

WHERE DID SPARTIATES LIVE? THE LAKEDAIMONIAN *ōbai* AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN THE SPARTAN PLAIN FROM THE ARCHAIC TO THE ROMAN PERIOD

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Summary: The current scholarly consensus is that, from the Archaic through the Roman periods, all Spartiates belonged to one of five locality-based groupings (*ōbai*) and that each *ōba* was linked to a particular settlement nucleus, four of which were located in Sparta and one at Amyklai. All Spartiates thus ostensibly lived in Sparta or Amyklai. Based on a comprehensive review of the textual evidence and an exposition of the relevant archaeological data (which is largely absent from prior treatments of this subject matter), I argue that the city of Sparta was never divided into four *ōbai*/settlement nuclei and that there was an important element of diachronic change: during the Archaic and Classical periods, Spartiates lived in an unknowable number of *ōbai* tied to settlements scattered throughout the Eurotas river valley, but, starting sometime in the late fourth or third century BCE most Spartiates found it expedient to live in or near Sparta.

1. Introduction

This article addresses a deceptively simple question: where did Spartiates live?¹ The prevailing response to that question was most influentially articulated by H.T. Wade-Gery in the mid-20th century. Wade-

- 1 Thanks are due to Paul Cartledge, Aryeh Lesch, and the anonymous reviewers of the journal for their comments on earlier versions of this article. I also benefited from the opportunity to present part of the argumentation offered here at a conference organized by Florentia Fragkopoulou and Nicolette Pavlides at the British School at

Gery's views can be summarized as follows: the primary purpose of the Lycurgan reforms was to strengthen the Lakedaimonian army.² Those reforms included the Great Rhetra, which created five new "tribes based on domicile" called *ōbai*, each of which was linked to a military unit and a distinct settlement nucleus. Four of those *ōbai* – Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, Pitana – were situated in the city of Sparta, while the fifth was located at Amyklai (c. 5 km south of Sparta).³ All adult male Spartiates had to be enrolled in one of the five *ōbai* and hence resided in Sparta or Amyklai. The area around Sparta lacked any substantive settlements other than the four *ōbai* and Amyklai: "Laconia had no inhabited centres except Sparta (*plus* Amyklai) on the one hand, and on the other the towns of the *perioikoi*."⁴ Wade-Gery believed that this combination of sociopolitical institutions and residential arrangements came into being in the late seventh century BCE, with the enactment of the Great Rhetra, and continued to function through the end of the Roman period. Throughout the discussion that follows, I refer to this view of where Spartiates lived; the nature, number, and location of *ōbai*; and settlement patterns in the vicinity of Sparta as the "current orthodoxy."

The current orthodoxy has proven to be remarkably persistent, even though the supporting evidence is far from abundant and the methodology on which it is based has fallen out of favor. Wade-Gery relied heavily on (1) the assumption that the Lycurgan reforms were driven by military considerations, (2) a brief and enigmatic provision in the Great Rhetra that calls for creating *phylai* and *ōbai*,⁵ (3) the importance of colleges of five officials in the Lakedaimonian government (most obviously the ephors) and what he took to be convincing evidence for the division of the Lakedaimonian army in some periods into five major units, and (4) inscriptions from Sparta and dating to the first through third centuries CE that attest to the existence of four or possibly five *ōbai*. The sole function

Athens in September, 2024. Responsibility for the views expressed here and for any errors or omissions is solely my own.

2 See Section 5.2 for a detailed discussion of Wade-Gery's work and relevant citations.

3 An additional *ōba*, Neopolis, was created in the third century BCE. See n. 190. For the location of Amyklai, see Figure 16 in Section 7.

4 Wade-Gery 1958: 78.

5 See Section 3.1 for the text.

performed by the *ōbai* in those inscriptions is organizing a ballgame contested by boys passing through the state educational system.⁶ Wade-Gery took it as a given that Lakedaimonian institutions remained essentially unchanged over the course of centuries. As a result, he saw no difficulty in reconstructing a political and residential system that he claimed came into being with the enactment of the Great Rhetra in the late seventh century BCE on the basis of texts about ballgames that were inscribed several hundred years later.⁷

The evidentiary basis of the current orthodoxy leaves something to be desired, but its biggest single defect is methodological. The use of Roman-era evidence to reconstruct Lakedaimonian sociopolitical institutions in the Archaic period was accepted practice in Wade-Gery's time but is now discredited, and for good reason.⁸ Although Cicero felt no qualms about standing in front of a Roman jury and claiming that "the Lakedaimonians ... alone in the whole world have now lived for more than 700 years with one set of customs and without ever altering their laws," it is abundantly clear that the sociopolitical structure of Lakedaimon changed fundamentally between the Archaic and Roman periods.⁹ To give but one example, there was, in Roman Lakedaimon, no equivalent to the two hereditary kings who wielded great influence in the Ar-

6 See the Appendix for the texts of these inscriptions.

7 All dates in the text that follows are BCE unless otherwise indicated. I have, in the interests of brevity, not specified CE for obviously modern dates such as 1805. Greek words and names have been transliterated in such a way as to be as faithful as possible to original spellings while also taking into account established usages for well-known individuals and places. My general practice is to employ the spelling in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* for Greek names and places that have their own lemma in that widely-used reference work. My assumption is that the provision of a lemma in the *OCD* is a reasonably good measure of the prominence of a person or place and hence the likelihood that there is an established usage for the spelling of the person or place in question. Unless otherwise indicated, English translations are my own.

8 For another mid-20th century example of using Roman-era evidence to write the history of early Lakedaimon, see Chrimes 1949.

9 Cic. *Flac.* 63; trans. C. Macdonald, modified. Compare the accounts of Lakedaimonian government during the Classical period in Andrewes 1966 and de Ste. Croix 1972: 131-38 with the treatment of Lakedaimonian government during the Roman period in Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 120-33.

chaic period. Scholarship produced over the past three decades has definitively established that the explicit and implicit claims in ancient sources about long-term continuity in Lakedaimonian institutions reflect political propaganda and the process of idealization, distortion, and exaggeration that François Ollier termed *le mirage spartiate*.¹⁰ The current orthodoxy about where Spartiates lived is thus the result of the application of a flawed methodology to a problematic body of evidence.

I am acutely aware that revisionist views of what have long been seen as “basic facts” can be disorienting. Moreover, while deconstructing received but questionable wisdom is useful in and of itself, it is undoubtedly preferable to simultaneously offer a new interpretation that draws on the full range of available evidence and up-to-date methodologies. The text that follows is constructed accordingly. It begins with potentially helpful background information on terminology, the topography of the area around Sparta (the Spartan plain), and ancient and modern accounts of the early history of Lakonia and Lakedaimon (Section 2). I then present all the literary and epigraphic evidence for Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived (Section 3) and consider what is known about the organization of the Lakedaimonian army (Section 4). Next, I review in some detail previous scholarship – which relies almost exclusively on textual evidence – about Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived (Section 5). In doing so, I strive to give the current orthodoxy a full hearing while also demonstrating that scholars, both before and after Wade-Gery, have interpreted the evidence in ways that differ markedly from the current orthodoxy. I then present the archaeological evidence for the settlement organization of Sparta (Section 6) and settlement patterns in the Spartan plain (Section 7), as well as comparative evidence from the Late Bronze Age and 19th century CE (Section 8). Finally, I provide a detailed treatment of my views on the nature, number, and extent of the Lakedaimon *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived (Section 9). The concluding section of the article includes a discussion of a passage from Thucydides’ work,¹¹ in which he contrasts the architectural glories of the city of Athens with the physically unimpressive communities in Lakedaimon. That passage has been regularly cited – and in my view,

10 See the bibliography cited in n. 187.

11 Thuc. 1.10.2.

misread – in previous scholarship on the Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and the settlement organization of Sparta.

This article builds directly on the work of Marcello Lupi, who has, in a series of perspicacious publications, argued that the *ōbai* were actually phratries and that Spartiates lived in several different communities in the Eurotas river valley.¹² While I do not agree with all of Lupi's conclusions, his scholarship played a key role in bringing the fragility of the current orthodoxy to my attention. I have extended Lupi's work, which is based almost entirely on textual evidence, by undertaking a full review of the relevant literary and epigraphic sources (which Lupi explores only in part) and by cataloging and analyzing the archaeological and comparative evidence for the settlement organization of the city of Sparta and settlement patterns in the Spartan plain.

I argue, based on the aforementioned textual and archaeological evidence, that *ōbai* were, as per Wade-Gery, locality-based groups tied to specific settlement nuclei, not, as Lupi would have it, phratries. However, unlike Wade-Gery, who believed that the *ōbai* fulfilled primarily military functions, I take the *ōbai* to be local administrative units similar to Athenian demes. In addition, it is impossible, in my view, given the currently available evidence, to determine the number of *ōbai* at any point in time (including the Roman period); where they were located; or the area they encompassed, either individually or collectively. That uncertainty vitiates the supposition that all Spartiates necessarily resided in Sparta or Amyklai.

In place of the current orthodoxy, I make the case that, during the Archaic and Classical periods, Spartiates belonged to an unknowable number of *ōbai* tied to settlements located throughout the Spartan plain. The geographic dispersion of Spartiates over the Spartan plain was to some degree counterbalanced by the requirement that they routinely take part in collective activities (e.g. *syssitia*) centered in Sparta.¹³ The many Spartiates who resided outside of Sparta found it necessary to

12 See Section 5.4 for a detailed conspectus of Lupi's work.

13 I owe the insight about the connection between the Spartiates' residential pattern and their dedication to collective activities to Lupi; see Section 9.4 for further discussion. For the mandatory nature of participation in collective activities, see, for example, Xen. *Lac.* 3.3 on the educational system and Plut. *Lyc.* 12.3 on *syssitia*.

travel regularly to and from the city to participate in the mandatory shared lifestyle. Those Spartiates had a need for spaces in the city where they could dine, sleep, socialize, etc. That need was met by the construction in Sparta of a substantial number of *leschai*, which were, in all likelihood, built and maintained by *ōbai*. The nature of the remains at *leschai* means that they look like cult sites in the archaeological record, even though they served a variety of functions. Starting sometime in the later fourth or third century – as the number of Spartiates declined precipitously, the security situation in Lakonia deteriorated, and the city of Sparta was fortified – most Spartiates found it possible and expedient to live in or near Sparta. Many of the *leschai* became, in this new environment, redundant, and the space they occupied was used for residences instead.

This reinterpretation of the Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived prompts a reconsideration of a famous passage in which Thucydides (1.10.2) claims that the “*polis* of the Lakedaimonians” had never been synoikized and, as a result, was settled *kata kōmas* and lacked the grandiloquent architecture found in Athens.¹⁴ The prevailing interpretation of this passage is that Thucydides is describing the city of Sparta, which entails equating Thucydides’ *kōmas* with the four distinct settlement nuclei linked to *ōbai* postulated by the current orthodoxy. I argue instead that Thucydides’ wording is precise and that he is, in fact, describing not the city of Sparta but the *polis* of Lakedaimon. He seeks to highlight the absence of a single, dominant urban center in Lakedaimon and the concomitant failure to embellish any community in Lakonia, including Sparta, in a fashion commensurate with Athens. That elucidation of the Thucydides passage, it need hardly be said, makes perfect sense if we subscribe to the idea that, in the fifth century, Spartiates lived in a series of settlements dispersed across the Spartan plain.

A revised understanding of where Spartiates lived has ramifications for our views on several other aspects of life in Lakedaimon. For example, the presence of multiple religious sanctuaries in the vicinity of Sparta has been interpreted as an intentional demarcation of a sort of sacred boundary (*pomerium*) around the city. If, however, Spartiates resided

14 Thuc. 1.10.2. See Section 9.3 for the text.

throughout the Spartan plain, at least some of those sanctuaries were, in all probability, simply cult places tied to specific settlement nuclei.¹⁵

Covering all this ground results in what can only be described as a lengthy and dense piece of scholarship. The textual evidence is extensive, in part because the question of where Spartiates lived entails dealing with multiple, interrelated issues. Moreover, the relevant sources vary widely in date, contain numerous internal contradictions, and have been interpreted in highly divergent fashions in a body of scholarship that extends back into the 18th century CE. Archaeological evidence has, for a variety of reasons, not been seriously addressed in previous discussions of the Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived. Systematic excavation in Sparta has been much more limited, and less well published, than in other ancient urban centers such as Athens, Corinth, Miletus, and Selinus. The extension of archaeological protection to the entire area of the ancient city of Sparta in 1994/1995 resulted in a sharp increase in the number of rescue excavations carried out by the Greek Archaeological Service. However, the results did not begin to appear in print until roughly a decade later and were published piecemeal, typically in the form of short articles (one for each rescue excavation) in the *Archaiologikon Deltion*. My colleague Nathaniel Kramer and I have recently finished compiling the data from those articles and have used it to reconstruct diachronic development in the settlement organization of Sparta from the Bronze Age through the Roman period.¹⁶ Significant quantities of new finds from other sites in Lakedaimon have been uncovered in recent years, especially in the context of rescue excavations conducted in conjunction with the construction of major highways.¹⁷ As a result, there is quite a bit of new archaeological evidence that needs to be summarized and analyzed.

I have throughout prioritized comprehensive treatment of the evidence over brevity, for three reasons. First, long-established views that are deeply embedded in the scholarship on a particular subject are not easily laid to rest. The most convincing way to demonstrate the fatal

15 See Section 9.4.

16 Christesen & Kramer 2024, which should be consulted for detailed discussion of the history of excavations in Sparta.

17 See Section 7.

flaws in the current orthodoxy on the Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived is to explore the relevant evidence and argumentation in depth. Second, in cases such as this, in which the pertinent evidence is voluminous and varied, a full treatment can be particularly valuable. Although there is a lingering expectation that all scholars read everything pertinent to the subject in which they specialize, it is, in reality, impossible to do so, given the sheer volume of source material and published research. In such circumstances, comprehensive examinations of the evidence for and the previous scholarship on particular issues are helpful and perhaps necessary. Third, the current orthodoxy on the Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived has been taken as a given for so long that alternative views of the situation are not readily available, even to scholars specializing in the study of Lakedaimon. We are, as a result, in a position where moving beyond the current orthodoxy entails beginning from the beginning. Having all the relevant material together in a single publication makes that process more straightforward and will, I hope, facilitate future work on this subject matter by other scholars.

In order to accommodate readers who do not wish to delve into the fine-grained details of evidence and interpretation, I have written Section 9 so that it functions as something close to a stand-alone overview (with ample cross-references to appropriate parts of the preceding text). The focus throughout is on the Archaic through Roman periods. The evidence for earlier periods is too exiguous to draw any firm conclusions about the issues addressed in this article. The major changes that swept through the Roman world, including the Peloponnese, starting in the fifth century CE brought about fundamental changes in sociopolitical institutions and living conditions that eventuated in the abandonment of Sparta in the 13th century CE.¹⁸

18 See Armstrong 2002 for a good overview of what is known about Lakonia during the Byzantine period. On the abandonment of Sparta, see the bibliography cited in n. 328.

2. Background

2.1 Terminology

The ancient terminology pertaining to Sparta was more complex than is sometimes appreciated.¹⁹ In exploring that terminology, we need to distinguish between four separate entities: (1) the urban center, (2) the polity, (3) the geographic region in which the urban center was situated, and (4) the territory controlled by the polity. The basic parameters of the relevant terminology seem to have remained largely the same from the Archaic period down through the first century, so it is possible, for present purposes, to approach the issue primarily in a synchronic fashion.

The urban center was referred to as either ἡ Σπάρτη (in Doric, Σπάρτα) or ἡ Λακεδαίμων, with the former being much more commonly employed than the latter.²⁰ The polity was referred to as ἡ Λακεδαίμων or ἡ Σπάρτη, with the former being much more commonly employed than the latter.²¹ The city of Sparta was situated in a geographic region typically referred to as ἡ Λακεδαίμων. The term “Lakonia” is a modern usage that derives from the Latin “Laconica” and its variant “Laconia,” neither of which is attested prior to the first century.²² There were two city-ethnics, Σπαρτιάτης and Λακεδαίμωνιος; the former denoted the group of fully enfranchised male citizens and their families, whereas the latter (strictly

19 See Hall 2000; Shipley 2004: 570-71, 587-89; Shipley 2006: 52-53, on which the following discussion is directly based. On Latin authors in particular, see Iliopoulou 1992.

20 For ἡ Σπάρτη/Σπάρτα as an urban center, see, for example, Hom. *Il.* 2.582; Theognis 785 (where Sparta is characterized as an ἄστυ); Hdt. 1.68.5; Thuc. 4.3.2. The examples of ἡ Λακεδαίμων as an urban center are more ambiguous, probably because there was some inherent terminological slippage involved. See, for example, Thuc. 1.43.1; Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.16; Dittenberger & Purgold 1896: #171. The etymology of Σπάρτη/Σπάρτα is uncertain; see Bölte 1929b: 1272-73.

21 For ἡ Λακεδαίμων as a political entity, see, for example, Hdt. 7.234.2; Thuc. 5.23.1; Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.14, 3.5.6; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1180a25. For ἡ Σπάρτη/Σπάρτα as a political entity, see Tod 1933-1948: vol. 2, 204.34-35; Ps.-Scylax 46.

22 For ἡ Λακεδαίμων as a geographic region, see, for example, Hom. *Il.* 2.581; Hdt. 9.6; Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.7. For Laconica/Laconia as a geographic region, see, for example, Plin. *HN* 2.243, 5.32, 6.214, 25.94. An exceptional usage occurs in Pherekydes *FGrH* 3 F 168 in which the settlement of Oitylos in southern Lakonia is referred to as ἡ πόλις ἡ ἐν τῇ Σπάρτῃ; Sparta here seems to be a geographic region.

speaking) encompassed all the inhabitants of the *polis* of Lakedaimon.²³ Shorter versions of Λακεδαιμόνιος – Λάκων (male) and Λάκαινα (female) – could be applied to either Spartiates or *perioikoi*.²⁴ The adjective Λακωνικός was derived from Λάκων. The territory governed by the polity of Lakedaimon (which varied over time) was typically referred to as ἡ Λακωνική, which was a shorthand for ἡ Λακωνική γῆ/χώρα.²⁵ This collection of terminology is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Ancient terminology for the entities discussed in this article

urban center	Sparta (but also Lakedaimon)
polity	Lakedaimon (but also Sparta)
geographic region	Lakedaimon
territory governed by polity	Lakōnikē

I use Sparta to refer to the urban center, Lakedaimon to refer to the polity, Lakonia to refer to the geographic region in which the city of Sparta was situated (despite the anachronism involved), and Lakōnikē to refer to the territory governed by the polity. The term “Spartiate” is used throughout to designate fully enfranchised inhabitants of Lakedaimon, even after the third century, when mass enfranchisements carried out by Agis IV and Kleomenes III blurred prior sociopolitical distinctions.²⁶ On a related note, I intermittently refer to the Sanctuary of Apollo Amyklaios (on Agia Kyriaki hill, c. 1 km northeast of the modern village of Amykles) as the Amyklaion.

2.2 The Spartan Plain, the Perioikoi, and the Spartiates

The geographical region of Lakonia can, for descriptive purposes, be divided into seven subregions: the Parnon mountains, the east Parnon

23 For discussion of city-ethnics (which identified an individual as an inhabitant of a specific community), see Hansen & Nielsen 2004a.

24 See, for example, Hdt. 7.161.2; Eur. *Hec.* 441.

25 See, for example, Hdt. 1.69.4, 6.58.1; Thuc. 2.25.1; Hellanikos *FGrH* 1 F 198. Several variants are attested, including ἡ Λακωνὶς γαῖα (*Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 410) and ἡ Λάκαινα χώρα (Hdt. 7.235.1).

26 See Section 9.2 for further discussion.

foreland, the west Parnon foreland, the Eurotas furrow, the Taygetos mountains, the Tainaron peninsula, and the Malea peninsula (see Figure 1).²⁷ The boundaries between these subregions are, to a certain extent, arbitrary. For example, the boundary between the west Parnon foreland and the Parnon mountains is more a matter of judgement than of geology or topography.

The Eurotas furrow is expansive (the Eurotas drains an area of c. 2,400 sq km) and can best be described by dividing it into three subsections (see Figure 2).²⁸ The first of those subsections encompasses the northern part of the furrow, from the Eurotas' source to the place where it is joined by the Oinous river. This part of the furrow is constricted by mountains on two sides, and it is relatively inhospitable insofar as the terrain is hilly and dissected by ravines. What is typically referred to as the "Spartan plain" or the "Spartan basin" constitutes the second subsection of the Eurotas furrow; this area is clearly demarcated on all four sides: to the north by the hilly terrain of the northern section of the Eurotas furrow, to the east by the west Parnon foreland, to the west by the cliffs that dramatically delimit the eastern edge of the Taygetos, and to the south by a hilly area known as Vardounia (which terminates at its eastern end in Mt. Lykovouno) and a ridge west of the modern village of Goritsa that extends from the west Parnon foreland. Sparta was built on and around a low hill (235 masl) at the northern end of the Spartan plain.²⁹ The final subsection of the Eurotas furrow consists of the area between Vardounia and the Gulf of Lakonia (the Helos plain).

27 Cartledge 2002: 11-20.

28 Philippon & Kirsten 1959: 446-63.

29 Naval Intelligence Division 1944-1945: vol. 3, 185-86; Bintliff 1977: 374-75; Bintliff 2008: 528-29.

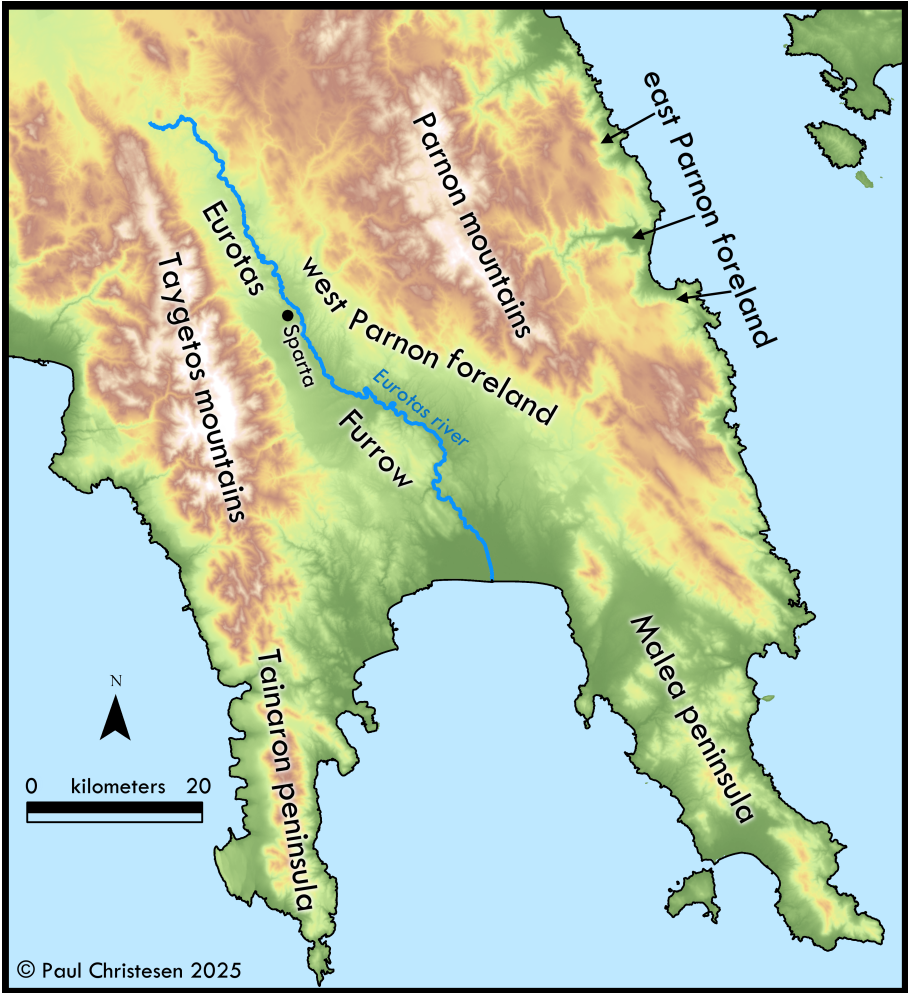


Figure 1: Subregions of Lakonia.



Figure 2: The Eurotas furrow, with locations of sites mentioned in Section 2.2. The label for Goritsa is underlined to indicate that it is a modern rather than an ancient site.

The Spartan plain was a distinct area with special historical status and economic value. It is c. 22 km long, varies in width between c. 6 and 12 km, and covers an area of c. 220 sq km. Most of the Spartan plain lies on the west side of the Eurotas, but it also includes land on the east bank of the river. Although the early history of Lakedaimon remains shrouded in mystery, there can be little doubt that the Spartan plain represented the original core of Lakōnikē. It is noteworthy that when Lakedaimon was compelled to join the Achaean League in 195, the territory under its control reached its nadir and consisted of little more than the Spartan plain and the northern part of the Eurotas furrow.³⁰ By far the best farmland in Lakonia was situated in the Spartan plain. The Neogene and alluvial soils in the plain were fertile, and the Eurotas and numerous water-courses running eastward from the Taygetos, together with relatively high rainfall levels (c. 800 mm annually in modern Sparta), provided ample water supplies and made irrigation possible in at least some areas (see Section 8 for further discussion of the geology of Lakonia).³¹ In modern times, farmers in the Spartan plain have been able to produce two crops annually, and the same was likely true in antiquity.³²

30 See Shipley 2000 with Figure 2. Plutarch (*Agis* 8.1) claims that when Agis IV redistributed land in Lakonia, he created 4,500 lots in the area between “the torrent at Pellene, Taygetos, Malea, and Sellasia” and 15,000 lots in the rest of Lakonia. This two-fold division implies a distinction between a “core” and “peripheral” territory, but it is difficult to make sense of the boundaries of the core territory as described by Plutarch. See Bölte 1929c: 1331–32 and Hodkinson 2000: 139 for further discussion. Hodkinson (2000: 135–41) suggests that *perioikoi* owned land in the Spartan plain and that Spartiates owned land outside the Spartan plain, but (as per Messenia) Spartiate ownership of land outside the Spartan plain did not imply residence on that land.

31 See the discussion of SEG 40.348 in Section 3.3. The agricultural census published in 1830 includes irrigated farmland in Lakonia, most notably in two villages (Trypi and Vordonia) in the foothills of the Taygetos. For the data, see Belia 1977. Leake mentions the use of channels to bring water from the Eurotas to irrigate wheat fields in the Spartan plain (Leake 1830: vol. 1, 148).

32 ‘Υπουργείου Ἐθνικῆς Οἰκονομίας 1911: 598–99; Cartledge 2002: 16. For a graph showing annual rainfall in Sparta between 1894 and 1980, see Cavanagh, Shipley & Crouwel 2002: Ill. 19 on pg. 11. For further discussion, see Rackham 2002: 76.

There is something approximating a scholarly consensus that the areas directly controlled by Spartiates and the areas in which *perioikoi* exercised local administrative control did not overlap to any significant degree. In other words, what might be described as the *chōra* of the Spartiates was distinct from the *perioikis*. Graham Shipley, in his important studies of the Lakedaimonian *perioikoi*, has persuasively argued that the perioikic settlements of Pellana, Sellasia, Geronthrai, and either Krokeai or Gytheion – all of which lay outside the Spartan plain – were situated at the edges of the Spartiate *chōra*.³³ The entirety of the Spartan plain was thus directly controlled by Spartiates. It is possible that some *perioikoi* lived within the boundaries of the Spartan plain, as residents of communities (potentially including Sparta) that were largely populated and dominated by Spartiates. It is also possible that some non-royal Spartiates owned land in perioikic communities. That said, there is no evidence suggesting that Spartiates had permanent residences in perioikic communities (or anywhere else outside the Spartan plain).

2.3 Ancient and Modern Accounts of the Early History of Lakonia and Lakedaimon

The textual evidence for the spatial and political organization of Lakonia and Lakedaimon has been repeatedly read against the background of ancient and modern narratives recounting their history between the end of the Bronze Age and c. 700. It is, therefore, worthwhile to briefly review those narratives. The only continuous ancient account that has survived to the present day is that offered by Pausanias in Book 3 of his *Periēgēsis*.³⁴ For present purposes, it is sufficient to examine what Pausanias has to say and consider other ancient sources on just one key point – the incorporation of Amyklai into Lakedaimon. It will be helpful to bear in mind that Pausanias, like other Greek authors,³⁵ differentiated between the

33 Shipley 2006: 62.

34 Paus. 3.1.1–5, 3.7.1–6.

35 See, for instance, Theopompos *FGrH* 115 F 122.

Achaean, said to be the original inhabitants of Lakonia, from the Dorians, said to be migrants who arrived with the Herakleidai in the third generation after the Trojan War.³⁶

Pausanias begins with Lelex, whom he characterizes as the first king of Lakedaïmon, and then traces the succession of kings that follow: Myles, Eurotas, Lakedaïmon, Amyklas, Argalos, Kynortas, Oibalos, Tyn-dareus, Menelaos, Orestes. Then the Herakleidai, accompanied by the Dorians, return to the Peloponnese, and Eurysthenes and Prokles, the twin sons of Aristodemos (the great-great-grandson of Herakles), become kings. Pausanias proceeds to offer separate accounts of the Agiads (descendants of Eurysthenes) and Eurypontids (descendants of Prokles) (see Table 2). Lakedaïmonian expansion begins during the reign of Echestratos, who expels the population of Kynouria, a borderland between Argos and Lakedaïmon. Labotas initiates a series of wars with Argos, and Archelaos (with the assistance of the Eurypontid king Charillos) captures the town of Aigys, situated at the northern part of the border between Lakonia and Messenia.³⁷ Teleklos captures the towns of Amyklai, Pharis, and Geronthrai, “which up to that time had been still held by the Achaeans.” The inhabitants of Pharis and Geronthrai surrender without a fight, but “the people of Amyklai ... offered a long and not inglorious resistance.”³⁸ Teleklos is assassinated by Messenians at the Sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis in the Taygetos mountains. Alkamenes destroys the town of Helos in southern Lakonia, and Messenia is conquered during the reigns of the Agiad kings Alkamenes, Polydoros, Eurykrates, and Anaxander and the Eurypontid kings Nikander, Theopompos, Zeuxidamos, and Anaxidamos.

36 On ancient accounts of the so-called Dorian Invasion/Migration and the Herakleidai, see Hall 2002: 56-89.

37 Pausanias places Lycurgus' activity as a lawgiver in the reign of Agesilaos (3.2.3).

38 Paus. 3.2.6.

Table 2: Pausanias' list of early Agiad and Eurypontid kings

<i>Agiads</i>	<i>Eurypontids</i>
Eurysthenes	Prokles
Agis	Soos
Echestratos	Eurypon
Labotas	Prytanis
Doryassos	Eunomos
Agésilaios	Polydektēs
Archelaos	Charillos
Teleklos	Nikander
Alkamenēs	Theopompos
Polydoros	Zeuxidamos
Eurykrates	Anaxidamos
Anaxander	Archidamos I

The conquest of Amyklai, which attracted considerable attention from Greek authors starting in the Classical period at the latest, was closely associated with a group known as the Aigeidai. Herodotus characterizes the Aigeidai as a “great *phylē* in Sparta” and traces their ancestry back to Kadmos in Thebes.³⁹ Pindar, in an epinikion written for a Theban victor, praises the city of Thebes in part by claiming that “your descendants, the Aigeidai, captured Amyklai.”⁴⁰ A scholion to the Pindar passage, citing the Aristotelian *Politeia of the Lakedaimonians*, describes the Aigeidai as a Theban phratry. The scholiast claims that the leader of the Aigeidai during the conquest of Amyklai was Timomachos and that his breastplate was displayed at the celebration of the Hyakinthia festival at Amyklai.⁴¹ Pausanias, in his treatment of the wars between the Lakedaimonians and Messenians, recounts a battle at which King Polydoros commanded the left wing of the Lakedaimonian army, King Theopompos the right wing, and Euryleon – one of the Aigeidai – the center.⁴² While the historical veracity of this part of Pausanias' account is very much open to question, it

39 φυλὴ μεγάλη ἐν Σπάρτῃ; 4.149.1; see also 4.147–48. On the Aigeidai, see Nafissi 1980–1981; Vannicelli 1992; Malkin 1994: 98–106.

40 Pindar *Isthm.* 7.14–15.

41 This scholion appears in Rose's collection of Aristotelian fragments as fr. 532.

42 Paus. 4.7.8.

presumably reflects a tradition in which the Aigeidai played a leading role in Lakedaimon.

Modern scholars crafting narratives of the early history of Lakonia and Lakedaimon have been heavily influenced by the ancient sources while at the same time acknowledging their limitations. The most prominent account in the present day is that offered by Paul Cartledge in his monograph *Sparta and Lakonia: A Regional History 1300-362 BCE*.⁴³ Cartledge pays careful attention to both the textual sources and the archaeological evidence, especially the chronology and spatial distribution of Lakonian pottery. He suggests that Dorians, divided into three tribes (Dymanes, Hylleis, and Pamphyloi), migrated from Illyria and Epiros to Lakonia sometime around 1000; founded the city of Sparta; and, between c. 950 and 775, gained control of the entire Eurotas furrow and enslaved much of the indigenous population (the Achaeans). Pausanias ascribes the conquest of Amyklai to Teleklos (whose reign historians typically place somewhere in the mid-eighth century), but Cartledge argues that the inhabitants of Sparta would have gained control over the entire Eurotas furrow sometime in the tenth or ninth century. In his view, the four *ōbai* in the city of Sparta existed from a very early date and were amalgamated at some point prior to the mid-eighth century. Cartledge sees Teleklos as being responsible not for the conquest of Amyklai but rather for incorporating Amyklai as a fifth *ōba* (with Amyklai having been subjugated and “Dorianized” well before then). He also takes issue with earlier scholars who argued that the conjunction of Hyakinthos and Apollo at the Sanctuary of Apollo at Amyklai (the Amyklaion) represented the synthesis of an Achaean/pre-Dorian deity (Hyakinthos) and a Dorian deity (Apollo) such that the cult provided evidence that buttresses ancient accounts of a conflict between Dorians based at Sparta and Achaeans based at Amyklai.⁴⁴

43 Cartledge 2002: 65-112. For a more recent account, which largely agrees with Cartledge’s reconstruction of the course of events, see Rahe 2016: 64-98.

44 Cartledge 2002: 69-70, 92-93. For the cult at the Amyklaion as a mixture of Achaean and Dorian beliefs, see, for instance, Nilsson 1950: 556-58.

3. Textual Evidence for Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and Where Spartiates Lived

This section addresses the literary and epigraphic evidence for Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived. The sources are organized on the basis of chronology rather than subject matter because there has been a persistent tendency to analyze them synchronically and thereby collapse, for example, the nearly millennium-long gap between the Great Rhetra on the one hand and Roman-era inscriptions on the other. In compiling this evidence, I have made an effort to be comprehensive while, in the interests of (relative) brevity, omitting sources of only tangential relevance. I have supplied the text of most passages in both Greek and English so that readers can easily explore nuances that are sometimes lost in translation.

3.1 Archaic Period

The textual evidence from the Archaic period comes from Homer, the Great Rhetra, Tyrtaios, Alcman, and Pratinas, as well as an enigmatic inscription (IG V.1.722). The Catalog of Ships in the *Iliad* offers a list of places in Lakedaimon:

They who held the swarming hollow of Lakedaimon,⁴⁵ Pharis, and Sparta, and Messe of the dove-cotes, they who dwelt in Bryseiai and lovely Augeiai, they who held Amyklai and the seaward city of Helos, they who held Laas, and they who dwelt about Oitylos, of these his [Agamemnon's] brother Menelaos of the great war cry was leader, with 60 ships marshaled apart from the others. He himself went among them in the confidence of his valor, driving them batteward,

45 Although the Lakedaimon mentioned in the Catalog of Ships has been taken by some scholars to be a reference to a town, Hope Simpson and Lazenby are surely right to argue that the adjectives *κοίλη* and *κητώεσσα*, which modify Lakedaimon, are much more appropriate for a geographic region than a town (Hope Simpson & Lazenby 1970: 74).

since above all his heart was eager to avenge Helen's longing to escape and her lamentations.⁴⁶

If one accepts the current scholarly consensus that the Great Rhetra is an authentic document from sometime around 600, it ranks among the most important sources for the study of Lakedaimonian history.⁴⁷ The text as transmitted by Plutarch begins "Having built a shrine to Zeus Syllanios and Athena Syllania and having tribed the tribes and obed the obes, and having established a Gerousia of 30 members, including the *archagetai*, then from time to time *appellazein* between Babyka and Knakion ..." ⁴⁸ The Great Rhetra thus calls for the distribution of the citizen body into *phylai* and *ōbai*, without precisely specifying the nature or number of either group or the relationship between the two.

One of the fragments of Tyrtaios' poetry mentions Lakedaimonians going into battle brigaded on the basis of the three Doric tribes: "Pamphyloi, Hylleis, and Dymanes, separately, brandishing in their hands murderous spears of ash."⁴⁹ The extant fragments of Alcman's poetry contain two references to females described as Dymainai: "you, god-

46 οἱ δ' εἶχον κοίλην Λακεδαίμονα κητώεσσαν, | Φᾶρίν τε Σπάρτην τε πολυτρήρωνά τε Μέσσην, | Βρυσειάς τ' ἐνέμοντο καὶ Αὐγείας ἐρατεινάς, | οἳ τ' ἄρ' Ἀμύκλας εἶχον Ἑλος τ' ἔφαλον πτολίεθρον, | οἳ τε Λάαν εἶχον ἡδ' Οἴτυλον ἀμφενέμοντο, | τῶν οἱ ἀδελφεὸς ἦρχε βοήν ἀγαθὸς Μενέλαος | ἐξήκοντα νεῶν ἀπάτερθε δὲ θωρήσσοντο· | ἐν δ' αὐτὸς κίεν ἦσι προθυμίῃσι πεποιθὼς | ὀτρύνων πόλεμον δέ· μάλιστα δὲ ἔτεο θυμῷ | τίσασθαι Ἑλένης ὀρμήματά τε στοναχάς τε (Hom. *Il.* 2.581-90; trans. R. Lattimore). Interpretation of the information in the Catalog entails answering two preliminary questions: is the Catalog based on genuine geographical knowledge of the Greek world, and, if one responds in the affirmative, what period of time does it reflect (the Bronze Age, the Early Iron Age, or the Archaic period)? See Jasnow 2020. See Section 7 for further discussion of the sites in the Spartan plain mentioned in the Homeric Catalog.

47 The scholarship on the Great Rhetra is enormous. See Fragkaki 2015 for an overview.

48 Διὸς Συλλανίου καὶ Ἀθανᾶς Συλλανίας ἱερὸν ἰδρυσάμενον, φυλάς φυλάξαντα καὶ ὠβάς ὠβάξαντα, τριάκοντα γερουσίαν σὺν ἀρχαγέταις καταστήσαντα, ὥρας ἐξ ὥρας ἀπελλάζειν μεταξύ Βαβύκας τε καὶ Κνακιῶνος (from Plut. *Lyc.* 6.1-10). τριάκοντα has in the past sometimes been read with the preceding phrase and taken to mean that there were 30 *ōbai* (see Section 5.1), but it is now typically understood as specifying the size of the Gerousia.

49 χωρὶς Πάμφυλοι τε καὶ Ὑλλεῖς ἡδ[ὲ Δυμᾶνες], ἀνδροφόνους μελίας χερσὶν ἀν[ασχόμενοι] (fr. 19 West).

loved choir-leader Hagesidamos, glorious son of Damotimos, lead the Dymainai” and “hair-loving Dymainai.”⁵⁰ Ancient commentaries on Alcman’s poetry provide two further statements about the Dymainai, namely that they formed a “tribal chorus” and that “often *parthenoi* of the Dymainai came to Pitana to join in choirs with the Pitatan girls.”⁵¹ While we cannot reach any firm conclusions about the veracity of these statements, they are presumably based in some fashion on verses of Alcman that are no longer preserved.⁵²

Pratinas, a poet from Phlius who seems to have been active at the end of the sixth century, is said by Athenaeus to have written a play with the title of *Dymainai* or *Karyatides*.⁵³ Athenaeus’ comments on the play connect it with Lakonia, which is not surprising since there was a settlement named Karyai in the northern part of the region.⁵⁴

IG V.1.722 presents unusual interpretive challenges because it no longer survives and because the only transcription was made by Michel Fourmont in the 18th century. Fourmont had difficulties in understanding the epichoric alphabet of Lakonia, produced many inaccurate transcriptions (apparent in cases where the original inscription survives), and forged several inscriptions in order to enhance his reputation.⁵⁵ He claimed that he found the inscription that was later published as IG

50 ἄρχε ταῖς Δυμαί[ναις] ... σιοφιλὲς χο[ρὰ]γὲ Ἀγησίδαμε κλε[νν]ῇ Δαμοτιμίδα (fr. 10b Page/Davies; trans. D.A. Campbell); Δυμαί[ναις] ... φιλοπλ[οκάμοις] (fr. 4(5.3)).

51 φυλ[ικὸς δὲ χ]ορός (fr. 5.2, col. ii); π[ολ]λάκις δ(ὲ) [Δ]υμαιν[ῶν παρθένοι ἀφί]κοντο ε[ἰς] τὴν Πιτά[ν]ην συγ[χορεύσουσαι] τ[αῖς] Πιτανάτισι (fr. 11; trans. D.A. Campbell). Athenaeus’ explanation (131c-d) of some place names in Alcman fr. 92 includes the statement that they are near Pitana; it is possible, but by no means certain, that Athenaeus found that information in Alcman.

52 The Suda (s.v. Ἀλκμάν) claims that Alcman was from Messoa, which presumably should be equated with the place in Lakonia bearing that name (see Section 3.4.2). The basis of that claim is unknown.

53 Ath. 9.392f; Pratinas TrGF (Snell) 4 fr. 1. On Pratinas, see Shaw 2014: 43-55; Stewart 2017: 94.

54 Pausanias (3.17.9) claims that the Messenian hero Aristomenes captured at Karyai a group of Lakedaimonian *parthenoi* who were performing dances in honor of Artemis. On the location of Karyai, see Pikoulas 1987: 137-39.

55 On Fourmont, see Boeckh 1828: 61-104; Stoneman 1985; Gengler 2020.

V.1.722 on a broken *stēlē* in the vicinity of Amyklai and provided the following text:

..ΛΝΤΟΥΕΔΕΡΟΕΕΥΟ
 ..ΝΑΜΑΝΟΟΙΤΙΛΕΓΟ..
 ΝΞΕΘΕΚΕΜΕΥΕΛ·ΙΤΙΜ
 ΔΕΔΟΦΑΣΑΡΚΑΛΟΝ
 ΟΕΙ·ΑΛΛΑΚΑΘΑΙΡΟΝ
 ΝΙΡΟΥΙ·ΡΟΦΟΡΟΜΚ
 ΑΙΨΑΕΥΑΛΛΥΙΥΟ

When the inscription was included in *Inscriptiones Graecae*, it was characterized as a verse funerary inscription, and the text was printed as follows:

[- -] άντου έδε ροε̃ huō
 [- -] θα̃μα νοδι· τί λέγō;
 [- -] ος έθ̃εκέ με χ̃ερ̃ ά[ρ]ίτιμ[ον]
 [- -] <δ>έδοφας άρκαλον
 [- -] Οε . . [ά]λλὰ καθαίρον
 [- -] . ρου . . ροφορο<ν> κ[- -]
 [- -] αγ φαενν̃ά? Λ Λ [- -]

In 1951, Arthur Beattie published an emended text and translation based on his attempts to discern and correct errors Fourmont had made in the process of transcription:

]άντο μεδ̃ε̃ τ̃ο̃ ρ̃ε̃μ̃ο̃
 ένυφ]ασάσθ̃ο̃, τ̃ι̃ με̃ πο[λι-
 -ανόμ]ος έθ̃εκε. με̃ χ̃ερ̃αν τιμ-
 -α̃χ̃εν] πεδ' ό̃φ̃α̃ς Άρκαλ̃ον
 μεδ̃ε̃ π̃[ο̃λ̃]ε̃γ· [ά]λλὰ καθαίρον-
 -τας τ̃ο̃ δ̃ο̃]μα̃ τ̃ος̃ [πυ]ροφορο̃ς κ[α̃ι̃
 [Beattie did not offer a transcription of the final line.]

They shall not ... nor shall they weave into the garments anything that the Polianomos has not prescribed. No unmarried woman shall hold the priesthood in the *ōba* of the Arkaloi, nor serve as Polos; if this should happen, the Pyrokoroι shall cleanse the temple and ...⁵⁶

Lakedaimonian inscriptions make an equivalence between digamma and beta,⁵⁷ so ὄφᾱς can be read as the genitive singular of ὠβᾱ. Beattie, who dated the inscription to the late sixth or early fifth century, described πᾱδ' ὄφᾱς Ἀρκάλῳν as “the most certain phrase” in the text,⁵⁸ and one does not have to accept the entirety of Beattie’s emended text to take this inscription as evidence for the existence of an *ōba* of the Arkaloi.

This collection of sources indicates that in the Lakedaimon of the Archaic period:

- both *phylai* and *ōbai* existed as subdivisions of the citizen body;
- three *phylai* served as divisions of the army and formed choruses;
- there was (possibly) an *ōba* of the Arkaloi.

The *phylai* of the Great Rhetra were probably the same tribes mentioned by Tyrtaios. In part because the relative chronological positioning of the Great Rhetra and Tyrtaios’ poetry is uncertain, there is no way to establish whether the *phylai* or *ōbai* in the Great Rhetra were institutions created *ex nihilo* or if they pre-existed the Rhetra and were being reorganized.⁵⁹

3.2 Classical Period

The textual evidence from the Classical period consists of passages from the work of Pindar, Herodotus, Thucydides, Euripides, and Xenophon. In *Olympian* 6 (written for Hagesias of Syracuse to commemorate a victory won in 472 or 468), Pindar traces Hagesias’ ancestry back to the nymph

56 Trans. A.J. Beattie, modified.

57 Bourguet 1927: 66-72.

58 Beattie 1958: 49.

59 On the relationship between the Great Rhetra and Tyrtaios’ poetry, see van Wees 1999; Meier 2002; van Wees 2002; Link 2003.

Pitana. Pindar opens that part of the ode by stating, “I must go today, in good time, to Pitana, beside the ford of the Eurotas.”⁶⁰ Herodotus mentions a Pitana in Lakonia on two separate occasions.⁶¹ In recounting the Lakedaimonian expedition to Samos in the closing decades of the sixth century, he offers an aside on one of his sources of information:

Once, in Pitana (which was his native village), I personally met another Archias, who was the grandson of the Archias I have just been talking about, since he was the son of Samios the son of Archias. This Archias honored the Samians more than any other foreigners, and he told me that his father had been given the name Samios because of the heroic death his father Archias had died on Samos.⁶²

The specifics of the Greek are important here since Herodotus describes Pitana as a *dēmos* (δήμου γὰρ τούτου ἦν), which probably means something like “township” in this context. In his account of the behavior of the Spartiate commander Amompharetos at the Battle of Plataia, Herodotus describes Amompharetos as “serving as commander [*lochēgos*] of the *lochos* of the Pitanatans.”⁶³ Elsewhere in his work, Herodotus, in recounting the vicissitudes of the legendary Minyans during their time in Lakonia, states that “the Lakedaimonians welcomed the Minyans and gave them a share of the land and distributed them among their *phylai*.”⁶⁴

Thucydides subsequently critiqued Herodotus (without overtly naming him) on the grounds that there was no such thing as a *lochos* of the Pitanatans:

60 πρὸς Πιτάναν δὲ παρ’ Εὐρώτα πόρον δεῖ σάμερον ἐλθεῖν ἐν ὥρᾳ (Pind. Ol. 6.28; trans. D.A. Svarlien).

61 Herodotus also references a town called Pitana in Asia Minor (1.149.1).

62 τρίτῳ δὲ ἀπ’ Ἀρχίῳ τούτου γεγονότι ἄλλῳ Ἀρχίῃ τῷ Σαμίου τοῦ Ἀρχίῳ αὐτὸς ἐν Πιτάνῃ συνεγενόμην (δήμου γὰρ τούτου ἦν), ὃς ξείνων πάντων μάλιστα ἐτίμα τε Σαμίους καὶ οἱ τῷ πατρὶ ἔφη Σάμιον τοῦνομα τεθῆναι, ὅτι οἱ ὁ πατὴρ Ἀρχίης ἐν Σάμῳ ἀριστεύσας ἐτελεύτησε (Hdt. 3.55.2; trans. R. Waterfield, modified).

63 Ἀμομφάρετος δὲ ὁ Πολιάδῃ λοχηγέων τοῦ Πιτανητέων λόχου ... (Hdt. 9.53.2).

64 δεξάμενοι δὲ τοὺς Μινύας γῆς τε μετέδοσαν καὶ ἐς φυλὰς διεδάσαντο (Hdt. 4.145.5).

I could point to many other false beliefs – about the contemporary world, not the long-forgotten past – in the rest of Greece too: for example, that the kings of the Lakedaimonians do not have one vote each, but two, and that there is a body of Lakedaimonian troops called “the Pitane *lochos*,” which in fact has never existed.⁶⁵

In his *archaiologia* at the beginning of Book 1, Thucydides warns against estimating a community’s military capacity from the size and magnificence of its primary settlement, and uses Athens and Lakedaimon to illustrate his point (see Section 9.3 for the text). He describes the *polis* of the Lakedaimonians as being settled in an old-fashioned way, *kata kōmas*, and lacking in splendid buildings. Thucydides makes no mention of *ōbai* and does not have anything to say about a specific number of settlement nuclei, but his *kōmai* in Lakedaimon have frequently been associated, based on much later lexicographical entries (see Section 3.5), with *ōbai*.

In Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, the chorus, in anticipation of being enslaved and taken to Lakonia, wishes destruction upon Menelaos: “May he never reach the land of Lakonia or his ancestral hearth or the *polis* of Pitana or the goddess of the bronze gate.”⁶⁶ The “goddess of the bronze gate” is a reference to the sanctuary, on the acropolis of Sparta, to Athena Polias, who was also known as Athena Chalkioikos.⁶⁷

In his account of events in 390, Xenophon describes a costly defeat inflicted on the Lakedaimonian army. The defeat occurred when the Amyklaians in the Lakedaimonian army stationed near Corinth set out for Lakonia so that they could participate in the Hyakinthia festival:

It is the custom of the Amyklaians, no matter where they find themselves, whether on campaign or away from their city for any other

65 πολλά δὲ καὶ ἄλλα ἔτι καὶ νῦν ὄντα καὶ οὐ χρόνῳ ἀμνηστούμενα καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι “Ἕλληνες οὐκ ὀρθῶς οἴονται, ὥσπερ τοὺς τε Λακεδαιμονίων βασιλέας μὴ μιᾷ ψήφῳ προστίθεσθαι ἐκάτερον, ἀλλὰ δυοῖν, καὶ τὸν Πιτανάτην λόχον αὐτοῖς εἶναι, ὃς οὐδ’ ἐγένετο πώποτε (Thuc. 1.20.3; trans. M. Hammond, modified).

66 μηδὲ γαῖάν ποτ’ ἔλθοι Λάκαιναν πατρῷόν τε θάλαμον ἐστίας, μηδὲ πόλιν Πιτάνας χαλκόφυλόν τε θεάν (Eur. *Tro.* 1110-13).

67 See, for example, Paus. 3.17.2. See Figure 6 in Section 6.1 for the location of this sanctuary.

reason, always to leave for home at the time of the festival of the Hyakinthia, so that they may participate in the festival and sing the *paian* to Apollo. At the time of which we are speaking, Agesilaos had left all the Amyklaians in the army back in Lechaion.⁶⁸

Xenophon's wording strongly implies that the Amyklaians did not, at least in his time, all belong to a single unit within the Lakedaimonian army.⁶⁹ The privileges enjoyed by the Amyklaians suggest that they were Spartiates, though Xenophon does not state this outright. In his encomium of Agesilaos, Xenophon states that the king on one occasion returned from campaign to participate in the Hyakinthia by joining in the singing of the *paian*, which leaves no doubt that Spartiates took part in that rite.⁷⁰ The special status of Amyklai in the Greek historiographic tradition about the early history of Lakonia and Lakedaimon (see Section 2.3), and the major investment the Lakedaimonians made in embellishing the Amyklaion, reinforce the impression that Spartiates lived in Amyklai in some numbers.⁷¹ One might also note that the terms of the Peace of Nicias called for it to be inscribed on *stēlai* at Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, the acropolis of Athens, and the Amyklaion, which indicates that Amyklai was a place of considerable importance in Lakedaimon.⁷²

These passages collectively demonstrate that there was, in or close to Sparta, a locality named Pitana. The fact that Pindar and Euripides could refer to it in works intended for non-Lakedaimonian audiences suggests that Pitana was known outside of Lakonia. It is impossible to draw any firm conclusions on the basis of the labels – *dēmos*, *polis* – attached to Pitana by authors who were not themselves Lakedaimonians. However, those labels may suggest that Pitana had an official legal status of some

68 οἱ Ἀμυκλαῖοι ἀεὶ ποτε ἀπέρχονται εἰς τὰ Ὑακίνθια ἐπὶ τὸν παιᾶνα, ἐάν τε στρατοπεδευόμενοι τυγχάνωσιν ἐάν τε ἄλλως πως ἀποδημοῦντες. καὶ τότε δὴ τοὺς ἐκ πάσης τῆς στρατιᾶς Ἀμυκλαίους κατέλιπε μὲν Ἀγησίλαος ἐν Λεχαίῳ (Hell. 4.5.11; trans. J. Marincola, modified).

69 See Lazenby 1985: 13.

70 Xen. Ages. 2.17.

71 For a description of the architecture and dedications at the Amyklaion, see Paus. 3.18.6–19.6 as well as Theopompos FGrH 115 F 193.

72 Thuc. 5.18.10, cf. 5.23.5.

kind. The various references to Amyklai strongly suggest that it was inhabited by Spartiates. We will return in Section 4 to Herodotus' and Thucydides' conflicting claims about the existence of a Pitana *lochos* and, in Section 9.3, to Thucydides' description of Lakedaimon.

3.3 Hellenistic Period

The textual evidence from the Hellenistic period consists of coin legends from southern Italy; passages from Callimachus, Euphron of Chalcis, Dioskourides, Sosibios, and Demetrios of Skepsis; inscribed roof tiles; and four inscriptions on stone *stēlai*. A series of silver coins found in small numbers in a part of southern Italy dominated by the Samnites bears images of Hera on the obverse and Hercules on the reverse and the legend ΠΕΡΙΠΟΛΟΝ ΠΙΤΑΝΑΤΑΝ. These coins were issued sometime between 325 and 275.⁷³ The authority responsible for minting these coins is unknown, but it may well have been the Lakedaimonian *apoikia* of Taras.⁷⁴ Strabo states that some people claimed that migrants from Lakonia settled among the Samnites, as a result of which some of the Samnites were called Pitanaes. This story, in Strabo's view, was nothing more than a fabrication created by the Tarantines to develop good relations with a powerful neighbor.⁷⁵ The ΠΕΡΙΠΟΛΟΝ ΠΙΤΑΝΑΤΑΝ coins probably reflect politically convenient *mythoi* rather than historical reality. Nevertheless, they indicate that the locality of Pitana had a reputation extending beyond Lakedaimon.

In his *Hymn to Artemis*, Callimachus lists a series of places where “the nymphs circle you [Artemis] in dance” including “near the fountains of Egyptian Inopos or Pitana (for Pitana is yours) or in Limnai ...”⁷⁶ A scholion on this passage glosses Pitana as a “Lakedaimonian *polis*” and Limnai as a “deme in Attica where Artemis is honored.” Pausanias saw a

73 Tagliamonte 1996: 23-28; Rutter & Burnett 2001: 60, HN 445; Cerchiai 2002-2003.

74 On Taras as a Lakedaimonian *apoikia*, see Fischer-Hansen, Nielsen & Ampolo 2004: 299-302.

75 Strabo 5.4.12. For further discussion, see Roller 2018: 281-82.

76 ἡνίκα δ' αἱ νύμφαι σε χορῶ ἐνι κυκλώσονται | ἀγχόθι πηγῶν Αἰγυπτίου Ἰνωποῖο | ἢ Πιτάνῃ (καὶ γὰρ Πιτάνῃ σέθεν) ἢ ἐνὶ Λίμναις (Il. 170-72; trans. D.L. Clayman, modified).

sanctuary of Artemis Issoria, who was also known as Artemis Limnaia, in the northwestern part of Sparta.⁷⁷ Polyaeus discusses an incident during the Theban invasion of Lakonia in 370/369 that took place on a hill dedicated to Artemis Issoria, which he locates “near Pitana.” Eleni Kourinou, in her study of the settlement organization of Sparta, places the Sanctuary of Artemis Issoria on Vamvakia hill, in the northwestern part of the city.⁷⁸ Strabo informs us that the marshy suburbs of Sparta were called Limnai, and Pausanias notes that the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia could be referred to as the Limnaion.⁷⁹ It is, therefore, possible that Callimachus’ Pitana and Limnai were both, *pace* the scholiast, situated in Sparta.

In the *Hymn to Artemis*, Callimachus also lists a series of hunting dogs that Pan gave to Artemis, including “seven Kynosourian dogs, faster than the winds.”⁸⁰ A scholion glosses the word Κυνσοῦρίδας as referring either to dogs born from cross-breeding foxes and dogs or as Lakonian dogs. The latter possibility is explained by adding that “Kynosouris is a place in Lakonia.”⁸¹

Euphorion of Chalcis, active in the third century, was a prolific writer known for employing obscure allusions and intentionally archaizing expressions.⁸² In one of his poems, Euphorion referred to the “hair-loving Dymainai.”⁸³ Given that we have already encountered this exact phrase in the work of Alcman (fr. 4 Page/Davies), it is highly probable that Euphorion was directly quoting the earlier poet.

77 Strabo 8.5.1; Paus. 3.14.2.

78 Λόφον ἱερὸν Ἀρτέμιδος Ἰσσωρίας ἐγγὺς Πιτάνης (Polyaeus 2.1.14); Kourinou 2000: 212–13. Cf. Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἰσώριον: ὄρος τῆς Λακωνικῆς, ἀφ’ οὗ ἡ Ἀρτεμὶς Ἰσσωρία. See also Plut. Lyc. 32.4–6. For the location of Vamvakia hill, see Figure 5 in Section 6.1.

79 Paus. 3.16.7.

80 ἐπτὰ δ’ ἔδωκε θάσσονας αὐράων Κυνσοῦρίδας (Il. 93–94).

81 Κυνσοῦρις γὰρ τόπος Λακωνικῆς.

82 On Euphorion, see Magnelli 2002.

83 φιλοπλοκάμοισι Δυμαίναις (fr. 47 Powell). This phrase occurred in a poem called the *Chiliades* (known only from fragments) that looked forward to the punishment of Euphorion’s enemies.

Dioskourides was an epigrammatist who was active in Alexandria during the second half of the third century.⁸⁴ One of his poems mentions Pitana:

Dead on his shield to Pitana came Thrasyboulos, having received seven wounds from the Argives, exposing his whole front to them; and old Tynnichos, as he laid his son's blood-stained body on the pyre, said "Let cowards weep, but I will bury you, my son, without a tear, you who are both mine and Lakedaimon's."⁸⁵

This epigram is a purely poetic exercise in which the reference to Pitana almost certainly derives from earlier literary sources and demonstrates simply that Dioskourides was well read.⁸⁶

Sosibios was born in Lakedaimon in the first half of the third century but spent much of his adult life in Alexandria. His extensive corpus of writings (which survive only in fragments) included works on Lakedaimonian customs, literature, and religious practices. One of the scholiasts to *Olympian* 6, commenting on Pindar's mention of the nymph Pitana, states, "the Lakonian Pitana traces her pedigree from the river Eurotas, so Sosibios says."⁸⁷

One of the most frequently cited pieces of evidence for subdivisions of the Lakedaimonian citizen body is a fragment of the commentary on the *Iliad* written by Demetrios of Skepsis in the first half of the second

84 On Dioskourides, see Clack 2001: 2-6.

85 Τῷ Πιτάνῃ Θρασύβουλος ἐπ' ἀσπίδος ἤλυθεν ἄπνους, | ἑπτὰ πρὸς Ἀργείων τραύματα δεξάμενος, δεικνὺς ἀντὶ πάντα τὸν αἱματόεντα δ' ὁ πρέσβυς | παῖδ' ἐπὶ πυρκαϊῇν Τύννιχος εἶπε τιθεῖς | "Δειλοὶ κλαίεσθωσαν· ἐγὼ δὲ σέ, τέκνον, ἄδακρυς | θάψω, τὸν καὶ ἑμὸν καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιον" (*Anth. Pal.* 7.229; trans. W.R. Paton, modified). A slightly re-worked version of this epigram forms part of Plutarch's *Saying of Spartans* (#51; *Mor.* 235a). The fourth-century CE writer Ausonius composed a more thoroughly re-worked version; for translation and commentary, as well as biographical information on Ausonius, see Kay 2001: 11-32, 127-29.

86 Pritchett 1974-1991: vol. 4, 243 n. 47.

87 ἡ δὲ Λακωνικὴ Πιτάνη Εὐρώτῃ τοῦ ποτάμου γενεαλογεῖται, ὡς Σωσίβιος (*FGrH* 595 F 21; trans. A. Bayliss). On Sosibios, see the biographical essay by A. Bayliss in *Brill's New Jacoby*.

century. That fragment, which is preserved as part of Athenaeus' discussion of dining customs in Lakedaimon, describes practices at the festival for Apollo Karneios:

Demetrios of Skepsis, in Book I of his *Trojan Catalog*, says that the Lakedaimonians' Karneia festival imitates their military way of life. For there are a total of nine places, referred to as "canopies" [*skiades*] because they contain something that resembles tents. Nine men eat dinner at each of these; everything is done in response to a herald's order; each canopy contains three phratries, and the Karneia festival lasts for nine days.⁸⁸

Demetrios may have been commenting on *Iliad* 5.362-63, where Nestor advises Agamemnon to arrange the Greek army "by *phylē* and phratry ... so that phratry may aid phratry and *phylē* may aid *phylē*."

Excavations in Sparta conducted by British archaeologists starting in 1906 uncovered, among much other material, a large number of terracotta tiles that were used to cover the mudbrick superstructure of the city wall. Many of those tiles bear an inscription that was impressed with a wooden stamp. Two tiles, found just to the south of Klaraki hill in the northwestern part of the city and dated to the third century, are inscribed with the word Πιτανατᾶν ("of the Pitanatans").⁸⁹ These tiles – which were found among the ruins of the city wall and thus in situ – are

88 Δημήτριος δ' ὁ Σκήψιος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τοῦ Τρωικοῦ Διακόσμου τὴν τῶν Καρνείων φησὶν ἑορτὴν παρὰ Λακεδαιμονίοις μίμημα εἶναι στρατιωτικῆς ἀγωγῆς. τόπους μὲν γὰρ εἶναι ἐννέα τῷ ἀριθμῷ, σκιάδες δὲ οὗτοι καλοῦνται σκηναῖς ἔχοντες παραπλήσιόν τι· καὶ ἐννέα καθ' ἕκαστον ἄνδρες δειπνοῦσι, πάντα τε ἀπὸ κηρύγματος πράσσεται, ἔχει τε ἐκάστη σκιάς φρατρίας τρεῖς καὶ γίνεται ἡ τῶν Καρνείων ἑορτὴ ἐπὶ ἡμέρας ἐννέα (Ath. 141f = fr. 1 Gaede; trans. S.D. Olson, modified). Eustathius, who was active in the 12th century CE, incorporated this passage (without citing Demetrios) into his commentary on the *Iliad*, as part of his discussion of the banquet held in Book 24 after the burial of Hector (vol. 4, pg. 991, l. 11 van der Valk). On this passage and Demetrios in general, see the commentary (on fr. 1) and biography in the relevant entry, written by Anna Maria Biraschi, in *Brill's New Jacoby*.

89 Wace 1907b: 42 #61; IG V.1.917. See also Wace 1906. See Figure 5 in Section 6.1 for the location of Klaraki hill.

particularly important because they provide a specific locational anchor for Pitana.

A group called the Kynosoureis is mentioned in a Hellenistic inscription on a *stēlē* (SEG 40.348) found near the modern village of Aphysou (on the east bank of the Eurotas, across the river from Sparta). The *stēlē* is decorated with a relief showing two male worshippers approaching an altar and a female deity holding a torch. The style of the relief and the letter forms together suggest a date in the third or second century.⁹⁰ The text is divided into two parts, the first of which provides information about the reason for the erection of the *stēlē*:

The Kynosoureis⁹¹ dedicated Antamenes to Eulakia. He was *hydragos* and led down the water in the best way and did not create a shortage when there was a drought and had not taken land from anyone.⁹²

The second part of the text begins with “The following men jointly financed the production” and continues with a list of 39 men who presumably paid for both the work overseen by Antamenes and the *stēlē*.⁹³ A *hydragos* was responsible for infrastructure designed to move water, in this case probably for the purposes of irrigation, and Eulakia was an epithet associated with Artemis.⁹⁴

Another Hellenistic *stēlē* bears an inscription (SEG 50.406), dated to c. 200 on letter forms, in which a *hydragos* is honored by a group that may

90 SEG 40.348. For the *editio princeps*, see Peek 1974. On the date, see Robert & Robert 1976: 467–68. See Figure 14 in Section 6.3 for the location of Aphysou.

91 Eta is frequently used in place of an intervocalic sigma in Lakonian inscriptions (Bourguet 1927: 46–48; Alonso Déniz 2009).

92 τοὶ Κονοῦρηες ἀνέσθηκαν Ἀνταμένην | τᾷ Εὐλακίᾳ ὑδραγὸν γενόμενον καὶ τὸ
ἡύ[δ]-|ωρ καταγαγόντα κάλιστα πάντων καὶ ἀπορ-|ηλίαν οὐδεμίαν ποιήσαντα τῆς
ἀνδρίας | γενομένης καὶ κοιάξαντα οὐδένα; trans. N.W. Kramer.

93 τοῖδε συνέδωκαν ἐς τὰν κασκευάν Κλήνικος ...

94 Kramer (forthcoming). See also Le Roy 1974: 229–38 as well as Robert & Robert 1976: 467 on SEG 63.276. Peek maintains that the 39 subscribers paid for the irrigation project, whereas Kennell believes that the 39 subscribers paid for the monument to Antamenes (Kennell 1995: 164).

be a previously unattested *ōba*.⁹⁵ The *stēlē* was found in a secondary context during a rescue excavation in the western part of the city of Sparta in 1980. The text, which survives largely intact, seems to have originally appeared between two reliefs. The upper relief in its present form consists solely of the lower parts of two legs of an individual, the lower relief of two heads. The text, as interpreted and translated by Nicole Lanérès, reads:

The Aisiatai dedicated to the Tyndarids [the effigy of] Timon the *hydragos*; the two sub-*hydragoi* Androstheneis and Kallikrates (dedicated it with them).⁹⁶

Lanérès, noting the parallel with SEG 40.348, in which the Kynosoureis honor a *hydragos*, suggested that the Aisiatai were a collectivity of some kind, possibly an *oikos*, *kōma*, or phratry. Another possibility is that the parallel with SEG 40.348 is more precise and the the collectivity of the Aisiatai constituted an *ōba*.

A third relevant *stēlē* from the Hellenistic period (IG V.1.26) provides invaluable information about the governance structure of the *ōba* of Amyklai. This *stēlē* was found near the church of Agia Paraskevi in the modern village of Amykles. It is decorated with a relief showing a female figure with a kithara in her left hand, standing in front of an altar; three male figures approach the female figure.⁹⁷ The text, dated to the late second or early first century based on letter forms and the sculptural style of the relief, reads:

95 The inscription was first published by Kourinou (2000: 224-27 with figure 51). The key relevant publication is Lanérès 2013. For other scholarship on this inscription, see the article by Lanérès and SEG 52.355.

96 Τοι Αἰσιᾶται ἀνέσηκα[ν] | τοί Τινδαρίδαι Τίμω[να] | ὕδραγὸν καὶ τῷ ὑφυδ[ρα]-|γῶ, Ἀνδροσθένης, Καλλικρά[της] (Lanérès 2013). Lanérès derives Αἰσιᾶται from Αἰσιᾶται based on the assumption that an intervocalic sigma became an aspiration and was subsequently dropped. Lanérès suggests Αἰσιᾶται is based on the root αἰσιος ('auspicious').

97 Tod & Wace 1906: 65-66 #441, 176-67 #441. The female figure is presumably Alexandra (in whose sanctuary the *stēlē* was to be erected); the male figures are presumably the three ephors honored in the decree carved onto the *stēlē*.

Dogmatographoi: Lysinikos son of Soteridas, Nekles son of Aristokrates, Pasikrates son of Pasikles. Decreed by the Amyklaians that: Whereas the ephors in office for the year under Nikeas, Pasiteles son of Tetartos, Euthymos son of Lysikrates, Damiadas son of Damiadas, conducted themselves in a manner worthy of themselves and of the pledge entrusted to them, in all ways carrying out their year without thought of gain and in a civilized way, it was decided by the Amyklaians to praise the ephors around Pasiteles for carrying out their office well. Let them always make a portion for them in the Supplication, as long as they shall live, so that the *ōba*, in remembrance of the benefits that came about for it, might appear to give back fitting honors. That those appointed contract for a marble *stēlē*, onto which the decree will be inscribed, and erect it in the sanctuary of Alexandra. Let the *ōba* pay the expense for this, and let those appointed for this submit an account of the expenses arising. And, moreover, to praise their secretary, Kallikles.⁹⁸

This inscription has provoked iterated discussion because it strongly suggests the *ōba* of the Amyklaians had its own governmental apparatus.⁹⁹ The decree is characterized as an enactment of the Amyklaians, and the ephors in the inscription function in a college of three, whereas

98 δογματογράφων Λυσινίκου τοῦ Σωτηρίδα, Νηκλέος | τοῦ Ἀριστοκράτεος, Πασικράτεος τοῦ Πασικλέος | τὸ δοχθὲν ὑπὸ Ἀμυκλαιέων. | {anaglyphum} | ἐπεὶ κα[τ]ασταθέντες ἔφοροι εἰς τὸν ἐπὶ Νικέα ἐνιαυτὸν Πασιτέλης | Τετάρτου, Εὐθυμος Λυσικράτεος, Δαμιάδας Δαμιάδα ἀξίως | ἀνεστρέψαν αὐτῶν τε καὶ τὰς ἐνχ<ει>ρισθείσας αὐτοῖς πίσ<τεως>, ἐμ πᾶσιν ἀκερδῶς καὶ ἡμέρως τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν διεξα<γαγόντες>, δεδόχθαι τοῖς Ἀμυκλαιείοις ἐπαινέσαι ἐφόρους | τοὺς περὶ Πασιτέλη ἐπὶ τῷ καλῶς τὰν ἀρχὰν διεξαγνέειν. | ποιοῦντω δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ ταῖ προστροπαῖ ἀ<ε>ῖ μερίδα, ἕως | ἂν ζῶσι, ὅπως ἀξ[ί] ἃ ὠβὰ μναμονεύουσα τῶν γεγο<νό>των φι<[[λ]]ανθρώπων εἰς αὐτὰν ἀποδιδούσα φαίνεται τὰς καταξίους | τιμὰς. ἐγδόμεν δὲ τοὺς κατασταθέντας στάλαν λιθίναν, | εἰς ἃν ἀναγραφῆσεται τὸ δόγμα, καὶ σᾶσαι εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν τὰς | Ἀλεξάνδρας. τὰν δὲ εἰς ταύταν δαπάναν δότω ἃ ὠβὰ καὶ λόγον | ἐνεγκόντω περὶ τὰς γεγενημένας δαπάνας τοὺς ἐπὶ ταῦτα | κατασταθέντας. ἐπαινέσαι δὲ καὶ τὸν γραμματέα αὐτῶν Καλλικλῆ. Trans. N. Kennell, modified.

99 See, for example, Pareti 1910: 461-62 and *passim*; Chrimes 1949: 164-66; Jones 1987: 122; Lupi 2006: 201.

the ephors of the Lakedaimonian state are never attested as being anything other than five in number.¹⁰⁰ The *stēlē* is to be set up in the sanctuary of Alexandra, a cult site dedicated to Agamemnon and Cassandra (who went locally by the name of Alexandra) that Pausanias saw in the settlement of Amyklai,¹⁰¹ and the relevant expenses are to be paid for by the *ōba*. The *ōba* of the Amyklaians thus seems to have had their own magistrates and public treasury. Little can be said about the *dogmatographoi* (literally, the “drafters of decrees”), but they too were presumably officials of the *ōba*.¹⁰²

At the same time, the *ōba* of the Amyklaians seems to be dependent in some fashion on the *polis* of Lakedaimon. The inscription is dated by reference to the magistracy of Nikeas, whom Nigel Kennell has plausibly identified as the eponymous magistrate of Lakedaimon (by this point in time, the *patronomos*). One might also note that the choice of the title of ephors for the administrators of the *ōba* connects it to the government of the *polis* of Lakedaimon.¹⁰³

The final piece of Hellenistic epigraphic evidence records an *ōba* dispensing honors for someone named Aristoteles. The *stēlē* in question (*IG* V.1.27) survives in a highly fragmentary state and can be only tentatively dated to the first century.¹⁰⁴ The text includes the phrase: δεδόςθαι πάντα τὰ τᾷς ὥβ[ᾱ]ς τ[ίμια] [καὶ αὐτοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἐκγ]όνοις α[ὐτ]-<ῶ>ν καὶ σείτησιν ἐ[ν τῷ] πρυτανείῳ – – τᾷς ὥβᾱ[ς]. The *ōba*, whose name does not survive, grants *timia*, including the right to *sitēsis*. The restoration of πρυτανείῳ is too speculative to permit one to conclude that the *ōba* had its own *prytaneion*.

100 Richer 1998: 261–64.

101 Paus. 3.19.6; Salapata 2014: 18–19, 22–34. See Section 7 for further discussion of this sanctuary.

102 The office of *dogmatographos* appears in several inscriptions from the eastern Aegean; see, for example, *IG* XII.2.67 (Mytilene) and *Inscripfen von Ephesos* 27E, F.

103 Kennell 1995: 162–65. By this point in time, the perioikic communities in Lakonia had become independent and formed the League of Lakedaimonians (later known as the League of the Free Lakonians, see Kennell 1999 for the details). Amyklai does not appear in the list of members of the League of Free Lakonians given by Pausanias (3.21.7). On the office of *patronomos*, see Section 3.4.1.

104 Jones 1987: 122.

The sources from the Hellenistic period make it possible to associate Pitana with the northwestern part of Sparta and provide the earliest evidence for a locality in the vicinity of Sparta called Kynosoura (with the caveat that the sources do not describe Kynosoura as an *ōba*). *IG* V.1.26 and 27 contain the first explicit references to *ōbai* since the early fifth century (presuming Beattie's reading of *IG* V.1.722 to be correct) and provide evidence for an *ōba* acting as a collectivity with its own governmental structure. *SEG* 50.406 may provide evidence of the existence of a previously unattested *ōba* of the Aisiatai.

3.4 Roman Period

The corpus of relevant Roman-era textual evidence is sufficiently extensive to warrant discussion under two separate headings: epigraphic and literary.

3.4.1 Epigraphic Texts

One of the most important components of the evidence for *ōbai* is a series of inscriptions that record victories won by teams of ballplayers (called *sphaireis*) in a contest held annually in Sparta. Kennell has shown that the contest was in effect a graduation ceremony for boys completing their time in the state educational system (called the *agōgē* during the Roman period).¹⁰⁵ Fourteen such inscriptions (*IG* V.1.674-87), ranging in date from the first through third centuries CE, have been found (see Appendix for the texts). Although some of these inscriptions are known solely through transcriptions provided by early visitors to Lakonia (including Fourmont), the available information indicates that they were all carved on marble *stēlai* that were roughly 50-75 cm high and 50 cm wide. In at least some cases (e.g. *IG* V.1.675, 676, 683), the *stēlai* were embellished with a figural relief. They were all found in either Sparta or Mystras (c. 5 km to the west of Sparta). Given that the settlement at Mystras was established in the 13th century CE and that many of the structures there were built using materials from the site of Sparta (which was gradually abandoned due to voluntary migration to Mystras), we can be reasonably

105 Kennell 1995: 28-48.

confident that all the inscriptions were originally erected in Sparta.¹⁰⁶ None of these inscriptions seems to have been found in situ, so the context in which they were displayed initially cannot be definitively established.

The *sphaireis* inscriptions exhibit marked similarities in content. The text of IG V.1.680, among the best preserved examples and dating to the second century CE, is presented here *exempli gratia*:¹⁰⁷

Good Fortune. When Lysippos, the son of Damainetos, dedicated to Caesar and to his fatherland, was *patronomos*, when Pedoukaios the son of Epaphrodeitos, chosen on account of excellence, was *bidieos*, and when Damainetos the son of Aristokrates was, voluntarily, *diabetēs*, the *sphaireis* of the Neopolitans defeated the *ōbai* without a bye. Their [the *sphaireis*'] captain was Galenos the son of Spendon ... [the remainder of the inscription is missing].

Other inscriptions in the series (see, in particular, IG V.1.674) show that they included a list of the team members' names following the name of the captain. The *patronomos* was an annual office that was probably created in the Hellenistic period; one individual held this position at a time, and that individual served as the eponymous magistrate of Lakedaïmon.¹⁰⁸ Five *bidieoi* held office at any given time and seem to have been city-level officials.¹⁰⁹ The *diabetai* were closely associated with and presumably appointed by either *phylai* or *ōbai*. This is most immediately evident from the *cursus honorum* of two men who were active in the second century CE, Agathokles and Damokles, both of whom included διαβέτης Λιμναέων among the list of offices that they held.¹¹⁰ The positioning of

106 On the history of Mystras, see Runciman 2009.

107 There is continuing debate about whether the language of these inscriptions is intentionally archaizing. See, for instance, Brixhe 1996 and Delli 2013.

108 Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 47, 186–87.

109 Paus. 3.11.2; Kennell 1995: 58–60.

110 IG V.1.32A and B; Bradford 1977: 5–6 (Agathokles (15)), 113 (Damokles (3)). See also IG V.1.34. Pedoukaios is not described as διαβέτης Νεοπολιτῶν in IG V.1.680 because the very nature of the inscription, which was tied to the achievements of a group linked to the *ōba* of the Neopolitans, made his obal affiliation obvious.

diabetēs in this and other *cursus* indicates that it was a minor office typically held early in one's public career.¹¹¹ The responsibilities of all the officials named in the *sphaireis* inscriptions (*patronomos*, *bidieoi*, and *diabetai*) were primarily concerned with running the *agōgē*.¹¹²

The *sphaireis* inscriptions contain references to the *ōbai* of Limnai, Neopolis, Pitana, and possibly Kynosoura (the name is restored in *IG* V.1.681, 684). We can be certain that the inhabitants of the *ōba* of Kynosoura participated in the *sphaireis* contests because an honorary decree for Marcus Aurelius Palaistreites from the Roman period describes the honorand as “σφαίρεια, Κονοουρέα,” and a *cursus honorum* from the second century CE for Isochrysos proudly proclaims that he was *diabetēs* when the Kynosoureis won the *sphaireis* contest for the first time in 40 years.¹¹³

There is no firm epigraphic evidence for an *ōba* named Mesoa. Spawforth has shown that *IG* V.1.515, which refers to a Damatrios of Mesoa, is one of Fourmont's forgeries.¹¹⁴ Marcus Tod restored Μεσοάτων in line 8 of *IG* V.1.685, but Walter Kolbe subsequently read Πιτανάτων.¹¹⁵

The absence of Amyklai from the *sphaireis* inscriptions merits discussion in some detail because it potentially impacts our understanding of the organization of the *polis* of Lakedaïmon. As noted above, what is here referred to as the current orthodoxy assumes that, during the Archaic and Classical periods, five *ōbai*, one of which was centered at Amyklai, formed the core of the Lakedaïmonian state. Those *ōbai* are characterized as “tribes based on domicile” that functioned in the first instance as military units. That model does not readily accommodate the existence of a separate government for the *ōba* of Amyklai, which is evident from the late second-/early first-century decree from Amyklai (*IG* V.1.26) discussed in Section 3.3. It has been argued that Amyklai had an obal government in the late second/early first century because it had become semi-autonomous at some earlier point, probably during the Hellenistic

111 Woodward 1925: 181.

112 Kennell 1995: 28–70.

113 *IG* V.1.566; *SEG* 11.493; Woodward 1925: 180–81.

114 Spawforth 1976. See Section 3.1 on Fourmont.

115 Tod 1904: 64, 77; for Kolbe's reading, see *IG* V.1. For references to Mesoa in literary sources, see Section 3.4.2.

period. The absence of Amyklai from the *sphaireis* inscriptions has been taken as a reflection of the detachment of Amyklai from the other *ōbai*.¹¹⁶

However, Kennell has argued that Neopolis was another name for Amyklai and that the Amyklaians thus did participate in the *sphaireis* contests.¹¹⁷ He builds his case around the relief decorating the *stēlē* on which IG V.1.683 (which celebrates a victory by the *ōba* of the Neopolitans) was carved. That *stēlē* was destroyed in a fire, and the relief is known only through the description provided by Ludwig Ross, who stated that it showed a big ball and a female figure with four arms.¹¹⁸ Kennell compares this relief to the one on the *stēlē* on which IG V.1.675 was inscribed, which showed a big ball and the Dioskouroi,¹¹⁹ and argues that the reliefs on *sphaireis* inscriptions featured a deity closely associated with the victorious *ōba*. A four-armed deity is, for obvious reasons, distinctive, and the relief has long been understood as a depiction of Apollo Tetracheir (Apollo Four Hands), who was worshipped at Amyklai.¹²⁰ This leads Kennell to conclude that Neopolis was another name for the *ōba* of Amyklai.

Four further inscriptions from Roman Sparta can usefully be brought into the discussion of the *sphaireis* texts. A late first- or early second-century CE inscription (IG V.1.480) on the base of a statue of Tiberius Claudius Harmonikos states that the statue was erected due to honors bestowed on him by the tribe of the Kynosoureis: ἀπὸ φυλῆς Κονοουρέων τῶν τιμῶν δοθεισῶν. An inscription (IG V.1.564) on the base of another statue, this one of Marcus Aurelius Damarchos, describes him as “leader of the *phylē* of the Limnaians”: πρέσβυν τῆς Λιμναέων φυλῆς. The inscription also states that the person who paid for the statue, Lucius Apronios Euelpistos, was a “good and just man, and a fellow tribesman [of Marcus Aurelius]”: ἀγαθοῦ καὶ δικαίου, το[ῦ] φυλέτου. Finally, two decrees from the second century CE (IG V.1.472, 663) recognizing the

116 See, for example, Wade-Gery 1958: 75.

117 Kennell 1995: 162-69.

118 Ross 1861: 659-60. Ross came across the inscription in the house of the governor of Sparta and does not provide any information about its findspot.

119 Tod, Tillyard & Woodward 1907: 214-15.

120 For the relevant ancient sources, see Kennell 1995: 215 n. 6.

achievements of Gaius Avidius Agathangelos characterize the honorand as Πιτανάτης.

3.4.2 Literary Texts

The literary sources from the Roman period include passages from Strabo, Pausanias, Plutarch, and Herodian.¹²¹ Strabo provides two of the few extant descriptions of Sparta and, in so doing, gives information about Limnai:

Sparta and Amyklai – the site of the sanctuary of Apollo – and Pharis are located at the foot of Mt. Taygetos, in the inland parts of the region. The city [Sparta] is situated in a rather hollow spot, but there are hills within it. However, no part of the city is marshy, but in former times the suburbs were marshy and were thus called Limnai.¹²²

121 Aelius Aristides, who was active in the second century CE, writes in his *Panathenaic Oration* that the Lakedaimonians' laws were given by Apollo and then observes that Apollo also "established the division of *phylai* and *genē* in Athens" (382). Some scholars (see, for example, Kiechle 1963: 192-93) have compared this passage with the phrase about arranging *phylai* and *ōbai* in the Great Rhetra and argued that *ōbai* can be equated with *genē* and that *ōbai* must therefore have been descent-based groups. Wade-Gery is rightly dubious about this interpretive approach (Wade-Gery 1958: 79 n. 2).

122 ὑποπέπτωκε δὲ τῷ Ταῦγέτῳ ἡ Σπάρτη ἐν μεσογαίᾳ καὶ Ἀμύκλαι – οὗ τὸ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ἱερόν – καὶ ἡ Φᾶρις, ἔστι μὲν οὖν ἐν κοιλοτέρῳ χωρίῳ τὸ τῆς πόλεως ἔδαφος καίπερ ἀπολαμβάνον ὄρη μεταξύ, ἀλλ' οὐδὲν γε μέρος αὐτοῦ λιμνάζει· τὸ δὲ παλαιὸν ἐλίμναζε τὸ προάστειον, καὶ ἐκάλουν αὐτὸ Λίμνας (Strabo 8.5.1; cf. Polyb. 5.22.3). This passage ends with a parenthesis: καὶ τὸ τοῦ Διονύσου ἱερόν ἐν Λίμναις ἐφ' ὕγρῳ βεβηκὸς ἐτύγχανε, νῦν δ' ἐπὶ ξηροῦ τὴν ἵδρυσιν ἔχει ("and the Sanctuary of Dionysos in the Marshes is situated in an area that was once marshy, but it now stands on dry ground"). This parenthesis is an interpolated note from a later editor that pertains to a sanctuary in Athens (Radt 2002-2011: vol. 6, 441-42). The Greek text given here comes from Radt's edition.

Among the places cataloged by Homer, they say that Messe is nowhere to be found and that Messoa is not part of the *chōra* but of Sparta, just as Limnaion and [- -].¹²³

The end of the second passage is less than entirely clear due to textual corruption; the gap is filled with the word “Thornax” in some editions, but that is nothing more than speculation. The significance of “Limnaion” in the second passage is apparent from Strabo’s discussion of a sanctuary of Artemis in the Taygetos:

The Sanctuary of Artemis in the Marshes [ἐν Λίμναις], where the Messenians are supposed to have violated the *parthenoi* who went there to offer sacrifices, is on the border between Lakonia and Messenia. ... The Limnaion sanctuary in Sparta [τὸ ἐν τῇ Σπάρτῃ Λιμναῖον ... ἱερόν] dedicated to Artemis is said to take its name from this sanctuary.¹²⁴

Strabo’s Limnaion sanctuary of Artemis can be confidently equated with the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, because Pausanias informs us that “the place called Limnaion is a sanctuary dedicated to Artemis Orthia.”¹²⁵ Pausanias says very little about the Orthia sanctuary, but he does, in providing an aetiology for the whipping rite that took place there, mention four groups that can be associated with *ōbai*:

When the Limnaians among the Spartiates and the Kynosoureis and those from both Mesoa and Pitana were sacrificing to Athena, they started to quarrel, and this led to bloodshed. After many had been

123 τῶν δ' ὕφ' Ὀμήρου καταλεγόμενων τὴν μὲν Μέσσην οὐδαμοῦ δείκνυσθαι φασί· Μεσσοῶν δ' οὐ τῆς χώρας εἶναι μέρος ἀλλὰ τῆς Σπάρτης, καθάπερ καὶ τὸ Λιμναῖον καὶ τὸν [- -] (Strabo 8.5.3). On the textual corruption in this passage, see Radt 2002-2011: vol. 6, 444. For the relevant passage from Homer, see Section 3.1.

124 τὸ δ' ἐν Λίμναις τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερόν, ἐφ' ᾧ Μεσσήνιοι περὶ τὰς παρθένους ὑβρίσαι δοκοῦσι τὰς ἀφιγμένας ἐπὶ τὴν θυσίαν, ἐν μεθορίοις ἐστὶ τῆς τε Λακωνικῆς καὶ τῆς Μεσσηνίας. ... ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν Λιμνῶν τούτων καὶ τὸ ἐν τῇ Σπάρτῃ Λιμναῖον εἴρηται τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερόν (Strabo 8.4.9).

125 Τὸ δὲ χωρίον τὸ ἐπονομαζόμενον Λιμναῖον Ὀρθίας ἱερόν ἐστιν Ἀρτέμιδος (Paus. 3.16.7).

killed on the altar, and a plague wasted the rest, they were bidden by an oracle to wet the altar with human blood.¹²⁶

Pausanias provides one other tidbit of relevant information. In describing the northwestern part of the city, he states that there is a *leschē* of the Krotanoi, whom he characterizes as forming part of the Pitaneans.¹²⁷

In his life of Lycurgus, Plutarch discusses subdivisions of the Spartiate citizen body and relevant officials. He provides the text of and commentary on the Great Rhetra and explains the phrase φυλὰς φυλάξαντα καὶ ὠβὰς ὠβάξαντα in the Rhetra as meaning “to divide and distribute the populace into groups, the former of which he [Lycurgus] called *phylai* and the latter *ōbai*.”¹²⁸ Elsewhere in the same work, Plutarch states that tribal officials (τῶν φυλετῶν οἱ πρεσβύτατοι) inspected infants at birth.¹²⁹

Both Plutarch and Herodian have occasion to mention Pitana. In *On Exile*, Plutarch consoles the recipient in part by stating, “That you do not live in Sardis is nothing. Neither do all Athenians live in Kollytos, nor all Corinthians in Kraneion, nor all Lakonians in Pitana.”¹³⁰ Kollytos was a deme in Attica, and Kraneion was a suburb of Corinth. Herodian, who was active in the second half of the second and first half of the third centuries CE, wrote a work with the title *History of the Empire from the Death of Marcus*. In recounting one of the campaigns of Caracalla, Herodian informs us that the emperor “sent for young men from Sparta and called them

126 τοῦτο δὲ οἱ Λιμνᾶται Σπαρτιατῶν καὶ Κυνοσουρεῖς καὶ οἱ ἐκ Μεσόας τε καὶ Πιτάνης θύοντες τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι ἐς διαφοράν, ἀπὸ δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐς φόνους προήχθησαν, ἀποθανόντων δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ βωμῷ πολλῶν νόσος ἔφθειρε τοὺς λοιπούς. καὶ σφισιν ἐπὶ τούτῳ γίνεται λόγιον αἵματι ἀνθρώπων τὸν βωμὸν αἱμάσσειν (Paus. 3.16.9-10; trans. J.G. Frazer, modified).

127 Paus. 3.14.2; see Section 9.2 for the text.

128 ἐν τούτοις τὸ μὲν φυλὰς φυλάξαι καὶ ὠβὰς ὠβάξαι διελεῖν ἐστὶ καὶ κατανεῖμαι τὸ πλῆθος εἰς μερίδας, ὧν τὰς μὲν φυλὰς, τὰς δὲ ὠβὰς προσηγόρευκεν (Plut. *Lyc.* 6.1). On the Great Rhetra, see Section 3.1.

129 Plut. *Lyc.* 16.1.

130 Τὸ δέ σε μὴ κατοικεῖν Σάρδεις οὐθέν ἐστιν· οὐδὲ γὰρ Ἀθηναῖοι πάντες κατοικοῦσι Κολλυτόν, οὐδὲ Κορίνθιοι Κράνειον, οὐδὲ Πιτάνην Λάκωνες (Plut. *On Exile* 6 = *Mor.* 601b; trans. P.H. De Lacy & B. Einarson, modified). On this work, see van Hoof 2010: 116-50.

his Lakonian and Pitanaite battalion.”¹³¹ Herodian and Caracalla probably relied on references to Pitana in earlier literary sources, most obviously Herodotus’ mention of a Pitanaite *lochos* (see Section 3.2).

The Roman-era textual sources provide the first certain reference to an *ōba* named Limnai and the first known references to an *ōba* called Neopolis and to Mesoa (which is not, however, explicitly described as an *ōba*). Two honorary inscriptions (IG V.1.480, 564) dating to the same period as the *sphaireis* inscriptions show that Kynosoura and Limnai could be referred to as both *phylai* and *ōbai*. The passages from Strabo and Pausanias connect the *ōba* of Limnai to the eastern part of Sparta, in the vicinity of the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia. The absence of Amyklai from the aetiology provided by Pausanias could be an indication that Amyklai was in some fashion administratively separated from the other *ōbai*. However, if Neopolis was indeed an alternative name for Amyklai, then the Amyklaians took part in ballgames along with the other *ōbai*. Moreover, the Amyklaians had their own, quite important sanctuary at the Amyklaion and may have been less involved in the rites at Artemis Orthia purely for reasons of religious practice and accessibility.

3.5 *Lexicons, Encyclopedias, and Scholia*

This section treats all the relevant passages from lexicons, encyclopedias, and scholia, regardless of their date. Most of the works in question were produced during the Byzantine period. The dating of individual scholia can be complex, and no attempt will be made to place any of them in time. In addition to the unnamed scholiasts, we will encounter eight authors:

- Apollonius Sophista, active c. 100 CE, author of a lexicon of words from Homer;

131 ἀπό τε Σπάρτης μεταπεμψάμενος νεανίας Λακωνικὸν καὶ Πιτανάτην ἐκάλει λόχον (Herodian *History of the Empire* 4.8). On Herodian and his work, see Kemezis 2014: 227–72.

- Aelius Herodianus, active in the second century CE, author of *Περὶ καθολικῆς προσωδίας* (*On Prosody in General*, frequently referred to as *De prosodia catholica*, primarily a study of accentuation) and *Περὶ Παρωνύμων* (*On Nominal Derivatives* [words derived from nouns]);
- Hesychius, active in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, author of a lexicon of unusual and obscure words;
- Stephanus of Byzantium, active in the sixth century CE, author of the *Ethnika*, a geographical dictionary that survives in the form of an epitome and fragments of the larger, original text;
- Photios, active in the ninth century CE, author of a lexicon of words that had become obsolete or fallen out of use;
- The *Suda*, an encyclopedia compiled in the tenth century CE;
- *Etymologicum Symeonis*, a lexicon from the 12th century CE;
- Pseudo-Zonaras, a lexicon from the 15th century CE that has in the past been incorrectly attributed to the 12th-century CE scholar John Zonaras.

Some of the later authors in this list relied on earlier authors in the list, so not every reference can be considered a separate testimonium. In addition, the large chronological and experiential gap between, for example, Lakedaimon of the Archaic period and Photios needs to be borne in mind.

Scholia and lexical sources mention Pitana, Kynosoura, Mesoa/Mes-soa, and Amyklai. Pitana is referred to as a *kōmē*, a *phylē*, and a *polis*; the scholiast to Pindar *Olympia* 6.46 states that Pitana is located near a ford on the Eurotas river.¹³² Kynosoura is referred to as a *phylē*, and

132 *Kōmē*: Scholiast to Thuc. 1.20. *Phylē*: Hesychius s.v. Πιτανάτης στρατός; Photios s.v. Πιτάνη. *Polis*: Scholiasts to Eurip. *Tro.* 1112, Pind. *Ol.* 6.28 (= 6.46a Drachmann).

Mesoa/Messoa as a *phylē* and a place.¹³³ Amyklai is repeatedly characterized as a *polis*.¹³⁴ A scholion to Pindar *Pythian* 1 (1.121a Drachmann) states that Pamphylis and Dymanis were tribal names in Lakedaimon.

Hesychius, due to his interest in obscure words, is a particularly important source. The relevant entries in his lexicon include:

- οὐαί· φυλαί (“*ōbai: phylai*”)
- ὤας· τὰς κώμας (“*ōbai: kōmai*”)
- ὠβαί· τόποι μεγαλομερεῖς (“*ōbai: magnificent places,*” or perhaps “places that form parts of a whole”)
- ὠβάτας· τοὺς φυλέτας (“fellow members of an *ōba*: fellow members of a tribe”)
- ὠγή· κώμη (“*ōba: kōmē*”)

These various forms are related because ὠβά was originally written with a digamma rather than a beta; as the digamma went out of use, various orthographies were employed.¹³⁵

Three further entries in Hesychius’ lexicon require more detailed discussion:

- (1) A heading in the gamma entries is corrupt in the manuscript tradition and has been tentatively restored as γεροάκται, whereas the definition is intact: οἱ δῆμαρχοι, παρὰ Λάκωσιν.
- (2) Johannes Baunack argued that Hesychius’ entry ὠνάρχος· δῆμψος should be interpreted as meaning that there was a

133 Kynosoura: Hesychius s.v. Κυνόσουρα; Photios s.v. Κυνόσουρα. Mesoa/Messoa: Aelius Herodianus *Περὶ καθολικῆς προσωδίας* vol. 3.1 pg 301.26 Lentz (citing Strabo Book 8 as a source); Steph. Byz. *Ethnika* Epitome s.v. Μεσσόα; Suda s.v. Ἀλκμάν, Μεσσόα.

134 Apollonius Sophista pg. 28.10 Bekker; Aelius Herodianus *Περὶ καθολικῆς προσωδίας* vol. 3.1, pg. 318.10 Lentz; Aelius Herodianus *Περὶ Παρωνύμων* vol. 3.2 pg. 872.13 Lentz; Hesychius s.v. ἀμυκλαῖδες; Steph. Byz. *Ethnika* Epitome s.v. Ἀμύκλαι; *Etymologicum Symeonis* s.v. ἀμύκλαι; Pseudo-Zonaras s.v. Ἀμύκλαι; Scholiast to Theocritus Prolegomenon Poem 12, 12–16d.

135 Bourguet 1927: 71 n. 1; Ehrenberg 1937: 1693; Chantraine 1968: s.v. ὠβά.

- Lakonian term ὤφαρχος that was the equivalent of the Attic δήμαρχος.¹³⁶
- (3) The entry for ἐπιπαίζειν reads τὸ μὴ φρατρίαν. Λάκωνες. The verb ἐπιπαίζειν appears only rarely in the extant corpus of Greek literature and is defined in the *LSJ* as “to mock at.” Kurt Latte, in creating an edition of Hesychius’ lexicon, noted the practice (attested at Athens and Delphi) of making a sacrifice on the occasion of presenting a child to one’s phratry. He suggested emending the entry to read: ἐπιπαιδειάζειν· τὸ μὴ <ἐν καιρῷ> θύειν φρατρίαν. Λάκωνες (“the phratry does not make the sacrifice at the appointed time among the Lakonians”).¹³⁷ Lupi, in his detailed discussion of this entry, argues that ἐπιπαιδειάζειν meant something like “to recognize, in addition, as a son” (i.e. “to adopt”). He takes the definition of ἐπιπαιδειάζειν as an indication that Lakonian phratries did not make sacrifices at adoption ceremonies.¹³⁸ The key issue in the present context is the implication that there were phratries in Lakonia and that they played a role in recognizing children as legitimate offspring.

This collection of texts echoes the epigraphic sources in the confusion between *ōbai* and *phylai* and adds an equation between *ōbai* and *kōmai*. In addition, two entries in Hesychius’ lexicon suggest that *ōbai* had magistrates similar to Athenian demarchs.

136 Baunack 1911: 488.

137 In Cunningham’s updated version of Latte’s edition (Cunningham 2020: entry 5038), the original text is supplied, and Latte’s emendation is provided in the *apparatus criticus*.

138 Lupi 2005.

4. The Organization of the Lakedaimonian Army

The organization of the Lakedaimonian army figures prominently in Wade-Gery's work on the Lakedaimonian *ōbai* because, in his view, military units were, for an extended period, tied to specific *ōbai*. Evidence pertaining to units in the Lakedaimonian army could, therefore, be used to reconstruct the number and names of *ōbai*. It is, as a result, necessary to examine the relevant sources in some detail, particularly as they pertain to the number and names of military units.¹³⁹

The earliest source is Tyrtaios (fr. 19 West, see Section 3.1), who mentions "Pamphyloi, Hylleis, and Dymanes, separately, brandishing in their hands murderous spears of ash." This passage strongly implies that in the seventh century units in the Lakedaimonian army were based on the three Dorian tribes. If, as one might suspect, there were units smaller than the tribes at that point in time, we have no information about them. As we have seen (Section 3.2), Herodotus describes the Spartiate officer Amompharetos at the Battle of Plataia as "serving as commander [*lochēgos*] of the *lochos* of the Pitanatans," while Thucydides expressly denies the existence of such a unit.¹⁴⁰ Herodotus (9.53.2), in discussing Amompharetos' disobedience to Pausanias' orders at Plataia, states that "all the rest of the *taxiarchoi* were ready to obey Pausanias."¹⁴¹ When dis-

139 For a summary and discussion of the full range of evidence for the organization of the Lakedaimonian army, not all of which is relevant here, see Anderson 1970: 225-51.

140 Hdt. 9.53.2; Thuc. 1.20.3. See also Hdt. 9.57.1-2, where Herodotus three times refers to the unit under Amompharetos' command as a *lochos*.

141 οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι ἄρτιοι ἦσαν τῶν ταξiάρχων πείθεσθαι Πανσανίῃ (Hdt. 9.53.2). *Taxiarchos* in this passage is probably a generic word for a high-ranking commander, intended to give Herodotus' readers some sense of Amompharetos' relative standing in the army, rather than an actual rank in Lakedaimon. Lazenby suggests that Amompharetos was one of the *polemarchoi* (Lazenby 1985: 48-50). There is an extensive bibliography on Amompharetos' position in the Lakedaimonian chain of command at Plataia; see, for instance, Christesen 2020. Van Wees, in a detailed examination of two oaths inscribed on a *stēlē* found at Acharnai in Athens and dated to the mid-fourth century, interprets one of the oaths as a relatively faithful reflection of an oath sworn by Greek forces during the Persian War. He argues that

cussing the reforms of Lycurgus, Herodotus claims that Lycurgus “established their military organization: the *enōmotiai* and *triēkades* and *sysitia*.”¹⁴²

In his account of the Battle of Mantinea in 418, Thucydides states that orders issued by a Lakedaimonian king were passed down a chain of command: from *polemarchoi* to *lochagoi* to *pentēkontēres* to *enōmotarchai*. The Lakedaimonian forces at Mantinea were, according to Thucydides, divided into seven *lochoi*, one of which was an ad hoc unit made up of *Brasideioi* and *Neodamōdeis*.¹⁴³

Xenophon does not provide a comprehensive statement about the structure of the Lakedaimonian army in the *Hellenika*, but he supplies relevant information at nearly two dozen points in sections 2.4.31-7.1.25 (covering the years 403-368). That information is internally consistent and can be summarized as follows:

- the Lakedaimonian army has 6 *morai*;
- a *polemarchos* commands each *mora*;

the content of that oath drew heavily on the oath sworn by Spartiates when they joined one of the *enōmotiai* (“sworn bands”) (van Wees 2006). The oath on the *stēlē* contains the phrase “I shall not leave my *taxiarchos* or my *enōmotarchēs*,” which van Wees takes as evidence for the claim that the only officers who commanded units in the Lakedaimonian phalanx were *enōmotarchai* and *taxiarchoi*. He sees the *polemarchoi* referenced by Herodotus as members of a general staff who did not command their own units. Leaving aside concerns about the authenticity of the text of the oaths on the *stēlē* (see Rhodes & Osborne 2003: 440-48 for a detailed discussion that leaves the question open), the term *taxiarchoi* in the oath could easily be a generic reference to “superior officers.” *Enōmotarchēs* would be mentioned specifically because the oath was tied directly to joining an *enōmotia*. The details of the oath as transmitted are, therefore, a questionable source for the command structure of the Lakedaimonian army in the early fifth century.

142 μετὰ δὲ τὰ ἐς πόλεμον ἔχοντα, ἐνωμοτίας καὶ τριηκάδας καὶ συσσίτια (Hdt. 1.65.5).

143 Thuc. 5.66.3-68.3. On the *Brasideioi* and *Neodamōdeis*, see Hunt 1998: 58-60, 116-17. Several features of this passage (e.g. Thucydides’ calculations of the number of Lakedaimonian soldiers present at Mantinea) have been discussed repeatedly and at length but are not immediately relevant here. See, for example, Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1945-1981: vol. 4, 110-17; Lazenby 1985: 125-34; Hornblower 1991-2008: vol. 3, 180-82.

- the only subordinate officers directly referenced are *pentēkontēres*;
- the Lakedaimonian units at Leuktra in 371 are drawn up by *enōmotiai*, implying the existence of *enōmotarchai*;
- no information is provided about the number of *pentēkontēres* or *enōmotiai* in a *mora*;
- neither *lochos* nor *lochagoi* is mentioned.

In the later sections of the *Hellenika* (covering the years 365-362), Xenophon twice states that the Lakedaimonian army consists of 12 *lochoi*.¹⁴⁴

In his *Lakedaimonion Politeia*, Xenophon ascribes the following army organization to Lycurgus:

- 6 *morai* of infantry, 6 *morai* of cavalry;
- each infantry *mora* has 1 *polemarchos*, 4 *lochagoi*, 8 *pentēkontēres*, 16 *enōmotarchai*.

Each *mora* thus seems to consist of 4 *lochoi*, 8 *pentēkostues*, and 16 *enōmotiai*.¹⁴⁵

The information in the *Hellenika* and the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* is contradictory (see Table 3). If we presume that the 12 *lochoi* of the *Hellenika* were subdivisions of the 6 *morai*, there would have been 2 *lochoi* per *mora*, whereas the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* states that there were 4. Given that *lochoi* are not mentioned until 365, the Lakedaimonian army may have been reorganized shortly after Leuktra.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, Xenophon may not have had occasion to mention *lochoi* or *lochagoi* in the earlier sections of the *Hellenika*, and the number attached to the *lochagoi* in the manuscripts of the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* could be corrupt.

144 The relevant passages in the *Hellenika* are: 2.4.31, 2.4.33, 3.5.22, 4.2.22, 4.3.15, 4.3.21-23, 4.4.7-8, 4.5.3-5, 4.5.7, 4.5.10-19, 4.6.3, 5.1.29, 5.4.46-47, 5.4.51-52, 6.1.1, 6.1.17, 6.4.12, 6.4.14-15, 6.4.17, 7.1.17, 7.1.25, 7.4.20, 7.5.10. See also 3.1.28, 3.2.16, 4.1.26, 6.2.18.

145 The relevant passages in the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* are: 11.1, 11.4, 11.6, 12.5-6, 13.1, 13.4, 13.6-7, 13.9.

146 The date when Xenophon penned his *Lakedaimonion Politeia* remains an open question. See Lipka 2002: 9-13.

Table 3: Organization of the Lakedaimonian army according to Thucydides and Xenophon

Thucydides	Xenophon <i>Hellenika</i>	Xenophon <i>Lakedaimonion Politeia</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 regular <i>lochoi</i> • each <i>lochos</i>: 4 <i>pentēkostues</i>, 16 <i>enōmotiai</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 <i>morai</i> • each <i>mora</i>: (probably) 2 <i>lochoi</i> divided into unstated number of <i>pentēkostues</i> and <i>enōmotiai</i> • 12 <i>lochoi</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 <i>morai</i> • each <i>mora</i>: 4 <i>lochoi</i>, 8 <i>pentēkostues</i>, 16 <i>enōmotiai</i>

Thucydides and Xenophon, despite their differences on various points concerning the Lakedaimonian army, agree that there were six major units within that force. The subdivisions of the Lakedaimonian army were described in the Aristotelian *Politeia of the Lakedaimonians*, with the extant fragments suggesting that there were either five or six major units. The clearest statement is found in the lexicon compiled by Harpokration of Alexandria in the second century CE, in the entry for μόραν: “certain Lakonian military units bear this name. Aristotle discusses them in the *Politeia of the Lakedaimonians*. He says that there are six named *morai*, and all the Lakedaimonians are divided among the *morai*.”¹⁴⁷ This passage appears in Rose’s collection of Aristotelian fragments as fr. 540.

An exchange in Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, in which the eponymous protagonist mentions “four *lochoi* of battle-ready women,” was explained by some scholiasts and lexicographers as a reference to military units in Lakedaimon.¹⁴⁸

147 μόραν: ... συντάγματά τινα Λακωνικὰ οὕτω καλεῖται. διείλεκται δὲ περὶ τούτων Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν τῇ Λακεδαιμονίων πολιτείᾳ. φησὶ δὲ ὡς εἰσὶ μόραι ἕξ ὠνομασμέναι, καὶ διήρηνται εἰς τὰς μόρας Λακεδαιμόνιοι πάντες. This passage appears in Rose’s collection of Aristotelian fragments as fr. 540.

148 Lys. 453-54.

Scholiast Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 453: there exist four *lochoi* among the women. This means that there are also among the Lakedaimonians four *lochoi*, which are at the disposal of the king.¹⁴⁹

Scholiast Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 453: the poet is referring, in a sloppy fashion, to Lakonian customs. For there are not four *lochoi* in Lakedaimon but five: Edōlos, Sinis, Arimas, Ploas, Messoagēs. Thucydides says that there are seven, leaving aside the Skiritai.¹⁵⁰

Hesychius s.v. λόχοι: Aristophanes says there are four Lakedaimonian *lochoi*. There are in fact five, as Aristotle says.¹⁵¹

Photios s.v. λόχοι: Aristophanes says there are four Lakedaimonian *lochoi*, Thucydides five, Aristotle seven.¹⁵²

A scholion to Thucydides 4.8, in response to Thucydides' mention of Lakedaimonian soldiers having been drafted by lot "from all the *lochoi*," notes that "there are five *lochoi* among the Lakedaimonians: Aidōlios, Sinis, Sarimas, Ploas, Mesoatēs."¹⁵³ Finally, the entry for Ἐδωλός in Hesychius' lexicon reads "a *lochos* among the Lakedaimonians bears this name."¹⁵⁴ Rose bundled these six passages under the heading of fr. 541; this arrangement reflects his belief that all these passages drew on a single section of the Aristotelian *politeia*.¹⁵⁵

149 ὅτι καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν εἰσὶ (τέτταρες λόχοι μαχίμων γυναικῶν): παρὰ ταῖς γυναῖξιν ὑπάρχουσι δ' λόχοι. τοῦτο δέ φησιν, ὅτι καὶ παρὰ Λακεδαιμονίοις τέσσαρες ὑπάρχουσι λόχοι οἷς κέχρηται ὁ βασιλεύς.

150 τέτταρες λόχοι: ἀργότερον τὰ Λακῶνων ἔοικεν ἐξεργάσθαι ὁ ποιητής. λόχοι γὰρ οὐκ εἰσὶ τέτταρες ἐν Λακεδαιμονίᾳ ἀλλὰ ε', Ἐδωλος, Σίνις, Ἀρίμας, Πλοάς, Μεσσοάγης. ὁ δὲ Θουκυδίδης ζ' φησὶ χωρὶς τῶν Σκιριτῶν.

151 λόχοι: Λακεδαιμονίων φησὶν Ἀριστοφάνης τέτταρας. πέντε γάρ εἰσιν, ὥς φησιν Ἀριστοτέλης.

152 λόχοι: Λακεδαιμονίων δ', ὥς Ἀριστοφάνης. Θουκυδίδης δὲ ε', Ἀριστοτέλης ζ'.

153 λόχοι Λακεδαιμονίων πέντε, Αἰδῶλιος, Σίνις, Σαρίμας, Πλόας, Μεσοάτης.

154 Ἐδωλός: λόχος Λακεδαιμονίων οὕτως ἑκαλεῖτο.

155 The same collection of passages (minus one of the Aristophanes scholia) appears in Gigon's collection of Aristotelian fragments as fr. 546.1-5. Hesychius' entry for μόραν is fr. 547.

This collection of material has led some scholars to claim that the Aristotelian *Politeia of the Lakedaimonians* gave the names of five *lochoi* in the Lakedaimonian army.¹⁵⁶ This claim relies heavily on Rose's judgment about the interrelationship of the six passages he cataloged under the heading of fr. 541. However, none of the passages that give names for Lakedaimonian *lochoi* specifically cites Aristotle. Harpokration (in Rose fr. 540) does state, citing the Aristotelian *politeia*, that there were six named *morai* in the Lakedaimonian army (μόραι ἕξ ὠνομασμέναι). In addition, Hesychius (in fr. 541 Rose) does cite Aristotle for the statement that there were five Lakedaimonian *lochoi*. If, as Harpokration implies, the Aristotelian *politeia* gave the names of six Lakedaimonian *morai*, it is possible that it also gave the names of five *lochoi*, but that needs to be understood as an inference. Lupi has argued that the names of the five *lochoi* in the scholiasts to Lysistrata 453 and Thucydides 4.8 are actually the names of the five Argive *lochoi* that fought at Mantinea in 418.¹⁵⁷ (Thucydides refers to the Argive forces shortly after his discussion of the structure of the Lakedaimonian army.)

Another issue is the number of *morai* and *lochoi*. Harpokration, citing the Aristotelian *politeia*, gives the number of *morai* as six, and Hesychius, citing Aristotle, gives the number of *lochoi* as five. This may indicate, as has sometimes been claimed, that the Aristotelian *politeia* discussed two different systems of organization used in the Lakedaimonian army, one involving six *morai* and another involving five *lochoi*. However, if Rose was correct in thinking that all of the six passages he lumped together as fr. 541 derived information from the same section of the Aristotelian *politeia*, there was some confusion among the later authors using the *politeia* as to whether there were four or five *lochoi*. (Photios seems to have mixed up Aristotle and Thucydides.) The claim that there were four *lochoi* may be an erroneous guess based on Aristophanes' mention of four *lochoi* of women, but we cannot be certain about what the Aristotelian *politeia* had to say about the number of Lakedaimonian *lochoi*.

Wade-Gery employed this collection of textual evidence to reconstruct the evolution of the organization of the Lakedaimonian army. He argued that the Lakedaimonian army had three successive structures,

156 See, for example, Toynbee 1969: 371.

157 Thuc. 5.72.4, Lupi 2014a.

which he called the Tribal Army, the Obal Army, and the Army of the *Morai*.¹⁵⁸ The Tribal Army consisted of three regiments (each of which was linked to a descent-based Dorian tribe) and 27 phratries. In the seventh century, the enactment of the Great Rhetra created five new regiments called *lochoi*. Each *lochos* was linked to one of five locality-based *ōbai* that were situated in Sparta and Amyklai. Those five *lochoi* contained only Spartiates; the *perioikoi* had their own separate system that was probably also built around five (other) *lochoi*. Following the earthquake of c. 464, which resulted in the death of many Spartiates, a new system, built around six *morai*, was created. The *morai* were not based on locality (or tied in any way to the *ōbai*), and each *mora* contained both Spartiates and *perioikoi*. Wade-Gery, in proposing this reconstruction, relied on Tyrtaios fr. 19 West, the presence of 5,000 Spartiates and 5,000 *perioikoi* at Plataia (which Wade-Gery presumed represented 10 *lochoi* each with a strength of 1,000 men), Herodotus' reference to a Pitana *lochos* (because Pitana was one of the five *ōbai*),¹⁵⁹ the passages collected as fr. 541 Rose, and the evidence for *phylai* and *ōbai* in the Roman-era inscriptions.

The names of the *lochoi* (Edōlos/Aidōlios, Sinis, Arimas/Sarimas, Ploas, Messoagēs/Mesoatēs) presented difficulties for Wade-Gery because only one of them – Messoagēs/Mesoatēs – could be straightforwardly linked to an *ōba* (Mesoia). The other names seem to be nicknames. Hans van Wees suggests, based on a series of plausible etymologies, that Edōlos/Aidōlios = “Devourer,” Sinis = “Ravager,” Arimas/Sarimas = “Hell-Bent,” Ploas = “Thundercloud,” and Messoagēs/Mesoatēs = “Leader of the Center.”¹⁶⁰ Kennell astutely points out the parallel between these names and titles such as *rapax* and *victrix* given to Roman legions.¹⁶¹ Wade-Gery resolved this problem by simply stating, “But if one *Lochos* is regional then surely all five must be.”¹⁶² Other scholars, however, have

158 Wade-Gery 1925: 558-65; Wade-Gery 1958: 66-85.

159 Hdt. 9.10.1, 9.11.3, 9.53.2.

160 van Wees 2006: 158-61.

161 Kennell 1995: 167. Kennell suggests a different meaning for Arimas/Sarimas.

162 Wade-Gery 1958: 77. Wade-Gery explains the absence of Pitana in the list of *lochoi* given by the scholiast to Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 453 and Thucydides 4.8 by arguing that one of the names in that list is a nickname for the Pitana *lochos*. For Wade-Gery, the six *morai* in Aristotle fr. 540 and the five *lochoi* in fr. 541 show that the Aristotelian *politeia* provided a history of the Lakedaimonian army.

argued that Messoagēs/Mesoatēs had no connection whatsoever to the name of an *ōba*. Kathleen Chrimes, for instance, made the case that *lochos* in this usage referred to a file in a phalanx and that Messoagēs was the name of the middle rank in an *enōmotia* deployed in five files.¹⁶³

Lazenby, in his monograph on the Lakedaimonian army, took issue with Wade-Gery's reconstruction of its organizational history. He endorsed Thucydides' rejection of Herodotus' claim about the existence of a Pitaneate *lochos*, highlighted the interpretive difficulties with the passages in fr. 541 Rose, and expressed doubt about using Roman-era inscriptions pertaining to participants in ballgames as evidence for the structure of the Lakedaimonian army hundreds of years earlier. Given that the actual strength of a Lakedaimonian unit at a particular battle depended on how many age-classes had been called up, the presence of 5,000 Spartiates at Plataia is not probative for the organization of that force. Lazenby proposed instead that the Obal Army was a figment of Wade-Gery's imagination and that the Lakedaimonian army, by the time of the Persian Wars at the latest, was organized into six *morai*, each of which was subdivided into *lochoi*, *pentēkostues*, and *enōmotiai*. Lazenby speculated that the six *morai* already existed in the eighth century, at which point in time each of the three Doric *phylai* was divided into two *morai*.¹⁶⁴ Hence, for Lazenby, the Lakedaimonian army did not at any point in its history have five major units.

163 Chrimes 1949: 316, 392. See also Lazenby 1985: 52; Kennell 1995: 167. For *lochos* meaning a file in a phalanx, see Arrian *Taktika* 5.4.

164 Lazenby 1985: 63-69. For an entirely different perspective, see Singor 2002, who argues that the Lakedaimonian army at Mantinea as described by Thucydides consisted of five *lochoi* of Spartiates, with *perioikoi* brigaded separately. For further discussion of the structure of the Lakedaimonian army, see, in addition to the sources cited above, Kelly 1981; Cartledge 1987: 427-31; Lupi 2006; Sekunda 2010: 719-20.

5. Previous Scholarship on *ōbai* and Where Spartiates Lived

The previous scholarship on Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived is based almost exclusively on the textual sources discussed in Sections 3 and 4. A key issue in interpreting those sources is the relationship between *phylai* and *ōbai* – more specifically, whether *ōbai* were subdivisions of *phylai* (and hence descent-based) or whether *phylai* and *ōbai* were separate systems, with the *ōbai* being based on locality rather than descent. Other questions (not all of which are addressed by any given scholar) follow thereupon: did *phylai* and *ōbai* pre-exist the Great Rhetra or was one or both created ex nihilo by its enactment? If *phylai* and/or *ōbai* pre-existed the Great Rhetra, what was the impact of its enactment? What was the nature and number of *phylai* after the enactment of the Great Rhetra? What was the nature and number of *ōbai*? If they were locality-based units, where were they located and what was the sociopolitical status(es) of their inhabitants? The last two questions are of particular significance in the present context because they have ramifications for our understanding of where Spartiates lived and settlement patterns in the Eurotas valley more broadly speaking.

The body of scholarly work on the *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived is vast, and an exhaustive review would require a lengthy essay solely on that subject. The discussion that follows is thus necessarily selective. I begin by examining some of the more influential pieces of scholarship that characterize *ōbai* as descent-based groups (Section 5.1). I then treat the scholarship that characterizes the *ōbai* as locality-based groups (Section 5.2). In that section, the work of Luigi Pareti, Victor Ehrenberg, and Wade-Gery, who authored the most widely read statements of the current orthodoxy, is discussed and critiqued in some detail. Next, I briefly examine some scholarship that appeared after Wade-Gery's time and expresses views differing from the current orthodoxy (Section 5.3). The recent scholarship on Lakedaimonian *phylai* and *ōbai* authored by Lupi is addressed in Section 5.4.

It will rapidly become apparent that several, highly divergent views about the nature and number of the *ōbai* have been proposed. Table 4 summarizes the opinions of some of the scholars whose work is discussed in Sections 5.1-4 on the number of *phylai* and *ōbai* after the enactment of

the Great Rhetra. The table helps make it apparent that the current orthodoxy is by no means the only viable approach to interpreting the available evidence.

Table 4: Proposals about the number of *phylai* and *ōbai* in Lakedaïmon after the enactment of the Great Rhetra

scholar	number of <i>phylai</i>	number of <i>ōbai</i>
Müller (1830)	3	30
Pareti (1910)	3	5
Dickins (1912)	9	27
Kahrstedt (1922)	5	at least 15
Wade-Gery (1925, 1943-44)	3	5
Hammond (1950)	5	5
Beattie (1951)	5	~30
Huxley (1962)	3	9
Lupi (2005-2015)	3	27

5.1 Scholarship Presenting the *ōbai* as Descent-Based Groups

Until the early 20th century, it was common to understand *ōbai* as descent-based subdivisions of *phylai*. For example, in the early decades of the 19th century, Karl Otfried Müller, citing Demetrios of Skepsis' comments on phratries at the Karneia (see Section 3.3), claimed that *ōba* was another name for phratry and that *ōbai* were subdivisions of the three Dorian *phylai*. Müller believed that Lycurgus restored prior (Dorian) customs (and thus did not create anything new), implying that *phylai* and *ōbai* pre-existed the Great Rhetra. He regarded both *phylai* and *ōbai* as descent groups tied to specific locales within Sparta, maintaining that there were 30 *ōbai* in total, with the *triēkades* mentioned by Herodotus (1.65.5) being subdivisions of *ōbai*. Müller thought it likely that all Spartiates lived in Sparta itself and a few neighboring villages.¹⁶⁵

165 Müller 1830 [1824]: vol. 2, 12-13, 47-48, 79-84. Szanto 1901: 12-13 articulates a position similar to that of Müller, but, whereas Müller presumes that the three tribes

Denis Roussel, in an important monograph on the history of tribes in Greece published in 1976, argued that the *phylai* and *ōbai* of the Great Rhetra were both descent groups and that the *ōbai* were subdivisions of *phylai* (and hence akin to phratries). This is similar to Müller's position, with the significant caveat that whereas Müller saw *phylai* and *ōbai* as pre-existing groupings, Roussel took them to be ex nihilo creations.¹⁶⁶

Ulrich Kahrstedt, in the first volume of his *Griechisches Staatsrecht* (published in 1922), argued that *ōbai* were subdivisions of *phylai*, with urban *ōbai* bearing the same name as the *phylai* to which they belonged. Kahrstedt saw both the *phylai* and *ōbai* of the Great Rhetra as locality-based groupings that became descent-based in the Hellenistic or Roman period. He posited the existence of five *phylai* (Dyme, Konuria, Limnai, Mesoa, Pitana), with Dyme encompassing land outside of Lakonia and the other four corresponding to parts of Sparta. He was agnostic about the number of *ōbai* per *phylē* (and if the number of *ōbai* per *phylē* was uniform) and about the total number of *ōbai*. However, he explicitly named what he took to be several additional *ōbai* besides Amyklai, Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana: Aigytiis, Bryseiai, Geronthrai, Helos, Karystos, Krotaioi, the Menelaion, Pharir, Selinus, and Therapne. Kahrstedt argued that some *phylai* included both a part of Sparta and the surrounding territory (without being specific beyond that) but left the extent of the area inhabited by Spartiates unclear.¹⁶⁷

existed prior to the Dorians' migration to the Peloponnese, Szanto presumes they were formed in the Argolid in the context of dividing newly conquered land.

166 Roussel 1976: 233–45. Roussel notes that the terminology may have already existed for older, different groups and been applied to the new *phylai* and *ōbai*. Welwei 1979 agrees with Roussel's interpretation while providing some additional nuances. For other iterations of the view that *ōbai* were descent-based subdivisions of *phylai*, see Kiechle 1963: 119–27; Lévy 1977: 91–94; Christien-Tregaro 1997: 52–53.

167 Kahrstedt 1922: 18–22, 70. Kahrstedt does not seem to have been aware of Tyrtaios fr. 19 (which was published in 1918) when he wrote this work. He focused on the constitution of Lakedaimon during its period of hegemony and thus does not comment at length on the origins of this system (or its relationship to the Great Rhetra). He does state that it replaced a system with 27 phratries that incorporated *homoioi*, *hypomeiones*, craftsmen, and perhaps Helots.

5.2 Scholarship Presenting the *ōbai* as Locality-Based Groups

Before the end of the 19th century, the late lexicographical sources and the discovery of a handful of Roman-era inscriptions mentioning *ōbai* induced some scholars to equate *ōbai* and *kōmai*. The identification of *ōbai* as *kōmai* led to the conclusion that the *ōbai* were locality-based. Georg Löschke, in publishing (in 1878) the inscription that became IG V.1.26 (see Section 3.3), took the text as confirmation of the idea that *ōbai* were locality-based groupings.¹⁶⁸

In 1906, a team from the British School at Athens began the first systematic, sustained excavations in Sparta.¹⁶⁹ In advance of those excavations, British scholars made an effort to assemble and publish the available inscriptions and objects. Once excavations started, they uncovered and rapidly published a substantial number of epigraphic texts that provided significant additional evidence for *ōbai*.¹⁷⁰ That evidence prompted a shift in scholarly opinions toward the view that *ōbai* were locality-based groups. Guy Dickins, who played an important role in British excavations in Sparta in the early 20th century, argued that the Dorian population of Lakonia was originally divided into the three Dorian tribes. As a result of the *synoikismos* of Sparta c. 800, the Dorian tribes died out. They were replaced by nine new, locality-based *phylai*, each of which was divided into three locality-based *ōbai*. Dickins maintained that the 27 *ōbai* in Lakedaimon included Amyklai, Krotanoi, Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana. The Great Rhetra was, according to Dickins, enacted c. 650 and restored the system that had been put in place c. 800. He did not directly address the geographic spread of the *phylai* and *ōbai* or the political status of their inhabitants. Dickins did, however, presume that at least some of the *phylai* consisted of non-Dorians.¹⁷¹

In 1910, Luigi Pareti, making good use of the newly published inscriptions from Sparta, articulated the earliest comprehensive statement of the position that developed into the current orthodoxy. Pareti argued that the Dorians, when they migrated into Lakonia, brought with them a

168 Löschke 1878.

169 On the history of British excavations in Lakonia, see H.W. Catling 1998.

170 See, for example, Tod 1904; Tod & Wace 1906; Tod, Tillyard & Woodward 1907.

171 Dickins 1912: 6-9. Dickins suggested that each *phylē* had an *ōba* of the same name.

system of three descent-based tribes, with each tribe being divided into three *triēkades* and nine phratries (thus giving a total of nine *triēkades* and 27 phratries). The Great Rhetra, in Pareti's view, left the Dorian tribes and phratries intact while creating five new, locality-based tribes called *ōbai*. Pareti, relying primarily on Roman-era inscriptions from Sparta, especially the *sphaireis* inscriptions (see Section 3.4.1), made the case that there were originally five *ōbai*: four in Sparta (Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana) plus Amyklai.¹⁷² He linked the existence of multiple colleges of five officials in Lakedaïmon, most obviously the ephors, to the existence of five *ōbai*. Those *ōbai* all encompassed areas in Sparta or Amyklai such that Spartiates inhabited a restricted space around Sparta, beyond which were fields worked by helots and, further out, *perioikoi*.¹⁷³

Pareti's view found a wide audience and was echoed by Victor Ehrenberg, in a much-cited article on *ōbai* that appeared in the Pauly-Wissowa *Real-Encyclopädie* in 1937.¹⁷⁴ Ehrenberg differed from Pareti in taking the *ōbai* to be pre-existing entities that were reorganized, not created by the Great Rhetra, and in arguing that the Rhetra impacted the functioning of the Dorian tribes (without providing any details).¹⁷⁵ He had nothing to say about the subdivisions of the Dorian tribes. However, he did, noting the Roman-era inscriptions that characterize Kynosoura and Limnai as

172 See n. 190 on the creation of a sixth *ōba* by Kleomenes III.

173 Pareti 1910; see also Pareti 1917-1920: vol. 1, 171-87.

174 Ehrenberg 1937. Later scholarly work that closely follows Pareti and Ehrenberg includes, but is by no means limited to, Toynbee 1969: 260-65.

175 See also Kiechle 1963: 119-27 for the argument that *ōbai* existed among the Dorians prior to their migration into the Peloponnese. Den Boer (who largely agreed with Ehrenberg's views) suggested that the *ōbai* were tribal, descent-based divisions of the pre-Dorian population that the Dorian invaders found expedient to convert into locality-based units (den Boer 1954: 170-75). Negri, building on the work of Levi, argues that *ὥβᾱ* derives from Mycenaean *o-pa*, which he takes to mean either a tribute-paying community or the tribute paid by such a community. For Negri, *ὥβᾱ* were groupings that existed long before the arrival of the Dorians, who brought with them different groupings in the form of *phylai* (Negri 1978). Subsequent scholarship has suggested that *o-pa* meant something like "work to be performed" and expressed doubt about its connection with *ὥβᾱ* (Melena 1983; Killen 1999).

both *phylai* and *ōbai*, extend Pareti's work by arguing that in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods *phylai* and *ōbai* were alternate appellations for the same, locality-based groupings.

The most influential statement of the current orthodoxy can be found in the work of Wade-Gery, in his essay on Lakedaimon in Volume 3 of the first edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History* (published in 1925) and three articles published in *Classical Quarterly* in 1943 and 1944.¹⁷⁶ Wade-Gery's work, which draws on earlier scholarship including that of Pareti and Ehrenberg, had a particularly powerful impact in no small part because his views were endorsed by Cartledge in his seminal book on Lakedaimon (first edition 1979, second edition 2002).¹⁷⁷

Wade-Gery's argument, summarized in a highly compact fashion, is that there were five *ōbai* in Sparta during the Roman period, five major units in the Lakedaimonian army, and colleges of five officials in the Lakedaimonian government. Thus, one can infer that the Great Rhetra created five locality-based *ōbai*, four in Sparta and one at Amyklai, that served as the basis of Spartiate military and political life for centuries thereafter. All Spartiates necessarily resided in one of the five *ōbai* and hence in either Sparta or Amyklai.

Wade-Gery's arguments can be presented in more detailed form as follows:

- (1) The Great Rhetra is a genuine document from the late seventh century that formed part of a series of reform measures (the Lycurgan reforms) that were put into place within a compressed time frame. Tyrtaios' poem *Eunomia* was composed not long afterward.
- (2) The Lycurgan reforms were, at their heart, oriented toward the reorganization and strengthening of the Lakedaimonian army.

176 Wade-Gery 1925: 558-65; Wade-Gery 1943; Wade-Gery 1944a; Wade-Gery 1944b. The *Classical Quarterly* articles are reprinted in a collection of Wade-Gery's work, *Essays in Greek History*, published in 1958 (Wade-Gery 1958: 37-85). Insofar as it is easier to read the articles successively in *Essays in Greek History*, I cite that work here.

177 Cartledge 2002: 92-93; see also Cartledge 1987: 427-31, where the suggested organization of the Lakedaimonian army in the Classical period closely echoes that postulated by Wade-Gery.

The provision in the Great Rhetra that called for tribing the tribes and obing the obes entailed enrolling all adult male Spartiates into military units.

- (3) The *phylai* of the Great Rhetra were the three descent-based Dorian tribes, and the *ōbai* were five locality-based groupings that were tied to four settlement nuclei in Sparta (Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, Pitana) and one at Amyklai. As a result, starting in the late seventh century, Spartiates belonged to both a descent-based group (a Dorian tribe) and a locality-based group (an *ōba*). The Great Rhetra left the Dorian tribes intact but deprived them of military significance such that they became unimportant relics.¹⁷⁸
- (4) The Lakedaimonian army was originally organized around the three Dorian tribes (the Tribal Army). The Great Rhetra entailed the creation of an army organized around five *lochoi*, each of which was linked to a specific *ōba* (the Obal Army). Spartiates and *perioikoi* were separately brigaded, so there were five *lochoi* of Spartiates and five *lochoi* of *perioikoi*. Sometime after the Battle of Plataia in 479 and before the Battle of Mantinea in 418 (probably after and in response to the casualties caused by the great earthquake of 464), the Lakedaimonian army was once again reorganized. The new structure centered around six *morai* in which Spartiates and *perioikoi* were brigaded together (the Army of the *Morai*). The *morai* were not tied to specific localities.

Insofar as all Spartiates were necessarily registered in a locality-based *ōba* and all the *ōbai* were in Sparta or Amyklai, all Spartiates lived in or quite close to Sparta. That assertion had ramifications for settlement patterns in the Eurotas river valley, as Wade-Gery made clear:

Laconia had no inhabited centres except Sparta (*plus* Amyklai) on the one hand, and on the other the towns of the *perioikoi* ... In Laconia,

178 In his 1925 essay in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, Wade-Gery claimed that the Great Rhetra abolished the Dorian tribes (Wade-Gery 1925: 560). His views on that matter had evolved by the time the articles in *Classical Quarterly* were published.

we must first subtract the whole perioikis: in what is left, the only inhabited centres in which citizens are domiciled were the five villages or small towns which lay within four miles of the foot of the Akropolis [of Sparta]. The country estates of the Spartiates were not grouped round villages ... but isolated, and anyway the Spartiate's domicile was not on his estate but in Sparta.¹⁷⁹

The idea that all Spartiates lived in Sparta and Amyklai is not an independently supported argument, but rather a corollary that follows from Wade-Gery's views on the location and function of the *ōbai*. If we admit to uncertainty about the *ōbai*, we must also simultaneously reconsider the question of where Spartiates lived.

Leaving aside some bits and pieces, the evidence that Wade-Gery cited in support of his arguments consisted of:

- Roman-era epigraphic texts, especially the *sphaireis* inscriptions, and passages from contemporary literary works that discuss the layout and early history of Sparta (most notably Strabo and Pausanias);
- various sources pertaining to the structure of the Lakedaimonian army and the size of deployed units, such as Tyrtaios fr. 19, Herodotus' statement about the existence of a Pitanaite *lochos*, and Thucydides' description of the Lakedaimonian forces at the Battle of Mantinea;
- the existence of colleges of five magistrates, including the ephors, *agathoergoi*, and the group of Lakedaimonians sent to arbitrate the dispute between Athens and Megara over Salamis;¹⁸⁰
- ostensibly similar institutional structures in Athens, where, after the late sixth century, four descent-based Ionic tribes co-existed with ten locality-based Kleisthenic tribes;

179 Wade-Gery 1958: 78. This view echoes the conclusions reached by Bölte in the Pauly-Wissowa *Real-Encyclopädie*: "Daß es hier [the vicinity of Sparta] auch in der klassischen Zeit keine Städte gegeben hat. ... Die Spartiaten werden in der Stadt fest zusammengehalten ... Es hat auch keine Helotendörfer gegeben" (Bölte 1929a: 1336).

180 *Agathoergoi*: Hdt. 1.67.5. Arbitrators: Plut. *Sol.* 10.4.

- an ostensible decline in the vibrancy of the cultural life of Spartiates after the late sixth century.

This collection of evidence is less than compelling.¹⁸¹ The evidentiary deficit is most acute with respect to the function of the *ōbai*. Wade-Gery's view that the *ōbai* were created for military purposes rests on his assumption that the crisis of the Second Messenian War led (via the Lycurgan reforms) to the militarization of Lakedaimonian society. As he put it in the *Cambridge Ancient History*:

The Spartans ... knew now they were living on a volcano. They met this situation with the *Eunomia*, the famous legislation which later generations associated with the name of Lycurgus. ... It was chiefly a subjecting of their whole lives ... to a discipline as rigid as any religious rule, in the strength of which they defied not the Devil but the Helots. This reorganization of the Spartan army was so radical that it changed the face of Spartan civilization.¹⁸²

The reliability of the various, frequently contradictory ancient claims about the motivations behind and the content of what we call the Lycurgan reforms is difficult to assess,¹⁸³ and the belief that Lakedaimon was at any point in time a militarized society has been questioned by scholars such as Moses Finley and Stephen Hodkinson.¹⁸⁴ In addition, even if one assumes that the Lycurgan reforms militarized Lakedaimon, it does not necessarily follow that the *ōbai* were military units. The only sources that

181 None of the previous critiques of the current orthodoxy known to me is as comprehensive as the one offered here. Among the previous scholarship, I found Kennell 1995: 162–69 to be particularly helpful.

182 Wade-Gery 1925: 558.

183 Plutarch begins his life of Lycurgus by stating “Concerning Lycurgus the lawgiver, in general, nothing can be said which is not disputed, since indeed there are different accounts of his birth, his travels, his death, and above all, of his work as lawmaker and statesman” (trans. B. Perrin). The passage of time has not made matters much clearer. See, for instance, the observations in Hölkeskamp 2010 and Nafissi 2018.

184 Finley 1968; Hodkinson 2006.

shed light on the function of the *ōbai* are the Roman-era *sphaireis* inscriptions, in which the *ōbai* organize a ballgame tournament that formed part of the state educational system. The *phylai* and *ōbai* of Roman Lakedaimon thus appear to have served purposes quite different from those that Wade-Gery assigned them in the Archaic and Classical periods.¹⁸⁵ The requirement in the Great Rhetra to “obe the obes” implies that they fulfilled important functions of some kind. However, we know nothing for certain about what those functions may have been or how they evolved.

The evidentiary shortcomings of the current orthodoxy are compounded by methodological problems. Wade-Gery’s conclusions about the number, names, and locations of the *ōbai* created by the Great Rhetra in the late seventh century BCE are based primarily on inscriptions and literary passages from the first through third centuries CE. When Wade-Gery was writing about Lakedaimon, it was widely presumed that, due to an ostensibly high degree of conservatism, Roman Lakedaimon preserved an array of ancient customs. That presumption encouraged scholars to rely on Roman-era evidence to reconstruct the history of Lakedaimon in the Archaic and Classical periods. To give but one example, Chrimes’ *Ancient Sparta: A Re-Examination of the Evidence*, published in 1949, is divided into Part I (Sparta in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods) and Part II (The Earlier Sparta). This arrangement made it easier, as Chrimes put it, “to trace constitutional and social survivals back to their roots in the past.”¹⁸⁶ Recent scholarship has highlighted the numerous hazards in this approach and the need to take into account both diachronic change in Lakedaimon and the progressive mythologization of the past that produced what François Ollier called *le mirage spartiate*. The Roman-era epigraphic texts are a particularly problematic source because the residents of Sparta in the Roman period, when the town had developed into a tourist destination known for preserving what were presented as antique customs, made a concerted effort to highlight, and fabricate, continuities with bygone eras.¹⁸⁷ The current consensus is that,

185 Kennell 1995: 28–48.

186 Chrimes 1949: v.

187 On the dangers of using Roman-era sources to reconstruct Archaic and Classical Lakedaimon, see Hodkinson 2000: 1–64; Powell 2018. On the Spartan Mirage, see

from a methodological perspective, it is highly questionable to use texts from the first through third centuries CE to reconstruct the sociopolitical organization of Lakedaïmon in the late seventh century BCE.

Moreover, although Wade-Gery (like Ehrenberg and others before him) worked from the presumption of long-term continuity in Lakedaïmonian institutions, specific features of the evidence compelled him to acknowledge elements of change. This is most apparent with respect to *IG V.1.26*, a late second-/early first-century inscription in which Amyklai is an *ōba* with its own governmental apparatus (see Section 3.3). For Wade-Gery, the *ōbai* were “tribes based on domicile”¹⁸⁸ that served as subdivisions of the citizen body and the basis of military organization, not local governments, and Amyklai was one of the five *ōbai*. In order to explain how Amyklai could have had its own officials, Wade-Gery argued that Amyklai attained a degree of independence during the turbulent events of 146.¹⁸⁹ Even if one accepts Wade-Gery’s explanation of how the *ōba* of Amyklai had a local government (see Section 9.1 for further discussion), that explanation presumes that the structure and function of *ōbai* changed over time. One might also note that, for Wade-Gery, the *phylai* of the Great Rhētra were the three, descent-based Dorian tribes (Dymanes, Hylleis, Pamphyloi), whereas the *ōbai* (Amyklai, Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, Pitana) were newly created, locality-based groupings. Yet, in the Roman-era inscriptions, Kynosoura and Limnai are characterized as both *phylai* and *ōbai* (see Section 3.4.1). If one accepts Wade-Gery’s reading of the Great Rhētra, the characterization of Kynosoura and Limnai as both *phylai* and *ōbai* can only be understood as an indication of significant change in the function of those two groups between the Archaic and Roman periods. All this goes to say that Wade-Gery’s arguments are based on the presumption of long-term continuity in the structure, number, and function of the *ōbai*, but the available evidence

Ollier 1933; see also Tigerstedt 1965–1978; Cartledge 2001: 169–70; Flower 2002. On cultural memory, some of it clearly fabricated, in Lakedaïmon during the Roman period and its political benefits, see Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 190–211 and Kennell 2018, as well as Cusumano 2009–2010; Baudini 2013; del Mar Alcocer Rodríguez 2016.

188 Wade-Gery 1958: 78.

189 Wade-Gery 1958: 75–76. On the events of 146 as they pertain to Lakedaïmon, see Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 88–90.

proves that presumption to be untenable. Even Wade-Gery had to postulate some degree of change in order to make the evidence compatible with his arguments.

One point that requires particular emphasis is that there is little evidence to support the widespread belief that there were five *ōbai* in Lakedaimon starting in the Archaic period (at the latest) and continuing through the Roman period. No textual source, either literary or epigraphic, contains a statement about the number of *ōbai* at any point in time. Among the four *ōbai* that ostensibly existed in Sparta by the seventh century at the latest, Pitana is repeatedly mentioned in literary sources from the Classical period, Kynosoura first appears (in an inscription and possibly in the work of Callimachus) in the Hellenistic period, and Mesoa in the Roman period. Limnai may have been mentioned by Callimachus; otherwise it is first known from Roman-era literary and epigraphic texts. The Roman-era epigraphic sources contain references to the *ōbai* of Kynosoura, Limnai, Neopolis, and Pitana, and contemporary literary sources mention Mesoa (without specifically characterizing it as an *ōba*). It is, as a result, possible (but far from necessary) to conclude that there were five *ōbai* during the Roman period.¹⁹⁰ The limited number of relevant inscriptions and literary passages leaves open the possibility that there were additional *ōbai*. Indeed, the epigraphic record (see, in particular, the discussion of *IG* V.1.722 in Section 3.1 and *SEG* 50.406 in Section 3.3) suggests that there were *ōbai* other than Amyklai, Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, Neopolis, and Pitana. Furthermore, even if we were certain that there were five *ōbai* in Roman times, we could not, on that basis, confidently state that the same was true in earlier periods. In fact, we have no way of achieving any degree of certainty about the total number of *ōbai* at any point in the history of Lakedaimon (see Section 9.1).

In a similar vein, the oft-repeated statement that Sparta was, from time immemorial, divided into four villages (each linked to a specific *ōba*)

190 In order to account for the existence of Neopolis and keep the number of *ōbai* at five, Wade-Gery endorsed Pareti's idea that Neopolis was created by Kleomenes III and argued that Amyklai became independent after 146 (Pareti 1917-1920: vol. 1, 176-77; Wade-Gery 1958: 75, 76 n. 3). This means that even Wade-Gery implicitly subscribed to the idea that there were, for a brief period, six *ōbai*. Kennell argued that Neopolis was another name for Amyklai. See Section 3.4.1.

is at best speculative and at worst misleading. This claim is not directly supported by any ancient textual source of any date. The idea that there were four separate settlement nuclei in Sparta is based primarily on: (a) the belief in the existence from an early date of five *ōbai* (one of which was Amyklai), (b) Thucydides' statement that the "*polis* of the Lakedaimonians" was, in his time, settled *kata kōmas*, and (c) references in Byzantine lexicons that equate *ōbai* and *kōmai*.¹⁹¹ As we will see (Section 9.3), there is good reason to believe that the relevant passage in Thucydides' work has been misread – Thucydides was probably describing the settlement pattern in the Spartan plain, not the settlement organization of the city of Sparta. Moreover, there is no trace in the archaeological record of distinct settlement nuclei in Sparta (see Section 6.2). What we know about the early history of other Greek urban centers makes it entirely possible that there were distinct settlement nuclei in Sparta at some point, but, at the moment, it is impossible to establish the number or the specific locations and extents of those nuclei.¹⁹²

The remainder of Wade-Gery's evidence requires only brief treatment. We have already seen (Section 4) that his Obal Army, built around five locality-based *lochoi*, may not have ever existed.¹⁹³ The existence of colleges of five magistrates is indisputable, but the assumption that they reflected a political and military system organized around five *ōbai* is open to question. There is no necessary connection between the numerical bases of different parts of a sociopolitical system. Through most of the Archaic period Athens had nine archons and four Ionic tribes; in the fifth century Argos had a citizen body divided into four *phylai* and an army divided into five *lochoi*; and, in Wade-Gery's system, two Spartiate

191 Thuc. 1.10.2. For the relevant lexicon entries, see Section 3.5. Wade-Gery presumed that the city of Sparta was comprised of four villages (Wade-Gery 1958: 79), but mentioned Thucydides' description of Sparta only in passing. This passage does feature in the work of Pareti (see, for example, Pareti 1917-1920: vol. 1, 183) and Ehrenberg (Ehrenberg 1937: 1694-95).

192 On the existence of distinct settlement nuclei in Greek urban centers, see, for instance, Osanna 1999 on Corinth.

193 As Lupi pointed out, it would have been quite difficult to ensure that manpower levels in each of the five locality-based *lochoi* would have stayed roughly equal over the course of time (Lupi 2018: 166).

kings ruled over three Dorian tribes and then five *ōbai*.¹⁹⁴ We can, in any historical context with multiple institutions, play number games that may easily lead to questionable hypotheses when we lack probative evidence. Dickins, for example, argued that there were originally 27 *ōbai* and connected that number to membership in the Gerousia by suggesting that a 28th *ōba* (Neopolis) was added to accommodate new citizens: if each *ōba* supplied one member of the Gerousia, we arrive, with the addition of the two kings, at 30.¹⁹⁵ The simultaneous existence of two distinct tribal systems in Athens is suggestive, but in and of itself tells us nothing about civic subdivisions in Lakedaïmon. Wade-Gery mentions the ostensible decline of the vibrancy of Spartiate cultural life only in the *Cambridge Ancient History* essay. He does so in order to help establish that the Lycurgan reforms were essentially military in nature (the unstated assumption being that militarization led to austerity). The textual and archaeological evidence for Spartiate austerity is currently being subjected to searching re-examination.¹⁹⁶ Even if we were to presume that Lakedaïmon became a more austere place after the late sixth century, that would tell us nothing about the details of sociopolitical organization or settlement patterns.

Wade-Gery's articulation of the current orthodoxy thus relies on a web of deductions that is much more fragile than it might appear *prima facie*. Simply put, the less-than-secure assumptions that the Great Rhetra militarized Lakedaïmonian society and that there were five *ōbai* in Roman Sparta and five major units in the Lakedaïmonian army (between the seventh and mid-fifth century) are not sound bases for reconstructing the sociopolitical organization of Lakedaïmon in the Archaic period. The current orthodoxy cannot, based on present evidence, be conclusively falsified, but it is sufficiently problematic as to warrant serious consideration of alternative interpretations.

194 On Athens and Argos, see Jones 1987: 28-77 and 112-18, respectively.

195 Dickins 1912: 7.

196 See, for example, Martin 2024.

5.3 Scholarship on the *ōbai* after Wade-Gery

Scholars working after Wade-Gery have proposed an array of slightly different versions of the current orthodoxy. A couple of examples will give a sense of the range of suggestions. N.G.L. Hammond, in an article published in 1950, argued that the enactment of the Great Rhetra effectively abolished the pre-existing Dorian tribes and created five new, locality-based *ōbai* and five new, descent-based *phylai* that were named after *ōbai* (this would help explain the conflation of *phylai* and *ōbai* in the Roman-era inscriptions).¹⁹⁷ Nicholas Jones, in a book published in 1987, expressed the view that the Great Rhetra did not alter either the three descent-based Dorian *phylai* or the five locality-based *ōbai*, which were already in existence at the time of its enactment, but instead prescribed that citizens would arrange themselves according to those groupings when meeting in the Assembly. When Kleomenes III created large numbers of new citizens in the third century, he put them all, regardless of their place of residence, into a newly created *ōba*, Neopolis. This began a lengthy process by means of which *ōbai* became descent-based groups that could be conflated with *phylai* by the Roman period.¹⁹⁸

Other scholars writing after Wade-Gery have maintained more heterodox positions. Arthur Beattie, in an article published in 1951, presented a new reading of *IG V.1.722* (which Fourmont found near Amyklai) that seems to include a reference to an *ōba* of the Arkaloi (see Section 3.1).¹⁹⁹ Beattie argued that, in what would now be called the Early Iron Age, an *ōba* consisted of a group of kinsmen ruled by a *basileus*, *ōbai* formed part of *phylai*, and each *ōba* was subdivided into phratries. He suggested that in Lakedaïmon, after the enactment of the Great Rhetra, there were five *phylai* subdivided into approximately 30 *ōbai*, with the latter functioning as important elements of local governance. Pausanias gives a genealogy for the legendary figure Amyklas (see Section 2.3) that includes two sons named Argalos and Kynortas and a grandson named Oibalos.²⁰⁰ Beattie

197 Hammond 1950: 59-60. For an earlier articulation of a similar argument, see Neumann 1906: 39-46.

198 Jones 1987: 118-23.

199 Beattie 1958.

200 Paus. 3.1.3.

equated Argalos and Arkalos and, reading Oibalos as meaning “little *ōba*,” posited the existence of two *ōbai* – Arkalos and Kynortas – in the vicinity of Amyklai in the Archaic and Classical periods. He explained the references to *ōbai* in Roman-era inscriptions as the result of the dismemberment of Lakedaimon in the second century: the *ōbai* situated close to Sparta became wards of the city, while the *ōbai* in outlying districts became fully independent *poleis*. That scenario assumes that the *ōbai* in the Archaic and Classical periods encompassed much, if not all, of Lakedaimon and that their inhabitants included both Spartiates and *perioikoi*.

George Huxley, in a book on Lakedaimon published in 1962, argued that there were, prior to the Great Rhetra, three descent-based *phylai*, five locality-based *ōbai*, and an uncertain number of phratries that were also known as *lochoi*. The Great Rhetra reorganized both *phylai* and *ōbai* such that there were three descent-based *phylai* and nine locality-based *ōbai*. Each *ōba* consisted of three phratries, one from each tribe (so that there were 27 phratries in all). Huxley takes Pitana to be an *ōba* and Kro-tanoi to be a phratry/*lochos* in the *ōba* of Pitana. The geographic extent of the *ōbai* is not clearly specified but seems to encompass much, if not all, of Lakedaimon.²⁰¹

5.4 Recent Work by Marcello Lupi

Marcello Lupi, in a series of excellent and stimulating articles, has critiqued the current orthodoxy and proposed an alternative that represents a variation of the conception of the *ōbai* as subdivisions of the Dorian *phylai* found in the work of Müller, Huxley, Roussel, etc. (see Sections 5.1, 5.3).²⁰² Lupi builds his arguments around recent scholarship on the

201 Huxley 1962: 37–49. Huxley’s views are reiterated, with minor variations, in Forrest 1980: 40–60.

202 Lupi’s ideas on this subject are most fully expressed in Lupi 2018, but are also addressed elsewhere, including Lupi 2005; Lupi 2006; Lupi 2014a; Lupi 2014b; Lupi 2014c; Lupi 2015. The summary of Lupi’s views provided here takes all of this work into account. Lupi has announced his intention to treat all of this material in a forthcoming monograph with the title *An Old-Fashioned City. Villages, Civic Subdivisions and Community in Ancient Sparta*.

history and function of subdivisions of the citizen body in Greek communities and on ethnogenesis, the importance of triadic divisions in Lakēdaimon, and Demetrios of Skepsis' description of the Karneia.

There was a long-lived scholarly consensus (already evident in Müller's work in the early decades of the 19th century) that *phylai* and Dorian and Ionian ethnic identities existed from a very early period in Greek history. In 1976, Roussel published what proved to be an influential book in which he argued that *phylai* and phratries were not primordial forms of social organization but rather took shape at the same time as *poleis*.²⁰³ Oswyn Murray and others subsequently argued that the progressive formalization of political institutions in Greece involved the creation of carefully structured subdivisions of citizen bodies.²⁰⁴ A separate but related body of scholarship, in which Jonathan Hall's work from the late 20th and early 21st century played a key role, presented Dorian, Ionian, and Hellenic identities as the result of complex processes of ethnogenesis that unfolded over the course of the Archaic period.²⁰⁵

The number of the Dorian *phylai* is, for Lupi, significant because it foregrounds the importance of triadic divisions in the structure of Lakēdaimonian institutions of all kinds. He points to the 30 members of the Gerousia, the 300 *hippeis*, the enigmatic *triēkades* mentioned by Herodotus, and the tradition in the ancient sources claiming that Lakēdaimon was divided into 9,000 *klēroi*.²⁰⁶

Lupi makes the case that the structure of the Karneia as described by Demetrios dates to the Archaic period. Triadic divisions tied to military organization feature prominently in Demetrios' description of the Karneia (fr. 1 Gaede, see Section 3.3 for the text), and Lupi takes this as a reflection of "a Dorian ideological horizon" that weakened over time.²⁰⁷ Thucydides' description of the Lakēdaimonian army at the Battle of Man-

203 Roussel 1976.

204 Murray 1997.

205 Hall 1997; Hall 2002.

206 Hdt. 1.65.5. On the ancient sources for the number of *klēroi* in Lakēdaimon, see Hodkinson 2000: 65–112. Hodkinson sees the number of 9,000 as an invented tradition that developed in the third century.

207 Lupi 2018: 168.

tinea in 418 (see Section 4) indicates that the three Dorian tribal regiments attested in Tyrtaios fr. 19 had been superseded by six *lochoi*. In Lupi's view, this provides a *terminus ante quem* for the structure of the Karneia as described by Demetrios.

Demetrios states that at the Karneia there are nine *skiades* that contain tents, nine men eat dinner in each *skias*, and each *skias* contains three phratries. Lupi sees this arrangement as faithfully reproducing a system that structured both the Lakedaimonian army and citizen body. Based on the presumption that the men sharing a *skias* fought together and therefore belonged to the same *phylē*, Lupi reconstructs a system of three Dorian *phylai*, 9 intermediate units, and 27 phratries that were, in Lakedaimon, called *ōbai*.²⁰⁸ He traces this system back to the *synoikismos* of the *polis* of Lakedaimon, when three Dorian *phylai* and 27 *ōbai* were created to serve as institutions for organizing the citizen body into units of roughly equal size. Once in existence, *phylai* and *ōbai* helped create a shared Dorian identity that bound together the entire citizen body. Although the *ōbai* are, in Lupi's reading of the evidence, descent-based groups, he also sees the *ōbai* as being in some sense – which is not clearly specified in his published work – based on locality.²⁰⁹

In support of this interpretation of the Demetrios fragment, Lupi points to the situation on Kos, where the citizen body was (in the fourth century) divided into the three Dorian *phylai*, with each *phylē* being subdivided into three *chiliastues*.²¹⁰ He also expresses strong approval for Beattie's reading of IG V.1.722 (dated to the late sixth/early fifth century), according to which there were two *ōbai* – Arkalos and Kynortas – in the vicinity of Amyklai in the Archaic period (see Sections 3.1, 5.3). Lupi adds a third *ōba* to that group by connecting Pausanias' genealogy of the legendary king Amyklas (according to which Amyklas had three sons, Hyakinthos, Argalos, and Kynortas) to the inscription on a bronze bowl. The bowl, dated to the second half of the sixth century, was found

208 Other scholars have proposed that each of the three phratries in each *skias* came from a different *phylē*. See, for instance, Pettersson 1992: 62.

209 "The opposition between kinship-based and territorial subdivisions has proved misleading since the subdivisions, despite being fictional kinship groups, also had a territorial nature" (Lupi 2018: 174).

210 The *chiliastues* were also referred to as *enatai* (ninths). See Jones 1987: 236–42.

at Aigiai and hence not far from Gytheion in southern Lakonia.²¹¹ The inscription seems to read *ὑακίνθιοι ἀνέθεν αἵται ἀγροίκῳ(ι)*, which Lupi takes as recording a dedication made by an *ōba* of the Hyakinthioi located near Amyklai. The simultaneous presence of three *ōbai* in the vicinity of Amyklai is, for Lupi, another indication of the fundamental importance of triadic divisions in Lakedaimon.²¹²

This reading of the evidence prompts Lupi to reconsider the nature of the Aigeidai, Agiads, and Eurypontids; of the *leschai* in Sparta; and of the Great Rhetra. He takes the Aigeidai (described as a *phylē* by Herodotus and a phratry in the Aristotelian *Politeia of the Lakedaimonians*) to be an *ōba*, which leads him to conclude that the Agiads and Eurypontids also constituted *ōbai*.²¹³ Pausanias' description of Sparta includes "the *leschē* of the Krotanoi, who form part of the Pitanaatans" and "a *leschē* called Poikilē."²¹⁴ Plutarch states that Spartiates under the age of 30 were expected to spend most of their time in gymnasia and *leschai* and that new-born children were taken to a *leschē* where they underwent an examination by the "elders of the tribes" (τῶν φυλετῶν οἱ πρεσβύτατοι).²¹⁵ Lupi notes the role of phratries in other Greek communities in recognizing children as legitimate offspring and takes the *leschai* to be the seats of *ōbai* (with Plutarch sharing the conflation of *ōbai* and *phylai* evident in Roman-era inscriptions). In a notably audacious interpretive venture, Lupi argues that the Great Rhetra does not, as per the current scholarly consensus, establish legislative practices, but rather specifies procedures for admission to the Spartan citizen body.²¹⁶ He reads the text as requiring that each subdivision of the Spartan citizen body meet at more or less the same time each year to test the legitimacy of children.

211 Paus. 3.1.3, SEG 28.404. Both the text and significance of SEG 28.404 continue to be debated. Gallavotti, for instance, took the Hyakinthioi to be a *thiasos*, while Martin sees the inscription as evidence for the participation of *perioikoi* in cult activities at the Amyklaion (Gallavotti 1978: 184; Martin 2024: 101-2).

212 Lupi's interpretation of Hesychius' ἐπιπαι[δεία]ζειν (see Section 3.5) represents another possible piece of supporting evidence.

213 Hdt. 4.149.1; Aristotle fr. 532 Rose. On the Aigeidai, see Section 2.3.

214 λέσχη Κροτανῶν: εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ Κροτανοὶ Πιτανάτων μοῖρα (3.14.2); ἐν Σπάρτῃ δὲ λέσχη τέ ἐστι καλουμένη Ποικίλη (3.15.8).

215 Plut. Lyc. 25.2, 16.1.

216 Lupi 2014b.

Lupi astutely recognizes the implications of all of the preceding for our understanding of settlement patterns in Lakonia:

By defining Sparta as a city settled in villages (πόλις κατὰ κώμας), Thucydides only intended to illustrate the settlement pattern, without any institutional implications: a *polis* which consisted of a series of villages situated in the plain of Sparta (along the middle valley of the Eurotas from Thornax in the north at least as far south as Amyclai), and which, nevertheless, had its centre in the village of Pitane and the adjoining acropolis of Sparta.²¹⁷

For reasons discussed in Sections 9.1-2, I agree with Lupi's views on where Spartiates lived (with the important caveat that I posit an element of diachronic change that is absent from Lupi's work), while disagreeing with his identification of the *ōbai* as phratries.

217 Lupi 2018: 163-64. See also Lupi 2006: 203. Lupi is here referencing Thuc. 1.10.2, on which see Section 9.3.

6. The Settlement Organization of Sparta

Wade-Gery did not explicitly discuss the origins or specific locations of the four settlement nuclei, each linked to an *ōba*, that he believed collectively constituted the city of Sparta. However, the widespread belief in a Dorian invasion and the idea that the Dorians founded Sparta on a previously uninhabited site sometime around 1000 BCE have led most scholars to conclude that the four settlement nuclei came into being at the same time as the city. The belief that Thucydides at 1.10.2 describes Sparta as being settled *kata kōmas* has been taken as evidence that a dispersed settlement organization persisted at least through the fifth century.²¹⁸ The *ōbai* of the Great Rhetra are habitually equated with Thucydides' *kōmai* based on entries in Hesychius' lexicon.²¹⁹

There is a long tradition – stretching at least as far back as the drawings that Jean-Denis Barbié du Bocage made to illustrate Jean-Jacques Barthélemy's *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (1788, see Figure 3) – of producing plans showing Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana tightly clustered around the acropolis of Sparta.²²⁰ A notable recent example is the plan of Sparta included in Kourinou's invaluable monograph (published in 2000) on the topography of the city. In that plan, Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana are placed in specific parts of the area delimited by the Hellenistic city wall (see Figure 4).

The available archaeological and textual evidence runs counter to this understanding of the settlement organization of Sparta in three ways: (1) there are no traces of distinct settlement nuclei in Sparta, (2) areas outside the space delimited by the Hellenistic city wall were densely occupied from an early date, and (3) textual sources starting in the Archaic period repeatedly equate Pitana and Sparta. Before addressing those issues, I provide a brief overview of Sparta's layout as a potentially helpful orientation to the physical realities of the city.

218 See, for example, Ehrenberg 1937: 1695 (citing Bölte 1929c); Cartledge 2002: 80–81, 90–92.

219 For the text of the Thucydides passage, see Section 9.3 For the entries in Hesychius' lexicon, see Section 3.5.

220 Barthélemy 1788: vol. 1, 495, 624–27; Barbié du Bocage 1788; Lupi 2014c: 103–5.



Figure 3: Plan of Sparta by Bocagé for Barthélemy's *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis*.



Figure 4: Kourinou's plan of Sparta. Red and blue have been added to the original black-and-white plan to make it easier to locate the *ōbai* and the Hellenistic fortification wall. © Eleni Kourinou; reproduced with permission.

6.1 *The Layout of the City*

The site of Sparta is bounded on three sides by rivers: to the north by the Mousga, to the south and southwest by the Magoulitsa, and to the east by the Eurotas (see Figure 5). The two most significant topographic features within the city are the acropolis and adjoining Palaiokastro plateau. The city stretched south from the Palaiokastro plateau, in the space defined by the Mousga, Magoulitsa, and Eurotas. A series of isolated hills, though not much higher than the surrounding ground level, had sufficiently steep sides to be significant features in the topography of the city. These hills include Gerokomeiou and Xenia (both located just to the south of the Palaiokastro plateau) and Evangelistria (alongside the Magoulitsa).²²¹

A fortification wall (see Figure 6) was constructed in the Hellenistic period. Another, smaller fortification (typically referred to as the Late Roman wall) was constructed around the acropolis and the Palaiokastro plateau sometime in the fourth century CE.²²² This later wall enclosed numerous earlier buildings, including the Sanctuary of Athena Chalki-oikos. Several cult sites were located on the west bank of the Eurotas, including the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia. Three extracommunal cemeteries have been identified at the fringes of the city: one in the Mousga ravine and two (what are typically called the Southwestern Cemetery and the Olive Oil Cemetery) along the Magoulitsa.²²³

221 Other than the Eurotas, the ancient names for the various topographical features of Sparta are unknown, and all the standard nomenclature is modern.

222 Wace 1907a; Frey 2016: 85-127.

223 Christesen 2019b.

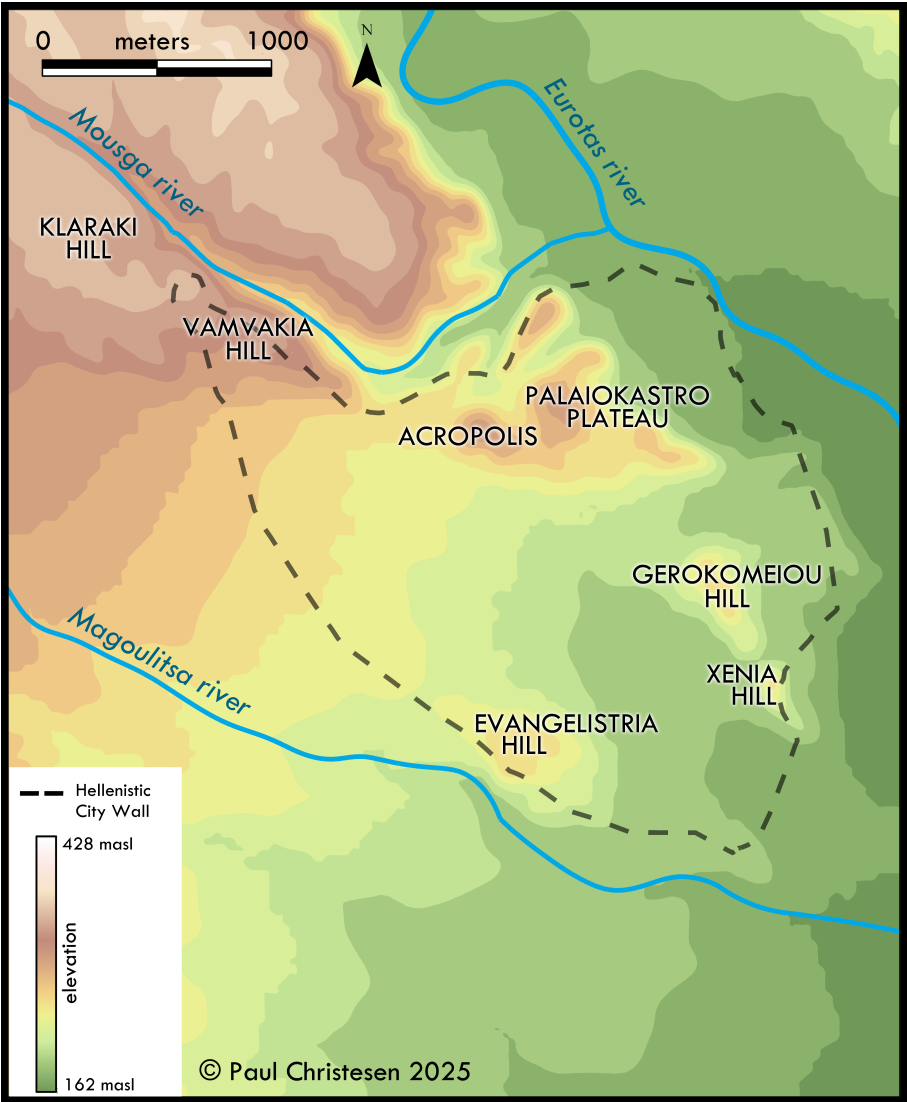


Figure 5: Topography of Sparta.

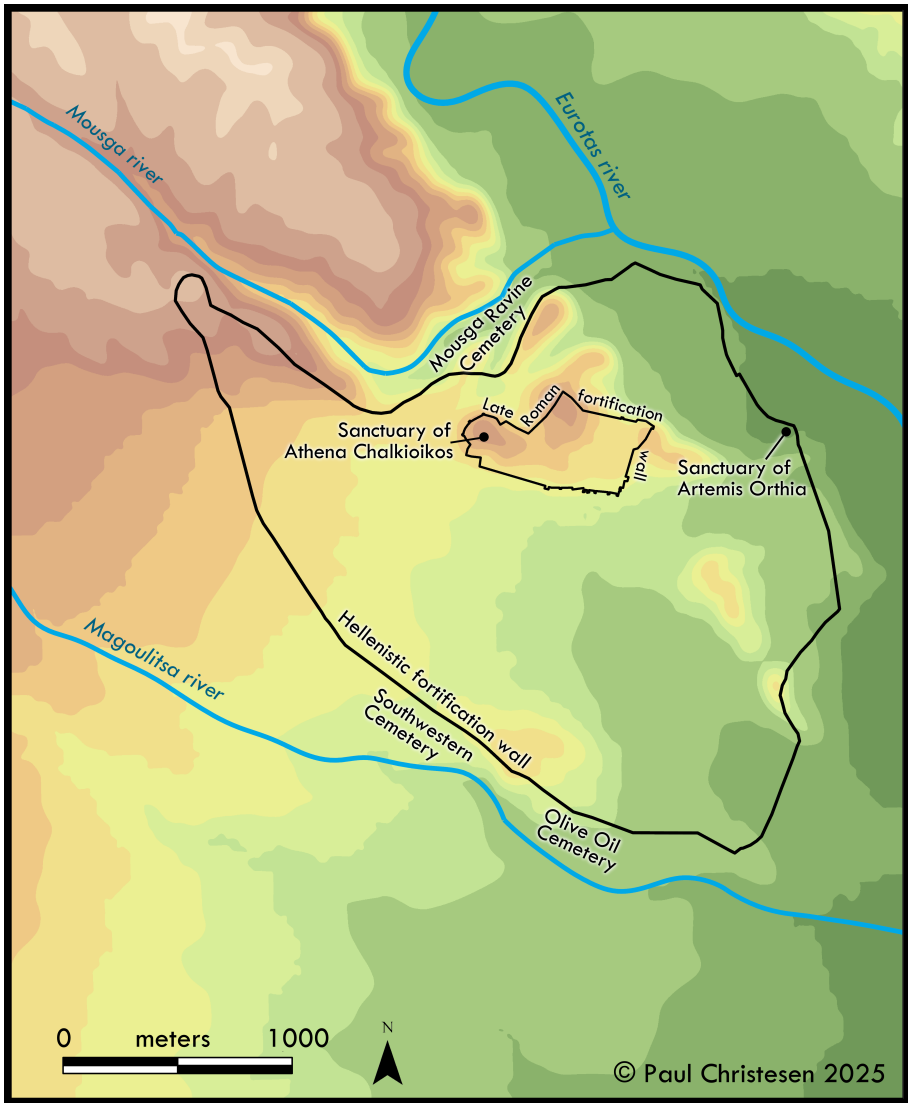


Figure 6: Landmarks in Sparta.

6.2 Four Distinct Settlement Nuclei?

The previous scholarship on where Spartiates lived has relied almost exclusively on textual sources, but, for reasons articulated in Section 1, it is now possible to bring archaeological evidence to bear. New information on the settlement organization of Sparta, especially published burials, can be used to help assess the veracity of the assumption, built into the current orthodoxy, that there were four distinct settlement nuclei in Sparta inhabited by roughly 80% (= the inhabitants of four out of five *ōbai*) of adult male Spartiates and their families. Kourinou and others have argued that there were four cemeteries in Sparta, one for each of the *ōbai*. Maria Tsouli has argued that the Olive Oil Cemetery functioned as the burial ground for the *ōba* of Mesoa.²²⁴

In a previous publication I have expressed doubt – based simply on a visual inspection of a map that I constructed showing burial locations – about the existence of four obal cemeteries.²²⁵ It is now possible, partly as the result of the recent work on the settlement organization of Sparta that I have done with Nathaniel Kramer, to carry out a more sophisticated analysis of the spatial patterning of burials in Sparta. That analysis employs geospatial software and involves placing each published burial in a grid of 100 x 100 meter tiles that covers the entirety of the ancient city.²²⁶

Spatially distributed variables (e.g. the locations of instances of a disease) can be clustered, evenly dispersed, or random (see Figure 7). In practice, few real-world variables are spatially distributed such that they correspond precisely to one of the cubes shown in Figures 7a and 7b. As a result, the spatial distribution of variables is typically calculated using what is called Moran's Index, which provides a measure of what geographers call "spatial autocorrelation." A perfectly clustered variable (Figure 7a) would get a Moran's Index score of 1, a perfectly dispersed variable (Figure 7b) would get a score of -1, and a completely random distribution would get a score of 0 (Figure 7c).

224 Kourinou 2000: 215-19; Tsouli 2013a: 153.

225 Christesen 2019b: 336-38.

226 Christesen & Kramer 2024. See also Christesen & Kramer (forthcoming).

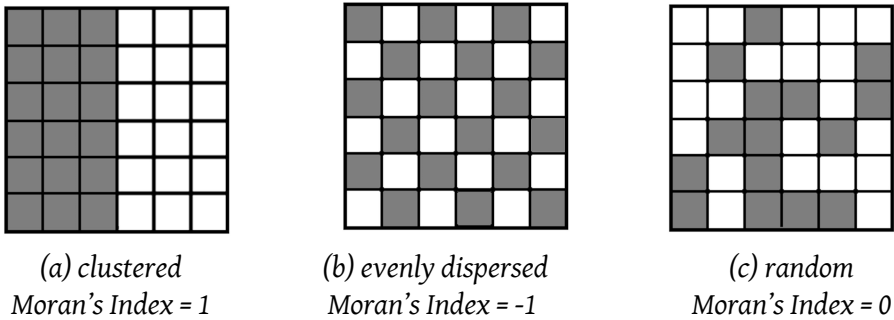


Figure 7: Types of spatial distribution.

Moran's Index can be calculated in two different ways. A global Moran's Index calculation generates solely a numerical score for the dataset in question. A local Moran's Index calculation identifies the locations of statistically significant clusters in the dataset.²²⁷

227 The analysis presented here was performed using the Spatial Autocorrelation (Global Moran's I) and Cluster and Outlier Analysis (Anselin Local Moran's I) tools in ArcGIS Pro. The conceptualization of spatial relationships was set to "inverse distance" and the distance method to "Euclidean." The threshold distance was set to 100 meters. For more details on the operation of these tools in ArcGIS Pro, see: <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/spatial-statistics/spatial-autocorrelation.htm>; <https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/spatial-statistics/cluster-and-outlier-analysis-anselin-local-moran-s.htm>.

The formulas employed in ArcGIS Pro to calculate global and local Moran's Indexes can be found at:

<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/spatial-statistics/how-spatial-autocorrelation-moran-s-i-spatial-st.htm>;
<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/latest/tool-reference/spatial-statistics/how-cluster-and-outlier-analysis-anselin-local-m.htm>.

For a general introduction to the use of Geographic Information Systems in archaeology, see Conolly & Lake 2006. On the statistical underpinnings of the Moran's Index calculations, see Rogerson 2015: 268-73. On the use of global and local Moran's Index calculations in the analysis of archaeological data, see Hacıgüzeller 2020 and Crema 2020, respectively. For an example of another recent application of the use of Moran's Index in the field of archaeology, see Heydari Dastenaiei & Niknami 2023.

I calculated global and local Moran's Indexes for two different datasets:

(a) dated, intracommunal burials, which I defined as burials within the space delimited by the Hellenistic wall circuit (391 burials in all; see Table 5);

(b) dated, intracommunal burials plus dated burials made within 400 meters or less outside the Hellenistic wall (1,472 burials in all). This calculation included burials in the Southwestern and Olive Oil cemeteries. For analytical purposes, I set the number of burials in the Southwestern Cemetery to 1,000, dated them all to the Roman period, and distributed them over four 100-meter tiles. I set the number of burials in the Olive Oil Cemetery to 70 (dated as 25 Archaic, 25 Classical, 20 Hellenistic), and placed them all in a single 100-meter tile.²²⁸ In both cases I combined Protogeometric and Geometric burials into a single category because it has proven difficult in some cases to differentiate the tombs of those two periods.

Table 5: Number of cataloged intracommunal burials, by period

Proto-geo-metric	Geo-metric	Archaic	Classi-cal	Hellen-istic	Roman
15	19	29	17	77	234

The results of the global Moran's Index calculations are shown in Table 6. The scores for intracommunal burials do not support the hypothesis that there were four distinct cemeteries within the inhabited area of Sparta. There is no trace of clustering in the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods, and only a limited degree of clustering in the Protogeometric-Geometric and Roman periods. The scores for intracommunal and extracommunal burials taken together tell essentially the same story. Those scores also suggest that burials in Sparta did become significantly more highly clustered, but not before the Roman period.

228 These parameters are consistent with the published details of the two cemeteries, on which see Christesen 2019b.

Table 6: Global Moran's Index scores for burials in Sparta

period	global Moran's Index	probability that this pattern could be the result of random chance	global Moran's Index	probability that this pattern could be the result of random chance
	intracommunal burials		intracommunal and extracommunal burials	
Protogeometric-Geometric	0.15	< 1%	0.15	< 1%
Archaic	-0.01	pattern appears to be random	0.00	pattern appears to be random
Classical	0.03	pattern appears to be random	0.00	pattern appears to be random
Hellenistic	0.04	pattern appears to be random	0.02	pattern appears to be random
Roman	0.15	< 1%	0.49	< 1%

The spatial patterns underlying this data are made clear by the results of the local Moran's Index calculation, which can be found in Figure 8. During the Protogeometric-Geometric period, there was a notable cluster (spanning four tiles) in the northeastern part of the city. During the Roman period, there were clusters in the center and southeastern part of the city.²²⁹ The limited number of clusters in any given period and their

229 The cluster in the southeastern part of the city is now sometimes referred to as the Southeastern Cemetery (see, for example, Tsouli 2020: 153-54). The Hellenistic period exhibits one major cluster, located just to the west of the Roman cluster in that area. The low global Moran's Index score for the Hellenistic period is largely the result of the existence of more than 20 burials in the northeastern corner of the city, which produces a considerable degree of dispersion.

movement over time are not consonant with the idea that there were, from the foundation of the city, four distinct cemeteries attached to four distinct settlement nuclei.

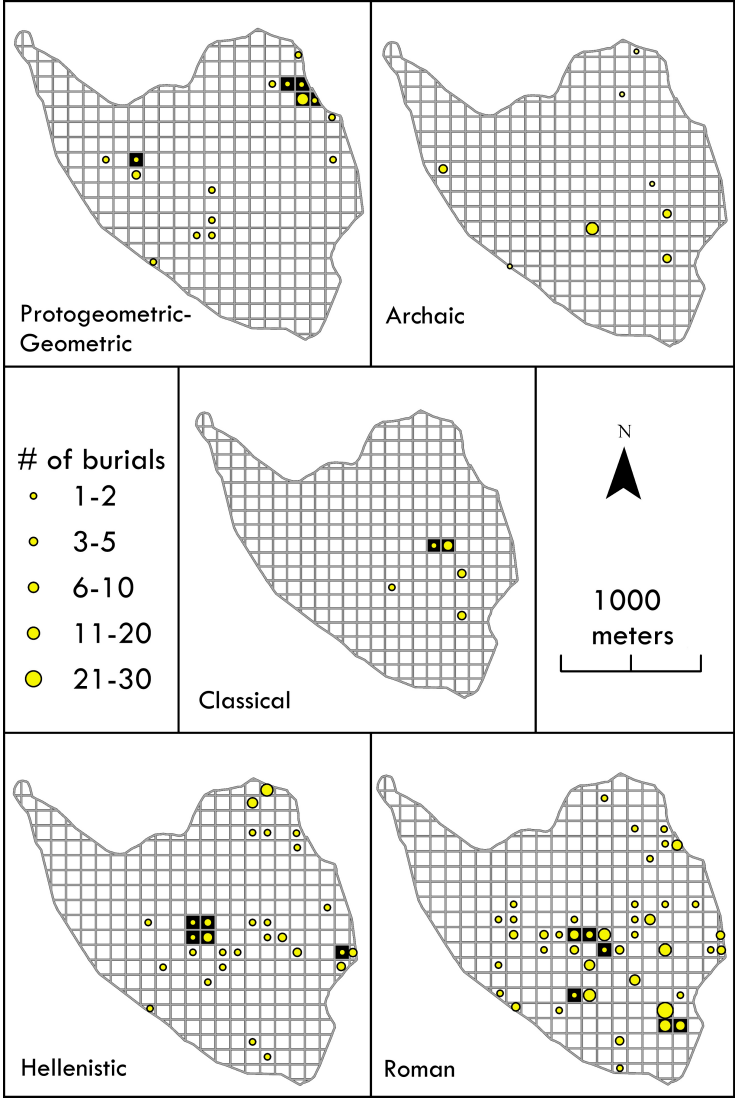


Figure 8: Locations and clustering of burials in Sparta, by period, based on local Moran's Index calculations. Burials are represented by proportionally-sized dots, and statistically-significant clusters are shaded in black.

What is known about the number of Spartiates, the extent to which the space delimited by the Hellenistic city wall was occupied in the Archaic and Classical periods, and the use of space casts further doubt on the existence of four distinct settlement nuclei. It will be helpful to bear in mind that the evidence for residential spaces in Sparta prior to the later Hellenistic period is exiguous because of the use of ephemeral materials such as mudbrick. As a result, the proportion of the city given over to housing can only be determined through indirect means.

At the end of the Archaic period there were approximately 8,000 adult male Spartiates who, given standard demographic patterns, would have belonged to approximately 6,500 separate households.²³⁰ If we assume a family size of four free persons plus two enslaved persons, and if 80% of Spartiate households resided in Sparta, the population of the city would have been approximately 31,000 in the early fifth century.²³¹

A significant fraction of the area encompassed by the Hellenistic city wall, c. 270 ha, was at best lightly inhabited prior to the Hellenistic period: there is little evidence for activity south of a line drawn between Evangelistria and Xenia hills, most if not all of the Palaiokastro plateau was given over to religious sanctuaries and the agora, and the edges of the settlement do not appear to have reached the line of the Hellenistic wall in some places.²³² Moreover, the published finds indicate that, in the Archaic and Classical periods, a considerable portion of the space in the city was used for cult purposes (see Section 9.2).

If, using round numbers, we allot 40 hectares to cult sites, 20 to the Palaiokastro plateau, 20 to the area south of Evangelistria and Xenia hills, 20 to areas within the Hellenistic wall not occupied during the Archaic and Classical periods, and another 20 to roads and unusable hillsides, we are left with an area of approximately 150 hectares. This result aligns with Mogens Herman Hansen's argument that roughly half of the intra-

230 Hodkinson 2000: 383; Doran 2018: 22-32.

231 The addition of two enslaved persons per household is, in my view, a minimum number that is necessitated by the refusal of Spartiates to engage in a wide range of activities performed by free persons elsewhere. See, for example, *Xen. Lac.* 8.1-3.

232 Christesen & Kramer 2024: 261-67.

mural area of a typically-sized Greek urban center was used for residential space, and John Travlos' estimate that residences occupied c. 120 of the 215 hectares within the Themistoclean walls in Athens.²³³

Thirty-one thousand people residing in a space of 150 hectares gives a population density of c. 200 persons per hectare. This is a high but not impossible figure, given that Hansen assumed an average of 150 persons per hectare in a typical Greek urban center.²³⁴ However, that figure presumes that, leaving aside the areas listed in the previous paragraph, all the space in the city was occupied by residences. Here we need to recall the prevailing interpretation of Thucydides' (1.10.2) observations on Lakedaimon, which are typically taken to mean that, in the later fifth century, Sparta was still laid out *kata kōmas*, such that there were distinct settlement nuclei in the city. If there were indeed four distinct settlement nuclei in Sparta in the fifth century, they would have needed to be separated by some considerable amount of open space. If one allots any meaningful area to those interstitial spaces, the population density of the occupied areas rapidly increases to improbably high numbers. One might, in the same vein, note that (admittedly incomplete) maps of the use of space in Sparta during different periods (see Figures 9-13) do not show any trace of the existence of four separate settlement nuclei.²³⁵

233 Travlos 1960: 71; Hansen 2006: 22, 35-47.

234 Hansen 2006: 22, 35-47. For similar (albeit less detailed) calculations, see Forrest 1980: 43; Lupi 2006: 202-3.

235 The categories of spatial function shown in Figures 9-13 are discussed in Christesen & Kramer 2024.

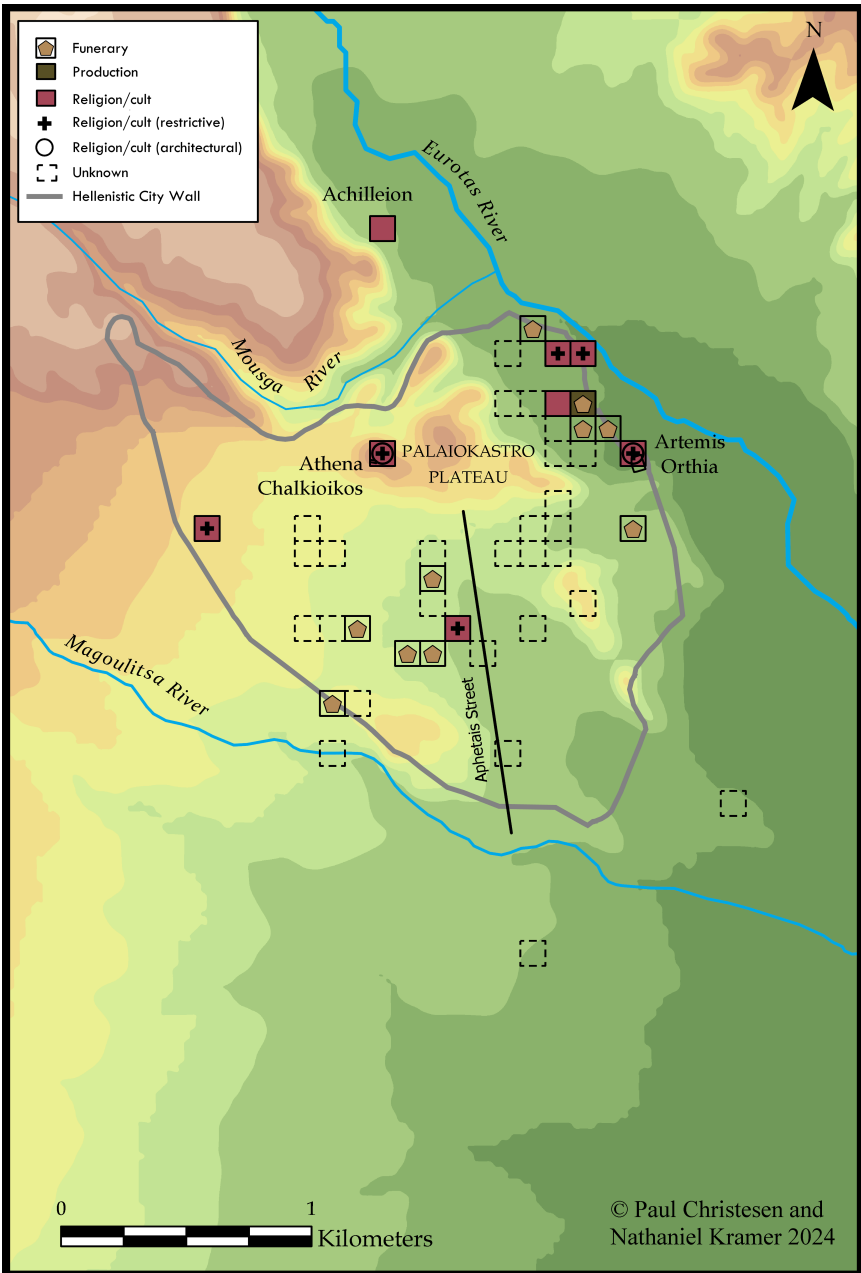


Figure 9: Sparta in the Geometric period. The Hellenistic city wall is shown solely as a convenient landmark.

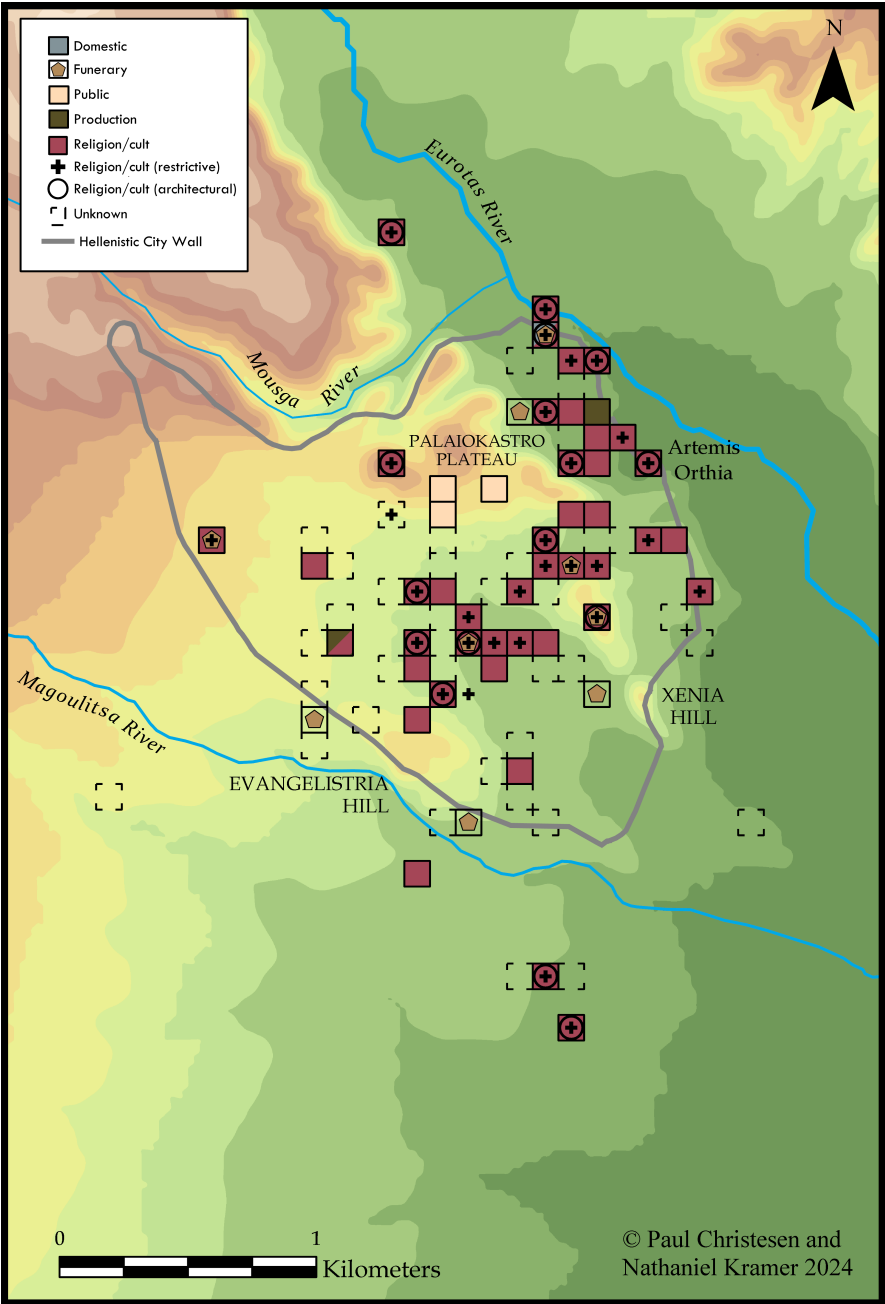


Figure 10: Sparta in the Archaic period. The Hellenistic city wall is shown solely as a convenient landmark.

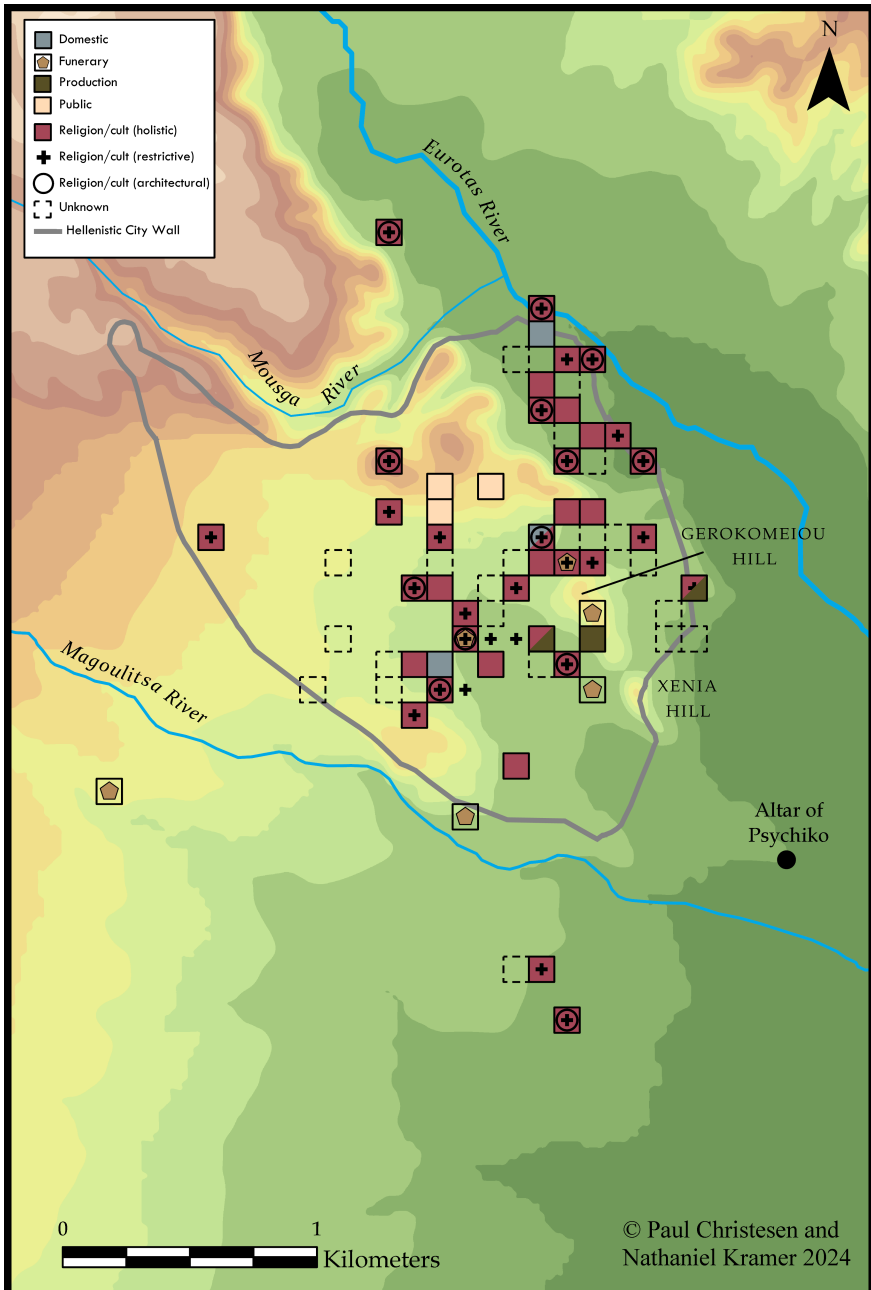


Figure 11: Sparta in the Classical period. The Hellenistic city wall is shown solely as a convenient landmark.

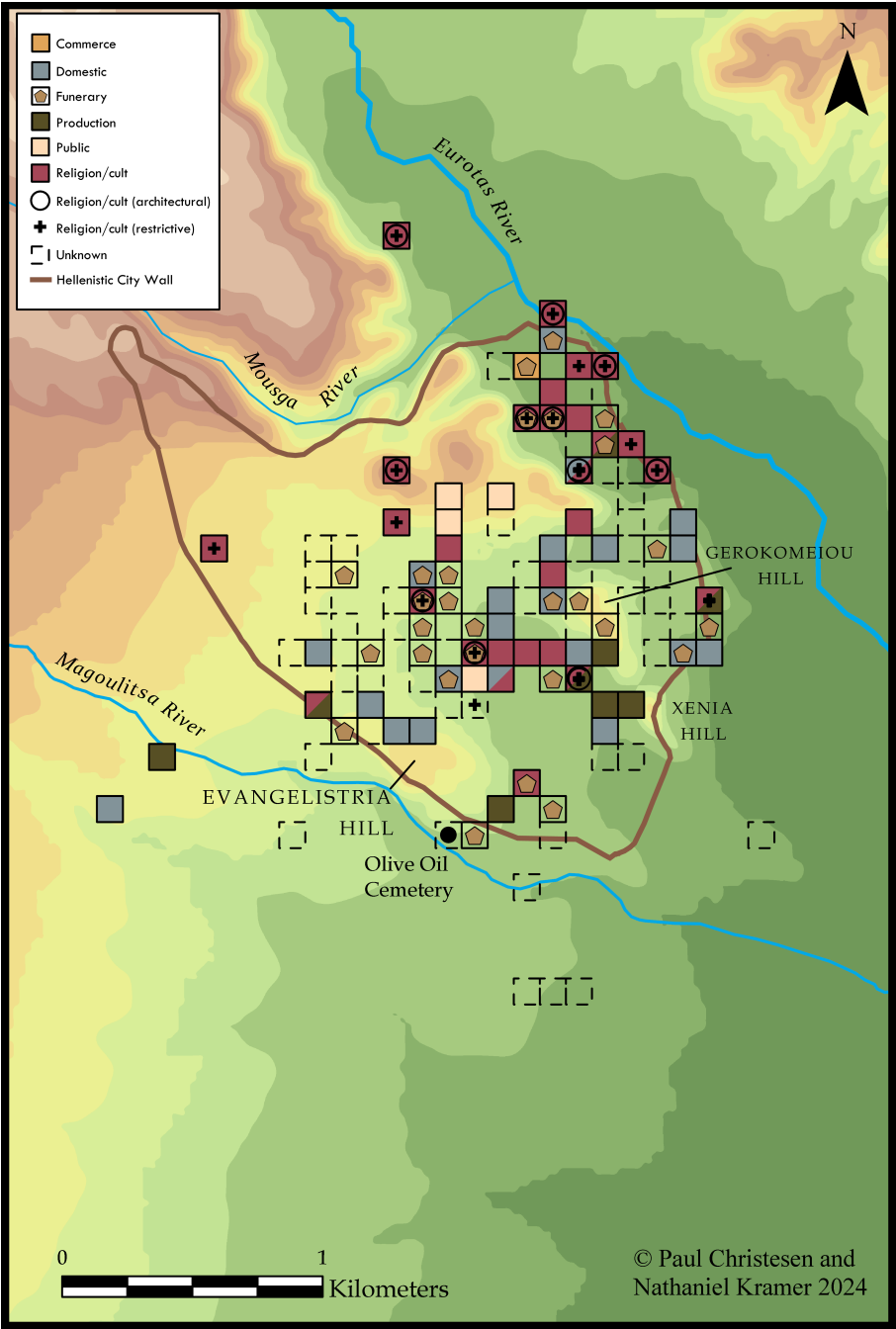


Figure 12: Sparta in the Hellenistic period.

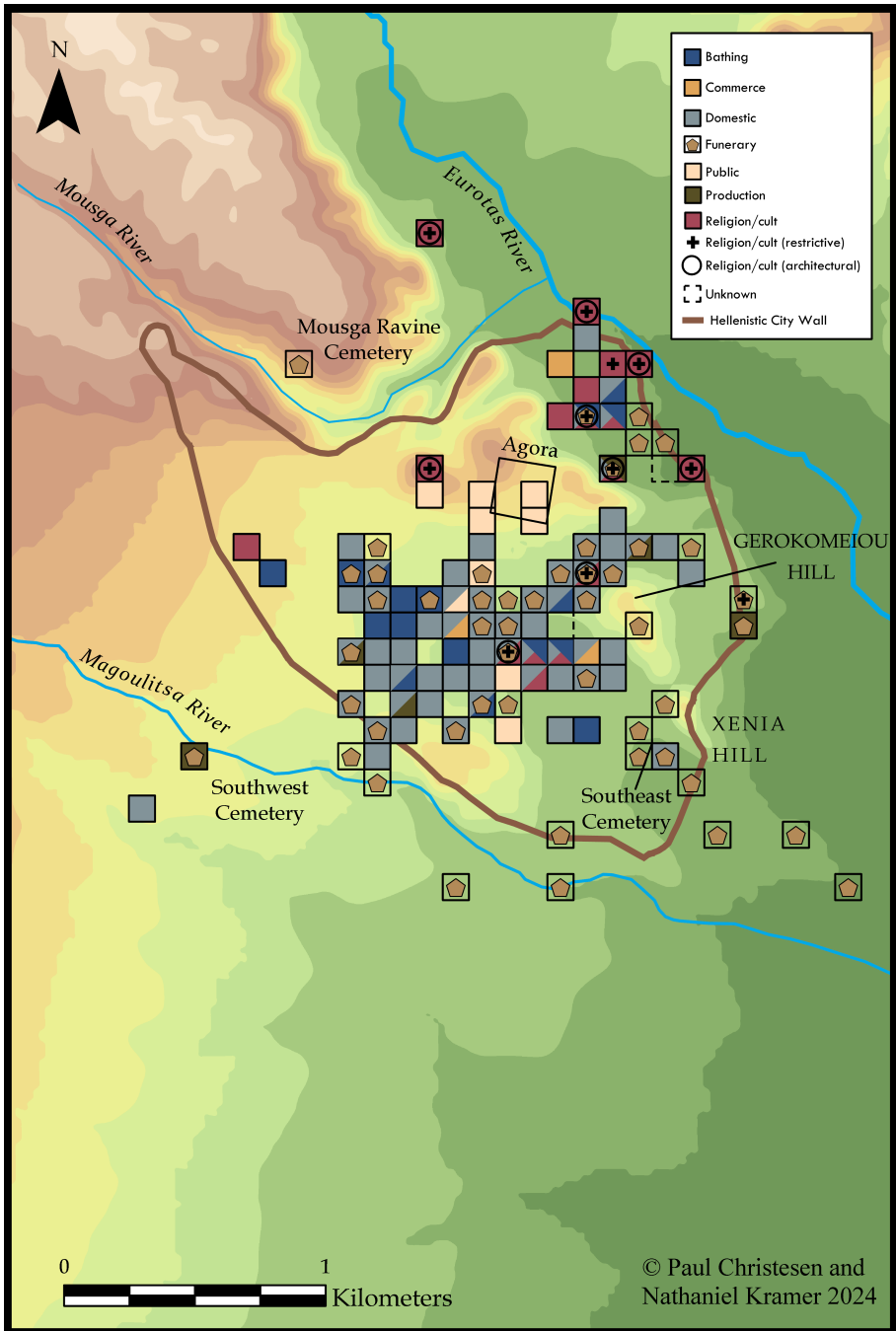


Figure 13: Sparta in the Roman period.

6.3 A City with Suburbs

Archaeological evidence, much of it newly available, indicates that, starting in the Archaic period at the latest, the city of Sparta had highly developed suburbs. The presence of rivers on three sides constricted the available space in Sparta, and, in addition, the area to the southeast of the city, starting at the southern ends of Evangelistria and Xenia hills, seems to have been lightly occupied during all periods (probably because it was marshy for at least parts of each year).²³⁶ There were, however, spaces available for the city to expand outward. The Magoulitsa ran roughly NW-SE, while the Mousga turned northwest not far from its juncture with the Eurotas. As a result, the area west of the Palaiokastros plateau (called Magoula in the present day) contained a considerable amount of flat ground outside the area delimited by the Hellenistic wall. In addition, there was a narrow plain, backed by foothills rising to the west Parnon foreland, along the east bank of the Eurotas (see Section 2.2), and the area immediately south of the Magoulitsa was a gently undulating plain.

The more than 50 rescue excavations conducted in Magoula (see Figure 14) yielded evidence of dense settlement starting in the Archaic period at the latest. The published reports for those excavations do not include the sort of detailed locational information that would make it possible to map the results. However, the overall pattern is clear. Finds point to the existence of at least one and probably multiple sanctuaries in the Archaic period; numerous burials ranging in date from the Protogeometric through Roman periods (including a horse burial, probably Archaic in date); at least one and probably multiple Hellenistic workshops; and Roman-period houses, roads, and water pipelines. Pottery finds, dating to the Archaic through Roman periods, from various sites in Magoula suggest that much of this area was occupied from an early date.²³⁷

236 Christesen & Kramer 2024: 245.

237 It is not possible here to cite every relevant excavation report, but see in particular: Spyropoulos 1983; Zavvou 1997b; Maltezou 2010a; Maltezou & Vlachakos 2010; Tsiangouris 2010h; Tsiangouris 2010i; Tsouli & Tsiangouris 2013b.



Figure 14: Modern Sparta and its suburbs. The Hellenistic city wall is shown as a convenient spatial reference.

The narrow plain (forming part of the larger Spartan plain) on the east bank of the Eurotas, across from Sparta, was intensively surveyed between 1983 and 1989 as part of the Laconia Survey. That project covered a total of 70 sq km, which was divided into 19 subsections (labeled A-U with the omission of I and O). Those subsections were, in turn, grouped into three sectors: north, west, and southeast (see Figure 15).²³⁸ The west sector, which was roughly coterminous with the aforementioned narrow plain and occupied c. 20 sq km, extended c. 6 km to the north of Sparta and c. 2.5 km to the south.²³⁹ The members of the Laconia Survey team found that there was in the west sector, starting in the sixth century and up through and including the Roman period, what they described as a “continuous string” of relatively small (typically less than 0.30 ha) sites: 20 that were in use during the Archaic period (600–450), 15 from the Classical period (450–300), 24 from the Hellenistic period, and 12 from the Roman period.²⁴⁰ These numbers need to be read as a minimum insofar as the accumulation of alluvial fill along the banks of the

238 For an overview of the Laconia Survey’s history and methodology, see Cavanagh, Shipley & Crouwel 2002. The maps illustrating the work of the Laconia Survey are available only in hard copy. The site catalog provides locational data using six- or eight-digit numbers indicating the easting and northing from a point defined as the origin of the survey grid (Shipley 1996a: 264–65). I constructed Figure 15 by georeferencing the hard copy maps. In practice, this means that the location of specific sites is reasonably but not perfectly accurate (spot checks suggest that locations are no more than 75 m off in any direction).

239 The west sector comprised subsections D, H, J, M, and Q.

240 R.W.V. Catling 2002; Shipley 2002. In some cases, the entries in period-specific site catalogs in the Laconia Survey publication do not precisely match the accompanying maps. In those cases, I have privileged the information in the site catalogs. Shipley’s list of Roman-period sites in the west sector (Table 6.10 on pg. 292) includes a site in subsector K, which I have omitted from the site count and map provided here. On the “continuous string of sites,” see Catling 2002: 180. Based primarily on the size and content of the sherd scatters, the survey team identified most of the sites in the west sector as individual farmsteads or clusters of farmsteads. However, the small number of sherds from the sites found by the Laconia Survey (the median number of Hellenistic sherds from the Hellenistic-period sites

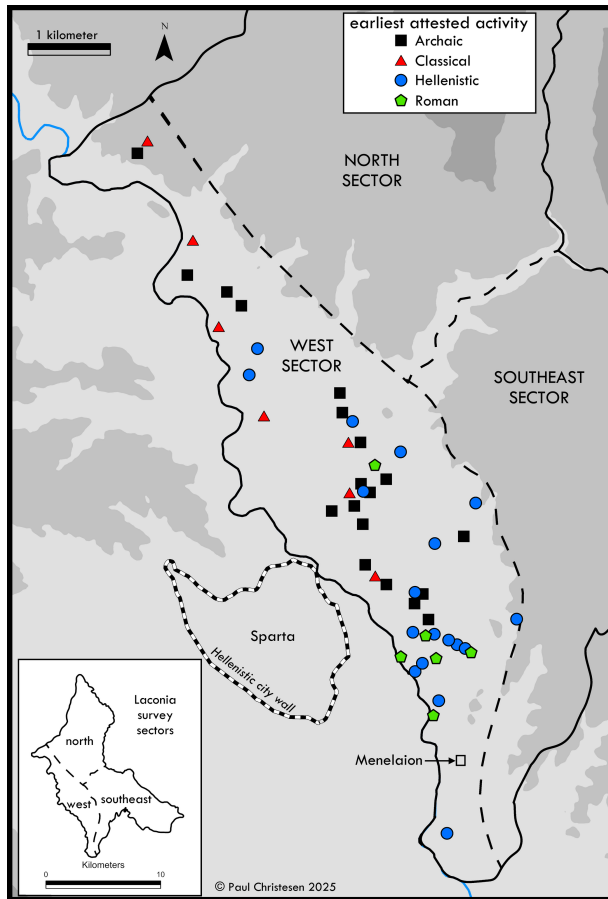


Figure 15: Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman sites found in the west sector of the Laconia Survey. The symbology indicates the earliest attested activity at any given site. Many sites were occupied for multiple periods, so this map should not be read as a complete visualization of the sites from any given time frame (except the Archaic period).²⁴¹

was 13.0, from the Roman-period sites 8.0) makes determining site function challenging (Shipley 2002: 261-63). Twenty of the sites found in the Laconia Survey, including several sites in the west sector, were re-examined in more detail (but without excavation) as part of the Laconia Rural Sites Project (Cavanagh, Mee & James 2005). See in particular pp. 148-66, 196-220, 239-64 on sites LP 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 11.

241 See R.W.V. Catling 2002: Figures 5.2-3 and Shipley 2002: Figures 6.4, 6.6 for separate maps showing site distributions for each of the four periods.

Eurotas has significantly reduced the degree to which sites are visible via survey methodologies.²⁴²

Rescue excavations prompted by the construction, between 2007 and 2016, of a new highway significantly enhanced our knowledge of the archaeological remains in the modern villages of Kladas, Kokkinorachi, and Aphysou (all located just to the north of Sparta, on the east bank of the Eurotas).²⁴³ Among the array of remains uncovered in Kladas are workshops, cemeteries, and agricultural installations of various dates, as well as an Archaic and Classical sanctuary with dedications that include lead figurines and at least 1,500 miniature vessels. Excavations uncovered at Kokkinorachi multiple Archaic kiln sites and an Archaic cult site and at Aphysou a cemetery that was in use from the Archaic through Hellenistic periods.²⁴⁴

242 R.W.V. Catling 2002: 167; Cavanagh, Shipley & Crouwel 2002: 42-43. As Hope Simpson has pointed out, "Often even minor excavation can yield substantial results in places where surface survey has provided little or no indication" (Hope Simpson 2009: 316). Hope Simpson cites an example from the Minoan site of Pseira on Crete, where three sherds were found on the surface in a 10 x 10 m area, but a 4.0 x 1.5 m trench dug on that spot yielded 313 sherds.

243 The highway in question runs approximately 40 km northwest from Sparta to the national motorway that links Corinth and Kalamata. The program of excavations associated with the construction of this highway resulted in the discovery of 162 new archaeological sites along the route of the new road. See E. Pantou & Tsouli 2016. Although the area of Kladas, Kokkinorachi, and Aphysou had been explored by the Laconia Survey, the recent rescue excavations have produced a wealth of new information.

244 Kladas: Tsiangouris 2010d; Tsiangouris 2010e; Tsiangouris 2010f; Kakourou & Maltezoú 2011; Tsiangouris 2011a; Maltezoú 2013a; Maltezoú 2013b; Souchleris 2013a; Souchleris 2013b; Tsouli 2013b; Tsouli 2013c; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014b; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014c; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014d; Tsouli 2014; Souchleris 2016a. Kokkinorachi: Zavvou 1996a; Tsiangouris 2010g; Maltezoú 2011; Tsouli & Theodosi-Kontou 2013; Maltezoú 2014; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014a; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014b; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014c; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014d; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014e; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014f; Tsouli & Tsountakos 2014. Aphysou: Christou 1961-1962; Christou 1963a; Zavvou 1999a; Zavvou 1999b; Kakourou & Koulogeorgiou 2010; Tsiangouris 2010a; Tsiangouris 2010b; Souchleris 2014; Souchleris & Kotsi 2014a; Souchleris 2016b; Souchleris & Koulogeorgiou 2017.

Textual sources help flesh out this archaeological evidence. Shipley has argued that the nondescript ancient remains at Geladari, directly to the north of Kladas, should be identified as the site of Thornax.²⁴⁵ Herodotus and Pausanias both mention a sanctuary to Apollo at Thornax, situated not far to the north of Sparta. Herodotus claims that the Lakedaimonians acquired gold from Croesus that they intended to use “for the statue of Apollo that now stands at Thornax in Lakonia.” Pausanias states that he saw a statue of Apollo Pythaeus at Thornax.

In the winter of 370/369, the army that invaded Lakonia under the leadership of Epameinondas marched down the east bank of the Eurotas to Sparta. In his account of this invasion, Xenophon notes that the presence of Lakedaimonian hoplites near the bridge over the Eurotas prevented any attempt on Sparta. As a result, the invading army headed south, along the east bank of the Eurotas, “burning and plundering houses full of many valuable things.”²⁴⁶ This passage – along with the finds from the Laconia Survey and the rescue excavations in Kladas, Kokkinorachi, and Aphysou – indicates that the east bank of the Eurotas across from Sparta was densely inhabited for a long time.

Rescue excavations in modern villages south of Sparta demonstrate that there was, by the Archaic period at the latest, activity throughout the area between Sparta and Amyklai (see Figure 14). At Charisio, walls, tombs, and strata rich in pottery from the Archaic to Roman periods were uncovered (as well as pieces of the ancient road connecting Sparta and Amyklai).²⁴⁷ A small Archaic sanctuary building was found at

245 Hdt. 1.69.4; Paus. 3.10.8; Shipley 1996b: 355–57. See now also Eleutheriou & Skagkos 2010–2013 and the bibliography listed in Tsouli 2020: 142 n. 4.

246 *κάνοντες καὶ πορθοῦντες πολλῶν κάγαθῶν μεστὰς οἰκίας* (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.27; trans. C.L. Brownson). The invading army crossed the river at a spot directly across from Amyklai, so the houses in question were located in the immediate vicinity of Sparta. See also Livy 34.28, in which the army that invaded Lakonia in 195 is said to have “utterly laid waste all the pleasant and thickly inhabited country round the city” (trans. G. Baker). Curtius concluded, on the basis of the passage from Xenophon and Livy’s description of the campaign of 195, that the area on the east bank of the Eurotas across from Sparta and the area immediately to the south of Sparta were suburbs of the city (Curtius 1851–1852: vol. 2, 239, 243).

247 Zavvou 1995a; Zavvou 1995b; Kakourou 2010c; Maltezou 2010b; Tsiangouris 2011c; Tsouli, Souchleris, Kiakou et al. 2014.

Kamares, and tombs and pottery dating from the Archaic through Roman periods at Kalogonia.²⁴⁸ Excavations at Sykaraki revealed a sanctuary in use from the Archaic through Hellenistic periods, and at Alesia a cemetery with Archaic through Roman burials.²⁴⁹ Hope-Simpson and Waterhouse, in their pedestrian survey of Lakonia, noted the presence at Tseramio of what they describe as an “extensive classical site” (which may be the ancient settlement of Alesiai mentioned by Pausanias).²⁵⁰ Remains of what seem to be agricultural installations in use from the Archaic through the Hellenistic periods were found at Kalami.²⁵¹ Parts of a Roman cemetery were uncovered at Gounari.²⁵²

6.4. *Pitana and Sparta*

If there were four distinct *ōbai* in the city of Sparta from the time of its foundation, three of those four *ōbai* are rarely mentioned in the textual record prior to the first century CE. The earliest extant references to Kynosoura date to the Hellenistic period, and the first certain references to Limnai and Mesoa date to the Roman period. Pitana, on the other hand, is repeatedly attested in textual sources starting in the Archaic period. Alcman probably mentioned Pitana, and Pindar locates it “beside the ford of the Eurotas.” Herodotus describes Pitana as a *dēmos*, and in the *Trojan Women* Euripides characterizes Pitana as a *polis* and the hometown of Menelaos. Two tiles, stamped with the word Πιτανᾶτᾶν and dating to the third century, were found in the northwestern part of Sparta.²⁵³ Pitana was thus undoubtedly located in the immediate vicinity of the Palaiokastro plateau, and – unlike Kynosoura, Limnai, or Mesoa – seems to

248 Kamares: Kakourou 2010b; Tsiangouris 2010c; Tsouli 2016e. Kalogonia: Christou 1963c. Kalogonia may be a corruption of Heptagonia, which Livy places somewhere to the south of Sparta (34.38; Leake 1830: vol. 1, 173).

249 Sykaraki: Tsouli 2016a. Alesia: von Prott 1904: 6–7; Demakopoulou 1968; Tsouli 2016b.

250 Paus. 3.20.2–3; Hope Simpson & Waterhouse 1960: 82 #2. See also Shipley 1996a: 289, GG85.

251 Kakourou 2010a; Tsouli 2010b; Tsouli 2016d; Paus. 3.19.9–20.7.

252 Christou 1960; Christou 1964; Zavvou 1994; G. Pantou 1996; Tsouli 2016c.

253 Alcman fr. 5 Page-Davies; Pind. *Ol.* 6.28; Hdt. 3.55.2; Eur. *Tro.* 1110–13; *IG* V.1.917.

have been particularly closely identified with Sparta by the fifth century at the latest. One can explain this peculiarity by positing that Pitana was the most “fashionable” of the four *ōbai*.²⁵⁴ We should, however, be mindful of the possibility that most or all of Sparta was encompassed in the *ōba* of Pitana and that Kynosoura, Limnai, and Mesoa encompassed territory that lay largely or entirely outside the city.

6.5 Summary

The archaeological and textual evidence for the settlement organization of Sparta reveals no trace of four distinct settlement nuclei, but it does attest to the existence of well-developed suburbs and a close connection between Pitana and Sparta. The absence of evidence for distinct settlement nuclei in Sparta is not compatible with the current orthodoxy, though the limitations of the evidence need to be recognized. It is, for example, possible that what had originally been four spatially distinct *ōbai* had, as the result of organic growth, effectively merged into a single conurbation at an early date. That understanding of the settlement organization of Sparta is, however, not compatible with reading Thucydides (1.10.2) as saying that Sparta was, in his time, laid out *kata kōmas*.²⁵⁵

The existence of suburbs creates further complications for the current orthodoxy. At present, it is impossible to reconstruct the pattern of settlement in the immediate vicinity of Sparta with any degree of precision. However, we can be certain that extensive suburbs containing houses, workshops, and cemeteries surrounded the city from the Archaic period onward. The absence of a city wall prior to the Hellenistic period meant that there were no clear boundaries separating the urban center from the surrounding territory. The horse burial in Magoula and the elegant houses on the east bank of the Eurotas indicate that the inhabitants of the suburbs included at least some affluent families. By far the

254 See, for example, Bölte 1950: 1840.

255 I argue in Section 9.3 that Thucydides is describing the settlement pattern of the Spartan plain, not the city of Sparta.

most obvious explanation is that those families were Spartiates.²⁵⁶ (The only viable alternative, that the suburbs were inhabited by *perioikoi*, would entail a major revision of the current scholarly consensus on where *perioikoi* resided.) The presence of Spartiate families in the suburbs of Lakedaimon's primary urban center would not, in and of itself, be particularly surprising. Nonetheless, the existence of suburbs inhabited by Spartiates is difficult to reconcile with the current orthodoxy because it indicates either that some or all of the four *ōbai* (Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, Pitana) extended outside the immediate bounds of the city of Sparta, or that there were more than four *ōbai*. If one subscribes to the former position, one has to entertain the possibility that the boundaries of the *ōbai* – and hence the area inhabited by Spartiates – stretched well beyond Sparta. If one accepts the latter position, the current orthodoxy collapses entirely.

The archaeological and textual evidence for the settlement organization of Sparta thus does not conclusively disprove the current orthodoxy, but it points toward a different scenario, in which all Spartiates did not live within the confines of Sparta or Amyklai, and some *ōbai* encompassed areas outside of Sparta.

256 Catling, in his analysis of the area covered by the Laconia Survey during the Archaic and Classical periods, notes that, "A Spartiate presence of some sort, whether in person or in the form of helot-worked farms and estates, seems inevitable in most of the western sector, especially that part south of the confluence of the Eurotas and Kelephina" (R. W. V. Catling 2002: 228).

7. Settlement Patterns in the Spartan Plain: Archaeological Evidence

As noted in Sections 1 and 5.2, the current orthodoxy holds that there were just two substantial settlements in the Spartan plain – Sparta and Amyklai. That position has been based in large part on the lack of compelling evidence for the existence of other settlements. However, it is important to bear in mind that archaeological investigation of the Spartan plain has been far from comprehensive. A considerable number of European intellectuals, starting in the 19th century, have traveled across the Spartan plain and tried to connect visible remains with sites known from literary sources (primarily the Homeric Catalog of Ships and Pausanias).²⁵⁷ The relevant work includes, but is by no means limited to, books and articles by William Leake, Ludwig Ross, Ernst Curtius, Hans von Prott, and Henry Ormerod.²⁵⁸ In the mid-20th century, Richard Hope Simpson and Helen Waterhouse carried out a more systematic, though still relatively informal, survey of Lakonia. They focused on Neolithic and Bronze Age sites, but they did provide occasional notes on material from later periods.²⁵⁹

There have been no expansive, intensive surveys of the part of the Spartan plain lying to the west of the Eurotas. The Laconia Survey covered 70 sq km to the east of the Eurotas (see Section 6.3). The intensive surveys conducted elsewhere in the Spartan plain have explored limited areas around particular sites.²⁶⁰ Aside from Sparta, just one post-Bronze Age site in the Spartan plain – the Amyklaion – has been systematically

257 Hom. *Il.* 2.581-90 (see Section 3.1 for the text); Paus. 3.18.6-20.11.

258 Leake 1830: vol. 1, 120-90, vol. 2, 531-34, vol. 3, 1-19; Ross 1848: vol. 2, 201-50; Curtius 1851-1852: vol. 2, 203-334; von Prott 1904; Ormerod 1910.

259 Hope Simpson & Waterhouse 1960; Waterhouse & Hope Simpson 1961. Hope Simpson used the results of the survey in subsequent work on sites mentioned in the Homeric poems (Hope Simpson 1966; Hope Simpson & Lazenby 1970).

260 For surveys carried out in the immediate vicinity of the Bronze Age sites of Vapheio/Palaiopyrgi and Agios Vasileios, see Banou, Chapin & Hitchcock 2022 and Voutsaki, Wiersma, de Neef et al. 2019, respectively. See below for an ongoing survey at Amyklai.

excavated.²⁶¹ The Amyklaion was situated some distance from the ancient settlement of Amyklai, which remains largely unexplored (see below for details).

As a result, rescue excavations are the primary source of information about post-Bronze Age settlements in the Spartan plain other than Sparta. Unfortunately, relatively few rescue excavations have been conducted in that area. The construction in recent years of a new, 8-km-long road linking Skoura and Pyri prompted rescue excavations at 12 sites in the Spartan plain.²⁶² Even so, the *Archaiologikon Deltion* contains nearly 500 reports about rescue excavations in the city of Sparta, but fewer than 30 reports about rescue excavations at post-Bronze Age sites in the entirety of the Spartan plain south of Amyklai. Moreover, rescue excavations are, by their very nature, circumscribed in extent, duration, and depth.²⁶³ Roman remains frequently hinder exploration of lower, earlier strata. In addition, up until the Roman period, the nature of the extant remains makes it easier, throughout Lakonia, to detect sanctuaries than habitation sites or cemeteries.²⁶⁴

We can be reasonably certain that, in this instance, the absence of evidence is not evidence for absence. Prior to 1995, much of the city of Sparta had not been archaeologically explored. Systematic excavations were conducted at a limited number of sites (most notably the theater and the sanctuaries of Artemis Orthia and Athena Chalkioikos) by British archaeologists. Rescue excavations were carried out by Greek archaeologists only sporadically because most of the city was not archaeologically protected. After archaeological protection was extended to the entire city in 1995, rescue excavations began to be conducted in significant

261 Multiple Neolithic and Bronze-Age sites in the Spartan plain have been systematically excavated. See, for example, Cavanagh, Mee & Renard 2025 (Kouphovouno); de Neef, Voutsaki, Ullrich et al. 2022 (Agios Vasileios); Banou, Chapin, and Hitchcock 2022 (Palaiopyrgi).

262 Tsouli & Vlachakos 2016e.

263 For a discussion of some of the shortcomings of data produced by rescue excavations, see Christesen & Kramer 2024: 217–21.

264 The reasons why this is the case include the accumulation of easily recognizable, diagnostic objects (such as lead figurines) at sanctuary sites, and, prior to the Roman period, the use of ephemeral building materials for structures other than temples.

numbers across much of the urban fabric. However, the results did not appear in print for several years.²⁶⁵ When Hodkinson published *Property and Wealth in Classical Sparta* in 2000, his catalog of all known, dated graves in the city had a total of 12 entries.²⁶⁶ As a result of the excavations carried out since 1995, there are now more than 1,400 known burials in the city of Sparta.²⁶⁷ In the same vein, Hope Simpson and Waterhouse (in the 1930s and 1950s) and Emily Banou (in the 1990s) carefully examined the surface remains at Agios Vasileios but found no trace of either the cemetery or palatial complex that have been revealed by recent excavations (which were prompted by a chance find of fragments from Linear B tablets in 2008).²⁶⁸ These examples are salutary reminders that we need to be exceedingly cautious about using negative evidence to draw conclusions about many facets of Lakonian archaeology, including settlement patterns in the Spartan plain.

While the evidentiary base is far from ideal, the currently available archaeological data does contain valuable clues and hence is worth reviewing in some detail. The discussion that follows focuses on substantial sites for which significant information is available and does not address every potentially relevant scrap of information (e.g. the discovery of a small amount of Classical-period pottery). We begin with Amyklai.

Amyklai attracted the attention of scholars from an early date because it figures prominently in the ancient literary sources bearing on Lakonia.²⁶⁹ References in Pausanias, Polybius, and Xenophon provided

265 Christesen 2019b: 309–12; Christesen & Kramer 2024: 213–15.

266 Hodkinson 2000: 238–40, 243. Hodkinson described the absence of graves in Sparta as an “astonishing archaeological lacuna whose full explanation is far from obvious.”

267 Christesen 2019b.

268 Hope Simpson & Waterhouse 1960: 80–82; Banou 1996: 37–39. On the discovery of the first fragments of Linear B tablets, see Vasilogambrou 2010; Vasilogambrou, Morgan, Diamanti et al. 2024: 46–47. On the finds at Agios Vasileios, see the bibliography cited in n. 261.

269 See Bölte 1929a: 1328–29 and the discussion in Section 2.3 above. In the early modern period, there were several small settlements in the area of ancient Amyklai, the most significant of which were the adjacent villages of Mahmoud-Bey (to the east of the main road running south from Sparta) and S(k)lavochori (to the west of that road). In 1921 Mahmoud-Bey was renamed Amykles (Αμύκλες), and in 1940 that name was also given to Sklavochori.

valuable information that facilitated finding the Sanctuary of Apollo Amyklaios (the Amyklaion) and the associated settlement. Epigraphic evidence has made it possible to locate both places with a high degree of certainty.²⁷⁰ The Amyklaion is situated on Agia Kyriaki hill, c. 1 km north-east of the modern village of Amykles (see Figure 16). In the Late Bronze Age, Agia Kyriaki hill, which had been a habitation site since the Early Bronze Age, became a sanctuary, and the nucleus of habitation shifted to the southwest.²⁷¹

The clearest indication of the location of the ancient settlement of Amyklai comes from what is known about the Sanctuary of Agamemnon and Alexandra. Pausanias mentions this sanctuary while recounting his visit to Amyklai:

Amyklai was destroyed by the Dorians, and has since remained a mere village [κώμη], but it contains a sanctuary [ἱερόν] of Alexandra and an image of her, which are worth seeing. The Amyklaians say that Alexandra is no other than Cassandra, the daughter of Priam. Here, too, is a likeness [εἰκών] of Clytemnestra and the reputed tomb of Agamemnon [Ἀγαμέμνονος νομιζόμενον μνημα]. The deities worshipped by the people here are the Amyklaian god and Dionysos. ... Such were the notable objects at Amyklai.²⁷²

The sanctuary was located after the accidental discovery, in 1955, of hundreds of terracotta objects in the vicinity of the church of Agia Paraskevi in Amykles. That discovery prompted the ephor at the time, Chrysanthos Christou, to undertake intermittent excavations between 1956 and 1961.²⁷³ Christou found a votive deposit with more than 10,000 objects, ranging in date from the early seventh through the late fourth century. The deposit consisted primarily of terracotta plaques (c. 1,200 in all) and

270 Paus. 3.19.6; Polyb. 5.19.2; Xen. *Hell.* 6.27-30.

271 Spyropoulos 1981; Gallou 2020: 68. For information on the ongoing excavation program at the Amyklaion, see <https://amyklaion.gr/en/>.

272 Paus. 3.19.6; trans. J.G. Frazer, modified.

273 Christou 1956; Christou 1960a; Christou 1960b; Christou 1961.

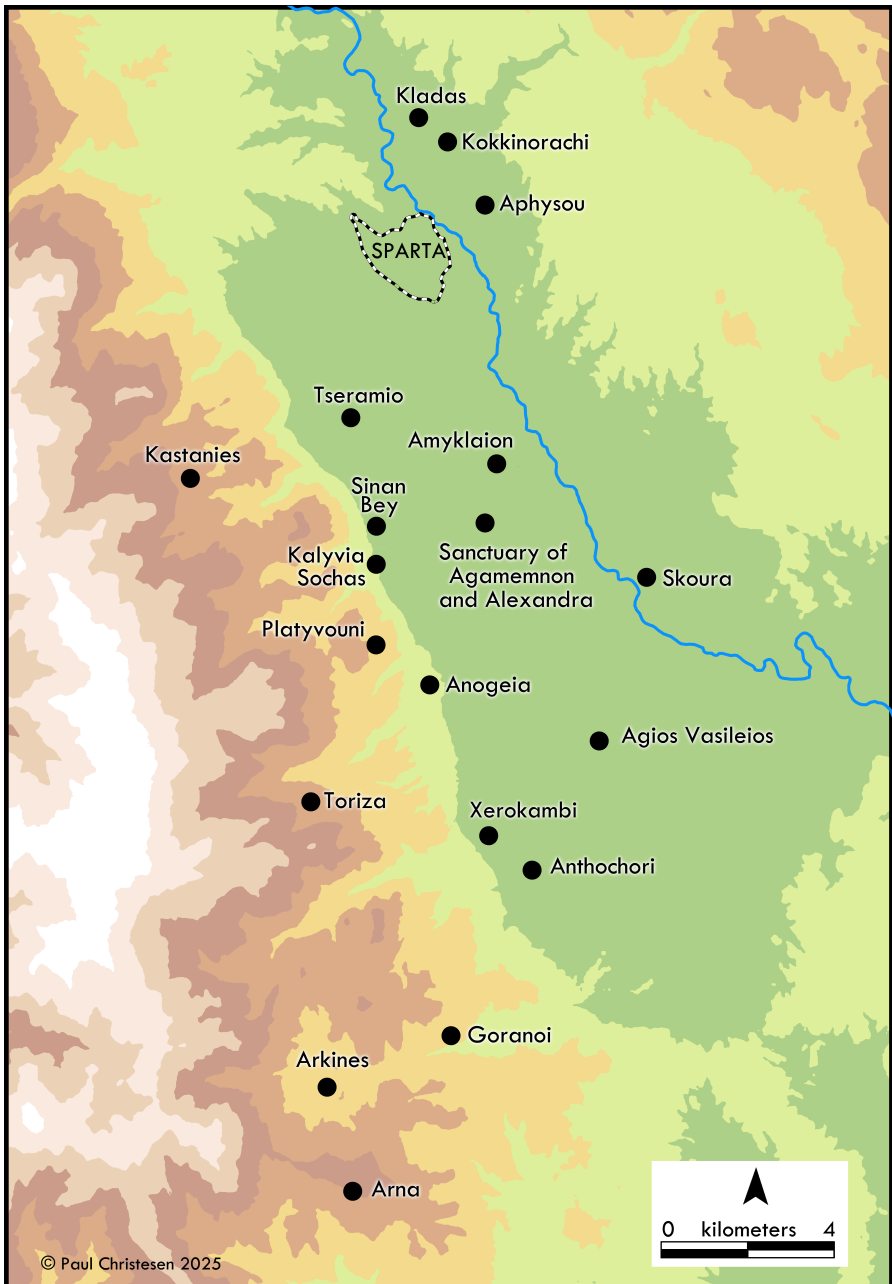


Figure 16: Sites in the Spartan plain and the Taygetos plateau discussed in Sections 7 and 8.

pottery (including more than 2,000 kylikes).²⁷⁴ A second votive deposit with thousands of objects, similar to those from the first deposit, was discovered in the same locale in 1998.²⁷⁵ Some of the finds (e.g. an Archaic disk akroterion) suggest the presence of architecture nearby, but no cult structures have as yet been located. Inscriptions (the earliest dating to the last quarter of the sixth century) on some of the excavated objects identify them as dedications to Agamemnon or Alexandra. *IG* V.1.26 (see Section 3.3), inscribed on a *stēlē* found near the church of Agia Paraskevi, includes a provision for the *stēlē* to be set up in the sanctuary of Alexandra. A marble throne, dated to the first century BCE or CE and found in Amyklai, bears a dedicatory inscription to Alexandra (*SEG* 24.281).

Rescue excavations, in addition to those done by Christou, have been conducted in the area of the settlement of Amyklai on several occasions.²⁷⁶ Those excavations uncovered an array of material ranging in date from the Protogeometric through Byzantine periods, including residential structures and tombs.²⁷⁷ Hope Simpson and Waterhouse found large quantities of Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman pottery, covering an area of at least 2 km N-S and 1 km E-W, in the vicinity of the modern village. The archaeological finds, taken together with the textual sources (see Sections 2.3 and 3.2-3), indicate that the ancient settlement of Amyklai was quite extensive.²⁷⁸

The most compelling evidence for a substantial post-Bronze Age settlement in the Spartan plain other than Sparta and Amyklai comes from the modern village of Anthochori. In the 1960s and again in the 2000s,

274 Stibbe 1994: 17.

275 Zavvou 1998. Gina Salapata produced a detailed study of the terracotta plaques from the first deposit (Salapata 2014). The rest of the material from both deposits is known primarily through the initial reports filed by the excavators.

276 A survey project initiated in 2024 is exploring the area between the Amyklaion and the Sanctuary of Agamemnon and Alexandra, but no significant results have as yet been reported. See <https://www.hansbeck.org/belonging-toin-lakonia>.

277 Raftopoulou 1992; Raftopoulou 1994; Themis 1996; Zavvou 1996b; Zavvou 1997d; Zavvou 2000; Zavvou 2003; Tsouli 2010a; Tsiangouris 2011b; Tsouli & Tsiangouris 2013a.

278 Hope Simpson & Waterhouse 1960: 82. Polybius (5.19) describes Amyklai as being “καλλιδενδρότατος καὶ καλλικαρπώτατος,” which suggests that the inhabitants of the settlement controlled a considerable area of arable land.

members of the Greek Archaeological Service conducted brief excavations in the vicinity of the church of the Metamorphosis (also referred to as the church of the Transfiguration) in Anthochori. That work was prompted by chance finds, most notably lead figurines, that pointed to the presence of an ancient sanctuary.²⁷⁹

The excavators uncovered a series of strata extending to a depth of 3.5 m and covering, at minimum, an area extending 500 m from the church in every direction.²⁸⁰ The material in those strata ranged in date from the Early Helladic to the Byzantine periods. The published reports do not offer much in the way of details, but the presence of what are described as houses and storage pithoi points to the existence of a settlement. The discovery of high-quality Protogeometric pottery in shapes typically found at cult sites, along with miniature vases and lead figurines, demonstrates the existence of a sanctuary that was founded at an early date and continued to be active for an extended period thereafter.

This archaeological evidence can be productively combined with textual sources. Multiple roof tiles found at Anthochori date to the Hellenistic period and are stamped with the words Μεσσαπέος | Δαμόσιοι.²⁸¹ Stephanus of Byzantium, in the entry in his *Ethnika* for Μεσσαπέαι, provides the following information:

Μεσσαπέαι· χωρίον Λακωνικῆς. το ἔθνικόν Μεσσαπεεύς· οὕτω γὰρ ὁ Ζεὺς ἐκεῖ τιμᾶται. Θεόπομπος νζ'.

279 For reports by the excavators, see Christou 1961-1962; Christou 1962a; Christou 1962b; Christou 1963b; Zavvou 2004; Zavvou 2006a; Zavvou 2006b; Zavvou 2009. See also Hope Simpson & Dickinson 1979: 110. For a summary, see Shipley 1996a: 293, GG108. For an insightful analysis of the material from Anthochori in comparison with that found at the Sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus at Tsakona, see Cavanagh & Catling (forthcoming).

280 Christou indicates 500 m as both the circumference of the site (Christou 1961-1962: 84) and its radius (Christou 1962a: 135, Christou 1962b: 114). The latter is much more compatible with Christou's statement that the finds indicate that the ancient settlement was larger than the modern one (Christou 1962a: 135, Christou 1962b: 115).

281 Taïphakos 1977: 219-22; Zavvou 2009: 29, 31.

Messapeai: a settlement in Lakonia. The ethnic is Messapean: for Zeus is thusly honored there. Theopompos [says in Book] 57.²⁸²

The citation of Book 57 is an important detail because it allows us to determine the context in which Theopompos mentioned Messapeai. The only one of Theopompos' works longer than 12 books was his account of Greece during the reign of Philip II, the *Philippika*, which occupied 58 books.²⁸³ Given that Philip invaded Lakonia in the aftermath of Chaeronea and may have led his army as far south as Gytheion and that he died not long thereafter, it is a near certainty that Theopompos mentioned Messapeai in describing Philip's invasion of Lakonia.²⁸⁴ The word *me-sa-pi-jo* – probably a place name – is attested in the Linear B tablets from Agios Vasileios, which may suggest that the name of Messapeai for the ancient settlement at the modern site of Anthochori went back into the Bronze Age.²⁸⁵

The archaeological evidence and textual sources taken together indicate that Anthochori was the site of an ancient settlement called Messapeai, which included a sanctuary dedicated to Zeus Messapeus. That sanctuary was still in operation well into the Roman period: in describing his travels in the Spartan plain south of Sparta, Pausanias writes that “There is in the plain a temenos of Zeus Messapeus. The *epiklēsis* derives, they say, from the name of a man who served as priest of the god.”²⁸⁶ No

282 FGrH 115 F 245; trans. W. Morrison.

283 See the biographical essay in William Morrison's entry for Theopompos in *Brill's New Jacoby*.

284 On Philip's invasion of Lakonia, see Paus. 3.24.5; Polyb. 9.28.6, 9.33.8; Musti & Torelli 1991: 277; Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 14–15; Kennell 2010: 160. Hope Simpson has argued that the Sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus mentioned by Theopompos should be equated with the sanctuary at Tsakona (northeast of Sparta), that the remains at Anthochori should be identified as the ancient site of Bryseiai mentioned by Homer (*Il.* 2.583) and Pausanias (3.20.3), and that a sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus was located between Anthochori and the Taygetos (Hope Simpson 2009: 329–31).

285 For *me-sa-pi-jo* in the Agios Vasileios tablets, see Vasilogambrou, Bennet, Karagianni et al. 2024: 72 (Fragment AV X 111).

286 ἔστι δὲ ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ Διὸς Μεσσαπέως τέμενος γενέσθαι δέ οἱ τὴν ἐπικλήσιν ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς λέγουσιν ἱερασαμένου τῷ θεῷ (Paus. 3.20.3). Various explanations for the

in situ archaeological remains of the sanctuary were discovered, but a Doric capital, dated stylistically to the middle of the sixth century and found in a secondary context in Anthochori, has dimensions similar to those from the Amyklaion. This capital probably came from a monumental cult structure of some kind.²⁸⁷

This collection of evidence indicates that Messapeai was a significant settlement, quite possibly on the same scale as Amyklai, by the sixth century at the latest. Christou noted the presence of material from all periods in the entirety of the 500-m radius circle around the church of the Metamorphosis and, among that material, many finds of Archaic date. One could, therefore, tentatively calculate that the settlement of Messapeai occupied an area of at least 78 ha by the end of the Archaic period. For the sake of comparison, the Hellenistic fortification wall of Sparta enclosed an area of c. 270 ha. The fact that Theopompos had occasion to mention Messapeai in his account of Philip's invasion of Lakonia is another indication that it was a site of considerable importance.

The excavations carried out in association with the construction of the Skoura-Pyri road produced a considerable body of evidence that the area around the modern village of Skoura was the site of an important settlement at various periods of time. The ancient road leading from Sparta to Geronthrai crossed the Eurotas via a ford located at or just north of modern Skoura.²⁸⁸ Rescue excavations undertaken at the western edge of the village (and hence near the Eurotas river) uncovered what the excavators took to be the remains of an extensive Early Helladic

epiklēsis Messapeus have been offered. Pausanias derives the *epiklēsis* from the name of a priest, whereas Theopompos seems to have believed that it derived from the name of the settlement. It is also possible that the *epiklēsis* comes from the Messapians of southern Italy (based on the idea that the cult was imported from there; R.W.V. Catling & Shipley 1989: 196-97). Etymologically, Messapeai may be a formation based on the Indo-European roots from “middle” and “water” and hence may mean something like “land between two rivers” (Vayiakkos 1987: 376-78).

287 Kokkorou-Aletras 2016; Kokkorou-Aletras 2021: 129-33. Another sixth-century Doric capital was found in a secondary context c. 2 km east of Anthochori. That capital has slightly different dimensions from the one found in Anthochori and hence probably comes from a different structure.

288 See Hope Simpson 2009: Figure 1 and the route map in Pikoulas 2012.

settlement.²⁸⁹ Excavations in Skoura and the area immediately to the south (Perdikovrysi) revealed the remains of what seems to have been a substantial Roman settlement that included a bathhouse, kilns, and a cemetery.²⁹⁰ Occupation in the intervening period is suggested by the discovery of two tombs from the Classical period.²⁹¹ Given that Skoura is situated in the area where the plain on the eastern side of the Eurotas broadens considerably, it would not be surprising if a significant settlement was located there for much of antiquity. The existence of what appears to be a major Mycenaean settlement at Vouno Panagias and contemporary secondary settlements at Agios Georgios and Melathria (all located approximately 2 km to the east and northeast of Skoura) highlights the long-term attraction of this area.²⁹²

The remaining evidence for post-Bronze Age settlements in the Spartan plain is more exiguous. Hope Simpson and Waterhouse, in their discussion of Agios Vasileios, noted the existence of some “classical and Hellenistic pottery” on the surface around the eponymous church. They also came across, about 1 km to the west, another substantial cluster of “classical” sherds and fragments of column drums and statues (around the chapel of Agios Nikolaos).²⁹³ The church of Agios Vasileios contained two noteworthy spolia: a sixth-century Doric capital and part of an inscribed *stēlē*. In the early decades of the 20th century, Petros Stergiannopoulos found the capital inverted and used as a column base inside the church.²⁹⁴ The length of the sides of the abacus (75 cm) suggests it came from a relatively large structure. The text on the *stēlē*, the so-called Spartan war fund inscription (*IG* V.1.1), records contributions made by Lakedaimonian allies to pay for military expenses.²⁹⁵ Another, smaller fragment from the same *stēlē* was found c. 5 km to the southwest of Agios Vasileios (at

289 Tsouli & Vlachakos 2016c; Tsouli & Vlachakos 2017.

290 Zavvou & Themis 2002a; Tsouli & Tsiangouris 2010; Tsouli & Vlachakos 2016a; Tsouli & Vlachakos 2016d; Tsouli 2017.

291 Tsouli & Vlachakos 2016b.

292 Banou 1996: 36–37, 78–80, 100–2; Banou 2009; Banou 2020b. For the locations of Vouno Panagias, Agios Georgios, and Melathria, see Figure 18 in Section 8.

293 Hope Simpson & Waterhouse 1960: 80–82. See also Shipley 1996a: 293, GG014.

294 Stergiannopoulos 1936. See also Wesenberg 1971: 53 #101.

295 On the inscription, see Osborne & Rhodes 2017 and the bibliography listed therein.

Moni Zerbitsis). Angelos Matthaïou and Yannis Pikoulas, in a detailed discussion of where the *stēlē* originally stood, identified two likely possibilities: Agios Vasileios and the Amyklaion.²⁹⁶ Matthaïou and Pikoulas opted for the latter, primarily because the text of the Peace of Nicias as given by Thucydides calls for it to be inscribed on a *stēlē* erected at the Amyklaion.²⁹⁷ Insofar as a fragment of what seems to be a similar list of contributions (IG V.1.219) was found on the acropolis of Sparta,²⁹⁸ it is worth considering whether multiple copies of public inscriptions were set up at important sanctuaries in the Spartan plain. If that was the case, IG V.1.1 may well have been erected originally at Agios Vasileios, which would in turn suggest the presence of an important sanctuary and settlement.²⁹⁹

Four sites along the western edge of the Spartan plain (other than Anthochori) have yielded evidence for activity during Classical antiquity. The finds at Sinan Bey, the most northerly of those sites, include a significant number of Roman-era sculptures.³⁰⁰ Among the places that Pausanias visited in the Spartan plain was “a sanctuary of Demeter, with the *epiklēsis* Eleusinia” in which stood a wooden statue of Orpheus. Pausanias adds that a wooden statue of Persephone was (presumably as part of a festival) carried in procession “from Helos ... to the Eleusinion.”³⁰¹ His description of the surrounding area indicates that the sanctuary was located in the foothills of the Taygetos. In 1902, von Prott, while working on *Inscriptiones Graecae* V, discovered in a ruined church at Kalyvia Sochas several inscriptions that enabled him to identify the modern village as the site of the sanctuary of Demeter mentioned by Pausanias. In 1910, Richard Dawkins spent four days excavating at Kalyvia Sochas. He found

296 Matthaïou & Pikoulas 1989: 113–16. Moni Zerbitsis is situated in a relatively isolated locale in the foothills of the Taygetos and shows no traces of remains from Classical antiquity. The land around Agios Vasileios was once owned by the Moni Zerbitsis, which suggests that the fragment from Moni Zerbitsis came from Agios Vasileios.

297 Thuc. 5.18.10, cf. 5.23.5.

298 Osborne & Rhodes 2017: 301.

299 Von Prott identified Agios Vasileios with the Homeric Pharis. He argued that Pharis was a major settlement on par with Amyklai and that it dominated the southern part of the Spartan plain (von Prott 1904: 5).

300 Shipley 1996a: 290, GG87.

301 Paus. 3.20.5–7.

various votives as well as stamped tiles and an inscription that confirmed von Prott's identification. In the aftermath of a catastrophic flood in 1947, John Cook conducted a brief rescue excavation that uncovered architectural members and further votives.³⁰² The finds from the site, including part of a Doric column drum and roof tiles, establish the presence of an as-yet-unlocated and undated cult structure. The earliest votives, in the form of pottery, terracotta figurines, and bronze vases, date to the seventh and sixth centuries. The complete assemblage suggests that the cult was particularly popular in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Further south, at the village of Anogeia, a considerable collection of chance finds has turned up over the years. Those finds include Archaic ceramics, bronzes (including Geometric and Archaic pins and a bronze spearhead), at least 40 lead figurines, and an Archaic Aeginetan *statēr*.³⁰³ Although Felix Bölte's suggestion that Anogeia was the site of a *Peri-oikengemeinde* is improbable, his sense that there was a significant settlement here may well be correct.³⁰⁴

The most noteworthy remains at Xerokambi, the southernmost site, consist of a stone, arched bridge that should probably be dated to the Hellenistic period. The bridge seems to have been built to facilitate the movement of traffic on a road that ran along the western edge of the Spartan plain.³⁰⁵

The Homeric Catalog of Ships lists eight settlements, other than Sparta, in the area ruled by Menelaos: Pharis, Messe, Bryseiai, Augeiai, Amyklai, Helos, Laas, and Oitylos. Pausanias claims to have visited the

302 von Prott 1904; Dawkins 1910; Cook & Nicholls 1950. The finds from the 1910 excavations were re-studied by Stibbe in the 1990s; his report is more detailed than that provided by Dawkins (Stibbe 1993). For a brief summary, see Shipley 1996a: 291, GG 95. For a report on a recent find of an undated kiln, see Zavvou & Themis 2002b.

303 von Prott 1904: 13-14; Ormerod 1910: 65-66; Hope Simpson & Waterhouse 1960: 82 #5; Shipley 1996a: 291, GG118 and 294, HH267; Zavvou 1997a; Zavvou 1997c. The finds come from both Anogeia and a hilltop, called Sto Molyvi, above the town. Ormerod also notes that, according to local reports, the site featured an enclosure wall built from ashlar blocks with lead clamps, before the blocks were taken to Sparta as building material.

304 Bölte 1929a: 1331.

305 Höper 1982; Armstrong, Cavanagh & Shipley 1992: 297; Bougia 1996: 233-37; Shipley 1996a: 293, GG107.

sites of Pharis and Bryseiai (both of which seem to have been abandoned in his time) in his account of places in the Spartan plain; neither site has been definitively located.³⁰⁶ The various uncertainties surrounding the Catalog of Ships,³⁰⁷ and the desire in later periods of Classical antiquity to link places mentioned in the Catalog to extant sites, make it difficult to determine if and when Pharis and Bryseiai were secondary settlements in the Spartan plain. Augeiai, Laas, Oitylos, and Helos have been associated with some degree of confidence with specific sites in southern Lakonia, outside the bounds of the Spartan plain. The location of Messe remains an open question.³⁰⁸

Authors from the Hellenistic and Roman periods mention a variety of other, as yet unlocated, places that may have been situated in the Spartan plain. However, without supporting archaeological evidence it is impossible to establish precisely where they were or reach any conclusions about their size and importance.³⁰⁹ For example, Pausanias mentions cult sites in the Spartan plain dedicated to Lakedaimon (at Alesiai) and Artemis Dereatis (near Dereion and Lapithaion).³¹⁰ As noted above (Section 6.3), Alesiai has been tentatively identified with the modern village of Tseramio. Dereion and Lapithaion have been tentatively localized in the vicinity of Anogeia.

The evidence reviewed above demonstrates that Amyklai was, from the Archaic through the Roman periods, a major settlement, and it strongly suggests that other important settlements, in that same time frame, could be found at Anthochori and Skoura. The finds from Agios Vasileios, Sinan Bey, Kalyvia Sochas, Anogeia, and Xerokambi are, at present, less impressive but still potentially significant. The most straightforward reading of this evidence is, in my opinion, that a series of settlements occupied the Spartan plain, from Sparta in the north to Anthochori in the south.

306 Hom. *Il.* 2.581-90 (see Section 3.1 for the text); Paus. 3.20.3-4.

307 See, for example, Jasnow 2020.

308 On all of these sites, see Hope Simpson & Lazenby 1970: 74-81; Hope Simpson 2018: Section 4. On Bryseiai, see also Stibbe 1993: 83-88. On Helos, see also Themis 2007; Hope Simpson & Janko 2011. On Messe, see also Gardner 2018: 141-42, 445-48.

309 See Shipley 2004 for the relevant evidence.

310 Paus. 3.19.9-20.7.

8: Settlement Patterns in the Spartan Plain: Comparative Data

The decidedly incomplete evidence for settlement patterns in the Spartan plain from the Archaic to the Roman periods can be supplemented to some degree by data on settlement patterns in other periods. This information is worth considering because some important factors that have influenced settlement patterns in the Spartan plain – the extent and location of arable land, the relative absence of barriers to movement, climate, agriculture as the fundamental basis of the economy, the basic mix of crops, and the available transportation technology – underwent minimal change between the beginning of the Bronze Age in the Aegean (c. 3000 BCE) and the early years of the 20th century. It is essential to acknowledge from the outset that the sociopolitical situation in the Spartan plain, which had a potentially major impact on settlement patterns, has changed massively over the course of time, and at least some degree of diachronic fluctuation in settlement patterns is to be expected. That said, given the long-term continuity in the factors outlined above, information about settlement patterns in other periods can be useful in establishing whether the settlement pattern posited here for the Spartan plain between the Archaic and Hellenistic periods, which presumes the existence of a series of substantial settlements running down the entire length of the Spartan plain, was a practical possibility. (It is worth bearing in mind that the current orthodoxy assumes that starting in the Archaic period there were just two substantial settlements in the Spartan plain, Sparta and Amyklai; see Sections 1 and 5.2.) The comparative data is of course suggestive rather than probative – demonstrating the possibility of a particular settlement pattern is not the same as demonstrating that the settlement pattern in question existed at a specific point in time.

I begin by discussing the geological history of Lakonia in order to establish that some basic parameters of life in the Spartan plain have remained largely the same throughout the Holocene (11,700 years ago to the present day). The landscape of Lakonia as it currently exists began to take shape about 100 million years ago, when a collision between the African and Eurasian tectonic plates created major mountain ranges (a process known as the Alpine orogeny), including the Taygetos and Parnon. The eastern edge of the Taygetos rises abruptly from the Spartan plain,

along a fault line, to an elevation of approximately 500 masl. A plateau (referred to here as the Taygetos plateau, see Figure 17) then rises gradually upward to approximately 1000 masl over a distance of roughly 3 km. After that, much steeper slopes climb to peaks above 2000 masl.³¹¹

In the early part of the Neogene period, namely the Miocene epoch (23-25 million years ago (mya)), tectonic forces pulling in opposite directions uplifted the Taygetos and Parnon and created between the two ranges a graben (rift valley) that eventually developed into the Eurotas river valley as we know it. For much of the Miocene epoch, that graben was covered by sea and lakes, and its floor was gradually buried under thick layers of clay, marls, gravel, sand, limestones, and conglomerates. That material is frequently referred to as “Neogene fill.”

In the Pliocene epoch (5-2.6 mya), tectonic uplift raised the graben above sea level, thereby creating something like the Eurotas valley of the present day. The central part of the graben subsided, while its eastern margin experienced further uplift. As a result, there were, broadly speaking, two distinct parts of the graben: a higher section to the east and a lower section to the west. The higher section, frequently referred to as the Neogene plateau, merges with the foothills of the Parnon at its eastern edge and drops off sharply at its western edge. The lower section of the graben can, for analytical purposes, be divided into two parts: the Spartan plain and the Helos plain. (The latter has a distinct history because its lower elevation made it more susceptible to marine submersion and flooding.)

311 The Taygetos consists of three major, superimposed layers of rock: phyllite-quartzite (on the bottom) and two separate sheets of hard limestone (the Tripolitsa and Olonos-Pindos units). Much of the Taygetos is composed of Tripolitsa limestone (the lower sections of which have metamorphosed into marble in some areas) with a cap of Olonos-Pindos limestone. The phyllite-quartzite, due to post-orogenic warping and erosion, is exposed in the Taygetos plateau. On the geological history of Lakonia, see Loy 1970: 44-61; Bintliff 1977: vol. 1: 5-34 and vol. 2, 372-76; Piper, Pe-Piper, Kontopoulos et al. 1982; Pe-Piper & Piper 1985; Higgins & Higgins 1996: 22-23, 51-52; Wilkinson 1998; Morton 2001: 13-14; van Berghem & Fiselier 2002: 60-61; Pope, Wilkinson & Millington 2003; Papanastassiou, Gaki-Papanastassiou & Maroukian 2005; Pope & Wilkinson 2005; Fouache, Cosandey, Cez et al. 2025.

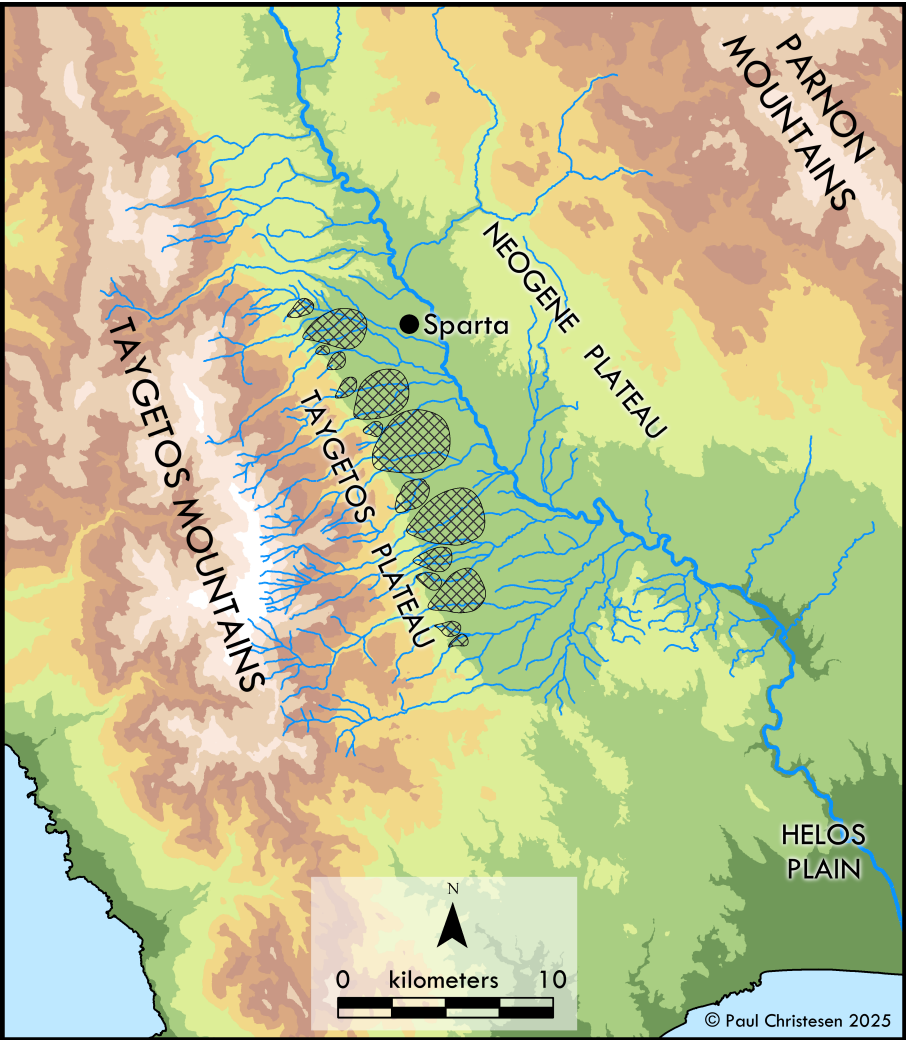


Figure 17: Map showing key geological features of Lakonia. The position and size of the alluvial fans (indicated in cross-hatching) are based on Figure 2 in Pope, Wilkinson & Millington 2003. The tributaries on the west side of the Eurotas are shown in more detail than those on the east side (in order to highlight the relationship between those tributaries and the alluvial fans).

Water flowing through the graben ran northwest to southeast through its lowest point, roughly along the seam between its upper and lower sections, and formed the Eurotas river. Post-orogenic crustal extension during the Pliocene created fractures running east-west through the Taygetos. The streams draining from the Taygetos flowed through those fractures and into the Spartan plain and created alluvial fans before continuing eastward to the Eurotas. During the Pliocene and Pleistocene (2.6 mya – 11,700 years ago), water- and wind-driven erosion heavily dissected the Neogene plateau, thereby greatly reducing its value as agricultural land. In the Spartan plain, some of the Neogene fill was eroded away; that process created a line of low hills – starting with the acropolis of Sparta and terminating at Agios Vasileios – in the central part of the Eurotas valley, on the west side of the river. The summits of those hills, which have elevations of approximately 220-240 masl, are about 30 meters higher than the surrounding terrain. However, the Spartan plain did not experience the dissection that reshaped the Neogene plateau. The plain remained a level area with minimal obstructions to movement (other than the easily crossed beds of the streams running eastward from the Taygetos to the Eurotas). In addition, it was blessed with fertile soil (primarily Neogene marls and alluvial fill).³¹²

- 312 Bintliff, drawing on the scholarship of Claudio Vita-Finzi, distinguished two distinct types of fill in Lakonia: “Older Fill” (predominantly red in color and hence sometimes called “red beds,” typically found in the form of massive alluvial fans) and “Younger Fill” (buff or grey, consisting of fine sand with an admixture of gravel and sometimes tile, brick, and pottery) (Bintliff 1977: vol. 1, 35-58; Wagstaff 1981: 247-48). Bintliff argued that these fills were formed in distinct episodes that were widely separated in time (with the Older Fill being at least 20,000 years old and the Younger Fill having been formed after c. 400 CE) and that climatic changes drove their formation. More recent scholarship has taken the view that it is impossible to distinguish reliably just two categories of fill, that fill was deposited at widely variant dates, and that both anthropogenic and climatic factors need to be taken into account (see, for example, Lewin, Macklin & Woodward 1991; Fuchs, Lang & Wagner 2004; Tourloukis & Karkanis 2012). Bintliff has modified his views since 1977 (see, for example, Bintliff 1992; Bintliff 2000; Bintliff 2002). Bintliff also rejected prior statements that much of the soil in the Spartan plain is alluvial. He argued that alluvial fill is limited to a narrow band along the course of the Eurotas and that most of the soil in the Spartan plain is Neogene fill (Bintliff 1977: vol. 2,

Other than some extension of the alluvial fans in the western side of the plain and continuing alluviation along the Eurotas, the fundamental geological and topographic parameters of the Spartan plain that were in place by the end of the Pleistocene remained mostly unchanged throughout the Holocene.³¹³ While the Eurotas was until recently subject to seasonal flooding that periodically shifted its banks, the general course of the river has remained the same.³¹⁴ As a result, the extent and location of arable land in the Spartan plain and the capacity to move freely through the plain did not change significantly. Prior to the 20th century, the challenges of exploiting the lands around the fringe of the plain, the Neogene and Taygetos plateaus, also did not evolve markedly.

There has, in addition, been a substantial degree of continuity in terms of climate, which has experienced fluctuations over the course of the Holocene but remained broadly similar.³¹⁵ This continuity is reflected in similarities between the vegetative landscape of Lakonia in ancient and modern times. Oliver Rackham, in an exploration of the historical ecology of Lakonia, concluded that, “the landscape and vegetation of the middle Peloponnese were not very different in Classical times from what they were just before the recent agricultural decline.”³¹⁶ The fertility of the Spartan plain and its geographic isolation from the sea have helped

375-76, 383, 386, 391, 402). The details of the formation and location of the fills in the Spartan plain are not, in the present context, a major concern.

313 There remains some degree of uncertainty about the timing and extent of the growth of the alluvial fans in the western part of the Spartan plain during the Holocene. See Pope & Millington 2000; Pope & Millington 2002; Pope, Wilkinson & Millington 2003; Cavanagh, Mee & Renard 2004: 74-5; Pope & Wilkinson 2005; Fouache, Cosandey, Cez et al. 2025: S6. The most thorough treatment of the issue (Pope & Wilkinson 2005) concludes that the alluvial fans in the Spartan plain were formed primarily during the Middle Pleistocene.

314 This is most immediately evident from the fact that the known ancient bridges remain on or very close to the banks of the Eurotas. See Armstrong, Cavanagh & Shipley 1992; Hitchcock, Chapin & Reynolds 2020: Figure 4. On the bridge at Sparta, see now Christesen & Kramer 2024: 208.

315 For a comprehensive review of the evidence, see Weiberg, Unkel, Kouli et al. 2016; see also Rackham 2002: 114, 116-17 and, for more up-to-date discussion and bibliography, Timonen 2024: 74-79.

316 Rackham 2002: 101. In the quote supplied above, Rackham is referring to the decrease in agricultural activity in Lakonia that began c. 1950.

maintain agriculture as the fundamental form of economic activity. Moreover, the *syssitia* contributions required from Spartiates (grain, wine, figs, plus voluntary donations of olive oil) speak to a crop regimen that corresponds closely to that apparent in the archaeobotanical record from Lakonia and surrounding regions in the Bronze Age and from agricultural censuses carried out in the 19th and early 20th centuries (though citrus trees did not arrive until the Ottoman period).³¹⁷ The detailed agricultural census published in 1911 shows that in the eparchy of Lakedaimon (consisting of the Spartan plain and the immediately surrounding territory), the area under cultivation was devoted primarily to grain (59% of the total), olive trees (21%), grapes (9%), legumes and vegetables (6%), and fodder crops (2%).³¹⁸

Insofar as the inhabitants of the Spartan plain in the period between the start of the Bronze Age and the early 20th century CE undertook broadly similar economic activities in a broadly similar landscape, a settlement pattern that was possible at one time was possible – but by no means inevitable – at another time. In the discussion that follows, the settlement pattern in the Spartan plain in two periods, the Late Bronze Age and the 19th century CE, is examined. The surveys and systematic excavations focused on Bronze-Age sites in Lakonia (see Section 7) provide an unusually rich body of evidence for settlement patterns in that period. Modern censuses offer a level of detail that cannot be derived from archaeological data.

Hope Simpson and Waterhouse, based on their survey of Lakonia, identified the major Late Bronze-Age sites in the Spartan plain as the Menelaion, the Amyklaion, Palaiopyrgi, and Agios Vasileios. The latter three were all located on one of the low hilltops to the west of the Euro-

317 On Spartiate mess contributions, see Figueira 1984. On the archaeobotanical evidence for Bronze-Age Lakonia, see Cappers & Mulder 2004; Vaiglova, Boggard, Collins et al. 2014; and Diffey & Bogaard 2025. The best study of the relevant evidence for an adjoining region is now Timonen's work on the Argolid (Timonen 2024). For the 19th century, see Petmezas 2003 and the detailed statistical tables contained therein.

318 'Υπουργείου Ἐθνικῆς Οἰκονομίας 1911. The relevant figures can be found in Volume 5, part A.

tas. Hope Simpson and Waterhouse argued that the Bronze-Age inhabitants of the Spartan plain were attracted to hills that were defensible and had ready access to good farmland.

In a study of settlement patterns in Bronze-Age Lakonia published in the 1970s, John Bintliff agreed with Hope Simpson and Waterhouse about the preference for hilltop sites with farmland in the immediate vicinity.³¹⁹ He also observed that the major sites were spaced approximately one hour's walk from each other, with secondary settlements situated about 30 minutes from the major settlements. Bintliff made the case that the soil in the alluvial fans in the western part of the plain was difficult to farm, as a result of which there was "scant interest in much of this piedmont till recent times."³²⁰ Anthochori, which was excavated after the publication of Hope Simpson and Waterhouse's work, presented a challenge because it was located at the western edge of the plain.³²¹ Bintliff, who characterizes Anthochori as a significant secondary settlement in the Late Bronze Age, explains its location in the western part of the plain as a reflection of an interest in accessing the resources available on the Taygetos plateau.³²²

In 1996, Emily Banou published a study of Mycenaean Lakonia in which she argued that there was a four-level hierarchy of sites. She ranked the sites in the Spartan plain as follows (see Figure 18 for the locations):

- large urban centers: Agios Vasileios, Menelaion, Palaiopyrgi, Vouno Panagias
- small urban centers: acropolis of Sparta, Agios Georgios, Anthochori, Kouphovouno
- villages: Aphysou, Melathria

319 Bintliff 1977: 371-450. See, in particular, 393, 407-8.

320 Bintliff 1977: 402.

321 Anthochori is situated at the eastern edge of an alluvial fan and the western edge of a considerable expanse of fertile, flat land. On the finds from Anthochori, see Section 7.

322 Bintliff 1977: 402. This position is somewhat inconsistent with the ostensible disinterest in the western part of the Spartan plain.



Figure 18: Mycenaean sites in the Spartan plain, with indication of placement in Banou's site hierarchy.

- rural installations: (none listed in the Spartan plain).³²³

The recently discovered site of Vrysika can (based on the size of the settlement as indicated in the excavation reports) be added to the list of small urban centers.³²⁴ Banou, echoing Bintliff, noted that the large urban centers were spaced about 5 km apart and that small urban centers were situated roughly halfway between them.³²⁵

A wealth of modern census data pertaining to Lakonia is available. The Ottoman government starting in the 15th century intermittently collected detailed demographic and economic information;³²⁶ the extant records from the period of Venetian rule over the Peloponnese (1684 to 1715) include information from three separate censuses (1689, 1700-1701, c. 1710);³²⁷ and the Greek government carried out 20 censuses during the 19th century (and a further four censuses between 1907 and

323 Banou 1996: 100-1. The chronological data contained in the most recent publications on Kouphovouno may suggest that it was not an important site in the Late Bronze Age. See Cavanagh, Mee & Renard 2025.

324 Tsouli & Kotsi 2017; Tsouli, Kotsi & Vlachakos 2022.

325 Banou 2020b: 27. Banou pointed out that the co-existence of multiple large sites within close proximity to each other in the Spartan plain still requires satisfactory explanation (Banou 2020a). The waxing and waning of the size of the sites over the course of the Late Bronze Age must be taken into account, but further work is required to establish the precise chronology of activity at some sites. Hitchcock, Chapin, and Reynolds argue that Lakonia in the Late Bronze Age was characterized by “regional cooperation and integration rather than conflict” (Hitchcock, Chapin & Reynolds 2020: 335).

326 The most significant sources of demographic information in the Ottoman records are the *tahrir defterleri*, which record the number of individuals liable to taxation and the scope of taxable resources. A *tahrir defter* was prepared for each newly-conquered region and then, in theory at least, updated every 20-30 years. More than 1,500 *tahrir defterleri* are extant, though the records pertaining to Lakonia remain largely unpublished. For a thorough, recent publication of a *tahrir defter* compiled for the Peloponnese between 1460 and 1463, see Liakopoulos 2019. (Note that most of the pages recording information from Lakonia are missing from that *tahrir defter*.) On the *tahrir defterleri* and their use as historical sources, see Coşgel 2004 and Gümüşçü 2008.

327 There is reason to believe that the census from 1689 missed a significant fraction of the population of the Peloponnese, and the records from the c. 1710 census are

1928). In my opinion, the most immediately relevant information comes from the last quarter of the 19th century. Census data from before the second quarter of the 19th century is less than ideal for present purposes, because Sparta was abandoned after the foundation of Mystras in the 13th century CE and not re-founded until the 1830s.³²⁸ The early census data thus pertains to a situation in which the dominant site in the northern part of the Spartan plain was Mystras, not Sparta. Starting in the early 20th century, the introduction of the internal combustion engine and the gradual integration of Greece into the Western European capitalist economic system impacted residential patterns and farming activity. The last quarter of the 19th century represents something of a “sweet spot.” By that point in time, a major land redistribution program had been implemented. That program helped put into the hands of small farmers more than 1 million hectares of land that the Greek government had controlled since gaining independence from the Ottoman empire. This helped create a situation that, in very rough terms, bore some resemblance to the landholding patterns in the Archaic through Roman periods, in that arable land was privately held by a significant number of households.³²⁹ Moreover, by the last quarter of the 19th century, Sparta had once again emerged as the dominant community in the Spartan plain. Insofar as the modern census data is of interest primarily as representing a possible settlement pattern, the results of a single census are sufficient for present purposes.

The 19th-century census data presents some challenges because the relevant publications produced by the Greek government do not include maps showing the locations of the communities listed in any given census. I addressed that problem by linking information from the 1879 census to sites shown on the highly detailed map of Greece (in 11 sheets)

incomplete. The census started in 1700, the so-called Grimani census, is the most complete and valuable of the three. See Panagiotopoulos 1985: 135-51 (the data from the Grimani census is tabulated on pp. 231-89).

328 Runciman 2009: 9-14; Matalas 2017.

329 On the ownership of agricultural land in 19th-century Greece, see Petmezas 2003: 23-92 and Lemontzoglou 2020. On land ownership in ancient Lakadaimon, see Hodkinson 2000.

prepared by Iphicrates Kokkidis and Heinrich Kieppert for the Kaiserlich-Königliches Militär-Geographisches Institut in Vienna and published in 1885.³³⁰ I also drew on some additional cartographic resources, such as the maps created by members of the French Morea Expedition and published in 1835.³³¹ In the administrative subdivisions employed in the 1879 census, the entirety of the Spartan plain lay within the eparchy of Lakedaimon (which was subdivided into 13 demes and 162 communities). I was able to map with a high degree of confidence 139 of the 162 communities listed in the eparchy of Lakedaimon in the records from the 1879 census. Those communities contained more than 98% of the total population of the eparchy.³³² The resulting map thus offers a good picture of the distribution of population in the Spartan plain in the second half of the 19th century.

As was virtually certainly the case in antiquity, Sparta was, by a considerable margin, the largest town in the Spartan plain in 1879, with just over 3,500 inhabitants (see Figure 19). The next largest settlement in the vicinity was Anavryti, which was located on the Taygetos plateau. There were four villages with more than 500 inhabitants in the vicinity of Sparta (Hagiannis, Magoula, Mistra, Parori). Four additional settlements of that size were located in the southern part of the plain (at Anogeia, Palaiopanagia, Skoura, Xerokambi). The towns of Sklavo Khorio and Mahmoud Bey, which together occupied the site of ancient Amyklai, had a combined population of 582.

The existence in the 19th century of multiple substantial settlements along the western edge of the plain calls for some discussion. Bintliff (who had a good, qualitative grasp of the location and size of settlements in the Spartan plain in the 19th century) argued that the settlements in the western part of the plain became prominent in the Ottoman period,

330 'Υπουργεῖο Ἑσωτερικῶν 1881; Kokkidis & Kieppert 1885.

331 Bory de Saint Vincent 1835. See now the invaluable digital cartographic resources for 19th-century Greece being made available through the efforts of the *Ινστιτούτο Ιστορικών Ερευνών του Εθνικού Ιδρύματος Ερευνών* in Athens: <https://mo-ree1829.gr/>; <https://atlas1821.com/>.

332 The 139 mapped communities had a cumulative population of 51,638. The total population of the eparchy was 52,519. The unmapped communities were almost all quite small and thus harder to trace.

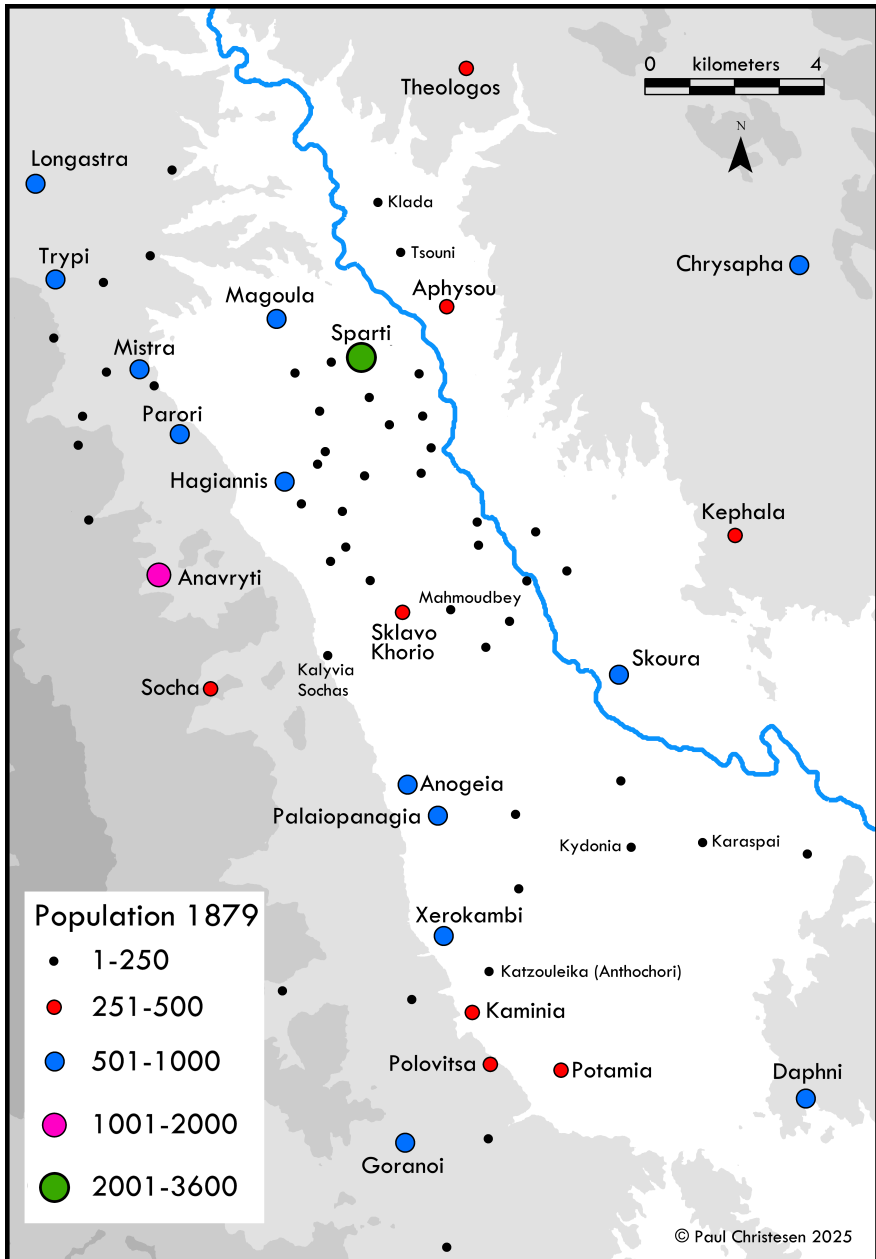


Figure 19: Distribution of population in the Spartan plain and Taygetos plateau in 1879 CE. In the interests of legibility, most settlements with populations less than 250 are not labeled.

when much of the land in the eastern part of the plain was controlled by Turks and worked by hired labor.³³³ However, as we have seen, he also interpreted the existence of an important ancient settlement at modern Anthochori as reflecting an interest in exploiting resources available on the Taygetos plateau.

The available archaeological evidence, some of which became available after the 1970s, suggests that Bintliff underestimated the extent of activity during antiquity along the western edge of the Spartan plain and on the Taygetos plateau. As we have seen (Section 7), significant remains have been found at five sites along the western edge of the plain (Sinan Bey, Kalyvia Sochas, Anogeia, Xerokambi, Anthochori). There is also noteworthy evidence from several sites on the Taygetos plateau. The discovery of two tholos tombs and other Late-Bronze Age material at Arkines – c. 6 km southwest of Anthochori and at an elevation of c. 700 masl (see Figure 16 in Section 7) – points to the existence of a settlement. Geometric- and Classical-period finds from the site suggest that activity continued after the Bronze Age. Material from the Classical and Roman periods has been found at Arna and Goranoi (c. 2 km southwest and northeast of Arkines, respectively).³³⁴ In 2010, a rescue excavation at Toriza (c. 5 km northwest of Anthochori and at an altitude of c. 900 masl) uncovered a six-room residential structure that was occupied between the fifth and first century BCE.³³⁵ Further north, near modern Anavryti, the remains of what is probably a Roman settlement were found at Kastanies (elevation c. 850 masl).³³⁶ The attractions of the Taygetos included stone resources; marble was quarried starting in the Archaic period at Goranoi and Platyvouni (c. 1.5 km northwest of Anogeia).³³⁷ In addition, cooler temperatures, perennial streams, and forests on the Taygetos plateau created opportunities for agriculture, animal husbandry, and hunting. The poems of Theognis include praise for wine produced “beneath the peak of Taygetos, from vines planted on the mountain

333 Bintliff 1977: vol. 2, 417-18.

334 Shipley 1996a: 294, HH117; 294, HH115.

335 Maltezou 2020.

336 Shipley 1996a: 294, HH342.

337 Kokkorou-Aletras, Efstathopoulos, Kopanias et al. 2006.

glens.”³³⁸ The 1911 agricultural census shows that residents of villages in the Spartan plain kept, on average, 1.84 livestock animals (cattle, sheep, and goats) per inhabitant, whereas residents of villages on the Taygetos plateau kept 4.3 livestock animals per inhabitant. This data points to opportunities for animal husbandry that could have been exploited in antiquity.³³⁹ There is, as a result, no particular reason to believe the western part of the Spartan plain and the Taygetos plateau received “scant interest” in antiquity.³⁴⁰

Two features of the evidence for settlement patterns in the Spartan plain during the Late Bronze Age and the 19th century are particularly noteworthy. First, in both periods, there is a hierarchy of settlements of different sizes that are relatively evenly distributed across the plain. This settlement pattern can be plausibly understood as the result of a desire

338 879–81, trans. D.E. Gerber. Ross, who visited the village of Goranoi in the mid-19th century CE, remarked that most of its inhabitants made their living from viticulture (Ross 1848: vol. 2, 214).

339 These figures are based on a compilation of the data in ‘Υπουργείου Ἐθνικῆς Οἰκονομίας 1911, Volume 5, part B. Ross found that many of the inhabitants of Anavryti made products (leather, shoes, rope, etc.) from animal skins and hair and sold those products to people living in the valley below (Ross 1848: vol. 2, 204).

340 The data from the 1911 agricultural census shows that land-use patterns in villages located in the alluvial fans on the western side of the Spartan plain (e.g. Anogeia and Xerokambi) differed markedly from those in the central part of the plain (e.g. Karaspai and Kydonia). See the chart below, which gives percentages of total cultivated area devoted to different crops (the data is compiled from ‘Υπουργείου Ἐθνικῆς Οἰκονομίας 1911, Volume 5, part A). The inhabitants of the settlements in the alluvial fans, who had access to less than ideal soil but plentiful water, focused on olive trees, which could flourish in stonier soils, and legumes and vegetables, which required regular watering. The inhabitants of the settlements in the central part of the plain grew almost exclusively grain (in the form of wheat). This adaptability to localized conditions was presumably also an option for farmers in antiquity.

	grain	olives & figs	grapes	legumes & vegetables
Anogeia	54%	0%	17%	25%
Xerokambi	27%	53%	12%	2%
Karaspai	95%	0%	5%	0%
Kydonia	93%	0%	7%	0%

to cultivate the plain as fully as possible, limitations on how far it was practical to travel to and from one's fields, and the absence of natural obstacles in the plain. Second, specific areas attracted significant settlement in both periods: the northern end of the plain (Menelaion/Sparta, situated on opposite sides of the Eurotas), the central part of the plain on both the west and east sides of the Eurotas (ancient/modern Amyklai/Sklavochori, Vouno Panagias/Skoura), and the southwestern corner of the plain (Anthochori/Xerokambi-Kaminia).

Those two features resonate with what we know about settlement patterns in the Archaic through Hellenistic periods. The key issues are the certain existence of sizable settlements in the northern and west-central parts of the Spartan plain (Sparta, Amyklai), the possible existence of a sizable settlement in the east-central part of the plain (Skoura), and the probable existence of a sizeable settlement in the southwestern corner of the plain (Anthochori/Messapeai). The higher resolution in the 19th-century data permits more detailed comparison, particularly with regard to the existence of a penumbra of suburbs around Sparta and a chain of settlements on the Taygetos plateau and the western edge of the plain. The size of the linked settlements at Socha and Kalyvia Sochas (a *kalyvi* being a place to which inhabitants of higher elevation settlements moved for the winter months) may suggest that the cult site uncovered at Kalyvia Sochas was part of an as-yet undiscovered ancient settlement. The same could be true of the cult site found in the vicinity of Anogeia.

9. Conclusions

We are now in a position to draw some tentative conclusions about Lakedaimonian *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived. What is here called the current orthodoxy holds that:

- the enactment of the Great Rhetra in the late seventh century resulted in the creation of five domicile-based tribes called *ōbai*;
- each *ōba* was tied to a military unit and a distinct settlement nucleus;
- four of the *ōbai* and associated settlement nuclei (Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, Pitana) were centered in Sparta and one at Amyklai;
- every Spartiate was enrolled in an *ōba* and thus necessarily resided in either Sparta or Amyklai;
- there were no significant settlements in the Spartan plain other than Sparta or Amyklai.

This combination of subdivisions of the citizen body and residence patterns is said to have persisted largely unchanged through the end of the Roman period.

The current orthodoxy is ripe for reconsideration. It consists of a fragile web of deductions that derive from the application of a questionable methodology to a limited collection of evidence. A key problem is that the word *ōba* appears in the extant textual evidence only sporadically prior to the Roman period: in the Great Rhetra, then (probably) in *IG* V.1.722 in the late sixth or early fifth century, followed by a long gap until *IG* V.1.26 and 27 from the late Hellenistic period. The only texts that say anything directly about the nature of the Lakedaimonian *ōbai* are the Roman-era *sphaireis* inscriptions and late lexicons, encyclopedias, and scholia. In the *sphaireis* inscriptions, the *ōbai* function solely as organizers of ballgames that formed part of the state educational system. Some entries in the late lexicons equate *ōbai* with *kōmai*. The military function attributed to the *ōbai* by the current orthodoxy is thus not attested in any ancient source. Furthermore, given the temporal gap between the Great Rhetra and later sources, the indisputable fact that the Lakedaimonian sociopolitical system underwent significant changes over the course of

time, and the efforts of the inhabitants of Sparta in the Roman period to draw connections with a glorious past, scholarly interpretations that rely on Roman- and Byzantine-era sources to reconstruct the nature of the *ōbai* in earlier periods need to be treated with considerable skepticism.³⁴¹ In addition, the current orthodoxy is not compatible with the available archaeological evidence for either the settlement organization of Sparta, which shows no trace of distinct settlement nuclei, or for settlement patterns in the Spartan plain, which seems to have contained at least one substantial settlement other than Sparta and Amyklai (see Sections 6-7).

In this section of the article, I propose alternative interpretations of the number, location, and extent of *ōbai* and where Spartiates lived. I argue that *ōbai* were, as per the current orthodoxy, locality-based groupings created by the Great Rhetra. However, I make the case that they were in the first instance local governmental entities, akin to Attic demes, rather than military units. In addition, I am skeptical that we can say anything for certain about their number, location, or extent. That conclusion has important ramifications for our understanding of where Spartiates lived. If we admit to a high degree of uncertainty about how many *ōbai* there were, where they were located, and how much territory they encompassed, we must simultaneously abandon the claim that all Spartiates necessarily lived in Sparta and Amyklai.

I suggest that, in the Archaic and Classical periods, Spartiates lived in a series of settlements across the entirety of the Spartan plain. The dispersal of Spartiates over a considerable stretch of territory may well have been responsible, at least in part, for their commitment to a shared lifestyle built around collective activities (educational system, commensality, and so forth) that took place in Sparta.³⁴² The requirement that all Spartiates participate regularly in those activities meant that many Spar-

341 The textual sources are discussed in Section 3, the current orthodoxy and its flaws in Section 5.2. On the methodological problems inherent in using Roman-era sources to interpret much earlier texts about Lakedaimonian *ōbai*, see the bibliography cited in n. 187.

342 The connection between where Spartiates lived and the importance of collective activities among Spartiates has been nicely articulated by Lupi. See Section 9.4.

tiates, in effect, commuted to and from their primary residence. Spartiates who did not live in Sparta but who necessarily spent a considerable amount of time in the city found it convenient to have access to spaces in which they could worship, eat, sleep, and so on. Those spaces took the form of *leschai* that were probably constructed and maintained by *ōbai*. The *leschai* were multi-functional, but the nature of the extant remains is such that they present as cult sites in the archaeological record. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, as the number of Spartiates declined and as the security situation in Lakonia deteriorated, it became possible and advantageous for most, if not all, Spartiates to reside in or very close to Sparta. That shift in residence patterns made many of the *leschai* in Sparta superfluous, and some spaces used for *leschai* in the Archaic and Classical periods were converted to residential purposes in the Roman period.

This analysis of the available evidence is supported by a new reading of a passage in which Thucydides (1.10.2) describes the “*polis* of the Lakedaimonians” as never having been synoikized and, as a result, being settled *kata kōmas* and lacking in physically impressive structures. This passage has traditionally been interpreted within the context of the current orthodoxy such that it is understood as applying solely to the city of Sparta (with Thucydides’ *kōmas* equated to four distinct settlement nuclei linked to the *ōbai*). I make the case that Thucydides is describing exactly what he says he is describing, the *polis* of Lakedaimon, not the city of Sparta. In my view, Thucydides is claiming that there was no single, dominant urban center in Lakedaimon, with the result that communities in Lakonia, including Sparta, were not embellished to nearly the same extent as Athens (which became the dominant urban center in Attica as the result of the *synoikismos* carried out by Theseus). This reading of Thucydides 1.10.2 is not compatible with the current orthodoxy, but it is consonant with the idea that Spartiates in Thucydides’ time lived in a series of settlements scattered throughout the Spartan plain.

9.1 The Nature, Number, Location, and Extent of *ōbai*

An obvious starting point for a reconsideration of the *ōbai* is the long-standing debate about whether *ōbai* were descent-based subdivisions of

phylai or locality-based units within a system that had no organic connection to *phylai*. The latter view has been ascendant since the early decades of the 20th century, but Lupi has recently attempted to revive the former view (see Section 5).

In my opinion, the evidence favors the interpretation that the *ōbai* were, from the time of the Great Rhetra onward, locality-based units that performed local governmental functions and hence were similar to Athenian demes. This view deviates from that of Wade-Gery, who saw the *ōbai* as “tribes based on domicile” that were primarily military units and hence not tasked with local governmental functions. The most important sources for the nature of the *ōbai* are, from my perspective, Herodotus’ characterization of Pitana as a *dēmos* and Plutarch’s comparison of Pitana to the Athenian deme of Kollytos.³⁴³ The references discussed in Sections 3 and 6.4 show that Pitana was a particularly prominent locale, and it is explicitly characterized as an *ōba* in the Roman-era epigraphic sources.³⁴⁴ The word *ōba* appears only in textual sources bearing on Lakedaïmon, which indicates that it was a local term that was not used elsewhere in the Greek world. Non-Lakedaïmonian authors, therefore, probably found it necessary to refer to *ōbai* using terminology that would have been more familiar to their readers. Herodotus made a concerted effort to learn about Lakedaïmon, personally visited Sparta, interacted with a resident of Pitana, and went out of his way to explain to his readers the nature of Pitana. (Herodotus states that he met the Spartiate Archias in Pitana and adds as an aside, δῆμον γὰρ τούτου ἦν). Plutarch, who was exceptionally well informed about Lakedaïmon, also equates Pitana with a deme. Attempts to take the same approach with different authors – for example, Lupi and others have argued that the phratries in Demetrios of Skepsis’ description of the Lakedaïmonian Karneia festival were *ōbai* –

343 Hdt. 3.55.2; Plut. *On Exile* 6 = *Mor.* 601b. See Sections 3.2 and 3.4.2 for the relevant passages. For the *ōbai* as “tribes based on domicile,” see Wade-Gery 1958: 78.

344 See, for example, IG V.1.675.

are less persuasive because of the lack of explicit connection to an entity that we know to have been an *ōba* at one point.³⁴⁵

I would also note that *IG V.1.26*, from the late second or early first century (see Section 3.3), demonstrates that the *ōba* of the Amyklaians at that point in time had its own government, complete with officials (ephors and *dogmatographoi*) and a public treasury. The existence of an obal government is much more compatible with *ōbai* as demes than as descent-based groups or military units. Hesychius' definition of a word, probably γεροάκται, as "*dēmarchoi* among Lakonians" provides further evidence for *ōbai* being equipped with administrative machinery and their equivalence to demes.³⁴⁶

The administrative function(s) associated with *phylai* and the nature of the relationship between *phylai* and *ōbai* remain unclear. The wording of the Great Rhetra shows that *phylai* and *ōbai* were different entities in the Archaic period. It is not unreasonable to equate the *phylai* of the Great Rhetra with the Dorian tribes (Dymanes, Hylleis, Pamphyloi) mentioned by Tyrtaios (fr. 19 West) in a military context. The Tyrtaios fragment indicates that in the Archaic period the Lakedaimonian *phylai* were, at minimum, army units. In the Roman-era inscriptions, *phylai* and *ōbai* appear only in relation to athletic activities forming part of the *agōgē*. Kynosoura and Limnai appear in those inscriptions as the names of both a *phylē* and *ōba*, which strongly suggests that the two were easily conflated at that point in time. The Archaic and Roman-era *phylai* in Lakedaimon thus probably differed in meaningful ways. Kennell has argued that by the Roman period, *phylai* and *ōbai* were little more than groupings within the

345 Lupi 2006; Lupi 2018. Although phratries appear with some regularity in the modern scholarship on Lakedaimon (see Sections 5.1-2), the only evidence for their existence is Demetrios of Skepsis' description (in his commentary on the *Iliad*) of the Karneia festival (see Section 3.3); the corrupted entry for ἐπιπαίξειν in Hesychius' lexicon (see Section 3.5); and the claim, in a scholion to Pindar *Isthm.* 7.14-15 (7.18b Drachmann, = fr. 532 in Rose's collection of Aristotelian fragments), that the Aigēdai were originally a Theban phratry (see Section 2.3). It is possible that there were, at some points in time, phratries in Lakedaimon, most likely as subdivisions of *phylai*, that were entirely separate entities from the *ōbai*.

346 See also Section 3.5 for the proposal that the entry for *ōnarchos* in Hesychius' lexicon (ὠνάρχος δῆμψος) attests to the existence of officials called ὠφάρχοι who were the equivalent of Attic demarchs.

agōgē. According to Kennell, boys spent five years in the Roman-era *agōgē* and were divided into five *phylai* (Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, Neopolis, Pitana). Each *phylē* was subdivided into five age-class-based groupings called *bouai*; as a result, there were 25 *bouai*. The oldest *boua* in each *phylē* consisted of *eirenes*, and each *boua* of *eirenes* competed in a ballgame tournament that served as a graduation ceremony. A *boua* competing in the tournament was called an *ōba* and bore the same name as the *phylē* of which it was part.³⁴⁷ This is a plausible though necessarily somewhat speculative interpretation of the relevant evidence. I would suggest instead that the *ōbai* continued to function as local administrative units, at least in the context of the *agōgē*, during the Roman period, whereas the *phylai* were effectively defunct and could, therefore, be conflated with the *ōbai*.

More can perhaps be said about the administrative capacities of *ōbai* prior to the Roman period. Kennell discusses IG V.1.26 at some length because he, like Wade-Gery, believes the institutional structure and freedom of action attested in that inscription are incompatible with Amyklai being one of the constituent communities of a synoikized Sparta that, administratively speaking, encompassed Amyklai. Wade-Gery argued that Amyklai was one of the original constituent communities of a synoikized Sparta, but had been given a considerable degree of independence during the reorganization of Lakadaimon following the events of 146 (hence the absence of any mention of Amyklai in the Roman-era *sphaireis* inscriptions). Kennell, on the other hand, makes the case that Amyklai was not one of the original constituent communities of Sparta. Rather, it was an *ōba* only in the generic sense of being a village, until the first century, when it was formally incorporated into Sparta.³⁴⁸ In my view, the *ōbai*, from the time of the Great Rhetra onward, were, in effect, demes, and hence it would not be in the least surprising if each *ōba* had its own administrative structure (as per IG V.1.26). IG V.1.722, which seems to be a decree passed by the *ōba* of the Arkaloi in the late sixth or early fifth century, offers further evidence for administrative machinery at the obal level. The same can be said for the aforementioned entry in Hesychius' lexicon pertaining to demarchs in Lakonia. Insofar as the *ōbai*

347 Kennell 1995: 28–69. See also Chrimes 1949: 163–69.

348 Wade-Gery 1958: 75–76; Kennell 1995: 162–69.

appear in Roman-era inscriptions solely in relation to athletic activities that took place in the context of the *agōgē*, it seems likely that their organizational role had, by the first century CE, diminished considerably.

It is conceivable that the *ōbai* as we know them from Roman-era inscriptions were recent creations referred to using “recycled” terminology originally applied to institutions that had existed in the past but had ceased to function. Lakedaimonians in the Roman period found it highly convenient to emphasize elements of unbroken continuity between their present and past customs. Among other benefits, that emphasis on continuity made Lakedaimon attractive to Romans, with their respect for *mos maiorum*, and helped Lakedaimonians secure favorable treatment from the Roman government.³⁴⁹ We cannot, therefore, exclude the possibility that Roman-period *ōbai* had no organic connection to earlier Lakedaimonian institutions bearing that name. However, *IG* V.1.26 attests to an *ōba* performing administrative functions outside the boundaries of the *agōgē* in the late second or early first century, so I am inclined to view the Roman-era *ōbai* as institutions with roots stretching back into the distant past.

I do not see any way of establishing the total number of *ōbai* in Lakedaimon at any point in time, even in the Roman period when we have relatively good sources at our disposal. There is no explicit statement in any of the extant sources about the number of Lakedaimonian *ōbai*. The Roman-era epigraphic texts contain references to four entities overtly described as *ōbai*: Kynosoura, Limnai, Neopolis, and Pitana. Contemporary literary sources have much to say about Lakedaimon, but rarely use the word *ōba* or its cognates. Strabo mentions Limnai and Mesoa, and Pausanias provides an aetiology for the whipping ritual at Artemis Orthia in which the inhabitants of Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana came to blows.³⁵⁰

Wade-Gery argued that starting in the Archaic period there were five *ōbai* (Amyklai, Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, Pitana) and that in the Hellenistic period a new *ōba* was created (Neopolis) while Amyklai became

349 On the importance of *mos maiorum* in Roman thought, see Bettini 2000. See also the bibliography cited in n. 187.

350 Strabo 8.5.1, 3; Paus. 3.16.9–10. See Section 3.4.2.

largely independent, so that the number of *ōbai* remained five.³⁵¹ Kennell, on the other hand, equated Amyklai and Neopolis.³⁵² However, Mesoa is never in any ancient source, either epigraphic or literary, explicitly identified as an *ōba* (though Pausanias puts it into a group that includes Kynosoura, Limnai, and Pitana). Wade-Gery (like other scholars before him) found it convenient to count Mesoa as an *ōba* because he saw five-fold divisions as crucial to the structure of the Lakedaemonian army and government (see Section 5.2).

An additional problem is that the Roman-period inscriptions that explicitly mention *ōbai* all pertain to activities that formed part of the *agōgē*. We need to be alert to the possibility that only the inhabitants of certain parts of Lakonia participated in the *agōgē* at that point in time. If that was the case, there could have been an unknowable number of *ōbai* that continued to function as administrative units but do not appear in the epigraphic record because they did not send their boys through the *agōgē*. The absence of any mention of *ōbai* in the textual record from Lakedaemon outside of Sparta and Amyklai is not probative, because of the limited number of literary and epigraphic sources for other places in Lakonia and because *ōbai* appear infrequently even in the much richer collection of sources for Sparta. We are, therefore, not in a position to make definitive statements about the number of *ōbai* in the Roman period.

These ambiguities are greatly amplified for earlier periods. Sporadic references in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic epigraphic and literary texts either to places (e.g. Pitana) that are characterized as *ōbai* in Roman-era epigraphic texts or to a specific *ōba* (e.g. *IG V.1.26*) do not provide any insight into the number of *ōbai*. Wade-Gery et al. retrojected the ostensible five Roman-period *ōbai* all the way back to the Archaic period, in large part because of the existence of various five-fold divisions in Lakedaemonian institutions. That approach is problematic for several reasons, not least because it assumes a high degree of continuity over long periods of time, even though there is good evidence for diachronic change. The existence of an *ōba* called Neopolis in the Roman-era inscriptions probably indicates that new *ōbai* could be created, so the number

351 On the creation of the *ōba* of Neopolis, see n. 190.

352 Kennell 1995: 162-69.

of *ōbai* may well have varied diachronically. Finally, some sources suggest (e.g. *IG* V.1.722, if Beattie's reading is correct, see Section 3.1) that there were *ōbai* other than Amyklai, Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, Neopolis, and Pitana. A great deal of skepticism is, therefore, in order about any attempt to specify the precise number of *ōbai* at any point in time.

The extent of territory encompassed by any given *ōba* also remains unclear. The current orthodoxy presumes that the *ōbai* of Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana were all tied to distinct settlement nuclei contained within the space delimited by the Hellenistic city wall (see, for example, Figure 4). The evidence supporting that presumption is quite limited. The archaeological record from Sparta reveals no traces of distinct settlement nuclei and, by the Archaic period, the city had extensive suburbs that were probably inhabited by Spartiates (see Sections 6.2-3). Pitana is, as we have seen (Section 6.4), frequently used as a synonym for Sparta and is placed by Pindar near the Eurotas, so there must have been some considerable degree of overlap between the two. Pausanias saw a Sanctuary of Artemis Issoria in the northwestern part of Sparta, and Polyaeus describes that sanctuary as being "near Pitana."³⁵³ In addition, tiles stamped with Πιτανᾶτων were excavated in the northwestern part of Sparta.³⁵⁴ Strabo states that the suburbs of Sparta were once marshy and hence called Limnai. He also, in a discussion of places in Lakonia mentioned by Homer, states that certain writers equate Homer's Messe with Messoa and characterize the latter as part of Sparta rather than a place elsewhere in Lakonia (Strabo himself argues that Messe is a shortened form of Messenia). Both Strabo and Pausanias state that the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta was called the Limnaion, which creates an implicit connection between that sanctuary and Limnai (though Strabo claims that the Artemis sanctuary in Sparta took the name Limnaion from the Sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis in the Taygetos).³⁵⁵

These sources support the suppositions that the *ōba* of Pitana encompassed space to the west of the Palaiokastros plateau (see Figure 5 in Section 6.1) and that the *ōba* of Limnai encompassed marshy areas along the Eurotas (and hence on the eastern edge of the city). However, we have

353 Paus. 3.14.2; Polyaeus 2.1.14.

354 *IG* V.1.917.

355 Pind. *Ol.* 6.28; Strabo 8.4.9, 8.5.1, 8.5.3; Paus. 3.16.7.

no way of knowing the extent of the area covered by either *ōba*. The close connection between Pitana and Sparta can be, tentatively, linked to the absence of evidence for distinct settlement nuclei in Sparta and to the existence of suburbs inhabited by Spartiates. It is possible that the *ōba* of Pitana covered much of the area delimited by the Hellenistic city wall and that other *ōbai* were situated partially or entirely outside the city.³⁵⁶ Pitana may well also have encompassed the western suburbs of Sparta (modern Magoula) and areas further west, between Sparta and the Taygetos.

Strabo explicitly places Limnai in the suburbs of Sparta, which creates difficulties for anyone wishing to locate it within the Hellenistic city wall, as does the close association between Sparta and Pitana. The *ōba* of Limnai may well have lain entirely outside the Hellenistic city wall, and it could easily have stretched a considerable distance north and south along the Eurotas and east into the small plain on the eastern side of the river. It is worth noting in this context that in the early 20th century CE, the eparchy of Lakadaimon was divided into 14 *dēmoi*, one of which was called Parapotamios and included the villages of Tsouni (= Kokkinorachi), Aphysou, Zaganou, Platana, and Skoura. Those five villages were all located on the east bank of the Eurotas and stretched from 2 km north of Sparta to 10 km south of Sparta (see Figure 19).³⁵⁷

Even less can be said with any degree of confidence about Kynosoura and Mesoa, for which the ancient sources provide no explicit topographical information. Scholars have typically, on a purely speculative basis, placed Kynosoura in the southwestern part of the city and Mesoa in the southeastern part, or vice-versa.³⁵⁸ The earliest references to Kynosoura are found in a Callimachus passage referring to a breed of hunting dogs known as Kynosourians, and an inscribed *stēlē*, found near Aphysou (see Figure 14 in Section 6.3 for the location) and dated to the Hellenistic period, recording what seems to have been an irrigation project funded by 39 individuals who describe themselves as Kynosoureis (see Section 3.3). Making all due allowances that the *stēlē* may have been a *pierre errante*,

356 For variant opinions on whether or not the acropolis/Palaiokastro plateau would have been included in Pitana, see Kourinou 2000: 92–93 with earlier bibliography.

357 See, for example, 'Υπουργείου Ἑθνικῆς Οἰκονομίας 1911: 938–43.

358 Kourinou 2000: 94–95.

the findspot could offer an indication that Kynosoura was located to the east of Sparta. The fact that the Kynosoureis were famed for their hunting dogs and funded an irrigation project indicates that their *ōba* included at least some rural areas. Given that the *ōba* of Limnai was named after a natural feature of its territory, the same may have been true of Kynosoura (“dog’s tail”).³⁵⁹ The name Kynosoura was given to multiple places in the Greek world, with the common thread seemingly being that they had the shape of a dog’s tail. Perhaps the best-known example is the promontory that helps define the northern edge of the Bay of Marathon in Attica.³⁶⁰ Barthélemy and Barbié du Bocage connected Kynosoura to an (imaginary) hill north of Sparta (see Figure 3). I would be more inclined to locate Kynosoura in the west Parnon foreland (see Section 2.2), a narrow plateau to the east of Sparta that curves in a fashion such that it resembles a dog’s tail. If that identification, purely a matter of guesswork on my part, is correct, the *ōba* of Kynosoura would have covered a considerable amount of territory.

In the same vein, if we assume that Mesoa was an *ōba* and that its territory was, in some fashion, “in the middle,” it may have been situated to the south of Sparta and hence in the middle of the Spartan plain. The area in the center of the Attic peninsula was called the Mesogeia, and Strabo refers to the interior of Lakonia using precisely that term.³⁶¹

9.2 Where Did Spartiates Live?

The adoption of an agnostic position about the number, location, and extent of *ōbai* encourages us to rethink the question of where Spartiates lived. Even if we assume that the Great Rhetra required that every Spartiate belong to a locality-based *ōba*, there could well have been *ōbai* scattered across the entirety of the Spartan plain. The current orthodoxy presumes that “Laconia had no inhabited centres except Sparta (*plus Amyklai*) on the one hand, and on the other the towns of the *perioikoi*.”³⁶²

359 On possible etymologies for the names of the Kynosoura, Limnai, Mesoa, and Pitana, see Vertseti 1990.

360 See Hesychius s.v. Κυνόσουρα.

361 [Arist.] *Ath Pol.* 21.4; Strabo 8.5.1.

362 Wade-Gery 1958: 77.

However, as we have seen, Sparta already by the Archaic period had substantial suburbs; the material and textual evidence attests to secondary settlements at various places in the Spartan plain, including Anthochori/Messapeai; and the comparative evidence suggests that there may have been more secondary settlements than we can currently trace (see Sections 6-8).

Who lived in those suburbs and secondary settlements? The Spartan plain represented the original core of Lakedaimon, and it remained under Lakedaimonian control even when the borders of the *polis* were severely reduced in 195.³⁶³ The textual and archaeological evidence for the suburbs of Sparta indicates that at least some of the inhabitants were wealthy (see Section 6.3), which points to the presence of Spartiates. What the current scholarly consensus takes to be the perioikic communities nearest to Sparta – Pellana, Sellasia, Geronthrai, Gytheion, and possibly Krokeai – were all located at or beyond the edges of the Spartan plain (see Section 2.2 with Figure 2). It would, therefore, be surprising if the inhabitants of the secondary settlements in the Spartan plain were primarily *perioikoi*. Although we know vanishingly little about the living arrangements imposed on helots, it seems highly improbable that the Spartiates would have countenanced the existence in the Spartan plain of communities that were inhabited largely by helots. Furthermore, the Sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus at Anthochori/Messapeai has been plausibly interpreted as a twin of the sanctuary dedicated to the same deity at Tsakona, c. 4 km northeast of Sparta, and the cult site at Tsakona, given its proximity to Sparta, was almost certainly patronized mainly by Spartiates.³⁶⁴ Anthochori/Messapeai was thus in all probability inhabited primarily by Spartiates, and the same can be said about the other secondary settlements in the Spartan plain. Given the clause of the Great Rhetra that calls for the division of the citizen body into *phylai* and *ōbai* and the evidence of Archaic activity at sites other than Sparta in the Spartan plain, including Amyklai, Anthochori, and Anogeia, we can be reasonably confident that this settlement pattern was already in place in the Archaic period.

363 See Section 2.2.

364 See, for example, Cartledge 1998: 44. On the cult site at Tsakona, see Section 9.4 and the bibliography cited therein.

The breadth of time span under discussion in this article – the end of the Roman period came approximately a millennium after the beginning of the Archaic period – is such that we need to give careful thought to the possibility of diachronic change in where Spartiates lived. Furthermore, particular facets of the settlement organization of Sparta may indicate that, by the Roman period, most if not all Spartiates resided either in or close to Sparta. Nathaniel Kramer and I have, in a previous publication, offered a sketch of the development of the settlement organization of Sparta between the Early Bronze Age and the late Roman period. We based our conclusions on a comprehensive database, which we built and analyzed using geospatial software, of finds from published systematic and rescue excavations.³⁶⁵ In order to carry out that work, we created a grid of 100 x 100 m tiles that cover the entirety of the modern country of Greece. The area within the Hellenistic city wall intersects (entirely or partially) 325 of those tiles.

Our data indicates that the percentage of space in Sparta devoted to cult sites was remarkably high in the Archaic period and then steadily decreased through the Roman period. More specifically, finds from the Archaic period were excavated at 86 different tiles, and the finds from 43 of those 86 tiles were diagnostic of cult activity (see Figure 10 in Section 6.2).³⁶⁶ We cannot by any means conclude that in the Archaic period half the city was occupied by religious sanctuaries, for a variety of reasons including the relatively high level of archaeological visibility of cult sites and post-depositional processes that disperse objects from their original contexts.³⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the evidence points to a strikingly high frequency of cult sites in Archaic Sparta.

The area devoted to cult space seems to have declined starting in the Hellenistic period, and some former cult space was converted to residential use. Finds from the Hellenistic period were excavated at 117 tiles, and the material from 27 of those tiles was diagnostic of cult activity. The corresponding figures for the Roman period are 141 and 17 tiles (see Figures 12 and 13 in Section 6.2). Moreover, 16 of the 58 tiles occupied by

365 Christesen & Kramer 2024.

366 Christesen & Kramer 2024: 244–57.

367 For important caveats about identifying cult space in Sparta, see Christesen & Kramer 2024: 217–21, 247–49.

houses in the Roman period had at some earlier point shown traces of cult activity. This shift in usage is much more noticeable in what seems to have been the core of the ancient city – the area directly to the south of the Palaiokastros plateau – than in less desirable, more flood-prone areas in the northeastern part of the city.³⁶⁸

These findings raise two questions: why might a considerable fraction of Archaic Sparta have been devoted to cult spaces and why would that have changed significantly by the Roman period?³⁶⁹ The answer to the first question needs to be grounded in the strong possibility that in the Archaic period many, perhaps most, Spartiates did not live in Sparta but nonetheless had to be present in the city on a daily basis to participate in collective activities such as *syssitia*. A considerable number of Spartiates had to, in effect, regularly commute to and from Sparta. The need to travel to and from the city would help explain the strong interest Spartiates showed in hippotrophy.³⁷⁰ Spartiates living in settlements such as Anthochori/Messapeai could have made the c. 14-km-long trip to Sparta much more quickly on horseback than on foot. Xenophon's claim that Spartiates were free to make use of each other's horses can perhaps be best understood as a reflection of the iterated need for many Spartiates to traverse significant distances.³⁷¹ Insofar as Sparta was situated at the northern end of the Spartan plain, the placement of the *syssitia* along the Hyakinthian Way south of Sparta may have been intended to facilitate access by Spartiates coming into the city from settlements to the south, such as Amyklai and Messapeai.³⁷²

The Spartiates who commuted to Sparta would have needed spaces in the city where they could eat, worship, socialize, rest, etc. Visitors to Panhellenic sanctuaries found themselves in a similar situation, and excavations at sanctuaries such as Nemea and Delphi have uncovered structures erected by individual *poleis* that served as multifunctional

368 Christesen & Kramer 2024: 261–77.

369 These questions are not addressed in Christesen & Kramer 2024.

370 On Spartiate hippotrophy, see Christesen 2019a: 100–4 and the sources cited therein.

371 Xen. *Lak Pol.* 6.3.

372 On the location of the *syssitia*, see Lavrencic 1993: 103–8.

spaces, presumably for the convenience of *theōroi* and perhaps all citizens of the *polis* in question, during festival periods. The most famous such structure was the *leschē* of the Knidians at Delphi.³⁷³

Leschai were also a feature of Greek communities from an early date. In the *Odyssey*, a maid-servant scolds Odysseus disguised as a beggar for lingering in Odysseus' home, saying "you will not go where the smith is at work and sleep there, or to some *leschē*," and in the *Works and Days*, Hesiod advises that an industrious farmer should avoid the smithy and *leschē* in winter time.³⁷⁴ Textual sources show that *leschai* served a variety of purposes including dining, socializing, cult activity, and sleeping.³⁷⁵

We have at our disposal some potentially valuable information about *leschai* in Sparta. Athenaeus, as part of his discussion of dining in Lakedaemon, quotes a passage from Kratinos' *Ploutoi* (written in the last third of the fifth century) referring to a feast called the *kopis*:

Is it really possible, as they say, for all strangers who visit there [Sparta] to dine well at the *kopis*? And do sausages really hang pegged up in the *leschai*, for the old men to take a bite from?³⁷⁶

Plutarch, in his life of Lycurgus, claims that boys born to Spartiate families had to be brought "to a place called *Leschē*" (εἰς τόπον τινὰ Λέσχην καλούμενον) where they were inspected by the "elders of the tribes" (τῶν φυλετῶν οἱ πρεσβύτατοι). Suitable infants were assigned one of 9,000 *klēroi*; unsuitable ones were exposed. He also states that male Spartiates were expected to spend most of their time in gymnasia and *leschai*.³⁷⁷ Pausanias comments on two *leschai* in Sparta, one called the *Leschē Poikilē* (located near hero shrines dedicated to Kadmos and his

373 Pouilloux 1960: 120-39; Miller 1990: 118-27, 160-66.

374 οὐδ' ἐθέλεις εὔδριν χαλκήϊον ἐς δόμον ἐλθών, | ἥε που ἐς λέσχην (Hom. *Od.* 18.328-29; trans. R. Lattimore); πὰρ δ' ἴθι χάλκειον ὠθκον καὶ ἐπαλέα λέσχην | ὥρη χειμερίη (Hes. *Op.* 493-94).

375 Bremmer 2008: 153-68.

376 ἄρ' ἀληθῶς τοῖς ξένοισιν ἔστιν, ὥς λέγουσ', ἐκεῖ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐλθοῦσιν ἐν τῇ κοπίδι θοινᾶσθαι καλῶς; ἐν δὲ ταῖς λέσχαισι φύσκει προσπεπατταλευμένοι κατακρέμνεται, τοῖσι πρεσβύταισιν ἀποδάκνειν ὁδᾶξ (fr. 175 Austin & Kassel *apud* Ath. 4.138e; trans. S.D. Olson, modified).

377 Plut. *Lyc.* 16.1, 25.1.

descendants)³⁷⁸ and another that he saw in the northwestern part of the city:

In this part of the city are the graves of the Agiad kings, and nearby is what is called the *leschē* of the Krotanoi, who form a part of the Pitanaatans.³⁷⁹

These references to *leschai* in Sparta have been connected with remains found in the city. A rescue excavation carried out in Stauffert Street in the 1990s uncovered a site with what appear to be three phases of activity. During the Geometric period, a pit grave was cut in virgin soil and covered with a trapezoidal stone plaque; a circular stone cairn, contemporary with the burial, was piled on top of the trapezoidal plaque. During the Archaic period, a room, with a bench on one wall, was built to the west of the Geometric grave; the finds from this room consist primarily of pottery. During the Hellenistic period, a layer of fill, nearly 1 m thick, was, in a short space of time, dumped in the area around the Geometric grave, starting at the level of the top of the stone cairn. (The fill was not found in the room with the bench.) A layer of blackened earth, similar to that of the fill but with animal bones mixed in, was found near the grave. The finds from the site include more than 2,500 fragments of terracotta plaques, more than 1,500 miniature vases, c. 800 terracotta figurines, lead votives, and a fragment of a marble relief of a type that is, in Lakonia, closely associated with hero sanctuaries.³⁸⁰

The presence of animal bones and a room with a bench, along with the fact that the pottery from the site includes a large number of drinking vessels such as *lakainai* and *kantharoi*, suggest that ritual dining took place in the sanctuary. Valeria Tosti, building on the work of Massimo Nafissi, has argued that the room with a bench was a *leschē* (in which diners habitually sat on benches rather than reclining on couches). Tosti

378 Paus. 3.15.8.

379 κατὰ τοῦτο τῆς πόλεως τάφοι τῶν Ἀγιαδῶν βασιλέων εἰσὶ καὶ πλησίον ὀνομαζομένη λέσχη Κροτανῶν· εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ Κροτανοὶ Πιτανατῶν μοῖρα (Paus. 3.14.2; trans. W.H.S. Jones & H.A. Ormerod, modified).

380 Flouris 1996; Flouris 2000: 14–18 and *passim*; Christesen & Kramer 2024: 231, 249, 251.

made the case that *leschai*, among which she places the Stauffert Street site, served as *lieux de mémoire* for family groups within the Spartiate citizen body.³⁸¹ Lupi, on the other hand, working solely from the literary sources, argued that ceremonies of admission to the citizen body overseen by phratries (= *ōbai* for Lupi) took place in *leschai*. He maintained that Plutarch, writing in the Roman period when the distinctions between *phylai* and *ōbai* were blurred, erred in associating *leschai* with *phylai*.³⁸²

I would suggest that *ōbai* attached to settlement nuclei outside of Sparta constructed *leschai* in the city to serve as what were effectively clubhouses for their members. It is possible that, as Lupi proposes, some official functions carried out by *ōbai* took place in *leschai* in Sparta. *ōbai*, each of which in my view had its own administrative machinery, may have paid for and overseen the construction and maintenance of *leschai* in Sparta (though private initiative cannot be ruled out). The *leschē* of any given *ōba* was, in all likelihood, dedicated to a hero or deity associated with that *ōba*, so the *leschē* was a cult site that the members of an *ōba* used for a variety of purposes.³⁸³ A potentially useful comparandum would be gymnasia, which were habitually centered around a heroic cult and which fulfilled a wide range of functions.³⁸⁴

The Stauffert Street site was almost certainly dedicated to a hero. The assemblage of votives from that site diverges markedly from the assemblage at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, which is located just 200 m to

381 Nafissi 1991: 318-27; Tosti 2011.

382 Lupi 2018: 171.

383 Kennell has shown that the victory monuments erected by *ōbai* in the Roman period (to commemorate success in the annual ballgame tournament) could feature a portrayal of the patron deity of the *ōba* (Kennell 1995: 162-69).

384 Burkert 1985: 208. The fact that Pausanias (3.14.2) mentions a *leschē* associated with the Krotanoi, whom he describes as part (*moira*) of the Pitonates is compatible with this characterization of the *leschai* in Sparta. It may, *prima facie*, seem unlikely that the inhabitants of Pitana, which was closely associated with Sparta, would need a clubhouse in Sparta. However, as we have seen, the extent of any given *ōba* is impossible to determine, and some *ōbai* may well have covered a considerable amount of territory. The precise nature of the Krotanoi has been much debated and remains unclear. Ehrenberg, for example, argued that they were a family group, not an *ōba* (Ehrenberg 1937: 1696).

the southeast of Stauffert Street. The most obvious differences are the predominance of terracotta plaques at Stauffert Street, compared to their near total absence at Orthia, and the paucity at Stauffert Street of more ostentatious dedications such as ivories and bronzes. The finds from other Lakonian sites, including the Sanctuary of Agamemnon and Cassandra at Amyklai, strongly suggest that the assemblage of votives at Orthia was typical at cult sites for Olympian deities, whereas the assemblage of votives from Stauffert Street was typical at cult sites for heroes.³⁸⁵ It is possible that the *leschai* associated with *ōbai* were all dedicated to heroes. The particular votive assemblage found at Lakonian hero sanctuaries offers a distinctive signature that can be identified at a minimum of 19 of the 43 tiles dedicated to cult activity in Archaic Sparta.³⁸⁶

The spatial patterning of where Spartiates lived and the lifestyle expected of Spartiates may well thus help explain the prevalence of cult sites in Archaic Sparta. Just as *poleis* erected clubhouses at Panhellenic sanctuaries to accommodate the needs of their citizens away from home, *ōbai* located outside Sparta could have established clubhouses to cater to the needs of their members who commuted regularly to the city. In line with standard Greek practice, those clubhouses took the form of *leschai* linked to a cult (cf. Pausanias' description of the Leschē Poikilē in Sparta as being located next to a collection of hero shrines). The result was a proliferation of *leschai* in Sparta that appear in the archaeological record as cult sites.

The significant decline in the amount of space dedicated to cult sites in Roman Sparta can be explained at least in part by important shifts in the demographic, security, and sociopolitical situation in Lakedaïmon that began in the late Classical period.³⁸⁷ The number of Spartiates dropped precipitously after the late Archaic period. Herodotus' account

385 Dawkins 1929; Salapata 2014: 217–28; Pavlides 2023: 29–78. The sanctuary of Helen and Menelaos is an outlier in this regard.

386 Christesen & Kramer 2024: 249.

387 Another relevant factor may be an increase in the frequency of cult activity within households in Sparta; see Christesen & Kramer 2024: 248–49.

of the Persian Wars suggests that there were c. 8,000 adult male Spartiates in 480.³⁸⁸ By the first quarter of the fourth century, there seem to have been approximately 2,000 adult male Spartiates, and Aristotle claims that (presumably in his own time) there were fewer than 1,000.³⁸⁹ Plutarch states that there were 700 Spartiates at the time of the reforms of Agis IV in the third century.³⁹⁰

The drop in the number of Spartiates was an important contributor to the collapse of Lakedaimonian power starting in the fourth century. That story need not be rehearsed here, but the effects on the security situation in Lakonia are highly relevant to the issues under discussion: between 370/369 and 149, Lakonia was invaded at least a dozen times.³⁹¹ One response was to begin building defenses for what had been an un-walled city. The first fortifications in Sparta were erected in the late fourth century, and a full circuit wall followed in the third century.³⁹²

There were quite possibly concomitant changes in where Spartiates lived. The number of Spartiates becomes difficult to determine after the reforms of Agis IV and Kleomenes III, who seem to have created approximately 4,000 new citizens.³⁹³ Many of those new citizens did not enjoy their enhanced status for long: Plutarch claims that only 200 of the 6,000 Lakedaimonian citizen-soldiers who fought at the Battle of Sellasia in 222 survived.³⁹⁴ However exaggerated that claim may be, it speaks to the heavy casualties suffered by Lakedaimonian citizens in military conflicts during the later third and early second centuries. In addition, it remains unclear how many descendants of the men enfranchised in the third century managed to retain citizenship in the decades and centuries that followed. Even those who retained citizenship may have found themselves effectively marginalized. Cartledge and Spawforth have argued that

388 Hdt. 7.234.3, cf. 9.28.2 and Arist. *Pol.* 1270a36-37. For a discussion of the evidence for changes in Spartiate numbers over time, see Doran 2018: 22-32.

389 Arist. *Pol.* 1270a30. On the number of Spartiates immediately before and after Leuktra, see de Ste. Croix 1972: 332.

390 Plut. *Agis* 5.6.

391 Invasions are known to have taken place in 370/369, 362, 338, 294, 272, 240/239, 222, 218, 200, 195, 192, and 149. See Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 3-92 for the details.

392 Kourinou 2000: 35-88.

393 Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 38-79.

394 Plut. *Cleom.* 27.5, 28.5; cf. Polyb. 2.65.

“old” families that could trace their lineage back before the third-century enfranchisements retained a de facto special status through the Roman period.³⁹⁵

These circumstances would have strongly encouraged Spartiates to concentrate in and around Sparta. The relative safety of the city’s walls, which proved to be effective in repelling invaders, would have been a major inducement. The relatively small size of the citizen body (one might hazard a guess of 1,000-2,000) meant that the absorption of most or all adult male Spartiates and their families into the city did not present any major spatial challenges. The increasing desirability of living in Sparta, and, after the incorporation of Lakedaimon into the Roman empire, the freeing up of resources previously expended on the military, created a positive feedback loop by facilitating investments in urban amenities that further enhanced Sparta’s attractiveness. To give but one example, Roman Sparta was embellished with an array of bathing facilities that must have been far superior to those available anywhere else in the vicinity.³⁹⁶

It may well not be coincidental that the collective activities that had bound Spartiates together in the Archaic and Classical periods did not survive the Hellenistic period intact. The precise sequence of events remains difficult to reconstruct, but it seems likely that the educational system and *syssitia* ceased to function in the second quarter of the third century. A restoration undertaken by Kleomenes III lasted only until the early second century. A much diminished version of the educational system was created in 146, but the *syssitia* were not revived.³⁹⁷ The integration of Lakedaimon into the Roman empire in the second century obviated the need for the *polis* to maintain an army.

The Roman-era epigraphic texts discussed in Section 3.4.1 support the supposition that Spartiates over the course of time came to reside in a more constricted area. Given the importance of the *agōgē* to Spartiate identity in the Roman period, it is likely that most if not all Spartiates

395 Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 163-64. On the reforms of Agis, Kleomenes III, and Nabis, see Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 38-79.

396 Christesen & Kramer 2024: 268-77.

397 Kennell 1995: 5-27 and *passim*; Ducat 2006: ix-xvii. See also the doubts expressed in Texier 2014: 259-68 and the nuances offered in Nafissi 2024: 207-9.

sent their children through it.³⁹⁸ If we assume, for the sake of argument, that most Spartiate families sent their sons to the *agōgē*, we can draw tentative conclusions about where Spartiates lived since just four *ōbai* are attested in those inscriptions: Kynosoura, Limnai, Neopolis, and Pitana. Pitana can be located in/around Sparta with confidence, and Limnai in the eastern suburbs of the city. Kynosoura may have been situated in the area to the east of Sparta, and Neopolis may have been synonymous with Amyklai. That would place all four of the *ōbai* mentioned in the inscriptions in the northern end of the Spartan plain. In other words, Wade-Gery's belief that all Spartiates lived in Sparta and Amyklai has some truth in it, but only when applied to the Roman period, and it requires the emendation "in the vicinity of Sparta and Amyklai." There was, therefore, probably a significant element of diachronic change with respect to where most Spartiates lived: throughout the Spartan plain in the Archaic and Classical periods and in the northern part of the Spartan plain starting at some point in the Hellenistic period.³⁹⁹

The decrease in the amount of space dedicated to cult sites in Sparta, especially in the city center, should be understood against that background. The daily flow of Spartiates who resided in *ōbai* outside of Sparta into and out of the city dried up in the Hellenistic period, which in turn removed the need for *leschai* in the urban center. Wealthy families seeking to construct one of the large, elaborate houses that became increasingly desirable in the Hellenistic and Roman periods acquired property occupied by defunct *leschai*. The result was that Sparta, which was probably unusual in terms of the amount of space dedicated to *leschai*/cult sites in the Archaic and Classical periods, became a more typical urban center.

398 On the importance of the *agōgē* for Spartiate identity in the Roman period, see del Mar Alcocer Rodríguez 2016: 53 and Kennell 2018: 646–47.

399 The currently available evidence does not make it possible to reach any conclusions about the effects of the diminution of the number of Spartiates and their probable concentration in the area around Sparta during the Roman period on other settlements in the Spartan plain. Given the need to continue farming the plain, it seems likely that what one might call the "outlying *ōbai*" continued to be inhabited.

9.3 Re-reading Thucydides 1.10.2

We can at this point revisit the oft-cited passage in which Thucydides describes the *polis* of the Lakedaimonians. This passage has been regularly cited as a key piece of evidence supporting the claim that the city of Sparta was divided into distinct settlement nuclei.⁴⁰⁰ Thucydides (1.10.2) writes that:

Λακεδαιμονίων γὰρ εἰ ἡ πόλις ἐρημωθείη, λειφθείη δὲ τὰ τε ἱερὰ καὶ τῆς κατασκευῆς τὰ ἐδάφη, πολλὴν ἂν οἶμαι ἀπιστίαν τῆς δυνάμεως προελθόντος πολλοῦ χρόνου τοῖς ἔπειτα πρὸς τὸ κλέος αὐτῶν εἶναι (καίτοι Πελοποννήσου τῶν πέντε τὰς δύο μοίρας νέμονται, τῆς τε ξυμπάσης ἡγοῦνται καὶ τῶν ἔξω ξυμμάχων πολλῶν· ὅμως δὲ οὔτε ξυνοικισθείσης πόλεως οὔτε ἱεροῖς καὶ κατασκευαῖς πολυτελέσι χρησαμένης, κατὰ κώμας δὲ τῷ παλαιῷ τῆς Ἑλλάδος τρόπῳ οἰκισθείσης, φαίνοιτ' ἂν ὑποδεεστέρα), Ἀθηναίων δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο παθόντων διπλασίαν ἂν τὴν δύναμιν εἰκάζεσθαι ἀπὸ τῆς φανεράς ὄψεως τῆς πόλεως ἢ ἔστιν.

For if the *polis* of the Lakedaimonians were to become deserted, and the temples and the foundations of the buildings were left standing, I expect that, with a lot of time passing, there would be much disbelief among future generations that the fame of the Lakedaimonians was an accurate reflection of their power. Yet they possess two-fifths of the Peloponnese and lead the whole of it and many allies outside of it. Nevertheless, the visible remains would seem rather disappointing because the *polis* has not been synoikized nor is it equipped with elaborate sanctuaries and buildings, and it is settled in villages in the fashion of Greece long ago. Whereas if the Athenians suffered the same fate, I expect that future generations would infer, based on the visible remains, that their power was twice as great as it actually is.

While several meanings could be assigned to the word *polis*, those meanings fall under two broad headings: the *polis* as a collective entity and as

400 See, for instance, Kourinou 2000: 36 n. 45. For the underlying reasoning, see Section 5.2.

a physical settlement.⁴⁰¹ The πόλις in the phrase πόλις ἐρημωθείη and πόλεως in the phrase ξυνοικισθείσης πόλεως are habitually taken to refer to a physical settlement, the city of Sparta. For example, Martin Hammond's translation begins "if the city of Sparta were to become deserted," and Shipley states "when Thuc. 1.10.2 comments on the underdeveloped physical urban form of the 'polis of the Lakedaimonians,' he certainly means the town of Sparta."⁴⁰² Thucydides is understood to be saying that if the urban center of Sparta were abandoned (Λακεδαιμονίων γὰρ εἰ ἡ πόλις ἐρημωθείη), future generations would underestimate the power wielded by the Lakedaimonians because the urban center of Sparta is not joined into a single conurbation but is divided into distinct settlement nuclei (οὔτε ξυνοικισθείσης πόλεως) and lacks impressive structures. Thucydides' *kōmai* are interpreted as a reference to the four *ōbai*, each linked to a distinct nucleus, that ostensibly comprised the city of Sparta. That reading of the passage is prompted by and hence consistent with the current orthodoxy.

Leaving aside the fact that there are no traces of distinct settlement nuclei in Sparta at any point in time (see Section 6.2), Thucydides' choice of terminology suggests that a different reading is called for. The wording at the beginning of the passage, Λακεδαιμονίων ... πόλις, combining *polis* with a genitive plural, is not an obvious choice for clearly referring to the urban center of Sparta, for which Thucydides elsewhere uses Σπάρτη or Λακεδαίμων.⁴⁰³ Thucydides' three other usages of Λακεδαιμονίων πόλις refer to the *polis* as a communal entity:

ἡ δὲ τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων πόλις πᾶσί τε τούτοις ἐθάρσει καὶ μάλιστα ὅτι οἱ ἐκ τῆς Σικελίας αὐτοῖς ξύμμαχοι πολλῇ δυνάμει ... ἅμα τῷ ἥρι ὥς εἰκὸς παρέσεσθαι ἔμελλον.⁴⁰⁴

The *polis* of the Lakedaimonians was encouraged by all these things and especially by the probable prospect that their allies in Sicily would come in great force in the spring.

401 Hansen & Nielsen 2004b.

402 Shipley 2004: 587.

403 Σπάρτη: see, for example, 1.128.2, 1.131.5, 3.54.5, 4.3.2, 4.53.2, 4.132.3. Λακεδαίμων: see, for example, 1.43.1, 1.95.5.

404 Thuc. 8.2.3.

καὶ ταῦτα ἄνευ τῆς Λακεδαιμονίων πόλεως ἐπράσσετο· ὁ γὰρ Ἅγισ, ὅσον χρόνον ἦν περὶ Δεκέλειαν ἔχων τὴν μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ δύναμιν, κύριος ἦν καὶ ἀποστέλλειν εἴ ποί τινα ἐβούλετο στρατιὰν ...⁴⁰⁵

And these things were accomplished without [instructions from] the *polis* of the Lakedaimonians. For Agis, as long as he was at Dekeleia with the army under his command, was empowered to send soldiers wherever he wished ...

οἱ γὰρ οἰκέται τοῖς Χίοις πολλοὶ ὄντες καὶ μιᾷ γε πόλει πλὴν Λακεδαιμονίων πλεῖστοι γενόμενοι ...⁴⁰⁶

For the Chians had many slaves, the most in any one *polis* except [the *polis*] of the Lakedaimonians ...⁴⁰⁷

In addition, Thucydides employs the verb συνοικίζω ten times, and in every instance the verb is applied to a collective entity, not a single urban center. More specifically, συνοικίζω appears in the following passages:

- 1.24.2: Corinthian settlers join the *apoikia* of Epidamnos;
- 2.15.2: Theseus dissolves the councils and magistracies in the various communities in Attica and creates a single *bouleutērion* and *prytaneion* in Athens;
- 2.16.1: The Athenians continue to live in dispersed communities after the *synoikismos* carried out by Theseus (described in 2.15);
- 2.68.5: the Ambraciots are invited to join Amphilochian Argos as new citizens;

405 Thuc. 8.5.3.

406 Thuc. 8.40.2.

407 Thucydides goes on to say that when the Chians' slaves deserted to the Athenians, their knowledge of the *chōra* (ἐπιστάμενοι τὴν χώραν) made it possible for them to do "the greatest mischief." The slaves in question thus resided across the island, and Thucydides is referring to Chios as a collective entity and not the main urban center of the island.

- 3.2.3: the Mytilenians attempt to forcibly combine all the *poleis* on the island of Lesbos into a single political entity (with no implication that all the urban centers on Lesbos other than Mytilene would be abandoned);
- 3.9.3: the *polis* of Herakleia in Trachis is founded;
- 6.2.6: scattered Phoenician outposts in Sicily are, after the arrival of the Greeks, combined into three larger settlements at Motya, Panormos, and Soloeis;
- 6.5.1: Syracusan exiles join the *apoikia* of Himera;
- 6.63.3: the Syracusans in the winter of 415/414, during a period of Athenian inactivity, taunt the Athenians by asking if they have come to Sicily to become Syracusans.

Reading the genitive absolute οὔτε ξυνοικισθείσης πόλεως as a reference to the physical layout of Sparta thus requires assigning συνοικίζω a meaning that would be unique in Thucydides' work.

The other appearances of the phrase κατὰ κώμας in Thucydides are also instructive. In writing about Hellenic customs in early periods, he states:

προσπίπτοντες πόλεσιν ἀτειχίστοις καὶ κατὰ κώμας οἰκουμέναις ...⁴⁰⁸

They would fall upon *poleis* that were unwallled and settled *kata kōmas* ...

This passage might seem to be referring to single, unwallled settlements with distinct nuclei, but consider Thucydides' description of Aetolia. At 1.5.3 Thucydides notes that some Hellenes, including the Aetolians, continue to live "in the old fashion," and he subsequently (in his account of Demosthenes' decision to launch an expedition against Aetolia) describes the entire *ethnos* of the Aetolians as living *kata kōmas*.

τὸ γὰρ ἔθνος μέγα μὲν εἶναι τὸ τῶν Αἰτωλῶν καὶ μάχιμον, οἰκοῦν δὲ κατὰ κώμας ἀτειχίστους ...⁴⁰⁹

408 Thuc. 1.5.1.

409 Thuc. 3.94.4.

[The Messenians said] the *ethnos* of the Aetolians, although numerous and warlike, lived *kata kōmas* in unwalled villages ...

Thucydides' statement that the *polis* of the Lakedaimonians is "settled in villages in the fashion of Greece long ago" resonates strongly with his characterization of the Aetolians as being old-fashioned and living, as a group, *kata kōmas*. One might also note that Sparta was, at this time, unwalled.

In light of these considerations, I would suggest that in 1.10.2 Thucydides is saying that the *chōra* of the *polis* of Lakedaimon – not the city of Sparta – had never been synoikized and was, as a result, still settled *kata kōmas*. This reading, which is the most straightforward interpretation of his choice of words and consonant with his description of other places in the Greek world, raises two immediate questions: to what part of Lakedaimon did Thucydides' observations apply and what, for Thucydides, did it mean in practice for Lakedaimon to not be synoikized and to be settled *kata kōmas*?

With respect to the first question, we should rule out the idea that Thucydides was simply noting that much of the population of the polity as a whole (most obviously the *perioikoi*) lived in relatively small, widely scattered communities and that his observations did not apply to Sparta or its immediate surroundings. Thucydides clearly expresses the idea that Lakedaimon lacked a major, highly developed urban center on par with Athens. Moreover, he explicitly states elsewhere in his work (see below) that Attica was synoikized from an early date and that much of the population of the *polis* continued to live in the *chōra* after the *synoikismos* was completed. The absence of *synoikismos* in Lakedaimon thus cannot simply be a matter of the continued existence of secondary settlements in the *chōra*. Rather, it must be understood as pertaining to and having ramifications for Sparta.

With respect to what it meant for Lakedaimon to not be *synoikized*, one possibility is that Thucydides understood *synoikismos* in Lakedaimon in purely physical terms. He could have been claiming that Lakedaimon was like Aetolia insofar as the populace was dispersed among relatively small, unwalled villages and that, as a result, the *polis* of the Lakedaimonians

lacked a “central place” in the form of a large urban center embellished with elaborate structures. Given what we know about Sparta in the fifth century, this would seem to be a somewhat exaggerated (though by no means unjustified) description of the situation in Lakedaimon. However, Thucydides both at 1.10.2 and in his work as a whole went out of his way to draw a stark contrast between Athenians and Lakedaimonians.⁴¹⁰

Another possibility is that Thucydides understood *synoikismos* in Lakedaimon as first and foremost a political matter that had ramifications for what we would call settlement organization and settlement patterns. Given that Thucydides explicitly compares Lakedaimon and Athens at 1.10.2 and describes the *polis* of Lakedaimon as not having been synoikized, his observations on the *synoikismos* of Attica by Theseus may well offer insight into his views on the situation in Lakedaimon:

ἐπὶ γὰρ Κέκροπος καὶ τῶν πρώτων βασιλέων ἡ Ἀττικὴ ἐς Θησέα αἰεὶ κατὰ πόλεις ὥκεῖτο πρυτανεῖα τε ἐχούσας καὶ ἄρχοντας, καὶ ὅποτε μή τι δείσειαν, οὐ ξυνῆσαν βουλευσόμενοι ὥς τὸν βασιλέα, ἀλλ’ αὐτοὶ ἕκαστοι ἐπολίτευον καὶ ἐβουλευόντο. ... ἐπειδὴ δὲ Θησεὺς ἐβασίλευσε, γενόμενος μετὰ τοῦ ξυνητοῦ καὶ δυνατὸς τὰ τε ἄλλα διεκόσμησε τὴν χώραν καὶ καταλύσας τῶν ἄλλων πόλεων τὰ τε βουλευτήρια καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐς τὴν νῦν πόλιν οὖσαν, ἐν βουλευτήριον ἀποδείξας καὶ πρυτανεῖον, ξυνώκισε πάντας, καὶ νεμομένους τὰ αὐτῶν ἐκάστους ἅπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ ἠνάγκασε μιᾷ πόλει ταύτη χρῆσθαι, ἢ ἀπάντων ἡδὴ ξυντελούντων ἐς αὐτὴν μεγάλη γενομένη παρεδόθη ὑπὸ Θησεῶς τοῖς ἔπειτα.⁴¹¹

In the time of Cecrops and the first kings down to Theseus, the population of Attica always lived in separate *poleis*, each with its own town hall and officials. Except when some danger threatened, they did not convene for joint consultations with the king, but each group managed its own affairs and determined its own policy. ... But when Theseus became king and attained power in addition to being intelligent,

410 On the physical realities of Sparta in the fifth century, see Christesen & Kramer 2024: 257-61. On Thucydides’ contrast between Athens and Sparta, see, for instance, Cartledge & Debnar 2006.

411 Thuc. 2.15.1-2.

he put in order everything in the *chōra* and, having dissolved both the *bouleutēria* and magistracies of the other *poleis* and having created a single *bouleutērion* and *prytaneion* in what is now the polis, he synoikized everyone so that, although they held their possessions that they had before, he compelled them to make use of this one *polis* [Athens], which, with all now contributing to it, became the great *polis* that was handed down by Theseus to those who followed.

Immediately after these remarks, Thucydides launches into a description of the physical realities of the city of Athens prior to the *synoikismos*, which is implicitly compared to the much larger and more imposing city of Thucydides' time.

Thucydides clearly considers the crux of *synoikismos* in Attica to be the merging of several, largely independent *poleis* into a single polity. The creation of that new polity then had major ramifications for the level of activity, size, and grandeur of the urban center that served as its capital. If we read 1.10.2 in this light, we are led to the conclusion that Thucydides is saying that: (1) the *polis* of Lakedaimon had not been politically centralized to nearly the same extent as the polity of Athens; (2) as a result, the populace of Lakedaimon continued to live in relatively small villages retaining a considerable level of independence; and (3) the main urban center remained small and unimpressive. (Note the parallel between κατὰ κώμας δὲ τῷ παλαιῷ τῆς Ἑλλάδος τρόπῳ οἰκισθείσης in 1.10.2 and ἡ Ἀττικὴ ... κατὰ πόλεις ὥκεῖτο in 2.15.1.)

However we choose to understand precisely what the absence of *synoikismos* in Lakedaimon meant for Thucydides, he is, in my view, arguing in 1.10.2 that Lakedaimon – including the area around Sparta – was settled *kata kōmas*. Unless we wish to dismiss Thucydides as poorly informed about the situation in Lakedaimon, that reading of 1.10.2 is incompatible with the current orthodoxy and the concomitant presumption that there were only two, large settlements in the Spartan plain. It is, however, entirely compatible with the conception that Spartiates lived in a series of settlements located throughout the Spartan plain.⁴¹²

412 The possibility that Thucydides sought to characterize those settlements as retaining a considerable degree of autonomy can perhaps be connected to the existence

9.4 Future Research

The conclusion that Spartiates in the Archaic and Classical periods inhabited communities dispersed across the Spartan plain has important ramifications for our understanding of multiple aspects of Lakedaimonian society. Lupi has astutely pointed out that “a community formed from the amalgamation of several villages situated relatively far from each other ... required institutions that facilitated cohesion and physical contact between the various groups that joined to create it.”⁴¹³ He persuasively argues that collective activities in Lakedaimon, such as the Spartan *syssitia* and the practice of removing boys from their homes at an early age, served to unify the spatially dispersed Spartiates.

Much more could and should be done with respect to identifying other aspects of the history and material culture of Lakedaimon that merit reconsideration in light of a revised understanding of where Spartiates lived. One example, provided here simply *exempli gratia*, is that the dispersal of Spartiates across the Spartan plain calls into question the existence of what has been called a “Spartan *pomerium*.”

Due to the nature of the material remains in Lakonia, the fashion in which those remains have been explored, and the particular interests of authors such as Pausanias, we are much better informed about religious sanctuaries than other site types (e.g. cemeteries).⁴¹⁴ Leaving aside the city of Sparta itself, the material remains of five important sanctuaries have been uncovered in or immediately adjacent to the Spartan plain (moving clockwise, starting from Amyklai, see Figure 20):

of obal governments (see Section 3.3) with their own officials and treasury. One might also recall that the Amyklaians, regardless of the prevailing military situation, had the right to return home for the Hyakinthia (see Section 3.2 for the relevant passage from Xenophon’s *Hellenika*). The facts that *stēlai* with the terms of the Peace of Nicias were erected on the acropolis of Athens and the Amyklaion and that the Spartan war fund inscription (*IG V.1.1*, see Section 7) was erected at either present day Agios Vasileios or the Amyklaion could be seen as an indication that Sparta did not play the predominant role in the political life of Lakonia that Athens played in Attica.

413 Lupi 2018: 177.

414 See n. 264.

- the Sanctuary of Apollo Amyklaios at Amyklai;
- the Sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus at Tsakona;
- the Sanctuary of Helen and Menelaos at Therapne;
- the Sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus at Anthochori;
- the Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Kalyvia Sochas.

Cult activity at Amyklai seems to have begun in the 12th century, and in the eighth century at the other four sites.⁴¹⁵

Literary sources provide the names and approximate locations of six additional sanctuaries in the Spartan plain. Sanctuaries to the Dioskouroi, to Phoibe and Hilaeira (the wives of the Dioskouroi; the sanctuary was called the Phoibaion), and to Poseidon Gaiaochos all existed in the vicinity of Therapne and hence near the Menelaion. The first mentions of the sanctuaries to Phoibe and Hilaeira (the Phoibaion) and to Poseidon Gaiaochos are found in the work of Herodotus and Xenophon, respectively.⁴¹⁶ Alcman associates the Dioskouroi with Therapne, suggesting that the twins had a cult site there from an early date. Herodotus and Pausanias both mention a sanctuary to Apollo at Thornax, which was located not far to the north of Sparta.⁴¹⁷ Pausanias refers to a sanctuary of Dionysos located at Bryseiai, somewhere on the western edge of the Spartan plain south of Sparta.⁴¹⁸

415 On the Sanctuary of Apollo Amyklaios, see Vlizos 2017. On the Sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus at Tsakona, see H.W. Catling 2002. On the Sanctuary of Helen and Menelaos, see Stelow 2020: 258–84. On the Sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus at Anthochori and the Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Kalyvia Sochas, see Section 7. I do not include the so-called Achilleion (located just north of Sparta; Stibbe 2002) and a sanctuary with similar finds recently excavated at Kladas (Maltezou 2013b), both of which appear to be roadside shrines.

416 Alcman fr. 7 Page-Davies; Hdt 6.61.3; Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.30–31; Parker (forthcoming). The passage from Xenophon places the sanctuaries of Poseidon and of the Dioskouroi on the west bank of the Eurotas.

417 Hdt. 1.69.4; Paus. 3.10.8; Shipley 1996b: 355–57. See Section 6.3 for further discussion.

418 Paus. 3.20.3. The precise location of Bryseiai remains unknown; see Stibbe 1993: 83–88.

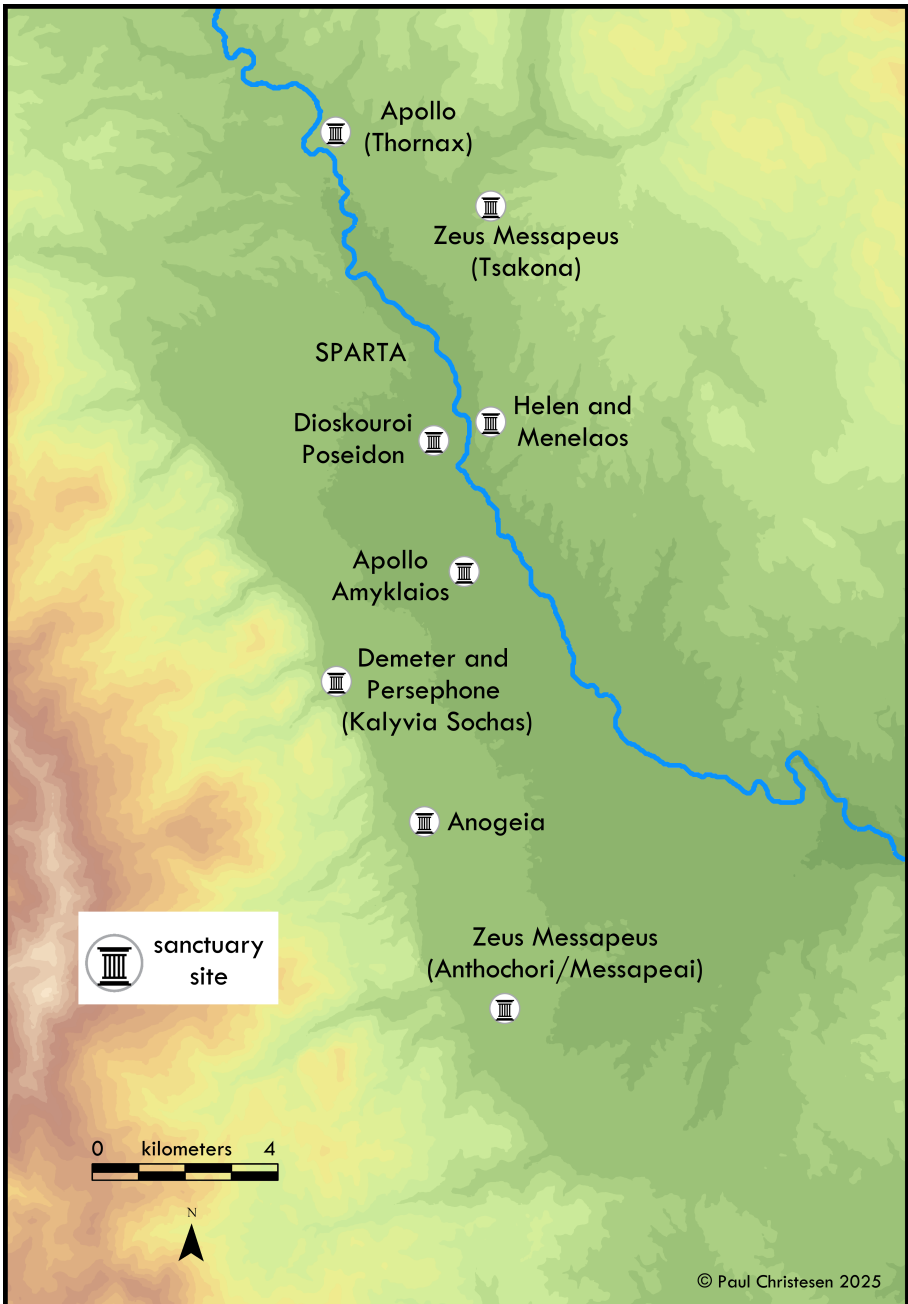


Figure 20: Sanctuaries in and near the Spartan plain.

Cartledge argued that the sanctuaries to Helen and Menelaos, Demeter and Persephone, Zeus Messapeus (at Tsakona), and Apollo Amyklaios (along with sanctuaries of Artemis Issoria and Artemis Orthia in Sparta) “formed a kind of *pomerium* ... or sacred boundary around Sparta itself.” Richard Catling adopted a similar position and added to Cartledge’s list the sanctuaries dedicated to Apollo Pythaeus (Thornax), the Dioskouroi (Therapne), Dionysos (Bryseiai), and Zeus Messapeus (Anthochori). He also mentions the sanctuary to an unknown hero/deity at Anogeia.⁴¹⁹ Scholars such as Mait Kõiv, Nicolas Richer – and myself, in an earlier publication – have endorsed this view of the sanctuaries in the Spartan plain.⁴²⁰

I am now inclined to see those sanctuaries not as defining a *pomerium* but rather as cult sites attached to communities inhabited by Spartiates. This would help account for their number: we might expect one or two or even three border sanctuaries, but nine seems improbable. The spatial relationship between the ancient sanctuary sites and population centers in the 19th century CE (see Figure 21) may provide some insight into the links between sanctuaries and settlements in antiquity.

The existence of multiple, important sanctuaries tied to specific communities in the Spartan plain would help explain the relative paucity of elaborate cult buildings that attracted Thucydides’ attention.⁴²¹ The pool of public resources available for the construction of magnificent sanctuaries was, in all probability, not only smaller in Lakadaimon than in Athens, but also more broadly dispersed. One suspects, for instance, that the inhabitants of settlements such as Amyklai were more interested in embellishing sanctuaries in their own town than those in Sparta. The Apollo sanctuaries at Thornax (with its gold statue of Apollo) and at Amyklai (with its monumental throne/altar) no doubt required considerable investment. The same was likely true of Anthochori, where a large Archaic, Doric capital is probably the remnant of a substantial cult building of some kind.⁴²²

419 Cartledge 1998: 44; R.W.V. Catling 2002: 230–32. On the sanctuary at Anogeia, see Section 7.

420 Richer 2012: 201–2; Kõiv 2015: 29; Christesen 2019a: 172. See also Sassu 2022: 54–56.

421 Thuc. 1.10.2; see Section 9.3.

422 Kokkorou-Alevras 2016; Kokkorou-Alevras 2021: 129–33.

I observe, by way of closing, that when it comes to ancient Lakedaïmon, nothing is ever as simple as it might appear at first glance. Even seemingly obvious questions, such as where Spartiates lived, can be answered in new ways that challenge long-established orthodoxies. If the question of where Spartiates lived had never been addressed, and we were to examine the relevant evidence on a *tabula rasa* basis, it is highly improbable that we would arrive at something resembling the current orthodoxy. While the available evidence does not make it possible to conclusively falsify the position articulated by Wade-Gery et al., that evidence, in my view, strongly suggests that during the Archaic and Classical periods Spartiates resided in an unknown number of *ōbai* scattered across the Spartan plain and that they eventually found it expedient to congregate in and around Sparta itself. My hope and expectation is that continued archaeological exploration in Lakonia will make it possible to address this particular facet of Lakedaïmonian history in a decisive fashion in the near future.

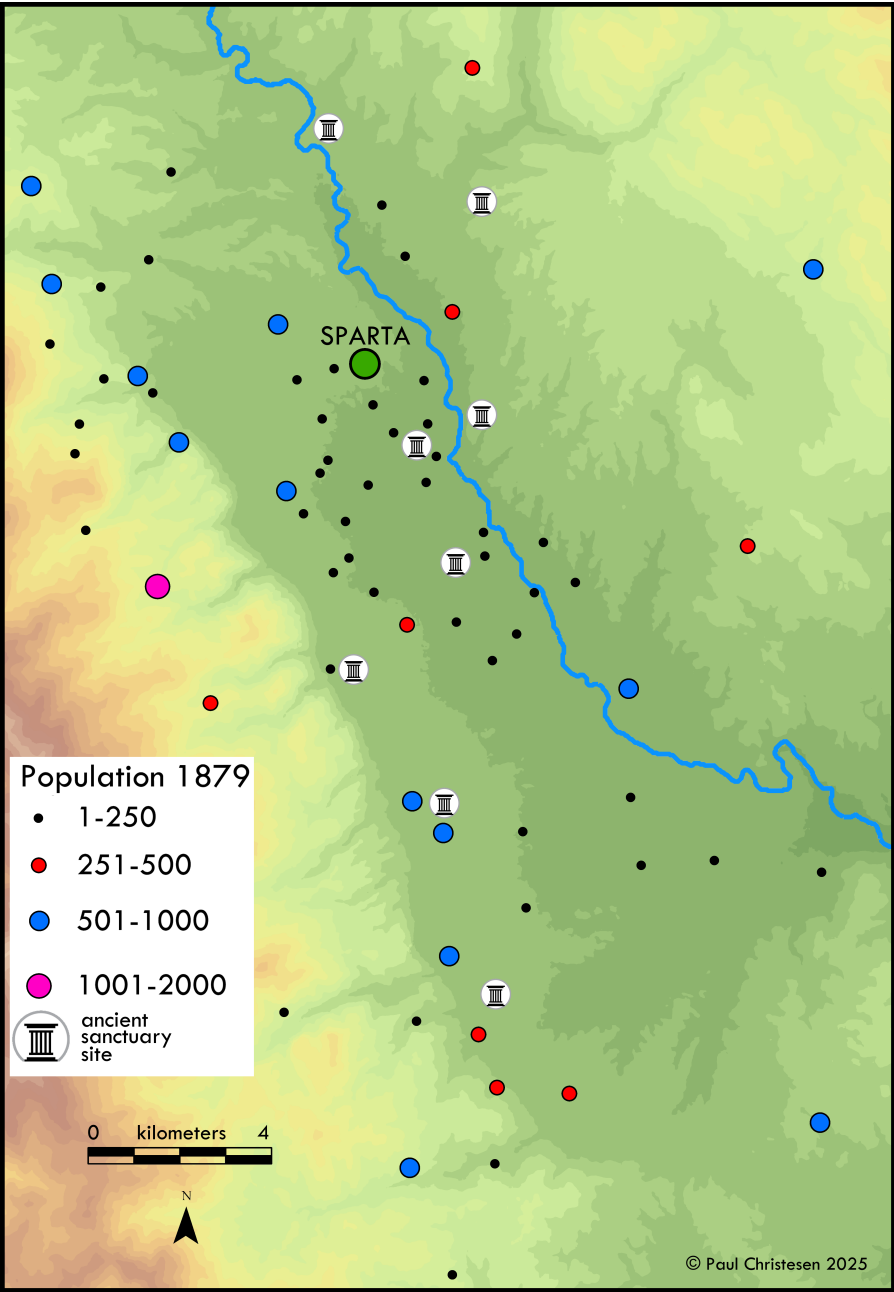


Figure 21: Sites of ancient sanctuaries and 19th-Century CE settlements in the Spartan plain and the Taygetos plateau.

Appendix: Roman-Era Epigraphic Texts

<i>IG designation</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>other designations</i>	<i>find spot</i>	<i>text</i>	<i>notes</i>
IG V.1.472	c. 130 CE	CIG 1426	Sparta	[ἡ] πόλις Γά(ιον) Ἀβί(διον) Ἀγαθάγγελον [ἀνδρ]είας καὶ βίου σε-[μνó]τητος ἔνεκα, [προς]δεξαμένου τὸ [ἀνάλ]ωμα τοῦ ἀξιολο- [γωτάτου βοαγοῦ αὐτοῦ] [Τιβ(ερίου) Κλαυ(δίου) Πρατολάου τοῦ] [Βρασίδου], [Πιτανάτην].	
IG V.1.480	early C2 CE	CIG 1347	?	ἃ πόλις Τιβ(έριον) Κλαύδιον Ἀρμόνικον εὐσεβῆ καὶ φιλόπατριν, γυ- μνασίαρχον, ἀπὸ τᾶς πρώ- τας ἀλικίας πολιτευόμε- νον ἄριστα, ἀρετᾶς ἔνε- κεν καὶ τᾶς πρὸς <α>ύτᾶν ἄσυνκρίτου μεγαλοψυ- χίας, ἀπὸ φυλῆς Κονοου- ρέων τῶν τιμῶν δοθεισῶν, διὰ συναρχίας, ἧς πρέσβυς Ξενοκράτης Φιλωνίδα, τῆς ἐπὶ Γ(αῖου) Ἰου- λίου Λάκωνος τὸ β΄.	
IG V.1.564	Roman period	CIG 1377	Sparta	ἡ πόλις Μᾶρ(κον) Αὐρ(ήλιον) Δάμαρχον Παρδαλᾶ, πρέσβυν τῆς Λιμναέων φυ- λῆς, ἀνδρείας χάριν, προσδεξαμένου τὸ ἀνάλωμα Λουκίου Ἀπρωνίου Εὐελπίστου, ἀγαθοῦ καὶ δικαίου, τρ[ῶ] φυλέτου.	
IG V.1.663	reign of Trajan	CIG 1425	Mys-tras	Γά(ιος) Ἀβίδιος Ἀγαθάνγε- λος, νικήσας ἀγε- νειῶν πάλιν ἐπὶ ἀγνωστοῦ τ<ῶ>ν μεγάλων Εὐρυκλε[ί]- ων Γαῖ(ου) Ἰου(λίου) Ἀντιπά- τρου τοῦ Λυσικρά- τους, Λακεδαιμόν[ι]- ος Πιτανάτης.	

IG V.1.674	C1 CE	Tod 1904: 70 #10 Tod & Wace 1906: #721	Ma- goula	[ἐπὶ πατρωνόμου – – –] [– , βιδέου δὲ – – , διαβέ]- [τεος δὲ Με]νεκλέου[ς (tri)]-[bus) σ]φαιρεῖς οἱ νικάσαντ<ε>ς τᾶ[ς ὦ] βάς, [ῶν πρέσβυ]ς Νικοκράτης, [.]κίδας Φιλοστράτου, ομένης Ἐπικτήτου, ιππίδας Ἐπικράτους, [Φιλ]οκλῆς, vac. [Ε]ῦνικος, vac. [Σ]ώανδρος Τρύφωνος, Εὔδαμος Ἰππάρχου, Καλλικράτης Φιλοστράτου, Δάμιππος Τιμοκράτους, Κλεόμαχος, Εὐδαιμοκλῆς Εὐδᾶμου, Σώστρατος Θεοδώρου, Ξενάκων Ἀντιβίου. vacat {anaglyphum}	relief showing a ball and a palm branch
IG V.1.675	reign of Do- mi- tian	Tod, Tillyard & Woodward 1907: 213 #1 Tod & Wace 1906: #844	Sparta	{anaglyphum} ἐπὶ πατρωνόμου Μνάσωνος σφαιρεῖς Πιτανατῶν οἱ νεικά- σαντες τὰς ὠβάς, ῶν πρέσβυς Ἀλεξᾶς Χρυσέρωτο[ς], [Λα]οδαμίδης Γοργίππ[ου], - - - - - -]	relief of Dioskou- roi with ball above
IG V.1.676	Ro- man Im- perial pe- riod	Tod, Tillyard & Woodward 1907: 216 #2 Tod & Wace 1906: #837	Ma- goula	ἐπὶ Ἀγαθοκλέους τοῦ [Κ]λεοφάντου βιδύου δὲ Ξένωνος τοῦ Ξενο- στράτου διαβέτεος δ[ε] Φιλέρωτος τοῦ Θεοξένο[υ], σφαιρεῖς Λιμναέων οἱ νικ[ά]- σαντες τὰς ὠ[βά]ς, ὦν πρέ[σ(βυς)] Ἐπάγαθος Σωκράτους, Στράτων <ἀ>πελε(ύθερος), Πρατόνικος . . [.]οφώντο[ς], . . ογενί[δας Ἀρ]ιστοκρατ[– –], [Τι]μοκράτης Σωτίωνος, Νίκαρχος Ἀγαθονίκου, Τρίτων, Ἀφροδείσιος Ἀρίστωνος, Ζήλος	relief of ball, oil- flask, and wreaths

				Ἀγαθονίκου, Εὐτυχος, Μένανδρ[ος], Σωτήρ[ιχο]ς ῤαθήκοντ[ος], Ἀγα[----- -----] [-----]	
IG V.1.677	c. 130 CE	Tod, Tillyard & Woodward 1907: 217 #3	Sparta	[ἐπὶ πατρὸνόμου] Κλαυδίου [Ἀττικοῦ, βιδύου] δὲ Κανινί- [ου Εὐπόρου, δια]βέτεος δὲ [αὐτεπαγγέλτο]υ Θρασυβούλου [τοῦ, σφαιρεῖ]ς οἱ ἀρχαῖοι [Νεοπολιτῶν?] οἱ νεικάσαντες [τὰς ὠβὰς vac. ῶ]ν πρέσβυς [----- Ἐ]ρασμίου, [----- δ]ώρου, -----. [----- -]του.	
IG V.1.678	no date given	CIG 1471	Mys- tras	[ἐπὶ] Ἀριστοδαμί[δα] [πατρὸνό]μου, Δεινομ[ένους] [----] διὰ βίου, Ἐ<π>έρ[αστος] [-- τὰν] ὠβὰν ἐνίκα [----] Πο<λ>υά<ν>θει [κάσεν]	
IG V.1.679	Ro- man Im- perial pe- riod	Tod 1904: 66 #6	Mys- tras	[ἐπὶ πατρὸνόμου ----] [τοῦ δεῖνος -- φιλοκαί]-[σαρος καὶ φιλο]πάτρι-<δο>[ς], ---- --], βιδέω δὲ Αἰλ(ίω) [---- -]ω, διαβέτεο<ς> [δὲ αὐτεπαγ]γέλτω καὶ ἀ[ρι]- [στίνδου Μά]ρκω Σουλ- [πικίω -, σφαιρεῖς --] [οἱ νικάσαντες τὰς ὠβὰς]	
IG V.1.680	reign of Anto- ninus Pius or Mar- cus Aure- lius	Tod 1904: 63 #1 Tod & Wace 1906: #400	Sparta	[ἀ]γαθῇ τύχη. ἐπὶ πατρὸνόμου Λυσίπ- που τοῦ Δαμαινέτου φιλοκαίσαρος καὶ φιλοπά- τριδος, βιδέου δὲ Πεδουκαί- ου Ἐπαφροδείτου, ἀριστίν- δου δὲ καὶ διαβέτεος αὐτε- παγγέλτου Δαμαινέτου τοῦ Ἀριστοκράτους, σφαι- ρεῖς Νεοπολιτῶν οἱ νικά- σαντες τὰς ὠβὰς ἀνέφε- δροι, ῶν πρέσβυς Γαληνὸς	

				Σπένδοντος, Σπε[- - - - -] [- - - - -]	
IG V.1.681	no date given	CIG 1432 Tod 1904: 65 #3	Mys- tras	[- - - - - βιδέου δέ] [Ἀφροδ]εισίου [τοῦ Εὐκαταλ]- [λάκτου], διαβέτε[ος δέ - -] [- - αἰω]νίου ἀρισ[τοπολει]- [τευτοῦ]· σφαιρεῖς Κ[ονοου]- [ρέων οἱ] γεικάσα<ν>[τες τὰς] [ὠβὰς ἀνέ]φετ<ρ>οι, [ὦν πρέσ]- [βυς - - -]ος Ἄτ[- - - -]	
IG V.1.682	193- 217 CE	CIG 1273 Tod 1904: 67 #7	Sparta	[ἐπὶ πατρονόμου Πο(πλίου) Αἰλ(ίου) Ἀλκανδρίδα τοῦ] [Δαμοκ]ρατίδα [ἀρχιέρεως τοῦ Σεβας]- τοῦ, διαβέτ[εος δέ αὐτεπαγγέλτου - -] - κράτους τοῦ Σ[- - - , ἐπιμελη]- τοῦ δέ τῆς φ[υλῆς καὶ γυμνασιάρ]- χου Αὐρ(ηλίου) Ἀπο[λλ- - - - - σφαι]- ρεῖς Λιμν[αέων οἱ νικῆσαντες] τὰς ὠβὰς ἀ[νέφεδροι, ὦν πρέσ]- βυς Κλαύ<δ>[ιος - - - - -], [Α]ὐρ(ήλιος) Ἀγαθία[ς, Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ἀλκισθένης Εὐ]- [ε]λπίστου, [- - - - -] .. Ἡρακλεο[- - - - -] [. Αὐ]ρηλιο[- - - - -]	
IG V.1.683	early C3 CE	Tod 1904: 69 #9	?	ἀγαθεῖ τύχε[ι]· νίκη Νεο<π>[ο]- λειτῶ[ν]. {anaglyphum} ἐπὶ πατρονό(μου) θεο<ῦ> Λυκο<ύ>[ρ]- <γ>ου τὸ ε', ἐπιμελουμένου [δὲ τῆς] πατρονο(μίας) Μ(άρκου) Αὐρ(ηλίου) Ἀλκισθένο<υ>[ς] τοῦ Εὐελπίστου, προστάτ[ου τῆς πό]- λεως, βιδέου δέ Μ(άρκου) Αὐρ(ηλίου) Ῥο[ύφου] τοῦ [Κλεάνορος - - - - -] [- - - - -] - - - - -] [σφαιρεῖς οἱ	relief showing big ball and fig- ure with four arms

				νεικάσαντες τὰς] [ὠβάς --- -----]	
IG V.1.684	early C3 CE	CIG 1272 Tod 1904: 68 #8	Sparta	[ἐπὶ πατρονόμου] Γαῖου Π[ομπωνίου Παν]-[θάλους [Διογένου Ἀρι]-[στέα σφ<α>[ιρεῖς Κονοου]-[ρέων οἱ νικήσαντες] τὰς ὠβάς, [ὦν] πρέσβυς Αὐρ(ήλιος) Σωτηρ[-], Αὐρ(ήλιος) Εὐτυχο[ς], Αὐρ(ήλιος) Νεικηφόρ[ος], Μέμμιος Σω[-], Αὐρ(ήλιος) Πρατύλο[ς], Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ἐπίγονο[ς], Αὐρ(ήλιος) Εὐτύχη[ς], Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ἀγαθόπο[υς], Μέμ(μιος) Παρμέν<ω>ν, [Α]ὐρ(ήλιος) [- -----]	
IG V.1.685	Ro- man Im- perial pe- riod	Tod 1904: 64 #2 Tod & Wace 1906: #781	Sparta	[ἐπὶ πατρονόμου τοῦ δεῖνος] [τοῦ δεῖνος -- φιλοκαΐα]- [ρος καὶ φιλοπάτρ]ιδ[ος, ---] [- --- υἱοῦ] βουλῆς, [αἰωνίου ἀγορᾶ]-[νόμου, αἰ]ωνίου ἀριστοπ[ολειτευ]- [τοῦ, βιδέ]ου δὲ Μ(άρκου) Αὐρηλί[ου -], [διαβέτεο]ς δὲ Ἰου(λίου) Ὠρείων[ος, σφαι]-[ρεῖς Πιτα]γατών οἱ νικήσ[αντες] [τὰς ὠβάς ἀνέ]φεδροι, ὧν π[ρέσβυς] [- -----]ΙΛε[- - -]	
IG V.1.686	no date given	CIG 1274 Tod 1904: 66 #4	Sparta	[ἐπὶ πατρονόμου - - - - -] [- ----- -] [- - σφαιρεῖς Λιμν[αέων οἱ] [νικήσαντε]<ς> τὰς <ὠ>[βάς ἀνέφ]-[εδροι, ὧν πρέ]σβυς [- - -] [- - - - - β]ουαγ[ός]	
IG V.1.687	Ro- man pe- riod	Tod 1904: 66 #5 Tod & Wace 1906: #647	Sparta	[- - - - -]ς, διαβ[έτεος] [δὲ αὐτεπαγγέλ]του <Λ>ου[κίου?] [- - - - -]τους τοῦ [- -] [- - - - -]εος σφ[αιρεῖς] [(tribus) οἱ νικήσα]ντες τὰς ὠ[βάς] [- - -	

				---]υς, ὧν πρ[έσβυς] [- - -----]	
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