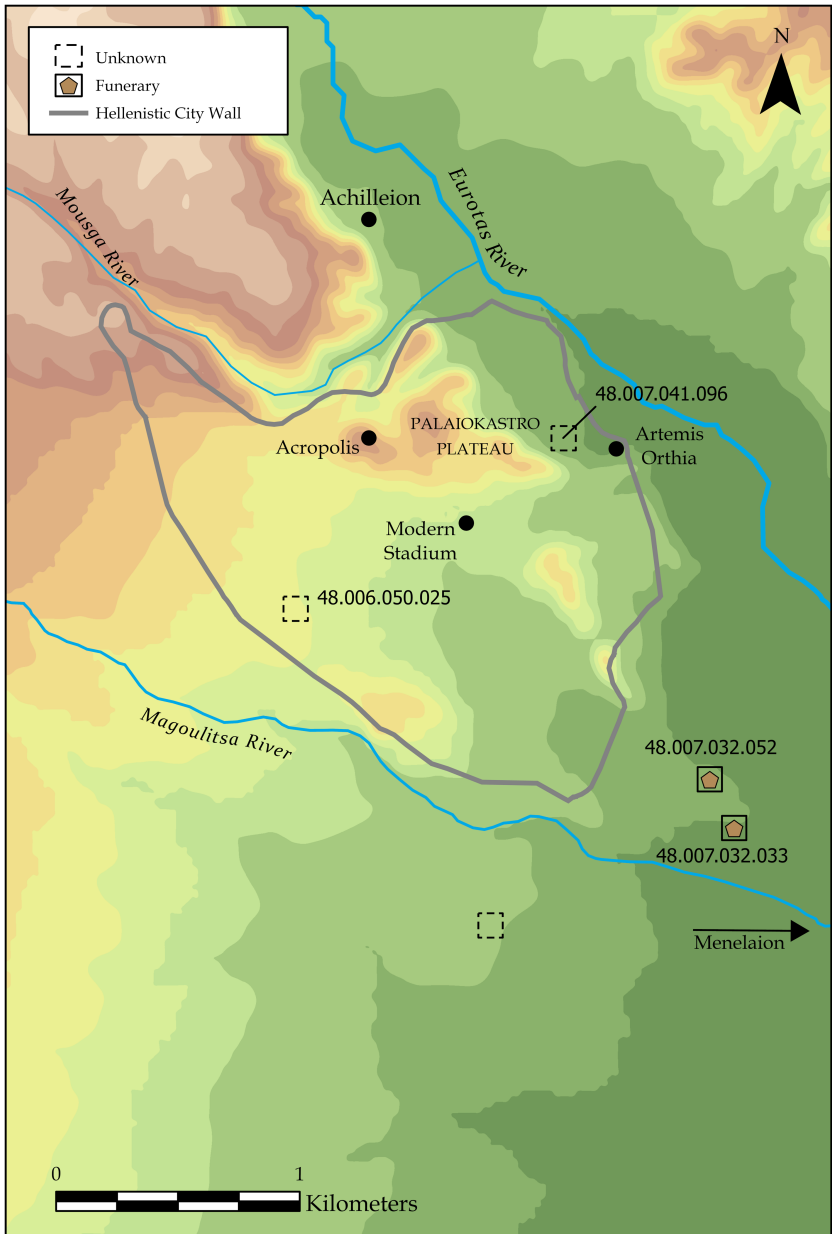


Figure 10: Sparta in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages and the Submycenaean period. The Hellenistic city wall is shown solely as a convenient landmark.

The evidence for the Late Helladic period, beyond the aforementioned LH1 chamber tomb, consists primarily of small quantities of Mycenaean pottery from the acropolis, the area of the modern stadium, the Achilleion, and the western edge of the city (Tile 48.006.050.025, BB150).⁸⁶ In addition, several engraved stones dated to the Mycenaean period were among the finds at Artemis Orthia.⁸⁷ The small quantities of Mycenaean material from the acropolis, Achilleion, and Artemis Orthia could be heirlooms dedicated at a later date; the relevant tiles are thus not marked as having activity in the Late Bronze Age in Figure 10.

Only one site in Sparta has produced Submycenaean material: fragments of a skyphos were excavated in the northeastern part of the city (Tile 48.007.041.096, BB097A).⁸⁸ The near complete absence of Submycenaean finds might suggest that there was a hiatus in habitation, but we need to take into account the various uncertainties surrounding Lakonian ceramics of the Early Iron Age and the uneven excavation of Sparta.⁸⁹ In the unsettled conditions of the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age, if there was a significant settlement in Sparta, it would probably have been concentrated on the Palaiokastro plateau, which offered some natural protection due to its elevation and encompassed a considerable expanse of arable land.⁹⁰ When James Frazer visited Sparta in the late 19th century, the Palaiokastro plateau was planted in wheat and olive trees and ‘presented a rich and park-like aspect’;⁹¹ much of the plateau is to this day still occupied by olive trees. More precisely, we would expect that settlement would have been concentrated along the eastern and northern edges of the plateau (which offered easier access to water supplies from the Mousga and the Eurotas), but that part of the city has seen little in the way of excavations. Future

86 Acropolis: Droop 1927: 79. Modern stadium: Cook & Nicholls 1950: 298. Achilleion: Stibbe 2002: 215–16. BB150: Zavvou 1999a.

87 Dawkins 1929b: 378–9.

88 This excavation is incorrectly listed in *Deltion* volume 52 as being in BB097 (Themom 1997).

89 Demakopoulou 2009; Vlachou 2015: 114 and *passim*; Gallou 2020: 55.

90 Raftopoulou argued that the early dwellings in Sparta were situated on hills, without specifying the Palaiokastro plateau (Raftopoulou 2002: 39).

91 Frazer 1898: 322.

archaeological exploration may lead to a radical revision of our understanding of Sparta in the 12th and 11th centuries.

However that may be, there is good reason to believe that Sparta was occupied to at least some extent from the Early Helladic period through the end of the Bronze Age.

Protogeometric and Geometric Sparta

The evidence for Protogeometric activity in Sparta consists largely of burials and pottery from cult sites (see Figure 11). Fifteen published burials can be dated to the Protogeometric period with some confidence (there is some uncertainty about whether some tombs should be dated to the Protogeometric or Geometric period). The most impressive assemblages of Protogeometric ceramics were discovered at the Heroon of Astrabakos (Tile 48.007.051.036) and from a rescue excavation conducted in Tile 48.007.041.050 (BB108).⁹² The finds from the latter site include several high-quality vessels that probably derive from a votive deposit. Smaller amounts of Protogeometric pottery were found at the sanctuaries of Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos.⁹³ Pottery finds from six tiles indicate activity without offering any clear evidence for function. There is attested Protogeometric activity at a total of 16 tiles.

The Protogeometric pottery at the Orthia and Chalkioikos sanctuaries indicates that cult activity had begun at both sites by c. 800 and possibly earlier. The chronology of the early structures at the Orthia sanctuary remains hazy, but it is clear that an altar and peribolos had been built and a cobblestone pavement laid around the altar prior to c. 650. An apsidal temple may have been constructed at the same time as the pavement.⁹⁴ The architectural remains from the Chalkioikos sanctuary were

92 Wace 1906a; Coulson 1985; Stibbe 1989: 89 n. 20; Soukleris 2014.

93 Droop 1927: 49-55; Droop 1929: 52-66; Coulson 1985. Some of the sherds that Droop categorized as Geometric are in fact Protogeometric, as Coulson shows.

94 Dawkins 1929a; Luongo 2013; Luongo 2014; Luongo 2015.

damaged by later construction and erosion, and there is much uncertainty about the date and nature of early structures.⁹⁵

We can thus trace multiple sites with activity during the Protogeometric period, including two cult sites that would develop into the major sanctuaries of the city. The location of the known sites indicates that by the Protogeometric period settlement was focused around the Palaiokastro plateau. At some unknown point after the Early Bronze Age, when settlement was concentrated along the Magoulitsa, a shift in the center of gravity of Sparta took place.

The basic pattern evident in the Protogeometric period – activity on and around the southwestern, southern, and eastern sides of the Palaiokastro plateau – continued to hold true in the Geometric period, but both the intensity and complexity of activity seem to have increased (see Figure 12). There are 19 published burials from this period, and evidence for religion/cult in eight tiles. Pottery finds from 33 tiles indicate activity without offering any clear evidence for function. There is attested Geometric activity at a total of 44 tiles.

One particularly interesting development is the appearance of the earliest post-Bronze Age evidence for craft production in Sparta. An excavation conducted at the eastern edge of the city (Tile 48.007.051.016, BB099) uncovered the remains of a Late Geometric workshop with three wells and a circular kiln.⁹⁶ The presence nearby of Geometric tombs indicates that the area was used for both ceramic production and funerary

95 For the original excavation reports, see Dickins 1907; Dickins 1908 as well as the summary in Spallino 2016. For more recent work, see Giannakaki & Vlachou 2020. The architectural remains include multiple, discontinuous wall segments that have been variously interpreted and dated. Dickins claimed that one wall segment was founded in a purely Geometric stratum. The earliest published architectural terracottas from the site date to the last quarter of the seventh century (Woodward 1927: 40–41; Skoog 1998: 51–52, 157 #11) and hence are not informative about pre-Achaic structures in the sanctuary.

96 Vlachakos 2010. The initial excavation report was uncertain on dating, placing the workshop in the Late Geometric/early Achaic range, but more recent reports state that the workshop was active starting in the Geometric period: see Vasilogambrou, Tsouli & Maltezos 2018.

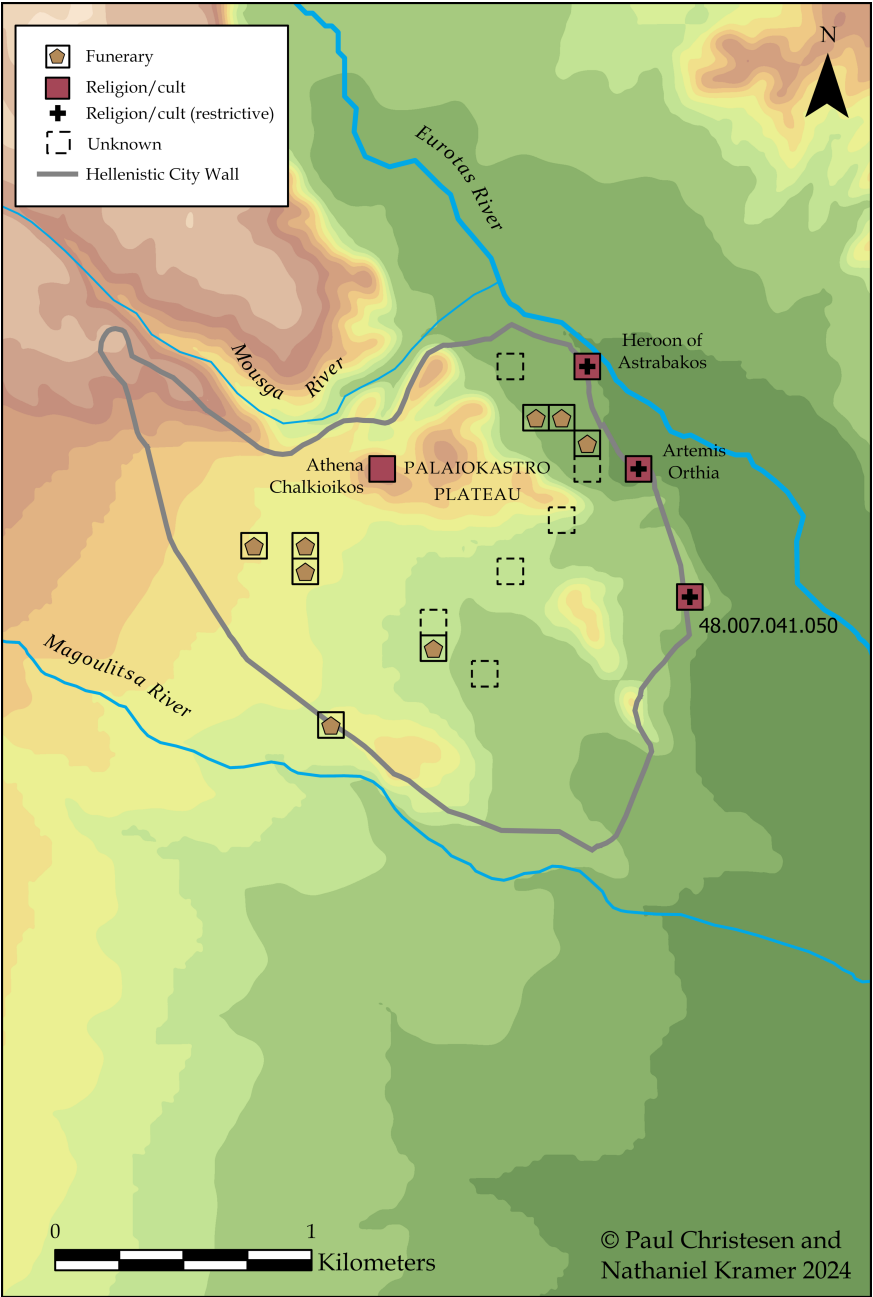


Figure 11: Sparta in the Protoegeometric period. The Hellenistic city wall is shown solely as a convenient landmark.

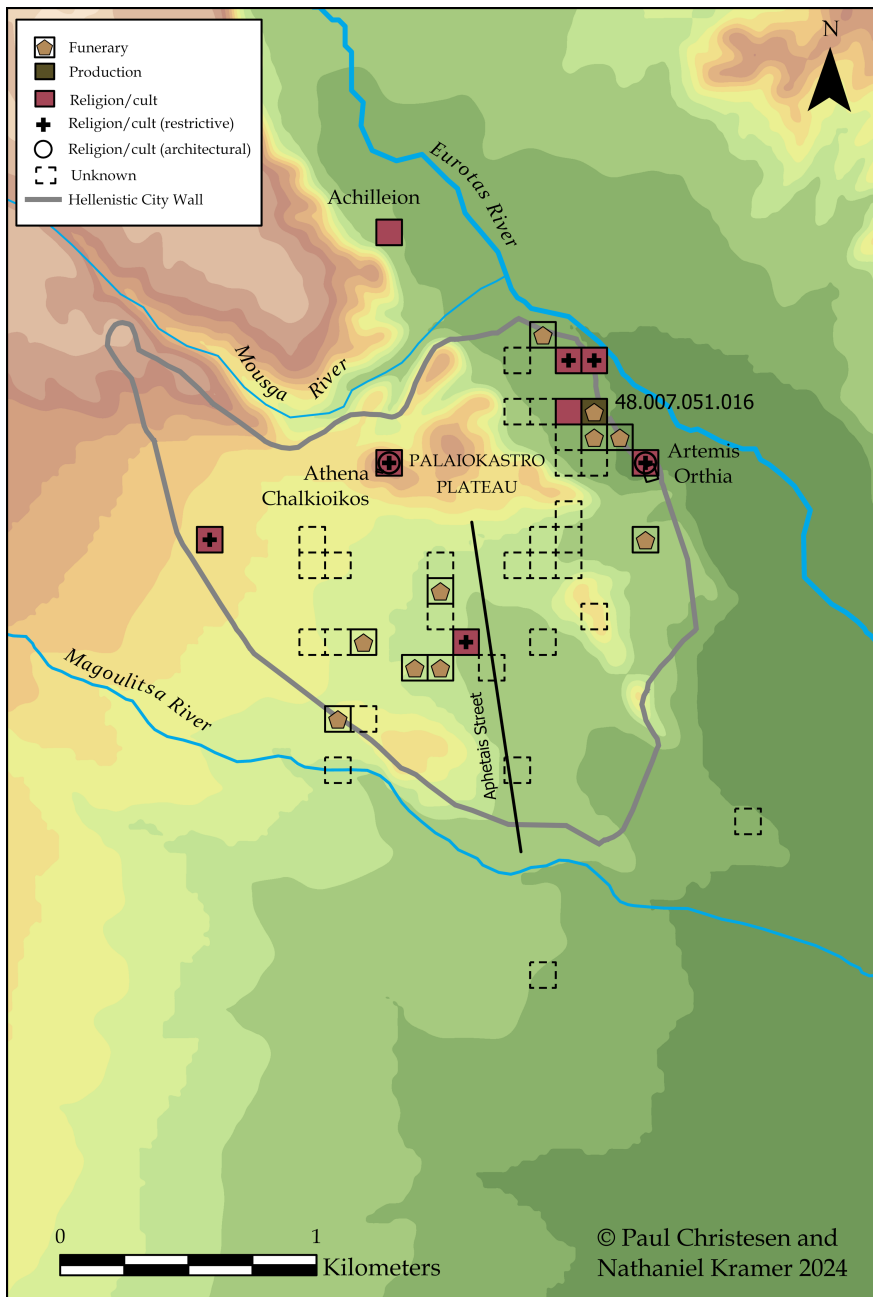


Figure 12: Sparta in the Geometric period. The Hellenistic city wall and Aphetais Street are shown solely as convenient landmarks.

purposes, a common combination elsewhere, most obviously of course in the Kerameikos in Athens.⁹⁷

There is a notable concentration of tiles classified under the headings of funerary and religion/cult in the northeastern part of the city, which might mean that this was the most heavily settled section of the urban center during the Geometric period. However, the northeastern part of the city was intermittently inundated by the Eurotas, which buried archaeological contexts under protective layers of alluvium, and has been particularly heavily excavated. The area to the south of Palaiokastro, on the other hand, was free from flooding and was densely settled in the Byzantine period, with attendant harm to earlier levels. Variations in the density of evidence for activity may thus have more to do with post-depositional processes and excavation history than the realities of Sparta in the Geometric period.

Although there is no relevant physical or textual evidence, it is likely that, by the end of the Geometric period if not earlier, some sort of predecessor of Aphetais Street was already in existence and that it followed more or less the same route as Aphetais Street. The concentration of settlement on and around Palaiokastro created a need for a road running south from the plateau, and it seems likely that the urban fabric in the Geometric and subsequent periods grew organically around an extant road that became an established fixture in the urban landscape.

Archaic Sparta

The spatial distribution of tiles with attested Archaic activity indicates that settlement in Sparta became denser in areas that were occupied in the Geometric period and expanded outward to the east, south, and west of the Palaiokastro plateau (see Figure 13). Pottery finds from 51 tiles indicate activity without offering any clear evidence for function. There is attested Archaic activity at a total of 85 tiles.

The two known craft production sites from the Archaic period may provide some indication as to the extent of the settled area of the city. Pottery workshops were habitually situated at the fringes of Greek cities,

97 See, for instance, Papadopoulos 2003.

so the locations of the two known production sites in Archaic Sparta are probably significant in and of themselves. Moreover, one of the production sites (in Tile 48.007.051.016), which was established in the Geometric period and which is discussed in the preceding section, was situated close to the location of one of the gates in the Hellenistic city wall and near the west bank of the Eurotas. The Eurotas River was (until the installation of dams in recent decades) prone to flooding,⁹⁸ so its banks would not have been a good place for residences, but would have been well suited to a production site, particularly a pottery workshop that needed large quantities of water. The production site near the Eurotas was thus probably located at the eastern fringes of the settled area of the city, which in turn suggests that the other production site may also help identify the outer limits of the city in the Archaic period.

That production site, the finds from which include a kiln that was used in the Archaic and Classical periods, is situated c. 1 km to the southwest of the Palaiokastros plateau (Tile 48.006.050.026, BB140) and c. 200 m to the east of the line of the later Hellenistic wall.⁹⁹ The location of this site likely indicates that the settled area in the Archaic period did not extend westward as close to the Magoulitsa as it did in later periods.

With respect to the southern limits of the settled area, there is minimal evidence from any period, including the Archaic period, for dense habitation to the south of a line drawn between the southern ends of Evangelistria and Xenia Hills. The terrain here begins to slope downward toward the juncture of the Magoulitsa and Eurotas, an area that Leake reported as being marshy.¹⁰⁰

There is evidence for religious/cult activity and burials to the northwest of the second production site. The Magoulitsa ran roughly NW-SE and the Mousga turned to the northwest not far from its juncture with the Eurotas, and there was, as a result, a considerable amount of flat

98 See Pikoulas 1982; Skoulidis, Oikonomou, Karaouzas et al. 2008: 7-8; Karaouzas, Theodoropoulos, Vardakas et al. 2018: 286-88, 317; Hitchcock, Chapin & Reynolds 2020: 328.

99 Zavvou 2004.

100 Leake 1830: 152-54.

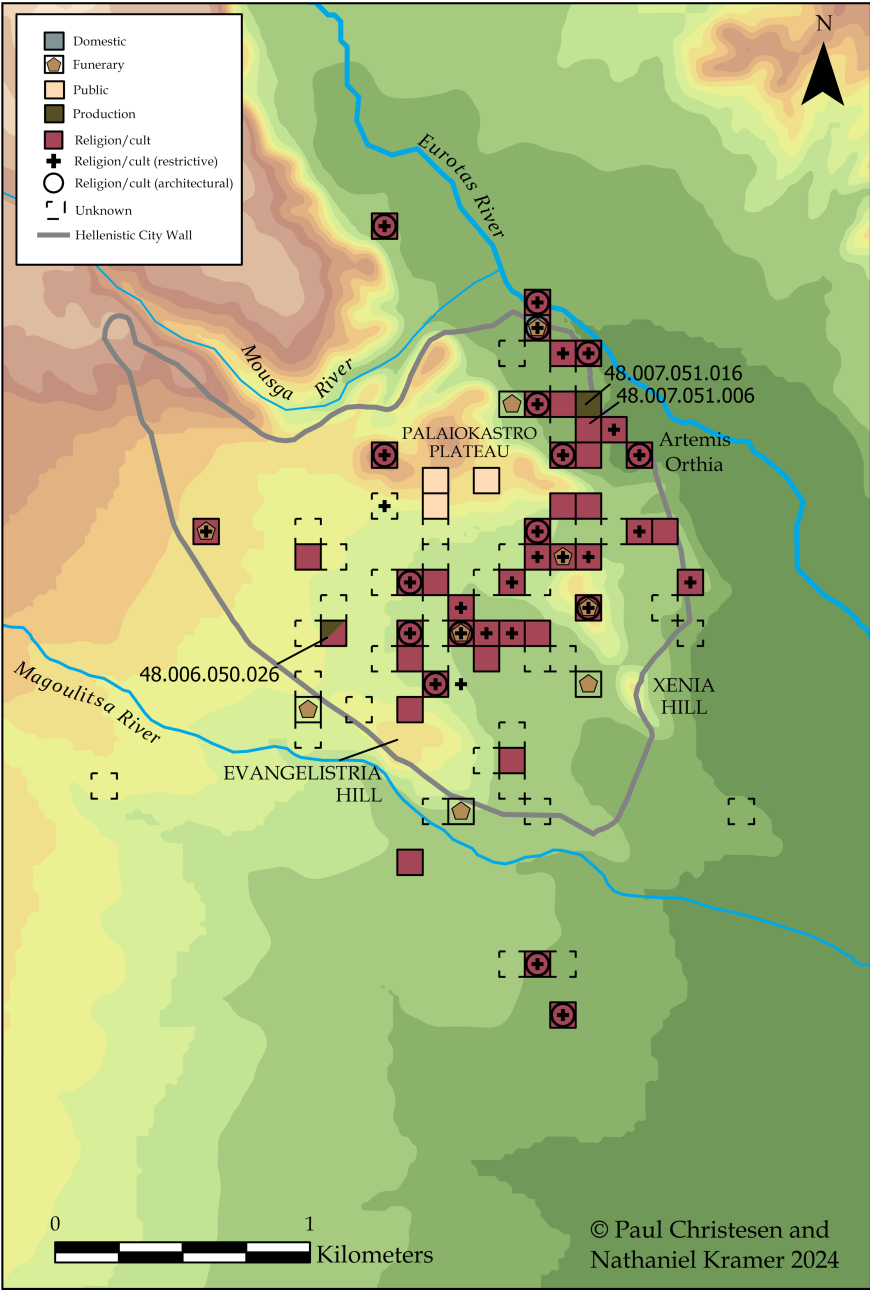


Figure 13: Sparta in the Archaic period. The Hellenistic city wall is shown solely as a convenient landmark.

ground outside the Hellenistic wall in the area west of the Palaiokastro plateau. This part of the modern city (known as Magoula) has not been heavily excavated, and the reports of some of those excavations make it difficult to precisely locate them. The settled part of the city may have bulged outward into the space between the Magoulitsa and Mousga (i.e. Magoula).

The number of published burials climbs from 15 in the Geometric period to 28 in the Archaic period, but by far the most noteworthy change is that there is evidence for religion/cult in 43 tiles (as opposed to 8 in the Geometric period). The upward jump in the number of tiles yielding evidence for religion/cult is not, at least *prima facie*, purely the result of more intense habitation in Sparta since the ratio of tiles with evidence for religion/cult to the total number of tiles with attested activity of any kind is higher in the Archaic period than in the Protogeometric and Geometric periods (see Table 6). That conclusion holds true regardless of which criteria (holistic, strict, architectural) are used.

Table 6: Ratio (Expressed in Percentage) of Tiles with Evidence for Religion/cult to the Total Number of Tiles with Attested Activity of Any Kind

	Proto- geometric	Geo- metric	Archaic	Classi- cal	Hellen- istic	Ro- man
holistic criteria	25%	18%	51%	56%	23%	12%
strict criteria	19%	14%	35%	44%	15%	8%
archi- tectural criteria	0%	5%	19%	20%	9%	8%

There are several reasons why the data for religion/cult space in Archaic Sparta, as we have compiled and presented it, might be flawed or misleading. The issues discussed above concerning the limitations of the data we used – post-depositional processes creating ‘smears’ of objects, the difficulty of tracing such smears back to their original context espe-

cially based on rescue excavations, the use of tiles rather than hypothetical sites to report finds, possibly uneven sampling, and differential visibility of certain types of sites and certain periods – are all possible factors.

In addition, changing patterns of dedication may have heightened the archaeological visibility of sanctuaries during the Archaic period. Some types of objects that attest to the existence of a Lakonian sanctuary seem to have been dedicated in significantly larger quantities in the Archaic period than in earlier and later periods. This pattern is most apparent with respect to lead figurines.¹⁰¹ The largest and best-documented collection of lead figurines comes from the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia. The dating of the earliest and latest figurines from Artemis Orthia remains uncertain,¹⁰² but at least 85% of the roughly 100,000 lead figurines from that sanctuary were probably dedicated in the Archaic period.¹⁰³

Furthermore, some of the evidence for religion/cult may derive from domestic contexts. Supernatural beings were regularly venerated within Greek households, and some of the rituals carried out in households were similar to those carried out in public settings.¹⁰⁴ The earliest definitive evidence for domestic cult activity in Sparta dates to the Roman period, but separating public from domestic cult can be difficult, especially when relying on rescue excavations. For example, a rescue excavation near the modern bridge over the Eurotas River uncovered a long, narrow (c. 2 m wide and at least 13 m in length) structure, dated to the Hellenistic period, with an enclosure in front of it. One of the structure's three rooms was built around a cist that contained a few bones and two sixth-century vases. The floor around that (probable) tomb was covered with a substantial number of votives (including c. 150 terracotta figurines). Two objects among those votives (a bronze protome and a terracotta horse figurine) seem to date to the Archaic period, but the remaining material is later. Giorgos Steinhauer, who excavated this structure, suggested that

101 Wace 1929; Cavanagh & Laxton 1984.

102 Lloyd 2024.

103 In his study of the lead figurines from Artemis Orthia, Boss argues that they all date to the Archaic period (Boss 2000).

104 Faraone 2008; see also Sofroniew 2015: 15–26; Mikalson, Petrovic & Petrovic 2022: 123–48.

it might be the remains of a family cult site.¹⁰⁵ We are, given the design of the structure and its location near a main road leading into Sparta, more inclined to interpret this as a public cult site, but it does serve as a good reminder that some of the objects that we have taken to be diagnostic of religion/cult might have come from residential structures.

The evidence for a high frequency of religion/cult space in Archaic Sparta – although consonant with the Spartiates' reputation for being unusually pious¹⁰⁶ – may, therefore, be a 'false positive.' The ambiguities in the relevant data make it possible to arrive at multiple interpretations.

Most of the tiles with evidence for religion/cult activity in Sparta lack material that would allow us to identify the supernatural being venerated there. However, it may be possible to identify a subset of sites that were dedicated to heroes (as opposed to Olympian deities) in the Archaic and Classical periods. Terracotta plaques occur primarily at hero shrines in Lakonia, and the offerings associated with terracotta plaques tend to take the form of figurines and pottery.¹⁰⁷ For example, the finds from a sanctuary excavated in Tile 48.007.051.006 (Stauffert Street) include more than 2,500 fragments of terracotta plaques, whereas only nine such plaques were discovered among the tens of thousands of dedications at the Artemis Orthia sanctuary (c. 200 m south of Stauffert Street).¹⁰⁸ If we take a preponderance of terracotta plaques as an indicator of a hero sanctuary, then cultic activity in 19 of the 43 religion/cult tiles was dedicated to heroes.

The relatively large assemblage of material from Archaic Sparta makes it possible to offer a tentative reconstruction of the layout of the city (see Figure 14), something that is not feasible for earlier periods. At least two major building phases reshaped the Orthia Sanctuary in the Archaic period (see Figure 15). Sometime around 650, a small (c. 4.5 x 9 m) temple and altar were built. Early in the sixth century, those structures were damaged by a flood, after which a thick layer of sand was laid down to raise the level of the sanctuary and a new (larger, non-peripteral,

105 Steinhauer 1972b.

106 See, for example, Herodotus 5.63, 9.7; Parker 1989.

107 Salapata 2014; Pavlides 2023: 29–78.

108 Dawkins 1929c: 154–55; Flouris 1996; Flouris 2000; Salapata 2014.

distyle *in antis*) temple (7.6×17.5 m) and peribolos wall (the 'Later Enclosure Wall') were built. (The British excavators called the two temples the Early Temple and the Later Temple.) The Later Temple sat on high foundations (2.75 m high, 1.25 m of which protruded above the sand), presumably to help forestall further damage from flooding.¹⁰⁹ The badly preserved remains from Athena Chalkioikos indicate that a cult structure of some sort was built in the seventh or sixth century, along with a stoa and a small structure (only partially preserved) that served cult purposes (see Figure 16a).¹¹⁰

The remains typically designated as the Eurotas Altar consist of a stone platform measuring 23.9×6.7 m, preserved to a height of 1.90 m. The (regrettably slight) available evidence suggests that the platform supported a long, narrow cult structure, similar to the temple at Artemis Orthia, that was also elevated to limit flood damage.¹¹¹ The remains at the Stavropoulos sanctuary include another long, narrow structure, though its original dimensions are difficult to reconstruct.¹¹² The first phases of construction at both the Eurotas Altar and the Stavropoulos sanctuary probably date to the Archaic period.

The Leonidaion (12.5×8.3 m) is built from huge blocks of conglomerate (the biggest of which measures $4.75 \times 0.73 \times 0.95$ m). The interior is divided into a pronaos (3.15 m deep) and a naos (6.9 m deep).¹¹³ Little is known about this building, but its masonry finds close parallels with other Lakonian structures of the Archaic period (e.g. the Round Building, on which see below), and its form indicates that it was a cult structure of some kind.

This body of evidence suggests that, during the period when the peripteral temple developed into the signature cult structure in many cities

109 See n. 94 for relevant bibliography.

110 Woodward & Hobling 1925: 241-49; Woodward 1927: 37-45.

111 Dickins 1906a; Giannakaki 2008: 9.

112 The site was excavated in the 1960s and again in 1980 (Delivorrias 1968a; Delivorrias 1968b; Delivorrias 1969b; Spyropoulos 1980), and it was re-examined during a conservation program in the early 2000s (Giannakaki 2008: 12).

113 See Waldstein 1892. Woodward argued that the Leonidaion was a cult structure dedicated to Apollo Karneios (Woodward 1909: 81, 85), Stibbe that it was dedicated to Poseidon Genethlios or the heroes Kleodaios or Oibalos (Stibbe 1989: 98-99).

in mainland Greece, the Spartans chose to continue the previous tradition of erecting the long, narrow cult structures that were prevalent in much of the Greek world in the eighth century. There is, in fact, no compelling physical or textual evidence that Sparta ever had a large, peripteral temple, and we can be certain that no such structure was ever built at the Orthia sanctuary, arguably the most prominent religious site in the city.¹¹⁴ The architecture at the Stauffert Street sanctuary (only part of which was excavated) included a small, rectangular building with benches on the inside, which suggests that at least some heroa in Sparta were equipped with dining structures.¹¹⁵

The agora was probably laid out well before the end of the Archaic period (see Figure 16a). The Round Building, consisting of a semi-circular retaining wall surmounted by a circular platform that may have supported a colonnade, was built in the late seventh or early sixth century.¹¹⁶ Christou's Stoa, a large, L-shaped structure (running at least 30 m N-S and 15 m E-W) was originally built with polygonal blocks and probably dates to the sixth century.¹¹⁷ Insofar as these structures seem to have helped delineate the borders of the agora in later periods, it is a reasonable assumption that an agora existed in this part of Sparta during the Archaic period.

The earliest known extracommunal cemetery in Sparta was established on the east bank of the Magoulitsa during the Archaic period. This cemetery (sometimes referred to as the Olive Oil Cemetery) is located precisely where one would expect – at the fringes of the densely settled

114 On the evolution of temple design in the Greek world, see Mazarakis Ainian 2016.

115 Tosti (Tosti 2011), building on the work of Nafissi, has argued that the room with a bench should be associated with *leschai*, where, according to Plutarch, adult male Spartans spent much of their time (*Lyc.* 25.2).

116 Waldstein 1892: 74-6; Waldstein and Meader 1893; Waldstein 1894; Waywell & Wilkes 1994: 414-19; Greco, Vasilogambrou & Voza 2009; Voza & Greco 2016; Orestidis 2020; Orestidis, Giannakaki & Vlachou 2020.

117 Christou 1964; Christou 1965; Kourinou 2000: 109-14; Greco 2011: 67-74; Greco 2016: 122-28. Pausanias (3.11.2), in describing the agora, refers to a stoa built with the spoils from the Persian Wars. This stoa has been speculatively associated with Christou's Stoa or the Roman Stoa.

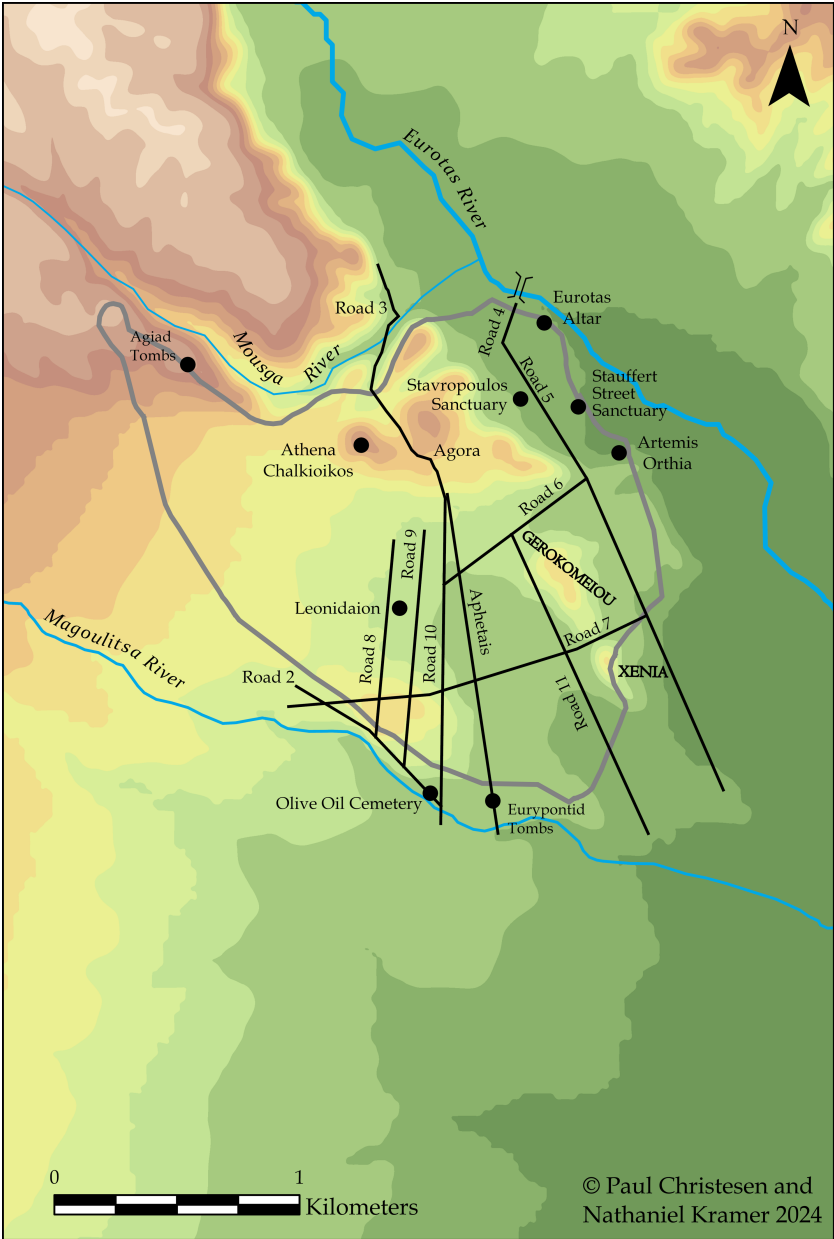


Figure 14: Tentative reconstruction of Sparta in the Archaic and Classical periods. The Hellenistic city wall is shown solely as a convenient landmark.

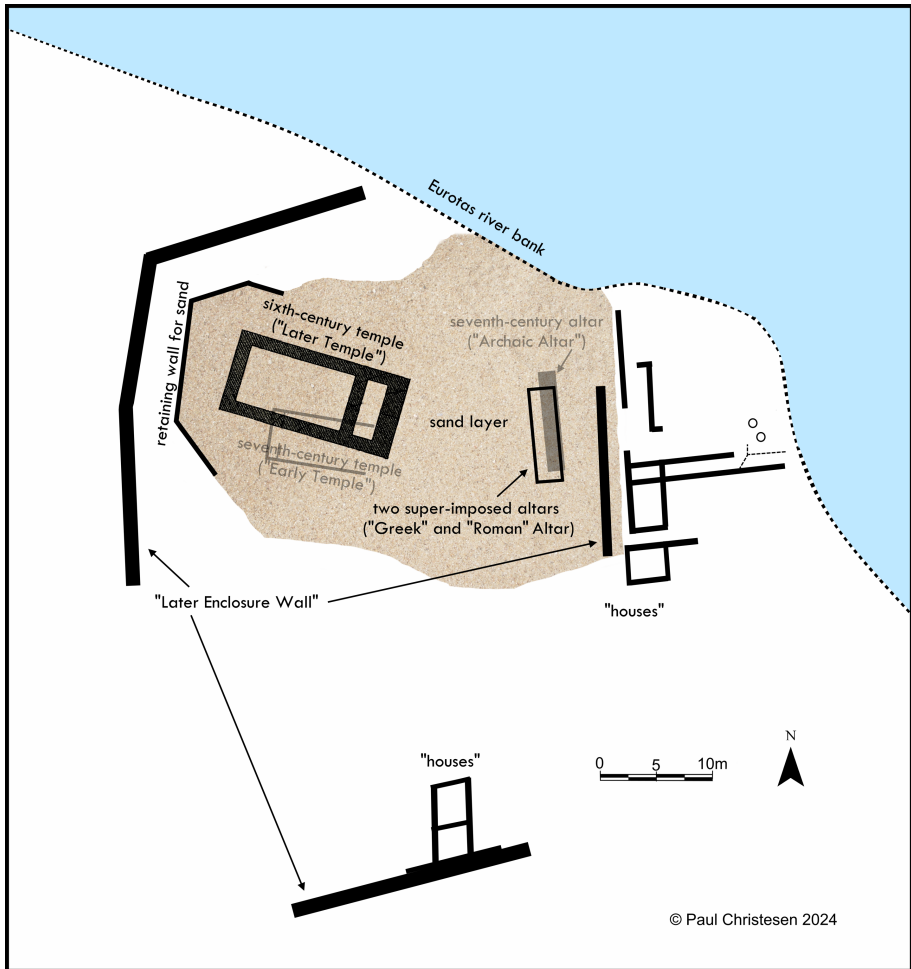


Figure 15: Plan of the Artemis Orthia sanctuary at the end of the Archaic period. The plan shows the extant stretches of the peribolos wall, which was presumably continuous.

part of the city. Its establishment probably reflects an increasing pressure on space in the city, which necessitated moving some (though not all burials) to its outer edges. It is noteworthy that the tombs in the cemetery were regularly destroyed, re-used, and built over to maximize the

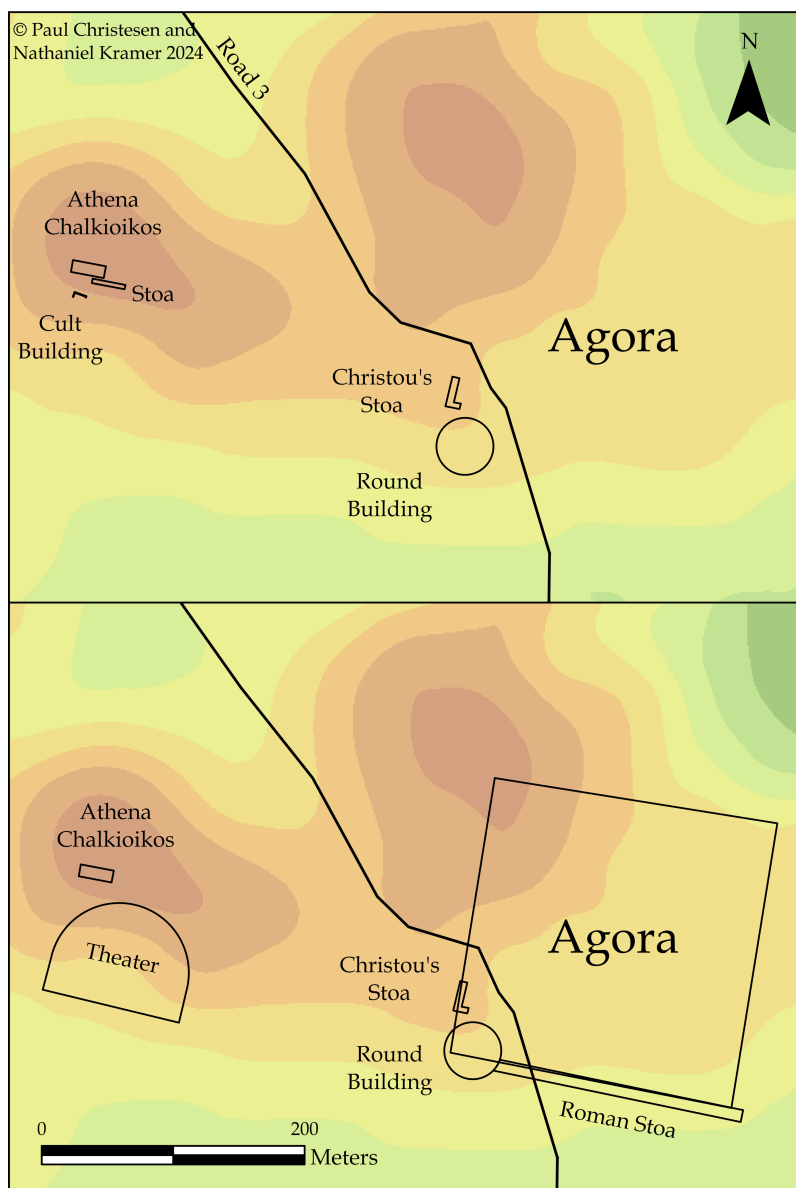


Figure 16a (above): Reconstruction of the layout of the Palaioikastro plateau in the Archaic and Classical periods.

Figure 16b (below): Reconstruction of the layout of the Palaioikastro plateau in the Roman period.

number of burials that could be placed within it.¹¹⁸ That cemetery remained in use through the Hellenistic period.

The archaeological evidence leaves little doubt that the number of the city's inhabitants and the amount of traffic into and out of the city grew substantially during the Archaic period, and it is likely that a bridge over the Eurotas, somewhere in the vicinity of the Medieval bridge, had been built by the end of the Archaic period at the latest. Polybius (5.22) writes that the Eurotas was difficult to ford much of the year, which would have made a bridge an important piece of infrastructure.

The increasingly dense settlement in the city suggests that important thoroughfares developed before the end of the Archaic period. Although the physical evidence for those thoroughfares is slight, it is possible to reconstruct the routes of some of them with some confidence. The obvious starting place is Aphetais Street, which may well have already existed in some form before the Archaic period. Excavations at the Olive Oil Cemetery uncovered a stretch of road (labeled Road 2 in Figure 14) running along the east bank of the Magoulitsa, the earliest roadbed of which dates to the Classical period, but which must have had an Archaic predecessor to provide access to the cemetery. The length of that road is impossible to reconstruct, but it probably intersected roads running roughly N-S and E-W and leading into the city proper. The main road leading northward to Arcadia ran along the west bank of the Eurotas, and it probably entered the city by running across the Palaiokastro plateau (Road 3). If there was a bridge over the Eurotas then there must have been a road leading from the bridge into the city proper (Road 4).

The likely routes of other roads can be traced based on topography and on strong evidence that intramural burials in Sparta were typically located along roadsides.¹¹⁹ The number of burials from the Archaic period is insufficient for this purpose, but if we make the plausible assumption that major thoroughfares in the city were established by the end of the Archaic period and maintained until the later Hellenistic period

118 Tsouli 2013; Christesen 2019: 325-28. Excavations in the cemetery produced some Geometric pottery, which cannot be definitively associated with any tombs and may reflect prior use of the space.

119 This approach is discussed in Christesen 2019: 332-35 and endorsed and validated in Tsouli 2020b.

(when the road network of Sparta underwent major changes), we can plot the locations of intracommunal burials from the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods and work from there.

That approach points to the existence of at least five other major roads:

- one (Road 5) running south from the bridge, between the eastern edge of the Palaiokastro plateau and the Eurotas River and giving access, among other things, to the sanctuaries along the Eurotas, including Artemis Orthia;
- one (Road 6) running roughly E-W, between the southern edge of the Palaiokastro plateau and the northern edge of Gerokomeiou Hill (the location of Artemis Orthia places it close to where Roads 5 and 6 would join);
- one (Road 7) running E-W between Gerokomeiou and Xenia Hills;
- three or four (Roads 8-11) leading south from the area of the agora.

The space south of the agora was roughly triangular, framed by the Magoulitsa on one side and Gerokomeiou and Xenia Hills on the other. The roads to the west of the agora thus ran a little to the west of N-S, and those to the east of the agora ran a little to the east of N-S. Road 10 presents some intriguing interpretive questions because it is close to the route later followed by Aphetais Street as suggested by Kourinou. It is possible that Kourinou's reconstruction of the route of Aphetais Street is incorrect and that Road 10 should be equated with a predecessor of Aphetais Street. However, the two roads would have diverged by more than 200 m farther south, so Road 10 and a predecessor of Aphetais Street may have been separate thoroughfares that converged as they approached the agora.

Pausanias saw the tombs of the Eurypontid kings at the southern end of Aphetais Street, and those of the Agiad kings in the northwestern part of the city. Kourinou persuasively argued that the Agiad tombs were located on the slopes of Vamvakia Hill. Pausanias saw, in the area that held the Agiad tombs, a marker erected in the early fifth century to celebrate

the achievements of the Spartan athlete Chionis.¹²⁰ It is probable, therefore, that both royal burial grounds had been established by the end of the Archaic period and did not move thereafter.

Classical Sparta

Pottery finds from 36 tiles indicate activity in the Classical period without offering any clear evidence for function. There is attested Classical activity at a total of 66 tiles (see Figure 17). As noted above, there is evidence for Archaic activity in 85 tiles, and the number of published intra-communal burials declines from 28 in the Archaic period to 17 in the Classical period. These differences are probably not a strong indication of diminished vitality of Sparta as an urban center. Tracing activity in Classical Sparta is complicated by two factors. First, there was a marked drop, both in Sparta and some other Greek settlements, in the number of dedications made at religious sanctuaries, with a concomitant diminution of archaeological visibility of those sanctuaries.¹²¹ Second, much of the pottery produced in Lakonia between c. 500 and the Hellenistic period was covered in black glaze with no additional decoration, which can make it difficult to date precisely.¹²² Insofar as there are no substantial extant structures that date to the Classical period, and we are aware of no substantial changes to the infrastructure of the city, the reconstruction of the layout of the city in Figure 14 also holds true for the Classical period.

In all likelihood, the extent of the densely settled part of the city was roughly the same in both the Archaic and Classical periods. An interesting development can be observed on the western slopes of Gerokomeiou Hill, which had served as religious/cult and funerary space starting in the Archaic period and received further burials and votives in the Classical period. That area also yielded evidence for craft production in the

120 Paus. 3.12.8, 3.14.2-3; Kourinou 2000: 212-13; Christesen 2010.

121 See, for example, Loy & Slawisch 2021.

122 See, for example, Bonias 1998: 55.

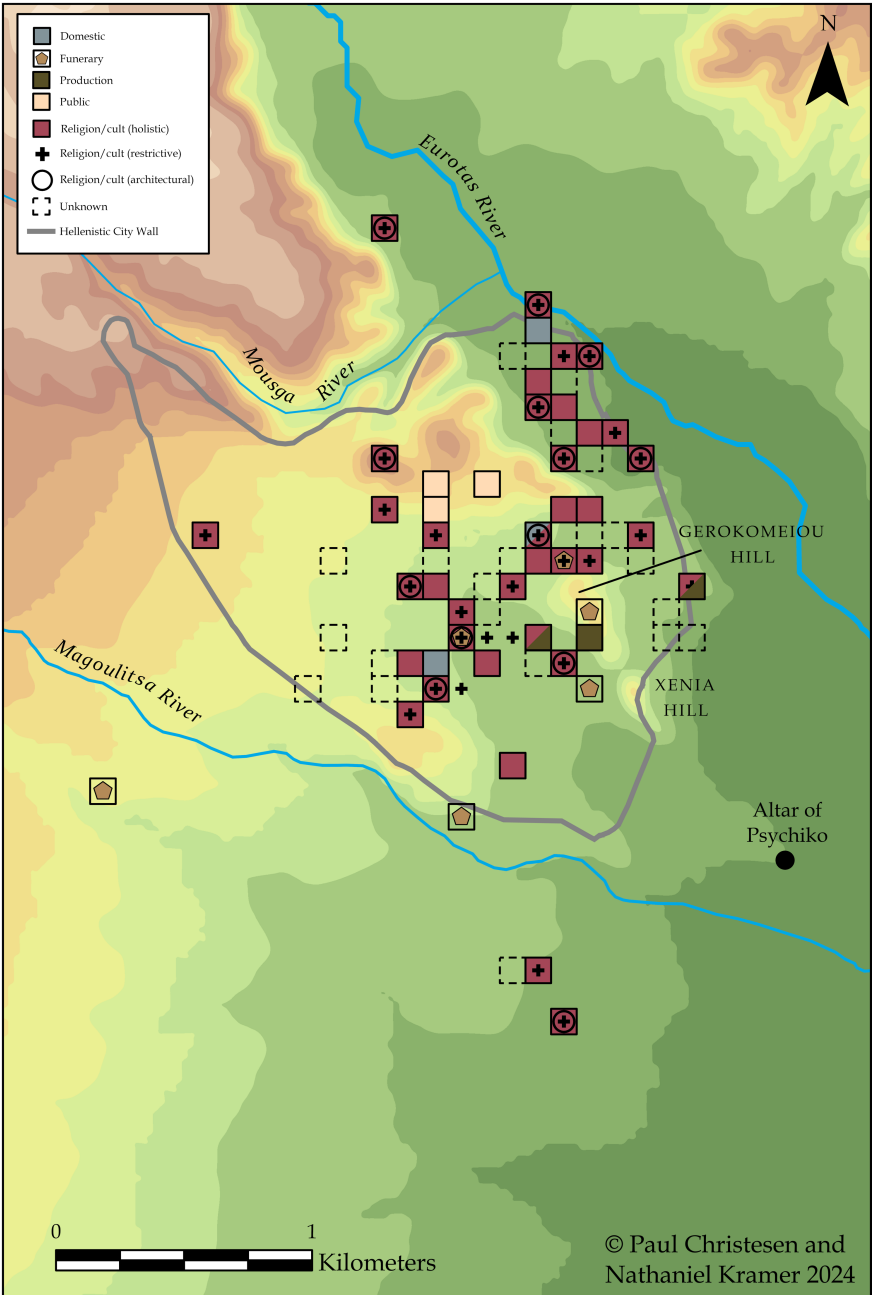


Figure 17: Sparta in the Classical period. The Hellenistic city wall is shown solely as a convenient landmark.

form of several molds for terracotta plaques.¹²³ In the early 20th century, Alan Wace noted, on the northern and eastern slopes of Xenia Hill, ‘traces of ancient potteries, which consisted of pits whence clay had been dug. They had afterwards been filled up with broken pots and other refuse from the kilns.’¹²⁴ Wace also records that clay was still being dug from this part of town and taken to kilns located a little to the southeast, in the area around the Altar of Psychiko. It seems likely, therefore, that there were clay beds on the slopes of both Gerokomeiou and Xenia Hills. As discussed in the previous section, there is minimal evidence for activity south of Xenia Hill, and the production site at the southern end of Gerokomeiou Hill and the burials just to the south both reinforce the conclusion that the densely settled part of the city did not extend south of Xenia Hill in the Classical period.

Any discussion of the settlement organization of Classical Sparta period must take into account Thucydides’ comparison of the relative grandeur of Athens and Sparta:

The fact that Mycenae was a small place – or that the buildings of any town of that period do not now seem very impressive – would not be a valid argument for doubting the scale of the expedition as related by the poets and maintained in the tradition. For example, if the city of Sparta were to become deserted, with only the temples and the foundations of buildings left to the view, I imagine that with the passage of time future generations would find it very hard to credit its reputed power. And yet the Spartans occupy two-fifths of the Peloponnese and lead the whole, as well as many external allies: but their dispersed settlement, devoid of temples or expensive buildings, more a collection of villages in the old Greek way [κατὰ κώμας δὲ τῷ παλαιῷ τῆς Ἑλλάδος τρόπῳ οἰκισθείσης], would seem rather disappointing. If the same happened to Athens, people would assume from the overt appearance that the city’s power was twice what it is.¹²⁵

123 Maltezou 2010b; Tsiangouris 2010c.

124 Wace 1907a: 6.

125 1.10; trans. M. Hammond.

This passage has typically been interpreted in light of evidence for the existence of *ōbai*, which lexicographical sources equate with *kōmai*.¹²⁶ The so-called Great Rhetra, probably a genuine document from the Archaic period, calls for the division of the Spartiate populace into *phylai* and *ōbai*.¹²⁷ Pausanias claims that at an early point in the history of Sparta, a quarrel arose between the inhabitants of Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana, all of which are characterized as *ōbai* in Roman-era inscriptions from Sparta.¹²⁸ Further evidence, such as tiles (originally used to cover the city wall) stamped with the inscription ΠΙΤΑΝΑΤΑΝ, has also been brought to bear.¹²⁹ In addition, Amyklai, c. 5 km south, is described as an *ōba* in an inscription dated on letter forms to the second or first century.¹³⁰ That would make five *ōbai*, which would help account for the existence in Sparta of magistracies, such as the ephorate, held by five individuals at the same time.¹³¹

These textual sources have led many scholars to attempt to locate the four *ōbai* of Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana within the larger space of the city of Sparta. Kourinou, for example, argued that each *ōba* had its own cemetery and on that basis identified burial clusters that could be interpreted as cemeteries and linked those clusters to specific *ōbai*, the locations of which are labeled on the map provided with her monograph.¹³²

However, Marcello Lupi has persuasively argued that the evidentiary basis for the idea that there were four distinct *ōbai* in Classical Sparta – Thucydides’ *kōmai* – is much weaker than it seems at first glance. The key problem is that it requires bringing together an enigmatic document from the Archaic period; a brief passage by Thucydides that may be shaped by a desire to draw a stark contrast between Athens and Sparta;

126 See Hesychius s.v. ὠάς, ὠβάι, ὠγή.

127 The scholarly literature on the Great Rhetra is voluminous. Fraggaki 2015 is a good starting place.

128 Paus. 3.16.9; IG V.1.674–88.

129 Wace 1907b: 42.

130 IG V.1.26.

131 Pareti 1917–1920: vol. 1: 173–87; Wade-Gery 1944.

132 Kourinou 2000: 88–95.

and inscriptions from the Hellenistic and Roman periods, when the sociopolitical system and urban fabric of Sparta had evolved in profound ways.¹³³

This is not the proper context for a thoroughgoing examination of the relevant evidence, but it is worth pointing out that the archaeological evidence shows no signs of the existence of four distinct nuclei within Sparta during the Classical period, or any other period. The visualizations included in this article help make that apparent, and we have shown elsewhere that examination of the locations of the 400+ published intracommunal burials in Sparta using the spatial analysis tool known as Moran's Index reveals very little in the way of the consistent clustering one would expect if there were four distinct *ōbai*, each with its own cemetery.¹³⁴

The absence of archaeological evidence for four distinct *ōbai* is consistent with Thucydides' observations on Sparta. Thucydides makes no mention of *ōbai* and does not have anything to say about a specific number of settlement nuclei. His phrase κατὰ κώμας δὲ τῷ παλαιῷ τῆς Ἑλλάδος τρόπῳ οἰκισθείσης can be interpreted as simply indicating that Sparta was less densely settled than Athens.

Hellenistic Sparta

The steep decline in the power of Lakedaimon that began with the Battle of Leuktra in 371 affected the settlement organization of Sparta: by the end of the fourth century, the city, which had not previously been fortified, was being strengthened by simple defensive works at particularly weak points. A complete circuit wall was built by the late third century; that wall was destroyed in 188 and rebuilt shortly thereafter.¹³⁵

The archaeological evidence for Hellenistic Sparta shows some interesting changes from the preceding period. Pottery finds from 82 tiles in-

133 Lupi 2006.

134 Christesen & Kramer forthcoming.

135 The relevant evidence, most of which is textual, is reviewed in detail in Kourinou 2000: 35-88.

dedicate activity in the Hellenistic period without offering any clear evidence for function (see Figure 18). There is attested Hellenistic activity at a total of 117 tiles. Notable changes from the Classical period include a sharp increase in attested domestic space (from 3 to 21 tiles), a drop in religion/cult space (37 to 27 tiles), and increasing complexity in the urban fabric in the form of water supply (0 to 7 tiles), transport (0 to 10 tiles), and production space (3 to 9 tiles).

The apparent rise in demand for domestic space in Sparta may have been linked to geopolitical realities in Lakonia; as the security situation in Lakonia deteriorated, it became increasingly desirable to live within the space protected by Sparta's newly built wall. During the Theban invasion of Lakonia in 370-369, a force of Lakedaimonian hoplites guarded the city of Sparta, and the Thebans contented themselves with pillaging wealthy homes on the east bank of the Eurotas. When Philip II invaded Lakonia in the 330s, the same pattern played out – the city remained safe, but the area around it suffered badly.¹³⁶

Though tempting, it is impossible to attribute the decline in space devoted to religion/cult to the increase in domestic space inside the city. Only three tiles classified as religious/cult in the Classical period were converted to domestic space in the Hellenistic period. Several factors – e.g. problems with archaeological visibility, shifts in religious practice – could explain the decline in the amount of space devoted to religion/cult, and it is not feasible at the moment to propose a definitive explanation of this change. The finds from both the Chalkioikos and Orthia sanctuaries demonstrate that cult activity continued through the Hellenistic period and into the Roman period, and the temple at the Orthia sanctuary underwent a major renovation in the Hellenistic period.¹³⁷

136 Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.27; Polyb. 5.22-3.

137 Dawkins 1929a.

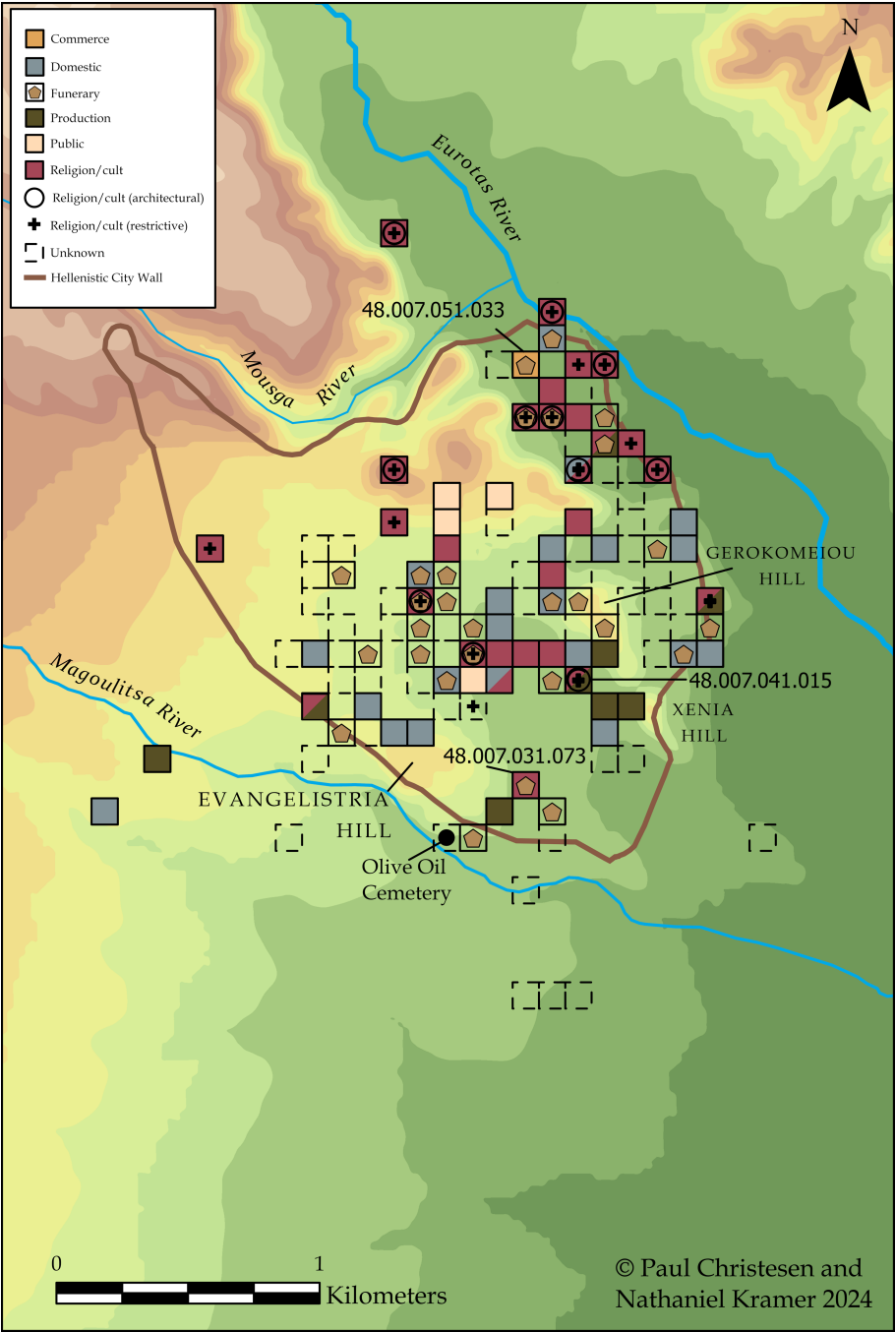


Figure 18: Sparta in the Hellenistic period.

It is not possible to determine the specific supernatural being worshipped at most of the cult sites in Sparta known solely through rescue excavations. However, excavations in Tile 48.007.041.015 (BB047) uncovered extensive Hellenistic remains including a votive base with an inscription dedicating it to the Mother of the Gods (MS 14956), a small *stēlē* with a female figure in relief (MS 15380), and numerous other votives.¹³⁸ These finds led the excavators to conclude that there was a sanctuary of the Mother of the Gods in the area. The sanctuary in question may be τὸ δὲ ἱερὸν τῆς Μεγάλης μητρός mentioned by Pausanias in his description of Aphetais Street.¹³⁹

The archaeological evidence shows that the area within the newly built fortification wall was for the most part densely settled. However, the area south of Evangelistria and Xenia Hills seems to have remained largely uninhabited. Just to the south of Evangelistria Hill there is evidence for production, religion/cult, and burials, and just to the south of Xenia Hill there is evidence for production and just one tile with evidence of domestic use.

Hellenistic Sparta seems to have had an increasingly elaborate network of roads and water supply pipes. In the Archaic and Classical periods, there were one and three tiles, respectively, with evidence of roads, and no evidence of a public water supply or drainage system. This changes in the Hellenistic period, for which we have 10 tiles with roads and 7 tiles with water supply or drainage installations.

The earliest evidence for commercial space in Sparta outside of the agora dates to the Hellenistic period and comes from the northeastern part of the city (Tile 48.007.051.033, BB189). Excavations in that tile uncovered a nearly 70-m long section of road running N/NE-S/SW, and heading toward the area of the bridge over the Eurotas. A stoa of mud-brick construction, dating to the Hellenistic period, ran along the western side of the road. Though few coins were found, a large quantity of pottery including pithoi and the position of the stoa along one of the main roads in Sparta indicate that this was a commercial space.¹⁴⁰

Figure 19 offers a tentative reconstruction of the layout of the city of

138 Zavvou 2003; MS = Sparta Museum inventory number.

139 Paus. 3.12.9.

140 Maltezou 2011; Tsouli 2014.

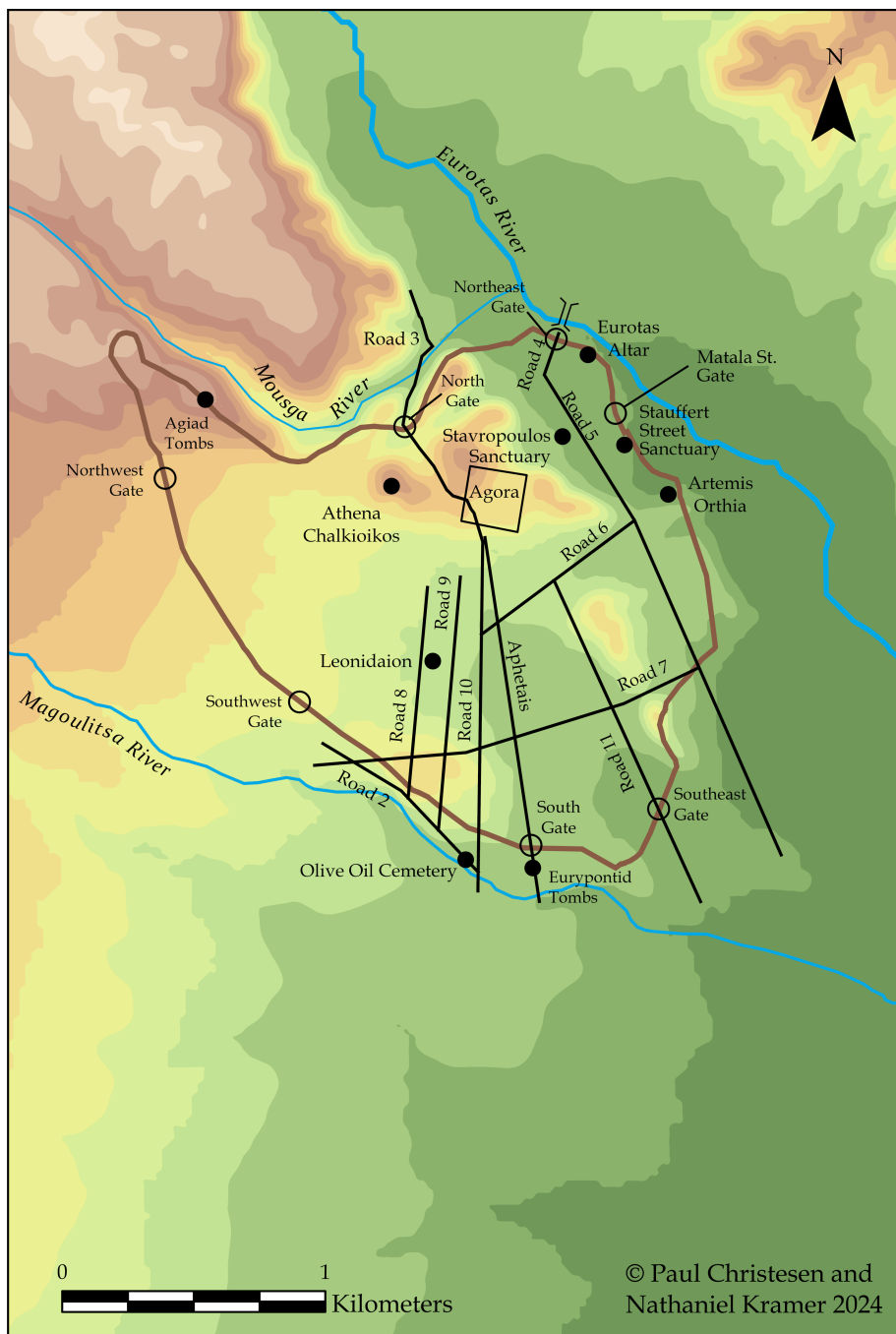


Figure 19: Tentative reconstruction of Sparta in the Hellenistic period.

Sparta in the Hellenistic period. There were several gates in the Hellenistic fortification wall, though it is impossible to establish their precise number. The literary sources mention three gates: one at the Eurotas, one leading to 'Pharas,' and one leading to 'Barbosthenes.'¹⁴¹ Scholars have attempted to establish the location of some of the gates in the city wall based on textual evidence, topography, and the location of the main bridge over the Eurotas.¹⁴² The first relevant archaeological evidence emerged in 1972, when excavations revealed a section of the fortification wall and an adjacent road along the bank of the Eurotas. Due to the site's proximity to the modern bridge and the remains of a Medieval bridge, the excavator argued that this must be very near the site of an ancient gate.¹⁴³

Kourinou, using the aforementioned evidence as well as the location of cemeteries and the assumption that Sparta in the Hellenistic and Roman periods had a regular street grid, postulated the existence of six gates:¹⁴⁴

- the North Gate, through which the main road to Arcadia would have run;¹⁴⁵
- the Northeast Gate, at the bridge over the Eurotas, which Kourinou tentatively identified with the gate to Barbosthenes;
- the Southeast Gate, which would have provided access to the Menelaion;
- the South Gate, through which Aphetais Street would have passed;
- the Southwest Gate, which would have provided access to areas to the west of the city;
- the Northwest Gate, which would have provided access to areas to the northwest of the city.

141 Eurotas gate: Polyb. 5.23.10. Pharas and Barbosthenes gates: Livy 5.30.9.

142 See, for instance, Crosby 1893: 347; Wace 1907a: 6-7, 9-10; Bölte 1929: 1356-57.

143 Steinhauer 1972a.

144 Kourinou 2000: 67-75.

145 Adamantiou 1931; Adamantiou 1934.

The existence and positions of these gates are more secure in some cases than others. The existence and position of the Northeast Gate, for example, is a near certainty, whereas the existence and position of the Northwest Gate are largely speculative.

In 2010, a rescue excavation uncovered a gate (here called the Matala Street Gate based on its location in the modern city), c. 350 m south of the postulated Northeast Gate. The Matala Street Gate – the first tangible remains of a gate in the Hellenistic city wall – was narrow (c. 3 m) and reinforced with a tower. A segment of a road, burials, and a production site, all of Hellenistic date, were uncovered in the immediate vicinity. The proximity of this gate to the Northeast Gate is somewhat surprising; it was presumably intended to give access to the area between the city wall and the west bank of the Eurotas.¹⁴⁶

The same combination of road, burials, and production site is attested at one other location in Sparta, close to the line of the Hellenistic wall, and this may indicate the position of Kourinou's South Gate. Excavations in Tile 48.007.031.073 (BB034) revealed a number of stamped roof tiles, which were used among other things to cover the fortification wall. In the same spatial tile, two sections of a Hellenistic road were discovered. In the adjacent spatial tile to the southwest, a large production site that included a Hellenistic ceramic kiln was discovered. The Olive Oil cemetery is situated a little further to the southwest.

There were certainly major changes in the urban fabric of Sparta during the Hellenistic period, but at present most of them (e.g. the elaboration of the road network) are insufficiently documented to place on a plan. As a result, the only major change between the reconstructions offered here for the Archaic/Classical and Hellenistic periods (Figures 14 and 19) is the presence of the fortification wall and gates. We assume that the major thoroughfares from earlier periods continued to exist for much of the Hellenistic period.

146 Vlachakos 2010.

Roman Sparta

The Roman period is, in terms of the quantity of physical remains and their state of preservation, by far the best attested era in the history of Sparta; most rescue excavations in Sparta uncover Roman material of one kind or another. This is in part the result of the Roman habit of using durable construction materials such as bricks, cement, and concrete; the decline of the size of the city in the Byzantine period, which left many Roman structures undisturbed ruins; and the abandonment of the city in the 13th century CE.¹⁴⁷

Pottery finds from 92 tiles indicate activity in the Roman period without offering any clear evidence for function. There is attested Roman activity at a total of 141 tiles (see Figure 20). Domestic space overtakes religious/cult space (58 domestic tiles; 17 religion/cult tiles). Many of the domestic spaces in Roman Sparta seem to have been more luxurious than their earlier counterparts. This is most immediately apparent from the existence of 91 mosaics found in 40 tiles (see Figure 21). The majority of these (55/91 mosaics and 34/40 tiles) are from domestic spaces. Four belong to a possible public building, and the other 32 are from bathhouses (see below). As there are 58 tiles with domestic activity, 59% of all domestic tiles have at least one mosaic.

The expansion of domestic space was not uniform throughout the area enclosed by the Hellenistic fortification wall. In the northeastern part of the city, only four tiles have evidence of domestic space. This area, which was marshy and intermittently flooded by the Eurotas, was probably not a desirable spot for affluent homeowners. The vast majority of the mosaics have been found south of the Palaiokastros plateau and west of Gerokomeiou Hill; that area seems to have been the most desirable living space in Roman Sparta. Further evidence that this might be the wealthy section of town comes from Tile 48.006.050.026 (BB140). The remains of an extensive Roman villa were found in this tile and included mosaics portraying members of the Imperial family. Steinhauer,

147 The city of Sparta in the Roman period is the subject of one of the chapters (pp. 127-42) in Cartledge & Spawforth 2002.

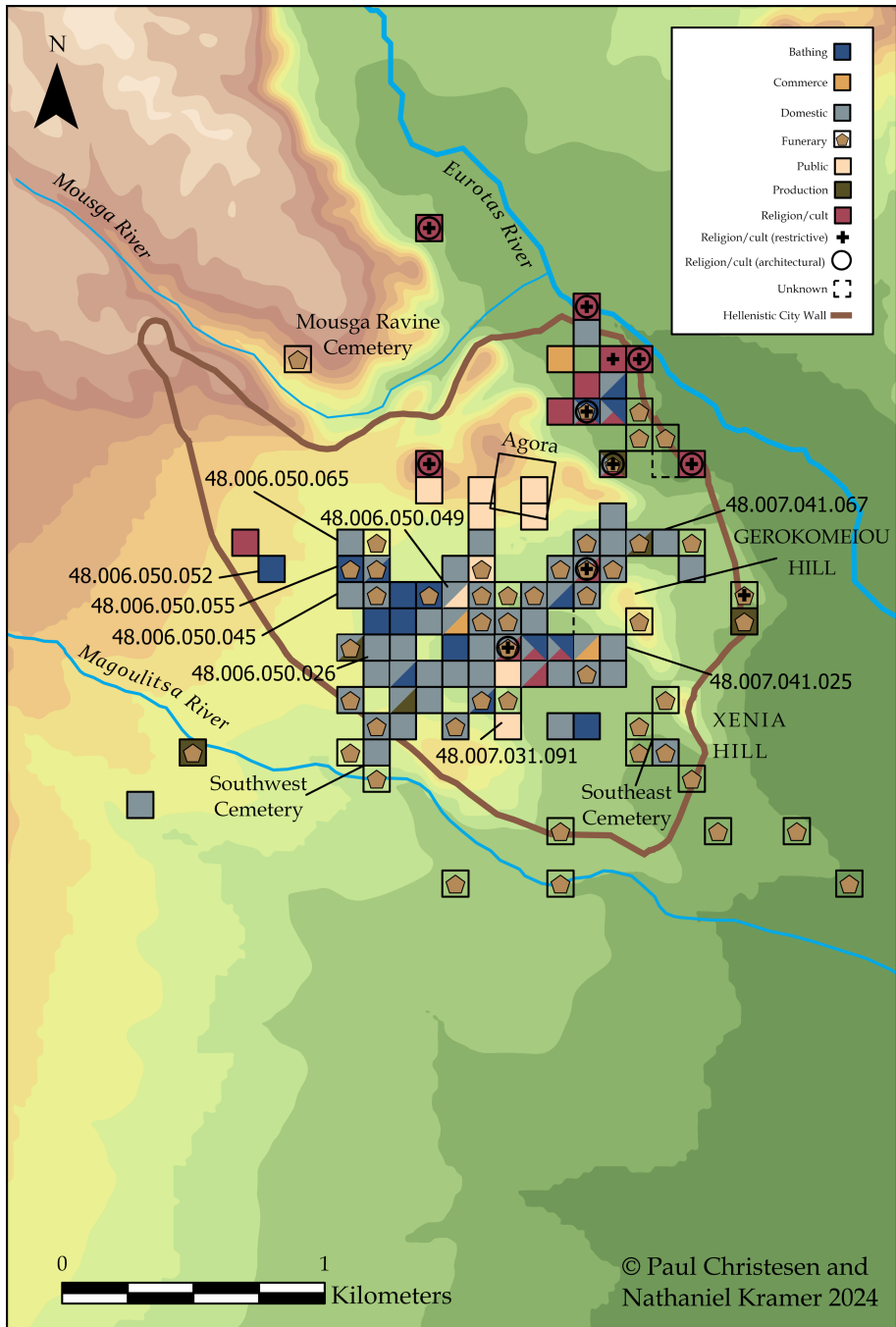


Figure 20: Sparta in the Roman period.

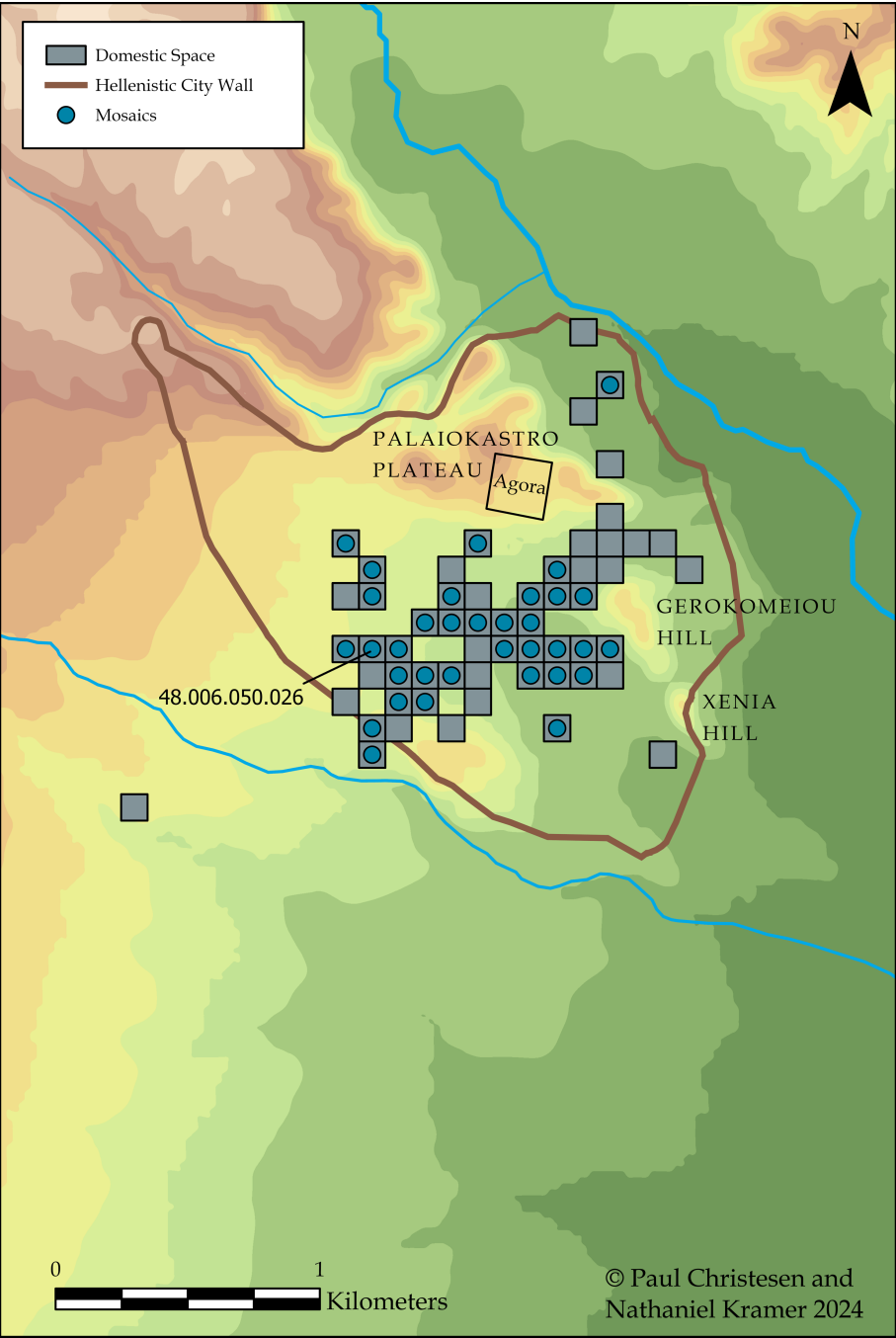


Figure 21: Domestic space and mosaics in Roman Sparta.

who excavated the site, claims that it was the villa of the Eurykleidai, the most powerful family in Roman Sparta.¹⁴⁸

There is a notable decrease in the number of tiles with attested religion/cult activity (from 28 in the Hellenistic to 17 in the Roman period). The reasons for this change are not immediately apparent, but it almost certainly can be explained at least in part by two factors: (1) centralization of cultic activity into clearly defined, large public spaces, and (2) more cultic activity taking place in private homes. Pausanias mentions around 100 cult sites in Sparta, which leaves a substantial gap between the material and textual records. Many of the religious spaces described by Pausanias were situated in public areas, especially the agora, that have not been excavated.

Elaborate private residences in at least some cases contained religious spaces, which may reflect a shift toward conducting cultic activity inside the home rather than at a sanctuary. What appears to be the remains of a shrine in a private house were uncovered in Tile 48.007.041.067 (BB115).¹⁴⁹ A complex of architectural remains of Roman date in that tile includes a small square structure, made of rough worked stone and clay and lined with painted mortar, in the corner of a room. The excavators identified the square structure as a shrine to Dionysus, based on the votive offerings – a nearly life-size terracotta statue of Dionysus, terracotta figurines, masks – found in and around it. Given the nature of the finds in the rest of the complex, the square structure was probably a family shrine in an elaborate private residence.

The drop in religion/cult space is not evenly distributed throughout the Roman city. Whereas the northeastern area of the city maintains the densest concentration of religion/cult tiles, the number of such tiles in the area to the south of Palaiokastros declined precipitously. Moreover, much of the space used for domestic purposes in the Roman period had religion/cult functions in earlier periods: 16 of the 58 tiles with domestic activity in the Roman period had attested religious/cult activity in ear-

148 Steinbauer 2009: 274; for more on the Eurykleidai, see Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 97–105. For the excavation report from the area, see Zavvou 2004.

149 Tsouli 2010.

lier periods but not the Roman period. There is thus good reason to believe that strong demand for residential space in the most desirable part of the city led to a reduction in the number of cult sites in that area.

As we have seen, the roads and water supply system in Sparta underwent a significant expansion in the Hellenistic period. For the Roman period, 36 tiles have produced evidence for roads, and 34 tiles for water supply or drainage systems (see Figure 22). Much of the earlier road and water supply network was rebuilt, and in some cases the routes of roads and pipes may have changed.¹⁵⁰

There is a curious phenomenon surrounding Spartan roads, starting in the Hellenistic period. Many roads from this period are preserved only in fragments and mentioned in excavation reports without direction. Yet most of the roads discovered in the Roman layers had underlying roadbeds dating back to the Hellenistic period. This implies that there were two separate road networks during the Hellenistic period. One of them was most likely the original, organic road network that had taken shape in much earlier periods, and the other was that laid down in the later Hellenistic period, possibly after Greece became a Roman province.¹⁵¹

Figure 23 supplies a tentative reconstruction of the layout of Roman Sparta. Using the available evidence from the 57 sections of Roman road discovered to date and the locations of the 126 known Roman-period intracommunal burials, it is possible to tentatively reconstruct the second/later Hellenistic road network, which seems to have been carried over into the Roman period.¹⁵²

The available evidence indicates that there was a considerable degree of continuity in Sparta's road network from earlier periods through the later Hellenistic and Roman periods. For example, the two major E-W routes, one running between the Palaiokastro plateau and Gerokomeiou Hill and the other between Gerokomeiou and Xenia Hills, did not change.

150 Themis 1994.

151 Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 86.

152 The road network in Sparta did not follow cardinal directions, so the descriptions of road orientations in many excavation reports (e.g. NW-SE) are insufficiently precise to create an accurate reconstruction.

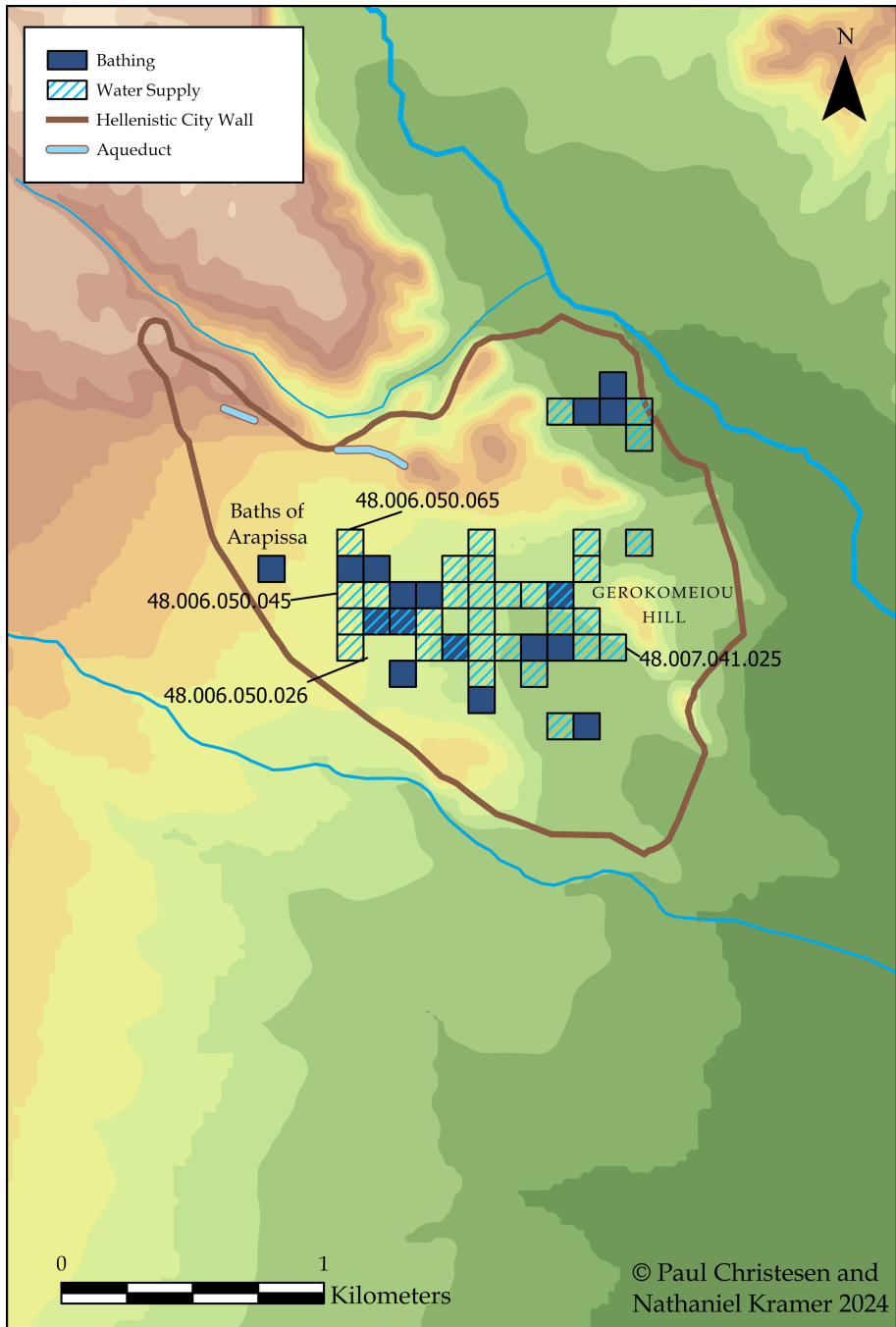


Figure 22: Bathhouses and water supply in Roman Sparta.

This is as one would expect given that the city did not suffer a catastrophic destruction at any point so the building of a completely new road network on a different orientation than before would have been quite disruptive. The reconstruction offered here suggests that even in the Roman period Sparta did not have a street grid with consistent spacing between roads that invariably ran perpendicular and parallel to each other. This contradicts both Kourinou's assertion of a regular grid running NE-SW and NW-SE, and Steinhauer's suggestion of regular *insulae* measuring either 52×52 or 52×104 m.¹⁵³

Two aqueducts supplied Roman Sparta with water. One began in the vicinity of the modern village of Trypi, c. 7 km northwest of Sparta, the other near modern Vivari, c. 12 km north of Sparta (see Figure 1).¹⁵⁴ The water from these aqueducts fed an array of bathhouses; there are as many tiles with evidence of bathing activity in the Roman period as there are tiles with evidence for religion/cult (17). The Arapissa baths (Tile 48.006.050.052), which covered a large area (at least 155×135 m), were constructed in the second or third century CE.¹⁵⁵ They were located near a terminus of one of the aqueducts in the northwestern corner of Sparta, and most of the tiles with evidence for baths are situated along a line running southeast from that part of the city. This suggests that many of Sparta's baths were purposefully built along one of the main water supply lines of the city.

Public spaces in Sparta resembled those in other Greek cities of the Roman period. A road to the south of the Palaiokastro plateau was adorned with a colonnade or stoa (Tile 48.006.050.049, BB126).¹⁵⁶ Two secular Roman basilicas were discovered in Tile 48.007.031.091 (BB031A) and Tile 48.006.050.055 (BB130).¹⁵⁷ A massive theater was, in the last third of the first century, built into the west slope of the Palaiokastro plateau (see Figure 16b). This theater, which accommodated c. 17,000 people, was

153 Kourinou 2000: 139-54; Steinhauer 2009: 273-74.

154 Kourinou 2000: 221-7.

155 Wace 1906b; Palagia 1989.

156 Steinhauer 1973-1974a.

157 Steinhauer 1973a; Vasilogambrou, Tsouli & Maltezou 2018: 336.

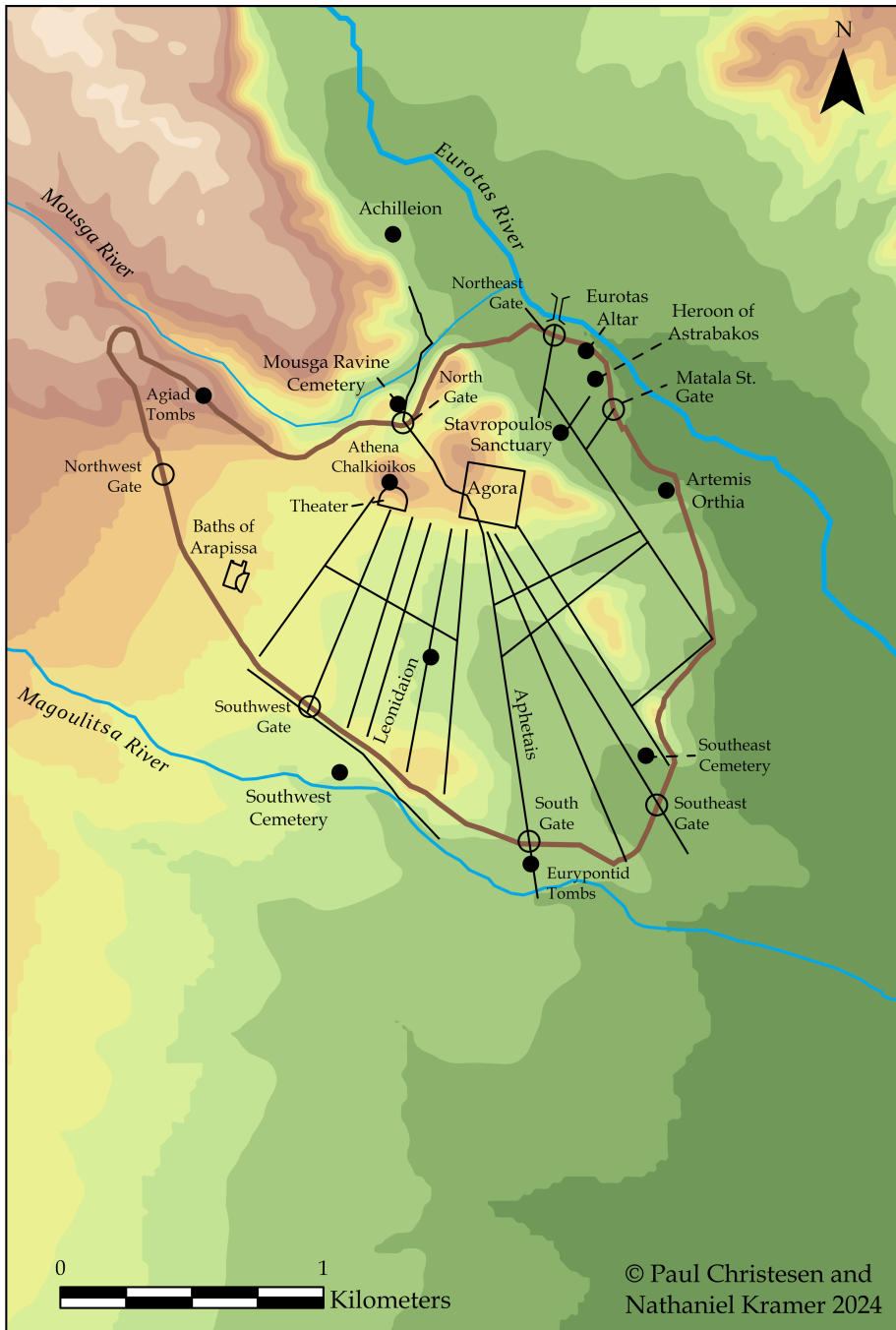


Figure 23: Tentative reconstruction of Sparta in the Roman period.

built during a period when C. Julius Eurykles ruled Sparta, thanks in large part to his close connection with the Julio-Claudians. Eurykles and/or the Julio-Claudians probably funded the construction of the theater.¹⁵⁸

Pausanias' description of the agora gives the impression of a large space that was packed with monuments of various kinds. Pausanias does not seem to mention the most prominent extant Roman-era structure from the agora: the Roman Stoa. This building, 187.6 m long and dated to the second quarter of the second century CE, was situated partly on the Palaiokastro plateau and partly on the lower ground to the south. It had facades (probably colonnaded) on both its north and south sides.¹⁵⁹ The locations of some prominent features of Sparta described by Pausanias, e.g. the athletic complex that he calls the Dromos, remain uncertain and hence cannot be placed on a map.¹⁶⁰

Sparta became in the Roman period something of a living museum that attracted visitors who came, among other things, to witness the *bōmolochia*, a supposedly Lycurgan practice of enduring lashings at the altar of the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia. Spectators at the Orthia sanctuary were accommodated by the construction of an amphitheater in the third century CE.¹⁶¹

Although intracommunal burials were made in Sparta throughout the Roman period, a major extracommunal cemetery, typically referred to as the Southwestern Cemetery, was established in the late Hellenistic period (first century; Tiles 48.006.040.076, 48.006.040.085). Based on the available preliminary reports, roughly 1,000 tombs have been uncovered in that cemetery, which remained in use throughout the Roman period.¹⁶² A second, smaller, extracommunal cemetery was established in

158 Waywell & Wilkes 1995; Waywell & Wilkes 1999; Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 97–104; Waywell 2002.

159 See Waywell & Wilkes 1994; Del Basso 2022. It is possible that this structure should be equated with Pausanias' Persian Stoa.

160 Paus. 3.14.2–5. For discussion of the location of the Dromos, see Sanders 2009.

161 Dawkins 1929a; Cic. *Tusc.* 2.34, 2.46, 5.77.

162 The most thorough preliminary report (Themos, Maltezou, Pantou et al. 2009) mentions more than 700 tombs, but further tombs belonging to the same cemetery have been excavated since then (see, for example, Tsouli & Papagiannis 2010).

the Roman period in the Mousga ravine.¹⁶³ A cluster of 46 intramural burials – sometimes referred to as the Southeastern Cemetery – developed in the Roman period in the area to the west and southwest of Xenia Hill (Tiles 48.007.031.086-7, 48.007.031.096). This cluster lies within the Hellenistic wall circuit, in a part of the city in which there had been little activity in preceding periods. The space was, as a result, available to receive a substantial number of burials.¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

Thucydides drew a strong contrast between Athens and Lakedaimon, not only in terms of their sociopolitical systems and military assets, but also in terms of the layout of their main urban centers (1.10). That contrast has remained a persistent feature of the modern scholarship on the two polities, despite Stephen Hodkinson's arguments that Lakedaimon was in many ways similar to a 'normal' *polis*.¹⁶⁵ In the absence of a suitable assemblage of evidence, modern comparisons of Athens and Lakedaimon have typically focused on sociopolitical and military issues and not seriously engaged with Thucydides' comments on the divergences between the settlement organization of Athens and Sparta.¹⁶⁶

The preceding discussion offers new insights into many aspects of Sparta's settlement organization, which in turn makes it possible to think anew about the similarities and differences between Athens and Sparta. Athens was clearly a much larger and more important settlement than Sparta in the Bronze Age. This is most immediately apparent from the absence in Sparta of any structure that required the sort of investment of resources that were poured into the Mycenaean fortification wall around the Athenian acropolis. The same gap between the relative size (and presumably local importance) of Athens and Sparta continued into the Submycenaean, Protogeometric, and Geometric periods. During

163 Adamantiou 1931; Adamantiou 1934.

164 Tsouli 2020a: 153-54.

165 Hodkinson 2009.

166 See, for example, Powell 2016.

that time frame, several substantial cemeteries were established in Athens (traces of habitation remain elusive), whereas there is minimal evidence for activity in Submycenaean Sparta, and it is only in the Protogeometric period that the Palaiokastro plateau emerges as the focus of settlement in a fashion that is comparable to the acropolis of Athens. Large-scale cemeteries remain unattested in Sparta through the end of the Geometric period.¹⁶⁷

In the Archaic period, the settlement organization of the two cities, both of which were the main urban centers of expansive polities, diverged in important ways. The acropolis of Athens remained surrounded by a fortification wall, and by the end of the Archaic period had been adorned with multiple peripteral temples. The city around the acropolis was embellished through major investments in cult sites (e.g. the unfinished Olympieion) and infrastructure (e.g. the water pipeline constructed by the Peisistratids and public fountain houses). The agora emerged as a civic and commercial center that featured multiple governmental buildings. Burials were concentrated in large, extracommunal cemeteries.¹⁶⁸ In Sparta, on the other hand, peripteral temples are entirely lacking, and investment in religious architecture seems to have been spread out over many sites rather than focused in a spectacular way on fewer sites, as in Athens. In a similar vein, there is no evidence for the construction of water pipelines or public fountain houses. The public structures that were erected (e.g. the Round Building, Christou's Stoa) seem to have been less numerous and impressive than their counterparts in Athens. The first known extracommunal cemetery in Sparta was established in this period, but it was relatively small, and intracommunal burials continued in some numbers. In general, Athens seems to have been a more developed urban center than Sparta during the Archaic period.

The divergence between Athens and Sparta as urban centers increased during the Classical period. Little need be said here of the massive investments Athenians made in public structures, including the Themistoklean fortification wall, the Long Walls, the Periclean and Lycurgan building programs, and the construction of elaborate naval and

167 Papadopoulos 2021.

168 Camp II 2021; Costaki & Theodoraki 2021; Shea 2021; Stroszeck 2021; Valavanis 2021.

commercial port facilities in the Peiraeus. In Sparta, there seems if anything to have been less investment in public structures than in the Archaic period; the only substantive architectural addition to the city of which we are aware is the Persian Stoa (the remains of which have not been definitively identified).¹⁶⁹ However we interpret the precise meaning of Thucydides' choice of words, the archaeological evidence indicates that he was justified in assessing the splendor of Sparta as being in no way comparable to that of Athens of his time.

During the Hellenistic period, Sparta seems to have begun to converge with Athens in terms of settlement organization. Sparta received its first fortification wall, and a large-scale extracommunal cemetery was laid out. The temple at the Orthia sanctuary was rebuilt, and a new road network was constructed. Cult activity became less dispersed.

Sparta developed into a typical Roman city with all the amenities found in Athens and other urban centers in the Empire. The city was the terminus of two aqueducts, which supplied water to an array of bath-houses. A massive theater was constructed on the acropolis, the southern end of the agora was embellished with a large stoa, and an amphitheater was built in the Orthia sanctuary.

Although the research presented here offers a more nuanced picture of the settlement organization of Sparta than has heretofore been possible, much work remains to be done. Our database will be progressively enhanced as new volumes of the *Archailogikon Deltion* are published. In addition, the incorporation of categories of material, e.g. high-resolution drawings, that have not to this point been available to us would make it feasible to reconstruct the city in a more fine-grained fashion. Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that the evidence from rescue excavations, when compiled and visualized using the remarkable capacities of GIS, helps pull back the veil that has long hung over the city of Sparta.

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169 Paus. 3.11.3; Del Basso 2022.

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