

SPARTA – A WARRIOR STATE

In the 10th century BC, a group of Dorians settled in Sparta, in Laconia, southern Greece, which became the nucleus of a thriving state. The Spartans soon acquired a reputation for toughness and military strength. After overpowering the local people, they extended their frontiers by conquering nearby Messenia in 740-720BC. Sparta was now one of the largest Greek states of its day.

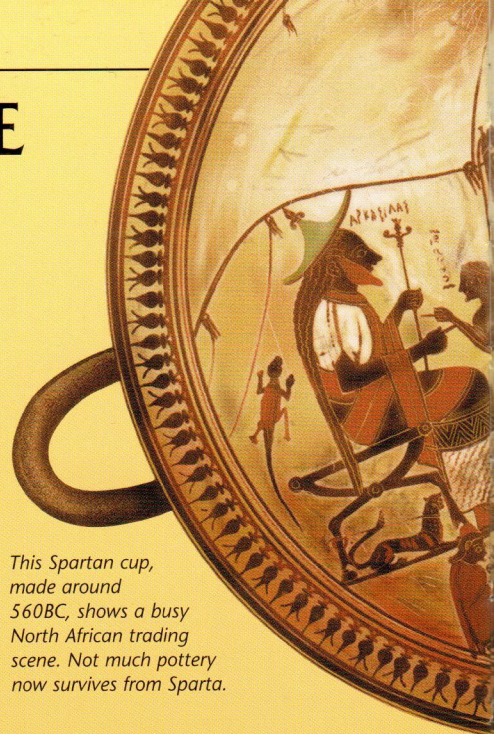


Map showing Sparta and Argos

TRADE AND PROSPERITY

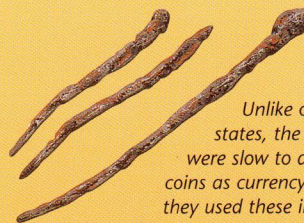
Not only was Sparta one of the largest states, it also had enough fertile land to make it self-sufficient in food. At the start of the Archaic Period, the Spartans were trading with other Greek states, importing luxury goods, such as ivory, amber and cloth.

This bronze figure shows a Spartan warrior of the 5th century BC.



This Spartan cup, made around 560BC, shows a busy North African trading scene. Not much pottery now survives from Sparta.

The Spartans themselves produced fine metalware and vases, and were also said to have played a role in the development of Greek music.



Unlike other states, the Spartans were slow to adopt coins as currency. Instead they used these iron rods.

SPARTA WEAKENED

Their early success was not to last. In 668BC, they were defeated in a war against Argos, another local state. In 630BC, the Messenians began a revolt which dragged on for 17 years. This convinced the Spartans they must make drastic changes - both to keep the population under control and to protect themselves from foreign invasions.