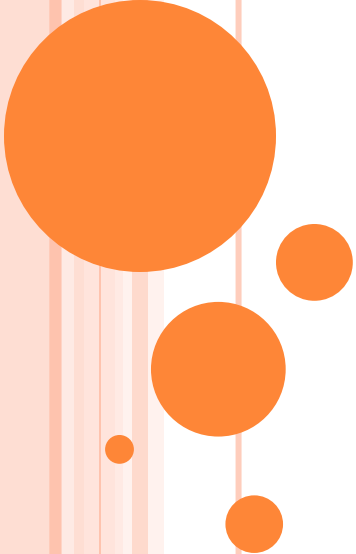




SPARTA: AN EXTRAORDINARY CITY

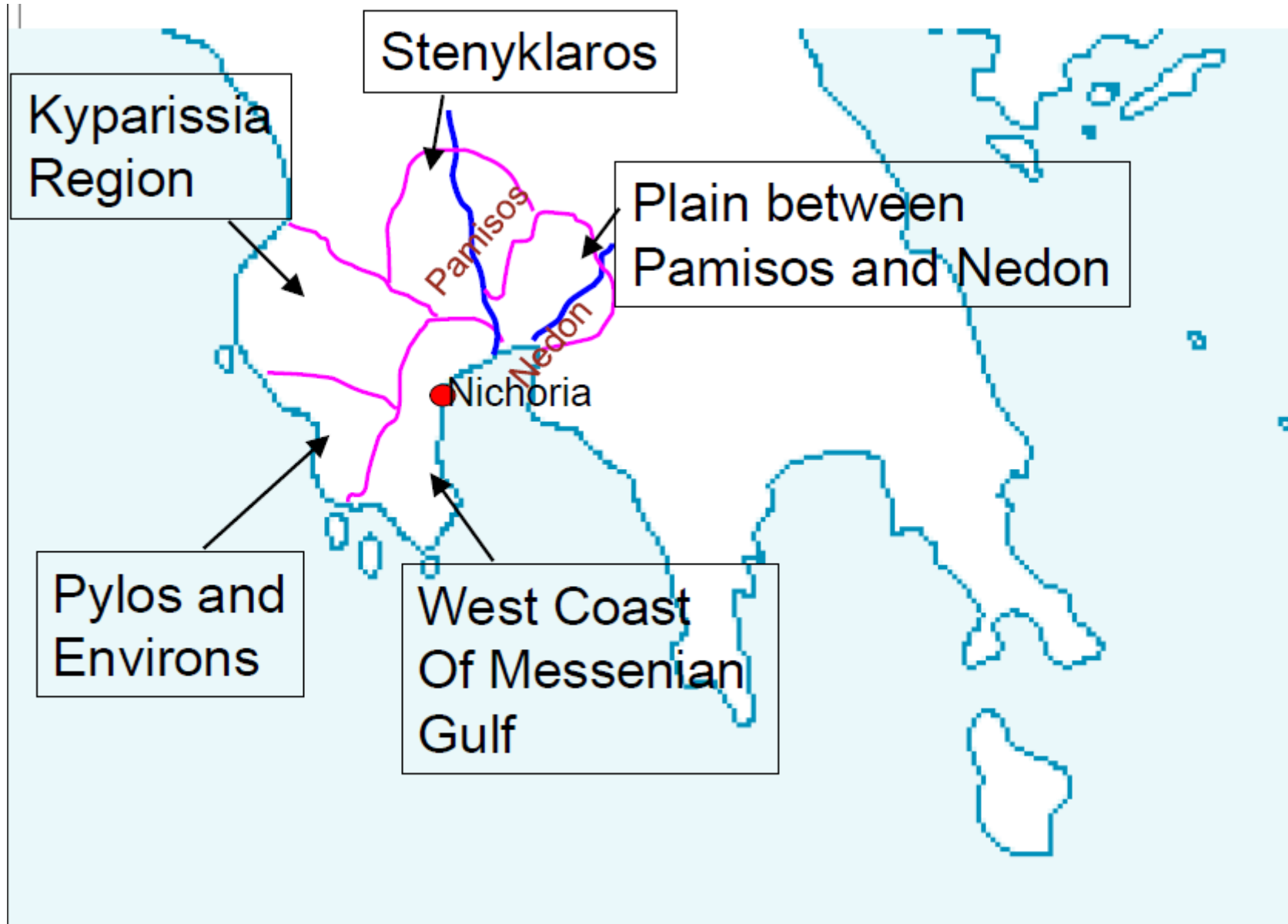
Lecture 6: Expansion

MESSENIA

- Messenia had a richer Bronze Age history than Lakonia with major example the palace at Pylos.
- However in the early Iron Age, Lakonia seems to have been less sparsely populated than Messenia.
- By the early archaic period, there is considerable settlement.



MESSENIAN GEOGRAPHY: REGIONS



MESSENIA AND SPARTA

- A lot of Spartan history in the archaic and classical periods has to do with Messenia.



But Messenia is not the whole story

THE FIRST INVASION

- The first invasion of Messenia by the Spartans happened probably in the last decades of the 8th century, although the dates are not quite certain.
- In the same period, the tradition mentions other conflicts in mainland Greece, such as the Lelantine War between Chalcis and Eretria.
- All we know about these conflicts comes from later sources and may be hopelessly corrupted.



1ST MESSENIAN WAR: OBJECTIVE

- Stenyklaros was the Spartan objective in the First Messenian War.
- Stenyklaros is the main plain in Messenia and it is very fertile.

*And in the 20th, leaving
their rich fields, the
Messenians fled from
the great mountains of
Ithome*

Tyrtaios F5.

Trans: Dillon & Garland
1994: p. 150.



THE WAR

To our king Theopompos, friend of the gods, because of whom we took spacious Messene, Messene good to plough, good to plant. They fought for 19 years unceasingly and always stout of heart, the spearmen fathers of our fathers. And in the 20th leaving their rich fields, the Messenians fled from the great mountains of Ithome.

Tyrtaios F5

Trans: Dillon & Garland 1994: p. 150.



THE WAR

- Tyrtaios says that the war lasted 20 years but that does not mean 20 years of all out warfare.
- Probably most of the warfare took place in the summer months between the various agricultural cycles.
- Note that the Messenians had been found in Ithome; later in the 5th century revolt, Ithome would once again be the main seat of the revolt.



THE AFTERMATH

- Probably the Spartans did not go further than Stenyklaros itself during the First Messenian War.
- Eventually quite a few of the communities of the lower Pamisos and the Nedon came under Spartan control.



THE MESSENIANS

- Some of the conquered Messenians left the area, either to overseas settlements or Arcadia.
- But the majority stayed in Messenia.
- CAUTION: The Messenians at this time were a conquered population not helots.



THE CONQUERED PEOPLE

Just like donkeys oppressed with great burdens,
bringing to their masters of grievous necessity
half of all the produce their land bears.

Tyrtaios F6 (=Pausanias 4.14.4-5)

Transl: Dillon & Garland (1994:335)



ANACHRONISMS

Be very careful not to commit the following anachronisms:

1. NO all-out warfare
2. NO army of occupation (yet)
3. NO absentee Spartan landlords (yet)
4. NO krypteia or helotage (yet)



THE WAR AND EARLY ARCHAIC REALITY

- The conquest of Messenia was not an aberration in the period.
- Border wars were common in the Greek world throughout the archaic and classical periods.



MESSENIA AND COLONISATION

- The 8th and 7th centuries BCE were the time of great Greek expansion overseas.
- Most poleis looked towards new territories to relieve pressures at home.
- But conquest of a nearby region was an alternative to settlement overseas.



TARAS

- In the same period, immediately after the end of the 1st Messenian War, Sparta established its only official archaic colony: Taras.



OVERSEAS SETTLEMENTS

There were various reasons for the establishment of overseas settlements in the archaic period.

1. Land-hunger / overpopulation
2. Lack of resources, mainly metals
3. Political and/or social unrest



CAREFUL

- The vast majority of overseas settlements were **NOT official** state enterprises.
- On the contrary, colonisation in many cases depended on individuals who wanted a better/different life.



TARAS

Taras is a somewhat exceptional case for a Greek settlement abroad:

1. It was established purely for reasons of political/social unrest
2. It may have been a state-sponsored enterprise.



TARAS: STORIES AND POSSIBILITIES

- Both stories have to do with political and social unrest.
- Possibly both stories are later invention trying to explain the name Partheniai (=maiden"s sons).
- Possibly Ephoros' claim that if the colony was unsuccessful the Partheniai would get 1/5th of Messenia reflects some original quarrel in Sparta about the distribution of land in Messenia



A STORY OF CRISIS?

- The expansion towards the west and the Partheniai affair soon after suggest very strongly that Sparta was going through a crisis in the late 8th /early 7th centuries BCE.
- This crisis was paralleled in other poleis.



THE CRISIS OF THE EARLY ARCHAIC PERIOD

- This crisis, in Sparta and elsewhere, was social, economic and, consequently, political.
- The resumption and increase of long-distance trade along with renewed prosperity created inequality and a class of newly rich and influential men that were outside or on the fringes of the traditional elites.
- This new prosperity is seen not only in the increased number of grave-goods but also in the beginning of hoplite style warfare.



HOPLITES AND NEW MEN

- The evolution of the hoplite is a vastly debated subject.
- In the most basic level, the ability of more people to bear good iron arms and have heavy armour shows that they were more prosperous than before.



CHANGES, CRISIS AND COLONISATION



CRISIS, LAW AND POLITICAL REFORM

- In the course of the 7th century, the crisis started having consequences in the old poleis as well. This crisis and the efforts to alleviate it then found release in legislation and the writing of such legislation and, eventually, in political reform, often after a period of tyranny.



SPARTA, CRISIS AND SOLUTION

Sparta was part of this general process as the rest of the Greek world and a similar pattern can be detected.

1. The quest for new land to alleviate the economic problems, (i.e. conquest of Messenia)
2. The settlement of Taras in an effort to remove part of the disgruntled population.
3. Political Reform, i.e. the rhetra.



THE FIRST HALF OF THE 7TH CENTURY

- Sparta in the first half of the 7th century was not content with its new acquisitions in Messenia.
- It started taking a more active role in Peloponnesian affairs, i.e. attacked its neighbours.



THE WAR WITH ARGOS

- The Battle of Hysiai:

On returning to the road that leads to Tegea you see Cenchreae on the right of what is called the Wheel. Why the place received this name they do not say. Perhaps in this case also it was Cenchrias, son of Peirene, that caused it to be so called. Here are common graves of the Argives who conquered the Lacedaemonians in battle at Hysiae.

Pausanias 2.24.7



SPARTA AND ARGOS

- Sparta wanted to dominate the Peloponnese and so did Argos.
- That is seen in the power that Argos gained after the victory at Hysiai, when Argive power spread throughout the northern Peloponnese.



CONSEQUENCES OF HYSIAI:

THE MESSENIAN REVOLT



THE PROBLEM OF MESSENIAN PROPAGANDA

- The accounts of the Messenian revolt are a very difficult body of evidence, since, except for Tyrtaios, they all come from late sources.
- The problem in this case is compounded because later sources were influenced by Messenian propaganda after the liberation of Messenia in the 4th century.

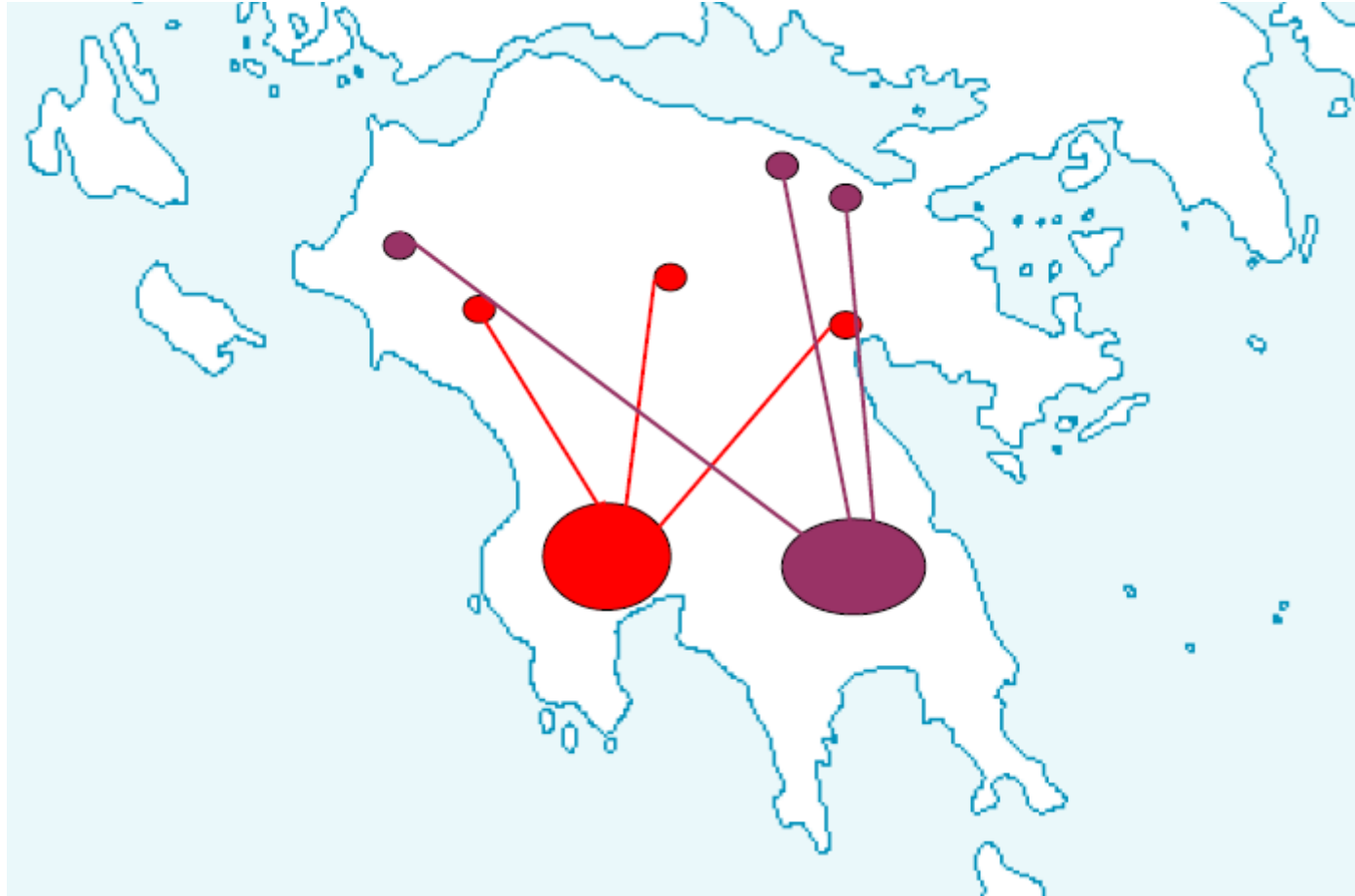


OUTSIDERS AND THE REVOLT

- The Messenian revolt was not only an internal affair.
- The rest of the Peloponnese also got embroiled in the conflict.



Argos, Arkadia and Elean Pisa sided with the Messenians



Corinth, Lepreon and probably the
majority of Elis sided with Sparta



THE END OF THE REVOLT

- Sparta after another long war triumphed. Quite probably at this time western Messenia was conquered



AFTER THE REVOLT

- After the end of the revolt comes a period of relative calm and prosperity for Sparta.
- The second half of the 7th century is a time of increased imports and massive exports of Lakonian pottery abroad.



THE END OF THE 7TH CENTURY

- By the end of the century war was again the order of the day and once again the forefront belongs to the conflict with Argos and to a lesser extent Arcadia (mainly Tegea).



THE BEGINNING OF THE 6TH CENTURY

- The first half of the 6th century was a time of almost constant campaigning.
- Sparta suffered some defeats mainly at the hand of the Tegeans.



DEFEAT BY TEGEA

- In consequence they soon ceased to be satisfied to stay quiet; and, regarding the Arcadians as very much their inferiors, they sent to consult the oracle about conquering the whole of Arcadia. The Pythoness thus answered them: Cravest thou Arcady? Bold is thy craving. I shall not content it. Many the men that in Arcady dwell, whose food is the acorn- They will never allow thee. It is not I that am niggard. I will give thee to dance in Tegea, with noisy foot-fall, And with the measuring line mete out the glorious campaign. When the Lacedaemonians received this reply, leaving the rest of Arcadia untouched, they marched against the Tegeans, carrying with them fetters, so confident had this oracle (which was, in truth, but of base metal) made them that they would enslave the Tegeans. The battle, however, went against them, and many fell into the enemy's hands. Then these persons, wearing the fetters which they had themselves brought, and fastened together in a string, measured the Tegean plain as they executed their labours. The fetters in which they worked were still, in my day, preserved at Tegea where they hung round the walls of the temple of Minerva Alea.

THE BONES OF ORESTES

Throughout the whole of this early contest with the Tegeans, the Lacedaemonians met with nothing but defeats; but in the time of Croesus, under the kings Anaxandrides and Aristo, fortune had turned in their favour, in the manner which I will now relate. Having been worsted in every engagement by their enemy, they sent to Delphi, and inquired of the oracle what god they must propitiate to prevail in the war against the Tegeans. The answer of the Pythoness was that before they could prevail, they must remove to Sparta the bones of Orestes, the son of Agamemnon. Unable to discover his burial-place, they sent a second time, and asked the god where the body of the hero had been laid. The following was the answer they received:

Level and smooth is the plain where Arcadian Tegea standeth;
There two winds are ever, by strong necessity, blowing, Counter-
stroke answers stroke, and evil lies upon evil. There all-teeming
Earth doth harbour the son of Atrides; Bring thou him to thy city,
and then be Tegea's master.

PROPAGANDA AND POWER

- Sparta scored an important propaganda point in the second quarter of the 6th century in recovering the “bones of Orestes” and subsequently the moral high ground in the their conflict with Tegea.
- The Tegean and, consequently, the other Arkadian resistance was broken and by the middle of the century Tegea was a Spartan ally.



ARGOS VS SPARTA

- In the same period the Argo-Spartan conflict was raging.
- The effective end of that phase of this long-standing conflict came just after the middle of the 6th century with the Battle of the Champions.



Now at this very time the Spartans themselves were feuding with the Argives over the country called Thyrea; for this was a part of the Argive territory which the Lacedaemonians had cut off and occupied. (All the land towards the west, as far as Malea, belonged then to the Argives, and not only the mainland, but the island of Cythera and the other islands.) The Argives came out to save their territory from being cut off, then after debate the two armies agreed that three hundred of each side should fight, and whichever party won would possess the land. ... Neither could gain advantage in the battle; at last, only three out of the six hundred were left, Alcenor and Chromios of the Argives, Othryades of the Lacedaemonians: these three were left alive at nightfall. Then the two Argives, believing themselves victors, ran to Argos; but Othryades the Lacedaemonian, after stripping the Argive dead and taking the arms to his camp, waited at his position. On the second day both armies came to learn the issue. For a while both claimed the victory, the Argives arguing that more of their men had survived, the Lacedaemonians showing that the Argives had fled, while their man had stood his ground and stripped the enemy dead. At last from arguing they fell to fighting; many of both sides fell, but the Lacedaemonians gained the victory.



BEGINNINGS OF THE PELOPONNESIAN LEAGUE

- The middle of the century was a period of great Spartan power.
- Argos had retreated at least for the time being.
- The alliance with Tegea became the beginning of a series of Spartan alliances in the Peloponnese with Sparta as leader.



SPARTA AND CROESUS

Croesus, then, aware of all this, sent messengers to Sparta with gifts to ask for an alliance, having instructed them what to say. They came and said:

“Croesus, King of Lydia and other nations, has sent us with this message: ‘Lacedaemonians, the god has declared that I should make the Greek my friend; now, therefore, since I learn that you are the leaders of Hellas, I invite you, as the oracle bids; I would like to be your friend and ally, without deceit or guile.’”

Croesus proposed this through his messengers; and the Lacedaemonians, who had already heard of the oracle given to Croesus, welcomed the coming of the Lydians and swore to be his friends and allies; and indeed they were obliged by certain benefits which they had received before from the king. For the Lacedaemonians had sent to Sardis to buy gold, intending to use it for the statue of Apollo which now stands on Thornax in Laconia; and Croesus, when they offered to buy it, made them a free gift of it. For this reason, and because he had chosen them as his friends before all the other Greeks, the Lacedaemonians accepted the alliance. So they declared themselves ready to serve him when he should require, and moreover they made a bowl of bronze, engraved around the rim outside with figures, and large enough to hold twenty-seven hundred gallons, and brought it with the intention of making a gift in return to Croesus.



SPARTA ABROAD

- The power of Sparta is best illustrated in its alliance with Croesus of Lydia.
- Spartan horizons had expanded dramatically by the mid-6th century and Sparta is now considered a major power not only in the Peloponnese but also in the wider Greek world.



EXPANDED HORIZONS

- The second half of the 6th century was a time of expanded horizons.
- Sparta no longer looked only at the Peloponnese but intervened widely in mainland Greece and the Aegean.



SPARTA THE LIBERATOR

- The second half of the 6th century was also the time when a large part of the Spartan myth was constructed.
- Sparta intervened widely, from Corinth to Athens to Samos, mainly against tyrants.



SPARTA AGAINST TYRANNY

- Sparta expelled
 1. the last of the Kypselids from Corinth,
 2. the Pisistratids from Athens
 3. Supported the Samian rebels against Polykrates



SPARTAN INTERVENTION

- The precise political reasons for this series of interventions in the internal politics of other poleis are unknown to us.
- What is certain, however, is that during this period and certainly later the actions of Sparta against tyrants became a major propaganda point in favour of Sparta



SPARTA AT THE END OF THE 6TH CENTURY

- Sparta in the second half of the 6th century realised its potential as the most powerful polis in Greece.
- This was best expressed in the first decades of the 5th century when Sparta became the leader of the Greek alliance in the Persian Wars.



FOLLOW-UP READING

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- Luginbill, R.D. “Tyrtaeus 12 West: Come Join the Spartan Army” *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 52, No. 2 (2002), pp. 405-41
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QUESTIONS?

