



Spartans used iron rods like those above as money. This discouraged trade. Instead, Sparta's economy depended on farming, as shown by the figures on the cup from ancient Greece, at right.

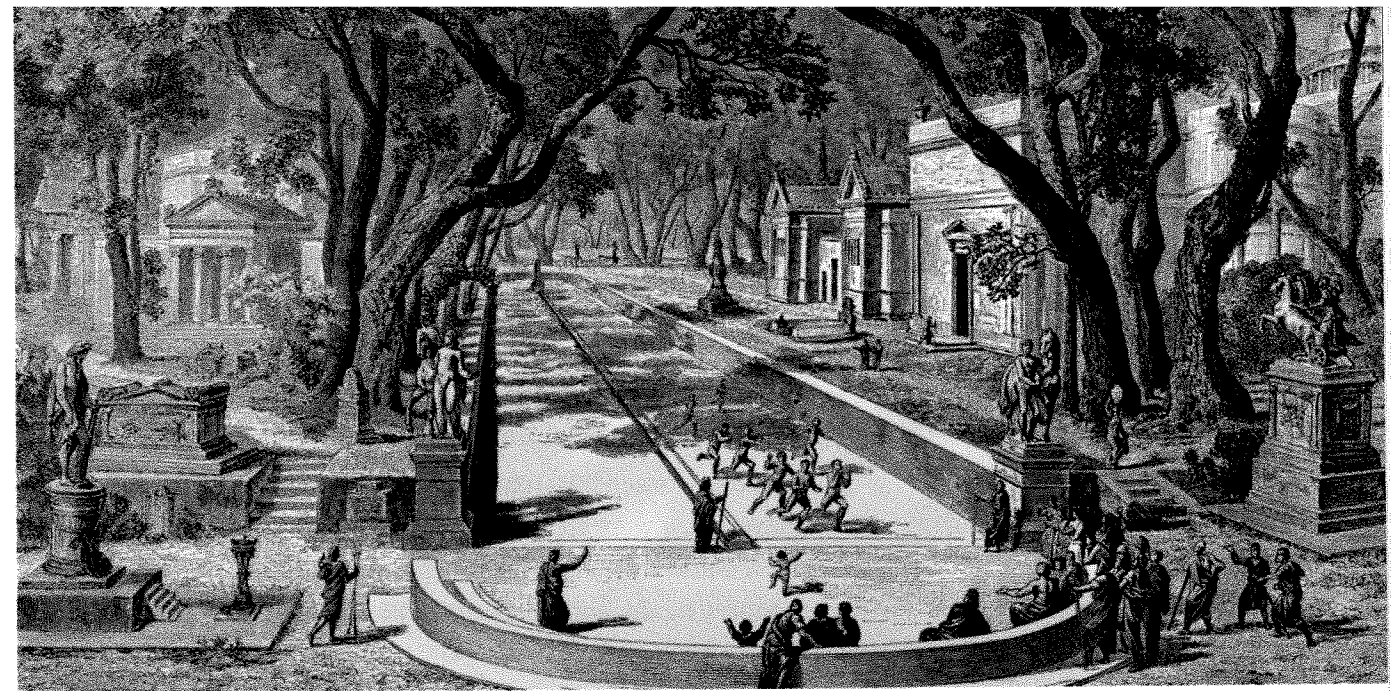
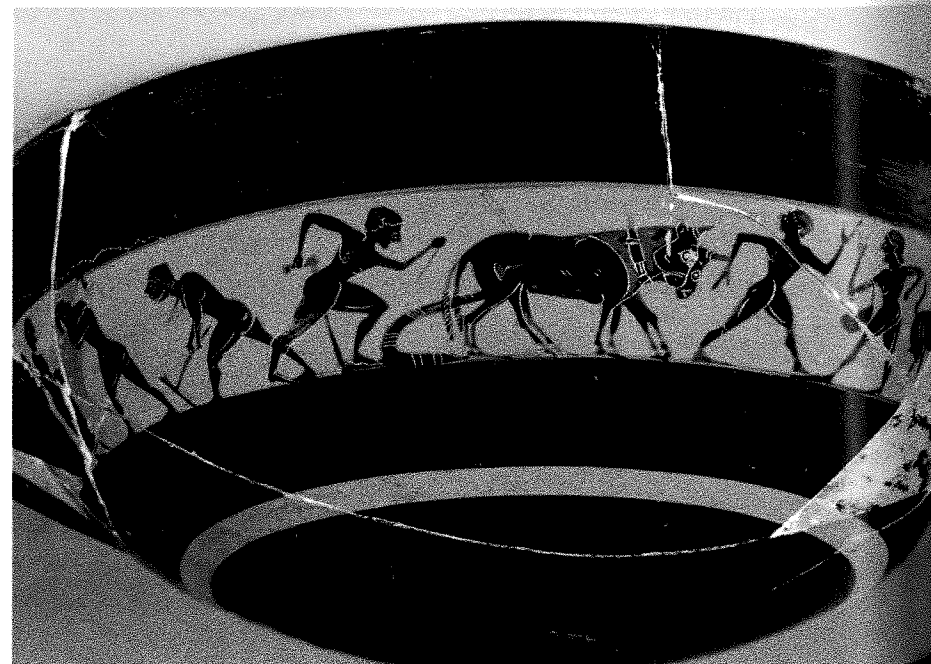
27.8 Spartan Economy

While Athens's economy depended on trade, Sparta's economy relied on farming and on conquests of other people. Although Sparta had fertile soil, there was not enough land to provide food for everyone. When necessary, Spartans took the lands they needed from their neighbors, who were then forced to work for Sparta. Because Spartan men were expected to serve in the army until the age of 60, Sparta had to rely on slaves and noncitizens to produce the goods it lacked.

Conquered villagers became slaves, called helots. The helots were allowed to live in their own villages, but they had to give much of the food they grew to Sparta.

The Spartans also made use of a second group of people—noncitizens who were free. Noncitizens might serve in the army when needed, but they could not take part in Sparta's government. They were responsible for making such necessary items as shoes, red cloaks for the soldiers, iron tools like knives and spears, and pottery. They also conducted some trade with other city-states for goods that Sparta could not provide for itself.

In general, though, Sparta discouraged trade. The Spartans feared that contact with other city-states would lead to new ideas that might weaken the government. Trading with Sparta was already difficult because of its system of money. Rather than use coins, Spartans used heavy iron bars as money. According to legend, an ancient Spartan leader decided to use this form of money to discourage stealing. An iron bar had little value. A thief would have needed to steal a wagonload of bars to make the theft worthwhile. As you might guess, other city-states were not anxious to receive iron as payment for goods.



27.9 Education in Sparta

In Sparta, the purpose of education was to produce **capable** men and women who could fight to protect the city-state. Spartans were likely to **abandon** sickly infants who might not grow up to be strong soldiers.

Spartans highly valued discipline and strength. From the age of 7, all Spartan children trained for battle. Even girls were given some military training. They learned wrestling, boxing, footracing, and gymnastics. Spartan boys lived and trained in buildings called barracks. Boys learned to read and write, but those skills were not considered as essential as military skills.

The most important Spartan goal was to be a brave soldier. Spartan boys were taught to suffer any amount of physical pain without complaining. They marched without shoes. They were not well fed; in fact, they were encouraged to steal food, as long as they did not get caught. One Spartan legend tells of a boy who was so hungry, he stole a fox to eat. But seeing his teacher coming, the boy quickly hid the fox under his cloak. The boy chose to let the fox bite him in the stomach rather than be caught stealing by his teacher.

At about the age of 20, Spartan men were given a difficult test of fitness, military ability, and leadership skills. If they passed, they became Spartan soldiers and full citizens. Even then, they continued to live in soldiers' barracks, where they ate, slept, and trained with their classmates. A man could not live at home with his wife and family until he was 30 years old. At the age of 60, Spartan men could retire from the army.

Boys in Sparta often exercised in outdoor areas.