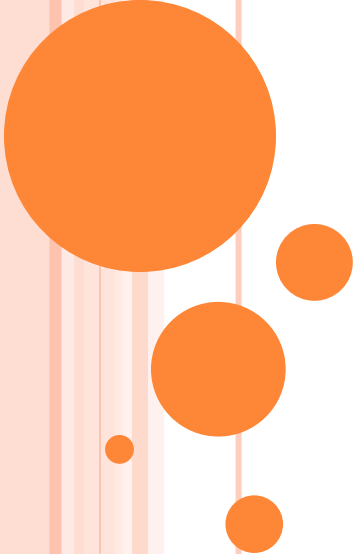




SPARTA: AN EXTRAORDINARY POLIS

Lecture 3: Archaic Sparta

THE 8TH CENTURY BCE

1. Alphabet
2. Colonisation
3. Metalworking (iron and bronze)
4. The Homeric poems
5. Urbanisation and political unity



ALPHABET

- The 8th century is the time when writing is re-introduced in the Greek world after the lapse of Linear B at the end of the Bronze Age.
- The exact circumstances of the introduction of alphabetic writing in Greece and the Aegean are still a hotly debated matter
- There is no such thing as a “Greek” alphabet.
- Throughout the archaic period there were various different versions of the alphabet according to locality. These are called region alphabets.

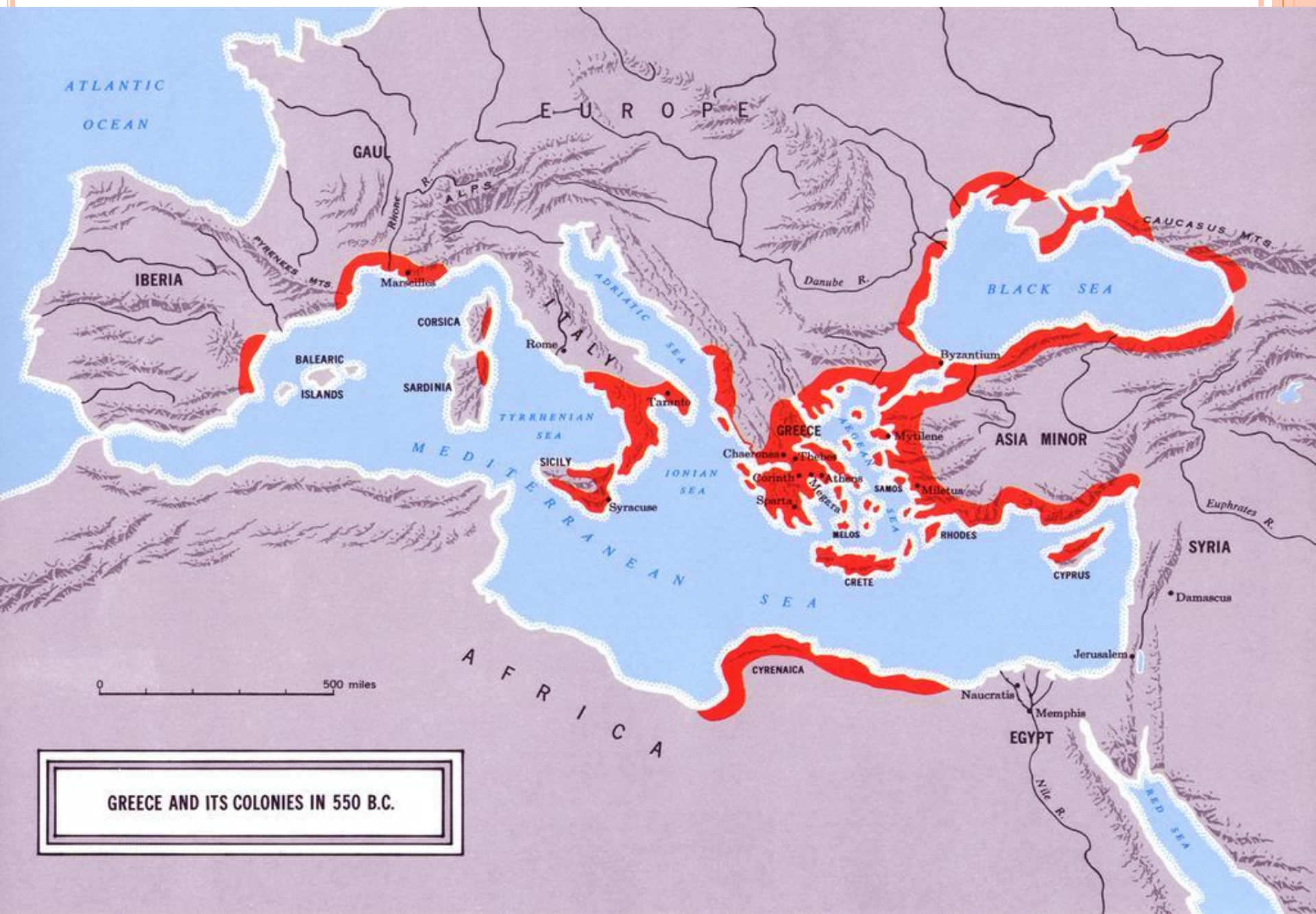


[illegible]

THE GREAT AGE OF GREEK COLONISATION

- Colonisation, mainly towards the west (Italy, Sicily, Gaul, Iberia) and the north (Thrace, Hellespont, Propontis, Black Sea), was one of the great developments of the 8th century
- The colonisation movement started in the 8th century and continued until the end of the archaic period but some of the most important foundations were made in the initial wave of the 8th century
- Many poleis took part in the 8th century colonisation, mainly from Euboea (Chalkis, Eretria), the Cyclades (Naxos, Paros, Rhodes) and the Peloponnese (Corinth).





SPARTAN COLONISATION

- The only 8th century foundation that was traditionally attributed to Sparta was Thera in the Cyclades.



METAL WORKING

- Metal-Working
- The 8th century saw one of the great advances in metal-working, mainly in bronze.
- The new techniques enabled the creation of stronger sheet bronze.
- It was used for statuary but more importantly in the making of bronze armour.



NEW METAL-WORKING IN SPARTA

- Little evidence for iron working in 8th C Sparta, significant evidence for Bronze work.
- From at least c. 775 BCE, Spartan bronze-workers were using the new techniques, as seen in figurines.



THE HOMERIC POEMS

- The Homeric poems were finding their common form in the course of the 8th century **(!!NOT their written form, that would not come until the 6th century!!!)**
- They were also achieving fame throughout the Greek world



HOMER IN SPARTA

- The Homeric poems were known in Sparta by the end of the 8th century
- The language of Tyrtaeus borrows from epic
- The sanctuary of the Menelaion outside Sparta itself shows that the Homeric poems and the myths they represent were known and respected in Sparta



URBANISATION AND THE POLIS

- Quite probably the most important of these developments in the 8th century was urbanisation and the creation of the polis.
- Urbanisation was the process by which individual communities coalesced into urban centres and politically into larger units.
- Urbanisation is one of the major steps in the creation of polis as an independent political unit.



THE POLIS

- The polis was made of two parts. The urban centre, the *astu*, and the countryside, the *chora*.
- The *astu* became the political, religious and social centre of the new community.
- The importance of the *astu* was seen through the buildings and public space that came to characterise it.
- In the larger poleis, the urban centre (*astu*) made have had satellites in less accessible parts of the territory of the polis.
- Thus some demes such as Acharnai and Thorikos in Athens were smaller urban centres.



8TH C URBANISATION

- Process of urbanisation is in its infancy
- But still the archaeological remains from the 8th century show that in most poleis the process had already started strong.
- That is especially true of the colonies, where centralisation was a major part of the colonising process.



URBAN SPARTA?

- Now Mycenae may have been a small place, and many of the towns of that age may appear comparatively insignificant, but no exact observer would therefore feel justified in rejecting the estimate given by the poets and by tradition of the magnitude of the armament. [2]**For I suppose if Lacedaemon were to become desolate, and the temples and the foundations of the public buildings were left, that as time went on there would be a strong disposition with posterity to refuse to accept her fame as a true exponent of her power.** And yet they occupy two-fifths of Peloponnese and lead the whole, not to speak of their numerous allies without. Still, as the city is neither built in a compact form nor adorned with magnificent temples and public edifices, but composed of villages after the old fashion of Hellas, there would be an impression of inadequacy. Whereas, if Athens were to suffer the same misfortune, I suppose that any inference from the appearance presented to the eye would make her power to have been twice as great as it is.

SYNOIKISMOS

- The urbanisation process and with it the formation of the polis as a unity was called by the Greeks *synoikismos* (synoecism).
- In effect that is the process whereby a number of villages or small settlements band together to form a larger unit.



SPARTAN VILLAGES

- The Spartan villages were called obai.
- We do not know how many obai there were and that is a debated issue among scholars.
- The current orthodoxy is that there 5 obai:
Limnai, Kynosoura, Mesoa, Pitana and Amyklai



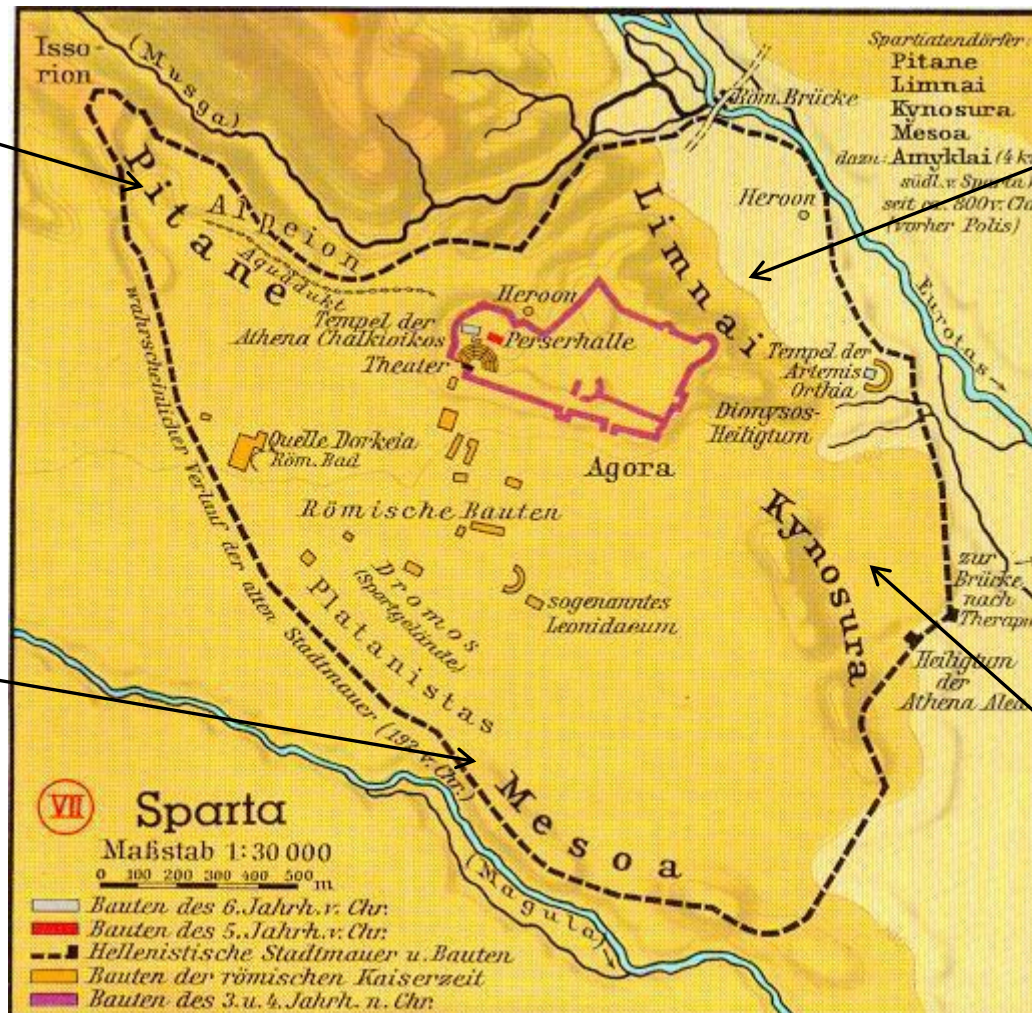
THE 4 OBAI

Pitane

Limnai

Mesoa

Kynosura



THE FIFTH OBAI? AMYKLAI

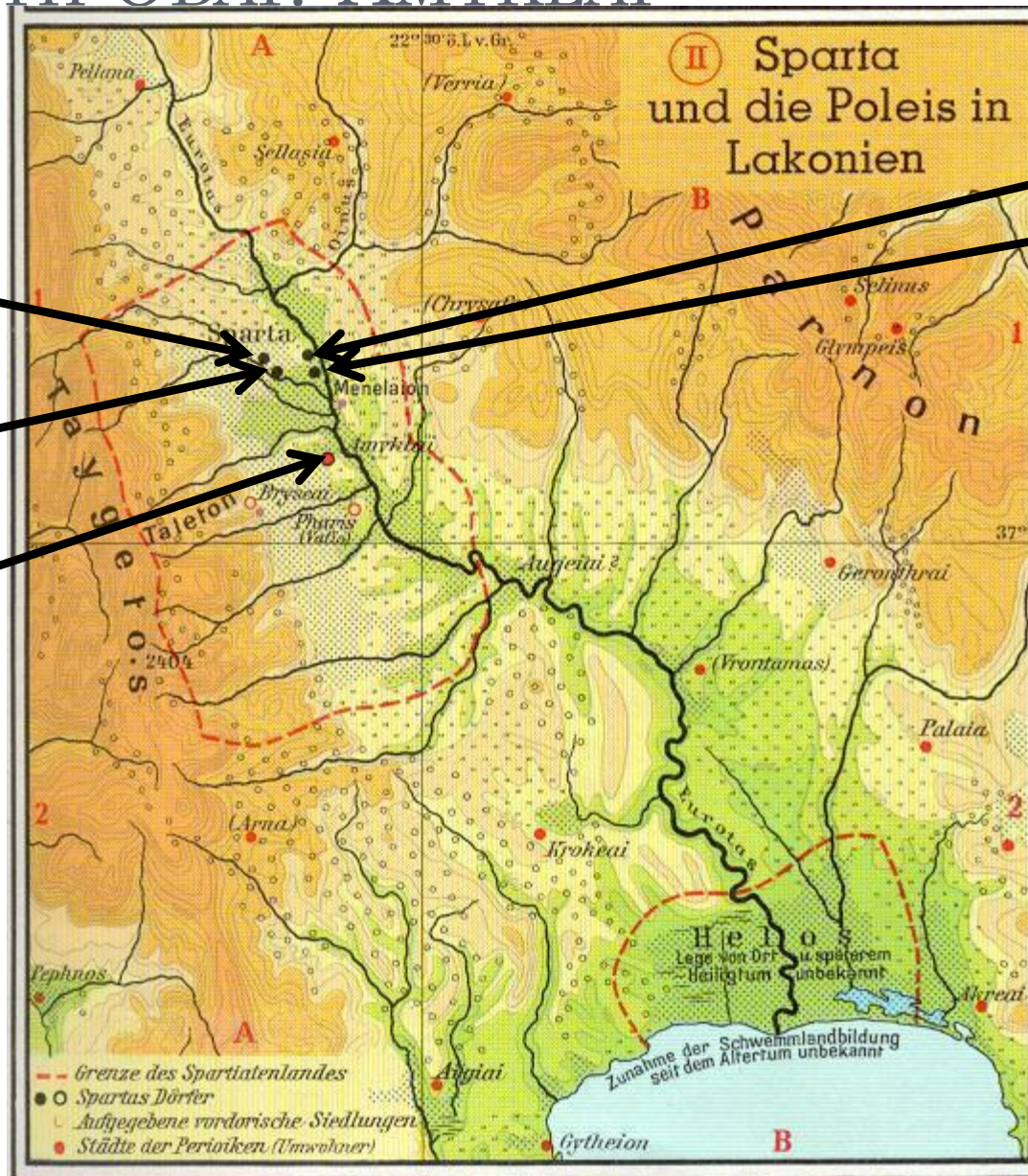
Pitana

Mesoa

Amyklai

Limnai

Kynosoura



A DIFFICULT SPARTAN SYNOIKISMOS

- It appears that the Spartan synoikismos was not a smooth process.
- The original synoikismos was of the 4 obai (Pitane, Limnai, Kynosoura and Mesoia) without Amyklai
- Probably the Spartan dual kingship was a remnant of that original synoikismos, since the Agiads came from Pitane and the Eurypontids from Limnai.



THE SYNOIKISMOS OF AMYKLAI

- Amyclae was laid waste by the Dorians, and since that time has remained a village; I found there a sanctuary and image of Alexandra worth seeing. Alexandra is said by the Amyclaeans to be Cassandra, the daughter of Priam. Here is also a statue of Clytaemnestra, together with what is supposed to be the tomb of Agamemnon. The natives worship the Amyclaeian god and Dionysus, surnaming the latter, quite correctly I think, Psilax. For psila is Doric for wings, and wine uplifts men and lightens their spirit no less than wings do birds.

Pausanias 3.19.7



RELIGION AND SPARTAN SYNOIKISMOS

- The best example of how the synoikismos of Sparta was never truly completed comes from religion.
- It appears that the 4 obai and Amyklai did not fully share the same religious festivals and cult centres.



THE 4 OBAI AND ARTEMIS ORTHIA



- It appears that the 4 Obai shared the cult centre and festivals of Artemis Orthia

Temple of Artemis Orthia



AMYKLAI AND APOLLO

- Amyklai continued with the cult of Apollo Amyklaios or Apollo Hyakinthios, which is a continuation of the Bronze Age cult at the same site.



8TH C SPARTA: SUMMARY

1. Alphabet = Sparta is a latecomer
2. Colonisation = Sparta does not colonise
3. Metalworking (iron and bronze) = Early evidence of new technique
4. The Homeric poems = In Sparta by end of 8th C
5. Urbanisation and political unity = Uncompleted process



CHANGES AFTER MID-8TH CENTURY

- The first half of the 8th century appears to be a period of relative isolation of Sparta.
- But the second half of the 8th century witnesses changes and developments.
- Sparta appears to look beyond its borders and becomes part of some of the developments that are happening in the Greek world at the time



A CHANGE OF POLICY?

- From the mid-8th century it appears that Sparta is looking outward from its borders.
- Sparta starts to have closer relations with the emerging great Greek sanctuaries of Olympia and Delphi



POTS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- The most important evidence for Sparta opening up to the outside world is pottery.
- REMEMBER: Pottery is not the beginning and end of the world. It is an important part of material culture for the Greeks but it is more important for us because it survives.



FROM PROTOGEOMETRIC (PG) TO LATE GEOMETRIC (LG)

- In the middle of the 8th century Lakonian pottery moves from the Protogeometric style to Late Geometric style.
- This is an innovation influenced by the Argive and Corinthian LG styles.
- Since there is no evidence of imports from Corinth or Argos, it is logical to assume that the painters and potters travelled.



DISTRIBUTION OF LAKONIAN LG POTTERY

- Possibly the most important issue concerning Lakonian LG pottery is its distribution.
- Unlike PG ware, LG Lakonian pottery had a wide distribution in the Peloponnese and further afield.



DISTRIBUTION OF LAKONIAN LG POTTERY



SPARTA AND SAMOS

- The most interesting importer of Spartan LG pottery is Samos.
- Samos was an Ionian polis on the other side of the Aegean.
- It was also an important religious centre with its temple of Hera.



SPARTA AND SAMOS

- Scholars have postulated some special relationship between Sparta and Samos in the archaic period, mainly the 6th century.
- That is provided by instances of military and political co-operation, such as the intervention of the Spartans in favour of the Samian exiles and against the tyrant Polycrates (c. 525 BCE)
- The import of LG Lakonian pottery in such numbers in Samos is to some extent corroborating evidence of a special relationship between the two poleis from the early archaic period.



FOLLOW-UP READING

- Cartledge, Paul. *Sparta and Lakonia : A Regional History, 1300-362 BCE*, London, 2002, pp.88-112
- L. H. Jeffery, L.H. and Cartledge, P. “Sparta and Samos: A Special Relationship?” *The Classical Quarterly, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1982), pp. 243-265*
- This reading can be found online.



PRE-WORKSHOP READING

READ:

Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*

Ogden, D. 'Crooked Speech: The Genesis of the Spartan Rhetra' *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 114. (1994), pp. 85-102.

Kõiv, Mait. "The Origins, Development, and Reliability of the Ancient Tradition about the Formation of the Spartan Constitution" *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Vol. 54, no. 3 (2005), p. 233-264.

Ellen G. Millender "Spartan Literacy Revisited" *Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Apr., 2001), pp. 121-164



RHETRA DEBATE

Questions you will cover:

- Was the Great Rhetra was written as a single document?
- Was the Great Rhetra was written by Lycurgus?
- Did the Great Rhetra gives the Gerousia and the Kings the power to overturn a vote of the people?



QUESTIONS?

