1. **GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING**

➢ **GEOGRAPHY**

- Located in *Lakonia or Lacedaemonia* → southern end of the *Peloponnese* (large peninsula at the southern tip of the Greek mainland)
- Territory of Lakonia = 2560 square km, divided into three distinct topographic zones:
  1. **The Eurotas valley**: only 80 square km, fertile, well-watered and well-populated, bounded by various mountain ranges.
     o **west** of Sparta → *TAYGETUS* mountain range
     o **east** of Sparta → *PARNON* mountain range
     o **north** of Sparta → *ARCADIAN* mountains
     o Mountains surrounded Sparta forming a natural barrier to the alluvial valley
     o Welsh notes that a trans-Laconian road system made movement within Lakonia relatively easy
     o The Eurotas valley contained the home estates of the Spartans → Messenia provided the greater part of agricultural wealth
     o Sparta located on the western side of the Eurotas river

2. **The hill country: to the east**

3. **The coastal plain**: Contained Laconia’s only ports of Pharae and *Gytheion*, 42km south of Sparta

- **Villages of Sparta**:
  o Pitane
  o Limnae
  o Mesoa
  o Kynosoura
  o Amyclae (5 km to the south)

➢ **RESOURCES AND CLIMATE**

- Climate was one of extremes → cold in winter and hot in summer
- Rainfall light in July and August, but sufficient rain for agriculture
- Eurotas valley is an alluvial plain → well-watered by the Eurotas River + easy to cultivate (stones which the river washed up made the land more suitable to the cultivation of fruit trees and olives)
- River provided water → small but very fertile Lakonian plain allowed cultivation of crops
- Mountain ranges remain snow capped all year → lower wooded areas provided excellent hunting grounds and timber
- Messene to the west + Thyreatis plain → both fertile regions suitable for both arable and pastoral agriculture
- Natural harbour at Gytheion
- **Lakonian produce**: *crops: barley, wheat, figs and olives*. also cultivated *orchards and vineyards (grapes)*, livestock included *sheep and goats* → provided milk, for cheese, skins, wool and hair, fat and perhaps meat, hides tanned and made into leather, *pigs, horses, wild boar, hare* could be hunted for both sport and food (mountain forests of Taygetus), *bees were colonised for honey*
and wax, hens produced eggs, shellfish, fish and seafood from Lakonian gulf, mollusks = dye for the Spartan phoinikis, plentiful supply of clay for pottery, deposits of iron and lead but had to import copper and tin to make bronze

- **Strabo** reports that there were quarries of marble and limestone
- **Strabo**: Messenia → a land of fine fruit and water by innumerable streams, abounding in
- **Xenophon** “simple but plentiful supply of food available.”
- **Tyrtaeus** territory of Messenia was “good to plough and good to sow”
- **Welsh** states together the topography and resources of Lakonia resulted in a ‘self-sufficient area enclosed by natural barriers, which protected rather than isolated the Spartans.’

➢ **SIGNIFICANT SITES**
- Polis of Sparta made up of 5 scattered villages that joined together
- Contrast to other ancient Greek poleis, Sparta was not a compact fortified city-state center with monumental civic and religious buildings → loose collection of smaller villages spaced over a large rural area and low hills
- **Had no fortified wall for most of history** (mountains served as barrier)
- **Highest of these knolls served as the Acropolis:**
  - Spartan acropolis was not a true fortified acropolis as such but rather a high rocky outcrop
  - In the Hellenistic period a theater and agora were built near the Acropolis
  - Chief temples were either on outskirts of town or several km away
- **The Menelaion at Therapne**
- **The Temple of Artemis Orthia**
- **Temple of Athena Chalkioikos**
  - On the top of the Acropolis, just to the north of the theater
  - Had its interior decorated with bronze sheets
  - **Pausanias (3.17.2): There is a Sanctuary built here of Athena Poliouchos (Athena Guardian of the City), who is also called Athena Chalkioikos (Athena of the Bronze House). According to the story it was Tyndareus who started the building of this Sanctuary, and when he died his sons wanted to finish the building from the spoils of Aphidna...**
- **Temple of Apollo at Amyclae**
- **Agora**

➢ **Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War:** “I think future generations would, as time passed, find it very difficult to believe that the place had really been as powerful as it was represented to be
2. SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

**Background Information**
- When the Greeks first lived in settled conditions their society was based on the following groupings:
  - **The tribe:** a large group of families claiming descent from a common ancestor
  - **The clan:** a smaller group of families who were part of the tribe
  - **The phratry:** meaning brotherhood another smaller grouping within the clan, sometimes structured according to religious purposes
  - **The oikos:** the single family unit
- Poet TYRTAEUS wrote that originally Sparta contained three main tribes: **HYLLEIS, DYMANES, PAMPHYLOI**
- When they took part in the *Karneia*, Athenaeus: divided into nine phratriai
- Divided into five distinct obai

**Perioikoi [dwellers around]**
- Shipley: contributed multifariously to society
- AUTONOMOUS/free inhabitants of the many communities throughout Lakonia, Messenia and along coastline of Sparta
  - Cartledge: occupied the less fertile hill land and coastal areas of Laconia and Messenia, around 80 towns and villages
  - AUTONOMOUS AND INDEPENDENT, managed own internal affairs and has local rights of citizenship
  - Allied to Sparta, obligated to render various services in return for protection, at disposal for economic and military purposes
  - But had no voice in the government or foreign affairs of Sparta, could not conduct any independent foreign policy/alliances
- Mostly farmers, but also traders and craftsmen
- Sparta restrained them and prevented them from prospering, couldn’t build any monumental civic buildings or temples