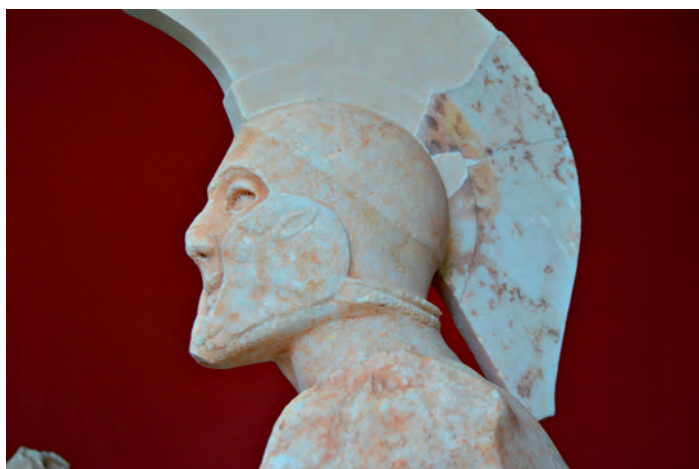Ryszard Kulesza

Sparta: History, State and Society

PETER LANG

Ryszard Kulesza

Sparta: History, State and Society

Richly illustrated with citations from ancient authors, the book *Sparta* introduces the reader to the universe of a polis which in the fifth and fourth century BC was a Greek superpower. Part I describes Sparta's political institutions and mechanisms of govern- ance, the structure of its society, the family, education, lifestyle and, naturally, the organization of the Spartan army and military life. Part II is an outline of the history of Sparta, and Greece, in the two centuries when the polis was at the peak of its influ- ence, extending also into the period of its waning. The book closes with an analysis of 'imaginary Sparta' and the ways the Spartan legend has been employed in the shaping of various identities from the early modern era to the present.

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The Spartans were a strange people who always have excited, and always will excite, the curiosity of those who would essay the difficult, and at times, baffling task of studying them and their political and social institutions.

(H. Michell, 1952, 1)

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Abbreviations

Ael.	Aelian (Claudius Aelianus), late second – early third century AD
	Var. Hist. – Varia Historia
Ar.	Aristophanes, mid-fifth – early fourth century BC
	Lys. – Lysistrata
Arist.	Aristotle, 384–322 BC
	Pol. – Politiká
Athen.	Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistaí*, late second – early third century AD
Aul. Gell.	Aulus Gellius, c. 125 – after 180 AD
Cic.	Cicero, Marcus Tullius, 106–43 BC
	De Rep. – De Republica
	Div. – De Divinatione
	Flac. – *Flaccus*
Dem.	Demosthenes, 384–322 BC
Diod.	Diodorus Siculus, first century BC
Dion. Hal.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, c. 60 – c. 7 BC
DK	*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, H. Diels W. Kranz, Berlin 1951–1954
Exc. Pol.	Heracleides Lembus, second century BC, *Excerpta Politiarum*
FGrHist.	*Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, F. Jacoby, 1923–1958
fr.	fragment
Hdt.	Herodotus, c. 480–429 BC
Hell. Oxy.	*Hellenika Oxyrhynchia*, second quarter of the fourth century BC
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*, Berlin 1873
Isokr.	Isocrates, 436–338 BC
	6 – *Archidamus* (ostensibly a speech by Archidamus III)
	8 – *On the Peace*
	12 – *Panathenaicus*
Iust.	Justinus, Marcus Junianus, second century AD, *Epitome*
Liv.	Livy (Titus Livius), 59 BC – 17 AD
Nat. Hist.	Pliny the Elder, c. 23–79 AD, *Naturalis Historia*
Nep.	Cornelius Nepos, c. 99–24 BC
	Ages. – Agesilaus
	Lys. – Lysander
Paus.	Pausanias, second century AD

Plato   Plato, c. 428–347 BC
                      Alk. – Alcibiades
                      Ep. – Epistulae
                      Pol. – Republic
                      Prot. – Protagoras
Plut.   Plutarch of Chaeronea, c. 46–120 AD
                      Ages. – Agesilaus
                      Agis – Agis (IV)
                      Alkib. – Alcibiades
                      Comp. Lyc. Num. – Comparison of Lycurgus and Numa
                      Demetrios – Demetrius
                      Graec. Quaest. – Quaestiones Graecae
                      Inst. Lac. – Instituta Laconica
                      Kleom. – Cleomenes (III)
                      Lyk. – Lycurgus
                      Lys. – Lysander
                      Mor. – Moralia
                      Pelop. – Pelopidas
                      Per. – Pericles
                      Phok. – Phocion
Poll.   Pollux, second century AD, *Onomastikon*
Polyainos, *Strat.*   Polyaenus, second century AD, *Strategemata*
Polyb.   Polybius, second century BC
Ps. Plato *Alk.*   Pseudo-Plato, *Alcibiades*
SEG   *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden 1923
SIG   *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, G. Dittenberger, Leipzig 1883
Tac.   Tacitus, Publius Cornelius, c. 56 – c. 120 AD, *Annales*
Thuk.   Thucydides, c. 455 – after 400 BC
Xen.   Xenophon, c. 430 – after 355 BC
                      Ages. – Agesilaus
                      Anab. – Anabasis
                      Cyrop. – Cyropaedia
                      Hell. – Hellenica
                      Lak. Pol. – Lacedaemonion Politeia

Introduction

> Suppose the city of Sparta to be deserted, and nothing left but the temples and the ground-plan, distant ages would be very unwilling to believe that the power of the Lacedaemonians was at all equal to their fame. And yet they own two-fifths of the Peloponnesus, and are acknowledged leaders of the whole, as well as of numerous allies in the rest of Hellas. But their city is not built continuously, and has no splendid temples or other edifices; it rather resembles a group of villages like the ancient towns of Hellas, and would therefore make a poor show. Whereas, if the same fate befell the Athenians, the ruins of Athens would strike the eye, and we should infer their power to have been twice as great as it really is. We ought not then to be unduly sceptical. The greatness of cities should be estimated by their real power and not by appearances.
>
> <div align="right">(Thuk. 1.10.2–3, trans. B. Jowett)</div>

Thucydides's statement is necessarily recalled both when we attempt to study the convoluted history of ancient Sparta and when we walk around the contemporary city that grew on the spot once occupied by the old one. Today, Sparta has less than twenty thousand residents and at the first glance it hardly differs from many other Greek towns of a similar size. The crucial difference lies in the regularity of its street plan and its spaciousness. This is not surprising, considering that it was founded *in cruda radice* in the year 1834, following the Hippodameian plan. The plan that was laid out as ordered by King Otto was for a city intended for a hundred thousand residents. Much water will surge down the Eurotas before the city fills with such crowds; neither do today's Spartans have much, if anything, in common with the ancient ones. They are descendants of newcomers from Asia Minor and from various parts of Greece.

The first impression, aroused by the width of the streets and the shapes of the buildings, soon proves erroneous and the city and its residents turn out to be truly likeable; the fact remains, however, that looking for the material traces of Sparta's former might we shall certainly be, as predicted by Thucydides, disappointed.

In Sparta's spacious acropolis, among olive trees and many, if unimpressive, traces of mostly Roman edifices, of which the theatre was the most striking, it was with some difficulty that many years ago I found the temple of Athena Chalkioikos, or rather the modest outlines of its foundations (Catling 1998, 24). There was something extraordinary in the aura of that place. Only a few hundred metres distant from the busy town, the acropolis of Sparta seemed remote, as if lost; a locus outside time. The snowy peaks of the Taygetus, the mellow bleating of sheep grazing in the olive groves at the foot of the acropolis, goats frisking in the ruins of the theatre and a turtle wandering among the stones in the auditorium brought into sharp relief the difference that exists – as it existed also in the past – between the Spartan acropolis and the busy, noisy environs of the Athenian

Acropolis. If, walking back from the acropolis, we turn towards the Eurotas, at the edge of the city we shall see the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia surrounded with a wire-mesh fence. Although this may have been a cult site since a much earlier period, the first altar and the temple dedicated to the goddess – first called simply Orthia, later Artemis Orthia – were built ca. the year 700 BC at the earliest; the wall marking the boundary of the temenos was built at the same time. That temple was destroyed, most probably flooded by the Eurotas, in the sixth century BC. A new, larger temple *in antis* was constructed in the place of the old one, and the temenos was expanded. The last alterations are dated to the Roman period, when the sanctuary gained its final, monumental form. In the third century AD, the temple and the altar were included into the area of the amphitheatre, whose remains are still visible today. In this place, British archaeologists discovered thousands of valuable pieces, on the basis of which the history of Laconian art was reconstructed. Here, again, only the outlines of foundations of the Archaic period temple and later structures are visible, rising but a little above the ground level.

Apart from the acropolis and the temple of Artemis Orthia, only one more structure extant in today's Sparta is thought to date from the Classical period. It is the Leonidaion, an odd rectangular construction made of stone blocks, which was reported to be the tomb of King Leonidas, fallen at the Thermopylae. Other traces of Antiquity in Sparta date from as late as the Imperial period, and they can be investigated by reading scholarly studies rather than by trying to guess what is concealed inside the fenced-off plots of land in which the archaeologists find the remnants of ancient – in fact, mainly Roman – buildings.

There are, however, two more sites in the vicinity of Lycurgus's city that were of great importance in the Classical period. The first of them lies at least an hour's walk from Sparta, on a hill called the Menelaion, from which spreads a wonderful panorama of the city and the Taygetus range. This is where ca. 700 BC the cult of Menelaus and Helen had stated, as we are informed by numerous votive objects. It would be interesting to know why it was founded so uncomfortably far from the city and in such an inaccessible place; perhaps this was because the Spartans traditionally believed that this was where Menelaus and his semi-divine wife Helen had once dwelt. The foundations of a small structure was indeed discovered close to the Menelaion, which Hector Catling (1998, 26) considers to be the remnants of a proto-palace from the second half of the fifteenth century BC. It is, however, also possible that the main Mycenaean centre was located in a still different place, close to Vaphio or Pellana.

The second of those sites lies even farther away. Walking southwards towards Gytheion, we shall reach the village of Amyklai, besides which we shall find the temple of Apollo Amyklaios. Today, a small Orthodox church stands on the site. The mighty wall shows how massive the temple must have been, and shards of old pottery scattered all around clearly indicate that in this remote but charming site we come truly close to the period from two and a half thousand years ago.

Most of the finds from the temple at Amyklai, from Menelaion and from the temples of Athena Chalkioikos and Artemis Orthia are held at the Museum of

Sparta, opened in 1874. This is the true treasury of the ancient town. Yet walking through the exhibition rooms, we may again think, following Thucydides, about Athens; this treasury seems modest, at least with regard to the Classical period. In fact, this impression will be, to some extent, correct, since in the fifth century BC culture or art hardly flourished at Sparta. On the other hand, however, warned by Thucydides that "the greatness of cities should be estimated by their real power and not by appearances", let us consider the origins and the nature of the power which from the seventh to the fourth century BC Sparta certainly did wield.

With the area of nearly 8,500 km^2, the ancient Sparta (*Sparte*, Doric: *Sparta*) was the largest polis of Greece proper. It encompassed Laconia (*Lakonike ge*) (ca. 5,000 km^2, Shipley 2004a, 569–598), Messenia (*Messene*) (ca. 3,240 km^2, Shipley 2004b, 547–568), and the island of Cythera (*Kythera*) (260 km^2) located at the Peloponnesian shore. The citizens of Sparta were known as the Spartiates or the Laconians. The term Lacedaemonians, in turn, denoted both the citizens enjoying full rights and the perioikoi who did not have full political rights, but enjoyed personal freedom and autonomy in their settlements.

The citizens, who described themselves as *homoioi* (equal, similar, or even identical), did not engage in profit-making activities; maintaining the Spartiates was the task of the subjugated helots, who farmed the "land portions" (*kleroi*) belonging to the citizens. All Spartiates went through a formation period lasting from the age of seven to the age of twenty, during which their education was controlled by the state. Adult Spartiates spent most of their time together, participating in daily meals (*syssitia*), military drills, physical exercises, and the meetings of the People's Assembly.

Sparta, a country of brave warriors who led an austere life and were boundlessly devoted to their homeland, has always aroused conflicting emotions: fascination and admiration, but also dislike and even hatred. Testimonies to of such attitudes are found both in the Antiquity and in later eras. The less was known about Sparta, the more readily the Spartan model was evoked.

> Since the Renaissance the "Spartan legend", i.e. the glorification of Ancient Sparta as a political, social and moral ideal, has played an important part in European politics, civilization and literature. Italian Humanists, Spanish Jesuits, French Calvinists, English Puritans, French Revolutionaries, German Romanticists, English Aesthetes, French Nationalists, German Nazis have looked to ancient Sparta and adduced its example in support of their theories. (Tigerstedt 1965, 17)

As a model, Sparta was most often treated purely instrumentally. The point was not to look for the real picture of ancient Sparta, but to keep to the stereotypes, often selected with a bias, and in them to discover a confirmation of the already entrenched attitudes. The image of Sparta changed like a chameleon, getting adjusted to the environment that created it for its own needs. So far, the most extreme embodiment of this idealisation was, as Henri Irenne Marrou put it, "a totalitarian state":

> But soldiering demanded morale as well as technical skill, and education took this
> into account. In fact, the point is particularly emphasized in all our sources. The whole
> purpose of Spartan education was to build up character according to a clearly defined
> ideal – an ideal that has reappeared in all its savage and inhuman grandeur in the to-
> talitarian states of twentieth-century Europe. (Marrou 1964, 45)

Its appropriation by the Third Reich resulted in the fact that after 1945, together
with the whole array of stereotypes, Sparta landed in the scholarly purgatory. It
began to gradually emerge from it in the 1970s, after a revival of Spartan studies
began with the publication of Geoffrey de Ste. Croix's research in 1972. The year
1983 is, in a sense, symbolic, having witnessed the publication of the German-
language synthesis by Manfred Clauss, which contained the *summa* of informa-
tion on Sparta at the time, and article *Social Order and the Conflict of Ideas in
Classical Sparta* by Stephen Hodkinson (Hodkinson 1983, 239–281), published in
the "Chiron" magazine, which opened a new era in the scholarly interest in La-
conia. Despite the continuously advancing research, many questions still await an
answer, among them the question whether Sparta was an ordinary or an excep-
tional polis. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, it was Athens that were
seen as exceptional and Sparta as typical; but in the twentieth century, following
the change in preferences regarding political systems, Sparta became exceptional,
and Athens, ordinary. Interestingly, an outstanding authority on Sparta, Stephen
Hodkinson (Hodkinson 1997; 1998; 2000; 2005; 2009, 417–472; 2018, 1, 29–57),
considers it to have been "remarkably normal by Greek standards", whereas an
outstanding authority on the polis, especially the Athenian democracy, Mogens
Herman Hansen (2009, 385–416) considers Sparta to have been exceptional.

The extent of information regarding Sparta naturally changed during the two
hundred years of scholarly research on its history (cf. Kennel 2010, 2). Although
today we know far more about it than we ever did, we are still at the start of the
journey, since many doubts, even regarding issues which are central to our un-
derstanding of the phenomenon of Sparta, have not yet been cleared. Fortunately,
however, we are able to quite clearly present the key moments in the history of
Sparta.

Its beginnings go back to the arrival of the Dorians to the Peloponnese towards
the end of the second millennium BC. In the tenth century, they lived in four
villages on the banks of the Eurotas, which together formed a community centred
around the temple of Athena Poliouchos on the acropolis and the nearby temple
of Artemis Orthia. The fifth village, Amyclae, located some 6 km south from the
others, joined the community in the ninth century, giving it its final shape. From
then on those five villages, collectively known as Sparta, constituted the political
centre of the Spartan state.

Soon the Spartans conquered the fertile region of Laconia, located in the
Eurotas valley. The broad plain was enclosed by the Taygetus range in the west
and Parnonas in the east. Mountains separated Laconia from its neighbours in the
north as well, providing it with conditions for safe development. It is in Laconia

that the distinctive social system of Sparta developed, with the citizens, who lived "in town" with their families, the helots, who lived in the countryside and farmed their land for them, and the perioeci living in separate settlements.

The Spartans themselves ascribed the creation of their state's socio-political system to the great lawgiver, Lycurgus (cf. e.g. Hooker 1988, 340–345; Hölkeskamp 2010, 316–335). Before, Sparta had the very worst legal system (*kakonomia*); he introduced the best one, which the Spartans described as *kosmos* (order, good regulation) or *eunomia* (the condition of having good laws). Lycurgus is a semi-legendary figure. His Greek biographer, Plutarch of Chaeronea, wrote:

> Generally speaking, it is impossible to make any undisputed statement about Lykourgos the lawgiver, since conflicting accounts have been given of his ancestry, his travels, his death, and above all of his activity with respect to his laws and government; but there is least agreement about the period in which the man lived. (Plut. *Lyk.* 1.1, trans. R.J.A. Talbert)

Investigating the historicity of Lycurgus is, however, a task that is productive and sterile at the same time, and certainly located outside the scope of this book; suffice it to say that the proposed dating of his lifetime and his reforms varies greatly, as they are placed in the ninth, eighth, and even seventh century BC. References to the "laws of Lycurgus" will appear repeatedly in the subsequent chapters of this book, but this does not indicate our taking a stance regarding the historicity of the lawgiver, but only serves to indicate that the ancients associated a given regulation or custom with him. This is because, while there is no certainty whether Lycurgus really existed, and if so, then when, we can be sure that the "laws of Lycurgus" did exist; this was the name which the Spartans (and other Greeks as well) gave to the set of regulations and customs in force in Sparta, even though those laws may have been introduced neither in the early period nor concurrently. In any case, until the beginning of the fifth century, as Massimo Nafissi (2018, 111) put it, "the whole edifice of political and social standards at Sparta was attributed to Lykourgos".

Also, from a certain point in time the Spartans believed that it was Lycurgus who divided the nine thousand, or at least a half of that number (see below, p. 28), of plots of land (*kleroi*) among the citizens, thereby freeing them from the duty to work and allowing them to devote all their time to serving the state. The so-called Great Rhetra, which was ascribed to Lycurgus (Meier 1998, 186 ff.; Luther 2004, 29–59; Nafissi 2010) introduced the institution of the council of elders (gerousia) to Sparta and defined the relations between the gerousia, the two kings and the People's Assembly (*damos*, *apella*):

> So eager was Lycurgus for the establishment of this form of government [i.e the gerousia], that he obtained an oracle from Delphi about it, which they call a 'rhetra'. And this is the way it runs: "When thou hast built a temple to Zeus Syllanius and Athena Syllania, divided the people into 'phylai' [*phylas phylaxanta*] and into 'obai' [*obas obaxanta*], and established a senate of thirty members [*gerousia*], including the 'archagetai' [chiefs, most likely kings], then from time to time 'appellazein' [gather

for assemblies] between Babyca and Cnacion and there introduce and rescind meas-
ures; but the people must have the deciding voice and the power." (Plut. *Lyk.* 6.1–2,
trans. B. Perrin)

The Great Rhetra was later amended by kings Theopompus and Polydorus, which
limited the apella's autonomy by giving the gerousia the right to rescind those of
its decisions that would be deemed harmful to the state:

> When the multitude [*plethos*] was thus assembled, no one of them was permitted
> to make a motion, but the motion laid before them by the senators and kings could
> be accepted or rejected by the people. Afterwards, however, when the people by
> additions and subtractions perverted and distorted the sense of motions laid before
> them, Kings Polydorus and Theopompus inserted this clause into the rhetra: 'But if
> the people should adopt a distorted motion, the senators and kings shall have power
> of adjournment' [*apostateres*]; that is, should not ratify the vote, but dismiss outright
> and dissolve the session, on the ground that it was perverting and changing the mo-
> tion contrary to the best interests of the state. (Plut. *Lyk.* 6.6–8)

Before the amendment was introduced (although it cannot be ruled out positively
that only after that), a five-person college of the ephors was established, which
counterbalanced the power of the kings (and possibly the gerontes as well). With
this, the political system of Sparta assumed its final form, which persisted, practi-
cally unchanged, until the turn of the fourth century BC.

As the social and political system of Sparta coalesced, so did its territorial
range. Sparta practically did not take part in the Greek colonization movement
(its only and exceptional colony was Taras (Taranto in Italy). Its main effort was
directed towards gaining control over, first, the entire Laconia, and then the fer-
tile lands of the neighbouring Messenia. Territories conquered during the First
Messenian War (in the second half of the eighth century BC; see Meier 1998,
91 ff.; Luraghi 2008, 68–106) became a part of the Spartan state. An attempt at
throwing off the Spartan yoke undertaken by the Messenians under the leadership
of Aristomenes, known as the Second Messenian War, engaged Sparta's energy
for thirty years in the second half of the seventh century. The war was won at
a greatest effort strengthened Sparta's power over the country, whose residents
were mostly turned into helots and the land was divided into *kleroi* for the citi-
zens. The subsequent wars were mostly frontier conflicts; they brought Cynuria
and Thyreatis under Sparta's government, but did not have any significant impact
on its fortunes. Sparta achieved its final territorial range with the conquest of the
island of Cythera in the sixth century and relinquished further conquests; instead,
it began to strengthen its political preponderance in the Peloponnese by means of
a system of alliances which coalesced into the Spartan Symmachia (in contempo-
rary studies often known as the Peloponnesian League). Sparta's leadership in the
Symmachia assured its hegemony over the peninsula, where its only possible rival
was Argos, a hostile neighbour too large for Sparta to easily deal with yet too small
to present a real threat.

From the eighth until the sixth century BC Sparta was a militant state, but at the same time, contrary to the saying that *inter armae silent Musae*, its culture and art were developing energetically. Poets from many corners of Greece visited it, evidently finding the Spartans a gracious audience. Three great poets of the Archaic period: the author of martial elegies Tyrtaeus and the makers of choral songs Alcman of Sardis and Terpander of Lesbos, worked in Sparta. The temples of Athena Chalkioikos, Artemis Orthia, Menelaus and Helen, and the temple of Apollo at Amyclae were built in the eighth century BC. In the sixth century BC, Skias was decorated with sculptures by Theodorus of Samos, and Bathycles of Magnesia sculpted the throne of Apollo Amyklaios. The outstanding architect and sculptor Gitiadas came from Sparta, and Cinaethon, one of the cyclic poets, to whom *Oedipodea*, *Little Iliad* and *Telegony* are ascribed, was a Lacedaemonian as well. Pottery flourished in the seventh and sixth century. Clay statuettes, figurines of bronze and lead, as well as objects of gold and ivory were produced in great numbers. Laconian craftsmen worked for the local market, but also exported their products.

There seems to be a clear divergence between the austere image of Sparta conveyed by the literary sources and the image that emerges from archaeological finds, according to which it was an entirely ordinary state. After all, it was reported that owing to Lycurgus (that is, in the ninth, eighth or even as late as the seventh century BC), wealth was eliminated from Spartan life, replaced by the principle of equality; the latter was fully realised slightly later, when the conquest of Messenia enlarged Sparta's territory and made it possible to increase the number of equal land portions granted to the citizens.

Excavations conducted in Sparta in the years 1906/1910 and 1924/1928 by the British School at Athens significantly changed that image. The very wealth of finds discovered in the early strata in the area of the temple of Artemis Orthia should have immediately overturned the traditional perception. This is because those finds clearly indicated that the realities of the Archaic period did not fit the image of the ascetic Sparta. Only in the middle of the sixth century BC (so, a long time after "Lycurgus") did the number and quality of finds decrease enough to suggest some momentous change that caused a widespread pauperisation evident in the fifth and fourth century BC. Hodkinson (1998 a, 107, tab. 2) demonstrated the rapid decrease in production based on the number of lead figurines discovered in the temple of Artemis Orthia. A similar process is discernible on the basis of other finds and other temples (e.g. in the Menelaion). The number of bronze finds from the temple of Artemis Orthia decreases starting from the middle of the sixth century BC (Hodkinson 1998 b, tab. 5. 1). Bronze jewellery and vessels, numerous in the period from 650 to 550 BC, become much more rare after 550 BC, and from ca. 500 until 350 BC they disappear altogether (Hodkinson 1998 b, tab. 5. 4 a–d).

However, the clear indications derived from materials sources did not immediately force the scholars to negate the worth of the literary tradition; on the contrary, attempts were made to reconcile those new finds with the statements indicating the sternness of Spartan culture.

Since Lycurgus was placed in the ninth, eighth or even seventh century BC, he could not have been responsible for Sparta's turn towards "austerity". In fact, archaeological finds indicated that a veritable explosion of opulence occurred there after the Second Messenian War. Efforts aimed at discovering in the literary tradition any reference to the reasons for the decrease in the number of archaeological finds in the middle of the sixth century caused a mysterious ephor by the name of Chilo to be designated as the author of the breakthrough (on the changes in the image of Sparta in scholarly literature, see Hodkinson 1998a, 93–96).

Considering that its citizens did not engage in craftsmanship (cf. e.g. Hodkinson 1998a, 110; 1998b, 55), there is one way in which archaeological finds may shed light on the changes occurring in Sparta, namely, by indicating the fluctuations in the demand on the part of the community buying the articles produced by the perioeci (and possibly also by foreign craftsmen). This is certainly a promising area of research; its potential success, however, depends on the results of excavations resumed by the British in 1973 (see Catling 1998, 19–27) that would add to the still modest and extremely fragmentary research material (Hodkinson 1998a, 111). Still, it is already clear enough that the general perception that Sparta resolutely turned away from art and craftsmanship is not at all correct. The theory regarding the sudden death of Laconian art (and perhaps even culture) in the middle of the sixth century cannot be upheld. Firstly, the decrease in numbers and quality of the late-Archaic and Classical finds discovered in the temple of Artemis Orthia can be explained, at least to a certain extent, by physical conditions. This is because in the early sixth century the temple grounds were covered with a layer of soil, which protected the earlier deposits against various factors (e.g. the floods of the nearby Eurotas, erosion and, possibly, looting) that may affected the votive offerings dating from the later period (Hodkinson 1998a, 94). Secondly, objects made of the less valuable materials, like lead or bronze, had a greater chance of survival; so did small objects in comparison with large ones, because the latter were often melted down (Hodkinson 1998b, 56). Finally, the often incomplete state of publication and the problems with dating many objects are not without their impact on research.

Despite the above problems, even an introductory analysis of the available material brings in considerable modifications in the traditional picture of the decline in artistic production in Sparta (Hodkinson 1998 b, 57 ff.). In the middle of the sixth century BC the number of finds discovered in the temple of Artemis Orthia evidently decreases; but parallel to that increases the number of bronzes on the acropolis, and perhaps also at the Amyklaion. In the second half of the fifth century BC it is still on the level comparable to the beginning of the sixth century BC and higher than in the latter half of the seventh century BC. Finds from various Spartan temples show various trends and they hardly support the theory about the birth of an ascetic society. First of all, the emergent picture indicates a change rather than a general decline; secondly, when viewed in a larger perspective, it seems that this change was not exceptional but, quite on the contrary, it followed the tendencies observable in the entire Greece, especially in the late Archaic period; this

is particularly evident with regard to votive offerings made of bronze (Hodkinson 1998b, 60).

Archaeological sources may actually indicate, quite contrary to the earlier interpretations, that Sparta of the Archaic period did not differ from other Greek poleis, at least in some respects, as it may seem at the first glance. Thus, since the literary sources highlight the exceptional character of Sparta and associate the emergence of its unusual socio-political system with the work of Lycurgus, it is necessary to question the credibility of the literary tradition. Already Felix Ollier (1934) was convinced that the traditional image of Sparta was, essentially, a fantasy, a mirage invented in Sparta for its own use, then advertised by the Spartans throughout the Greek world, and in the fourth century BC accepted and embellished by the oligarchs and philosophers hostile to democracy. In this context, one point is the usefulness of Classical sources for the reconstruction of the history of Sparta in the Archaic period; another is the fact that the image of the past can be adjusted to fit the present needs. Thus, in the process known as "the invention of tradition" (Flower 2002, 191–217), many socio-political practices, in reality introduced to achieve current political aims, were in various periods ascribed to Lycurgus. In has long been suspected that this method was used on a grand scale in the third century BC, when under the pretext of returning to the laws of Lycurgus, kings Agis IV and Cleomenes III carried out a thorough reformation of the socio-political relations in the state. This method was used, repeatedly, also in the fifth and fourth century BC. And this is precisely the reason why many Spartan solutions that seem shockingly "different" and "archaic" are not necessarily very ancient.

More recent research has shown that – in contrast to the view conveyed by the sources – neither in the Archaic nor in the Classical period did the equal, indivisible land shares exist in Sparta to be passed from the father to the eldest son (Hodkinson 1986, 378–406). The alleged rhetra of Epitadeus, which in the early fourth century introduced the possibility of disposing the land shares at will, is now considered unhistorical (Schütrumpf 1987, 441–457; Hodkinson 1986, 391; 2000, 90–94; Flower 1991, 89). There was no prohibition on using coin, although it is true that the state did not mint it (Hodkinson 1993, 150–152; 1997, 84–85; van Wees 2018, 208 ff.). Neither in the Archaic nor in the Classical period did the system of education known as the *agoge* function in the manner reported by Plutarch (Kennel 1995, 98–114; Ducat 2006). The alleged equality of the citizens is a myth. In reality, Sparta was always governed by a rich elite similar to the aristocracy known from the other Greek poleis (Hodkinson 1994).

However, negating the historicity (or even just the antiquity) of certain institutions and practices is not tantamount to rejecting all the elements of ancient Sparta's literary image. The Spartans have many times been described as people different from all the others, similar only unto themselves, their institutions and customs as relics of the most ancient period of Greek history, and Sparta itself as a sort of a "prehistoric fossil". In reality, although Thucydides wrote that Sparta had "preserved the same form of government [*politeia*] for rather more than four hundred years" (Thuk. 1.18.1), that system did not arise from conservatism or a will to preserve "primitive anachronisms"; it was a product of a change and adaptation that went on throughout the entire Archaic period in answer to the challenges posed by history (Hodkinson 1997, 98 and

esp. Hodkinson 2000, 3; 1989, 95–108). There was no single Sparta, and I do not mean only the coexistence of the fabulous Sparta and the historical Sparta in the sources and in the European tradition, or the fact that their images overlap in a manner that is awfully troublesome to a scholar. What I mean is that Sparta was changing over time.

Those phenomena appeared also in the Classical period, which may be far better documented in the sources, but is subject the same threats as those described above. This is because any attempt at reconstructing the Spartan social or political system in the fifth/fourth century BC is, to a large extent, burdened by the idealisation imposed on Sparta by both the contemporary authors and by those writing in the Hellenistic and Roman period. Nonetheless, the sources that we have at our disposal are burdened with more than just that idealisation. Their other great fault is their one-sidedness. The study of Sparta in the Classical period is greatly complicated by the fact that the available sources are both meagre and fragmentary, and this insufficiency is aggravated by the fact that most of the extent sources originated outside Sparta. The Spartans do not address us in their own voice; others speak for them. Why?

The reason for this is that they did not engage in describing their own history at all (which does not mean, of course, that they were not interested in it!). In Antiquity, they had the opinion of being uninterested in scholarly writing or any literary production. The perception of the Spartans' ignorance (*amathia*) was universal. The author of the text *Dissoi Logoi* (fifth century BC) maintains that they were not only illiterate, but also took pride in not teaching literature or music to their children (*Dissoi Logoi* 2. 10, see also Isokr. 12.209). Plato, in turn, expressed the view that the Spartans could not even count (Plato, *Hippias Maior*, 284–285). These opinions are certainly exaggerated (see Plato, *Nomoi* 680c–d; Isokr. 12.251), because young men were taught at least the rudiments of reading and writing (see Boring 1979, 41 ff.); but at the same time it is certain that the art of writing found less use in Sparta than in, for instance, Athens. All in all, the scholarly community is growing increasingly sympathetic to the view that the Spartans "were far more literate than previously supposed" (Hodkinson 2018. See Cartledge 1978, 25–37; Boring 1979; Millender 2001, 121–164; Ducat 2006, 119–121).

Only seven of all the extant Laconian vases bear inscriptions, which Powell (1998, 121) associates with a distrust of writing which he sees as typical of the Spartan system. Practically no Spartan in the Classical period is known to have written about Sparta. King Pausanias, who is supposed to have written a political treatise while in exile, containing information on the history of Sparta and above all recording the text of the Great Rhetra (Tigerstedt 1965, 54; Boring 1979, 52–54, see Cartledge 1987, 163), and Thibron, a Spartan officer living in the early fourth century BC (Boring 1979, 54), are exceptions that only confirm the rule.

It is also easy to guess that the extant epigraphic material for the history of Sparta in the Classical period is very scarce indeed (see Cartledge 1987, 712). Short inscriptions on the votive offerings found in Laconia and in Sparta itself do not give much information. Ninety-five small plaques with such inscriptions, found in the temple of Artemis Orthia, is the surviving material from the seventh/sixth century BC (Boring 1979, 1–22). From the fifth century, a hundred and eighty-one inscriptions (IG V, 1) are extant, but again they are, in an overwhelming majority, short. There are, however, a fen

exceptions. One of them is the so-called Hymn to Athena, dating from the sixth century BC, found during the British archaeological excavations in 1927. Another important find, dating from ca. 427 BC, contains information on Sparta's military expenses during the Peloponnesian War (Loomis 1992). The fifth-century text of a treaty between Sparta and Aetolia (SEG XXVI, 461), published by Werner Peck in 1974, is crucial to the analysis of Sparta's foreign policy.

Excavations yield new finds, such as the votive inscription of Hippansidas, a member of the gerousia, dedicated at the temple of Athena Alea (late fifth or the first half of the fourth century BC), found in 1988; yet, although their number will certainly continue to increase, we cannot hope for them to ever be plentiful due to the character of Spartan society. A very large number of inscriptions found in the region comes only from the period when Sparta was no longer Sparta, that is, the Roman period (IG V, 1; SEG XI, 456–884).

The ones to write about Sparta were mainly the Athenians or other Greeks who studied or lived in Athens. Many of them perceived Sparta as the anti-Athens; a polis embodying an ideal of a political system that was opposite to democracy. The proverbial Spartan *eunomia*, the faultless legal system, was often contrasted with the flawed system, *kakonomia*, of democratic Athens.

The aristocrats of Athens, and of other poleis as well, often held pro-Spartan sympathies, expressed not only through political stances, but above all through *lakonismos*, an admiration for the fashions and lifestyle of Laconia. From that circle came the Old Oligarch, the author of *The Constitution of the Athenians*, a treatise once erroneously ascribed to Xenophon. Critias, the leader of the Thirty Tyrants in Athens, who was openly "laconising" authored the first known treatise on the Spartan system; unfortunately, only a few fragments of his *Lakedaimonion Politeia* have survived (DK 88 B 327). Another philo-Laconic Athenian was the aforementioned Xenophon, who authored the treatise *Lakedaimonion Politeia*, where he idealised the Spartan system, and a text on King Agesilaus. Plato's approval of Spartan solutions is also perceptible.

Some of the writers were aware of their idealisation of Sparta. Yet even those who, like Herodotus and Thucydides, tried to remain impartial, did not have an easy task. One frequent obstacle was the lack of credible information. The Spartans quite intentionally surrounded themselves with an aura of mystery. As Thucydides said in reference to the Battle of Mantinea in 418 BC, "the secrecy of the government did not allow the strength of the Lacedaemonian army to be known" (Thuk. 5.68).

Aristotle was among the very few who were critical of the Spartan system. In his *Politics*, he formulated more than a few critical observations concerning Sparta (Arist. *Pol.* 1269a, 29–1271b, 19). Unfortunately, the treatise *Lakedaimonion Politeia* (fr. 532–45 Rose) written in the school of Aristotle, which must have contained a systematic presentation of Sparta's history and political system, has not survived. It is, however, possible that it was the source used by our chief expert on ancient Sparta, Plutarch of Chaeronea, who in the early second century AD wrote the lives of Lycurgus, Lysander, Agesilaus, Agis IV and Cleomenes III. Plutarch used many sources; in the *Life of Lycurgus* he himself made references to twenty-five authors. Among them are authors known to us (Tyrtaeus, Terpander, Pindar, Alcman, as well as Thucydides, Xenophon,

Plato and Aristotle), as well as authors about whom we known very little or nothing at all (Dieutychidas or Dieuchidas, Apollothemis). Plutarch had visited Sparta in person (Plut. *Lyk*. 18.2), which gave him the opportunity to investigate documents (*Ages*. 19.10) and talk to the locals; and it must be remembered that at that time, Sparta was a *sui generis* open-air historical museum for the guests from Rome, an ancient equivalent to the Plimoth Plantation, pretending to be its great ancestor.

Much information on Sparta is also found in Pausanias's *Description of Greece* (second century BC), whose credibility is, however, seriously undermined by the fact that he made extensive use of Messenian historians, whose presentation of Spartan history was biased. Other authors who provide us with various details regarding Sparta will also be mentioned further on in this book; but none of them presents its history in a systematic way.

In this book I attempt to present Sparta's social and political system as it was in the fifth and fourth century BC. I am fully aware that not everyone will be convinced by the conclusions posed herein. This is because "everyone" (at least: every historian) considers themselves an expert on Sparta, while even the best books on the subject – owing mostly to the nature of that subject – contain not only sound assumptions, but also less felicitous ones. Also, this book does not include all the possible areas; I focused mainly on topics associated with the political system. Sketches concerning the Spartan family (Chapter 3), education (Chapter 4), communal meals (Chapter 5) and the universe of war (Chapter 6) were included because it seemed to me that the issues presented therein were too important to our understanding of the nature of the Spartan *polis* to be completely overlooked. Part II, in turn (Chapters 7 to 11), containing the outline of the history of Sparta in the fifth and fourth century BC, is addressed mainly to those readers who, being less conversant with the Spartan matters, may need such a general introduction in order not to get lost in the intricacies of Sparta's social and political systems. I tried to avoid repeating myself, but this was not always possible without sacrificing the clarity of the argumentation. The book ends with currently the most extensive, yet by no means complete, bibliography of scholarly studies devoted to Sparta.[*]

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[*]   In the current work I cite texts which may facilitate further reading. In the bibliography, I cite those that will help to achieve an even more thorough orientation in the overall topic. The Spartans themselves would have certainly been surprised by the scale of the interest in them, while the subtlety of the scholarly reflection on their subject would have surprised them and, I hope, make them feel not only amused, but also pleased.

Part I The Spartans and Their State

Chapter 1 The social system of Sparta

The constitution of the Lacedaemonians is, we know, deemed the best of all constitutions.

– Critias to Theramenes (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.34)

A. The Spartiates

In the Classical period, the ancient Sparta encompassed Laconia and Messenia. Its population consisted of full citizens – the Spartiates, the perioeci, who were personally free but did not have political rights, and the subjugated helots. The citizens stood at the top of the social ladder; they were the only ones to be described as the Spartiates (*Spartiatai*, sing. *Spartiates*) or Laconians (*Lakones*, sing. *Lakon*). The official term for the Spartan state was Lacedaemonians (*Lakedaimonioi*, sing. *Lakedaimonios*); however, it is not unequivocal, since at times it denotes only the citizens, but it can refer to all the free population as well. Also, it can be an ordinary term, signifying the state (in the Greek understanding of the notion), but it can also signify, collectively, its government (Toynbee 1969, 159–160; Westlake 1977, 97–100 and esp. Shipley 2004, 568 ff.).

All the Spartiates lived in a city known as Sparta (*Sparta*, *Sparte*) or Lacedaemon (*Lakedaimon*). As highlighted by many scholars, in terms of the urban structure it was not exactly a city; the ancient Sparta was a community of five villages: Limnai, Konooura, Mesoa, Pitane and, twenty stadia to the south from them, Amyclae (Thuk. 1.10.2; Polyb. 5.19.2–3). Some scholars support the version Kynosoura instead of Konooura, but since the epigraphic sources confirm the form *Konoou* (IG 5.1.480, 566), it would perhaps be advisable to amend the form *Kynosoureis* found in Pausanias (Paus. 3.16.9) (MacDowell 1986, 26). Sparta did not have a regular plan; neither did it have numerous temples or other striking, monumental edifices, but, following the ancient Hellenic pattern, those five villages (*komai*) simply constituted the polis (Thuk. 1.10.2; 1.5.1).

Its striking feature was the lack of defensive walls. It is not certain why, in contrast to other Greek *poleis* (the exceptions are very few: Delphi, Delos, Gortyna, and Sparta itself) the Spartans did not choose to surround themselves with a wall. The reasons may have been many: a desire to follow tradition, a dislike of changes, as well as the conviction that the best defence was provided by the citizens' arms (Cartledge 1998a, 43. See esp. Christien 2006, 163–183).

From the demographic point of view, however, even though they did not comply with elementary requirements for the urban character, those five settlements were not villages either in the Greek or in the today's sense. This is because – even though in the course of two centuries the situation radically changed – those Spartan "villages" were always inhabited by from several thousand to several

hundred citizens and constituted what today is called a conurbation (Hansen 2009, 389). "There is in Lacedaemon a city [*polis*] called Sparta," Demaratus told Xerxes, "a city of about eight thousand men" (Hdt. 7.234.2). According to Aristotle, the Spartan state's constant trouble was *oliganthropia*, that is, a permanent decline of the number of Spartiates (*Pol.* 1270a 34; cf. Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 1.1). However, *oliganthropia* means a shortage of citizens, not necessarily a shortage of residents in general. In the case of Sparta, the number of citizens was falling, but the number of the city's residents did not have to fall with it, or at least not at the same speed.

In the period of the Persian wars, there were still 8,000 citizens (Hdt. 7.234.2), but by ca. 420 BC their number had fallen to some 3,500 (Thuk. 5.68.3). In the course of the fourth century their number fell from 2,500 men in ca. 390 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.6) to 1,500 men in the period of the Battle of Leuctra (Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.; 4.15.7). By the middle of the third century BC, there were only 700 Spartiates left. The decrease was so rapid that, if not for the complete silence of the sources on the subject, we might suspect the arrival of a plague. Various reasons for this exceptionally drastic decrease in the number of citizens in the fifth–fourth century BC have been proposed (see Lazenby 1985, 58; Wierschowski 1998, 291–306; Kulesza 2002, 1–17; Hodkinson 1989, 100–114; 2000, ch. 13; Doran 2018). The impact of the losses incurred during the wars, as well as during the earthquake in 464 BC, was highlighted (e.g. Ziehen 1933; Parker 1935). The low rate of natural increase was also mentioned. A remedy were supposedly the privileges for fathers of three or four sons as mentioned by Aristotle and fines for sworn bachelors as described by Plutarch (see below, Chapter 3, p. 122), but these measures either did not bring about the desired effects or they had been introduced too late. Particular importance was ascribed to the transformations caused by the influx of wealth after the Peloponnesian War and the concentration of land in the hands of a small group of rich men (see Bommelaer 1981, 231; David 1981, 5–77).

Whereas all these factors may have in some way contributed to the shrinking number of Spartiates who constituted the citizen community, it does not seem possible for them to be responsible for the magnitude of this decrease, especially considering that between 480 and 371 BC the trend seemed stable and there was no indication of a dramatic decline in the number of Spartiates during the fifty years preceding the Battle of Leuctra (Cawkwell 1983, 385–390; Flower 1991, 89). As decisively demonstrated by Hodkinson (1986; 1993, 2000), it is the Spartan system of inheriting wealth that must be considered the fundamental reason for the constant decrease in the number of citizens, as it favoured the concentration of land and gradually caused a large number of Spartiates to lose their citizen rights. In other words, the Spartan community was not decimated by wars or epidemics; neither was it threatened by extermination due to the low rate of natural increase. The true threat was the decrease in the number of citizens enjoying full civic rights, who thus could not fulfil all the duties associated with the status of a Spartiate. It is, however, possible that wars disrupted the functioning of the *kleroi*, which had to carry the costs of campaigns (connected with, for instance, the conscription of

helots into the army), and in the years 431 to 421 BC may have directly suffered during military operations.

A constantly diminishing group of citizens resided in the clearly delineated territories of the five villages. The citizens were divided into units known as the phyla (*phyle*) and oba (*oba*) (see Kiechle 1963, 116–126). Inscriptions dating from the Roman period indicate that at that time each of the five villages constituted one such unit; notably, the existence of phrases *tes Limneon phyles* and *oba Limnaieon* (IG 5.1.564, 688) seems to indicate that the terms *phyle* and *oba* meant exactly the same. In the Roman period, there was also an oba *Neopolitai* (IG 5.1.680, etc.), but its very name, "new citizens", suggests that it had probably not been in existence in the earlier period. Some scholars are of the opinion that there also existed some other obae (see Beattie 1951, 46–58; Forrest 1980, 42–3), but this is not confirmed; it seems more probable that in the fifth/fourth century there were only five of them (see Wade-Gery 1958, 69–85; Cartledge 1979, 107).

The issue of the number and nature of the phylae is also unclear. Tyrtaeus (19.8 West) mentions *Pamphyloi te kai Hylleis ed*[*e Dymanes*]; three phylae bearing these names existed in Doric states, so their existence also in Sparta seems natural. Wade-Gery (1958, 70–71) maintains that in the Archaic period, the Spartiates belonged to one of three phylae according to the criterion of birth, and to one of five obae according to the criterion of residence. Even if it was indeed so, those three phylae disappeared at some point before the Roman period and the term *phyle* began to describe what used to be an oba. However, no testimony indicates when or why this shift may have happened (MacDowell 1986, 27).

Another unit was a phratry. According to Athenaeus (4.141 ff.), when participating in the Carneia, the Spartans were divided into nine phratries. This statement is sometimes used as a basis for the view that each of the Doric phylae consisted of three phratries, which were important mainly in the cult sphere (Hooker 1980, 116).

The Spartiates, in contrast to the perioeci, were allowed to participate in the meetings of the Assembly (*apella*) and hold offices. However, belonging to this elite group depended on fulfilling several conditions. The most fundamental of those was being born in a family that was Spartiate on both the father's and the mother's side. In practice, citizenship was very rarely granted to foreigners. Another condition was being brought up in the state education system, the *agoge*, which was obligatory for all youngsters between the ages of seven and twenty. If a young man successfully completed the *agoge* (and there is nothing to indicate that anyone had ever *not* managed to complete it), he would henceforward dine together with other Spartiates belonging to his dining-group (*syssitia*); this, in turn, required him to provide a designated amount of food for those meals. To be able to fulfil this obligation, he had to own a land portion (*kleros*). The helots, non-free peasants, who tilled that land, maintained the Spartiate and his entire family.

The traditional picture

According to Plutarch, Lycurgus divided this part of land in Laconia which belonged to the city of Sparta *(eis to asty ten Sparten)* into nine thousand *kleroi*, and the rest, having divided it into 30,000 land portions, he assigned to the perioeci. Plutarch adds that according to some *(phasi)*, Lycurgus assigned 6,000 portions to the citizens and that the further 3,000 were added later by Polydorus, while others say that the latter assigned a half of those 9,000 and Lycurgus the rest (Plut. *Lyk.* 8.3–6). In all those cases the final number of the *kleroi* was nine thousand; but not only the period in which they were created, but also the very fact of their existence arouses some doubts. Whereas Plutarch and Ephorus (FGrHist 70 F 118) ascribed the creation of the system of *kleroi* to Lycurgus, Plato associated it with the coming of the Dorians to the Peloponnese.

Some scholars (e.g. already Jones 1964, 43; Cartledge 1987, 167) consider the indivisible Spartan land portions to be a myth originating from the Hellenistic period, created in order to support the reforms planned by Agis IV and Cleomenes III. Many others, however, still believe that the equal *kleroi* did indeed exist in the Archaic and Classical period; that the "citizen territory" (*politike chora*) taken over by the Dorians was divided into *kleroi* which were assigned to citizens and that every *kleros* would have one owner.

Until recently, most scholars supported the concept of considerable state supervision; in this interpretation, the state would tightly control the rules of handing over the land portions –until the period of the rhetra of Epitadeus (first half of the fourth century, see Introduction, p. 19), a Spartiate would not be allowed to personally dispose of his *kleros*, neither sell nor bequeath it.

Some scholars see the *kleroi* as inheritable property passed down from father to the eldest son. This, however, creates difficulties in interpreting a passage from Plutarch where the author reports that the father of a newborn child was obliged to submit it to the inspection of the elder members of his phyle, who stated whether it was healthy and consequently worth bringing up, and who assigned *kleros* to it (Plut. *Lyk.* 16). This would mean that the *kleroi* were the domain of the state and that the state assigned them to those who complied with the formal requirements. For this to be possible, the state would need to have some reserve of unassigned *kleroi* which would make it possible to, for instance, grant them to younger sons. Moving on in this direction, we might wonder whether, if a Spartiate died childless, his *kleros* returned to the polis or to his phyle.

What the above views have in common is the conviction that the way land passed from hands to hands was governed by rules set by the state, which guaranteed the indivisibility of the *kleroi* and prohibited their sale by the "owner". Theoretically, even if the *kleroi* were not equal, introducing unchangeable dues from each land portion for a Spartiate and his wife ought to have safeguarded citizen equality – with the provision that this equality did not have to concern their wealth. The surviving data indicating that the citizens were not equal with regard to wealth makes it necessary to enquire how some Spartiates may have gained

an advantage over others. This question is particularly troublesome to those who believe that Spartiate possessed just one, indivisible land portion, all of them similarly sized. Various options were suggested: that some *kleroi* were more effectively managed (although nothing indicates that the Spartiates were concerned with that at all), that war spoils made a contribution to some Spartiates' wealth, or, a suggestion that may seem surprising at first, that some of them owned land apart from the ordinary *kleroi.*

Heracleides Lembus (*Exc. Pol.* [ed. Dilts] 12 = Arist. fr. 611, 12 [ed. Rose]) reports that selling land was considered a disgrace (*aischron*) among the Lacedaemonians, and selling the ancient land portion (*tes archaias moiras*) was forbidden. By the same token, Plutarch mentions a prohibition on selling a land portion (*moiras*) which had been in force for a long time (Plut. *Mor.* 238e). If this information is treated literally and the "ancient land portion" is taken to mean the *kleros*, it must be assumed that the Spartans may have owned other land as well. Incidentally, if we recall that the original allocation of the *kleroi* pertained only to Laconia, we may assume that the Spartiates could have acquired this additional land in Messenia, which they subjugated in the later period; perhaps only there. This, however, is just an assumption, as the rules of apportioning land in Messenia are not known.

A truly remarkable intellectual acrobatics are performed by those scholars who write on the simple and austere Sparta. The Spartans would certainly be surprised. In any case, thanks to having the *kleroi* and the helots, the Spartiates did not need to engage in gainful employment. In fact, they were formally obliged not to perform any paid work (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 7.2), especially of the physical kind (*banausia*) (Plut. *Lyk.* 24.2) (see Cartledge 1976d, 110). In the traditional conception, the *kleroi* made it possible for the Spartiates to accomplish the ideal of "equality of assets" (*isotes tes ousias*), thanks to which they could, among others, consider themselves *homoioi*, that is "equal", "similar", or even "identical" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 10.7; 13.1; *Hell.* 3.3.5; *Anab.* 4.6.14).

It is not known when exactly the Spartiates began to call themselves *homoioi.* It may be connected with the adoption of the hoplite combat technique, which over the eight and seventh century BC changed the character of the war, turning the hoplite class into the foundation of a state's military might – which, in turn, resulted in an increase in the numbers of citizens enjoying full rights (Hooker 1980, 117; see Cartledge 1987, 15). Contrary to the widespread belief in the equality of Sparta's citizens, however, the "equality of assets" never existed there. Also, the term *homoioi* may have appeared quite late, introduced in order to differentiate between the citizens who had full rights from the rapidly growing numbers of those who did not.

There is much to suggest that Spartan citizens were equal, but some were more equal than others. On the fringes of their society we find some groups of "inferior quality" Spartans: the *hypomeiones*, the *mothakes*, the *tresantes.* Among the "equals", in turn, just as in any other Greek polis, we find the better born, the "beautiful and good", the rich. Herodotus tells us that some Spartan families professed they were descended from heroes known from Homeric epics. Some

families, and not only the royal ones (Thuk. 5.16.2; Xen. *Ages.* 1.2), claimed descent from the Heraclids (Plut. *Lyk.* 24; 26). Spartan heralds, the Talthybiads, considered themselves to be descended from Agamemnon's herald Talthybius. It is, of course, impossible to state conclusively whether they was of a pre-Doric origin or whether they referred to Talthybius as a patron of heralds, which practice was widespread also in other Greek poleis. Sperthies son of Aneristus and Boulis son of Nicolaus, who volunteered to make atonement for the killing of the envoys of Darius, were well-born and from families that were outstanding in wealth *(physi te gegonotes eu kai chremasi anekontes es ta prota)* (Hdt. 7.134.2). That some families held an exceptional position is also indicated by their connections, sometimes lasting over generations, with the aristocracy of other poleis; witness the hereditary friendship *(xenia)* between the families of the Spartiate Endius and the Athenian Alcibiades (Thuk. 8.6.3; see Richer 1998, 279). Some families continuously played an important role in the political life of Sparta; the family of Demarmenus may serve as an example. Two of his sons (and a daughter of one of them) are known to us. One of his two aunts became the second wife of King Anaxandridas, and the other was betrothed to the future King Leutychides, but the future King Demaratus took her away from him and married her himself; thus both women entered royal houses, which indicates that there were close connections between aristocratic families. The third wife of King Ariston also came from a rich and esteemed family.

The formation of the elite is clearly indicated by the fact that contacts with the outside world, foreign travels and high positions in the military were monopolised by a small group (Mosley 1979; Hodkinson 1993, 146–175). As shown by Hodkinson, in the years 431–371 BC this group counted about a hundred men in each decade – relatively few in comparison to the number of citizens. Nominations to commanders of the fleet or harmosts went to men linked by family ties, to some of them more than once (this pertains to 21 out of 59 cases discussed by Hodkinson, i.e. 36% of the total) (Hodkinson 1993, 155). The sources confirm that Alkamenes and Sthenelaus, sons of the ephor Sthenelaidas, were both harmosts, as was Clearchus, the son of Ramphias, a Spartan commander and envoy. Pedaritus, a harmost, and Antalcidas, who commanded the fleet, was an envoy to the Persian court and later held the office of an ephor, were sons of Leon, a famous winner of the chariot race in Olympia and an ephor in 419/418 BC (Hodkinson 1993, 158). The fact that in Sparta "all were equal but some were more equal than others" is indicated by Thucydides in his account of the campaign at Amphipolis, where Brasidas sent a message to the Lacedaemonians asking for reinforcements, but was refused "because their leading men *(protoi)* were jealous of him, and also because they preferred to recover the prisoners taken in the island" of Sphacteria (Thuk. 4.108.7) – the prisoners who, after all, belonged to the *kaloi kagathoi* (Thuk. 4.40.2). Equally interesting is the remark made by Xenophon, who in his *Lakedaimonion Politeia* (8.1) considers it impossible for Lycurgus to have accomplished his reforms without the support of Sparta's most influential men (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 8.3). Naturally, he could not have known what the true circumstances of those events had been; he was only drawing conclusions based on his knowledge of the situation in his

own times, which tells us what the state of affairs was in the fourth century BC (Clauss 1983, 97).

As rightly noted by Manfred Clauss, the above testimonies indicate that there existed in Sparta a group of families equivalent to the aristocracy known from other Greek poleis. This Spartan aristocracy, known as the *kaloi kagathoi* (see Arist. *Pol.* 1270b 24), made use of the existing ways of amassing wealth and was increasingly open in demonstrating their affluence, especially since the conclusion of the Peloponnesian war.

However, let us also note an entirely different interpretation of the Spartan approach to the concept of *kaloi kagathoi*. According to Felix Bourriot (1996, 129–140), it was a "honorific" accorded not only to citizens, but also to the perioeci in recognition of excellence in combat. In Bourriot's view, this title was not hereditary and pertained solely to the sphere of the military. It was transplanted to the Athenian milieu in the second half of the fifth century by the sophists, who, wishing to attract affluent disciples, referred to the magical Spartan slogan of *kaloi kagathoi*. In the conditions of Athens the concept acquired a meaning that was different from the one it had held in Sparta – and it was that new meaning which drew the attention of historians, who inflated it and gave it an enthralling past that reached back to Homer himself.

If we accepted Burriot's hypothesis, the observations about the Spartan *kaloi kagathoi* would be, from the viewpoint of the current study, entirely useless. Still, there are also other testimonies which indicate that a clearly demarcated elite existed among the *homoioi* (Hodkinson 2000, 413–416) and that the membership in it was based not, or at least not only, on the merits in the service of the state, but also on the economic position of the men in question.

From this group came the Spartan winners in the Olympic games, who competed in the chariot races and founded statues in Olympia. In the late sixth century BC, Euagoras won the quadriga race in Olympia three times, driving his own team (Hdt. 6.103.4). In the fifth century, no less than six Spartiates won the horse race in Olympia (Paus. 6.2.1–2; 1.7). It is known that Spartan horse breeders took prizes in other races as well; for instance, as we learn from an extant inscription from the fifth century BC, Damonon and his son Enymakratidas were victorious in a few dozen races organised in Laconia and in the towns of the perioeci (IG Dial. Sel. 19. See Hodkinson 1999, 152–153; 2000, 303–307).

After the middle of the sixth century BC Sparta, whose earlier victories in the Olympic games were in athletics, became a power in chariot racing – and this suggests that there existed a group of very rich men who could afford to engage in the expensive occupation of horse breeding (Figueira 1984, 99). The horse was a symbol of luxury both in the archaic and in the classical Greece. This, of course, makes it necessary to ask in what way the horse was – as put by Powell (1998, 140) – "Lycurgised", that is, inserted into the new system of values that promoted citizen equality. Names with the elements *hippo-* and *polo-* were extremely popular in Sparta in the second half of the fifth century and the first half of the fourth century BC (Hodkinson 1989, 99). Such names as Gylippos, Philippos, Hippocrates,

Herippidas, Mnasippos, Lysippos, Orsippos or Passipidas suggest that their bearers belonged to rich families who liked to highlight their love of horses (Hodkinson 1993, 159). This represents another sign of the existence of if not aristocracy, then of what were, at least in the conditions of Greece, aristocratic interests. After the Persian wars, it was the Spartans who of all the Greeks displayed the greatest enthusiasm for horses (Paus. 6.2.1).

Having noticed that many of his compatriots engaged in horse breeding (*hippotrophia*) and gained great fame from it, Agesilaus persuaded his sister Cynisca to enter her four-horse chariot team for the race in Olympia. His aim was to show that winning the prize depended not on personal virtues, but on the affluence of the horse owner and the money he (or, in this case, she) was able to spend on the enterprise (Plut. *Ages.* 20.1; see Cartledge 1987, 150; Hodkinson 1999, 147–187). This is more or less the manner in which the event was presented by Xenophon (*Ages.* 9.6). Cèsar Fornis comments: "Cynisca incarnait les deux valeurs prédominantes de la nouvelle Sparte impériale de Lysandre et Agésilas II: l'individualisme et la richesse" (Fornis 2014, 313). In my view, Fornis points to the very heart of the matter here: Xenophon is hiding from us both the shock which a woman's victory must have caused in Greece, and Agesilaus's "responsibility" for ruining both Sparta and Greece; in the background there is a debate which this fan of Agesilaus assiduously omits, but whose existence is as evident as its absence in our sources: the debate on the causes of Sparta's degradation.

It seems that the citizens of a state that ascribed so much value to developing the physical fitness of its men and women should secure all the possible prizes in the nearby Olympia and in other pan-Hellenic games. Nonetheless, as presented in Table 1, an analysis of the existing material reveals a very different picture.

Table 1. Spartan victories in the Olympic games (after: Crowther 1990, 202)

the year the discipline was introduced at the Olympic games	the discipline	the number of Spartan victories in this discipline	the percentage of Spartan victories which this number constitutes
776	*stadion* race	28	35.0
724	*diaulos* (foot race)	3	3.5
720	*dolichos* (long-distance foot race)	3	3.5
708	*pentathlon*	5	6.0

708	*pale* (wrestling)	14	17.5
688	*pygme* (boxing)	1	1.0
680	the four-horse chariot race	16	20.0
648	*pankration keles* (horse race)	0	0
632	the boys' *stadion* race	1	1.0
632	the boys' wrestling	2	2.5
628	the boys' *pentathlon*	1	1.0
616	the boys' *pygme*	0	0
520	*hoplites* (foot race in armour)	1	1.0
500	*apene* (chariot race for mule teams)	0	0
496	*kalpe* (mares' race)	0	0
408	the *biga* (two-horse chariot) race	1	1.0
384	the four-horse chariot race for foal teams	0	0
264	the *biga* race for foal teams	0	0
256	the foal race	0	0
200	the boys' *pankration*	0	0
	unknown	5	6.0

Despite the incompleteness of the material on which the above list (or any future one, which will surely still be incomplete) is based, it must be noted that the reality that it reflects is surprising indeed. Firstly, we see that in four disciplines: the foot race on the distance of a *stadion*, the four-horse chariot race, wrestling and boys' pentathlon, no other state won more victories than Sparta. If we reject that last result – which, considering that only one victory is confirmed, is questionable – we see, quite unexpectedly, a total absence of Spartan victories in most of the Olympic disciplines. In particular, we might have expected that the Spartans would regularly triumph in such a discipline as the race for runners wearing heavy armour (*hoplites*). Crowther's suggestion (1990, 202, n. 25) that this may be linked

to the fact that this discipline was introduced at a relatively late date (in his view, the Spartans were rarely successful in those disciplines) does not seem convincing.

In the late sources we find information about a ban on the Spartans' participation in some sports, supposedly introduced by Lycurgus. For instance, Seneca (*De Benef.* 5.3.1) reports that Lycurgus forbade them to take part in any competition that involved the loser having to surrender. Plutarch says that Lycurgus forbade them to take part in those competitions where the loser had to signal his surrender by raising his arms (Plut. *Mor.* 228d; see also *Mor.* 189e; *Lyk.* 19.4; Philostratus *Gym.* 9; 58). However, ancient authors may have been as surprised at the lack of Spartan successes as we are, and for this reason they ascribed to Lycurgus a prohibition that most probably never existed in reality (Crowther 1990, 200–201).

How, then, can we explain the Spartans' relatively modest achievements on the international sports arena? It seems that Sparta specialised in just three disciplines and showed little interest in all the others. But why those three? According to Crowther (1990, 201), because short-distance foot races, wrestling and chariot races were deemed appropriate for a military state. This view is difficult to accept with regard to the chariot race. Splendid achievements of Thessalian aristocrats would be quite natural here; but in a society of the *homoioi*, horse breeding seems a odd occupation rather than an obvious one.

We also have a large number of other testimonies indicating that there existed a group of rich men in Sparta (see Ste Croix 1972, 137 ff. and Appendix). Xenophon states openly that there were rich men in Sparta (*Lak. Pol.* 5.3; 1.9; 7. 3–4; 1.9). More gold and silver was held privately in Sparta than anywhere else in Greece, because there it was passed down for many generations (Ps. Plato *Alk.* 1.122e–123a). During the Theban invasion on Laconia in 370/369 BC, houses located in the vicinity of Sparta, which were full of valuable things *(pollon kagathon mestas oikias)*, were looted and burned (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.27). Ariston urged his friend to take whatever he might choose out of all the treasures (*ta keimelia*)which he owned (Hdt. 6.62.2).

A ban on ostentation?

"Some ways of manifesting wealth were permissible. Wealthy men contributed wheaten bread to the syssitia, as well as products from their own fields" (Athen. 4.141c–e), and "Those contributions were not made anonymously; the names of the donors were announced" (Athen. 4.139b–c). The answer to the question of what exactly was the indicator of wealth: was it land and/or money or perhaps other goods, is of importance in assessing the nature of economic inequalities in Sparta. It seems obvious, at least at the first glance, that it was not coin. Until the reign of Areus I (309/8–265 BC), and thus throughout the entire Classical period, Sparta did not mint its own coinage (on Spartan coins, Grunaer-von Hoerschelman 1978; see Christien 2002, 171–190; Figueira 2002, 137–170; Hansen 2009, 401–402), which was unusual but, in comparison with other states, not entirely unheard of (Hodkinson 1997, 96). What is more, while the sources do mention the view that

it was legally forbidden for the citizens of Sparta to possess silver or gold coins (Plut. *Lys.* 17.6, see Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 7.6), this does not mean that they did not hold any foreign currency; many scholars emphasise that this would have been highly improbable (Cawkwell 1983, 396; Cartledge 1987, 88; Flower 1991, 92; Hodkinson 1994, 198). Great riches allegedly came to Sparta towards the end of the Peloponnesian War. In 404 BC, when allegedly it was being debated whether the money sent by Lysander should be accepted at all, in reality the discipline was not loosened; on the contrary, either an existing practice was confirmed or restrictions on the possession of foreign currency were introduced for the first time (Cartledge 1987, 89; Noetlichs 1987; Hodkinson 1993, 150–151; 1994, 198; Ehling 1997, 13–20). In the framework of the monthly contributions to the shared feasts, every Spartiate paid a small sum, equal to little more than ten Aeginean obols (Athen. 4.141 c). Even if we assume that this monetary contribution was introduced only as late as in the third century BC, the report that in 421 BC the Spartans wanted King Agis to pay a fine of 100,000 drachmas, as given by Thucydides (Thuk. 5.63.2), cannot be ignored.

So wherefrom could the Spartiates have money, or any other *keimelia*, especially if they were forbidden to perform paid work (Berthiaume 1976, 360–364; see van Wees 2018a,b) War was certainly one of the sources of wealth. Pausanias and other Spartiates brought home silver, gold and many precious things as spoils from the Battle of Plataeae (Hdt. 9.80–81). A similar system of dividing the spoils, according to which the commanders got more and the rank-and-file got less, was in operation during all the other military campaigns as well.

In the later period, various official functions performed abroad became a rich source of income. In particular, many a Spartiate grew rich on being a harmost (Flower 1991, 91). Wealth circulated also in the community of the so-called equals. The Spartan elite preferred to marry within their own group for financial as much as for political reasons (Cartledge 1981, 96). Later sources assert that daughters were not given dowries in Sparta (Hermippus fr. 87; Plut. *Mor.* 227 f; Aelian *Var. Hist.* 6.6; Iust. 3.3.8), but more authority on this must be accorded to Aristotle, who reports that there were many heiresses (*epikleroi*) and large dowries were not an exception. Regardless of the criticism of Aristotle's formulations and the sense of his statement as presented by Cartledge (1981, 97–98), it is a fact that a Spartan daughter (*patrouchos*, Hdt. 6.57.4) did inherit the family's wealth (Hodkinson 2000) and that this was what guided many men – like that contender (or contenders) for the hand of Lysander's daughter (or daughters) – in their choice of a wife (see below, Chapter 3, p. 111).

As it has already been mentioned, according to a belief that is relatively universal (especially in older studies), economic inequalities among the *homoioi* began to deepen rapidly after the Peloponnesian War, when "gold and silver money first flowed into Sparta, and with money, greed and a desire for wealth prevailed through the agency of Lysander, who, though incorruptible himself, filled his country with the love of riches and with luxury, by bringing home gold and silver from the war, and thus subverting the laws of Lycurgus" (Plut. *Lyk.* 30.1; *Lys.* 17). The second reason for the change was to be the rhetra of Epitadeus, which permitted a free

trade in *kleroi* (Plut. *Agis* 5). In reality, however, even if we considered the above testimonies to the existence of an economic elite in Sparta to be questionable, Spartans of the fifth century BC had the same approach to wealth as all the other Greeks – as shown by Hodkinson (1994, 183–222; 2000). Herodotus records no less than eight cases of corruption among the Spartans, of which five pertain to their kings (Noetlichs 1987; see Bockisch 1974b, 219–220 n. 20. Hodkinson, 1994, 187 ff.). King Leutychides, who accepted a huge monetary bribe from the Thessalians, was charged with corruption by his compatriots and had to flee Sparta; his house was razed and he spent the rest of his life as an exile in Tegea (Hdt. 6.72.5). It was rumoured in Sparta that Cleomenes had accepted some bribes at Argos (Hdt. 6.82.13). The Spartans – or at least their leaders – had the opinion of being venal (Isokr. 8 96; Arist. *Pol.* 1271a 3–5).

This was, in practice, a view shared by most of the fifth- and fourth-century authors. It is only Thucydides who pointed to a certain difference in the Spartans' attitude to material goods, writing that "a modest style of dressing, more in conformity with modern ideas, was first adopted by the Lacedaemonians, the rich doing their best to assimilate their way of life to that of the common people" (Thuk. 1.6.4). Critias (fr. 6) reported that the Spartans were circumspect in eating and wine-drinking. Plutarch assured his readers that special regulations concerning privately owned buildings were in force in Sparta, aimed to guarantee that the citizens' houses were kept simple; for instance, "every house should have its roof fashioned by the axe, and its doors by the saw only, and by no other tool" (Plut. *Lyk.* 13.5). Further on, he noted that the very appearance of Spartan houses discouraged the use of sumptuous furnishings (Plut. *Lyk.* 13.6–7). The Spartans were certainly not the Amish of Antiquity; but all the above pertains, in essence, to their rigorous lifestyle, not to their affluence. Thucydides did not say there were no rich men in Sparta, but that their lifestyle was the same as that of their less affluent compatriots.

After the conquest of Messenia, the less prosperous Spartiates received minimal land portions (and the name *kleroi* suggests they were originally apportioned by *klerosis*, the drawing of lots), but the land was not divided anew. The rich citizens retained their large estates and the character of the land ownership system in Sparta remained similar to that existing in other Greek states (Hodkinson 1986, 386–394; 1989; 1997, 88; 2000; Flower 1991, 89; Singor 1995, 31–60). Privately owned land portions (*kleroi*) farmed by the state-controlled helots existed in Sparta throughout the entire Archaic and Classical period. The equal, indivisible *kleroi* were created in the third century BC in connection with the reforms planned by Agis IV and Cleomenes III; only the propaganda of the reformer kings moved their creation back in time.

The concept of equal, indivisible land portions passing, unchanged, from generation to generation and providing upkeep to all the Spartans is therefore entirely unhistorical, and the reasons for the Spartan *oliganthropia* must be sought in the continuous concentration of land which the poor lost in favour of the rich, thereby losing their full citizen rights.

B. The helots

"In Lacedaemon," writes Critias (fr. 37 D), "a free man is most free, and a slave most a slave." Plutarch makes a similar declaration when he condemns the Spartans' cruel treatment of the helots (Plut. *Lyk.* 28.11). It was they who were the most enslaved among the slaves. On the other hand, however, the helots constituted as integral an element of Laconian society as the Spartiates, and were the foundation of the Spartan economic system. Spartiates tasked helots with doing all work save for civic activity, which they reserved for themselves. The helots' main occupation was working the land (Ducat 1990, 53–54). They fed Spartans, who, in turn, provided the state with protection (Clauss 1983, 111).

However, as Plato noted in his *Laws*, "probably the most vexed problem in all Hellas is the problem of the Helot-system of the Lacedaemonians, which some maintain to be good, others bad" (*Nomoi* 776 c). Perhaps contrary to our modern expectations, criticism of the system in the Classical period pertained only to its efficiency (see Klees 1991, 1992). Aristotle, for instance, considered the helot system as one of the seven most faulty elements of Sparta's political system (Arist. *Pol.* 1269a 35 – b 13). Ethical concerns regarding the system were not voiced until the Hellenistic period (Ducat 1990, 79–93; on the role of helots according to ancient and modern scholars see Whitby 1994, 87–116).

Despite the interest they attracted, helots remain the most mysterious group of Spartan society, as the information on them is sparse. Essentially nothing is known about the life of the helot community. The very term 'helots' is a group description, used only in the plural. It is no coincidence that the singular form of the word appears only twice in the entire surviving source material (Hdt. 7.229.1; Kritias fr. 37 D-K), and no helot is known by name (Figueira 2018, 566).

It is therefore hard to answer the question of who helots were. They certainly were not ordinary slaves, though their exact status is difficult to define. The issue proved problematic to ancient and modern authors alike. Given this difficulty, it is a small wonder that scholars have not yet reached a consensus regarding the status of helots (Lotze 1959, 26–17; Oliva 1961, 5–34; 1971, 48–54; Ducat 1974, 1451–1455; 1978, 13–24; 1990; Cartledge 1979, 160–165; 1987, 166–177; 1998, col. 333–334; MacDowell 1986, 31–32; Hodkinson 1992, 124; Singor 1995, generally all studies by Figueira and Luraghi, incl. Luraghi, Alcock 2003).

When describing the helots' position within Spartan society, scholars in the past tended to make analogies to the Middle Ages. They often emphasised that, similarly to dependent peasantry such as serfs or villeins, helots were bound to the land. Still, acknowledging the helots' apparent similarity to mediaeval serfs or villeins only *seems* to help us understand their position (see Oliva 1971, 38–48; Ducat 1978, 13–24; MacDowell 1986, 32). In reality, the *heiloteia* as an institution was so unique that the best possible course is to simply examine the facts.

The nomenclature and origins of helots

The meaning of the term 'helots' (*heilotes, heilotai*) and the provenance of the social group are unclear (Lotze 1959, 26–27; MacDowell 1986, 31; Ducat 1978, 5–13; 1990, 7–12; Luraghi, Barnes 2009, 261–304), yet both are likely to have originated in Laconia. After the conquest of Messenia, the majority of the region's population was also made into helots, which is why in the fifth and fourth century BC Messenian helots were more numerous than Laconian ones (Thuk. 1.101.2). After the year 369, Messenia became an independent state, but helots could still be found in Laconia until the second century BC.

Ancient authors derived the term 'helots' from Helos, a city in Laconia razed by Spartans (Ephorus FGrHist 115 F 13 ap. Strabo 8.5.4) (see Ducat 1990, 8 ff.). Some modern academics subscribe to the belief that the word comes from *haireo* or *haliskomai* and signifies war prisoners, i.e. local residents conquered by foreign invaders (see Jones, 1964, 9; Clauss 1983, 110; Lazenby 1985, 73; Link 1994, 5). The similarity between these terms and the name Helos has also been noted (Ducat 1990, 10).

In both cases, there is a clear connection between the term and the conquest of Laconia. What remains, however, is the question of the circumstances in which this event took place. Did the victors subjugate the defeated during the conquest, or did the process occur later though a kind of a domestic revolution? According to Ephorus (*l. c.*), the second Spartan king Agis forced other Laconian communities into submission, and since the residents of Helos were the only ones who resisted, they were turned into slaves in retaliation. Plutarch, in turn, ascribes the establishment of the helot system to Soos, the alleged second ruler of the Europontid dynasty. In Pausanias's account, the subjugation of Sparta's neighbouring poleis occurs in a much later period (Aegys – during the reign of Archelaus, the eighth king; Amyclae, Pharis and Geronthrai – during the time of Archelaus's successor Teleclus, shortly before the First Messenian War). It is, however, much more probable that Spartans first conquered their closest neighbours in the Eurotas valley before turning to further expansion to the east and west (Jones 1964, 11).

Thus, the surviving sources point to two primary hypotheses to consider. In the first one, the institution of the *heiloteia* emerged during the Dorian invasion. The belief that had resulted from the conquest was well-established in ancient historiography. According to Theopompus, Laconian helots were "Hellenes, who once held the land in which they now dwell" (FGrHist 115 F 122) – in other words, they were Achaeans. Although this is a widely accepted view (Cartledge 1979, 97–98), it seems unlikely that all Dorian invaders congregated in Sparta, while the remaining settlements remained Achaean (Jones 1964, 11). A separate theory, not substantiated by any sources, was offered by Müller (1844, 29), who believed helots to have been descended from the pre-Dorian peoples subjugated by Achaeans even before the Dorians' arrival in the region. According to Oliva (1971, 48–49), the *heiloteia* developed as Laconian lands were fought over and conquered, long before the Spartan takeover of Messenia.

This would mean that helots were among the pre-Dorian inhabitants of Laconia. One evidence that seems to support this claim to some extent is the continuation of pre-Dorian cults in the lands of helots (such as the Temple of Poseidon at Tainaron), which were of profound importance to them (Clauss 1983, 109–110). According to yet another hypothesis, the *heiloteia* is the result of a domestic revolution. Such a version of Sparta's early history was presented by Isocrates (12.177–181), who wrote of internal conflicts among the Dorian invaders. The victorious oligarchs settled in Sparta, claiming the best lands and driving the defeated away to less fertile regions, allowing them only a severely limited level of self-administration. Isocrates's vision is certainly based on the political situation in Greece in the fourth century BC.

Despite the uncertainty regarding helots' origins (see e.g. Figueira 2018, 568), the development of the institution itself is evidently associated with Laconia. What occurred later was the system's transmission to Messenia, conquered in the eighth–seventh century. In theory at least, it might seem obvious that Messenians became helots directly after their defeat. And yet, when recounting the events that took place in the first half of the fifth century, Herodotus not only mentions Messenians (not helots from Messenia), but in fact presents them as worthy opponents of Sparta (Hdt. 5.49), scoring significant victories over them (Hdt. 9.64). According to Ducat (1990, 13–16), the formulaic phrase "helots and Messenians" was only coined by Ephorus. The existence of the collective term does indicate equality of status, even though extant sources allow no detailed analysis (Ducat 1990, 18).

While it is true that at the end of the second millennium BC Laconia was populated by both Achaeans and Dorians, in time the ethnic differences between the two groups blurred beyond recognition. By the fifth century BC, all inhabitants of Laconia, including the relatively recently conquered Kynouria, had already been "Dorianised" (Hdt. 8.73.3).

Helots and the system of ownership

As Walbank perceptively noted in the 1950s, the issue of land ownership is one of the most perplexing (but also – in my personal estimation – the most important) aspects of Spartan history (Walbank 1957, 628). This is partially due to the fact that none of the sources containing relevant information was written before Sparta lost Messenia in 370/369 BC. To make matters worse, the changes introduced in the third century BC by Agis IV and Cleomenes III, advertised as a return to the political system established by Lycurgus, in fact brought on an entirely new reality. As mentioned above, Plutarch recounts that Lycurgus assigned 9000 *kleroi* to the Spartiates and 30,000 to the perioikoi (Plut. *Lyk.* 8). He also cites a different version, according to which Lycurgus established only 6,000, or even as few as 4,500 *kleroi*,while the remaining ones were created by King Polydorus. This begs the question whether this increase in numbers might reflect territorial expansion resulting from the conquest of Messenia. If this was indeed the case, 4,500 or at least 3,000 new *kleroi* would have been established in its territory. In both accounts,

the number of *kleroi* ultimately reached nine thousand, which many scholars take at face value and use as the basis for analysing Sparta's economic and social structure (e.g. Figueira 1984; 1986). Others, however, voice their doubts. As has been noted, the alleged nine thousand *kleroi* are exactly twice the number of those that King Agis IV wished to allot (Plut. *Agis* 8.1) and Cleomenes III established (Plut. *Kleom.* 11.2; 23.1; 28.8). It is entirely possible that the number nine thousand was made up precisely to show that Agis (and subsequently Cleomenes) wished to restore Lycurgus's system also in this respect (Marasco 1978; 1979; Cartledge 1979, 169−170).

Scholars subscribing to the view that there was some fixed number of these allotments invoke yet another account, which, although indirect, is much more credible. Herodotus puts the numbers of Spartans in 480 BC at around eight thousand men (Hdt. 7.234.1); and states in another section of his work that 5000 Spartiates took part in the Battle of Plateae (Hdt. 9.10.1). According to Busolt, these numbers need not be contradictory at all, since not all Spartans would have been allotted a *kleros*. He believed the number of Spartan *kleroi* to have ranged between 6,500−7,000 (Busolt, Swoboda 1926, 640). It is, however, much more likely that the numbers −the 8,000 Spartiates mentioned by Herodotus and the 10,000 from Aristotle's account (*Pol.* 1270a 36−38) − inspired the reformer kings of the third century BC to associate the 3,000 or 4,500 *kleroi* with Polydorus, intending to complete the initial number of *kleroi* allegedly created by Lycurgus (Clauss 1983, 164; Hodkinson 1986, 382).

Ziehen (1933, 223), claimed that the information about the 9,000 *kleroi* had already been widespread in Aristotle's time. While Aristotle does mention that the number of Spartiates had once reached nine thousand (Arist. *Pol.* 1270a 36−38), Oliva (1971, 51) believes that number to be a rounded-up version of the 8,000 mentioned by Herodotus. According to Hodkinson (1986, 382), the contradictory accounts given by Plutach come from one and the same source, probably Hermippus of Smyrna (third century BC), who was in agreement as to the total number of *kleroi* (nine thousand), but made matters more simple by attributing the creation of all of them to Lycurgus. If, however, the system of *kleroi* had not existed in the classical period (Ducat 1983; Hodkinson 1986), and the only matter to be debated is whether it was introduced in the third or the fourth century BC (Ducat 1990, 19), the question that arises is: who owned the land in Sparta – the state or its citizens?

The size of the *kleroi*

The issue of the size of the *kleroi* (tackled by many authors, cf. Hodkinson 2000, 382−385) seems of little importance if we assume the existence of equal and indivisible allotments to be a myth originating in the third century BC. It would, however be worthwhile to establish what size would an estate have to be to allow a Spartiate to meet the conditions for maintaining the status of one of the peers, which is the function originally fulfilled by land allotments. Attempts have been made to estimate the size of *kleroi* on the basis of the quotas owed by the helots

who lived there. If a Spartiate received an annual total of eighty two *medimnoi* of barley (seventy for himself and twelve for his wife), assuming that the unit was Aeginetan *medimnos* (which may be inferred from the fact that they are converted to Attic *medimnoi* in an extant fragment from Dicaearchus; ap. Athen. 4.141c), then in modern terms the amount he got was 5,940 litres (Oliva 1971, 49).

In earlier academic literature (see Oliva 1971), the *kleroi* were estimated to have measured about 15 hectares (Beloch), 20–24 hectares (Busolt), 27–30 hectares (Jarde), or even 30 hectares (Kahrstedt, Ehrenberg). More recent works give their size as much smaller. According to Michell (1964, 227 n. 1) and Buckler (1977b, 254–255), each *kleros* held about 5 hectares. Figueira (1984, 100–102) estimates its size at about 15.4 hectares, noting that (see Figueira 1984, 100–102) an average agricultural holding in modern Greece measures between 3 and 6 hectares. Hodkinson (2000, 384), in turn, writes: "The mean size of the landholdings of ordinary citizens would thus be some 18.41 ha and these of the elite some 44.62 ha". As demonstrated by the above overview, scholars supporting the idea of uniform *kleroi* cannot agree on the actual size of Spartan allotments. In essence, it must be accepted that neither the number nor the size of the *kleroi* can be reliably defined, and all attempts made thus far are, as Cartledge put it (1979, 168, 175), "building in the sand". There are no sources that would provide any precise information about the *kleroi* before the reign of Agis IV. As Buckler (1977a, 258) aptly observed, "the number of land allotments, the size of the individual allotments, and the number of people who depended on the allotments for support are all unknown and, in my view, unknowable".

The number of the helots

We are equally far from answering the question of how many helots there were (see Scheidel 2003). Many scholars have tried (incidentally, usually aiming at establishing the number of helots at each of the allegedly uniform *kleroi*) to estimate the number of helots in proportion to that of Spartiates. However, very few data on the subject have been passed down from Antiquity. The most well-known of the extant sources is Herodotus's description of the Battle of Plataeae, according to which each of the five thousand Spartiates was attended by seven helots (Hdt. 9.10.1). This led Müller (1844, 41) to the conclusion (repeated by many researchers and history enthusiasts even today) that each *kleros* was inhabited by seven helot families.

The veracity of this passage from Herodotus has been questioned, as helots seem to have had no place in the Spartiate phalanx. Singor (1995, 49–51) rejects Heredotus's account entirely, while still accepting the view that each Spartiate was appointed seven helots. According to Hunt (1997, 129–144), helots fought at Plateae as hoplites alongside Spartiates, with the latter forming the first line of the phalanx, and the former – the following seven. On the one hand, it seems hard to imagine that Spartiates would trust helots enough to arm such a large force of them; on the other, it should be emphasised that neither Herodotus nor his

fifth-century readers found it strange that each Spartiate at the time of the Peloponnesian War could have retained seven helots (Oliva 1971, 52).

This does not necessarily mean that (as some claim) each of these helots represented one of the seven families allegedly residing in a *kleros*. In this case, the manner of mobilisation would certainly have been determined by the wartime needs, not by any general principle that each family had to provide one soldier.

What is relatively obvious is that helots far outnumbered Spartiates (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.5 Thuk. 4.80). However, all attempts at specifying their precise numbers are nothing more than unsubstantiated guesses, trying to fill a gap in our knowledge. It therefore comes as no surprise that the theories put forward in this regard vary greatly – from 175,000 helots (60,000 of them male) in the mid-fifth century BC (with the total population of Lacedaemon estimated at 230,000) (Beloch 1886, 142; 506); 375,000 helots (and 25,000 Spartans) (Grundy 1908); 250,000 helots (and 25,000 Spartans) (Coleman-Norton 1941); to 140–200 thousand helots (and 12–15 thousand Spartans – including women and children – in the years 480–450 BC (Ehrenberg 1976, 67). Based on his estimates of the size of the *kleroi* and their productivity, Figueira (1984, 104) calculated that in the fourth-century BC Messenia had a population of ca. 39,976 to 57,800 helots. Roebuck (1945, 163), in turn, estimates the maximum size of Messenia's population in the fourth century at 112,000.

Tributes paid by helots

Myron of Priene states that Lacedaemonians bequeathed land to helots (*ten choran*), specifying the share (*etaxan moirai*) they were always (*aei*) obliged to return (FGrHist 106 F 2 ap. Athen. 14. 677d). Plutarch, in turn, explains that helots cultivated land for Spartans, and paid a specific amount of tribute (*apophora*) (Plut. *Lyk.* 24.2. See Figueira 2019, 573).

Lycurgus contains the information that this tribute amounted to seventy *medimnoi* of barley for a man and twelve for a woman, in addition to a certain share of liquid produce (*ton hygron karpon analogos to plethos*) from each *kleros* (Plut. *Lyk.* 8.7). The vague mention of liquids may be explained with the obligation of providing a monthly supply of wine, cheese and figs for Spartan *syssitia*, also mentioned by Plutarch (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.2). In a different work, Plutarch added that a Spartiate could not demand helots to surrender more than that share, under the penalty of being cursed (*eparaton d'en pleionos tina misthosai*), and that the aim for such a stipulation was to give helots some incentive to work by allowing them to keep any surplus they produced (Plut. *Mor.* 239d–e) (*Inst. Lac.* 41). The abovementioned passages indicate that helots had a permanent obligation to provide fixed, unchanging quantities of produce. Information on these obligations are only found in later sources. There is no irrefutable evidence that such a system of tributes (*apophora)* existed in Sparta before the third century BC, when the Spartan myth was formed – including the legend of the indivisible *kleroi* passed down from father to the eldest son (Ducat 1990, 57–58). On the other hand, Pausanias (4.14.4–5) and Aelian (*Var. Hist.* 6.1) state that helots had to surrender half the

produce of their fields. In this case, both accounts are based on verses by Tyrtaeus, which inform that inhabitants of Messenia were "galled with great burdens like asses, bringing to their lords under grievous necessity a half of all the fruit of the soil" (Tyrtaeus fr. 6–7 (5)).

In contrast to the above authors, Tyrtaeus actually lived in Sparta, which automatically makes him a credible witness. However, it may be argued that the cited passage may contain poetic exaggeration, and thus should not be taken at face value. Furthermore, although it is commonly accepted that Tyrtaeus states that helots gave away half of their crops, in fact this very passage is corrupt. Out of the several possible emendations that have been proposed, the one that seems the most accurate is *hemisy panth*, which means that helots surrendered "the half and the whole". Does this indicate that some helots gave away half of their crops, while others – all of it? Or does it mean that, in practice, the tribute often amounted to one half (MacDowell 1986, 33)? Despite the lacunas in the text, the greatest consideration should be given to Pausanias's interpretation, as he could have read Tyrtaeus's text in its undamaged version (Hodkinson 1992, 127–128).

According to some scholars, helots were initially obliged to surrender half their produce, and the fixed amount of tribute was only specified after Messenia became fully subjugated following the second Messenian War (Kiechle 1959, 57–62, see Zwolski 1964, 205). Hodkinson claims that helots gave away half the crops both before and after that conquest; which would not have been too much of a burden in the fertile Messenian lands (Hodkinson 1992, 124–133; Link 1994, 2–3). Singor (1995, 42–43) emphasises that 50% was the standard solution in the case of conditional surrender and believes that initially helots did indeed give away half of what they produced, but eventually (perhaps in the first half of the fifth century BC) this gave way to fixed tribute rates; delineating only the maximum amount, and not any universal rate applicable to all, which could have been different than the one mentioned by Plutarch (Singor 1995, 51–52).

Evidence for the claim that helots in the third century were allowed to keep the surplus they produced is found in the information that in the year 223, when Cleomenes III promised freedom to all helots able to pay five *minae*, he managed to raise as much as five hundred talents. If this sum is accurate (as some doubts have been voiced in relevant literature), this would mean that six thousand helots gained their freedom. This raises the question of where did helots get money from. If they earned it by selling agricultural produce, it is unclear who they would be selling them to (especially in fifth/fourth century). It is known that in earlier periods helots had some possessions (see Cartledge 1979, 164). Thucydides, for instance, mentions boats owned by helots (Thuk. 4.26). It should be emphasised, however, that regardless of the nature of the helots' possessions, the passage about the five *minae* they paid in 223 BC is the earliest known mention of helots having money, and that it should perhaps be associated with the change in relations in Laconia after Messenia separated from it (see Cartledge 1987, 171).

In any case, do the cited authors speak of the same thing? Many scholars subscribe to the view that the burden imposed on Messenian helots was much greater

than that borne by their Laconian counterparts, and that Tyrtaeus's verse only applies to the former. On the other hand, no ancient source expressly mentions differences in status (which is not to mean there were none!) between helots in Laconia and Messenia (Cartledge 1979, 98; see Hodkinson 1992, 128–129).

According to one view, Plutarch's account relies on an earlier source (although, as noted by Link [1994, 1], it is unclear what it might have been). As Gilbert pointed out long ago (1872, 166), the fact that a Spartiate who demanded more than the helots' appointed share risked being cursed indicates that the tributes paid by helots had indeed been established in a very early period. However, it may very well be yet another expression of deliberate archaicisation practised by Spartans. Increasingly often, the fixed, clearly defined tribute rate described by Plutarch is presented as an invention from the third century BC (Ducat 1990, 56–59 as well as Hodkinson 1986, 378–406; 1989, 79–121; 1992, 125–126; Singor, 1995, 33; see Lotze, 1959, 29, Jones 1964, 9). While Plutarch's source remains unknown, it was most probably written in the third century BC (Singor 1995, 33). Hodkinson (1986, 382) suggests Hermippus of Smyrna as the author.

The rigidly defined tribute amounts that allowed the helots to keep a specific percentage of their produce led MacDowell to conclude that, in practice, such a system gave helots certain rights, including the right to own property. This claim was rejected by Stefan Link (1994, 4 ff.), who stated that helots were not subjects of law, but only objects thereof (Link 1994, 4 ff.). While this line of argumentation is accurate for earlier periods (especially if we accept that all *kleroi* were identical), it may not be so for the third century BC, when the entire system was created and given archaic provenance.

If we assume that helots surrendered half their produce, we must consider the question of how this half was determined. It can be surmised that this would require constant supervision to prevent fraud. On the other hand, one cannot help but agree with the logic of Hodkinson's statement (1992, 131–133), that setting the rate at one half of all produce was a more secure solution for the helots themselves (it protected them in the case of meagre harvest) and constituted the most effective method of retaining long-term economic relations between Spartiates and helots.

In reality, however, we still know nothing about the forms of helots' economic dependency, since no author from the Archaic or Classical period provides information on the topic (Ducat 1990, 62). There can be no doubt that Tyrtaeus's verses pertain to Messenians, yet they do not necessarily have to describe the status of helots. Given that there is nothing to corroborate the existence of a helot system in that early period, no source independent from Tyrtaeus indicates that helots were obliged to surrender half their produce (Ducat 1990, 61). The only thing that can be observed is a certain level of the helots' apparent "independence", if not in organisation, then in lifestyle.

Who owned the helots – the state or its citizens?

Hints as to the nature of the helots' status may be found in the very existence of a separate term. Had they been the same as other slaves, they would have been called by that denomination. In many sources, the terms 'helots' and 'slaves' (*douloi*, *oiketai*, *andrapoda*) are used interchangeably, which indicates that the status of the two groups was similar. What is obvious, however, is the helots' unique connection to citizens, which makes them distinctly different from Athenian "state-owned slaves".

It is widely accepted that the land and the helots of Sparta belonged to the state; they were owned by the "civic community", but were put to use by specific citizens (e.g. Cartledge 1998, col. 334. Helots as state property – e.g. Baltrusch 1998, 33). From the legal perspective, this meant a twofold dependency – from the community (the state) and from the citizen (Clauss 1983, 110). In fact, helots were "between the freemen and the slaves" (Pollux 3.83) – in the eyes of the law they were unfree, but in practice enjoyed a relatively high degree of freedom – they had families, utilised the land, owned tools and were hereditarily connected with the estate (see Cartledge 1979, 162; Clauss 1983, 110–111). According to Singor (1995, 41–42), they were slaves owned by the community and were bound to a single master, not to the land. A Spartiate made use of helots, but did not retain the full right of ownership, which signifies *Kollektivsklaverei* (Lotze 1959, 40, 77; Hodkinson 1992, 124). However, the possibility that helots were private rather than state-owned slaves (Diesner 1953/1954, 222) cannot be discounted. They had been enslaved as a community, but could have constituted individual property. Thucydides's account indicates that, in his view, the land in Sparta was privately owned. He does not, however, mention anything about the ownership of helots (Ducat 1990, 20–21). Xenophon, in turn, at least seems to suggest that helots were owned by the citizen community. He mentions that, in Sparta, it was possible to make use of someone else's slaves *(oiketai)* as of one's own (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 6.3; see Arist. *Pol.* 1263a 35–37; Plut. *Mor.* 238e (*Inst. Lac.* 23)). However, this view actually indicates that the "slaves" were private, not communal property. The same applies to other people's horses and hunting dogs, which a Spartiate in need could use as he would his own (see David 1993).

The belief that the helots were owned by the state, expressed by later authors (Strabo, Pausanias), finds apparent confirmation in the high level of state interference in the relationship between a Spartiate and his helots.

Interpreting the state's interference

The prohibition to sell "outside the borders". According to Ephorus (FGrHist 70 F 117), a Spartiate was not allowed to free a helot, or sell him "outside the borders" (*exo ton choron*). The first of these regulations is in line with the treatment of helots as "public slaves" (Paus. 3.20.8; Ephorus *l.c.*) owned by the state and only "utilised" by specific Spartiates. The ban to sell them "outside the borders" is more puzzling.

On the one hand, it may be regarded as an expression of the same concept of communal property that prohibited Spartiates to freely dispose of their helots. What "borders" could it refer to? If we assume that Ephorus meant the borders of the state (see e.g. Figueira 2018, 566–567), we must allow the possibility of Spartiates having the right to 'trade' helots within Spartan territory (Ducat 1990, 21–22). In this case the helots' connection to the state would be highly weakened, which would in practice undermine the hypothesis that helots were owned by the "civic community", and not by individual citizens. Could it therefore mean the borders of the *kleros*? This is the interpretation MacDowell is inclined to accept, yet it is easy to see that if this was the intent behind the regulation, the mention of the "border" is entirely superfluous. Since a helot could not be sold "outside the borders" of the estate, effectively he could not be sold at all, as it is difficult to imagine that a Spartiate would have anyone with whom to do trade within the *kleros.*

As demonstrated above, associating the "border" with neither the state nor the *kleros* resolves the issue in a clear manner. This may prompt us to try interpreting that mention in the context in which it appears in the source material, not in isolation. Returning to Ephorus (l.c.), we see that the prohibition to sell beyond the borders is invoked in connection to the enslavement of the inhabitants of Helos, and is likely to pertain to these very people (Link 1994, 4–5).

The helots' attire. As noted by Myron (FGrHist 106 F 2 ap. Athen. 14.657d), helots were obliged to dress in a very specific fashion. Each of them had to wear a leather cap (*kynee*) and a jacket (*diphthera).* Pollux (7.70) explains that the *diphthera* was a hooded chiton made of thick fabric. Contrary to what one may expect, it was not a garment reserved for slaves. Outside of Sparta, it was also worn by poor countryfolk (Ducat 1990, 111–112). In the Spartan context, however, the *diphthera* emphasised the helots' impairment. A similar, no doubt partially symbolic meaning was ascribed to the *kynee* (Ducat 1990, 112–113). Although Jean Ducat proved that these were not dog-skin caps, as previously believed (1990, 113–115), the garment must have had some particular visual appearance. Attire was a marker and a symbol of social status. On the one hand, dress regulations were to stigmatise helots, humiliate them, constantly emphasising the difference between them and their "masters"; on the other, given the lack of "racial barriers", it provided a way of visually distinguishing helots from citizens, especially when they were sent beyond the *kleros,* to serve in Spartan households or accompany Spartiates on military campaigns.

Punishing unruly helots. Spartiates were responsible before the state for the conduct of their helots. If a given helot was deemed unruly, he was put to death, and the Spartiate who did not instil the proper discipline in his servant was fined (Myron FGrHist 106 F 2). MacDowell (1986, 36) perceives this custom as similar to modern regulations pertaining to dangerous animals, which stipulate mandatory euthanisation of animals that got out of control, and penalties for their owners. At first glance, the mentioned regulation could be regarded as another proof that helots did not constitute private property. However, the state of Athens also

interfered with the master-slave relations, and a slave who was brutally mistreated could even request to be sold to another master.

In fact, the very meaning of Myron's text raises doubts. He mentions punishment for those Spartiates who failed to subjugate helots who had become fat (*hadroumenoi*) and did not look as slaves should (see Ducat 1990, 107–108, 119–120; Singor 1995, 44). What is this actually about? Certainly, the punishment was meant for a *hadros*, i.e. a large, portly, overweight helot. However, was it truly about the helot's physical appearance? Firstly, surviving information does not indicate that Spartiates pursued any conscious policy of keeping helots malnourished (Ducat 1990, 119–120). Secondly, such a policy would in fact go against Sparta's own interests, as the state needed helots for the army. Thirdly, and finally, it would be hard to imagine how a Spartiate could police his helots' meals, whether we assume the existence of *apophora*, or the custom of surrendering half the produce.

In spite of all doubts regarding the regulation Myron mentioned, it is apparent that a Spartiate was responsible for his helots before the state, as this was an issue related to state security (Ducat 1990, 23).

Freeing helots. As has already been mentioned (Ephorus FGrHist 70 F 117), a Spartiate could neither free a helot nor sell him beyond the borders. While a citizen was not allowed to free helots, the state of Sparta did have that right and used it at times, usually to reward helots who distinguished themselves in combat (Thuk. 4.80.3; 5.34.1; Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.28). Many scholars see this as corroboration for the notion that helots were a type of "state slaves", as they are called by Pausanias (3.20.6) and Strabo (8.5.4) – although the latter uses the phrase "state slaves in a way" (*tropon gar tina demosious doulous*) (Hooker 1980, 118–119). However, the fact that the state would free helots does not necessarily provide irrefutable evidence that these persons were owned by the polis, because, as it turns out, the Athenian state would also free slaves – privately owned ones (incidentally, for the same merits as in Sparta; see Ducat 1990, 25–27). Later references to helots as state slaves indicate that the concept of them being public property, which had already emerged in the late third or the early second century BC, has no connection to the classical period (Ducat 1990, 25). In the fifth- and fourth-century Sparta, there existed private estates, referred to by the old term *kleroi*, also cultivated by private helots, who were subject to more state control than those in other Greek poleis (Ducat 1990, 28–29; Hodkinson 1997, 89). This control resulted from the unique significance helots had for the community, and the potential threat they invariably posed.

The Spartan distrust of helots

The war against helots. Plutarch, referring to Aristotle, informs us that upon assuming office the ephors would declare war on helots *(tois heilosi katangellein polemon)*, so that killing them would not be impious (*euages)* (Plut. *Lyk.* 28,7 = Arist. fr. 538). The declaration of war could have been an archaic ritual which had lost its real importance by the fifth century BC (Michell 1964, 80). According to

Borimir Jordan (1990, 54), this custom was no longer followed during the Peloponnesian War, firstly because the ancient prescripts of Delphic Apollo were remembered, and secondly because such declarations of war would be contrary to the employment of helots as an armed force. It is uncertain how ancient the practice of declaring war on helots was; thus, we cannot rule out the possibility that it was only introduced in the atmosphere of growing fear after the helot revolt of the 460s BC, and that the ceremony took on a new meaning after the liberation of Messenia in the fourth century BC (see Whitby 1994, 106; Hodkinson 1997, 86). The ephors acted as representatives of the entire citizen community. The declaration meant that neither the state nor its individuals were at risk of committing a religious offense, which could provoke the wrath of the gods. A Spartiate could kill his (and presumably also another man's) helot with impunity, should he deem it necessary, even outside of the institution of *krypteia*.

Helots were regarded as enemies whom the state was battling every year, and as adversaries that had been defeated and tuned into slaves (Link 1994, 7–9; see also Hodkinson 1992, 124). This duality of the helots' nature as both enemies and the defeated men, or enslaved foes, does, to some extent, explain their hopeless position.

How often was the right to kill helots exercised? Isocrates claims that Lacedaemonians put to death without trial (*akritous apektonasi*) more Greeks that had ever been brought before court in Athens since the founding of the city (Isokr. 12.66). The credibility of this account has been – perhaps justifiably – questioned. Isocrates certainly had no access to any statistical data for Athens, much less for Sparta. Furthermore, the criticism of Lacedaemon plays a certain autonomous role in the *Panathenaicus*, and the arguments used in it could have been chosen with a specific bias. Thus, the text presents nothing more than an impression. However, no evidence compels us to disregard Isocrates's account as entirely useless. It is, after all, the voice of a contemporary indicating that the killing of helots in Sparta was not merely a theoretical possibility, but a fact noticeable by other Hellenes. Further corroboration may be found in the existence of the *krypteia* and the extermination of two thousand helots during the Peloponnesian War, mentioned by Thucydides. The widely accepted view is that the incident happened in the 420s BC (see Harvey 2004, 200–262), yet some scholars instead suggest the years 451–457 (see Figueira 1986, 186; 2005, 334–225).

The *krypteia*. Helots were intimidated using every possible means Sparta had at its disposal. One of them was the *krypteia* (cf. recently Zimmermann 2019, 117–129, and Couvenches 2014, 45–76), described by Plutarch in his *Lycurgus* (Plut. *Lyk.* 28.2–5). From time to time, Spartan authorities would send, as Figueira (2018,567) says, "especially the most enterprising" and distinguished young men to various parts of the country, armed only with a dagger and carrying a modest supply of food. They spent the day in hiding, and came down to the highways after nightfall to kill any helot they caught. Often they also walked the fields (in daytime), killing the strongest and best of helots (*rhomaleotatous kai kratistous*).

Plutarch did not hide his disdain for this custom and was reluctant to attribute its creation to Lycurgus. He believed that Spartans began to use such brutal measures "in later times", particularly after the earthquake in the 460s, when helots rebelled against Spartans in cooperation with Messenians, laid waste to Laconian lands and put the city itself in serious danger.

Some scholars have challenged the credibility of Plutarch's account of the *krypteia*; Müller, for instance, does so invoking Plato's *Laws* (633b; 763b), but is rightfully contradicted by Busolt, who warns against succumbing to the temptation of glamorising the *krypteia* (Busolt-Swoboda 1926, 670 n. 1). Plutarch's account is corroborated by a passage from Aristotle, which relates that those taking part in the *krypteia* murder helots at will (Arist. fr. 611, 10 [ed. Rose]).

According to a relatively widespread view, the *krypteia* initially had a different purpose and only gained its "policing" function in time. Jeanmaire (1913, 121–150) interpreted the customs as a "*rite de passage*" – an initiation rite through which a young Spartiate proved himself fit to become a citizen (see also Ducat 1990, 123–125; Sallares 1991, 172; Richer 1998, 469). Even if the *krypteia* evolved from a rite of passage, it had lost that function before other Hellenes became aware of it (see Whitby 1994, 105–106). It should be emphasised that only a part of Sparta's youth was involved in the *krypteia*; moreover, there is no reason to discredit Plutarch's suggestion that the cruelty of the *krytpeia* was a consequence of the Messenian uprising of the fifth century BC.

Even if the *krypteia* was a relic of tribal society, it had acquired a new function as an instrument of helot subjugation (Oliva 1971, 47; Hodkinson 1997, 92). Radical steps against helots were most probably taken every time the risk of mutiny seemed higher. As proved by Edmond Lévy, in the fourth century BC the *krypteia* gave rise to two institutions: (1) a longer period in hiding, which may not have involved all the Spartan youth, and (2) short-term, incidental operations against helots performed by elite units (Lévy 1988, 245–252; Hodkinson 1997, 92; Lévy's conclusions were questioned by Ducat 1997, 43–74).

<u>The extermination of helots.</u> During the Peloponnesian War, most likely in 425/424 (see Jordan 1990, 55; Harvey 2004, 199–218; Sekunda 2020, 183–206), Spartans resorted to a ruse to eliminate the threat helots were posing:

> They caused proclamation to be made that as many of them [helots] as claimed the estimation to have done the Lacedaemonians best service in their wars should be made free; feeling them in this manner and conceiving that, as they should every one out of pride deem himself worthy to be first made free, so they would soonest also rebel against them. And when they had thus preferred about two thousand, which also with crowns on their heads went in procession about the temples as to receive their liberty, they not long after made them away; and no man knew how they perished. (Thuk. 4.80.3–4, cf. Plut. *Lyk.* 28.4)

The entire incident is very unclear, to the extent that some scholars have called its veracity into question (Talbert 1989, 24–25; Whitby 1994, 98). It is known that

during the Peloponnesian War, Spartans periodically freed helots and used them to form units of neodamodes; and that roughly at the same time as the mysterious story takes place, they sent seven hundred helot hoplites to accompany Brasidas to Thrace, and later rewarded them by giving them their freedom. None of the accounts mention helots volunteering. The selection was apparently made by the Spartan authorities. According to Diodorus, (12.67.3) Brasidas was sent the most spirited of helots, in the hope that many of them would fall in battle. Sparta's appeal was answered by the toughest, and thus, from Spartan perspective, the most dangerous. Spartans might have feared that, if no preventive measures were taken, these helots could flee to Pylos or Cythera, or at least make it easier for Athenians to launch attacks on the Peloponnesian Peninsula from their bases there. From among those who came forward, Spartans chose around two thousand. While it is impossible to establish who these volunteers were, it seems unlikely that the group included those who had provided food to Spartiates stranded in Sphacteria, as Ducat suggests (1990, 156). Thucydides does not clarify the official criteria used to make the selection, or what (if anything at all) the helots were promised aside from their freedom. Neither does it explain the reasons for organising a festive procession of the chosen, yet it may be surmised that this was a kind of a ruse to allay the helots' suspicions. What did the helots themselves believe? As suggested by Jordan (1990, 37–69), this *astydromia* was not in any way associated with the procedures of slave liberation. Neither does he believe it to have been a ceremony similar to the *amphidromia*, symbolising the start of a new life and entering the community of the free folk. According to Jordan, going from temple to temple wearing a wreath on one's head resembles the behaviour of newly appointed gerontes. Jordan emphasises that, consciously or not, by imitating members the most venerable body in Sparta, helots gave Spartans a valid reason for turning to violence. Thus, although at first glance the helots' behaviour appears natural, customary and sanctioned by the authorities, Jordan believes that it was this very act that provoked the hostilities. He finds explanation for such reasoning in Aristotle, according to whom helots were not only constantly waiting for misfortune to befall their masters (*Pol.* 1264a 32–36), but also believed themselves equal to them and grew insolent if not kept in check (*Pol.* 1269b 7–11). As Jordan interprets it, if Spartans had he intention of killing these helots, they could have done it before they started to visit temples crowned with wreaths. It may also be that they were in fact unable to do so; in my opinion the terseness of Thucydides's account indicates that Spartans executed the entire operation in accordance to a premeditated plan (even if the helots' *astydromia* was a spontaneous expression of joy from those who had been promised their freedom). The helots disappeared soon after, and nobody knew what had become of them. If nothing else, a mass murder on two thousand helots certainly testifies to the Spartans' ability of concealing any inconvenient facts from the world. Naturally, there remains the question of who carried out the execution, and where and how it was done. Such an operation was not an easy thing to perform in those days. Although Diodorus (12.67.4) claims that the helots were killed one by one and in secret, each in their own home, it appears that

he could not have known more about the matter than Thucydides, from whom he (or his primary source) learnt about the incident.

Spartans were harsh (*tracheos*) and cruel (*skleros*) in their treatment of helots (Plut. *Lyk.* 28.8). On the one hand, they burdened them with the most undignified tasks (*pan hybristikon ergon*) (Myron FGrHist 106 F 2), on the other – emphasised and consolidated their rule over helots using various ritualised behaviours (Ducat 1990, 107).

Helot-lashing. Myron (FGrHist 106 F 2) states that a helot was given a certain amount of lashes every year, not because of any crime, but to remind him that he was a slave. It is uncertain whether the entire operation was organised by the state authorities and executed in Sparta itself, or in the *kleroi*, by special units sent there for that purpose. Another possibility to take into account is that the obligation lay with the owner of the *kleros*. While we do not know whether the prescript applied to Messenia as well as Laconia, there can be no doubt that it was a ritualised form of intimidating helots. Thus, although Myron claims that the "helot-lashing" was performed on all helots, one may wonder whether it was in practice limited to flogging a certain number of helot "representatives", who symbolically stood for the entire community (see Ducat 1990, 119). Helots were obliged to show respect to all Spartiates. They were, for instance, compelled to give way, and were beaten if they did not (Ps. Xen. *Ath. Pol.* I, 11). A helot had every reason to fear Spartiates.

Symbolic and physical violence against helots. Helots were made to drink alcohol in excess and brought to the *syssytia*, to show the youth what drunkenness was (Plut. *Lyk.* 28.8, see *Demetrios* 1.5; *Mor.* 239a (*Inst. Lac.* 30); *Mor.* 455e (*De cohibenda ira* 60); *Mor.* 1067e (*De communibus notitiis* 19)). Given that drinking undiluted wine (*akraton*) was considered a barbaric custom in Greece, the fact that helots were subjected to such a treatment evidently suggests they were situated outside the civilised world. Plutarch, who is the only source mentioning the practice, claims that the men responsible for organising the *syssitia* would bring two or three drunk helots to the mess (Plut. *Mor.* 1067e). He does not specify how often such displays were organised; one passage, however, informs that helots were also forced to drink large quantities of unmixed wine during public festivals (Plut. *Demetrios* 1.5). Each time, Plutarch puts emphasis on the didactic purpose behind the practice, indicating that the aim was to show the youth the consequences of drunkenness, it seems obvious that the practice was also meant to humiliate helots. They were additionally compelled to sing songs and perform dances Plutarch describes as indecent and vulgar (*agenneis kai katagelastous*). Smith believes that such a scene is depicted in a painting on the inside of one goblet found in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (Stibbe 1972 no. 64 pl. 26; Smith 1998, 77). Such practices certainly belonged to the social ritual intended as a means to humiliate helots as well as educate Spartan youth. Activities regarded as undignified were all reserved for helots. As noted by Plutarch, it was said that when Thebans entered Lacedaemon and ordered the helots they had taken captive to sing songs by Terpander, Alcman and Spendon, the helots begged to be excused from doing so since, as they explained,

"the masters did not like it" (Plut. *Lyk.* 28.10). Incidentally, this suggests that Laconian helots felt some attachment towards Spartans (Clauss 1983, 115), or perhaps, more likely, that obedience had been deeply ingrained in them.

<u>The helots' hatred of Spartans.</u> "No one was able to conceal the fact that he would be glad to eat them raw" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.6); this is how Cinadon summarised what helots, *neodamodeis*, impoverished citizens and *perioikoi* thought of Spartiates. As Oliva emphasises, the relations between Spartiates and helots have indeed been very tense (Oliva 1971, 47). He goes on to cite Theopompus, who claims that helots were impudent and hostile (FGrHist 115 F 3), and stresses that, according to Xenophon, helots loathed Spartans to such a degree that they would be willing to eat them, even raw. In reality, that last phrase is likely to have been (at least to some extent) propagandistic exaggeration on the part of ephors, who wanted to frighten Spartiates with the gravity of the threat they so competently kept at bay (see Cartledge 1987, 165).

This mainly pertains to Messenian helots. Ducat (1990, 143) believes that Messenians had not been fully "helotised" until the early fifth century BC, and that the process was only completed after the "Great Revolt", i.e. after 455 BC (Ducat 1990, 141–144). Sources mention clashes that took place in that region between ca. 520 and 460 BC. According to Plato (*Nomoi* 692d, 698e), it was the war against Messenia that prevented Spartans from arriving in time to aid Athens in 490 BC. Around the year 488 BC, Messenian fugitives went to Zancle (Paus. 4.23.6–10). Pausanias (4.33.2) mentions a statue of Zeus Ithomata made by Ageladas of Argos for Messenians living in Olympia. It would be difficult to believe that at the end of the sixth century (when Ageladas was active), a group of helots in Olympia was able to commission a statue. Pausanias (or the author whom he cites) also found this unlikely, given that he ascribed the funding of the statue to Messenians who settled in Naupactus in mid-fifth century. As emphasised by Ducat, at the end of the sixth century BC Messenians were presented as a separate "nation", building their own sanctuaries and commissioning statues. This is the reason why Spartans decided to commemorate their victory over Messenia by erecting a statue of Zeus in Olympia (Paus. 5.24.3; IG 5.1.1562).

Thucydides reports an isolated attempt at instigating Laconian helots to rebel, undertaken by the regent Pausanias in the early fifth century. The charge is most certainly false, yet the fact that it was made testifies that such a possibility did exist.

The revolt of Messenian helots, caused by the catastrophic earthquake in 464 BC, escalated into a conflict dubbed the Third Messenian War. It concluded with the signing of a pact between Spartans and the defenders of Ithome, which obliged the latter to leave the Peloponnesian Peninsula. Should any of them return, he would become a slave of the man who captured him. Athenians settled the refugees in Naupactus.

Ultimately, the elimination of local elites helped resolve the Messenian problem. Sparta's most implacable foes sailed to Zancle around the year 488 BC; others were driven away from the Peloponnesus pursuant to the treaty that ended the Third

Messenian War. Those who remained in Messenia were subdued with violence and repression. However, their sense of unique identity still persisted.

It was mainly Messenia, not Laconia, that was at risk of a mutiny during the Peloponnesian War. Similarly, when Theban forces invaded Sparta in 370/369 BC, they received aid from Messenia, not anywhere else. At that time, Spartan authorities managed to draft over six thousand helots for the army, and although many of them deserted (Xen. *Hell.* 5.5.32; 7.2.2; *Ages.* 2.24), the majority most probably remained loyal. Helots (and *perioikoi*) apparently opted for the safest choice from their perspective, i.e. upward mobility within the system with which they were familiar (Flower 1991, 95). Laconian helots were certainly subjected to more constant supervision than their counterparts in Messenia, but they also had to have more personal contacts with their Spartan masters. As Jones (1964, 10) put it, "they probably preserved no memories of their past, when their ancestors had been free men".

Although sources contain no information as to whether Messenian and Laconian helots were treated differently, the fact that there is no mention of unrest among the latter may suggest that Spartan policy towards helots in the two regions may not have been the same. These differences might be the reason behind the seemingly ambivalent attitude this policy took towards helots. It is entirely possible that military or domestic service, the promise of freedom and the more lenient treatment in everyday life was only reserved for Laconian helots, which would explain why they did not rebel against Spartan rule, even in the most trying times. On the other hand, the various restrictions and customary persecution that were the lot of (mainly? – Cartledge 1979, 177) Messenian helots may have been one of the factors that fuelled their hatred of Spartans and made them use every opportunity to rebel. Unfortunately, the surviving source material does not allow for this hypothesis to be verified, even though there can be no doubt that Spartan rule not only relied on overwhelming military might and a policy of terror, but involved other methods to prevent the oppressed from forming a unified front against those in power. While we cannot rule out the possibility that the policy of *divide et impera* was used on helots in both regions, the difference in attitude towards Sparta displayed by Messenian and Laconian helots indicates that the Langada Pass was indeed a border that separated one helot-related policy from the other.

Fear of helots. The Spartans' own approach towards helots was indubitably dominated by apprehension or even fear. This was an important constitutive element of the Spartiate community, one that strengthened their sense of solidarity, gave meaning to their chosen political system, and also forced them to take certain preventive measures. According to Thucydides (4. 80.3) almost everything in Sparta was done to help protect the state from the helot threat (see Gomme 1956, 547–548; Whitby 1994, 98–99; Baltrusch 2001, 1024).

Every time the Spartan army left the country, all adult helots were also mobilised and given tasks related, for instance, to transport (Hdt. 9.28; Thuk. 5.57.64). The Spartiates' attitude towards helots was somewhat ambivalent, mainly due to the

fact that the former were a small group ruling over a much larger community. Helots were a hostile element strong in numbers, and had become indispensable. It therefore comes as no surprise that the issue of helots was included not only in domestic, but also in foreign policy pursued by Sparta. In the earliest known treaty with Tegea, Sparta set the condition that Tegea expel all Messenians (Plut. *Mor.* 292b (*Graec. Quaest.* 5)) and amend the treaty signed with Athens in 421 BC to include the provision that it would come to their aid should the slaves rebel (Thuk. 5.23.3).

This was probably a standard clause in pacts signed by Sparta (Jones 1964, 9, 52; Cartledge 1987, 13). It also features in the Spartan – Aetolian [Erxiadieis] treaty from the fifth century BC, where the obligation to turn away fugitives should be associated with helots (Cartledge 1976c, 87–92). The importance of the helot issue in Spartan foreign policy is explicitly discussed by Thucydides. During the Peloponnesian War, in order to ease the strain of Athenian attacks on the Peloponnese, Spartans decided to organise a campaign against the Athenians' allies, who were ready to break off the alliance: "The Lacedaemonians were also glad to have an excuse for sending some of the Helots out of the country, for fear that the present aspect of affairs and the occupation of Pylos might encourage them to move. Indeed fear of their numbers and obstinacy (*neotes*) even persuaded the Lacedaemonians to the action which I shall now relate, their policy at all times having been governed by the necessity of taking precautions against them". The Spartans resorted to trickery, declaring that they would liberate the most valiant helots, and then murdering two thousand of them in secret. "The Spartans," Thucydides reports, "now therefore gladly sent seven hundred as heavy infantry with Brasidas", and sent them to Chalcidice along with mercenaries recruited on the Peloponnesus (Thuk. 4.80).

Around 425 BC, Sparta's situation had become dire: the strategically important outpost of Pylos had been lost, and the Spartans were desperate to recapture it. Aside from its military implications, the problem also had a social aspect, because Messenians exiled from their homeland in the 450s had been brought to Pylos by Athenians. Their presence increased the probability that Messenian helots would take up arms against Sparta. The crisis escalated even further in 424 BC, with the Athenian conquest of Cythera: "She had suffered on the island (Sphacteria) a disaster hitherto unknown at Sparta; she saw her country plundered from Pylos and Kythera; the Helots were deserting, and she was in constant apprehension that those who remained in Peloponnese would rely upon those outside and take advantage of the situation to renew their old attempts at revolution" (Thuk. 5.14.3). Thucydides believes that the Spartans were afraid that the spark of the helot revolt would rekindle, and that this was why they sent seven hundred helots with Brasidas to serve as soldiers (Thuk. 4.80.5).

Clauss (1983, 114) argues that Thucydides made the same mistake as many modern authors. He presents fear of helots as a driving force in Spartan policy, but still states that helots were given arms and sent to war with Brasidas, most certainly after undergoing considerable training. After these helots' return, Lacedaemonians

voted (*epsephisanto*) to set them free and allowed them to settle wherever they desired (Thuk. 5.34.1). It is unclear what this freedom to choose one's place of residence (in Lacedaemon, or perhaps also outside its borders?) entailed. In any case, the group ultimately settled in Lepreum by the border with Elis, which Sparta suspected of preparing to attack. The ex-helots were likely not assigned any land, but constituted a kind of a garrison (Ducat 1990, 160), presumably to protect the border. This would indicate that Spartans trusted them, since they assigned them with a task of considerable importance for the state

According to Clauss (1983, 114), Thucydides's assumption that Spartans feared helots is not entirely inaccurate. The ancient author simply does not differentiate between Laconian and Messenian helots when recounting events in Pylos and Cythera, even though it is Messenian, not Laconian helots he clearly has in mind when stating that Spartans were wary of a mutiny.

The five-year period between the fall of Sphacteria and the Peace of Nicias was an uncertain time in Sparta. Thucydides once more declares fear of a helot mutiny to have been the cause. In 370/69 BC, the Theban intervention and the actions of local helots led to Messenia becoming independent.

Interpersonal relations. Certainly there were helots who did not display hatred towards their masters, just as not all Spartiates treated helots the same. In time, personal attachment formed between some Laconian helots and their masters (Cartledge 1987, 172). Herodotus relates the story of a blind Spartiate Eurytus and his nameless helot who led him to the battlefield at Thermopylae (but did not participate in the fighting himself, leaving his master to certain death) (Hdt. 7.229). This may indicate that the relations between masters and servants were not always hostile. Still, it changes nothing with regard to the nature of the relation between the two groups within Spartan society. The fundamental conflict is the more important issue here.

The Spartan-helot relations stemmed from close proximity and the fact that helots worked as servants in Spartan households. The ownership of the *kleros* passed from father to son, which meant relations could develop over generations (Clauss 1983, 112). Clauss also points out that the better relationship between Spartiates and Laconian helots prevented the latter group from feeling a sense of solidarity with their Messenian counterparts (Clauss 1983, 112). This explains certain known facts pertaining to military service done by helots.

Helots in the army. To be sure, helots were servants to Spartan hoplites. Thus, they were part of the army, not only as squires but also as light infantry *(psiloi)*, hoplites, and oarsmen in Spartan fleet (e.g. Hdt. 9.10.1; Thuk. 7.19.3; Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.12; see Welwei 1974, 108–181; MacDowell 1986, 35; Ducat 1990, 157). They were usually employed far from their homeland, sent on foreign campaigns, and always remained loyal (Thuk. 5.34.67; 7.19.58; 8.5; Xen. *Hell.* 1. 3.15; 3.1.4; 4.2.20; 5.2.24; Pollux 3.83). What is perhaps most surprising is the fact that helots could serve as hoplites, a task reserved in Greece for the free folk, usually citizens (Ducat 1990, 159 ff.). Fighting as a hoplite required prior training, which means that some

internal stratification must have existed within the group of helots, since some were allowed to be armed (unless they were trained in the same way as Roman gladiators). The candidates were most likely investigated and tested, to see if they could be regarded as trustworthy and if they had the required physical constitution (Welwei 1974, 149, 156; Ducat 1990, 163–164). Those who passed the test became squires to Spartan hoplites, and were promoted to hoplites themselves as they acquired more skill. Ducat claims that members of the helot elite – which he believes existed – were interested in pursuing this path of social advancement. The helot community was certainly divided into several groups. Cartledge (1987, 174) opines that it included helot "kulaks". He believes that the *monomoitos* – a helot leader (*heloton archon*) – mentioned by Hesychius was a supervisor, responsible for managing other people's work, maintaining order and providing the required amount or tribute. Once again, one cannot help but suppose that Laconian helots were treated more humanely and that it was only them that could enlist in the army.

Domestic service. Helots worked as servants in Spartiate households (Ducat 1990, 54 ff.). This must have been a large group, and thus the numbers of helots in Sparta ought to be reflected in the security measures taken.

Lacedaemonian policy towards helots was invariably guided by caution, stemming primarily from the Spartans' fear for their own safety (see Thuk. 4.80.3). According to Critias, Spartiates would lock the doors to their houses for fear of helots (*apistias heineka tes pros tous heilotas*) (fr. 37 D-K). The fact that they felt compelled to secure the doors against a helot attack dramatically illustrates the anxiety in which Spartiates and their families lived. Spartan castles, famous throughout Antiquity, might perpetuate the image of a Spartan household as a besieged keep. However, like all Greeks, Spartiates mainly used locks to shut the door from the outside. Houses were locked when their residents were out, to protect them from thieves (Ducat 1990, 146–147).

According to Xenophon, Spartans always carried a spear and minded that helots were not given any weapons (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 12.4). Likewise, Critias reports that Spartans kept the strap handle *(porpax)* to their shield at home, and since this was forbidden in times of war, they carried a spear at all times, so that they would still be at an advantage even if attacked by a helot armed with a shield (Kritias fr. 37 D-K). Archaeological findings from Salamis in Cyprus confirm that *porpakes* were indeed easy to dismantle, but also indicate that this was not a technical solution unique to Sparta (Ducat 1990, 147). And while security measures preventing slaves from gaining easy access to arms were implemented throughout Greece, the ample evidence for helot presence in the army (see Ducat 1990, 148–149) proves that the accounts of Xenophon and Critias should not be taken at face value, and neither should the abovementioned formula of *metaxy eleutheron kai doulon*, most probably invented by Aristophanes of Byzantium in the late third and early second century BC (Pollux 3.83). It is a kind of a metaphor (Ducat 1990, 49), and pertains not as much to freedom, which helots did not have, but the distance that separated them from ordinary slaves. While deeming helots to be the most pitiful of slaves,

Greeks also regarded them as something more than ordinary serfs. This was thanks to the political and military significance of the helot community, the awareness of their Greek origin, especially the distinct identity of Messenians, as well as the later belief that helots were communal property (see Ducat 1990, 48–51).

The end of the *heiloteia* system is as mysterious as its beginnings. Strabo relates that the *heiloteia* survived until Roman rule (*mechri tes Rhomaion epikrateias*) (Strabo 8.5.4). The system most probably underwent a gradual dissolution in the second century BC, under the Roman influence (Ducat 1990, 193–199).

C. The *perioikoi*

The term *perioikoi* ('dwellers around') denotes those who lived *peri*, that is around (Sparta), and indicates a kind of dependency. The name certainly was not invented by those men themselves, but either by outsiders making analyses of the Spartan state or, which seems more likely, by Spartans, given that the word itself determines the relation between Sparta and the *perioikoi*. The *perioikoi*, similarly to the metics in Athens, probably preferred to use their own *ethnika*,which identified their village of origin (Shipley 1992, 223); the rest of the world, in turn, saw them simply as Lacedaemonians.

The ethnic makeup of the Spartan *perioikoi* has been the subject of numerous discussions resulting in many hypotheses. The fundamental questions revolve around determining, firstly, whether the group emerged as a result of conquest or later social differentiation, and secondly, whether the *perioikoi* were of the Achaean or Dorian origin, or perhaps did not form an ethnically homogeneous community.

One of the hypotheses that attempt to answer these questions follows a statement by Isocrates, which indicates that some interior conflict (*stasis*) among the Dorian invaders resulted in the men in power turning the Dorian commoners (*plethos*) into the *perioikoi*; as a result, the Dorian aristocracy seized the best lands for themselves, giving rise to the Spartan community, while the common Dorians were forced to content themselves with poorer land and became the *perioikoi* (Isokr. 12.179) (see Hampl 1937; Gschnitzer 1958; Mossé 1977, 121–124; Ducat 1985). However, even those who are willing to believe in the Dorian origin of the *perioikoi* (and who claim that Dorians could have laid the foundation for the higher stratum of the *perioikoi* communities) assume that a percentage, possibly a substantial one, of the group was Achaean, i.e. composed of the pre-Dorian inhabitants of the land. The fundamental question to answer here is whether the *perioikoi* were mostly Dorian, like the Spartiates (cf. Niese, Meyer, Kahrstedt, Hampl, Hamilton), or whether the majority had Achaean roots, as did the helots (cf. Müller, Busolt, Beloch, Witkowski). In the former case, it is also possible that the emergence of the *perioikoi* was the result of events that took place after the Dorian conquest of Laconia. According to Ephorus, "though the neighboring peoples, one and all, were subject to the Spartiatae, still they had equal rights, sharing both in the rights of citizenship and in the offices of state [...] but Agis, the son of Eurysthenes,

deprived them of the equality of rights and ordered them to pay tribute to Sparta"
(Strabo 8.5.4).

The *perioikoi* were certainly not a homogeneous group (Cartledge 1979, 97–82).
It may be supposed that some settlements were inhabited by the earlier Achaean
population, while others, such as Kythera, may have been established as a result
of Dorian colonisation (see Zwolski 1964, 205), and still others, such as Asine and
Mothone, were founded by foreigners whom the Spartans had invited there in the
Archaic period. When ca. 715 BC the Asinaeans had to flee Argolis, driven away
by the Argaeans, the Spartans gave them land in Messenia (see Kulesza, 1998, 434
n. 1). In the late seventh or early sixth century BC, Spartans settled yet another
group of refugees from Argolis, this time the Naupleans, in Mothone (see Kulesza
1998, 44 n. 2). While I do not share Figueira's opinion that the Aegineans who set-
tled in Thyreatis in 431 BC were granted the status of the *perioikoi*, I believe that if
their stay had become permanent, they would have become more similar to them
and would eventually receive the same treatment from Spartans as the *perioikoi* of
Asine or Mothone.

The *perioikoi* poleis

The ancient authors described the *perioikoi* settlements as poleis (e.g. Hdt. 7.234.2;
Thuk. 5.54.1; Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.3. see also Pherecydes FGrHist 3 F 168; Xen. *Hell.*
6.5.21; *Ages.* 2.24; Ps. Skylax 46; Isokr. 12.179; Strabo 6.2.4, 11; Paus. 3.2.6), i.e. with
the same word they used in reference to independent city-states such as Athens
or Sparta itself. Herodotus speaks of a great number of poleis (Hdt. 7.234.2),
Strabo – of about thirty (*peri triakonta*), noting that there used to be a hundred of
them (*hekatonpolin*) in the past. Some eighty of the *perioikoi* poleis are known by
name (Oliva 1971, 59 n. 2; Ridley 1974, 289 see Cartledge 1979, 185–193; 1987, 15).
Shipley's catalogue (1997) includes ninety-five sites from various periods. About
sixty *perioikoi* communities dating from the Classical period are known, over 50%
of which can now be located, and twenty-three can be identified as poleis (Ducat
2018, 589). The *perioikoi* poleis are found in Laconia (Aegys, Boia, Epidaurus,
Geronthrai, Gytheion, Kythera, Las, Sellasia), but also in Messenia (Aethaea, Asine,
Aulon, Kardamyle, Kyparissos, Mothone, Thouria).

These townships were scattered throughout the entire Lacedaemon (e.g. Sellasia
is located only a few kilometres from Sparta). Nonetheless, the vast majority lay in
border regions, a fact which prompted Cartledge (1998a, 43) to refer to the *perioikoi*
as the "first line of defence" an enemy had to break through to enter Laconia. The
location of the *perioikoi* townships may also indicate that they protected Sparta's
domestic security, for instance by separating the helots from the Arcadians and
Argaeans in Laconia (Cartledge 1979, 180).

Prompted by their sheer number, Oliva (1971, 59) believes that most of the
perioikoi settlements were small and notes that they must have significantly
differed from one another. In reality, however, this state of affairs seems to have
had a different root cause: the Spartiates left the *perioikoi* with smaller areas of

less fertile land, and this acted as a natural stopper to the development of their settlements (Cartledge 1979, 185). The only extant piece of information that may offer some insight as to their actual numbers pertains to the Battle of Plataeae, in which five thousand *perioikoi* took part (Hdt. 9.28. 2). Assuming that the traditional number of one hundred poleis is accurate, it may be surmised that in 479 BC each city sent an average of fifty soldiers. This is a quota that roughly corresponds to the military potential of Mycenae at the same time (also measured by its contribution to the anti-Persian coalition), but does not match that of the small polis of Plataeae, which aided Athens in 490 BC by sending a unit of one thousand soldiers. Given that the number of citizens in Plataeae (spreading on an area of ca. 85 km^2) is estimated to have been between 500 and 1000, we may assume the *perioikoi* poleis to have been smaller in terms of population than an average, or even a smallish Greek polis. Nonetheless, if the total number of the *perioikoi* poleis was only twenty-two, it would mean that each of them dispatched to Plataeae an average of 230 hoplites. As noted above, the *perioikoi* settlements probably differed in size. They not only included poleis such as Gytheion, but also villages (*komai*) such as Oion in Sciritis (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.25–26). If we believe the report of the *perioikoi* being granted thirty thousand plots of land, we must again wonder how large an average polis had to be; depending on the total number of these settlements, there would have been between 300 and as much as 1364 *kleroi* per polis. It is not known how large the plots were, or even whether the poleis truly had a similar number of plots allotted to them; this last seems unlikely in light of the information discussed above. Figueira (1984, 102), who believes Messenia to have contained fourteen *perioikoi* settlements, calculates that each of them had, on average, ca. 25 km^2 of arable land at its disposal. On the other hand, relatively significant differences may be observed between the cities whose acreage may be determined with more precision: Thalamai (1628 ha/4023 acres), Leuctra (3264 ha/8065 acres), Kardamyle (2611 ha/8065 acres), Pharai (1699 ha/4198 acres), Kalamai (1571 ha/3882 acres). Additional four ones, in whose case the precision of identification is lower, also display similar differences: Gerenia (3902 ha/ 9642 acres), Albia (1838 ha/4542 acres), Thouria (2217 ha/5478 acres), Aethaea (3879 ha/9585 acres). For the remaining five: Asine, Mothone, Aulon, Pephemos (?), Alagoneia, Figueira adopts an average acreage calculated from the above-mentioned nine figures, namely 25 km^2, which means that the total expanse of arable land was 125 km^2.

Assuming that owning a plot of land was indeed a criterion for citizenship, the above figures would also suggest that the *perioikoi* settlements were smaller in size than an average Greek polis (80% of known poleis occupied the space of under 200 square kilometres). Thus far, archaeological data corroborates this claim. As noted by Graham Shipley (1992), the *perioikoi* townships contain no traces of monumental public structures or temples from the Classical period, which emphasises the changes that took place there after the era of Spartan dominance had ended.

Most of the *perioikoi* settlements lay in Laconia, though some were also found in the Messenian territory. One distinguishing feature characteristic for the *perioikoi* poleis was their considerable dispersion, which, as suggested by Shipley, may have

resulted from a consciously implemented Spartan policy of making sure that they never grew to become large urban centres. Unfortunately, it is not known how numerous the *perioikoi* were as a group or how much land their poleis occupied in Lacedaemon. What may be inferred from the number of Lacedaemonian troops in 480/79 BC (i.e. 5000 Spartiates and 5000 *perioikoi*) is that the two communities were similar in size; yet the conclusion is relatively arbitrary given the fact that we do not know the proportion between hoplites and the rest of the community in either of the groups. Though seemingly exact, the estimates regarding the acreage of *perioikoi* land in Messenia (provided by Figueira) are equally unhelpful. Figueira assumes that 6000 out of the 9000 *kleroi* were found in Messenia, and stretched over a total of 925 km^2, whereas the *perioikoi* poleis covered 351 km^2, which would indicate that the *perioikoi* were in possession of 27.5% of all arable land in Messenia.

Formally speaking, the *perioikoi* constituted a part of the Spartan state (though the question remains whether they were still inhabitants of separate city-states; see Eremin 2002; Mertens 2002), which is reflected in its official name, the Lacedaemonians, which included both the fully enfranchised citizens (Spartiates) and the *perioikoi*. In my estimation, the *perioikoi* were both citizens of the Spartan polis *and* citizens of their own city-states, which justifies using the term "double citizenship" (Hall 2000). On the other hand, the *perioikoi* had no political rights, and thus were fully dependent on Sparta in the most fundamental issues, which is why they are sometimes described as "second-rate citizens" (Lotze 2000, 171–183, see Cartledge 2000, col. 582–583; Ducat 2018, 612). In his *Panathenaicus*, Isocrates perceived the Spartiates as aristocratic governors, and the *perioikoi* as the people (*demos*, *plethos*) whom the aristocrats subjected to bondage (Isokr. 12.177–181). He also states that the *perioikoi* cities had less power than the Athenian demes (Isokr. 12.179), which most likely means that they were not represented in Spartan authorities.

While the *perioikoi* poleis did not follow their own international policy, being fully dependent on Sparta's decisions in this respect, they enjoyed their autonomy in internal affairs. In a sense, they were "dependent poleis" (Shipley 1997, see Hansen 2004). Following Stefan Link (1994, 11), it should also be noted that the lack of self-determination in foreign affairs was not uncommon in Greece. Many small poleis that were either formally or *de facto* dependent on their powerful neighbours found themselves in a similar situation. In a sense, it is the independence of the *perioikoi* in internal matters that proves more problematic to describe, since we do not know what political institutions existed in these cities and to what extent their political system resembled that of Sparta. Worse still, we are not even certain how much Sparta intervened in the internal affairs of the *perioikoi*, though the snippets of information that are available suggest that their autonomy may have been of a limited nature.

As noted above, Lycurgus allegedly distributed thirty thousand plots of land among the *perioikoi* of Laconia, after all the *kleroi* for citizens had been assigned (Plut. *Lyk.* 8.5). This is not to mean that the land had been precisely measured and the plots clearly delimited. What Plutarch's account seems to suggest is rather that

the *perioikoi* were allowed to keep the land that had not been taken by Spartans. Moreover, the number "thirty thousand" is unlikely to be historically accurate. It was probably made up by doubling the number of *kleroi* (15,000) devised by King Agis IV after the war, so that it corresponded to Aristotle's estimates of Lacedaemon's military potential (which he put at 30,000 hoplites; *Pol.* 1270a 29–30). The number should therefore be associated with the time of the third-century BC "revolution" (Hodkinson 1986, 382).

Were the *perioikoi* in any way charged for the land they owned? It is generally assumed that they paid for the possibility to cultivate the land owned by Spartan kings and located within their territory (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.3). Plato (*Alk.* 122d–123a) and Strabo mentions the kings' receipts (*basilikos phoros*),which some scholars interpret as evidence that the *perioikoi* paid tribute from the land they owned (MacDowell 1986, 28; Cartledge 2000, 582–583, see Ducat 2018, 603). However, this claim is difficult to support given that none of the known sources mentions it directly (Link 1994, 10; Cartledge 1979, 180).

However, even if the *perioikoi* did not pay any special tribute to Sparta, this does not mean they were fully exempt from all economic strain. According to the traditional, albeit not entirely accurate image of Sparta in which the Spartiates played the part of warriors, the helots – the role of the farmers, and the *perioikoi* – that of merchants and craftsmen (comparable to the metics in Athens; Gauthier 1988, 25), it would seem obvious that this last group was tasked with the production and maintenance of all the weapons and shields the Spartiates required. Moses Finley (1968, 149) believes that the casting of metal and forging weapons were and obligation, and a privilege, of the *perioikoi* (see also Cartledge 1979, 184; 1987, 178; Hamilton 1991, 73). If this was indeed the case – although all sources are silent on the matter – there is no way to determine whether these were mandatory supplies for which the *perioikoi* were not paid, or whether Sparta (or specific Spartiates, if this responsibility did not lay with the state) compensated them for it. But even if they were paid, everything we know about the *perioikoi* settlements in the fifth and fourth century BC indicates that they did not make much profit from arms dealing.

While our knowledge about the economic obligations of the *perioikoi* remains limited, we have some information on the control exercised over them by Spartan authorities. Isocrates writes that the ephors had the right to put to death without trial (*akritous apok teinai*) as many *perioikoi* as they desired (Isokr. 12.181). Many scholars believe (Jones 1964, 8; see Cartledge 1979, 179) that Isocrates simply confused the *perioikoi* with helots in that passage (see Richer 1998, 452–453). However, evidence to the contrary may be found in the fact that the ephors' annual declaration of war against helots gave all Spartiates (and not only the ephors) a license to kill helots. This being said, if we assume Isocrates's account to be accurate, we need to note the lack of known examples for this law being applied in practice. Thus, we may only interpret it in the following manner: should the *perioikoi* commit a crime against Sparta, the ephors had the right to try and pass any sentence (including the death penalty) on any number of the *perioikoi*.

The only known example of the ephors ordering the arrest of certain *perioikoi* was actually a ruse to make Cinadon leave Sparta, and the ephors did not actually expect the command to be executed (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.8). We also learn that Cinadon had performed similar tasks for the ephors before. Upon being assigned the mission of bringing back a number of the *perioikoi*, Cinadon was told to go to the eldest of the commanders of the guard, who was supposed to assign six or seven men to his command. All of this was done to make the operation seem like routine procedures, so as not to arouse Cinadon's suspicions, while in fact a Spartan cavalry regiment was sent after him. Cinadon's mission suggests that the ephors had unlimited policing and judiciary authority over the *perioikoi* living in their poleis. These prerogatives may not have been limited to important matters of state security, as indicated by the other task – a side quest, so to speak – the ephors gave to Cinadon on that occasion. He was to go to Aulon to bring back not only the already mentioned group of the *perioikoi*, but also some woman who had allegedly "shown disdain" to the Spartiates coming there (or was thought to be corrupting them), old and young alike. While we may feel sorry for the woman, if she indeed ended up in Sparta, and regret that nothing more is known about her, the ephors' interest in her certainly proves that their interference in the affairs of the *perioikoi* poleis could have been very considerable. According to some scholars, Spartans appointed special governors (*harmostai*) for *perioikoi* cities (Parke 1931; Bockisch 1965); it has even been suggested that they not only sent the *harmostai*, but also maintained garrisons in these poleis (Hooker 1980, 115). However, the passage on which this hypothesis is based – referring to twenty *harmostai* (schol. ad Pind. *Ol.* 6.154) – is not fully clear. Moreover, while sources do mention Spartans appointing *harmostai* in cities captured from Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War (e.g. Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.18; 3.1.4), there is no direct confirmation of their presence in the *perioikoi* poleis on the Peloponnesian Peninsula. Some passages which Bockisch identifies as referring to *harmostai* are more likely speaking of the commanders of military garrisons, not governors wielding judicial power over the local population. Brasidas held military power (*phrouran echon*) in Methone (Thuk. 2.25.2) and Tantalus had probably been sent to Thyreatis only to set up defences in case of Athenian attack (Thuk. 4.57.3); Diodorus calls him a *phrourarchos* (Diod. 12.65.9). The phrase *tois ep Aulonois* most probably refers to the commanders of the Spartan garrison in Aulon (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.10, cf. Cartledge 1979, 27–45; MacDowell 1986, 29), and Geranor was not a harmost, but a polemarch of Asine (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.25).

Thucydides's text also indicates that the Spartans did not maintain a network of garrisons in *perioikoi* territory, at least not in the fifth century BC (Thuk. 4.55), although they could, if need arose, locate such outposts in the borderlands, e.g. in Thyreatis. Arguments to support the fact that they did not do so under normal circumstances come from Cinadon's story recounted above. If Aulon had its own harmost, the ephors would have contacted him or asked Cinadon to consult him. Had the city housed a garrison (Cartledge [1979, 27–45] erroneously concludes from Cinadon's story that Aulon did have a garrison), the ephors would not have

needed to provide their envoy with military assistance, either on that occasion or any previous ones.

The only place inhabited by the *perioikoi* which certainly had a special official annually sent from Sparta was the island of Kythera at the shores of the Peloponnese. Thucydides refers to this official as a *kytherodikes* (Thuk. 4.53.2), which suggests that his function, although perhaps only initially, was to settle disputes arising among the local residents. It remains unclear how these prerogatives balanced against the autonomy of Kythera's population (it is possible that, as Hansen [1997, 34] assumes, the official ruled Kythera, yet there is no proof to substantiate that claim), as these residents held the status of *perioikoi*, were considered Lacedaemonians by the outside world, and most probably referred to themselves as *Kytherioi*, emphasising their citizenship. According to MacDowell (1986, 30), the special title of the official and the fact that Thucydides considered him worthy of a mention both point to this solution being unique and not used in any other *perioikoi* city. MacDowell also believes that the use of the past tense (*diebainen*) indicates that the solution had already been abandoned by the time Thucydides wrote about it, and that the obvious moment when Spartans did not send a subsequent "magistrate" to Kythera was 424 BC, when Athenian forces seized the island. The possibility that the Spartans returned to the custom after reclaiming the island, starting to send magistrates again, cannot be discounted. This is the conclusion Cartledge (1979, 244) is inclined to make on the basis of a fourth-century inscription on Kythera, confirming a dedication to "Menandros the harmost" (IG 5.1.937). However, the inscription does not clear the existing doubts, not because it fails to mention where Menandros served as harmost, but primarily due to the fact that, contrary to what Cartledge (1987, 91) claims, the "magistrate for Kythera" (*kytherodikes*) was not the same thing as a harmost.

In my personal view, after Kythera was reclaimed at the end of the Peloponnesian War, the function of the representative of Spartan authorities on the island fell to the harmost (which is not tantamount to saying that Menandros was the harmost on Kythera, although this seems the most probable conclusion). One piece of evidence to support it comes from the fact that when Pharnabazus and Conon captured the island in 393 BC, they put its garrison under the command of Nicophemus, an Athenian, whom Xenophon calls a harmost (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.8), most likely employing the term which formerly denoted his Lacedaemonian predecessor.

Was the Kytheran solution truly unique, then, and if so, why was it used there and nowhere else? The very name of the office may point to its uniqueness; a "magistrate for Kythera" was certainly sent only to Kythera. While the possibility that similar posts existed in other *perioikoi* poleis cannot be completely discarded, the considerable distance between Kythera and Sparta, and the island's size and strategic location all suggest that it may have been treated differently than other *perioikoi* settlements. It should be noted that Kythera was a relatively recent addition to the Spartan state; it had been ruled by Argives as late as in the mid-sixth century BC and may have been used as a base to attack Lacedaemon. This would explain why Chilon the ephor said that it would have been better for Sparta if

Kythera sank into the sea (Hdt. 7.235.2). Captured by Spartans late in the sixth or early in the fifth century, the island never lost its significance afterwards. Thucydides himself suggests as much when he mentions the *kytherodikes* and the Spartan garrison almost in one breath, and concludes that Spartans keep careful watch over the island. According to Thucydides, Kythera was significant for both strategic and commercial reasons, as it was visited by ships sailing from Egypt and Libia and it protected Laconia from pirate attacks. The Athenians invaded it three times. First captured by Tolmides in 456/55 BC (Paus. 1.27.5; *schol.* Aisch. 2.75), during the Peloponnesian War the island probably remained in Athenian hands between 424 and 409 BC (Coldstream, Huxley 1972, 38) and was seized again in 393 BC by Conon and Pharnabazus. This also implies that special policies were applied to residents of Kythera because in trying times much depended on their loyalty to Sparta.

Thus, we once again return to the fundamental questions of the civil liberties granted to the *perioikoi* and their duties towards Sparta. While the alleged economic obligations of the *perioikoi* raise doubts, their military contribution seem obvious: the *perioikoi* were drafted into the military and took part in wars waged by Sparta. Spartan authorities did not have to ask for any permission in order to call on the *perioikoi* to provide a given number of soldiers. The Lacedaemonian army usually (although not always; see Lazenby 1985, 15–16, 42) included *perioikoi* units. This being said, we do not know the specific principles that governed the mobilisation of the *perioikoi*, or the details regarding their position within the Spartan army. They were most likely led by officers who followed the orders of their Spartan commanders. From about the mid-fifth century BC onwards, the *perioikoi*, who had earlier formed separate units, began to be put in the same formations as the Spartiates (Cartledge 2000). One account states that the *perioikos* Deiniades became the commander of a number of ships (Thuk. 8.22.1); but it seems improbable that he had fully enfranchised citizens under his command. We know that the Sciritae – inhabitants of one of *perioikoi* settlements – were granted the privilege of forming the left wing of the Lacedaemonian army; the right one consisted of Spartiates (Thuk. 5.67.1).

The existence of *perioikoi* hoplite units within Lacedaemonian army indicates that the community of the poleis that sent them had a sizable middle class (see Cartledge 1987, 177–178), whose members were able not only to afford the required military equipment, but also to devote enough time to hoplite combat training. In practice, this means the existence of a relatively large class of landowners. Xenophon remarks that there were *kaloi kagathoi* among the *perioikoi* (Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.9). While this may mean that the group included men whom Sparta regarded as trustworthy (as Kahrstedt's supposes, 1922 I, 79, 80), it seems more probable that what Xenophon meant by *kaloi kagathoi* were men of noble breeding, i.e. aristocrats (see Ridley 1974, 291). Another piece of data that may point to the existence of a higher stratum in the *perioikoi* society is a passage from Plutarch, who mentions *chariestatoi ton perioikon* (Plut. *Kleom.* 10.11).

Endorsing an oligarchic form of government in *perioikoi* poleis was certainly in Sparta's best interest, as it supported the same system in other Greek cities

(Cartledge 1987, 16). It is possible that the *perioikoi* modelled their political or even social structure on Sparta (Cartledge 1979, 195), yet no evidence exists to support or disprove this claim. The ephors mentioned on the inscriptions from Tainaron could have been either *perioikoi* (Ducat 1990b, 173–193) or Spartiate. Wealthy *perioikoi* had their own slaves. It is, however, uncertain whether they also had helots (in favour: Hampl 1937; against: Ehrenberg 1924; Kiechle 1963, 107 ff.; Ridley 1974, 288; Cartledge 1979, 185; 1987, 178). The Aristotelian school produced a "Politeia of the Kytherans", which points to Kythera's status as a separate entity and thus suggests that the *perioikoi* poleis could have produced different forms of the *politeia*.

The *perioikoi* communities certainly varied in terms of wealth and profession. Most of them made a living by cultivating the land. Depending on the local environment, they also engaged in fishing, animal herding and mining. According to a relatively widespread opinion, the *perioikoi* were the craftsmen of the Spartan state, who manufactured and repaired the weapons needed by Spartan citizens as well as everyday utensils; the belief that craftsmanship was the exclusive domain of the *perioikoi* in Sparta, expressed e.g. by Mossé (1973, 7–20, 19 n. 35), is countered by Cartledge (1976d, 115–119). On the one hand, it does not seem likely, given the lifestyle of the citizens, that the Sparta of the fifth and fourth century BC had much demand for artisanal production; on the other, some of the existing demand was probably satisfied by helots and slaves, though it is generally accepted that the majority of the pottery and bronze production, which was abundant in the Archaic period, was done in the *perioikoi* poleis (Hodkinson 1998a). Similarly, there is no evidence to support the claim (again, contrary to the popular belief) that the *perioikoi* settlements served a particular function in commercial exchange. The very nature of Spartan economy precludes any greater need for commerce. However, for a small number of settlements the situation might have been different. Gytheion certainly enjoyed a somewhat unique status, as it was the main base for the Spartan fleet (cf. e.g. Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.31), as well as a valuable port on the route to and from Crete and Taras (Taranto). But even in Gytheion agriculture played a prominent role in the lives of its inhabitants, as the city had a vast expanse of arable land.

Despite the seemingly obvious political handicap observable throughout most of the fifth and fourth century BC, the *perioikoi* remained almost unswervingly loyal to Sparta. How can this be explained? They may have valued the peace and security guaranteed by Spartan hegemony higher than the faint hope for independence, or perhaps their obedience was not, or not only, a matter of emotionless political calculations but stemmed from certain deeper bonds that had developed over time and made the *perioikoi* identify with the Lacedaemonian state, seeing it as their own. Outsiders clearly regarded the *perioikoi* (as opposed to helots) as a part of the Spartan political organism. In 424 BC, the Athenians would certainly have banished the residents of Kythera had they not chosen to surrender to Nicias before that could happen, since, as Thucydides observes, they were Lacedaemonians and their island was close to Laconia (Thuk. 4.54.3).

Securing the loyalty of the *perioikoi* certainly was among the principle goals of Sparta's long-term policy. The state must have used social inequalities to its advantage, endearing itself to local elites who led the local government and were responsible for the mobilisation and training of backup military units.

The diffuse nature and the (mostly) small size of *perioikoi* settlements made it easier for Sparta to maintain its hegemony. If there were cultural differences within the cities (and between settlements located far from one another), the risk of a unified attempt at mutiny was reduced even further.

It is not known what the *perioikoi* thought of the Spartans, and probably never will be. We can only suspect that opinions on the subject differed. Symptomatically, it was only the Messenian *perioikoi* who joined the Messenian helots in their revolt against Sparta, while their Laconian counterpartsremained loyal (Thuk. 1.101). In the early fourth century BC, Cinadon counted on the support of the *perioikoi*, who displayed an open hatred of the Spartiates, as did all non-citizens (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.6), yet this may have been the result of the rapid social changes that took place in the Spartan state in the late fifth and early fourth century. After the invasion that followed the Battle of Leuctra (370/369 BC), a majority of the *perioikoi* (and the helots) of Laconia chose to fight for Sparta rather than to defect to the Thebans. Furthermore, even in Messenia, the *perioikoi* of Mothone, Asine, Coriphasion and Ciparissia remained loyal to Sparta (Flower 1991, 95–96). They survived in Laconia until early in the second century, when many poleis joined the League of Free Laconians (*to koinon ton Eleutherolakonon*).

D. Slaves

Historical sources make numerous references to male and female slaves (respectively: *douloi* and *doulai*) in Sparta. Xenophon stated that Spartiates were allowed to use other people's slaves (*oiketai*) as they would their own (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 6.3). In another passage, he noted that slaves (*douloi*) had no access to arms (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 12.4). It was a slave (*oiketes*) who informed Ariston of the birth of his son (Hdt. 6.63.2). It may easily be assumed that these passages – and many similar ones – in fact refer to helots (Ducat 1990a, 46–47). There are, however, passages where a distinction between helots and slaves seems to be made (see Link 1994, 19). Describing the end of the Messenian revolt in the mid-fifth century BC, Thucydides writes that the rebels, among whom there were both helots and *perioikoi*, laid down their arms in Ithome under the condition that they would be granted the right to leave the Peloponnese safely, never to return. It was specified that if any of them broke the promise, he was to be made a slave (*doulos*) of the man who caught him (Thuk. 1.103.1–2). This indicates that the fate which awaited a (former) helot upon his capture would be different, and worse, to the life he had led before (a different opinion in Link 1994, 19). The existence of a group of slaves separate from the helots may also be inferred from the following two sources. Plato mentions how Spartans are superior to Athenians in their ownership of slaves, both helots and others (Plato *Alk.* 122d). Plutarch, in turn, states that Spartans entrusted all

business matters (*peri ta chremata*) to slaves and helots (*doulois kai heilosin*; Plut. *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 2.7). We also know of five surviving inscriptions from the temple of Poseidon at Tainaron, dated to the latter half of the fifth and the first half of the fourth century (IG 5.1.1228–1232), which are sometimes identified as acts of manumission performed by individual Spartans (MacDowell 1986, 38; Link 1994, 19 disagrees). They inform of a slave, mentioned by name, being liberated by means of a pledge to Poseidon. The inscriptions also name the witnesses and the ephor in whose term of office the manumission was performed.

As emphasised by MacDowell (1986, 38), the slaves referred to in the inscriptions could not have been helots (see Ducat 1990a, 25–26), since only the state was entitled to free them. Theares may have been a *perioikos* (this is the view expressed by Cartledge 1979, 179–180; see Ducat 1990a, 11, 25) or a Spartiate – MacDowell argues that this may be inferred from the fact that the dating mentions a Spartan ephor (*perioikoi* poleis may have had their own ephors; but it is possible that the documents in these cities also referred to Spartan ephors). However, given the connection the helot class had to the temple of Poseidon at Tainaron, it seem the most likely that the freed men were helots after all, or if they were slaves, that they may not have belonged to Spartans (it should also be remembered that manumission procedures applied in Sparta are not known).

The above sources have led some scholars to believe that the Spartiates owned some slaves who were not helots, even though that group may have been small (Busolt-Swoboda 1926, 66–78; MacDowell 1986, 39; Cartledge 1987, 177; see doubts expressed by Lotze 1959, 35–40). As regards the source from which the Spartiates obtained their slaves, MacDowell suggests that they captured some during military campaigns or bought them from slave traders, and that a person could simply be born a slave. While the demand for male slaves in Sparta was probably low, this may not have been the case with female slaves, who could be used as domestic servants and concubines (Link 1994, 21). The spoils apportioned to Pausanias after the Battle of Plataeae included "women, horses, talents, camels and all other things also" (Hdt. 9.81.2); all men who took part in the battle had a share in the loot (Hdt. 9.81.1). According to MacDowell, the slaves mostly worked in households and no other passage mentions their legal status, although it was probably similar to that in other Greek poleis.

This view is not universally accepted. First of all, as noted by Kahrstedt (1922, 59 n. 2), Plato and Plutarch might have used these terms in an imprecise manner or, alternatively, employed them deliberately to distinguish between helots working in the *kleroi* from those who served in citizens' households. Thus, while not discarding the possibility of a separate class of non-helot slaves having existed in Sparta, Kahrstedt is not inclined to believe that they were privately owned by individual citizens. Oliva's (1971, 17–34) standpoint is, in a sense, a compromise. He assumes that, in practice, helots whom Spartiates employed in their households became similar to slaves in the other Greek poleis. Moreover, it is possible that as Sparta expanded its relations with the rest of the Greek world, the goods which Spartiates purchased abroad began to include slaves. The influx of such "commodities" is

likely to have increased after the victory in the Peloponnesian War (see Ducat 1990a, 26, 45). However, Spartans only used them as domestic servants, as they did with helots.

In my personal estimation, there was a significant difference between the state-regulated status of helots, who were *metaxy eleutheron kai doulon* (between the free and the enslaved) and the slaves (*douloi*) dependent on individual Spartiates.

E. Freed helots

Freedmen

Myron of Priene (FGrHist 106 F 1 ap. Athen. 6.271 ff.) writes: "The Spartans freed their slaves (*doulous*) on many occasions. They called some of them *aphetai* – 'released', some *adespotoi* – 'persons without masters', some *erykteres* – 'defenders', others, whom they assigned to their naval expeditions – *desposionautai*, and others *neodamodeis* – 'new citizens', whose status was different than helots".

The large number of terms for freedmen in Sparta is truly puzzling. The reference to helots in one example and the freedmen's occupation in another may suggest that Myron's classification is not based on a single criterion. Neither does it seem to describe two different paths to freedom, one for the *douloi*, the other for helots. The majority of freed men in Sparta likely hailed from the latter group. Out of the terms enumerated by Myron, only the last one appears in other sources. The rest may not be technical terms as much as words used in the colloquial language (MacDowell 1986, 39).

As Oliva (1971, 171) observes, the most semantically transparent of them is *aphetai*, which simply means a helot who was set free. Similarly, the term *adespotoi* was probably used in the general sense to denote freed helots (or rather: slaves) who were no longer dependent on their masters. According to Michell (1964, 90), *aphetai* and *adespotoi* were sobriquets which did not denote two different classes of freedmen. Oliva believes that both words were used interchangeably in reference to helots who had been liberated, for varying reasons. Singor (1995, 57 n. 52) claims that *adespotoi* were those who had gained their freedom as a result of their masters' dying heirless.

The term *erykteres*, in turn, is derived from the verb *erykein* (to hold back, to divert, to keep). Müller (1844, 33, 239) suggested that it was used to denote those who had carried the wounded away from the battlefield. Michell (1964, 90 ff.) rightfully observes that "anybody's guess is as good as another. Perhaps the most likely explanation of these mysterious freedmen is that they were policemen who served under the command of the epimeletes. We know that in Athens the policemen were slaves, the famous Scythian archers". Chrimes (1952, 301) claimed that the *erykteres* were employed in garrisons, but were not yet free. Oliva, however, points out that this would be in contradiction to our only known source, which groups the *erykteres* together with freedmen.

The last of the four terms refers to those who had something to do with naval service, as Myron himself clarifies. Apart from that, everything is pure conjecture (Oliva 1971, 171–172). Müller (1844, 33) believes that the term encompassed all helots who served on Spartan warships. Kahrstedt offers a more probable idea that the *desposionautai* were helots freed in recognition of their diligent service at sea. Michell (1964, 91) opines that these helots distinguished themselves in battle and subsequently served as junior officers in the fleet. Singor (1995, 57 n. 51), in turn, suggests that the *desposionautai* worked as fishermen in coastal settlements and were conscripted to serve in the fleet if need arose.

The above terms remain a mystery despite the many attempts at their elucidation (see Oliva 1971, 170–172; 1981, 48; Ducat 1990a, 155–156). Conclusions drawn from the name alone are no substitute for actual information regarding what these words stood for in the Spartan social practice. Thus, we may only repeat a rather banal conclusion (corroborated by the analysis of the only category of freedmen mentioned in other sources, the *neodamodeis*) that the most obvious, and perhaps the only, reason for liberating slaves were their military contributions. Freedom was likely given, as promised, to helots who risked their lives to supply food to Spartiates stranded on Sphacteria (Thuk. 4.26). Likewise, Spartans promised to free the helots who took up arms to defend Laconia from a Theban invasion in 369 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.28). The fact that helots were a permanent fixture in the Spartan army of the Classical period indicates that military service was a regular path to freedom for helots, not something that was only available in dire times, when the country was in danger, as it was in 425 and 369 BC. Sparta waged wars constantly and the continuing decrease in citizen numbers meant that it could not afford to stop using helots as soldiers, especially considering that keeping the helots away from the matters of war would have made the demographic changes detrimental to the establishment even more pronounced, undermining the privileged position of the *homoioi*. On a different note, the acts of liberation may also have had a political aspect to them, being yet another method of applying the principle of *divide et impera* in relation to helots (Cartledge 1987, 175).

F. The *neodamodeis*

The term *neodamodes* derives from *neos* (new) and *damos* (the people), and thus its literal meaning is 'a new member of the citizen community'. Fully enfranchised citizens of Sparta were called *damodeis* or *demotai* (Hesychius). Can this mean that a freed helot became a member of the Spartan community, with all the rights thereof (Kahrstedt 1922, 1, 46; Witkowski 1938, 151)? Thucydides's and Xenophon's accounts evidently deny it (Cartledge 1987, 39–40). Singor (1995, 58), in turn, suggests that the term *neodamodeis* may have referred to men who had the right to establish new *damoi*, i.e. rural communities, outside of Spartan-owned lands. Who, then, was a *neodamodes*? The name indicates that his status was in some sense similar to that of a citizen, but not equivalent to it. Pollux (3.83) states that the helots who were granted freedom were called *neodamodeis* by the Lacedaemonians. A similar

definition is given by Hesychius (314), who specifies that the name *neodamodes* applied to men freed from the helot status. Thus, both lexicographers attest that Myron's mention of the *neodamodeis* indeed refers to freed helots.

Did every freed helot become a *neodamodes*? Myron is not the only source implying that this was not the case. Thucydides writes that Lacedaemonians freed the helots who fought alongside Brasidas and allowed them to settle in a place of their choosing. Soon after, he adds, the Lacedaemonians settled those men in Lepreum along with the *neodamodeis* (Thuk. 5.34.1). It is obvious that Thucydides did not consider the status of freed helots and the *neodamodeis* to be one and the same, though the criterion for their differentiation is not entirely clear.

Willets (1954, 27–32) believed that the *neodamodeis* were helots living in estates that were left without no Spartan heir and that they were allowed to keep the land if they served as hoplites in the army. In this sense, they became "new members of the demos", but not citizens; their estates allowed them to afford the necessary equipment and training. However, if the *neodamodeis* owned land in Laconia, why would they be willing to settle in the newly acquired region of Lepreum (MacDowell 1986, 41)? Tonini (1975, 305–316) offers a different theory, according to which the *neodamodeis* were hoplites deployed to the borderlands as a garrison; yet this does not explain the difference between the *neodamodeis* and ex-helots mentioned by Brasidas, because both these groups were sent to Lepreum.

It should be noted that those authors who mention the *neodamodeis* in action, i.e. Thucydides and Xenophon, portray them as soldiers. It does not seem coincidental that we first hear about them in the context of the Peloponnesian War, when Sparta was finding it difficult to address the problems of running a military campaign. The remarks in Thucydides indicate that they only appeared during the second phase of the Archidamian War, between the years 424 and 421 BC; the last passage from Xenophon which contains a reference pertains to 370/369 BC. During the Peloponnesian War, the *neodamodeis* numbered at least a thousand. It may be surmised that by the beginning of the fourth century BC, they had been playing a crucial role as Sparta's military reserve. In 397 BC, King Agesilaus set off to his Asian campaign with 30 Spartiates, 2000 *neodamodeis* and 6000 allies. This being said, the *neodamodeis* are portrayed as inferior to Spartiates in terms of skill. When in 374 BC Polydamas of Pharsalos pleaded with Sparta for military assistance, he asked them to send citizens, saying that if they wished to send *neodamodeis*, it would be better for them to stay at home (Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.14).

It is not clear how exactly a helot could gain the status of a *neodamodes*. According to one theory, in contrast to helots who were promised their freedom in recognition of their deeds on the battlefield, as mentioned by Brasidas, the *neodamodeis* had been liberated earlier and were obliged to serve in the military. MacDowell (1986, 51) believes that, being *mothakes*, they passed through the *agoge* education and after completing their period of service, they spent the rest of their lives serving in garrisons in the border regions. Another proposal is that those helots who volunteered to serve as hoplites went through training and were granted freedom at some stage of their military career (Ducat 1990a, 160 ff.). When

Sparta lost its hegemony over Greece, the *neodamodeis* lost their entire *raison d'être*. Oliva believes it possible that at that point many *neodamodeis* chose to settle in the Messenian territory and subsequently became citizens of Messenian cities.

The liberation of helots and entrusting them with military tasks abroad alleviated tensions within the country and increased the strength of the Spartan army, letting foreign enemies do the task previously completed using the *krypteia*. It also testifies to a degree of helot integration into the citizen community.

G. The *hypomeiones*

A Spartan citizen was obliged not only to complete the *agoge*, take part in the *syssitia* and own a *kleros*, but also to live in accordance with the principles compulsory for the *homoioi*. It was a citizen's duty to maintain this proper lifestyle, sometimes called *ta kala* (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 3.3; *Hell.* 3.3.9; Plut. *Agis* 5.5). Should he fail in this duty, he ceased to be counted as one of the "equals" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 10.7).

Having lost the status of a citizen, a man could no longer participate in the *syssitia* (Arist. *Pol.* 1271a 26–37; see Cartledge 1987, 170) or go through the *agoge* (the only citizen exempt from this form of education was the king's son and heir; Plut. *Ages.* 1.4). Reasons for a withdrawal of citizenship rights may only be discussed in very general terms, since only three specific criteria to disqualify a Spartiate are known. The first of them was associated with the prohibition to engage in business affairs (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 7.2; Plut. *Lyk.* 24.2). The second one was committing a grave crime. This was the case with the family of Cleandridas, who went into exile fearing a death sentence (Plut. *Per.* 22.3–4). The third and final one was cowardly behaviour on the battlefield.

A Spartiate guilty of any of these offences was subject to a punishment that drove him to the margins of the community of the equals. However, his exclusion did not entirely eliminate the possibility of regaining citizen status (this was especially true of the sons of the excluded man). The specific terms used to denote those removed from the citizen community are known: Gylippus, the son of Cleandridas, was a *mothax*; those whose actions were "cowardly" were called the *tresantes*.

Most scholars agree that a Spartiate who did not meet the criteria applied to citizens was demoted to the category of *hypomeiones* (see Oliva 1971, 177–178). There can be no doubt that Spartan society included men who had temporarily or permanently lost their citizenship and that the term *hypomeiones* did exist. However, the surviving sources do not suffice to provide a clear definition of the word. It is mentioned only once, by Xenophon, when he enumerates the social groups whose support Cinadon hoped to secure. The passage lists the helots, *neodamodeis*, *hypomeiones* and *perioikoi* (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.6). Of course, Xenophon may have used the term *hypomeiones* to denote impoverished Spartans, especially since the context indicates that Spartiates constituted a very small, elite community loathed by all others, and the remaining three groups that are mentioned in the passage do not include Spartiates; still, the author fails to provide a clarification.

It is precisely for this reason that making a connection between the men excluded from the community of citizens (whose existence is certain) and the only known mention of the *hypomeiones* seems bold but risky as an attempt at finding the "missing link" in the social terminology of Sparta. In fact, the word may not necessarily have been a technical term (Link 1994, 21); the possibility that *hypomeiones* did not constitute a group defined by law cannot be discarded. It may have included citizens punished for various crimes as well as those who did not own a *kleros*; what they had in common was their status, which was similar but in certain respects inferior to that of a fully enfranchised citizen. Any efforts towards presenting a more detailed characteristic of the *hypomeiones* are even more speculative.

Oliva (1971, 177), usually cautious in his statements, perceives the *hypomeiones* as former citizens who, unable to fulfil the obligations arising from the status of a Spartiate, lost their full rights. He adds, however, that the category also encompassed other free residents, who did not come from citizen families (see Michell 1964, 88). The groups Oliva (1971, 178) lists in this category included sons of helots who went through the *agoge* but had no *kleros* and thus could not be regarded as citizens. These men took up a range of temporary occupations, including craftsmanship. Jones, in turn, suspects that the *hypomeiones* had no political rights and most likely did not serve in the army, since they were not able to afford hoplite equipment. According to Hooker (1980, 117–118), the *hypomeiones* were sons of Spartan citizens who completed the *agoge* education but owned no *kleroi*. He portrays them as potential citizens waiting for an opportunity to be assigned a plot of land.

All these theories are purely conjectural. Xenophon's term *hypomeiones* has become the designation for not-fully-enfranchised citizens, and while we are certain that such men existed, we do not know how their contemporaries called them. Using the term *hypomeiones* in an emblematical fashion would be acceptable were it not for the attempts, based on nothing but imagination, at expanding its scope, especially to include the sons of helots (or, more precisely, helot women) and Spartiates.

H. The *mothakes*

Spartan society contained a separate group known as the *mothakes*. According to Phylarchus (FGrHist 81 F 43 ap. Athen. 6.271e), they were the *syntrophoi* of Lacedaemonians, i.e. they grew up together with the sons of Spartan citizens. All boys from citizen families had their *syntrophoi*, some had a one, others two, still others, a larger number. Phylarchus attests that *mothakes* were free men and, although not Lacedaemonians, they went through the Spartan system of education (*paideia*).

Who, then, were those boys who participated in the *agoge* alongside the young Spartans? Mentioning two helots who were brought up with Cleomenes, Plutarch states that in Sparta they were called *mothakes* (Plut. *Kleom.* 8.1). It has therefore

been hypothesised that the *mothakes* were young helots who were for some reason allowed into the *agoge* system.

In Xenophon's account, the troop which Agesipolis took on his expedition against Olynthus in 381 BC included not only *perioikoi* who went through Spartan education (*trophimoi xenoi*), but also Spartan bastards (*nothoi*), regarded as an equivalent of *mothakes*, "exceedingly fine-looking men, not without experience of the goods of the state" (Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.9). However, according to Phylarchus, the label of *mothax* also applied to Lysander, the general who defeated the Athenian fleet and was elevated to the status of a citizen as a result. His account is corroborated by Aelian (*Var. Hist.* 12.43), who uses the term to describe Lysander, as well as Callicratidas and Gylippus. If this information is credible (and doubts have been raised; see Oliva 1971, 176 n. 3), we may speculate that these men may have become *mothakes* because their fathers were unable to provide them with a proper education, for instance due to poverty. This is the assumption made by Lotze (1962, 433 ff.).

Chrimes (1952, 97–117) argues that the term *mothakes* referred to adult men who had participated in the *agoge* but did not belong to the group of fully enfranchised citizens. As boys, they were supposedly called *kasen*, a term which appears in epigraphic material from the imperial period. Aelian's account also states that the name *mothakes* was used to describe the *syntrophoi* of wealthy youths from outside of Sparta, whose fathers sent them there to compete against Spartan boys in the *gymnasion*. This solution was allegedly introduced by Lycurgus, who granted the Laconian citizenship to those who had completed the *agoge*.

However, other sources attest that Spartans did not usually reward foreigners with citizen rights. Tisamenus of Elis and his brother were granted citizenship since their help proved essential to Sparta during Xerxes's invasion, but Herodotus, recounting this story, asserts: "No one on earth save Tisamenus and his brother ever became citizens of Sparta" (Hdt. 9.35.1). This being said, it must be remembered that in the case of Tisamenus, citizenship was granted to someone who had not gone through the *agoge*.

Thus, the above sources indicate that *mothakes*, distinguishable by their participation in the *agoge*, were:

(1) foreigners. Among the boys sent to Sparta to be educated were two sons of Xenophon (Plut. *Ages.* 20.2; Diog. Laert. 2.54; see also Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.9), and the son of Phocion (Plut. *Phok.* 20. 4).

(2) sons of Spartiates and helot women (bastards, *nothoi*) (see Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.9). This view is supported e.g. by Hooker, who emphasises that the very existence of the term points to the frequency of such liaisons (see also Hamilton 1991, 71). According to Cartledge, the words *nothoi*, *mothones* and *mothakes* all refer to this social category (1981, 104).

(3) sons of Spartiates who had lost full citizen rights. The usual example here are impoverished Spartiates whose material status no longer permitted them to participate in the *syssitia*. This group likely included Lysander, who was reared

in poverty even though his father was a Spartiate (Plut. *Lys.* 2.12). It is, how-
ever, possible that Lysander's mother was a helot or a slave. Another historical
figure in this group was Gylippus, whose family was stripped of citizen rights
when his father Cleandridas fled the country to avoid a death sentence (Plut.
Per. 22.3–4). The view that *mothakes* were sons of Spartiates without full cit-
izen rights (i.e. *hypomeiones*) is shared by Jones.

If we lump all the *mothakes* together, we discover that they were an immensely
diverse group, encompassing all youths from beyond the borders of Sparta, whose
participation in the *agoge* system was, as it appears, an honour and the result
of a conscious choice made by their parents, as well as young helots, for whom
being allowed into the *agoge* was tantamount to social advancement, and sons of
Spartiates, for whom the status of *mothakes* was a social demotion. And while the
existence of the second and third group is incontestable, one may wonder whether
the company of helots and impoverished Spartans would really have been so de-
sirable for the members of that first class. I dare to doubt.

Phylarchus's account indicates that a single Spartan boy could have had several
syntrophoi, which is in contradiction to the image of Sparta in the fifth and fourth
century BC. The passage is therefore likely to refer to Phylarchus's own epoch and
to reflect the reality of the third century BC, when Spartiates were few in number
and the country had become much more open to the outside world than it had
been in the Classical period.

All in all, it should be considered whether the term *mothakes* could truly have
been used to refer to three groups of men in the same historical period, or whether
its meaning changed from period to period. Participation in the *agoge* was the
essential criterion throughout, but at different points in time, depending on the
situation in Sparta, different groups were allowed in as *mothakes*.

In this line of thought, the admittance of foreigners ought to be regarded as a
late phenomenon, which did not occur in the Classical period except in very rare
cases. *Mothakes* hailing from citizen and helot families may have had a longer his-
tory. Oliva (1977, 177) believes that although the sons of Spartan men and helot
women were also called *mothakes*, the majority of the social group had entirely
helot roots. MacDowell (1986, 51), in turn, opines that the word *mothax* meant a
non-Spartan boy in the process of the *agoge* education, and that after completing
it, the young man became a *neodamodes*. A similar opinion was expressed by Ducat
(1990a, 166–168), who claims that a helot could never become a *mothax*.

Chapter 2 The political system of Sparta

They heard the voice of Phoebus and brought home from Pytho oracles of the God and words of sure fulfilment; for thus the Lord of the Silver Bow, Far-Shooting Apollo of the Golden Hair, gave answer from out his rich sanctuary: The beginning of counsel shall belong to the God-honoured Kings whose care is the delight some city of Sparta, and to the men of elder birth; after them shall the commons, answering them back with forthright ordinances, both say things honourable and do all that is right, nor give the city any crooked counsel; so shall the common people have victory and might; for this hath Phoebus declared unto their city in these matters.

<div align="right">(Tyrtaeus fr. 4, trans. J. M. Edmonds)</div>

A. Kings

The Spartan state was ruled by two kings, equal in authority and holding their office for life. One of them was a descendant of the Agiad family, the other – of the Eurypontid one. The continuation of kingship as a form of authority was very rare in Greece. Even more extraordinary was the fact that this kingship took the form of a dyarchy. The origins of this system lay in the early period of Sparta's history, associated with the Dorian conquest and settlement of Laconia (Cartledge 1987, 100). Spartans themselves believed the dyarchy to have had ancient roots.

The origins of the dual kingship

The Lacedaemonians say (but no poet agrees) that it was Aristodemus son of Aristomachus son of Cleodaeus son of Hyllus, and not his sons, who led them to that land which they now possess. After no long time Aristodemus' wife, whose name was Argeia, bore him offspring; they say she was daughter of Autesion son of Tisamenus son of Thersander son of Polyneices; she bore him twins; Aristodemus lived to see the children, then died of a sickness. The Lacedaemonians of that day planned to follow their custom and make the eldest of the children king. But the children were identical in all respects, so the Lacedaemonians did not know which to choose; when they could not judge between them, or perhaps even before this, they asked the mother. She said she knew no better than the Lacedaemonians which was the elder; she knew perfectly well, but she said this because she desired that by some means both might be made kings. The Lacedaemonians were at a loss, so they sent to Delphi to inquire how they should deal with the matter. The priestess bade them make both children kings but give greater honor to the elder. When the priestess gave this response, the Lacedaemonians knew no better than before how to discover the elder child, and a man of Messenia, whose name was Panites, gave them advice: he advised them to watch the mother and see which of the children she washed and fed before the other; if she was seen to do this always in the same order, they would then have all that they

sought and desired to discover; but if she changed her practice haphazardly, then it would be manifest to the Lacedaemonians that she know no more than they did, and they must have recourse to some other means. Then the Spartans did as the Messenian advised; as they watched the mother of Aristodemus' children, they found her always preferring the elder when she fed and washed them, since she did not know why she was being watched. So they took the child that was preferred by its mother and brought it up at public expense as the first-born; and they called it Eurysthenes, and the other Procles. They say that when these two brothers grew to manhood, they feuded with each other as long as they lived, and their descendants continued to do likewise. (Hdt. 6.52)

Herodotus's tale explains both the genesis of the dyarchy and the reasons for the Agiad dynasty being the more revered one, despite the equal authority of the two kings. Indirectly, it also answers the question why Spartiates would supervise the birth of the royal offspring. Despite the differences indicated by Herodotus, the Greek tradition consistently traced the Spartan dyarchy back to Eurysthenes and Procles (Paus. 3.1.5; Apollod. 2.8.2; cf. Plato *Nomoi* 69ld; Xen. *Ages.* 8.7). Surprisingly, however, although these royal dynasties traced their origins back to Eurysthenes and Procles, they were not named the *Eurysthenidai* and the *Proklidai*, but the *Agiadai* and the *Eurypontidai* (after Agis and Eurypont, respectively). Fundamental doubts may also be raised regarding the list of Spartan kings. While the genealogy of the Agiad dynasty appears agreed upon (Hdt. 7.204; Paus. 3.2, 3.1–6.9), accounts vary with reference to the lineage of the Eurypontid kings (Hdt. 8.131.2; Plut. *Lyk.* 1.4; Paus. 3.7.1–7); (cf. Zwolski 1968; Lazenby 1985, 66–65). The early Eurypontid rulers seem particularly suspicious, as the list contains names such as Prytanis ('one who presides'), Eunomus (the name resembles the word *eunomia* – the "excellence of law", symbolising the constitution of Sparta) (Hdt. 8.131.2) and Soos ('saviour') (Plut. *Lyk.* 1.4; Paus. 3.7.1 ff.).

Contemporary scholars are far from accepting Herodotus's account of the origins of the Spartan dyarchy as credible. Many different hypotheses have been put forward to explain the roots of the system (cf. Oliva 1971, 23–28; Carlier 1984, 306–310). One of them hinges upon Herodotus's report of a Spartan military intervention in Athens late in the fourth century BC. When the priestess at the Acropolis temple told Cleomenes to leave, as no Dorian was allowed to enter its grounds, the man retorted that he was not Dorian, but Achaean (Hdt. 5.72.3). According to Wachsmuth (1868), this proves that, unlike the Dorian Eurypontids, the Agiad dynasty to whom Cleomenes belonged, was of Achaean origin.

Another hypothesis refers to Herodotus's mention of Lacedaemonians receiving the pre-Greek Minyae people, granting them lands and distributing them among their *phylai* (Hdt. 4.145.5). In one passage, Herodotus does indeed indirectly associate the Minyae with the *Aigeidai*, whom he calls "a great Spartan clan" (Hdt. 4.149.1). Based on that passage, some scholars have attempted to prove the existence of a fourth Spartan *phyla* (aside from the three Dorian ones): the *Aigeidai*, comprising Achaean peoples, and perhaps the pre-Greek Minyae as well. However,

since we only know of three (Dorian) *phylai* in Sparta, Herodotus's mention of the *Aigeidai* may mean that they constituted a special group of earlier inhabitants of the land.

Gilbert (1872) claims that early in its history, Sparta had three royal houses: the Achaean *Agiadai,* the Dorian *Eurypontidai* and the Minyae *Aigeidai.* He assumes that that last line died out because the Dorians coming into Laconia formed an alliance with the pre-Greek Minyae people willing to fight against their Achaean rulers. However, this hypothesis is not corroborated by historical sources. What seems particularly difficult to explain is why a royal line would disappear without leaving any trace in the records.

According to yet another hypothesis (Neumann [1906]), which rejects the assumption of the Achaean origin of the *Agiadai* and emphasises that both royal lines belonged to the Hyllean *phyla* and descended from Heracles, the kings had been the leaders of two groups of Dorians that engaged in the conquest of Laconia separately, and then united to form a single state (cf. also Clauss 1983, 118). Their kings could have been tribal chieftains *(phylarchoi/phylobasileis)* (Pareti 1932). The problem with this theory, however, is that similarly to other Dorian poleis, Sparta had three *phylai*, not two.

Momigliano (1932) argued that the belief in the seniority of the *Agiadai* indicates that they were the original royal line, and that the *Eurypontidai* were a later addition. He linked Herodotus's passage that could hint at the Achaean origin of the *Agiadai* with the location of the royal graves recounted by Pausanias (Paus. 3.14.2 [the *Agiadai* in Pitana], 12.8 [the *Eurypontidai* close to the walls]) stating that the *Agiadai* had been associated with the earlier, pre-Dorian settlement of Therapnai, and the *Eurypontidai* – with the area of the later city, the one that functioned as the political centre of the Spartan state. However, if (as Oliva [1971, 25] claims; which may not necessarily be true) Therapnai had been abandoned before Dorians invaded Laconia, Momigiano's line of reasoning falls flat. Lazenby (1985, 66), in turn, believed that the different location of the kings' graves indicates that the Agiads initially led the inhabitants of Pitana/Mesoa, while the Eurypontids – the Limnai/Konooura.

Nevertheless, many scholars believe in the Achaean provenance of the Agiad dynasty. Norvin (1939) was of the opinion that the Dorian conquest of the Eurotas Valley ended in a compromise, since the invaders were unable to utterly destroy the strong Achaean state. The Achaean ruling house of the *Agiadai* remained in power, because Dorians feared the wrath of the gods whose cult was managed by the old dynasty. According to Lenschau (1939), the dyarchy resulted from the synoecism of Dorian Sparta (*Eurypontidai*) and Achaean Amyclae (*Agiadai*) (the same view in Zwolski 1964). All of the mentioned hypotheses (save for Gilbert's) may essentially be reduced to two basic concepts. The first links the dyarchy with tribal structures, the second (more widely accepted) assumes the synoecism of two communities, each of which had their own monarch. Furthermore, all the hitherto presented theories search for the origins of the dyarchy in the distant past. In

contrast, Oliver (1960, 7) assumes that the second king ("prytanis") was appointed by the aristocracy in order to limit the power of the Agiad house.

In reality, none of the hypotheses offers a fully convincing explanation as to how the Spartan dyarchy came to be; the view that is usually accepted as the most probable associates its origins with the unification of Spartan villages. The genesis of the double monarchy has become so obfuscated by the theories attempting to explain it that Herodotus account on the topic has been all but forgotten. Thus, it may make sense to follow Carlier's approach (1984, 309) and conclude the discussion by asking: could the dyarchy not have originated from the joint rule of two brothers? Although it is but one more hypothesis, it has the advantage over all the others in being closer to the views expressed by ancient authors. It may be argued that more recent research have not brought new ideas or any significant breakthroughs (at least this is how I interpret the conclusions made by Ellen Millender 2018).

Archelaus of the Agiad and Charillus (or Charillaus) of the Eurypontid dynasty are often assumed to have been the first historical rulers of Sparta, on the basis of the questionable (or at least exceedingly flimsy) argument that the oracle demanded them to dedicate a part of the land they conquered to Apollo (Arist. *Pol.* 1271b 25; Paus. 3.2.5) (Cartledge 1979, 103 ff.; 1980b, 98; 1987, 102; Lazenby 1985, 66; Jeffery 1976, 114). However, no clear answer is (or indeed can be) offered as to when this event occurred. The institution of the Spartan double monarchy appears to have been a relatively early invention; certainly introduced before the seventh century BC (Carlier 1984, 310 and n. 435).

It should be noted that the emergence of the dyarchy is less remarkable than the fact that it continued to exist throughout the entire Archaic and Classical period. Despite being a very fragile political system (due to potential conflicts between the kings), it survived at a time when the entire Hellenic world had already moved away from hereditary royal power and replaced it with appointed officials. According to Carlier (1984, 310), this was due to political reasons and the religious aspect of the authority of the two kings, who represented the twin gods, the Dioscuri. The choice to maintain a system with two "monarchs" was in itself a means to limit their power.

The scope of the kings' authority (*timai*)

The authority of the Spartan kings underwent significant changes in the first half of the first millennium BC. The transformations that took place at the time are nevertheless impossible to be traced due to the lack of source material. We are only aware of the powers Spartan monarchs had in the Classical period (Cloché 1949, 113–119). These might seem to have developed in the gradual process of limiting royal authority which did not entirely disappear, unlike in other Greek poleis. However, the process may have been completely different. As Finley (1968, 159) tries to prove, the known scope of authority of Spartan kings from the fifth and fourth centuries BC could have been less of a relic of Homer's time, and more the

result of transformations that occurred in the Archaic period. Pierre Carlier (1984, 30–45, 273 ff.) points to the similarities, apparent in language and in the source material, between the privileges enjoyed by Homeric kings and those granted to kings of Sparta; but he also states that labelling them as relics hardly exhausts the topic. As he demonstrates, many aspects of the kings' power in Sparta were extended, but sometimes only seemingly, as the greater privileges hid changes that *de facto* limited their importance.

Powers in peacetime (*eirenaia*)

In Sparta, religious matters (*tas pros tous theous*) fell within the competences of kings (Arist. *Pol.* 1285a 6–7). Two priest positions were reserved for monarchs: the priest of Zeus Lakedaimonios and that of Zeus Uranios (Hdt. 6.56). As with many other royal prerogatives, Herodotus failed to specify whether specific priestly duties were divided among kings, or whether the two performed them together (Carlier 1984, 256). Another option is that they were taken on by the elder of the monarchs, since real power was, at times, held by only one king if the other was a minor. Lycurgus ordained that "the King shall offer all the public sacrifices on behalf of the state, in virtue of his divine descent" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.2). Carlier (1984, 265) believes that kings may in fact have been the only priests (*hiereis*) in Sparta. According to Herodotus, "they make the first libations, and the hides of the sacrificed beasts are theirs. At each new moon and each seventh day of the first part of the month, a full-grown victim for Apollo's temple, a bushel (*medimnos*) of barley-meal (*alphita*), and a Laconian quart of wine are given to each from the public store, and chief seats (*proedria*) are set apart for them at the games" (Hdt. 6.57.1–2). As Xenophon reports, the king had the right to "receive an honourable share of the beasts sacrificed" (*gera apo ton thyomenon*) (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15. 2).

The kings' religious authority is also associated with their sending envoys to Delphi and keeping the prophesises they received there, which certainly implied additional possibilities for political action (cf. Powell 2018, 318).

Judicial powers

"The kings alone judge (*dikazein*) cases concerning the rightful possessor of an unwedded heiress, if her father has not betrothed her, and cases concerning public roads (*hodon demosieon peri*). If a man desires to adopt a son, it is done in the presence of the kings," says Herodotus (6.57.4– 5). It is unclear why it was these particular matters that fell under the jurisdiction of the kings, yet we may surmise that the judicial powers mentioned by Herodotus constituted a relic of an earlier time, when royal power (including judicial prerogatives) was much more extensive. It may have been limited with the emergence of the ephors, who took over a substantial part of royal prerogatives.

The impression that the matters settled by kings were of minor importance may, in fact, be mistaken. In choosing spouses for heiresses and acknowledging

adoption, kings certainly acted as persons of trust; yet the position also granted them the possibility to decide about matters that had much importance in the Spartan context. Although it remains unclear to what extent they could act independently, they had some possibility to affect the distribution of wealth, which in turn was an instrument to pursue hand-out policy. On the other hand, we cannot be certain whether Spartan kings kept these prerogatives throughout the Classical period (cf. Cartledge 1987, 108–109).

The kings' powers regarding "public roads" continues to perplex researchers. It is difficult to even speculate what roads this prerogative referred to (they must have had some strategic importance; Cartledge 1987, 109; 1979, 187), or what precisely was meant. MacDowell (1986, 123) believes that the kings oversaw cases in which someone was accused of ploughing over a road or causing any other type of damage. The assumption is as good as any other, but Carlier's (1984, 270) more general suggestion seems better: the mentioned prerogatives ought to be associated with the military competence of kings.

Herodotus's account is equally enigmatic with regard to how kings exercised their judicial powers in practice. In times of war, when one of the monarchs commanded expedition forces outside of the country, judiciary duties naturally fell to the other king (this is just the theory – we do not know what happened if, for instance, both kings were underage). How were the prerogatives divided when both kings were in Sparta? Did they judge cases together, or maybe took turns? Sadly, these questions must remain unanswered due to the lack of relevant information in the source material.

Furthermore, the list of issues under the kings' jurisdiction as recounted by Herodotus does not necessarily have to be complete. Aristotle's statement that kings dealt with religious matters (Arist. *Pol.* 1285a 67) may in fact indicate that they also settled disputes pertaining to other issues associated with religion (MacDowell 1986, 124). We also know for a fact that kings were also responsible for other matters not mentioned above whenever they took command over the army during campaigns beyond the borders of Lacedaemon.

Monarchs could most likely act as mediators in conflicts between citizens who asked for such assistance, as evidenced by an anecdote narrated by Plutarch. Asked to arbitrate between two men, King Archidamus II took both of them to the sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos and had them swear to obey his verdict. When they complied, the king announced: "My decision is thus: you shall not leave the temple grounds (*temenos*) until you settle your differences" (Plut. *Mor.* 218d).

Powers in times of war (*ta empolemia*)

The kings, or rather one of them, took command over the army in times of war (cf. Carlier 1984, 257–260, Cartledge 1987, 10–56, and most importantly Luther 2006, 9–25). The king acted as the leader in all matters (*strategos autokrator*) (Arist. *Pol.* 1285a 7). Herodotus explains that kings in Sparta had the right to "wage war against whatever land they wish (*polemon g' ekpherein ep' hen an boulontai choren*);

and no Spartan can hinder them in this on peril of being put under a curse " (Hdt. 6.56). On the other hand, however, Xenophon claims that "whatever may be the destination to which the state sends out an army, he [the king] shall be its leader" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.2).

This might mean that the independence of kings in that regard was greatly limited between Herodotus's time and the period when Xenophon was writing his account. According to Jones, the change occurred even before Herodotus and was connected with the events that took place in 506 BC (Hdt. 5.74–75). It was then that King Cleomenes gathered the armies of all the Peloponnesus (i.e. Sparta and her allies), without explaining what the purpose was. When the troops arrived at Eleusis and were about to clash with the Athenians, a contingent of Corinthians refused to fight and left, along with the other Spartan king – Demaratus. Afterwards, Sparta adopted a rule forbidding kings from leading an army together beyond the borders of the polis.

The resulting system was described by Xenophon, who stated that Lacedaemonian kings commanded the troops wherever the state decided to send them (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.2). Thenceforth, the procedure could have been as follows: the Assembly declared war (Thuk. 1.87; Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.23; 4.6.3; 6.4.23), and then chose a king (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.9; 6.4.18; 5.10), whom they tasked with supreme command (cf. Carlier 1984, 257).

Even in the fifth century BC, the decision to initiate a campaign (but not to wage war) was taken by the king. In 419, Spartans led by King Agis and their allies marched to Leuctra (which was within their territory), "without anyone knowing their destination, not even the cities that sent the contingents" (Thuk. 5.54.1). Thus, it seems that the Assembly was not the body deciding about what specific military steps to take; this solution would have been strategically impractical. The Assembly's role was limited to declaring war and appointing a leader, who was then granted absolute tactical freedom. This is what Herodotus implies with the statement that the kings could wage war against whichever foe they choose.

However, even this solution could generate problems. In 418 BC, when Spartans deemed King Agis to have shown great incompetence at Argos, an unprecedented decision was taken – the monarch was assigned ten Spartiate advisors *(probouloi)*, "without whose consent he should have no power to lead an army out of the city (*apagein stratian ek tes poleos*)" (Thuk. 5.63.4).

Since the end of the fifth century BC (?), the king was also assisted by two ephors (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.5; *Hell.* 2.4.36). These, however, were only authorised to submit reports; actions against the king could only be taken after the entire party's return to the country. Although the monarch was not allowed to finalise a peace treaty, he could negotiate its preliminary conditions. Essentially all diplomatic activity during foreign campaigns was left to the king (cf. Carlier 1984, 263–265).

Unless some extraordinary circumstances arose (as they did in 418 BC), the king enjoyed unlimited power in times of war. However, the decision whether Sparta was or was not at war lay with the state, which could (even against the king's wishes, at least in theory) end a conflict. The king was then forced to return

home, as was the case with Agesilaus, recalled from Asia in 395 BC. Aristotle describes the Spartan monarchy as "hereditary military leadership" (Arist. *Pol.* 1285b). Describing the division of duties during campaigns led by the Lacedaemonian army, Xenophon concludes: "With this routine the only duties left to the King on active service are to act as priest in matters of religion and as general in his dealings with the men" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.11).

A king on a campaign took on a double role: that of the supreme commander and of the high priest: "First he offers up sacrifice at home to Zeus the Leader (*Zeus Agetor*) and to the gods associated with him," writes Xenophon. "If the sacrifice appears propitious, the Fire-bearer (*pyrphoros*) takes fire from the altar and leads the way to the borders of the land. There the King offers sacrifice again to Zeus and Athena. Only when the sacrifice proves acceptable to both these deities does he cross the borders of the land. And the fire from these sacrifices leads the way and is never quenched, and animals for sacrifice of every sort follow. At all times when he offers sacrifice, the King begins the work before dawn of day, wishing to forestall the goodwill of the god" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.2–3). The sacrifice done, the king would summon his commanders to give orders (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.5).

When the army was moving, the king rode first, preceded only by the Sciritae and "mounted vedettes" (*hoi proereunomenoi hippeis*) (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 3.6; Hdt. 6.56.1). "But if ever they think there will be fighting, he takes the lead of the first regiment (*to agema*) and wheels to the right, until he is between two regiments and two polemarchs The troops that are to support these are marshalled by the senior member of the King's staff (*ho presbytatos ton peri damosian*) (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.6–7).

Before combat, the king offered sacrifice to the Muses (Plut. *Lyk.* 21.7), and when the soldiers have assumed battle formations, he sacrificed a goat to Artemis Agrotera, commanded all warriors to don wreaths and ordered pipers to play a hymn to Castor (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.8; Plut. *Lyk.* 22.4). He then intoned a battle hymn. The king fought at the forefront, always at the right wing of the forces, surrounded by his guard of honour comprising a hundred *logades*, whom he chose personally from among three hundred *hippeis* (Hdt. 6.56.1, 67; cf. comment in Carlier 1984, 261 n. 129).

The people living in the royal tent during expeditions formed something akin to the king's staff (most commentators assume that the "royal tent" mentioned in *Lak. Pol.* 13.7 was the "king's council", Proieti 1987, 69). It consisted of polemarchs and three other members of the *homoioi*, who "take entire charge of the commissariat for the King and his staff, so that these may devote all their time to affairs of war" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.1). As noted earlier, the king was accompanied by two ephors who acted as observers (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.5). Later on, Xenophon adds: "The staff consists of all peers who are members of the royal mess, seers, doctors, fluteplayers, commanding officers (*hoi tou stratou archontes*) and any volunteers who happen to be present" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.7).

Judiciary powers

It might be assumed that the king acquired special judiciary powers during a military campaign, as the highest representative of the State authorities. And indeed, Plutarch's account of Agesilaus's expedition to Asia mentions him passing sentences in a number of cases (Plut. *Ages.* 7.67), clearly not connected with marriages, adoptions or roads. On the other hand, however, Xenophon openly states that if anyone came up to the king during an expedition asking to pass judgment, the monarch sent them away to the *hellanodikai* (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.11).

The explanation may lie in the fact that the *hellanodikai* (as the name suggests) settled disputes between Lacedaemonians and other Greeks, while the kings only judged Spartans (MacDowell 1986, 124–126). The line of reasoning finds corroboration in Aristotle's account; the relevant fragment of the text is, unfortunately, corrupted, yet the general meaning is that the king could not pronounce a death sentence except during military campaigns (Arist. *Pol.* 1285a 7–10). The most likely (and the most obvious) scenario is that these were sentences passed for breaking military discipline, probably for cowardice.

The king's place among the *homoioi*

When discussing the honours bestowed on Spartan kings, Xenophon states that "they do not greatly exceed those of private persons" and adds that Lycurgus arranged it thus, so as not to "put into the King's hearts despotic pride, nor to implant in the mind of the citizens envy of their power". "As for the honours assigned to the King at his death," he continues, "the intention of the laws of Lycurgus herein is to show that they have preferred the Kings of the Lacedaemonians in honour not as mere men, but as demigods (*hos heroas*)" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.9). The Spartan kings were seemingly no different from other Spartiates. According to Carlier (1984, 273), they carried no sceptres, wore no crowns or purple mantles. However, the sources inform us that Ariston was brought the news of the birth of his son as he was sitting on his throne accompanied by ephors (*en thoko kathemeno meta ton ephoron*) (Hdt. 6.63). Agesilaus granted audiences seated in a "royal chair" (*en to basiliko thoko*) (Plut. *Ages.* 4.5). Thus, similarly to the Spartan ephors, the king had his own *thokos*. Monarchs may also have been given some attributes of power. It is usually assumed that the *skeptron* with which Cleomenes in his madness struck the citizens' faces was a stick; yet the parallels with Homer's *skeptou choi basilees* mean that other possibilities cannot be disregarded.

In fact, there were few situations in which kings would be treated exactly the same as ordinary citizens. The only obligation to which they were subjected in equal measure to other members of the community was participation in the *syssitia*, yet even in this case their status was higher, as they were allowed double rations of food, "not that they might eat enough for two" as Xenophon hastens to explain, "but that they might have the wherewithal to honour anyone whom they chose" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.4, cf. Carlier 1984, 267). The kings' participation in the

messes was rigorously enforced, at least in some periods. In 418 BC, King Agis II was fined because he did not arrive at his mess after returning from Decelea; he asked for his ration to be sent to his house, and when he was refused, on the following day he chose not to offer sacrifice in the name of the State (Plut. *Lyk.* 12. 4–5. On the other hand, the kings' position was privileged even in this respect: they "supped in a special *syssitia* established by Lycurgus (*ta demosia* [*skene*])" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.4) financed from the public funds, not from the members' own coffers (Cartledge 1987, 107–108).

This special place among the civic community also meant a special kind of accountability. The kings could be held responsible for their actions, fined or even exiled (cf. Hooker 1980, 120), if their conduct was deemed harmful to the state. In every known case, this was due to some extraordinary situation. The Spartans "vehemently blamed Agis for not having subdued Argos, after an opportunity such as they thought they had never had before," Thucydides recounts. After the fall of Orchomenus, they were so outraged that "departing from all precedent, in the heat of the moment had almost decided to raze his house, and to fine him ten thousand drachmae". Agis managed to placate them by promising to "atone for his fault by good service in the field", yet the Spartans still decided to appoint ten royal advisors without whose approval the king could not lead the army out of the city (Thuk. 5.63).

The material status of kings

As noted by Xenophon, Lycurgus the lawgiver endowed the king of Sparta with "enough choice (*exaireton*) land in many of the outlanders' cities to ensure him a reasonable competence without excessive riches" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.3). Substantial benefits, some of them material, could also be drawn from the offering of sacrifices on behalf of the Lacedaemonian state. As it turns out, the king received "an honourable share" (*geras*) of every sacrifice he made (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.3). Furthermore, he was allowed "to take of every litter of pigs a porker, that a King may never want victims, in case he wishes to seek counsel of the gods" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.5). The kings also kept the hides and backs of the sacrificial animals killed during campaigns (Hdt. 6.56). In peacetime, at each new moon and on the seventh day of each month, "a full-grown victim for Apollo's temple, a bushel of barley-meal, and a Laconian quart of wine" was delivered to each king. They also had the right to the "hides of the sacrificed beasts" (Hdt. 6.57.1–2). At the feasts following the offering of public sacrifice, kings were allowed double portions (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.4). When not participating in the meal, they had "two choenixes of barley-meal and half a pint of wine" delivered to their houses (Hdt. 6.57.3).

Privileges in life

Kings were not only excluded from most of the restrictions imposed on the Spartiates; they also enjoyed many privileges that emphasised their extraordinary

status in the community. These certainly included an exemption from participation in the *agoge* for their sons (Plut. *Ages.* 1). Regardless of the reasons for this fact, the exemption was perceived as a manifestation of the king's unique position. Incidentally, it was to his participation in the *agoge* that Agesilaus allegedly owed his popularity among the citizens. Because of this experience, he was able to understand his people better and feel closer to them (Plut. *Ages.* 1).

Signs of respect shown to kings of Sparta took many forms, highly institutionalised in nature. For instance, all but the ephors were obliged to rise when the kings appeared (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.6). During feasts following public sacrifice, they were the first to sit and be served food (Hdt. 6.57.2), and were given a place of honour during games (Hdt. 6.57.1).

Privileges in death

This is how Herodotus described the customs in operation after a king's death:

> The kings are granted these rights from the Spartan commonwealth while they live; when they die, their rights are as follows: Horsemen (*hippeis*) proclaim their death in all parts of Laconia, and in the city women go about beating on cauldrons. When this happens, two free persons from each house, a man and a woman, are required to wear mourning, or incur heavy penalties if they fail to do so. The Lacedaemonians have the same custom (*nomos*) at the deaths of their kings as the foreigners in Asia; most foreigners use the same custom at their kings' deaths. When a king of the Lacedaemonians dies, a fixed number of their subject neighbours must come to the funeral from all Lacedaemon, besides the Spartans. When these and the helots and the Spartans themselves have assembled in one place to the number of many thousands, together with the women, they zealously beat their foreheads and make long and loud lamentation, calling that king that is most recently dead the best of all their kings. Whenever a king dies in war, they make an image (*eidolon*) of him and carry it out on a well-spread bier (*kline*). For ten days after the burial there are no assemblies or elections (*archairesie*), and they mourn during these days. (Hdt. 6.58, cf. Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.9)

The bodies of kings who died abroad were brought back to Sparta (Agesipolis's in 380 BC; Agesilaus's in 360/59). In the case of Leonidas, whose head Xerxes ordered to be cut off (Hdt. 7.225.1; 238.1), some effigy must have been made for the purposes of a symbolic burial. When forty (or perhaps four) years later Spartans recovered his remains from Thermopylae, a solemn burial was organised in the city (Paus. 3.14.1).

The burials of kings indubitably served a number of functions, be it religious, political or social, but first and foremost they accentuated the unity of the civic community and the role of hereditary monarchy, whose deceased scions were honoured as demigods (cf. Cartledge 1987, 332–343; 1988, 43–44; Parker 1988, 910). The details of these celebrations remain unknown. We are not certain, for instance, whether they were presided over by the other king, or perhaps the heir and

the family of the one they were mourning. Neither do we have any information on when the funerary rites were established. On the one hand, since Xenophon attributes them to Lycurgus (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.9), and Herodotus knows nothing of them (yet), it might be surmised that the funerary rites emerged (at least partially) in the period preceding the "social revolution" in Sparta (Toher 1991, 172). On the other hand, Herodotus's silence on the subject does not have to be indicative of anything; the entire ceremony could have been the result of the said "social revolution" (cf. also Cartledge 1987, 337).

The political significance of kings

If the political significance of kings in Sparta is analysed with strong (original?) monarchy as a point of reference, it quickly becomes clear that its constitutional standing in the classical period (data regarding the archaic period is in fact very scarce, cf. Carlier 1984, 301–315) did not give kings a strong position. The preservation of the double monarchy system, the transfer of decision-making powers to the people and the gerousia, and the control exercised by the ephors significantly limited the kings' independence.

The kings vs. the gerousia

From a formal point of view, in peacetime kings could essentially be regarded as honorary members of the gerousia, a body comprising 28 experienced citizens over 60 years of age. However, Spartan succession laws (in which the throne fell not to the eldest son, but to the one who was born first after his father became king; Hdt. 7.3.3) meant that the royal addition to the gerousia could very well be a young man with little political knowledge and certainly little experience, whose independence was an illusion rather than a fact. Like all gerontes, the king was accorded one vote. In the case of his absence, the vote was cast by his closest relative in the gerousia (cf. Carlier 1984, 271–272).

The kings vs. the ephors

As Plutarch explains, preventing kings from amassing too much power was a task entrusted to the ephors and the gerontes (Plut. *Ages.* 4). He also adds that relations between the monarch and these groups were bad.

Exercising control and curbing the kings' ambition was the ephors' *raison d'être*. They were the only ones not obligated to rise from their seats when the king entered the room (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.6), also, Xenophon adds, "they exchange oaths monthly, the Ephors on behalf of the state, the King for himself. And this is the King's oath: 'I will reign according to the established laws of the state'. And this the oath of the state: 'While you abide by your oath, we will keep the kingship unshaken'" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.7).

Once every nine years, the ephors "select a clear and moonless night, and in silent session watch the face of the heavens. If, then, a star shoots across the sky, they decide that their kings have transgressed in their dealings with the gods, and suspend them from their office, until an oracle from Delphi or Olympia comes to the succour of the kings thus found guilty" (Plut. *Agis* 11.4–5. This exchange of oaths probably took place since the mid-sixth century (cf. Cartledge 1987, 106–107).

The ephors could punish a king, or even sentence him to death, even though, as Plutarch attests, "Agis [IV] was certainly the first king of Sparta to be put to death by the ephors" (Plut. *Agis* 21.5, cf. Plut. *Kleom.* 10.6). Controlling and limiting the monarchs' power was indubitably among the ephors' tasks, while the relations between them were defined by tradition. Thus, it became customary that "when the ephors summoned a king to appear before them, he refused to go at the first summons, and at the second, but at the third rose up and went to them" (Plut. *Kleom.* 10.5).

One might get the impression that kings were a suspicious, or even inferior element in the Spartan system. However, although no author states it directly (perhaps, believing it to be obvious), Spartan kings appear to have been considered the most important people in the state, despite all limitations to their power. Some evidence for this may be found in the diplomatic protocol followed by other Greeks (most certainly with the Spartans' approval). The treaties signed by Lacedaemon, such as the peace of Nicias of 421 BC, mention the kings first, then the eponymous ephor and the rest of the ephor assembly, and in some cases other Spartans, without specifying their function.

Kings had an important part to play in the life of Sparta. They were, in a sense, regarded as the property of the civic community, and expected to conduct themselves with the gravity befitting their office. This led to restrictions of their personal freedom. According to one anecdote (which Cartledge [1987, 20] considers apocryphal), the ephors fined King Archidamus for marrying a very short woman, arguing that she would bear "not kings, but kinglets" (Teophrastus fr. 141 Wimmer ap. Plut. *Ages.* 2.3). Kings were also forbidden to sire children with foreign women (Plut. *Agis* 11.2; 11.4).

Around the year 540 BC, concerns about the continuity of the royal line (Richer, 1998, 352, 544) prompted the ephors and the gerontes to demand that King Anaxandrides cast away his barren wife and take another, who would give him a son and an heir. In Herodotus's account,

> [Anaxandrides] had as his wife his own sister's daughter, and although he was content with her, no children were born to him. Since this was the case, the Ephors called him to them and said, "Even if you have no interest in caring for yourself, we cannot allow the house of Eurysthenes to perish. Therefore send away the wife that you have, seeing that she bears you no children, and wed another. If you do this, you will please the Spartans." Anaxandrides, however, said in response that he would do neither of these things and that they were not giving him good advice in bidding him to get rid of his present wife, who was blameless, and to marry another. Then the Ephors

and Elders took counsel, and placed this proposal before Anaxandrides: "Since, as we see, you cling to the wife that you have, carry out our command, and do not hold out against it, bearing in mind that the Spartans will certainly find some other way of dealing with you. As for the wife that you have, we do not ask that you send her away. Keep providing her with all that you give her now and marry another woman in addition who can give you children." So they spoke, and Anaxandrides consented. Presently he had two wives and kept two households, a thing which is not at all customary at Sparta. (Hdt. 5.39–40)

The king's new wife gave birth to Cleomenes, and later his first wife bore Dorieus, Leonidas and Cleombrotus (Hdt. 5.41).

It is thus clear that the Spartans were able to interfere even in their kings' marital life. Moreover, they frequently decided who would ascend to the throne. On the surface level, the succession laws in Lacedaemon seemed very clear. The first son born after his father became king would in time succeed him. Still, the king often had no son, which opened a path to political games. Analysis of such cases indicates that the rule of primogeniture and the custom of transferring power to the closest male relative of the deceased were not always followed to the letter. It may be surmised that having a father who acted as a regent gave one a better chance of becoming king (cf. Carlier 1984, 240–248). Despite appearances, it was not always obvious who would become the next king of Sparta. The position of monarch (or regent) was highly desirable, and men fought bitterly for it, even though the pool of eligible candidates was smaller than in the case of other offices.

The influence of kings

Kings played a vital role in Sparta's political life and had considerable impact on foreign policy. In the hands of a talented king, military command could become an efficient instrument for gaining influence on many other aspects of life – from the choice of ephors, to public opinion and the decisions of the apella. An interesting, if unverifiable remark was made by Strauss (1939, 525 n. 6), who suggested that the very definition of the king's scope of authority, which increased in times of war and dwindled in times of peace, motivated the kings to be interested in war.

Even in a state where the monarch was formally only a member of the gerousia, and political leadership remained in the hands of the ephors, counsel from a victorious commander had immense value. Kings had one essential advantage over their potential rivals in the fact that they held the office for life. In a sense, this made them natural leaders for political factions. Even those that came into office with no experience would gain it in time. A fact of no small importance was that their function compelled to deal with international policy. As Herodotus notes, appointing *proxenoi* was also a royal prerogative (Hdt. 6.57.2); but it remains unclear what *proxenoi* he means. It is rather unlikely that the passage refers to people looking after Spartans in other Greek cities, or to Spartiates serving as proxenoi of other states in Lacedaemon. Carlier (1984, 269–270) believes that the *proxenoi*

appointed by the king were officials unique to Sparta, responsible for taking care of and controlling foreigners coming to Sparta (as the polemarchs did in Athens).

Kings often represented the state in its relations with outsiders. They also managed contacts with the Delphi oracle (Carlier 1984, 26–79). Each of them chose two Pythians who were "ambassadors (*theopropoi*) to Delphi" and ate "with the kings at the public expense" (Hdt. 6.57.3). Pronouncements brought from Delphi by the Pythians were kept by the kings. Moreover, the Pythians would automatically become members of the royal *syssitia* (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.5) and most likely acted as close associates of the kings. The kings were the individuals offering sacrifice on behalf of the state, which was another powerful means of influencing the political situation through specific interpretations of divine will.

Many Spartan kings were able to surround themselves with a circle of close associates. Their judicial prerogatives, though seemingly minor, greatly facilitated this process. When at war, they could also make skilful use of their right to supervise the division of spoils (cf. Hamilton 1991, 47–48; Hodkinson 1993, 151). For instance, Agesilaus tried to distribute the spoils in a way that benefitted his friends (Xen. *Ages.* 1.17–19). The double rations allotted to kings also allowed them to win the favour of other citizens in peacetime (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.4).

Royal privileges and material resources certainly provided kings with the opportunity to sway many influential individuals. Agesilaus gained the favour of the ephors and the gerontes with his tactful conduct, but also with specific forms of bribery: he presented each newly appointed geront with a cloak and an ox (Plut. *Ages.* 4.3). On the other hand, the king's favour must have been sought by many, since, when explaining the double rations allotted to kings in public messes, Herodotus hastens to add that "the same honour shall be theirs when they are invited by private citizens to dinner" (Hdt. 6.57.3). According to Hodkinson (1993, 161) Lysander owed his career not only to his skill but also to the support provided by the Europontids, which he gained by becoming Agesilaus's lover. Other individuals with associations to the royal family were Eudamidas and Phoebidas, who became military commanders in the 380s BC through Agesilaus's intercession. The harmost of Thespiae (378 BC), also named Phoebidas, was among the inner circle of King Cleombrotus I (Hodkinson 1993, 159).

There can be no doubt that ambitions and conflicts between kings could, and did, destabilise the political situation – *of* Sparta perhaps more than that *in* Sparta. However, much, if not everything, depended on the personality and temperament of the given king. Agesilaus (400/399 to 360/359 BC), who reigned for forty years, managed to assume total dominance over Sparta's political life and in a sense determined the fate of Lacedaemon in his time. On the other hand, of Cleomenes II (370–309/8 BC) we know next to nothing, although he "ruled" for sixty years. Much of Spartan history concerns the deeds of great kings: Cleomenes I, Archidamus, Agesilaus, Areus, Agis IV, and Cleomenes III.

B. The gerousia

> Among the many innovations which Lycurgus made, the first and most important was his institution of a senate, or Council of Elders, which, as Plato says (*Nomoi* 69le), by being blended with the 'feverish' government of the kings, and by having an equal vote with them in matters of the highest importance, brought safety (*soteria*) and due moderation (*sophrosyne*) into counsels of state. For before this the civil polity (*politeia*) was veering and unsteady, inclining at one time to follow the kings towards tyranny, and at another to follow the multitude towards democracy; but now, by making the power of the senate a sort of ballast for the ship of state and putting her on a steady keel, it achieved the safest and the most orderly arrangement, since the twenty-eight senators always took the side of the kings when it was a question of curbing democracy, and, on the other hand, always strengthened the people to withstand the encroachments of tyranny. (Plut. *Lyk.* 5.6–7)

Living in the times of the Roman Empire, Plutarch had little knowledge of the political reality of Greece in the Classical period; thus, he regarded the gerousia as a moderating factor in the relations within the state. The text of the Great Rhetra cited earlier implies that the people's assembly was called to convene by the kings and gerontes, who were also the only individuals able to submit proposals to it. Their prerogatives were further expanded by the amendments made by kings Polydorus and Theopompus, who granted kings and gerontes the right to adjourn the assembly if they believed it to be headed towards a wrong decision (Plut. *Lyk.* 6.8). All these developments were set in an unspecified distant reality (the times of Lycurgus), which was impossible to find in the Sparta of the fifth or fourth century BC.

Choosing gerontes

According to Plutarch, the twenty eight gerontes were chosen during the people's assembly, from among all citizens who reached over sixty years of age (Plut. *Lyk.* 26.3–5. The election procedure, consisting of determining which of the candidates was greeted with the loudest applause, was dismissed by Aristotle as childish (Arist. *Pol.* 1270b). One the one hand, it might seem that, uniquely for Sparta, the choice was a test of popularity, especially since (to our current knowledge) neither one's birth or material status was formally an excluding factor (cf. Cartledge 1987, 121–22). On the other hand, however, Aristotle clearly states that the elected came from a small number of noble families (Arist. *Pol.* 1306a 18–19). These constituted the elite of the *homoioi,* and were, in a sense, the Spartan aristocracy (cf. Clauss 1983, 128; Cartledge 1987, 122; Hamilton 1991, 72–73). Citizens simply preferred to choose candidates who had already held a position of authority as ephors or polemarchs. It is equally likely that the public elected people whose fathers had also served as gerontes; consequently, membership in the gerousia was a privilege reserved for a narrow group of families (MacDowell 1986, 126–127). Some

indication for this state of affairs may be found in the fact that in the absence of the king, his vote was cast by the ephor who was his closest blood relation (Hdt. 6.57.5). The existence of such a custom demonstrates that the gerousia included relatives of (both) Spartan kings, which, in turn, suggests that the circle of power in Sparta was a closed one. Furthermore, it has established that seats in the gerousia were highly sought after, and could become the subject of bitter rivalry (Cartledge 1987, 122). Regardless of the influence on the matters of state, membership in the gerousia was certainly an ennoblement. As one of the leading experts on ancient Sparta, Jacqueline Christien-Tregaro, notes in *Les temps d'une vie* (1977): "Être elu geronte garantiert donc de rester un homme important jusqua'a la fin de sa vie".

The age criterion and the number of gerontes

At age 60, Athenians, Spartiates and Romans finished their military (and citizen) service. Plutarch reports that gerontes needed to be over sixty years of age (Plut. *Lyk.* 26.1). However, according to Xenophon, Lycurgus reserved the selection to the gerousia for the time "near the end of life" (*mechri geros, epi gar to termati tou biou*, Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 10.1). Old age (*geras*) is an attribute shared by the members of the gerousia (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* X, 2); Xenophon contrasts the virtues of the mind, indirectly linked with old age, to the virtues of the body linked with youth (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* X, 3). Following Plutarch, who substituted that enigmatic "end of life" with the information that those who reached their sixtieth year were selected to the gerousia (Plut. *Lyk.* 26), scholars have agreed that sixty-year-olds could become gerontes in Sparta. This assumption may be correct, although the question to pose is whether this refers to the entire history of Sparta (Kulesza 2013).

The statement also generates other related doubts. In Antiquity, people were well aware that wisdom, if it comes at all, comes with the passing years; but they were equally aware that it goes away with advancing age (cf. Kulesza 2013). Solon claimed that in "the seventh and eighth" (periods of life or, in his words, *hebdomades*, that is at the age of 42–56 years), a man "is far the best in thought and speech. In the ninth [56–63 years] he still has ability, but his speech and wisdom give weaker proof of a high level of excellence. If one were to complete stage after stage and reach the tenth [63–70 years], he would not have death's allotment prematurely (*aoros*)" (Solon fr. 27 W). Even considering the changes in various intellectual fashions, Hesiod's view that "deeds belong to the young (*neoi*), counsels to the middle-aged (*mesoi*), prayers to the old (*gerontes*)" (Hes. *fr.* 321 M-W) seems more or less generally acceptable.

Aristotle is quite negative on the topic of old age in general (Arist. *Gen. An.* 784b34), and the gerousia in particular. He points to the age-related frailty – "for there is old age (*geras*) of mind (*dianoia*) as well as of body (*somato*)" (Arist. *Pol.* 1270b17) – but also to its harmful effects: "And it is known that those who have been admitted to this office [sc. the gerousia] take bribes and betray many of the public interests by favouritism" (Arist. *Pol.* 1270b17). Significantly, unlike Athenian officials, the gerontes were not subject to control and thus, as Aristotle put

it, they were *aneuthynoi* (Arist. *Pol.* 1271a 5–6). Aristotle especially stresses that it was wrong for the gerontes to not be subject to control: "so that it would be better if they were not exempt from having to render an account of their office, but at present they are" (Arist. *Pol.* 1270b17). This does not indicate any advantages related to age. At the most, we may ponder the loss of restraint that threatens when a man sees less and less future before him. In any case, Aristotle considers that the gerontes ought not to be *aneuthynoi*, because they make bad use of their responsibility, to use a phrase from much later times, "solely to God and history".

The Spartans indubitably shared the respect for the elders expressed by other Greeks and were convinced that experience and wisdom comes with passing years (cf. Clauss 1983, 127). The appreciation enjoyed by the "council of elders" was, to some extent, related to these beliefs. Nevertheless, it mostly stemmed from the fact that the said council was composed of members of the elite. It is, however, unclear why the council comprised precisely thirty men. The supposition that the number corresponded to the number of influential families in Sparta's early history (Clauss 1983, 127) is based on mere conjecture. Ephraim David (1991) invokes a "Spartan gerontocracy", and whatever the truth may be, it is one of the many important issues tackled by this distinguished scholar.

Membership in the gerousia was for life. Fabian Schultz believes that in Sparta a sixty-year-old lived, on the average, to the age of 67.5 years, and so 3.73 places in the gerousia became available per year (Schultz 2011, 121–122). I remain unconvinced whether this was indeed the case, although it is, of course, possible. If it was so (regularly or occasionally), the yearly changes in the gerousia, while not as fundamental as in the ephorate (100%), were still significant (ca. 13–14%).

Prerogatives

Isocrates (12.154), Demosthenes (20.107), Polybius (6.45), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2.14), as well as Plutarch (*Lyk.* 26) all describe the gerousia as the governing body of Sparta. However, sources are surprisingly silent on the council's involvement in Sparta's social life (cf. Richer 1998, 344). Even if this is put down to ancient authors not showing much interest in Sparta's internal affairs, this silence is still conspicuous. The gerousia supported the ephors that tried to pressurize King Anaxandrides into taking a new wife (Hdt. 5.40) and considered whether to wage war against Athens in 477 BC (Diod. 11.50). members of the council were also consulted on the matter of Cinadon's conspiracy (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.8). During the reign of King Agis IV, the gerousia successfully defied the Assembly (Plut. *Agis*11).

Along with the ephors, the council of elders kept general surveillance over Spartan law (*nomophylakia*) (cf. Cartledge 1987, 123). Gerontes were tasked with preparing the sessions of the Assembly, which meant selecting the issues that would be discussed. Furthermore, the gerousia was the supreme judiciary authority in Lacedaemon, presiding over all cases that could end in a death penalty, exile or loss of citizen rights (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 8.4; Plut. *Lyk.* 26.2; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1294b 33 ff.). Most probably, however, this only applied to citizens of Sparta, since the

right to pass sentence on the *perioikoi* (death penalty included) rested with the ephors (Isokr. 12.181). It was likely this latter group that decided whether a given Spartiate case would be directed at the gerousia, if they felt a harsh sentence may be pronounced. Although there are two sources (of dubious quality) indicating that a Spartiate could be judged and sentenced to death by the ephors (Plut. *Mor.* 221; Plut. *Lys.* 19.7), this prerogative was reserved for the gerousia.

If judgement was to be passed on a king, the tribunal consisted of 28 gerontes, all the ephors and the other ruling monarch of Sparta (Paus. 3.5.2). No source indicates, however, that the same assembly tackled all criminal cases (Bonner, Smith 1942, 113). In this case, what seems closer to the truth is MacDowell's assumption (1986, 128–129) that this was only done if the defendant was a king. Its judiciary powers allowed the gerousia to exert a profound influence on the trials of kings and other military commanders. There can be no doubt that gerontes were highly respected in Sparta, yet the specific role they played within the political system is impossible to ascertain (Hooker 1980, 121). Thus, the claim made by Andrewes (1966, 7) that the gerousia played a relatively insignificant role does not seem justified.

What remains is the issue of the political power of the gerousia which, according to David (1991, 9), "represents the most conspicuous incarnation of the Spartan gerontocracy". To make a long story short, we may repeat after Manfred Clauss (1983, 128): "Aus den Quellen erfahren wir über die Gerusie nicht viel" (incidentally, Clauss, like many others, believes in the special position of the gerousia). Not that, as Christien-Tregaro believes, the gerontes held "la plus importante des magistrature de l'Etat" (Christien-Tregaro 1977, 76), although various scholars presented the role of the gerousia in very diverse ways (Schulz 2011, 123–133), often, I think, seriously overestimating its importance in the fifth and fourth century BC. It is not known whether this was "a mainly deliberative body" (Kennel 2010, 20); yet in my opinion it does not make sense to present the political system of Sparta in the Classical period according to the pattern known from the Great Rhetra. This is because the sources show clearly that in that period Sparta, while politically in action, proceeded according to fundamentally different rules, and that the role of the gerousia (similarly to the role of the kings, whose political influence was greater or lesser and which could vary, too, depending on the period of their life) may have changed depending on the general configuration of the balances of power.

C. The ephors

The term *ephoros* derives from *horao* ('I see'; 'I look') and denotes a supervisor (Richer 1998, 388). The *Suda Lexicon* (s.v. *ephoroi*) states that Lacedaemonians used that term because the ephors exercise supervision over the affairs of the city (*ephorous ekaloun dia to ephoran ta tes poleos pragmata*). Many scholars believe that in the fifth and fourth century the ephors were practically Sparta's government – that they received and sent envoys on behalf of the state, submitted legislation

proposals to the Assembly, and made the necessary preparations when the decision to go to war had been taken. Furthermore, the ephors usually presided over sessions of the Assembly (cf. Kiechle 1963, 220–242; Hooker 1980, 122). Nevertheless, Ste Croix (1972, 148) opines that the role of the ephors was rather limited. Nicholas Richer's excellent monograph on the ephorate (1998; cf. also Luther 2004; Meier 2000, 43–102; Sommer 2001)) is over six hundred pages long, yet it does not offer a definitive answer to the question of the ephors' place in the life of the Spartan state, especially regarding their role in internal affairs, about which we know very little.

When was the ephorate established?

The origins of the ephorate are shrouded in mystery (Cartledge 1987, 125; Richer 1998, 11–151). It is unclear when the institution emerged, though it certainly happened at an early stage of Sparta's development, as indicated by the archaic election method identical to the one used for choosing gerontes (Welwei 1997, col. 1088). The ephors are mentioned neither in the Great Rhetra nor in Tyrtaeus; yet this does not necessarily mean that the office was created later. Ancient authors offer contradictory information on who established the council of ephors. The beginnings of the institution were associated with:

(1) Lycurgus (Hdt. 1.65.5; Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 8.3; Plato *Ep.* 8.354b; Isokr. 12.153–154; Ephorus FGrHist 70 F 149 (ap. Strabo 10.4, 18 (482); Diog. Laert. 1.68 (Satyros);
(2) appointments made by the kings during the First Messenian War (Plut. *Kleom.* 10.2–4);
(3) Theopompus (Arist. *Pol.* 5.1313a 23–33; Plut. *Lyk.* 7.1–2; *Mor.* 779e);
(4) "the third saviour" (*ho te tritos soter*) (Plato, *Nomoi* 691d–692a); it is possible that Plato refers to Theopompus (Oliva 1971, 124–125; differently den Boer 1954, 199);
(5) Chilon (Diog. Laert. 1.68 (Sosicrates)).

At least since Herodotus, who could have based his account on Spartan oral tradition, ancient authors ascribed the establishment of the ephorate, as well as all the other aspects of the Spartan political system, to Lycurgus (cf. Richer 1998, 21–24). At some point, however, this belief began to be questioned. King Cleomenes III stated in 227 BC that kings appointed the ephors because the continuing conflict with Messenia left them with no time to mete out justice, and that the ephors began as assistants to kings, but had gradually acquired more power (Plut. *Kleom.* 10.4). Many generations later, the ephor Asteropus was the first to add weight to the office and extend its powers (Plut. *Kleom.* 10.5). The connection between the ephorate and Lycurgus was questioned for the first time most likely by Pausanias, in a pamphlet he wrote in exile, if the claim that he strove to abolish the office (Arist. *Pol.* 1301b 21) is true (cf. Hodkinson 1997, 85; Richer 1998, 25–43).

The list of eponymous ephors allegedly continued until the year 754 BC (Pareti 1958, 212–220; Richer 1998, 67–73; 522–523). According to Plutarch (*Lyk.* 7.1), the

first council of the ephors was appointed one hundred and thirty years after Lycurgus. Eusebius (*Chron.* 2.78, 81 ed. Schoene) claims that the ephorate was established in the second year of the sixth Olympiad, by which time Sparta had been ruled by kings for three hundred and fifty years. Diogenes states that the first Spartan ephor Chilon was appointed in the mid-sixth century BC (Diog. Laert. 1.68); however, as it is usually assumed (following Eduard Meyer 1892, 246 n. 1), Sosicrates, whose account Diogenes invokes, did not report that Chilon was the first ephor, but mentioned Chilon's first term as ephor – a piece of information which Diogenes misunderstood (cf. Oliva 1971, 125).

The hypothesis that the ephorate was a primitive Dorian institution finds no corroboration in sources (Müller 1844, 107–111; Witkowski 1933, 19–26). While in later times ephors were also appointed in the *perioikoi* poleis (IG 5.1, 931–932, 961–962, etc.), Messenia (Polyb. 4.4), Thera (IG 12.3, 322, 326, 330, 336), Cyrene (Arist. fr. 611.18; SEG IX 1 § 5), Euesperides (SEG XVIII, 772) and Heraclea in Italy (IG 14.645), this was likely following the Spartan model (Oliva 1971, 127, cf. Richer 1998, 136–137).

The presented material indicates that the ephorate emerged at an early period of Spartan history. Tradition places it in the eighth century BC. Furthermore, it is possible that initially the office had little to do with the functions the ephors held later (even if we disregard the biased account of the ephorate's origins given by Cleomenes III). The imagination of scholars associated the early ephors with a number of functions, namely those of the judges (Ehrenberg 1929, col. 1376), priests (Luria 1927, 413), or heralds (Chrimes 1952, 409–413). The office may indeed have grown in importance as time progressed (cf. Carlier 1984, 314). Contradictory information passed down in ancient tradition (which only agreed on the issue of the ephorate being an old institution) might reflect some change in the function of the office whose role was systematically increasing throughout the Archaic period (Richer 1998, 149–151).

Busolt associated the period both with Spartan synoecism and with significant changes in the political system, emphasising that other Greek poleis also introduced elected officials at the time; and that these officials took over many royal prerogatives (Busolt-Swoboda 1926, 683).

It is generally assumed that, from the very beginning, the ephors were intended as a counterbalance to the power of kings and the aristocratic gerousia. Scholars have also noted that King Theopompus, associated with the establishment or reorganisation of the ephorate, was the author of an amendment to the rhetra which increased the status of kings and the gerousia at the expense of the people (Gilbert 1872; den Boer 1954). Still, as noted by Oliva (1971, 128), if Theopompus only started to be associated with the list of ephors later (in the fourth century BC), this hypothesis loses its validity. Oliva was also disinclined to believe that, similarly to the *kosmoi* of Crete, the earliest ephors were Spartiates of merit, close to kings (this view in Huxley 1962, 39). In essence, even the assumption that the ephors were constantly antagonistic towards the kings does not have to be accurate. On the one hand, I find it rather improbable for all the ephors to always

be in agreement with one another. On the other, one may also wonder whether the ephors, whose term lasted for only a year, would be willing to risk making the king hostile knowing that in a year's time they would return to being just private individuals. It may be no coincidence that no more is heard of the ephor Sthenelaidas after his rousing speech against King Archidamus in 432 BC (cf. Cartledge 1987, 126).

In the classical period, the ephors were chosen by the Assembly. Unfortunately, the details of the procedure are unknown (Richer 1998, 292–298). According to Aristotle, "of the two greatest offices (*tas megistas archas*) the common people elects to one and share in the other (*metechein*): the elect the Elders and share in the Ephorate (*tes d'ephoreias metechousin*)" (Arist. *Pol.* 1294b 29–31). Rahe (1980, 385–101) therefore concludes that members of the common people could be elected to the ephorate, but were not the ones voting. He believes the ephors to have been chosen with the method of *klerosis ek prokriton*, drawing lots from a list of candidates presented by a body that was not the apella. However, this view, based on an interpretation of the above-cited passage from Aristotle, has been rightfully criticised by Rhodes (1981, 498–502) and other scholars (Ducat 1983b, 221; Carlier 1984, 284 n. 255; Richer 1998, 292–298). Gilbert (1872) claimed that the ephors only started to be elected in Asteropus's time and had before that (since the reign of Theopompus) been appointed by kings. We do not know who nominated the candidates; whether a person could volunteer, or whether the notion had to come from someone else, for instance the gerousia. If that last possibility was true, the process may have in practice been that of cooptation (Momigliano 1963, 152), with the Assembly only did a formal acclamation. Most probably, however, anyone had the right to both elect and be elected (cf. Richer 1998, 295–296). Perhaps (sources do not specify the matter) a man could only run for the office of an ephor after his thirtieth birthday (Richer 1998, 289–291). In any case, however, although *de iure* any Spartiate could become an ephor, a member of the elite *de facto* had much higher chances of success (Richer 1998, 289).

The ephors were elected in the same way as the gerontes, using a "very childish" method (*paidariodes*) (Arist. *Pol.* 1270b 28), i.e. through acclamation (Richer 1998, 297; also Rhodes 1981, 498–502). From a formal standpoint, the Assembly could choose to elect any citizen, in practice the nomination required support from influential people (especially kings) and from citizens – which means that candidates needed to run election campaigns, as did the ones applying for the office of a geront (cf. Richer 1998, 298 ff.). Most likely nobody could hold the post of an ephor twice (Richer 1998, 304–309).

The council of ephors consisted of five members (Arist. *Pol.* 1272a 6; Xen. *Ages.* l.35; Paus. 3.11.2; IG 5.1, 32 B and 41; cf. Richer 1998, 261–264). The choice of the number remains unclear, yet it seems rather obvious to connect it with the five villages (*komai*). Timaeus, a grammarian from the mid-fourth century BC (*Lexicon Platonicum*; ed. Ruhnken 128) mentions five greater and five lesser ephors (*ephoroi pente meizous kai pente elattous*). According to Michell (1964, 118 n. 3), there were "junior" ephors who stood in for the "senior" ephors if the latter were absent from

Sparta, i.e. away at war. However, the majority of ephors (which means at least three) had to be present in Sparta at all times, which makes Mitchell's claim inaccurate. It could be assumed that the "lesser ephors" supervised the youth or in some way acted as assistants to the actual ephors; yet it is more likely that that function did not exist at all in the Classical period (cf. Richer 1998, 263–264; Westlake (1976), in turn, believes that possible).

One of the five was the so-called eponymous ephor, after whom the year was named. We do not know how this person was selected; although appointing this function to the eldest of the group would seem the natural choice, the example of Brasidas demonstrates that this was not always the case (Richer 1998, 320–322). It is equally unclear whether the eponymous ephor was given any special or additional tasks. Richer (1998, 322) believes that in this respect he did not differ from the others. The council usually worked together; if a difference of opinion arose, the decision was taken by majority vote (cf. Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.34, see 2.4.29; Richer 1998, 380–383).

The ephors were chosen from among the citizen population, for the duration of a single year. Den Boer (1954, 210) believed that the candidates were aristocrats; yet Aristotle clearly states that the ephors were elected "from the entire people" (*ek tou demou*), and that they were ordinary citizens with no special qualifications (Arist. *Pol.* 1270b 8–9). The office was often held by people who were rather poor and therefore incorruptible (Arist. *Pol.* 1270b 9–10). However, this may only describe the situation in the fourth century BC, when the number of citizens fell and the *homoioi* community became progressively more pauperised (Cartledge 1987, 126). Clauss (1983, 137) even believes that after the Battle of Leuctra, the Spartan elite lost interest in holding public offices, which may have made it easier for the "common" people to become ephors. Cicero likened ephors to people's tribunes in Rome (*De Rep.* 3.58; *De Legibus* 3.16), as the latter were also chosen by the commoners, to look after the interests of the people (cf. Richer 1998, 501–503). As Jones (1964, 30; cf. Meier 2010, 91–116) observes, "roughly speaking, the ephors represented the will of the majority". The comparison to people's tribunes in the Roman Republic may be very apt, though not necessarily in the sense presented by Jones. Just as people's tribunes were often used as tools in the hands of the Roman aristocracy, so could the ephors defer to the political elites of Sparta. Members of these elites, especially kings, could affect the choice of "representatives of the people", or use one group against the other (cf. Cartledge 1987, 127).

It remains unclear to what extent the ephors could pursue independent policy, even against the wishes of the Assembly. We do know, however, that the ephors frequently disagreed with one another, and that each year the new council could present a different front: "Next winter, however," reports Thucydides, "the Ephors under whom the treaty had been made were no longer in office, and some of their successors were directly opposed to it." After the departure of envoys from Sparta's allies, and from Athens, Boeotia and Corinth, "Cleobulus and Xenares, the two ephors who were the most anxious to break off the treaty, took advantage of this opportunity to communicate privately with the Boeotians and Corinthians,

and advising them to act as much as possible together" (Thuk. 5.36.1; cf. Richer 1998, 383–388). By choosing their ephors, Spartiates could indirectly express their opinion on the policy followed in the previous term. It is therefore possible that the differences in the ephor's standpoint could reflect differences in or changes of social mood within the civic community.

The scope of the ephors' power was very wide (cf. Cartledge 1987, 127–129). They were the ones to summon the apella to convene; one ephor (most probably the eponymous one) presided over the assembly. The cooperation between the ephors and the apella was reflected in the wording of the resolutions: *edoxe tois ephorois kai te ekklesia,* suggesting that with regard to the assembly, the ephors played a role similar to the Boule in Athens. The comparison may be misleading, as it does not take into account the factual balance of power, yet from a formal standpoint one may consider likening ephors to the *prytaneis*, and gerontes to the *boulai* of Athens (cf. Richer 1998, 347). The ephors implemented the decisions taken by the Assembly. Its probouleutic prerogatives granted the ephorate all the more power given that the Assembly did not convene frequently. In a sense, the ephors truly did embody the power of the state.

They had disciplinary authority over the entire population: "When the ephors enter upon their office, as Aristotle says [fr. 539 Rose], they issue a proclamation commanding all men to shave their moustaches, and to obey the laws, that these may not be severe upon them. They insist upon the shaving of the moustache, I think, in order that they may accustom the young men to obedience in the most trifling matters" (Plut. *Kleom.* 9.2–3). Even if this custom reflects the significance of the abstract cult of Phobos in Sparta (cf. Richer 1998, 251 ff., 220), Plutarch provides a rationalisation for it. What is more, he specifies the target to be the *neoi*, young men between the twentieth and thirtieth year of age. Older citizens were exempt from the obligation to shave, which may have served to highlight the boundary between the *eromenos* and the *erastes*, one clean-shaven, the other bearded (Richer 1998, 251–255).

After assuming office, the ephors, acting on behalf of the state, "made a formal declaration of war upon the Helots" (*tois heilosi katangellein polemon*), so that killing one could not be considered an act of impiety (Plut. *Lyk.* 28.7 Arist. fr. 538; cf. Richer 1998, 249–251). Also, as attested by Xenophon, the ephors had the authority to punish anyone they wanted, and to immediately impose a fine. They could depose a state official during his term, or even imprison him or make him stand trial (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 8.4; Arist. *Pol.* 1270b 28–31). According to MacDowell (1986, 128), two passages by Plutarch indicate that the ephors were authorised to pass a death sentence. A collection of apophthegmata contains an anecdote about one Thectamenes, sentenced to death by the ephors (Plut. *Mor.* 221 ff. (*Apophth.* 40)), but no information is given whether the man was a Spartiate. Elsewhere, it is reported that when the ephors "found Thorax […] with money in his private possession, they put him to death" (Plut. *Lys.* 19.7). It is, however, entirely likely that Plutarch's account is not very specific, only identifying the ephors as the force behind the accusation, which was actually reviewed by the gerousia. Most probably,

as the Vatican Palimpsest indicates (*Vat. Gr.* 2306), in matters of life and death the ephors were only responsible for conducting the investigation, while the judging was done by the ephors and the gerontes together (Richer 1998, 431–445). The ephors certainly had the authority to mete out the death penalty to the *perioikoi* (Isokr. 12.181; cf. Richer 1998, 452–453). They were also able to decide whether a given incident deserved punishment or not. They were not governed by any law in this respect, which is why Isocrates could claim that a trial before the ephors was no trial at all (Isokr. *l.c*). The situation was also criticised by Aristotle, whose opinion of the Spartan ephors was generally rather low. In his view, although the ephors were ordinary men, they could pass sentence in matters of great import, even though it would have been better for them not to decide using their own judgment, but on the basis of written rules and the law (Arist. *Pol.* 1270b 28–31).

Were the ephors forced to pass sentence jointly, which would certainly mitigate the risks mentioned by Aristotle, or could they make decisions individually? I believe that, in some cases at least, a single ephor could pass judgment on his own. Aristotle does mention individual ephors solving cases pertaining to "contracts" (*symbolaion*, Arist. *Pol.* 1275b 9–10). Most probably, the word *symbolaion* used in this passage does not denote any specific type of "contract", but private agreements of all kinds (cf. MacDowell 1986, 130–131). The ephors sat in judgment on a daily basis (Plut. *Mor.* 221a–b), and one could probably turn to them to solve a dispute at any moment. What we do not know is how an ephor was assigned to a given case. Presumably, he first had to listen to the arguments of both parties, as well as the witnesses they called, and then pronounce a verdict. In more serious cases the ephors most likely acted jointly. In public matters that affected the interests of the state, they took all preliminary steps, either on their own initiative (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 8.4), or in response to a citizens' complaint (e.g. Hdt. 6.82.1). They also acted as the state police, as illustrated by the case of Pausanias (Thuk. 1.133) and Cinadon (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.4–11).

The ephors exercised supervision over the kings (Richer 1998, 389 ff.). Their relations were at least partially regulated by the rules defined by tradition; it may even appear that they followed a *sui generis* diplomatic protocol which, for instance, dictated that when the king entered, everyone was obliged to stand up, but the ephors remained seated (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.6; cf. Richer 1998, 392). If the ephors wished to see the king, he could refuse twice, but had to go to them at the third summons (Plut. *Kleom.* 10.5). Every month, they made an oath to one another, "the Ephors on behalf of the state, the King for himself. And this is the King's oath: 'I will reign according to the established laws of the state'. And this the oath of the state: 'While you abide by your oath, we will keep the kingship unshaken'" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.7). This pledge, in which the ephors acted as representatives of the "civic community", was a kind of a contract, renewed on a monthly basis. Carlier (1984, 276) noted that Spartan kings were therefore confirmed in their office every month, as Athenian *strategoi* were by means of *epicheirotonia.* It is uncertain how old the custom of the oath was. Determining a *terminus post quem* is naturally connected to the dating of the ephorate itself. Andrewes (1956, 74), who associated

the oath with a consensus being reached between the kings and the aristocracy, pointed generally to the times before the Great Rhetra. Lenschau (1937, 284) placed the oath's beginnings before the Second Messenian War, while Oliva (1971, 131) argued that it was invented after it. Stibbe (1985, 14) believed it to have originated in the sixth century BC, Richer (1998, 396) – in the seventh, perhaps in the times of Asteropus.

Every nine years, the ephors took to observing the sky, "This is observed as follows. [...] the ephors select a clear and moonless night, and in silent session watch the face of the heavens. If, then, a star shoots across the sky, they decide that their kings have transgressed in their dealings with the gods, and suspend them from their office, until an oracle from Delphi or Olympia comes to the succour of the kings thus found guilty" (Plut. *Agis* 11.4–5). Den Boer (1954, 211) believes that there is no reason to doubt that Asteropus was a historical figure, as he may have got the name precisely because he stripped kings of the right to observe the heavens; on the other hand, the name's association with the starts may be entirely accidental (Anchimolius's father, for instance, was named Aster; Richer 1998, 180–181). The custom of astronomical observation was used by the ephor Lysander in his gamble against King Leonidas: taking advantage of the fact that the king broke the law by marrying a foreign woman (Plut. *Agis* 11.2), he first ordered the heavens to be observed and then put Leonidas on trial, which led to the king being relieved of his royal duty in favour of Cleomenes. Although Plutarch provides a description of the observation procedure (followed by the only known example of it being used), the details of the process are difficult to establish. Plutarch's description indicates that both kings were suspended from their offices (although Lysander's actions were clearly only directed at only one of them). The next step was consulting the oracle, yet no mention of it is made in this case. Should a negative omen be perceived, the observation was to be followed by establishing how the kings had transgressed. The matter of Leonidas's marriage had not been a secret in 242 BC. It appears, therefore, that his trial was an example of abusing the procedure, bending the rules for immediate political gain. The observation of the sky could have been one of the earliest duties assigned to the ephors, who were periodically required to check whether the kings still had divine favour (Carlier 1984, 315; cf. also 294–296 and Richer 1998, 171–172), although I personally lean towards Philip Davies's view that it was a "post-classical invention" (Davies 2018, 492).

While the ephors could put a king under arrest (Thuk. 1.131.2, cf. Plut. *Agis* 18–19), the court that judged him consisted of ephors, gerontes and the other monarch (Paus. 3.5.2). The ephors could also punish a king, although, as Plutarch emphasises, Agis IV was the first Spartan king to be sentenced to death (Plut. *Agis* 21.5).

In times of war, the ephors ordered a mobilisation of forces (cf. Richer 1998, 324–336, 481), announcing the age limit below which riders and hoplites, and later also craftsmen (*cheirotechnai*), were obliged to serve in the field (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 11.2). According to Xenophon, a king on a military campaign was accompanied by two ephors, who interfered "in nothing except by the King's request" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.5; Hdt. 9.76.3). Xenophon's account may even suggest that the ephors'

presence positively affected the discipline in the army. They are mentioned as accompanying Pausanias in his foray against Athens in 403 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.36), when their presence was not a politically neutral move. Contrary to Xenophon's opinion, the presence of ephors certainly did limit royal autonomy, as Aristotle clearly confirms by stating that a king travelling abroad was accompanied by two of his enemies (*Pol.* 127la 23–6).

Kings could certainly cede some tasks to the ephors if he felt that completing them would take his attention away from more important matters. After the Battle of Plataeae, when a woman of Cos (a concubine of Pharandates) appealed to King Pausanias, he told her: "'Take heart, lady, […] for you are my suppliant, and furthermore if you are really the daughter of Hegetorides of Cos, he is my closest friend of all who dwell in those lands.' For the present, he then entrusted her to those of the ephors who were present. Later he sent her to Aegina, where she herself desired to go" (Hdt. 9.76.3).

On the one hand, the ephors participation in campaigns may have been designed to divide responsibility; yet it clearly also served as a means of supervising the king (one that was apparently deemed insufficient, since in 418 BC King Agis was assigned ten advisors). Interestingly, however, there were cases when the ephors did not accompany the king. They are not seen at Agis's side as he occupied Decelea in 413–404 BC (cf. Richer 1998, 407 ff.).

D. The apella

The People's Assembly, called the apella, consisted of all adult citizens of Sparta. It is unclear whether this meant only those over 30 years of age (e.g. Hooker 1980, 124; Baltrusch 1998, 26), or whether a man only needed to be over twenty in order to qualify (e.g. Jones 1964, 130; Clauss 1983, 20). In any case, it was much easier for Spartans to participate in the Assembly than it was the case for Athenians. More precise estimates of the number of members depend on views on the overall size of Sparta's citizen population. Unlike in Athens, the site where the assembly convened remains unknown, and thus we cannot assess its size to calculate the possible capacity. Likewise, there is no information on whether participation in the apella was compulsory, though it must have been a common thing, for a number of reasons. The People's Assembly of Sparta and the youth (*epheboi*) festivals in Delphi were both called *apellai*. During the annual gathering of tribes or families, *epheboi* were officially welcome into the adult community. Initially, these assemblies may have been organised once a year in Sparta, as indicated by the name of the month Apellaios (Burkert 1975, 9–10). However, contrary to the popular opinion, not every Assembly in Sparta was described as *apella*. Literary sources also refer to such gatherings as *ecclesiae* (Welwei 1997, 242–249; Luther 2006, 73–88).

The text of the Great Rhetra specifies that the Assembly was to convene *horas ex horas* – "from season to season", or, to put it more clearly, at designated times (Plut. *Lyk.* 6.2). This led some scholars to assume that the apella most likely gathered once a month, with special sessions called if need arose (e.g. to listen to envoys – Xen.

Hell. 2.2.19; 5.2.11; e.g. Busolt-Swoboda 1926, 691–4; Clauss 1983, 130; Link 1994, 71). Support for this claim may be found in the *scholion* to Thucydides (ad Thuk. I, 67) according to which the Spartan Assembly gathered on the day of the full moon. This statement, however, has been contested; Hammond (1950, 43), for instance, believed that the apella was to convene *horas ex horas*, meaning "forever", and that the wording did not suggest that the sessions were cyclical. This does not seem accurate. If the apella existed before (and was convened if need arose, like Homer's agora), the new element in the rhetra was the introduction of a fixed (probably monthly) frequency of gatherings (Oliva 1971, 92).

According to the Great Rhetra, the Assembly was to convene "between Babyca and Cnacion" (Plut. *Lyk.* 6.2). Plutarch explained that "the Babyca is now called Cheimarrus, and the Cnacion Oenus; but Aristotle says that Cnacion is a river, and Babyca a bridge" (Plut. *Lyk.* 6.4). Some scholars believe Cnacion to be the river Oinous mentioned in accounts of the Battle of Sallasia in 222 BC and identify it with the river presently called Kelephina (cf. Oliva 1971, 92–93). However, attempts at identifying what was meant by "Babyca" proved entirely fruitless. In Plutarch's *Pelopidas*, the phrase "between Babyca and Cnacion" is used to denote Sparta in general (Plut. *Pelop.* 17.6), which prompted some scholars to believe that the name referred to the entire territory of Lacedaemon (Chrimes 1952, 485 ff.; cf. Oliva 1971, 93; Stibbe 1994, 69–102).

The above passages are not enough to identify the location in which the sessions of the apella were held. They only indicate that the Assembly convened in the open, and that the names Babyca and Cnacion were no longer recognised in Aristotle's time (which explains why he decided to clarify their meaning). As regards the question of where the apella gathered in later periods, Izrael Shatzman (1968, 385–389) provides an interesting hypothesis.

According to Shatzman, the gathering place was the agora, as indicated by Plutarch's tale about a certain youth who put Lycurgus's eye out with a stick at the agora (Plut. *Lyk.* 11). While Plutarch does not directly state that the incident occurred during or in connection with a session of the apella, such a conclusion may easily be made at the end of Chapter 11, which informs us about sticks being banned at Spartan Assemblies. Shatzman claims that at some point in Sparta's history the space "between Babyca and Cnacion" ceased to be the apella's meeting place, but remained the general term for the assembly, which by then convened at the agora.

Pausanias recounts that in Roman times the apella gathered in the agora, inside a building called the Scias (Paus. 3.12.10). As Shatzman observes, it is impossible to ascertain when the Scias began to function as the meeting place for the Assembly. A seemingly clear chronological suggestion comes from Pausanias, who states that by Spartans' own account the building was erected by Theodorus of Samos. This would date the construction to the sixth century BC. Shatzman does not consider this impossible and states that the apella first gathered "between Babyca and Cnacion", then (perhaps since the sixth century BC) in the agora, and later, in the final days of the institution's existence, in the Scias building near the agora. "The

fact that the Skias borders upon the 'agora'," writes Shatzman (1968, 389), "shows the desire to keep its relation with the former place of meeting." Following the same line of thinking, we can ask whether relocating the meetings to the agora might stem from the same desire, meaning that the space "between Babyca and Cnacion" was also located somewhere in the vicinity. However, if we want to give credit to Aristotle's account, we need to assume that the assembly gathered in an open space on the outskirts of the city, or maybe even beyond its borders. Furthermore, the three stages in the Assembly's existence should also be associated with the declining numbers of Sparta's citizen population. Successive relocations could therefore be related to the fact that the assembly needed less and less space. To some extent, the relocation may have been caused by psychological factors. At the last stage in the apella's history, when the assembly was no longer any larger than a typical Greek *boule*, the meetings were moved indoors. Most certainly, the Scias could not have housed the assembly during the reign of Leonidas, or Archidamus, or even Agesilaus. Thus, if the statement that Spartans associated the building with Theodorus has some truth to it, it might only mean that in the second century BC the edifice had already been quite ancient; in the classical period it must have been used for some other function. Most likely, it was only converted to the seat of the citizen assembly in the Hellenistic period.

In the fifth – fourth century BC the meetings were called and presided over by the ephors; before the ephorate was established, the function most likely lay with the gerontes, though the rhetra does not specify the matter. While no source directly confirms this, it is generally assumed that sessions of the apella were supervised by the eponymous ephor (cf. Richer 1998, 318).

The prerogatives of the apella

The citizens gathered at the Assembly made significant decisions on the State's policy, chose their officials, and in times of need also appointed army and fleet commanders, granted, limited and took away citizen rights, passed laws, decided about war and peace, struck alliances, met envoys.

Could the apella have acted as a court of justice? Herodotus claims that Lacedaemonians assembled a court when they felt that Aeginetans had been treated unjustly by Leutychides (Hdt. 6.85.1). Thucydides, in turn, mentions the Lacedaemonians passing a sentence on Agis II (Thuk. 5.63.2–3). However, these passages might not refer to the Assembly, but to a court acting on behalf of the Spartan state (MacDowell 1986, 133–134). Cases against the king were judged by the gerontes, the ephors and the other monarch (Paus. 3.5.2). The assembly did settle the dispute for the throne between Leutychides and Demaratus (Hdt. 6.66.1) and between Agesilaus and Leutychides (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.4), yet none of these cases involved a trial sensu stricto (MacDowell 1986, 135). When the mother and grandmother of Agis II demanded that he be tried by the citizens (Plut. *Agis* 19.10), their request went against the Spartan custom. Moreover, Aristotle expressly states that disputes were settled by various officials (Arist. *Pol.* 1285b 7–12).

Who put motions to the apella?

According to the Great Rhetra, motions to the Assembly could only be put (*eispherein*) by *archegetai* (kings) and gerontes (Plut. *Lyk.* 6.2).

"When the multitude (*plethos*) was thus assembled, no one of them was permitted to make a motion, but the motion laid before them by the senators and kings could be accepted or rejected (*epikrinai*) by the people (*demos*)" (Plut. *Lyk.* 6.6). Plutarch notes that these rules were not respected:

> Afterwards, however, when the people by additions and subtractions perverted and distorted the sense of motions laid before them, Kings Polydorus and Theopompus inserted this clause into the rhetra: "But if the people should adopt a distorted motion, the senators and kings shall have power of adjournment (*apostateres*)"; that is, should not ratify the vote, but dismiss outright and dissolve the session, on the ground that it was perverting and changing the motion contrary to the best interests of the state. (Plut. *Lyk.* 6.7–8)

The amendment made by Polydorus and Theopompus was motivated by frequent (and substantial) changes to the content of the motions, introduced during the session of the assembly. It did not, however, institute a total ban on changing motions, only created a safety measure by allowing the Assembly to be adjourned if the people were "perverting" the proposals. This means that, in practice, the role of the Assembly was not limited to approving (or rejecting) motions put forward by the elders or kings. The amendment clearly targeted the practice of introducing changes to proposals during the session, making sure that the alterations did not go too far.

In the year 477, the matter of war against Athens was discussed by the gerousia and the apella (Diod. 11.50). Before the gerontes took the final decision, the apella was convened to debate on the matter. The geront Hetoemaridas managed to dissuade the other elders and the assembly from the idea. Diodorus does not specify who proposed the motion in the first place.

The surviving sources do not present kings or gerontes as presenting motions, calling for an assembly, or presiding over its proceedings. This role is always played by one or many ephors. Epitadeus introduced a new rhetra when he "came to be ephor" (Plut. *Agis* 5). When Kings Agis wished to remit all debts and redistribute land, the ephor Lysander introduced the relevant rhetra first before the gerousia, and then before the Assembly (Plut. *Agis* 8–9). Does this manoeuvre by Agis (having Lysander put forward the motion as an ephor) mean that only a person holding that office was authorised to present a proposal? The passages cited above indicate that the tasks of summoning the Assembly and presenting motions were customarily performed by the ephors, and Agis preferred to follow the custom. Secondly, according to the rhetra, kings were only members of the gerousia; the body that decided which motions were to be put before the Assembly. Agis had no chances of getting a majority in the council of elders, which is why he wanted the Assembly (to which an ephor could submit proposals) to influence

the gerousia with its views. Neither of these cases provides a clear answer to the question whether a formal voting process took place at the Assembly before the gerousia made its final decision, yet the two stories have different endings, which suggests that the Assembly did vote in one case, but not in the other. During the reign of Agis IV, the result of the vote in the gerousia was negative, and the rhetra was rejected.

There is, however, one more possibility which has to be taken into account. The ephors might not have been able to propose motions to the Assembly without a formal consent from the gerousia. In this was the case, Lysander's rhetra did not follow through, because the gerousia refused to support it and pass it on to the apella. What this hypothesis makes harder to explain is why Hetoemaridas had to convince both the people and the gerousia, unless his address to the latter had no formal importance, but was only significant from the political point of view. In other words, Hetoemaridas simply explained to the apella the motives behind the elders' decision not to pursue war with Athens. If the social mood really leaned towards aggressive solutions, such a move could have been dictated by political acumen.

However, the question that remains unanswered is how the people were able to make bad decisions (which Polydorus and Theopompus tried to counteract by granting the authorities the right to adjourn the sessions). Was it possible for citizens to not only present motions on their own initiative, but also put them to the vote?

Did real debates take place at the apellae?

The extant source material indicates that the people who could speak against a motion during the Assembly were kings and gerontes. As Cartledge (1987, 129) emphasises, there was no *isegoria* at Spartan apellae. However, given the maturity Lacedaemonian institutions reached in the fifth century BC, it would be difficult to assume that, like Homer's "crowds", the Assembly only expressed its approval or displeasure by shouting (Hooker 1980, 124).

What evidence is there to support the claim that Spartan apellae featured real debates? The question is all the more difficult to resolve due to the manner in which Greek historiography presents the speeches of politicians and heads of state, mostly paying attention to the argumentation, and showing little interest in the mood at the Assembly.

It is generally assumed that no real political debates were held at the apellae, unlike in Athens, where the speeches could affect the Assembly's ultimate decision (Cartledge 1987, 128 ff.). As noted by Clauss (1983, 130), although we do not know whether ordinary citizens engaged in discussions, it does not seem particularly likely. Clauss (whose view on the matter is shared by most scholars; e.g. Baltrusch 1998, 26–27) finds it difficult to believe that an obedient, disciplined Spartan soldier would deviate from his normal behaviour when acting as a citizen at the Assembly. In other words, it was the authorities that had the final say.

Nonetheless, there is some evidence to the contrary. As mentioned above, in 477 or 475 BC a geront named Hetoemaridas convinced the council of elders and the people to reject the proposal of waging war against Athens (Diod. 11.50). An even better example of a dispute during an apella pertains to the events of 432 BC. Thucydides's account (1.79 ff.) clearly shows that the situation resulted in a serious political debate. Emissaries from Megara and other cities addressed the assembly, followed by Corinthians and Athenians. After listening to all their speeches, Spartans ordered the foreigners to leave the Assembly and continued to discuss the matter among themselves (*ebouleuonto kata sphas autous*). "The opinions of the majority all led to the same conclusion; the Athenians were open aggressors, and war must be declared at once" (Thuk. 1.79), but King Archidamus spoke in favour of waiting. Finally, the ephor Sthenelaidas passionately argued for war (Thuk. 1.79–86). A debate seems to have ensued, as it would be difficult to imagine that the people stayed silent as ephors, kings and gerontes made their speeches (cf. Hooker 1980, 125). Different opinions were brought into the open, but unfortunately no information is given on whether the previous speakers were ordinary citizens or gerontes/ephors.

In 371, the apella became the stage of a conflict between Prothous and Agesilaus (Plut. *Ages.* 28.6). When the proposal to attack Thebes was made, Prothous spoke in favour of honouring the treaty, but the Assembly ignored his advice and immediately voted to go to war (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.2–3). Again, we do not know whether Prothous held any office or not.

If the anecdote related by Aeschines in the speech *Against Timarchus* in 346 BC (Aisch. 1.180–181; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 801b–c) is true, an ordinary citizen that was not subjected to *atimia* (for instance because of being a "coward", *tresas*) was able to put a proposal to the Assembly. Aristotle's *Politics* (1273a 9–13) indicates that around the year 330 BC the Assembly could only opine on motions presented by the ephors or the gerontes. Richer (1998, 356–366) surmises that this meant an increase in the prerogatives of the gerousia between 346 (or rather 371) and 330 BC, suggesting that citizens' rights were limited in the year 371–360 owing to Agesilaus, in order to make it impossible for the apella to take decisions that would go against the interest of the State.

In the Hellenistic period, the decline in citizen numbers and the political system's evolution towards oligarchy facilitated the process of strengthening the gerousia's status at the expense of ordinary citizen's rights.

When the ephor Lysander proposed the remission of debts and a redistribution of land in 242 BC, he addressed the Assembly himself. The same procedure was followed by the two kings. Agis spoke in favour of the motion, and Leonidas against it; other people participating in the debate included Mandrocleidas and Agesilaus (Plut. *Agis* 9–10). Agesilaus most certainly was not an ephor, for he was elected for this office the following year (Plut. *Agis* 12). No mention is made of Mandrocleidas being an ephor, yet the next council of ephors indicted him (and Lysander) for trying to force reforms (Plut. *Agis* 12). Both men were advanced in

years, and thus could have been members of the gerousia, although this raises the question why would Plutarch neglect to mention it if this was really the case.

If the right to speak and make proposals at the Assembly was only limited (and given to ephors and gerontes) after the year 371, the image of a silent Assembly obediently approving motions put forward by officials was but another inaccurate element in the myth of Sparta (at least in the fifth century BC).

The method of voting

When officials were being chosen, selected men (*andres chairetoi*) were gathered in a building close to where the assembly would gather. These people could neither see anyone or be seen, only hear the loud noises coming from the apella. The candidates for the office passed through the assembly in silence, in a random order (determined by drawing lots), while the men sequestered in the nearby building noted which one of the candidates was greeted with the loudest applause. The one with the highest acclamation would be elected (Plut. *Lyk.* 26.3–5; cf. Lendon 2001, 169–175; Flaig 1993, 139–160).

Acclamation (*boa*) was also used as a method when taking other decisions in Sparta, though in that case the assessment of the results lay with the president of the Asssembly. In 432 BC, Sthenelaidas "as Ephor, himself put the question to the assembly of the Lacedaemonians. He said that he could not determine which was the loudest acclamation (their mode of decision is by acclamation not by voting) (*krinousi gar boe kai ou psepho*)" (Thuk. 1.87.1–2).

Sthenelaidas then ordered a different mode of voting, one that was likely used when the wishes of the community needed to be determined in a more precise manner, namely, "he wished to make them declare their opinion openly and thus to increase their ardor for war. Accordingly he said, 'All Lacedaemonians who are of opinion that the treaty has been broken, and that Athens is guilty, leave your seats and go there,' pointing out a certain place; 'all who are of the opposite opinion, there.' They accordingly stood up and divided; and those who held that the treaty had been broken were in a decided majority" (Thuk. 1.87.2–3).

The voting formula in Sparta (as in other Greek poleis) indicates a cooperation between the pro-buleutic organ (i.e. the ephors) and the Assembly (*edoxe tois ephorois kai te ekklesia*) (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.23; 4.6.3). It appears that, like the similar formula known from Athens, the custom clearly designated the citizens as the ruling body. A similar impression may arise from reading ancient historiography, which contains speeches aimed at persuading members of the Assembly. Thus, in Lacedaemon as well, it was the apella that had the final say.

E. The ruling elite

Describing the Spartan system of education, Xenophon mentions that it was supervised by one man selected from "the class from which the highest offices are filled" (*hai megistai archai*) (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.2). This raises the question what the "highest

offices" could mean, since the list of candidates for *paidonomoi* would include nei-
ther kings nor gerontes. Moreover, it is unlikely that Xenophon only meant the
ephors, since he chose to use the general term 'offices'.

Even without Xenophon's account, common sense dictates that kings, ephors
and gerontes could not have constituted the entire apparatus of power, especially
in a state such as Sparta, where the scope of individual freedom appears to have
been slight. In the Athenian polis, aside from judges, the Council of Five Hundred
and the Aeropagus, there were no less than seven hundred other public offices'
the holders of most of them were exchanged annually. Even if the apparatus of
Sparta's officials was less elaborate (and, contrarily to what one may expect, there
is little indication that this was the case), the difference could not have been this
glaring. The impression of Sparta as having a very rudimentary system of offices
partially stems from the fact that no work on Lacedaemon could compare to
Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution*, which is our fundamental source of information
on the political system of Athens. Another reason is that authors writing about
Sparta tended to focus on the key political players. The myth of Lacedaemon would
suffer if the state turned out to be very similar to other Greek poleis in that respect.
Thus, we have no choice but to rely on the accidental information left by authors
in descriptions of Sparta's political and social history. While far from presenting
a thorough characteristic of the state apparatus, these bits of data still reveal that
the system consisted of more than just the kings, the gerousia, the ephors and the
apella. They also allow us to understand that the *homoioi* were not a community
of equals; many (or the majority) of its members held various functions, and the
entire system was based on (though to a lesser degree than in Athens) on the prin-
ciple of annual rotation.

Naturally, the military nature of the state added particular importance to
functions associated with the army. "For when a king is in the field all commands
proceed from him: he gives the word to the polemarchs (*polemarchoi*); they to the
lochages (*lochagoi*); these to the pentecostyes (*pentekonteres*); these again to the
enomotarchs (*enomotarchoi*), and these last to the enomoties. In short all orders
required pass in the same way and quickly reach the troops; as almost the whole
Lacedaemonian army, save for a small part, consists of officers under officers, and
the care of what is to be done falls upon many" (Thuk. 5.66.3–4).

As one may expect, the division of tasks was very precise; the Spartan army was
a well-oiled machine and a good team, in which a significant role was played by
functionaries. Even if their tasks did not go beyond the realm of the military, due
to the specific the nature of the state it was this structure that had a profound in-
fluence on the emerging social hierarchy in times of peace. As regards polemarchs,
we need to entertain the possibility that they had some judiciary powers, if it
is true that they imposed a fine on King Agis II (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.5 but in Plut. *Mor.*
226f–227a the fine was decreed by the ephors). The mentioned functions aside, the
offices that held particular importance were the nauarchs (admirals of the fleet)
and *hippagretai* (who commanded the three hundred *hippeis* that formed the king's
guard in times of war) (Hdt. 8.124.3; Thuk. 5.72.4). The victory in the Peloponnesian

War allowed many Sparrtans to hold the office of harmost outside of Lacedaemon. As mentioned above, another prestigious post within Sparta's borders was that of the paidonomos.

Inscriptions from Roman times mentioned Spartan officials called *patronomoi* and *nomophylakes* (IG 5.1, 18b, 32b, etc.). However, the post of the *patronomoi* was only instituted in the third century BC, by King Cleomenes III (Paus. 2.9.1). While we do not know when *nomophylakes* were first appointed, there is no indication to believe that the office existed in the classical period.

One office that did exist at that time were judges appointed annually for Kythera (*kytherodikes*). Xenophon mentions *hellanodikai* that accompanied the king during campaigns (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.11) to settle disputes between Lacedaemonians and foreigners. According to MacDowell, they could have done so not only outside of Sparta, but also within its borders. The Spartan judges sent to judge the Plataeans in 427 (Thuk. 3.52.3) and those who tried Ismenias in 382 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.35) could also have hailed from among that group.

Who were the people that held the highest offices in Sparta? Aristotle believes that gerontes were chosen from among a very narrow list of families (*Pol.* 1306a 18–19). It is also known that posts in the gerousia (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 10.1–2; Plut. *Lyk.* 26), and presumably also vacancies on any other office, were the subject of fierce competition. One circumstance that certainly made it easier to win was military fame. Military achievements could be a gateway to the highest offices, as exemplified by Brasidas's career. Having come to the succour of Methone in 431, he was not only the first hero of that war to earn an official commendation from the State (Thuk. 2.25.2), but was also appointed the eponymous ephor. While Brasidas's social status remains unknown – and he might have been a member of the elite – there can be no doubt that his advancement resulted from factual merit (cf. Richer 1998, 275–277). However, examples of careers made possible by talent (Brasidas, Sphodrias) are presented alongside those of bad commanders such as Alcidas and Agesippidas. Given the scarcity of reliable information on Spartan officials, commanders and envoys, the fact that so many members of the same families held high offices should not be disregarded as a coincidence (Hodkinson 1983, 261–262; 1993).

This certainly had something to do with the manner in which people were selected for state offices. The practice of drawing lots was never used in Sparta, and only ephors and gerontes were elected. Most offices were filled by appointment and cooptation. Beyond the borders of Lacedaemon, choices pertaining to personnel were made by military commanders; at least in the case of appointing harmosts (as Lysander did after the Battle of Aegospotami) and finding people for specific tasks (Hodkinson 1993, 160–161). Even in the case of harmosts and nauarchs, where the choice formally lay with the apella, it was limited to accepting candidates presented by the gerousia (and the ephorate?), and gerontes and ephors could certainly be influenced. In 389 BC, for instance, one Anaxibius managed to secure for himself the post of the harmost of Abydus by becoming friends with the

ephors (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.32). In 382 BC the general Eudamidas convinced the ephors to appoint his brother Phoebidas as the second commander (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.24).

Material status certainly worked to the elite's advantage, as only these families had the means to increase their political influence. Agesilaus gained the favour of people holding the highest offices not only with his tactful demeanour, but also with bribery (Xen. *Ages.* 4–5.1; 11.8; Plut. *Ages.* 4.5; *Mor.* 482 d). Young Spartans were used to competing against their peers, wishing to stand out and draw attention to themselves, but, as Finley (1968, 152) observes, there were families that could ensure their children's advancement from their earliest age.

Contrary to the stereotypical opinion that a Spartiate was more devoted to the State than to his family, reality presented a very different picture. Xenophon writes of King Agesilaus thusly: "By his relatives (*syngeneis*) he was described as 'devoted to his family' (*philokedemon*), by his intimates (*chromenoi*) as 'an unfailing friend' (*aprophasistos*), by those who served him (*hypourgesantes*) as 'unforgetful' (*mnemon*), by the oppressed (*adikoumenoi*) as 'a champion' (*epikouros*), by his comrades in danger as 'a saviour second to the gods'" (Xen. *Ages.* 11.13; cf. Cartledge's comment 1987, 143 ff.).

Important figures such as Agesilaus (cf. Cartledge 1987, 139–159) were able to provide their families with opportunities for advancement, and offer help to others if it meant possible political favours in the future. Families of young men hoping to make a career had to seek support from such men as Agesilaus. The system of patronage played an essential role in the recruitment of the Spartan elites, allowing them to provide their descendants with advantageous positions, but also allow the social advance of the most talented (and therefore the most useful) people from without the privileged group (cf. Rahe 1977; Hodkinson 1983, 260–265; Cartledge 1987, 142). In other words, the fundamental principle of the system was that the generation holding power would choose the people that would one day take their place (Hodkinson 1983, 264). As Powell rightfully observes: "Fifth-century Sparta may, then, be seen as an oligarchy within an oligarchy. A few thousand citizens dominated the masses of helot poor, and within the few thousand citizens a few wealthy families had special power" (Powell 2001, 1st edition 1988, 103).

Chapter 3 A Spartiate and his family

Most scholars are convinced that the family was of little consequence in Sparta. Anton Powell sums this up by saying: "It seems that model Spartans did not love their families; they loved the State" (Powell 1988, 228). According to Moses Finley, in Sparta the family was "minimized as a unit of either affection or authority, and replaced by overlapping male groups" (Finley 1981, 28). On the other hand, in the same text, the same Finley very perceptively observes that "there were families who were able to influence the appointment procedures in favour of their own members at the first opportunity, among the children" (Finley 1981, 32–33), which I think points to the importance of private interests associated precisely with the family. As demonstrated by Hodkinson, in the period 431–371 BC incompetents from good families were entrusted with successive commands and important missions. The fact that interactions with the outside world, foreign missions and military commands were monopolised by a narrow group very clearly points to the formation of an elite (Hodkinson 1993, 146–175).

It is quite certain that the family, and various issues related to it, were an important part of the Spartan order (*kosmos*). Plutarch writes: "There was, it appears, in Sparta a legal action for not marrying (*dike agamiou)* and for marrying late (*opsigamiou*) and for marrying badly (*kakogamiou*). Subject to this were in particular those who allied themselves to rich men *(plousioi)* instead of good men (*agathoi*) and relatives (*oikeioi*)" (Plut. *Lys.* 30.7, cf. *Mor.* 493e; Poll. 8.40). Plutarch mentions those regulations in connection with the punishment meted by the Spartans to young men vying for the hands of Lysander's daughters who after his death refused to marry them when it was revealed he had not left behind a substantial estate (Plut. *Lys.* 30.6, cf. *Mor.* 230a). Another version is related by Aelian (*Varia Hist.* 10.4, cf. 10.15), according to whom the young man betrothed to Lysander's daughter broke the engagement when after his death it turned out he had not been a rich man – and was punished by the ephors precisely for breaking it, because he valued riches higher than his vow. However, according to MacDowell (1986, 73–74) the offence committed by this suitor (or suitors) of Lysander's daughter (or daughters) did not fall under any of the three categories mentioned by Plutarch, even though – if we assume that Plutarch was well aware of what he was writing about – his comment that in Sparta punished were not only *agamia* and *opsigamia*, but also *kakogamia* can be referred precisely to the history of Lysander's daughter (or daughters). In these circumstances, Turasiewicz (1964, 441–442) may be right in asserting that "a legal basis for the accusation of *kakogamia* was provided by […] a broken engagement" or a delay in arranging the marriage ceremony. As assumed by Aurelie Damet (2017, 121), *kakogamia* could also include a marriage to a coward (*tresas*) or "l'union avec une femme au physique mediocre", an example being the wife of Archidamus, who was of short stature (Plut. *Ages.* 2. 6).

It seems obvious that the betrothal would have been preceded by various designs and calculations. As Scanlon observes, "Spartan female athletics" was not only a "part of a prenuptial Spartian marriage" (Scanlon 1988, 185–186); in my view, economic considerations were even more important at this stage. According to Hodkinson, the issue of Lysander's daughter (or daughters) constitutes one more proof of the tendency towards homogamy, which is characteristic for Sparta: "Such a marriage would have entailed such a disparity in wealth for the suitors that it apparently outweighed Lysander's former prestige and influence" (Hodkinson 2000, 407). This conclusion may not necessarily be correct; not only homogamy, but also hypergamy might have been involved (cf. Kulesza 2017, 250). Also, it has to be noted that in this case possession of land, of which the suitors would have been aware beforehand, was probably not the factor according to which Lysander's affluence was judged; they were obviously counting on a dowry of a different kind, either building false hopes on the appearance of wealth or drawing false conclusions from gossip on Lysander's riches which probably circulated in the community.

Agamia meant the unmarried state and referred to aging bachelors, although it is not known whether an age limit was set in this respect and if so, what that age might have been. Neither is it known what, in practice, would be considered a case of *opsigamia*, literally: an overly late marriage. We are not sure what kind of penalty was meted to those who married "badly" or "too late". Aelian and Plutarch report that the suitor (or suitors) of Lysander's daughter (or daughters) had to pay a fine (*zemia*); but if this was indeed the case, it is valid to ask what the nature of this fine may have been in the period when Sparta officially ignored monetary currency or, to be more precise, did not mint its own coin and "foreign currency" was in use.

Considering the differing level of "social harmfulness" of these three offences, it would be difficult to assume they received an identical treatment; the same is indicated by Ariston of Chios, who reports that the perpetrators of *agamia* and *opsigamia* were fined, and the fine for *kakogamia* was the highest (Stobaeus, *Frogil.* 67.16).

From the perspective of the state interested in raising the numbers of its citizens, the most detrimental were the results of *agamia*. *Opsigamia* only lowered the probability of children being born to an union, but did not rule out the option altogether. *Kakogamia* was in some way injurious to moral values officially supported by the state, no matter whether it was a daughter's marriage to, for instance, a "coward" that was considered "wrong" or whether this charge could be made against young men wishing to marry daughters of rich and influential families. In this last case, it may be assumed that the regulation remained glaringly contradictory to the daily practice or was actually a dead letter; this, as asserted by Cartledge (1981, 96), was the case in Aristotle's lifetime.

The fact that some practical solutions existed for the marriages of older, or even elderly, men to young women (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 1.7; Plut. *Lyk.* 15.12) prompts MacDowell (1986, 74) to suggest that *opsigamia* or *kakogamia* were not punished

with the dissolution of the marriage; this may indeed have been the case, although *opsigamia* most probably referred to men who remained bachelors until late in life and not to elderly men who took a successive wife. The only alternative is that *opsigamia* referred to the most extreme cases, when a man of an advanced age – an age excluding the option of begetting offspring – would marry a young woman.

The marriageable age

According to Xenophon, Lycurgus "withdrew from men the right to take a wife whenever they chose, and insisted on their marrying in the prime of their manhood, believing that this too promoted the production of fine children (*eugonia*)" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 1.6, trans. E. C. Marchant, G. W. Bowersock). This probably does not refer to the precise age of the newlyweds, but, especially in the case of women, to their physical development, since, as noted by Plutarch, Spartan men married their wives "not when they were small and unfit for wedlock, but when they were in full bloom and wholly ripe *(akmazousas kai pepeirous)*" (Plut. *Lyk.* 15.4). It is known that the Spartans ascribed the introduction of regulations related to the marriageable age to Lycurgus (Plut. *Mor.* 228a), whereas Plutarch suggests the existence of some minimum age limit (Plut. *Kleom.* 1, cf. Hdt. 6.61.5), although his remarks refer to later times. According to Cartledge (1981, 94–95), it was usual for men to marry at the age of about twenty-five and for women between the age of eighteen and twenty, whereas Sallares (1991, 149) is of the opinion that in Sparta, like in Athens, men married at the age of about thirty. These indications are intuitive rather than based on factual knowledge. According to Plutarch, a Spartan would marry between his twentieth and thirtieth year of life.

Although the regulations against unmarried state were associated with Lycurgus (Plut. *Lyk.* 15.1–3), in reality they could have been introduced rather late. Some scholars – again, intuitively – date their introduction to ca. 500 BC, with the intention to increase the strength of Spartan society in the face of the growing Persian threat (cf. Cartledge 1979, 309–310; 1981, 94 n. 64, 95). On a similar basis, Sallares (1991, 170) assumes that men were discouraged from remaining unmarried, and encouraged to marry, from the fifth century onwards, if not earlier; in this case, this tendency would be associated with Sparta's drive towards hegemony in Greece. This was done by organising processions and contests in which young women wrestled naked before an audience of young Spartans. Plutarch mentions that bachelors met with a type of *atimia*, that is revocation of some civic rights: they were banned from watching the Gymnopaedia (*Gymnopaidiai*), that is the mid-summer competitions in which the contestants were naked boys. It has been suggested that this prohibition was intended to mitigate homosexual inclinations among older men (MacDowell 1986, 75).

In winter, in turn, the authorities (*hoi archontes*) ordered confirmed bachelors to walk naked around the agora singing that they were justly suffering (*dikaia paschoien*) for not complying with the laws (*tois nomois*). This *agoradromia* was, first and foremost, a symbolic punishment – although it could be physically

disagreeable as well, considering that temperatures in Sparta can drop to below zero in winter (Cartledge 1979, 310) – but at the same time it was a warning to the bachelors themselves as well as to other men, and an encouragement for them all to marry. The timing is noteworthy; the *agoradromia* was to some extent a mirror image of the Gymnopaedia, since it took place at mid-winter as they did at mid-summer (Jordan 1990, 40). Those marches of confirmed bachelors, which to Plutarch were no more than a *sui generis* ethnographic curiosity, may have had some religious significance as well (cf. den Boer 1954, 220–221). It is not clear whether they took place annually or only from time to time, perhaps when the authorities deemed it necessary. Athenaeus, citing Clearchus of Soloi (fourth–third century BC), says that "In Lacedæmon the women, on a certain festival, drag the unmarried men to an altar, and then buffet them; in order that, for the purpose of avoiding the insult of such treatment, they may become more affectionate, and in due season may turn their thoughts to marriage" (Athen. 13. 555c–d).

It is thus quite obvious that confirmed bachelors "were deprived of the honour and gracious attentions which the young men habitually paid to their elders" (Plut. *Lyk.* 15.2). Plutarch relates the story of the renowned general Dercyllidas, to whom one young Spartiate refused to yield his seat, saying that Dercyllidas had not begotten a son who could one day honour him in the same way (Plut. *Lyk.* 15.3). According to den Boer (1954, 218–219), this indicates that the punishments under discussion applied not only to bachelors, but also to married men who failed to produce male offspring. However, if the lack of male offspring deprived a man of the respect due to his age, it must be noted that in Dercyllidas's lifetime (the late fifth – early fourth century BC) this did not apply to the citizen's political and military status, since Dercyllidas became a "reputable general (*strategos eudokimos*)" (Thuk. 7.61 ff.; Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.8–4.8.32). Den Boer is for the opinion that in the early fourth century BC Sparta witnessed a struggle – initiated by Pausanias – between the opponents and supporters of old customs and that this young Spartiate who treated Dercyllidas so roughly may have belonged to Pausanias's party. If it was so, the young man may have incorrectly understood the old sanction against men able to beget strong and healthy offspring yet failing to fulfil their duty towards the community. In the eyes of his political opponent, Dercyllidas was not a criminal in the religious sense but only an eccentric whose unmarried state did not hinder his career, which indicates that the *agamia* had by then lost its religious aspect (den Boer 1954, 219 n. 1). Also, the requirements of the war may have turned the Spartan's attention away from Dercyllidas's private life, which after the war ended provided his opponents with suitable arguments against him. Incidentally, Dercyllidas's advancement occurred in the period when, from the formal point of view, he did not yet fall under the charge of *agamia*. If the Spartans usually married sometime after the age of twenty, around thirty at the latest, it may be assumed that not getting married before fifty may have provided a basis for the charge of *agamia*, while getting married even later, around the age of sixty, opened a man to the charge of *opsigamia*.

Getting married

The decision was most probably made by the parents of the young couple. Marriages among the Spartan "upper class" were arranged with a view to financial gain, within a given social sphere, as an attempt to increase, or at least preserve, the family's assets (Cartledge 1981, 96, and above all Hodkinson, 2000, cf. Millender 2018, 512). For instance, Leutychides gave Lampito, his daughter by his second wife Eurydame, to his grandson Archidamus, the son of Zeuxidemus, who had been Leutychides's son from his first marriage (Hdt. 6.71). The decision as to a daughter's marriage certainly belonged to her father. If a girl was to inherit her father's estate and the father had not chosen a husband for her before he died, the decision fell to the king (Hdt. 6.57.4). However, the surviving source materials indicate that some forms of a marriage ceremony existing in Sparta were unknown in other Greek cities. One of those was the seizure of the chosen bride, which some scholars consider, in my view erroneously, to have been the main method of contracting a marriage. "In the classical period, in contrast [to the archaic period], the wedding ceremony was a mute affair, involving a secretive ritual seizure following a privately arranged betrothal," writes Hodkinson (2000, 23; *contra* Kulesza 2017, 247–248). This is how Plutarch describes such a wedding:

> They used to marry by seizure – not little girls or ones unripe for marriage, but in their prime and mature. When a woman was seized, the so-called bridesmaid (*nympheutria*) received her, and she shaved her head, dressed her in a man's cloak and shoes, and laid her on a pallet alone without a light. The bridegroom, not intoxicated or enervated, but sober, after dining in his mess as usual, slipped in to her, loosed her girdle, and lifted her and carried her to the bed. After spending a short time with her, he went away in an orderly manner to sleep in his usual quarters, with the other young men; and so he went on, passing his days and his rest with men of his own age, and visiting his bride secretly and cautiously, being ashamed and afraid that someone in the house might see him. The bride too helped to contrive opportunities for them to come together unobserved. They went on like this for a considerable time, so that some men even had children before they saw their own wives in daylight. (Plut. *Lyk.* 15.4–9, trans. D.M. MacDowell)

The actions that accompanied the abduction may have carried a symbolic meaning, indicating that in the distant past, this may have been some kind of a rite of passage (den Boer 1954, 227–230). According to Plutarch, the shearing of hair signified an irrevocable passage from the status of a virgin (*parthenos*) or a girl (*kore*) to the status of a woman (*gyne*), who was not allowed to wear long hair (Arist. *Lak. Pol.* = Heracleides Lembos 373.13 [ed. Dilts]). Dressing in a man's clothes and sandals may have been an apotropaic gesture. If Plutarch is to be believed, the groom would often meet with his bride secretly until the birth of a child, upon which they would become man and wife in the eyes of the community. Despite the entire symbolism of the seizure – suggesting that it was a rite of passage (according to Paradiso 1986, 137–153, *riti di separazione, riti di*

margine and *riti di aggregazione*), which would indicate that the custom was of ancient date – in the Classical period it was usually no more than a formality, even though real abductions may have occasionally occurred (O1iva 1971, 31). This is what Herodotus meant when he explained the reasons for Leutychides's hatred of Demaratus: "Leotychides was betrothed to Percalus, daughter of Chilon but Demaratus plotted and robbed him of his marriage, stealing Percalus and marrying her first" (Hdt. 6.65.2).

Sexual contacts, which from the very first were clandestine, were to result in the birth of children. In connection with this, some scholars speculate on the existence in Sparta of the "Ehe auf Probe", suggesting that the Spartans practised a "trial marriage", which would not became official until the wife became pregnant or until she gave birth. According to Pomeroy, such a form of trial marriage "would allow separation without dishonor if the couple proved infertile" (Pomeroy 1994, 197, differently Kulesza 2017, 241, cf. also Millender 2018, 509).

A contract and a seizure may not have been the only ways of getting married in Sparta: Hermippus of Smyrna wrote in the third century BC that "in Lakedaimon all the girls used to be shut up in a dark room, and all the unmarried young men were shut in with them; and each man took whichever girl he caught, without a dowry. This is why Lysander was punished, because he abandoned the first girl, and tried to contrive to marry a prettier one" (Hermippus ap. Athen. 13.555b–c). It is not certain whether in the case of that "love hut" we are truly dealing with a "most ancient custom recorded by this diligent collector of various 'curiosities', Athenaeus" (Turasiewicz 1964, 438). If we assume that this custom was indeed practised in Sparta at some point, there immediately arises a question as to what were the reasons for, and the technical details of, such a remarkable method of pairing boys and girls. It appears that the aim of the procedure was for all the young people to find partners; but it is not known how often they were brought to that dark room or on whose order this happened. Two facts seem to indicate that the custom was more in the girls' interest than the boys'. Firstly, Hermippus clearly states that "all the girls used to be shut up in a dark room"; nothing suggests that this pertained to all the boys. Secondly, he mentions the girls not getting a dowry, which in the light of other information concerning dowries in Sparta (see below) may indicate that the girls in question were those who could not get any dowry. Incidentally, to Lysander, who himself came from a poor family (so perhaps the entire custom concerned the youngsters of both genders coming from poor backgrounds) it was not the dowry that constituted a problem, but the questionable beauty of the bride he had seized on in the dark room (cf. Kulesza 2017, 273).

The dowry and the three procedures of getting married

Many Spartans unquestionably tried to marry well, finding wives among girls from rich and influential families; this is indicated by both legal regulations and examples from their personal histories that are known to us today. Aristotle states (on what basis is, alas, unknown) that almost two-fifths of all land in Sparta belong

to women, because there are many heiresses (*epikleroi*) among them, and also because they receive large dowries (Arist. *Pol.* 1270a 23–25). Plutarch, on the other hand, cites the answer allegedly given by Lycurgus to the question of why girls were to be given in marriage without dowries: "So that some of them shall not be left unwedded because of lack of means, and some shall not be eagerly sought because of abundant wealth, but that each man, with an eye to the ways [sc. qualities] of the maid, shall make virtue the basis of his choice" (Plut. *Mor.* 227f cf. Iust. 3.3).

In the case of the dark-room pairings as mentioned by Hermippus, there is, in fact, a remark that the girls were wed without dowries (*aproikon*). The question arises whether the existing practice was consistent with the ancient custom (MacDowell 1986, 81–82). Another possibility that cannot be ruled out is that a dowry was usual in the case of marriages arranged with the bride's father and perhaps not in the case of other marriages. Cartledge (1981, 97–98), however, maintains that Aristotle was wrong in saying that there had been many *epikleroi* in Sparta and brides received large dowries – not only because he used the Athenian term *epikleros* but above all because the Spartan heiresses (*patrouchos*), in contrast to the Athenian ones, truly inherited wealth from their fathers (Hdt. 6.57.4). In Cartledge's opinion, Aristotle's "large dowries" were, in reality, the marriage contracts encompassing both the land and the movable assets that a father decided to bestow on his daughter. If a daughter had lost a father, and if she had no brother by the same father, she inherited as a *patrouchos*, and thus she became a target for dowry hunters. For this reason, as well as because of the diminishing numbers of lawful male heirs, a considerable portion of land was in the hands of women.

The matrimonial situation, or the (extra-)marital strategies

Sparta was monogamous. This is confirmed also by the famous exception to this rule – the only one known to us: when King Anaxandridas proved unable to have offspring with his first wife, the ephors demanded that he divorce her and take a new wife to assure the continuation of the dynasty. When the king refused, saying that his wife did not deserve such treatment, the ephors and gerontes considered the matter and allowed him to keep her on condition that he take another wife who would give him children. Anaxandridas consented and from then on "he had two wives and kept two households, a thing which," as Herodotus commented, was "not at all customary at Sparta" (Hdt. 5.40).

The history of Anaxandridas and his two wives shows that polygamy, although possible, was most uncommon in Sparta. At the same time, however, the Spartan model of monogamy differed greatly from the pertinent customs as generally accepted in Greece; this is especially true in the case of the following two aspects:

1. Surrogate fathers. "Seeing that old men watch their wives most jealously, when they happen to married to a young woman, he decreed something quite contrary to this practice too; he made the old man bring in a [*sc.* younger] man, whose

body and soul he admired, to father a child (*teknopoiesasthai*) for himself" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 1.7, trans. M. Lipka). Plutarch mentions the same issue: "It was permitted for an elderly husband of a young wife, if he liked and approved of some fine young gentleman (*kalos kagathos*), to bring him to her, and filling her with good seed *(gennaion sperma)*, to adopt the offspring as his own" (Plut. *Lyk.* 15.12–13). According to den Boer (1954, 216–217), this custom points to the belief, common in primitive societies, in the life-force resident in the semen, *sperma*, of a warrior and the conviction that this force had to be used to the good of the community. Finding a worthy substitute for himself constituted both a religious and a social duty of a childless man (cf. Cartledge 1981, 103; Sallares 1991, 169).

2. Surrogate mothers. Borrowing of wives was another type of survival strategy, probably in a similar way connected with both infertility and financial issues: "On the other hand, he [Lycurgus] made it legal for someone who did not wish to cohabit with a woman but desired worthy children (*axiologoi*) to beget children with a woman when he [the man in question] saw her to be rich in offspring and noble, provided that he had her husband's consent. And he made many such concessions. For the women want to possess two households: while for their children the men want to obtain brothers who are members of the clan and participate in its power, but do not lay claim to the property" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 1.8–9, trans. M. Lipka). The opposite was also possible: "It was also permitted for a respectable man (*chrestos*), if he admired another man's wife who had borne good children and was well behaved (*sophrosyne*), to have intercourse with her with her husband's consent, sowing in a fertile field, so to speak, and producing good (*agathous*) children, who would be blood-relatives of a good family" (Plut. *Lyk.* 15.13). Polybius (12.6b.8) mentions a similar practice, saying that when a man had begotten enough children by his wife, he would customarily give her away to one of his friends, with the aim, it seems to be suggested, of the friend also obtaining fine offspring by her.

The aim of the Spartan "family-oriented policy" in the form of the above regulations was, of course, to increase the number of citizens – or they may, in fact, have been introduced in reaction to the escalating *oliganthropia* (Millender 2018, 510). The consent of the woman's husband was a necessary condition in every case, which indicates that the solutions were not obligatory, although, as pointed out by MacDowell (1986, 85–86), a husband who had a young, healthy wife and did not beget children on her was probably subjected to a "strong moral pressure" to give this opportunity to another man. In MacDowell's view, the legal paternity of children born to such unions was the matter of the prior contract between the two men; in my opinion, however, it was obvious to everyone that any child borne by a surrogate mother belonged to the father who invited the new partner to procreate with him.

Sallares (1991, 169) associates the Spartan custom of wife-sharing with the existence of the system of age groups and considers it to have been a residue of an earlier practice, in which all the members of a given age group had a collective right to access all the wives within this group. It is, however, doubtful whether these regulations were enforced in Sparta in the fifth and fourth century BC – in

fact, the very existence of such regulations must be questioned, considering that Spartan women enjoyed greater autonomy than was allowed them in other Greek poleis and the family appears to have been far more important than the creators of the Spartan myth would have it. It is not impossible that the solutions applied in Sparta caught the ancient writers' attention because they were exceptional. Those authors would naturally have preferred to write of what was remarkable about the Spartan customs rather than about what was similar to customs familiar from other parts of Greece – and writing solely about matters that did not comply with the Greek norms, they created the feeling that the Spartans' attitude to marriage was different than that of the other Greeks, and the exceptional was thus accepted as the ordinary. This does not mean that the historicity of the above customs should be negated altogether; it is quite certain that rich women from good families were an object of desire in Sparta, especially if they were also pretty and fertile. Considering that not all of these qualities could always be had in one woman, other solution were most probably sought by referring to ancient customs – or perhaps by inventing "ancient customs" anew, witness Ariston, who hungering for the wife of his friend Agetus swore to give him whatever he wanted from his possessions and persuaded him to make a similar vow; when Agetus selected some jewel of Ariston's, the latter demanded his wife in recompense and the duped husband was willy-nilly obliged to give her to him (Hdt. 6.62).

Fraternal polyandry?

Polybius says: "For among the Lakedaimonians it was a traditional custom *(patrion en)* for three or four men to have the same wife, sometimes more if they were brothers. The children of these belonged to them in common" (Polyb. 12.6b.8) and it is, of course, possible that with respect to the shared paternity he confuses Sparta with some other state – for instance with Plato's "State" (*Pol.* 457d) – or incorrectly understands a remark ascribed to Lycurgus (Plut. *Lyk.* 15.14) that children were not a private property of their fathers but belonged to the polis (*koinous tes poleos*) (MacDowell 1986, 86). Yet if a few men shared one wife, it would seem reasonable to consider the children borne by her as belonging to all of them, if only because of the problem posed by the determination of their true paternity. Polybius points to the ancient standing of this practice, but it may well have been linked to the disintegration of earlier social relations which occurred in the Hellenistic period. Its precise purpose is also unclear. Why would a few men share one wife? It could have been an attempt at preventing the fragmentation of their assets, but this would make sense only in the case of brothers; the option is unlikely in reference to a group of unrelated men. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the constantly diminishing community of the Spartiates consisted of people who all were more or less distantly related.

Extramarital relations

Whatever we may think of such practices, Plutarch immediately (perhaps to pre-clude any doubts) assures us that adultery did not happen in Sparta:

> For in the first place, Lycurgus did not regard sons as the peculiar property of their fathers, but rather as the common property of the state, and therefore would not have his citizens spring from random parentage, but from the best there was. In the second place, he saw much folly and vanity in what other peoples enacted for the regulation of these matters; in the breeding of dogs and horses they insist on having the best sires which money or favour can secure, but they keep their wives under lock and key, demanding that they have children by none but themselves, even though they be foolish, or infirm, or diseased; as though children of bad stock did not show their badness to those first who possessed and reared them, and children of good stock, contrariwise, their goodness. The freedom which thus prevailed at that time in mar-riage relations was aimed at physical and political wellbeing, and was far removed from the licentiousness which was afterwards attributed to their women, so much so that adultery was wholly unknown among them. And a saying is reported of one Geradas, a Spartan of very ancient type, who, on being asked by a stranger what the punishment for adulterers (*hoi moichoi*) was among them, answered: "Stranger, there is no adulterer among us." "Suppose, then," replied the stranger, "there should be one." "A bull," said Geradas, "would be his forfeit, a bull so large that it could stretch over Mount Taÿgetus and drink from the river Eurotas." Then the stranger was astonished and said: "But how could there be a bull so large?" To which Geradas replied, with a smile: "But how could there be an adulterer in Sparta?" Such, then, are the accounts we find of their marriages. (Plut. *Lyk.* 15. 8–10, trans. B. Perrin)

Does this mean that in Sparta of the Classical period adultery did not exist? This, as indicated by Plutarch's account, was the answer we would have heard in Sparta itself (at least in the Roman period). Xenophon does not mention adultery at all and Plutarch denies its existence (Plut. *Lyk.* 15.17–18; *Mor.* 228b–c), but the reality was most probably less rosy, not only because the Spartans lent each other their wives or found sexual partners for them, seeing this as quite an ordinary thing to do: there are enough testimonies to indicate that the phenomenon of adul-tery (*moicheia*) was frequent enough in Sparta, although entirely ignored by its legal system.

King Ariston publicly declared that Demaratus was not his son; this statement was to result in a dynastic crisis, although much later: because of that statement Demaratus was deposed (after – interestingly – some twenty-five years on the throne). Attempting to learn the truth from his mother, he asked her, naively, it seems, judging by the answer he got: "Who is my father? Tell me truly. Leotychides said in the disputes that you were already pregnant by your former husband when you came to Ariston. Others say more foolishly that you approached to one of the servants, the ass-keeper, and that I am his son. I adjure you by the gods to speak what is true. If you have done anything of what they say, you are not the only

one; you are in company with many women" (Hdt. 6.68.1–3). His mother's reaction seems a little unusual. Instead of reassuring her son that he had been fathered by Ariston, she relates how Astrabacus the hero came to her on the third night after her wedding, looking like Ariston, and she gave birth after seven months. The miraculous circumstances of his conception only increase the doubts as to Demaratus's lineage and, the king's paternity notwithstanding, the general observation he makes about the Spartan women's liaisons with slaves is also noteworthy. The very fact that such rumour was in circulation also indicates that the Spartan women would, and did, cuckold their husbands, and not only with helots, witness Alcibiades (Xen. *Ages.* 4.5; Plut. *Alk.* 23.7; *Ages.* 3; *Mor.* 467f; Athen. 13.574c–d).

The self-sufficiency of Sparta's social system extended also to the matters of sex. Cartledge (1981, 104) is right in observing that the absence of prostitutes in the fifth/fourth century Sparta resulted not from the "free love" allegedly practised by the Spartans but from the general availability of helot women. Bastards (*nothoi*) are mentioned by Xenophon (*Hell.* 5.3.9), and at least some of the *mothakes* were fathered by Spartiates on helot women.

Divorce

It is not known in what way marriage would be dissolved in Sparta. It is more or less generally believed that within the Greek world, the wife would be sent back to her father and the decision belonged solely to the husband. I do not think, however, that the process of *apopompe* may have operated in such a simple manner, whatever the place. Apart from all the other results, such course of action had serious social consequences, as it infringed the honour of the woman's family; thus, in order to send back a wife, a man must have had reasons that even her family found convincing. The most obvious of those, perhaps the only one, was her infertility.

The Spartiates, at least those whom we know from the reports of historians and biographers, did change wives. Leutychides, for instance, married Eurydame, with whom he had the daughter Lampito, after the death of Zeuxidemus, his son from the first marriage (Hdt. 6.71); it is not known what happened to his first wife, whether she died or remarried. King Ariston, who had been married twice before, blamed his childlessness on his wives and so he married a third one, taking her away from her then-husband Agetus (Hdt. VI, 61). Since he did it in the hope of obtaining offspring from her, it must be assumed that the first two women did not marry again, or at least did not have children, if they could be charged with infertility.

The extant testimonies may be taken as showing that the only aim of a Spartan marriage was the begetting of children. Xenophon writes that Lycurgus noticed that "during the time immediately succeeding marriage, it was usual elsewhere for the husband to have unlimited intercourse with his wife. The rule that he adopted was the opposite of this: for he laid it down that the husband should be ashamed to be seen entering his wife's room or leaving it. With this restriction on intercourse the desire of the one for the other must necessarily be increased, and their offspring

was bound to be more vigorous than if they were surfeited with one another" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.5). Xenophon emphasises here the procreative character of the separation of men from women as practised in Sparta; Sallares (1991, 171), in turn, links that with the ubiquity of homosexual relations among both men, who spent their time together, and women, who lived their lives away from them. In reality, however, there is very little that can be said for certain about the relationships within a Spartan family. The extant sources are interested in family life only in terms of the needs of the state and the state's involvement in the emotional or intimate life of the citizens; still, it does not seem that the image of a gay husband and a lesbian wife meeting only for the purposes of *teknopoiia* is entirely true. Anaxandridas's refusal to divorce his wife (Hdt. 5.40) indicates that deeper feelings between a husband and a wife did exist. King Agis, having returned from Attica, preferred the company of his wife to the company of the members of his syssition. Hamilton (1991, 13–14) suspects that Archidamus must have married Eupolia for love, since she was poor and ugly.

When getting married, a Spartiate, similarly to other Greeks, was hoping to have children born to him. However, in contrast to the majority of the Greek states, Sparta formally regulated the related issues: an unmarried man would be fined, a father of many children would be rewarded. According to Aristotle, the lawgiver, wishing there to be as many Spartans as possible, encouraged the citizens to beget children by exempting a father of three sons from military duty (*aphrouros*) and a father of four sons from all duties (*ateles panton*) (Arist. *Pol.* 2.1270b.l). The same mechanism is mentioned by Aelian, who links the second privilege, perhaps erroneously, with having five sons (Ael. *Var. Hist.* 6.6). It is, however, not known at which point in life a Spartiate could avail himself of those privileges: when the sons were born or perhaps only when they reached adulthood. The period when those inducements were introduced is also debatable; if they constituted a part of the state's procreation policy in conjunction with the fines for *agamia*, they may have been introduced at the same time, that is, according to some scholars, in the early fifth century BC (cf. Cartledge 1979, 309; 1987, 169; Sallares 1991, 170).

The inspection of infants

Plutarch describes the procedure of examination in the following manner:

> The father of a newborn child (*to gennethen*) was not entitled to make his own decision about whether to rear it, but brought it in his arms to a particular spot termed a *lesche* where the eldest men of his tribe (*ton phyleon hoi presbytaton*) sat. If after examination the baby (*to paidarion*) proved well-built and sturdy (*eupages kai rhomaleon*) they instructed the father to bring it up, and assigned it one of the 9.000 lots of land. But if it was puny and deformed (*agenness kai amorphon*), they dispatched it to what was called "the place of rejection" (*Apothetae*), a precipitous spot by Mount Taygetus, considering it better both for itself and the state that the child should die if right from

its birth it was poorly endowed for health (*euexia*) and strength (*rhome*). (Plut. *Lyk.* 16.1–2, trans. R. J. A. Talbert)

Plutarch writes of a child in general, but the mention of a *kleros* suggests that those regulations, at least as he understood them, referred to boys (Roussel 1943, 16; MacDowell 1986, 71; Link 1998, 154; Kulesza 2017, 213–233). The child was presented to the elders of his father's *phyle*; in the case the inspection yielded a favourable verdict, this indicated that the infant was accepted as a future member of the *phyle* and thus of the citizen community. Each *phyle* had its own *lesche* (MacDowell 1986, 53) where its members met at various occasions. It is not known after how much time after the birth a father was obliged to present the infant at the *lesche*. Neither is it known whether the elders met there according to need or whether the inspections were carried out at the appointed times, for instance once a month. The entire procedure was most probably limited to the elders looking at the infant; if their verdict was positive, the infant would be bathed in wine, which was done by women. Plutarch describes the inspection and then the wine bath in terms of a medical examination, but according to den Boer (1954, 233–239) those were relics of a distant past – remnants of various initiation rites resulting in the acceptance of a new member into the community. Whatever our opinion of the inspection of infants, the murderous bath in wine poses an even greater challenge to common sense.

The question of whether a father could decide to abandon a newborn on the mountainside on his own, not waiting for the verdict of the elders, cannot be resolved. The phenomenon of abandoning infants is well attested to in ancient Greece, and it is known that in other poleis the decision lay with the father. Outside Sparta, the abandoned newborns would often survive, collected and raised as slaves; it is, however, probable that in Sparta it was forbidden to pick up infants left at Apothetai. Let us also be note that those infants were not killed outright but abandoned, although for certain death. Following Plutarch's line of reasoning, all the above indicates that the state was careful to eliminate weak individuals.

Nonetheless, a different point of view must also be considered. If we accept the traditional image of Sparta, with the *kleroi* being inherited only by the eldest sons, we might assume that a Spartan family wishing to preserve its citizen status might be interested in having as few children as possible – which clashed with the interest of the state, which needed as many citizen soldiers as possible (Link 1998, 163–164). If the Spartiates attempted to limit the number of their sons to one, the inspection of infants may have been attempt to limit their autonomy in this respect (cf. Cartledge 1987, 168).

The inspection of infants at the *lesche* referred only to the offspring of Spartiate men born of Spartiate women. Plutarch's description suggests that it was the infant's physical condition that was judged. The precise manner in which the examination, that Spartan "Apgar test", was conducted is not known; the description is limited to a general set of criteria for the verdict. It can be guessed that *hoi presbytatoi* were looking for evident physical defects.

If the child was found acceptable, the father was instructed to bring it up. And from the first days of its life it was raised to become a Spartiate – that is, it was treated differently than children were treated in other Greek poleis. It was alleged that Spartiate women did not personally look after their offspring, but only supervised wet nurses: "Their nurses, too, exercised great care and skill; they reared infants without swaddling-bands, and thus left their limbs and figures free to develop; besides, they taught them to be contented and happy, not dainty about their food, nor fearful of the dark, nor afraid to be left alone, nor given to contemptible peevishness and whimpering. This is the reason why foreigners sometimes bought Spartan nurses for their children" (Plut. *Lyk.* 16.4).

The ancients believed that the Spartan regulations regarding marriage and procreation were introduced by Lycurgus (Plut. *Lyk.* 14.1). Lycurgus was reported to have given "every father authority over other men's children as well as over his own" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 6.1). The grounds for this view was undoubtedly the awareness that every adult was entitled to give orders to and punish children and youths. To illustrate this "sharing of children", Xenophon does not refer to any decreed or concrete data, but quotes an unverified tale about Spartan customs: "And if a boy is ever beaten by someone else and tells his father, it is considered disgraceful for the father not to inflict another beating on his son. To this extent they trust each other not to order their children to do anything that would incur disgrace" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 6.2, trans. M. Lipka). The reliability of this report needs not to be questioned, although Xenophon's own comment to it in the second sentence is perhaps slightly off mark: Spartan boys were taught to deal with difficult situations on their own and, consequently, to solve their problems themselves. I can, therefore, envisage a boy who complained to his Spartiate father being punished for the same offence that the boy caught on stealing food would be: for failing to achieve his goal.

However, the children in Sparta were by no means seen as belonging to all citizens in common. To be more precise: they were considered a common asset, but the distinction of ownership was respected.

The girls

Whether female infants were subjected to the inspection as well is unclear. Some scholars are of the opinion that they were not and they the decision whether a girl should be reared was left to the parents. However, in describing the procedure, Plutarch uses words in the neuter gender: *to gennethen, to paidarion* (Plut. *Lyk.* 16.1–2), which may refer to an infant of either sex. On the other hand, the remark about the assignation of a *kleros* indicates that Plutarch himself was thinking of the boys. Spartan girls, in contrast to the boys – and similarly to the situation in other Greek poleis – were raised at home, under the watchful eye of their mothers, from the day they were born until they married (Cartledge 1981, 90). They did receive some form of education (Ducat 2006, 223–247) but, according to Jean Ducat (2006, 133), Sparta did not have the means to provide salaries to state-employed teachers. Neither do we have any testimonies that would confirm the hypothesis posed long

ago by Nilsson (1908, 308–340) that their education was similar to the boys' *agoge*. Personally, like Nigel M. Kennel (2013, 387), I consider it impossible that the girls went through "a training system anything like that of their brothers and cousins".

The Spartan women

The women of Sparta are often presented in scholarly texts as "anti-Athenian women" or, to put it differently, as an ancient incarnation of modern women (cf. Kulesza 2017, 278–318). According to Sarah B. Pomeroy, "Spartan women were in many ways among the most liberated of the ancient world, receiving formal instruction in poetry, music, dance and physical education" (Pomeroy 2002, cover). This, an oligarchy (in Sparta) is alleged to have been more woman-friendly than a democracy (in Athens).

Aristotle considers the exceptional position of Spartan women to have been one of the reasons for Sparta's fall. Lycurgus had created an ideal world – *kosmos* – of men, and women were outside it, in the universe of *chaos*:

> Again, the licence in the matter of their women (*peri tas gynaikas anesis*) is detrimental both to the chosen aim of the constitution and to the happiness of the state. For just as man and wife are part of a household, so clearly we should regard a state also as divided into two roughly equal bodies of people, one of men, one of women. So, in all constitutions in which the position of women is unsatisfactory, one half of the state must be regarded as unregulated by law. And that is just what has happened there. For the lawgiver, wishing the whole state to be hardy, makes his wish evident as far as the men are concerned, but has been wholly negligent in the case of the women. For being under no constraint whatever they live unconstrainedly (*akolasia*), and in luxury (*trypheros*). An inevitable result under such a constitution is that esteem is given to wealth (*timasthai ton plouton*), particularly if they do in fact come to be female-dominated (*gynaikokratomoumeia*); and this is a common state of affairs in military and warlike races, though not among the Celts and any others who have openly accorded esteem to male homosexuality. Indeed, it seems that the first person to relate the myth did not lack some rational basis when he coupled Ares with Aphrodite; for all such people seem in thrall to sexual relations, either with males or with females. That is why this state of affairs prevailed among the Laconians, and in the days of their supremacy a great deal was managed by women (*polla diokeito hypo ton gynaikon*). And yet what difference is there between women ruling and rulers ruled by women? The result is the same. Over-boldness is not useful for any routine business, but only, if at all, for war. Yet even to those purposes the Laconians' women were very harmful. This they demonstrated at the time of the invasion by the Thebans: they were not at all useful, as in other states, but caused more confusion than the enemy. So it seems that from the earliest times licence in the matter of their women (*he ton gynaikon anesis*) occurred among the Laconians, reasonably enough. For there were long periods when the men were absent from their own land because of the campaigns, when they were fighting the war against the Argives, or again the

one against the Arcadians and Messenians. When they gained their leisure, they put themselves into the hands of their legislator in a state of preparedness brought about by the military life, which embraces many parts of virtue. People say that Lycurgus endeavoured to bring the women under the control of his laws, but that when they resisted he backed off. These then are the causes of what took place, and clearly, therefore, of this mistake as well. But the subject of our inquiry is not whom we ought to excuse and whom not, but what is correct and what is not. The poorness of the arrangements concerning women seems, as was said earlier, not only to create a sort of unseemliness in the constitution in itself on its own, but also to contribute something to the greed for money (*philochrematia*); for after the points just made one could assail practice in respect of the uneven levels of property. For some of them have come to possess far too much, others very little indeed; and that is precisely why the land has fallen into the hands of a small number. This matter has been badly arranged through the laws too. For while he made it (and rightly made it) ignoble to buy and sell land already possessed, he left it open to anyone, if they wished, to give it away or bequeath it—and yet the same result follows inevitably, both in this case and in the other. Moreover, something like two-fifths of all the land is possessed by women, both because of the many heiresses that appear, and because of the giving of large dowries. Now it would have been better if it had been arranged that there should be no dowry, or a small or even a moderate one. But as it is one may give an heiress in marriage to any person one wishes; and if a man dies intestate, the person he leaves as heir gives her to whom he likes. As a result, although the land was sufficient to support 1500 cavalry and 30 000 heavy infantry, their number was not even 1000. The sheer facts have shown that the provisions of this system served them badly; the state withstood not a single blow, but collapsed owing to the shortage of men (*oliganthropia*). (Arist. *Pol.* 1269b.12–1270a.34, trans. T. J. Saunders)

Wanton women, sportswomen, heroic mothers?

Nudity or semi-nudity is one of the leitmotifs of the tales about Spartan women (cf. David 2010, 137–163; Millender 2018, 506–507). Authors who could still have some knowledge of Spartan women's costume mentioned the *phainomerides*, "thigh-baring" women (Ibycus, fr. 339 *PMGF*; Eur. *Andr.* 595–601, cf. *Hec.* 932–936; Soph. fr. 872 Lloyd-Jones), not naked ones. The short dress (*schistos chiton*, Pollux 5.77) of young Spartan women could be shocking enough to other Greeks (on the Spartan women's attire, see also the observations of Thommen 1999, 137–140, and Hodkinson 2000, 228–229). The later authors unclothed the Spartan girls entirely, making them engage in sports naked. In this context, scholars such as Sarah Pomeroy usually refer to Xenophon and Plutarch (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 1.4; Plut. *Lyk.* 14.4–15.1; Nic. Dam. FGrH 103 F 90). Pomeroy is actually convinced that mature and old women, as well as pregnant ones, still exercised naked (Pomeroy 2002, 25). In my view, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2012, 20) is closer to the truth in saying that the short chiton was worn not by all women, but only by the young ones.

In the eyes of the non-Spartan world, the short chiton may have appeared to be the Spartan "regional" or "national" costume due to its uniqueness; there are records of the Doric peplos, the *himatia* and *monochitones* (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 27.3). But old ladies did not wear mini-skirts even when they were highly fashionable: such garments were meant for the younger clientele. Also, the accusation that Spartan women loved luxury must have had external justification in their attire and jewellery (cf. Eur. *Andr.* 147–53). Recently Nicholas Sekunda has pulled from the figurative Spartan coffer some forgotten garments completing the Spartiate attire: the *lakonikai* and *amyklaidai*, the typical Spartan shoes (Sekunda 2009, 253–259). In the fabulous Sparta, with a considerable contribution from Xenophon, not only were the Spartan shoes mislaid, but also the Spartans began to generally go barefoot. Incidentally, Jacques-Louis David, who was ahead of the American directors in underlining the Spartans' sexiness, painted his Leonidas in the buff, with the exception of a headdress and… shoes (or sandals, actually). The well-known figurine of the Spartiate of Hartford (Massachussets) confirms the career of the "barefoot Spartan" myth: bare feet, such as any gods-fearing Spartan should have (one hailing from the fabulous Sparta, that is) were added to it in the modern era. In reality, the Spartans, male and female alike, wore shoes.

The beauty of Spartan women was allegedly famous (*Sparte kalligynaika* – Hom. *Od.* 13.412); after all, the loveliest of women, Helen, came from Sparta and was especially venerated there. Seeing Helen as the "prototype" Spartan woman, we may perhaps more usefully judge her psychological and intellectual qualities than her physical charms.

The Spartan ideal of female beauty is not known. Certainly it would be difficult to speak, as Thomas F. Scanlon does, of "the legendary Spartan female beauty, perhaps comparable in our day to that of 'California girls'" (Scanlon 1988, 190). What is known is that according to the Spartan standards (whatever they were), not all the Laconian women were beautiful; but then this is quite obvious. Expectedly, beautiful men and women were an object of admiration (Heracleides Lembus *ap* Athen. 13.566a); but what was meant is probably a special type of physical beauty.

The emancipated Spartan women?

In the context of Sparta, that emancipation is probably additionally linked with the special role played by the women of Agesilaus II, whose good name was assured forever by Xenophon, though perhaps contrary to the opinion of many of his contemporaries. Among his women, a special place is held by his sister Cynisca, who won the four-horse chariot race in the Olympic Games twice, possibly in the years 396 and 392, which fact she proudly announced to the city and the world by means of monuments and the famous inscription (testimonies regarding Cynisca: Xen. *Ages.* 9.6; Plut. *Ages.* 20; Paus. 3.8.1–2; 15.1; 5.12.5; 6.1.6. Cf. Hodkinson 1986, 401–402; Hodkinson 2004, 111–112; Dillery 2019):

My fathers and brothers are the Kings
of Sparta. I, Cynisca, won in
the chariot race with swift-footed horses.
I erect this statue and I
say that I am the only woman from all
of Greece who has ever won
this crown. Made by Apelleas,
son of Callicles.
(*IG* V. 1. 1564a)

According to Xenophon, she was talked into entering her chariots into the races at
Olympia by her brother, who by this wished to prove (although to whom and what
for is unclear) that this victory attested to wealth, not to manly virtue (Xen. *Ages.*
9.6.). Interestingly enough, scholars have tacitly accepted this odd reasoning (E.g.
A. Powell, 1988, 228, although not Ellen Millender, who correctly indicates further
meanings in it (2009, 23–26) – odd at least because of the fact that it ignores the
motive for her second attempt at Olympia (unless, let us note *cum grano salis*, that
it was supposed to strengthen the effect) and also because of the fact that her vic-
tories did not discourage anyone. In essence, Cynisca's victories opened a new era,
showing that it was precisely wealth that was the most important factor. I would
expect that this overstepping of the boundaries of the until then male world caused
a shock in Sparta and in the entire Greece.

As a collective, Spartan women enter the scene of history twice. In 390, after the
defeat at Lechaion, Spartan women were full of sadness, "except for those whose
sons or fathers or brothers had died there. They went about radiant as if they had
won a victory, rejoicing in what had happened to their families" (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.10).
The tidings of the defeat at Leuctra caused similar reactions. The ephors forbade
women to weep, but "on the following day those who had lost relatives were to be
seen going about in the open, radiant and well turned out, whereas few were in ev-
idence of those whose relatives had been reported to have survived, and they went
about humbled and gloomy" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.16, Plut. *Ages.* 29.4–7). The reactions of
Spartan women, if they were indeed such, may seem shocking. Would any of us
like to have a wife, mother, sister or daughter who would grieve because we have
returned from wars alive? But this reaction becomes far easier to understand in the
face of the collective responsibility awaiting the family members of the *tresantes*
(see Kulesza 2008, 24–25, and above all Ducat 2006, 1–55).

The events that occurred soon after, when the Thebans and their allies invaded
Laconia in 369 BC, are actually far more surprising, also in view of the above.
Spartan women "could not stand even the sight of the smoke [raised as the Thebans
ravaged the area] because they had never before seen enemies" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.27–
28; Plut. *Ages.* 31.4–5; see Shipley 1997, 339–341). This must have made an impres-
sion in all Greece, just as the Battle of Sphacteria once had. The Spartan women's
physical prowess turned out entirely useless. Plato wrote about this (*Nomoi* 805e–
806b), and Aristotle stated outright that "they were not at all useful, as in other

states, but caused more confusion than the enemy" (Arist. *Pol.* 1269b 37–39) (On the interpretation of Aristotle's text and the attitude of Spartan women, Powell 2004, 137–150; see also Figueira 2010, 269). But the myth of the valiant Spartan woman (which, in my view, emerged very late, at the time when the historical Sparta had already been replaced by the "fabulous Sparta") was not damaged by the events of 369 BC. This element of the fabulous Sparta withstood the test of time; in the later tradition, there was more need for the brave Spartan women than for historical truth.

Thus, Plutarch questions Aristotle's statement that the Spartan system (presented as the achievement of Lycurgus) was characterised by the *anesis* and the *kratia* of women:

> In the matter of education, which he [sc. Lycurgus] regarded as the greatest and noblest task of the lawgiver, he began at the very source, by carefully regulating marriages and births. For it is not true that, as Aristotle says, he tried to bring the women under proper restraint, but desisted, because he could not overcome the great licence and power (*dia tas polles aneseos kai gynaikokratias*) which the women enjoyed on account of the many expeditions in which their husbands were engaged. During these the men were indeed obliged to leave their wives in sole control at home, and for this reason paid them greater deference than was their due, and gave them the title of Mistress (*Despoina*). But even to the women Lycurgus paid all possible attention. He made the maidens (*parthenon*) exercise their bodies in running (*dromois*), wrestling (*palais*), casting the discus (*bolais diskon*), and hurling the javelin (*akontion*), in order that the fruit of their wombs might have vigorous root in vigorous bodies and come to better maturity, and that they themselves might come with vigour to the fullness of their times, and struggle successfully and easily with the pangs of child-birth. He freed them from softness (*thrypsin*) and delicacy (*skatraphian*) and all effeminacy by accustoming the maidens no less than the youths to wear tunics (*gymnas pompeuein*) only in processions, and at certain festivals to dance and sing when the young men were present as spectators. (Plut. *Lyk.* 14. 1–2, trans. B. Perrin)

The fact that Spartan women engaged in physical exercise (cf. Wolicki 2020), at least until marriage, is mentioned by all the earlier authors. It seems that in this case the main source of Plutarch's inspiration was Xenophon. Nonetheless, the general remark that Lycurgus "ordered the female sex to exercise no less than the male" and created "competitions in racing and trials of strength" gains here a very concrete form: we are told of races, wrestling, discus and javelin throwing. I have a feeling that the myth of the Spartan sportswoman is one of the most vivid components of the fabulous Sparta. As Sarah B. Pomeroy (2002, 18) puts it: "Doubtless, like Spartan youths they could have outraced and encircled a hare". The truth is, this feat would be beyond even the fastest sprinter of our own times, Usain Bolt of Jamaica, whose record speed is about 45 km/h. Hares are far faster.

A Spartan mother: the birth of a myth, or, from the history of a fantasy

"The Spartan women," Redfield (1977/1978, 149) writes, "indeed come before us as the fierce enforcers of the warrior code", later on noting that "while the women enforce the code on others, they seem to be subject to no code themselves". The second observation pertains to the Spartan women known to us; the first – to the women from fabulous Sparta, especially the heroines of the *Sayings of Spartan Women.* The *Apophthegmata* are of varying quality (see Tigerstedt 1974, 16–30, and a brief discussion of issues linked with the *Sayings of Spartan Women* in Figueira 2010, 273–296, with further literature). Some may refer to facts; others reflect, in a concise but striking form, some important aspect of reality; but there are many which create a new, fabulous reality.

The *Sayings* portray Spartan women ready to lay down lives for the homeland, but – their sons' lives, not their own. It can indeed be said that model Spartan women loved only Sparta. The *Sayings* provided the foundation for the myth of a Spartan mother, but the direction of this myth changed in the later eras. Unnatural mothers of the *Sayings* were transformed into fierce enforcers of the patriotic code who not only demanded the greatest sacrifice from their sons, but brought up their offspring in the true spirit of patriotism and themselves were ready for self-sacrifice.

A Spartan woman was a wife, and above all a mother (cf. esp. Myszkowska-Kaszuba 2019). She deserved respect in proportion to the number of healthy children she had borne. It is possible that Spartiate women who died in childbirth had the right – similarly to Spartiate men fallen in battle – to have their names put on tombstones (Plut. *Lyk.* 27.2) (cf. den Boer 1954, 294–295; Cartledge 1979, 309; 1981, 95). Many scholars found this alleged symmetry between Spartiate men who fell in battle (*en polemo*) and Spartiate women who died in childbirth (*en lechoi*) most alluring, but it seems to be an erroneous conjecture (Brulé, Piolot 2004, 151–178).

According to Cartledge (1981, 92), the women's intellectual development was not entirely neglected regardless of the emphasis on physical exercise dictated by the reasons of eugenics. Thus, Cartledge refers to Plato's observation that not only the Spartiates but also their wives were familiar with *philosophia* and *musike* (*Prot.* 342d; *Nomoi* 806a). However, it is not only Plato's pro-Spartan attitude but also the very character and context of his testimony that does not allow us to treat it literally. The Spartan women, like their husbands, more often listened than they read and more often spoke than they wrote. On the other hand, the Spartan women were famous for having things to say and not being afraid to say them (Plut. *Mor.* 240–242d; cf. Tigerstedt 1974, 16–30).

The intellectual capabilities of the Spartan women may to a certain extent be confirmed by the epigraphic material (although that, incidentally, is not unambiguous either), which substantiates our conviction that at least some of the Spartan women had basic reading and writing skills. Votive objects with female names written on them dating from the end of the seventh century onwards have been

found in Sparta, and the fact that those are dedications to female deities permits us to see women as responsible for their materialisation.

This image of an athletic, disciplined Spartiate woman exercising in the nude and bearing a child after a child stands in sharp contrast to the poor reputation those woman had elsewhere in ancient Greece: they were seen as wicked, lascivious and luxury-loving (Arist. *Pol.* 2.1269b 19–23; 2.1270a 6–8). In addition, women who had just given birth, and those past the childbearing age, were probably not expected to take part in physical training (MacDowell 1986, 72). Also, the Spartan women were allegedly not allowed to possess any jewellery or wear long hair (Heracleides Lembus *Exc. Pol.* 13 [ed. Dielts]) – in contrast to their husbands, they cut their hair short. This would mean that even mature women were subject to some regulations which ruled out if not lasciviousness, then at least luxury. Nonetheless, Aristotle, criticising the Spartan *politeia* in Book II of his *Politics*, considers the fact that the Spartan husbands are ruled by women (*gynaikokratoumenoi*) to be one of its main defects (cf. Figueira 2010, 265–296; Millender 2018, 513; Fleck, Hansen 2009, 221–245). According to Aristotle, this was typical of all "military and warlike races" with the exception of those who, like the Celts and some others, "openly held in honor passionate friendship between males" (Arist. *Pol.* 2.1269b 19–23). Clearly Aristotle does not consider the wife and family to hold an inferior place in a Spartiate's life. But can Sparta be considered a "women's city"? Testimonies referring to the relations in Sparta in the third century BC, a period when Sparta was one of the many poleis typical of the era, seem to confirm this view. When in the fourth decade of that century the mother and grandmother of the young King Agis canvassed support for his plans, they "sent for their friends among the men and invited them to help, and held conference with the women besides, since they were well aware that the men of Sparta were always obedient to their wives, and allowed them to meddle in public affairs more than they themselves were allowed to meddle in domestic concerns", and in addition, "at this time the greater part of the wealth of Sparta was in the hands of the women" (Plut. *Agis* 7). In the end, then, it is perhaps the Spartan women's financial position that to the greatest extent explains their relatively high social standing. The observations concerning the Spartan women's power over their husbands cannot be verified in any way; in my opinion, this applied chiefly to the female members of the elite. If the phenomenon was more widespread, it did not leave any tangible traces in the sources. Thus, unless Aristotle is blatantly exaggerating, the Spartan women were so discreet in conducting their backstage manoeuvres that the secret never came to light. In Sparta, as everywhere else in Greece, the policies of the state were decided upon by men.

Chapter 4 The Spartan education

The Spartan education, in the Hellenistic and Roman period known as the *agoge* – and still in Antiquity idealised by philosophers and aristocrats – became a symbol of the Spartan *kosmos*, as the political, social, and moral system ascribed to Lycurgus came to be called. Its image was later subjected to various deformations as part of the agenda of the *mirage Spartiate* (Ollier 1933–1943), of which it was one of the chief elements (principal studies on Spartan education: Kennel 1995; Ducat 2006).

Even the ancient writers perceived the similarity between the Spartan system of education and that known from Doric cities in Crete as suggestive of their shared origins or of one borrowing from the other. Herodotus (1.65) and Ephorus (ap. Strabo 10.481 ff.) are convinced as to the precedence of Crete in this respect, as is Aristotle, who generally believes the Lacedaemonian political system to be a copy of the Cretan one and cites a tale of Lycurgus visiting Crete before he delineated his laws (*Pol.* 1271b). Strabo contradicts Ephorus, while Plutarch follows Aristotle (Plut. *Lyk.* 4). Nonetheless, as observed by Jones (1964, 34), most probably correctly, these similarities indicated a shared "primitive origin" of both systems.

Until recently, the Spartan education of the Classical era was almost generally considered to have been an assortment of primitive customs and rituals; most of its elements were seen as relics from earlier times. It became a popular field for anthropological analyses based on the assumption that due to their primitive character, the meaning of Sparta's educational institutions can be interpreted by finding analogies in the allegedly fossilised cultures of African tribal systems (Jeanmaire 1939). This approach yielded some interpretations which were often very interesting and certainly thought-provoking; but it turned out to have been, generally speaking, erroneous. Finley (1968, 158) pointed out as the first that the earliest Greek sources yielded hardly any traces of the *agoge*. More recent research incontrovertibly demonstrates that Spartan *agoge* in the form which it was until recently imagined to have had in the fifth and fourth century BC, did not exist at all; Nigel Kennel showed clearly that it was a product of the Hellenistic and Roman period (Kennel 1995; Hodkinson 1997, 97; Lévy 1997, 151–152).

Even the very word *agoge* does not appear in the fifth- and fourth-century sources as a term denoting the Spartan education. The Greeks most probably called it *paideia*, as did Xenophon (*Lak. Pol.* 2.1 and 2.14), and the term *agoge* emerged only in the third century BC. The earliest known author to have used this term in reference to the Spartan education is Teles of Megara (Kennel 1995, 113–114; Ducat 2006, 69), a Cynic, the author of a work on exile written in the period 240/239 to 230/229 BC. The word itself does not have any particular connection with Sparta; it means, generally, "leading" or "directing", and could just as well be used in reference to horses or ships as children (cf. Kennel 1995, 114–116; Ducat 2006, XII, 69). In the Classical period, education not only did not have any special name, but also

in was not, in contrast to the later period, a separate institution. It began to be perceived as such only when a certain lifestyle – the Laconian *diaita*, of which it had formed a part – was forgotten, only then did it acquire a separate name (Kennel 1995, 115). It turns out that *agoge* was created in the third century BC in keeping with the political goals of the time – and with the imagined image of how education must have been like in the times of Sparta's greatness.

This means that, as distinct from sources from the Archaic and Classical period, a substantial part of source materials pertaining to *agoge* dating from the Hellenistic and Roman period does not have much – or, in fact, any – connection to education. It also means that most of the allegedly primitive elements described in late sources are, in fact, relatively fresh, Hellenistic inventions (Hodkinson 1997, 97). Having said that, it must be admitted that concrete facts are sometimes difficult to judge. This is because, on the one hand, many clearly archaic elements can truly have very old roots (unless those had been made up) – among them are, for instance, the customs of going barefoot or gathering reeds bare-handedly on the banks of the Eurotas; on the other hand, however, *la mode archaisante*, well attested to in Greece in the period of the Roman Empire, may have resulted in deliberate attempts to imbue Spartan institutions with an aura of age (Lévy 1997, 153–154; Ducat 2006, XI). In order to highlight its special and ancient character, but also to attract tourists, the Roman Sparta attempted to appear as "antique" as possible. In contrast to Athens, it could not impress the visitors with splendid monuments that evoked associations with bygone greatness; all that it had were the elements lodged deep in the Greco-Roman collective memory.

Sparta, which at that time was – literally – a provincial town similar to many others in the eastern part of the Roman Empire and had very little in common with the Sparta of Leonidas or Archidamus, tended to "Laconize" itself, persistently trying to create the impression that its old customs and laws were being carefully preserved. Its effectiveness in this respect is demonstrated by, among others, Cicero, who after his visit to Laconia professed that the Spartans were "the only men in the whole world who have been living for now seven hundred years and more under one system, and under laws which have never been altered" (Cic. *Flac.* 63).

Epigraphic material evinces deliberate archaisation. A hundred and fifty-one of over a thousand extant Spartan inscriptions are dedications with iron sickles, which are associated with the *agoge*, and steles founded by the victors of contests held at the temple of Artemis Orthia. Most of the Spartan inscriptions are written in the *koine*, which at that time was in use throughout the entire Greek world, but 46 of them (including 43 pertaining to the *agoge*) contain unique, Doric dialectal forms (Kennel 1995, 87 ff.). Many scholars consider this an indication of a revival of the Laconian dialect and old Spartan customs occurring in the Roman period (Ehrenberg 1929, 1451–1452; Chrimes 1952, 85, 160–161; Tigerstedt 1974, 163); but a closer analysis reveals an entirely different picture: the archaised inscriptions do not evince the influence of the old Doric dialect at all – they adapt the contemporary *koine*. The changes are limited solely to orthography (e.g. writing *alpha*

instead of *etha*, *sigma* instead of *theta*, *omega* instead of the *omicron-ypsilon* diph-
thong, double *delta* instead of *zeta*, *rho* instead of the final *sigma*), and the aim of
the practice was to give the *agoge* an aura of antiquity. Interestingly, this linguistic
archaisation was applied during a relatively short period – these inscriptions ap-
pear in the third decade of the second century and are no longer found by the
mid-third century AD. The fact that they pertain almost exclusively to the *agoge*
seems to suggest that it was precisely this institution that was being clothed in the
ancient costume and turned into the Lycurgian signature of Sparta that had long
ceased to be *that* Sparta.

The boys' fight for cheeses at the altar of Artemis Orthia, which may have
seemed a cruel and ancient ritual, is another example of such changes. In the post-
Classical period, even though the event occurred in the same space, its contents
and meaning were different. Every year, in late May (or in June), an unusual cer-
emony was enacted in the Artemis Orthia temple enclosure. Boys approached the
altar in groups of fourteen or fifteen. As a trial of endurance (*karterias agon*), they
stood naked with their hands raised above their heads, and men with whips (*hoi
mastigountes*) rained lashes on their backs. During the scourging (*diamastigosis*),
the boys were not allowed to show pain, cry out or withdraw. The one who with-
stood the lashing for the longest was given the prestigious title of victor (*bomonikes*)
and the right to erect a statue in memory of his bravery. The *agon* was watched
by spectators gathered in the temple, including the fathers and mothers of the
scourged boys, who loudly encouraged their sons to endure. The sources assure us
that many boys preferred to die than to fail during the trial and be disgraced in the
presence of their parents; yet out of five eyewitnesses of the ceremony only one
is certain that deaths did, in fact, occur. Cicero (*Tusc.* 2.34) only says that he had
heard of such cases, Pausanias does not mention them at all, Philostratus (*Vitae
Apolloni* 6.20) actually denies that similar incidents took place, Lucian (*Anach.* 38–
39) suggests that he had seen nothing of the kind; only Plutarch (*Lyk.* 18.2; cf.
Mor. 239c–d (*Inst. Lac.* 40)) asserts that he had seen many youngsters dying when
whipped at the altar, although even here the interpretation of *apothneskontas* is not
at all unambiguous.

In the Roman period, *ho tes karterias agon* was Sparta's greatest tourist at-
traction. The fact that in the third century AD the auditorium was enlarged to
accommodate more spectators attests to its popularity (Dawkins 1929, 34; Lévy
1997, 154). To the elite of the Roman Empire, the whipping of boys at the temple
of Artemis Orthia was the quintessence of everything Spartan. To many modern
scholars, in turn, it became a relic of the primitive past and an astounding testi-
mony to the survival of the traditional Spartan virtues of bravery and obedience,
and the cult of courage and endurance. The *agon* began to be seen as a classic ex-
ample of a rite of passage, an initiation ceremony in which the boys crossed one of
the main thresholds of their lives.

However, as shown by Kennel (1995, 70–97, cf. Rzepka 2020, 57–64), this test
of endurance was not at all a relic of a distant past that had survived for centuries
in an unchanged form, but an entirely new ritual, invented in the second decade

of the third century BC by Sphairus of Borysthenes, who altered the meaning of a genuinely old ritual described by Xenophon (*Lak. Pol.* 2. 9) – that of the boys' fight for cheeses placed on the altar of Artemis Orthia. The original initiation rite was deprived of its essential religious character (although its association with Artemis, patroness of the *agoge*, was retained) and shaped in accordance with the stoic views of Sphairus and the socio-political programme of King Cleomenes III. Sphairus, like a new Lycurgus, revived – or, to be more precise, invented anew – the Spartan education and the syssitia (Plut. *Kleom.* 11.4), which some fifty years before had vanished from Spartan life. The fact that King Agis IV (ca. 244–240 BC) professed, even before he ascended the throne, a desire to revive the old system of education indicates that in his lifetime it was no longer in operation. It was probably not in operation even when the king was born in 244 BC, although in the year 274 BC King Pyrrus was still saying he wished his sons to receive a Spartan education (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 26, 21). The last Spartiate known to have gone through the *agoge* was Xanthippus, whom the Carthaginians hired during the Second Punic War to lead the operations against the Romans in 255 BC. Since by then Xanthippus had already had some military experience (Polyb. 1.32), and it would be generally improbable for the Carthaginians to entrust such a responsibility to an inexperienced leader, it must be assumed that the classical *agoge* existed from some point in the sixth century BC until ca. 270–250 BC. The two leading experts on the subject, Nigel Kennel and Jean Ducat, are of a diametrically different opinion on this subject. In Ducat's view, the Spartan *paideia* vanished not in the third century BC, but in 189/188 BC (Ducat 2006, X–XI). It is, however, certain that from the late fourth/early third century BC (the turning point was, in my view, the year 371) all began to change – Sparta ceased to be Sparta. Its borders shifted, its society changed, and the Spartan education, too, gradually began to fade away. I am of the opinion that the general description of the realities of the era, as well as the sources, point to the correctness of Kennel's interpretations, although Ducat's considerations are most inspiring, if quite un-Spartan in their subtlety.

Agis IV failed to revive the *agoge*; the one to succeed was Cleomenes III after the coup d'état of 227 BC. The Hellenistic *agoge* fashioned by Sphairus from old and new elements (cf. Kennel 1995, 98–114) existed for less than four decades (226–188 BC). According to Ducat (2006, XIII), Kennel "overestimated" the role of Sphairus; in fact, Ducat says, mistakenly in my view, that "Kennel's Sphairos is ghostly" (Ducat 2006, 32). In Ducat's view, the revival of the *agoge* under Cleomenes may have brought some alterations, but did not mean "a systematic rupture in its essentials" (Ducat 2006, XIV).

According to some scholars (Oliva 1971, 311 n. 2; Chrimes 1952, 46–48; Lévy 1997, 151–160), the revival of the *agoge*, which had been cancelled in 189/188 BC by Philopoemen, together with other institutions introduced by Lycurgus, took place as early as ca. 183–178 BC. According to Kennel (1995, 9–10, 13–14), it took place only in 146 BC, after Corinth was razed by the Romans. According to Ducat – and contrary to Kennel – the history of Spartan education falls into two periods. Above all, Ducat highlights not the "complete breaks" in the third and second century

BC, but the fact that "the reinstatements must have been accompanied by pro-found modifications" (Ducat 2006, X). According to Ducat, an *ephebeia* similar to that known from other Greek poleis was instituted when after the interruption of 188–178 Sparta became a *civitas libera* (Ducat 2006, XV ff.). The new, Roman *agoge* modelled on that instituted by Sphairus functioned until the fourth century AD, and it is about the Roman *agoge* that the most is known, because apart from the relatively numerous literary sources, we also have a surprisingly ample epigraphic material. Ducat maintains, again, in my view, mistakenly, that "up to and to and in-cluding the imperial period it is continuity which prevails in the history of Spartan education" (Ducat 2006, XVI).

The relative wealth of sources pertaining to the Roman phase of the *agoge* was, in effect, the greatest enemy of the scholars interested in the Spartan education who, having at their disposal sources dating from a period from the fourth century BC to the fourth century AD, quite generally applied the synchronic method. Tac-itly assuming that the institution of the *agoge* was immutable, they used sources belonging to all the periods at the same time. Worse still, they took the *Life of Ly-curgus* by Plutarch as the main basis for their reconstructions of the *agoge*, even though the author described mostly the Roman *agoge* or, in fact, an *agoge* which was in large part imaginary. They also tried to correct the discrepancies between Plutarch's text and the earlier sources, altering the latter so that they would agree with the later image. As a result of their attempts, the emergent image of Spartan education as it was in the Classical period was false; also there was a general confusion, especially obvious with respect to the terminology relating to the age groups within the *agoge*. Those used in the Classical period had not survived; for this reason, they were assumed to have been identical as in the later periods (the fact was that those names were not identical even in the Hellenistic and Roman period, and in addition they differed in number). In this situation, the attempts to reconcile contradictions simply had to result in solutions that were as arbitrary as they were clearly erroneous.

This state of affairs should have resulted in scepticism towards the informa-tion contained in Plutarch' *Life of Lycurgus*, even though it provides the largest number of data referring to the *agoge*. But, unfortunately, the earlier sources are not above suspicion, either. On the one hand, the likelihood of our getting to know the Spartan system of education as it was in the Classical period (and in the Ar-chaic one, when it evolved) is reduced by the fact that our earliest source is only Xenophon's *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* (*Lak. Pol.* 2–4), written as late as ca. the fourth century BC. However, the problem is not only that the earliest system and its transformations cannot be reconstructed; further restrictions result from Xenophon's own biases as he persistently highlighted the unique and excep-tional nature of Spartan education.

In my opinion, this kind of education, it its general outlines, did not differ as much from the systems used in other Greek poleis as might be assumed. The phases of education which began in the boy's seventh year and lasted until more or less his twentieth year, and even some rituals recall those used throughout the

Greek world. Spartan education was exceptional (as is education in our own world) in the facts that it was directly controlled by the state and that it imparted a "collective identity of the youth" resulting from the institutionalisation of educational practices which elsewhere were voluntary (Hodkinson 1997, 98). In fact, the *agoge* as introduced by Cleomenes III did not have to differ much in this respect from the Spartan *paideia* of the Classical period. The mandatory collective education organised by the state and the duration of the process of education were of fundamental importance. The boys were supervised by an inspector (*paidonomos*) selected from among the holders of the highest state offices (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.2). His autonomy regarding the disciplinary power over all the youths was extensive. He commanded a troop of young men (*hebontes*) armed with whips (*mastigophoroi*), who meted out the punishments he ordered (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.2). Most probably, the *paidonomos* was not only responsible for discipline among the youngsters, but he also supervised, in the name of the state, the entire process of their education – a task which elsewhere, as highlighted by Xenophon (*Lak. Pol.* 2.2), belonged to their parents.

Xenophon does not say directly at what age a boy would enter the state education system. Indirectly, his silence indicates that in this case, the Spartan customs did not differ from those seen in the rest of Greece; if it were otherwise, Xenophon would have certainly said so, since he readily and frequently pointed out the originality of Spartan solutions. The process of education was thus likely to have begun at the age of seven. Plutarch informs us that in Sparta, no-one was allowed to bring up his son as he pleased and all the boys who were seven years old (*heptaeteis*) came under the supervision of the state. They were divided into troops (*eis agelas*) and from then on they lived together, subject to the same rules, sharing the games and trials of their lives (Plut. *Lyk.* 16.7).

It is not entirely clear whether the term *heptaeteis genomenous* meant a boy who had already had his seventh birthday and was therefore in his eighth year of life or a boy who had not and was in his seventh year. But whatever the case might be, I consider it hard to accept the view that the Spartans themselves were unable to precisely determine the age of their sons and therefore on a certain appointed day (the first day of the year, for instance) they accepted into the *agoge* all the boys who looked roughly seven (MacDowell 1986, 160). Certainly the age of seven constituted the first of the three thresholds in the life of a young Spartiate. It is not known, however, when a boy went to live at the barracks; it may have been from the very beginning or perhaps from the age of twelve or even fourteen (Jones 1964, 34; Hodkinson 1983, 242; Lévy 1997, 155). I agree with Ducat that seven-year-olds were not taken away from their families (Ducat 2006, 125); but certainly at that age a boy came under the supervision of the state and began his formation period.

The younger boys – from the age of seven to thirteen or fourteen – were called *paides* (cf. Hodkinson 1983, 242, 249). They were divided into troops (*ilai*) (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.11); Xenophon does not use any other term, which does not allow us to clearly identify the *ilai* of the Classical period with those mentioned by later authors (Plut. *Mor.* (*Inst. Lac.* 5–12)); even less are we permitted to assume that in

the fifth and fourth century BC there existed also the *agelai* and *bouai* (cf. Kennel 1995, 120). Each *ila* consisted of boys of one age group. In each *ile*, the "keenest of the prefects" (*ton torotaton ton arsenon*) was nominated its commander (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.11). However, the editors changed the word *arsen (arren)*, which Xenophon uses twice (*Lak. Pol.* 2.5 and 2.11), into the word *eiren*, which is not confirmed by any of the manuscripts, and thereby guaranteed an illusory conformity between Xenophon's text and that of Plutarch, who says that each troop was commanded by the most warlike (*machimotaton*) and most prudent (*sophronestaton*) of the "eirens" (Plut. *Lyk.* 17.2).

Judging by Xenophon's description (*Lak. Pol.* 2.3–11), the education of the *paides* was of a general nature; its aim was to toughen them up, make them obedient and teach them to endure hardships. In contrast to their peers living in other Greek cities, Spartan boys went barefoot, wore the same garment all the year round and spent most of their time with members of their age group. "Instead of softening the boys' feet with sandals," Xenophon writes, Lycurgus "required them to harden their feet by going without shoes. He believed that if this habit were cultivated it would enable them to climb hills more easily and descend steep inclines with less danger, and that a youth who had accustomed himself to go barefoot would leap and jump and run more nimbly than a boy in sandals" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.3). Xenophon links going barefoot with preparation for the hardships to be borne during campaigns, but according to some scholars, this may be an attempt to explain rationally a custom that originally may have had a religious rather than a military significance. This is because analogies to going barefoot can be found in the religious sphere, in connection with festivals and rites of passage, whereas testimonies linking barefootedness with military training are entirely absent (cf. Kennel 1995, 123). Xenophon would have us imagine Spartans like Tolkien's hobbits; but whereas we can easily envisage teenage boys running around barefoot, we have problems picturing unshod soldiers: any time, any place, a soldier has always needed shoes; good shoes, too. I cannot readily see barefooted Spartiates climbing up and running down rocky slopes like hobbits, although this is an image accepted by many scholars (Kennel 2006, 7). Let us also note that shoes, the *lakonikai* and the *amyklaides*, were among the things for which Sparta was famous (Sekunda 2009, 253–259).

A boy would receive only one cloak (*himation*) per year. Again, we might wonder whether, as Xenophon would have it (*Lak. Pol.* 2.4), this was supposed to make the boys used to hardship or whether the single *himation* was to highlight, at least originally, the separate character of boys as a community, and their unity as a group, just as the black *chlamys* did in the case of the Athenian ephebes (cf. Kennel 1995, 123–124). Following Ducat (2006, 26), Xenophon's testimony may also be explained rationally in a different manner, as a "single cloak in the sense of a single type of cloak for the whole year". Also, the boys were not allowed to use ointments and permitted to bathe only a few times a year (Plut. *Lyk.* 16.12–13, cf. Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.5; Plut. *Inst. Lac.* 5–12). They could perhaps bathe in the Eurotas, but if so, few must have made the attempt, especially in winter. Let us note, however, that

while according to today's perceptions bathing is not a question of temperance, but of hygiene (den Boer 1954, 242), one garment per year, no bathing, the youthful hormones and physical effort – I doubt that the authorities (anywhere) would have allowed that.

The boy's received modest meals, but they were allowed to steal food – as long as they were not caught at it, because then they were severely punished (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.6–8; Arist. *Lak. Pol.* fr. 13 Dilts=Rose fr. 611, 13; Plut. *Lyk.* 17–18). The educational aspect of stealing was associated with military training (Ducat 2006, 9–10): punished are only those who let themselves be caught, those who do not "enjoy a higher esteem among fellow youths than others" (Isokr. 12.212–214). It is universally acknowledged that stealing is profitable as long as the thief does not get caught; but in this case, some king of gang morality seems to be suggested. The testimonies of Xenophon and Plutarch have led many scholars to suppose that theft was commonplace in Sparta. Allowing the possibility that the younger section of Spartan society regularly complemented their diet by stealing food goes against the common sense, as it ignores the fact that this would have inevitably resulted in a kind of anarchy. It is much more probable that those acts of stealing – to which Xenophon ascribes, as is his wont, only rational motives – were allowed solely in clearly defined circumstances associated with some religious festivals. If so, the theft of food would not be a way of adding to the modest daily ration, but a type of a ritual activity situated solely in the space of a religious festival (Kennel 1995, 122–123). Incidentally, Sparta was also famous for the "Laconian locks", which in themselves deserve a deeper analysis.

The motif of Spartan theft is crowned with the famous story of a boy who stole a young fox and carried it hidden under his garment; not wanting to have his theft detected, he "suffered the animal to tear out his bowels with its teeth and claws" until he died (Plut. *Mor.* 234a, 35). "Probably it was autumn, the time of the year when foxes were said to be tasty," writes Link (2004, 1); few believe this tale, and rightly so.

The education of the *paides* included reading and writing (Plut. *Lyk.* 16.10), but the anonymous author of the *Dissoi Logoi* (2.10) maintains that the Spartans did not consider it proper to teach their children music or literature. A tradition in which the Spartans are considered to be complete ignoramuses does exist (Plut. *Mor.* 237a (*Inst. Lac.* 4); Isokr. 12.209; cf. den Boer 1954, 241–242); but having completed the *agoge*, a Spartiate could certainly read (if perhaps not very fluently) and would have no problem deciphering military orders conveyed to him in writing (cf. Boring 1970, 63, 46–47). As soberly noted by Nicholas Richer (2018, 532), "evidently citizens commonly knew how to read"; but who taught the boys to read and write, and when – that remains a mystery. Perhaps, this issue was resolved individually and supervised by the boy's father or lover (Kennel 1995, 125–126); more probably, however, the reading and writing lessons were organised for peer groups by the state. It is true that the sources are silent on the topic of teachers of reading and writing; but neither do they mention any "instructors" teaching the boys to wield a sword or throw a javelin, or getting them acquainted with military

tactics, which does not mean that such instructors did not exist. The fact that the teachers of reading and writing are not mentioned is in keeping with the ancient authors' custom of noting only the points in which the Spartan lifestyle diverged from that of other Greeks' and speaking mostly of what was different in Sparta. It is also not impossible that teaching was not in the hands of "specialists"; it may have been entrusted to "amateur" instructors, namely, to citizens with expertise in the given field.

In his fourteenth year, a Spartan boy began a new phase in his existence. Plutarch (*Lyk.* 16.13) informs us that at that point he would leave his family home and go to live permanently in the barracks. During this second phase of their education – aged from fourteen to twenty – the boys were called *paidiskoi.* Xenophon notes:

> When a boy ceases to be a child, and begins to be a lad (*ek paidon eis to meirakiousthai*), others release him from his tutor (*paidagogoi*) and his schoolmaster (*didaskaloi*): he is then no longer under a ruler and is allowed to go his own way. Here again Lycurgus introduced a wholly different system. For he observed that at this time of life self-will makes strong root in a boy's mind, a tendency to insolence manifests itself, and a keen appetite for pleasure in different forms takes possession of him. At this stage, therefore, he imposed on him a ceaseless round of work, and contrived a constant round of occupation. (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 3.1–3)

Following Cobet and Tazelaar (1967), many scholars assume the expression *eis to meirakiousthai* to be a later interpolation, not authored by Xenophon, who was supposed to have used, here as well as in the *Hellenica*, the term *paidiskoi* to denote the boys in their second phase of education (cf. Tazelaar 1967, 127–153; Hodkinson 1983, 249–250; Cartledge 1987, 25). It is equally possible that Xenophon deliberately used the term *meirakia* to describe those who were no longer *paides* (cf. Diller 1942; MacDowell 1986, 166; Kennel 1995, 32–33; Ducat 2006, 14, 89). The word *sideunas* was to be another equivalent of this term (cf. Lévy 1997, 157–158).

The *paidiskoi* began a true military training. In the Hellenistic and Roman period they were divided into age classes described by different terms. The Roman terms are known to us from inscriptions, and the Hellenistic ones from two glosses (*Lexeis Herodotou* s.v. *eiren* [Stein, *Herodoti historiae*, 2.465]; a gloss on the margin of Strabo's *Geography* [Diller 1941, 499]). The terms referring to age classes dating from the Hellenistic period were *rhobidas, promikizomenos, mikizomenos, propais, pais, melleiren* and *eiren*; the terms from the Roman period were *mikichizomenos, pratopampais, hatropampais, melleiren* and *eiren.* Interpretations of these terms are certainly a challenge for classical philologists, but the problem does not seem to refer to Sparta in the Classical period (on age classes in older literature, cf. Marrou 1964, 42–43; in the more recent one, Ducat 2006, 71–77).

Relevant terms used in the Classical period are not known (cf. Kennel 1995, 22). King Agesilaus said in defence of Sphodrias, the harmost of Thespiae, that when a child (*pais*), boy (*paidiskos*) and young man (*hebon*), he had perfectly fulfilled all his duties (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.32). Also Xenophon in his *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* describes a division of the course of education into three main phases – first the

paides, then the *paidiskoi*, and then the *hebontes* (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.1–4.7). Plutarch says: They slept together, in troops and companies [*ilai* and *agelai*], on pallet-beds (*epi stibadon*, which they collected for themselves, breaking off with their hands – no knives allowed – the tops of the rushes which grew along the river Eurotas. In the winter-time, they added to the stuff of these pallets the so-called 'lykophron,' or thistle-down, which was thought to have warmth in it" (Plut. *Lyk.* 16.12–13). Sleeping on pallets of rushes gathered with their bare hands on the banks of the Eurotas may have served to habituate the boys to hardship, but it may also have had a symbolic meaning (cf. den Boer 1954, 242–245) and may have constituted a relic of a distant past. In addition, it probably signified the detached nature of the group: the youngsters stood outside the community of adults, who belonged to the world of culture (Kennel 1995, 120).

The attention of both the state and the adults was especially focused on the *paidiskoi*. The young man's future prospects largely depended on his progress at this stage of education. According to Xenophon, *paidiskoi* found to be neglectful of their duties were barred from high offices in their adult lives (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 3.3). Rivalry, both as individuals and in groups, was crucial from the very beginning of education. The boys and young men participated in various festivals (e.g. the Gymnopaedia) and contests. Most of the latter (e.g. the *moa*, *keloia*, *kynagetas*, *eubalkes*, *deros* and *platanistas*) are known to us only from the Roman period; it is impossible to state with any certainty whether they were a continuation or an adaptation of the old contests or entirely new inventions (cf. Kennel 1995, 49–69). The issue of the ball game (*sphairomachia*), which in the Roman period became an element of the *agoge*, is not entirely cleat either. In the fifth and fourth century BC it may have been played not only by the youngsters, since Xenophon mentions not being selected to ball-game teams among the penalties incurred by the *tresantes* (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 9.5, cf. Kennel 1995, 131).

There clearly existed an ethos of the *paidiskoi*. Xenophon informs us that "wishing modesty to be firmly rooted in them, [Lycurgus] required them to keep their hands under their cloaks (*himation*), to walk in silence, not to look about them, but to fix their eyes on the ground" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 3.3). The *paidiskoi* were obliged to be self-controlled in both gestures and words. In the presence of their elders, they were to answer questions and otherwise maintain silence unless asked to speak. From their earliest years, they were taught to express themselves tersely – "laconically" (Arist. *Lak. Pol.* fr. 611, 13 [ed. Rose]; Plut. *Lyk.* 19, 1. On the Spartan brevity, *brachylogia*, cf. Bayliss 2009, 231–260).

Plutarch describes a *sui generis* lesson in political education conducted by an *eiren* (if the custom existed in the Classical period, that would have been the *arsen* in command of the *ile*):

> The eiren, as he reclined after supper, would order one of the boys to sing a song, and to another would put a question requiring a careful and deliberate answer, as, for instance, "Who is the best man in the city?" or, "What thinkest thou of this man's conduct?" In this way the boys were accustomed to pass right judgements (*ta kala*)

and interest themselves at the very outset in the conduct of the citizens. For if one of them was asked who was a good citizen, or who an infamous one, and had no answer to make, he was judged to have a torpid spirit, and one that would not aspire to excellence. And the answer must not only have reasons and proof given for it, but also be couched in very brief and concise language, and the one who gave a faulty answer was punished with a bite in the thumb from the eiren. (Plut. *Lyk.* 18.3–6)

According to one of the hypotheses, this was a "magical" practice: the *eiren*'s bite was to impart strength and wisdom on the boy. Another interpretation suggests that since the amputation of the thumb made a man worthless as a soldier and was performed on prisoners of war, the bite on the thumb may have meant "you are not a man yet – you are not able to bear arms" (den Boer 1954, 275–281). Even if we fail to be convinced by the above explanations (or by the assumption that the thumb was a substitute for the penis or the tongue, cf. den Boer 1954, 276–288), this penalty certainly had some symbolic meaning. The extraordinary character of the entire situation must be highlighted: a boy, usually taught to be obedient to his elders, is asked to express his own opinion about men much older than him. Perhaps these lessons in political education were introduced only at the later phases of the *agoge*. But it is also impossible to rule out that this ostensibly very primitive manner of punishing the boys belonged to the deliberate methods of archaisation, especially that in the case of we observe the same element of brutalisation as in the ceremony at the temple of Artemis Orthia. Certainly this passage is an example of the challenges and occasions for mental juggling to which we are sentenced by the sources.

Much emphasis was placed on the educational role of music and song: the Spartan songs "were for the most part praises of men who had died for Sparta, calling them blessed and happy; censure of men who had played the coward, picturing their grievous and ill-starred life; and such promises and boasts of valour as befitted the different ages" (Plut. *Lyk.* 21.2). Traditional songs were sung and Homer and the Spartan poems were certainly read (cf. Jones 1964, 35).

The completion of the entire course of education was marked with the ceremony of the ritual theft of cheeses from the altar of Artemis Orthia, in which two teams of the *paidiskoi* played against each other (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.9; Plut. *Mor.* 239c (*Inst. Lac.* 40)). This ceremony signified the attainment of adulthood. The recent *paidiskoi* became young warriors (*irenes*) (Kennel 1995, 125; cf. den Boer 1954, 262–274).

In the Classical period, a Spartiate who just began to serve as a soldier was called an *ires* or an *arsen* (Kennel 1995, 120). A twenty-year-old Spartiate joined a *syssition* and served in the army, but he was not yet a fully enfranchised citizen. The *hebontes*, as all the men between twenty and thirty were called, were not allowed to hold offices; there also exists a view – an erroneous one, as it seems – that (in connection with the alleged prohibition to enter the agora, cf. Plut. *Lyk.* 25.1) they could not even participate in the meetings of the apella. The *hebontes* were still

supervised by the *paidonomos* and participated in mandatory training sessions, choruses and contests (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 4.2). They continued to sleep together.

From among the *hebontes*, the ephors selected three *hippagretai*, each of whom selected a hundred *hippeis* for himself; they constituted an elite military force. New men to replace those who had turned thirty were selected by the *hippagretai* from among the fresh *irenes*. It was an honour to be selected to this elite troop and a disgrace not to achieve a nomination from a *hippagretes*. Xenophon tells us that "those who failed to win the honour were at war both with those who sent them away and with their successful rivals; and they were on the watch for any lapse from the code of honour" on the part of their luckier colleagues. The constant sparring matches among the young men were adjudicated upon by older citizens and, as the last instance, by the ephors (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 4.5–6).

At the age of thirty, that is, *ten hebetiken helikian* – having passed the time of youth (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 4.7), a Spartiate became a fully enfranchised citizen, left the peers with whom until then he had spent most of his time, went to live at his own house and was formally permitted to hold an office.

Chapter 5 The syssitia

Choral dances and feasts and festivals and hunting and bodily exercise and social converse occupied their whole time, when they were not on a military expedition.

(Plut. *Lyk.* 24.5)

Even the Spartans at times had to relax.

(Athen. 4.139d–e)

"The training (*paideia*) of the Spartans lasted into the years of full maturity. No man was allowed to live as he pleased, but in their city, as in a military encampment, they always had a prescribed regimen and employment in public service, considering that they belonged entirely to their country and not to themselves, watching over the boys, if no other duty was laid upon them, and either teaching them some useful thing, or learning it themselves from their elders," writes Plutarch (*Lyk.* 24.1). Like bees, to which he likens them, Spartan citizens worked together for the common good, dedicating their lives to the needs of the state (Plut. *Lyk.* 25.5. Naturally, this is an element of the Spartan legend, yet it must be remembered that, by creating and sustaining that legend, Spartans themselves could yield to its sway. After his return from Asia, Agesilaus – at least according to Xenophon – was loved and revered by his countrymen for his simple lifestyle. Unlike many other commanders, he did not come back to Sparta as a changed man, spoiled by the foreign ways and unhappy with the customs of his own land, but, like the people who never crossed the Eurotas (whatever this means, given that this was an internal boundary at best, since the river Eurotas flowed through the centre of Lacedaemon), he loved and cherished the rules of old, never forsaking common messes, bathing, domestic life with his wife, and caring for his weapons and the furnishings of his house, the door to which, as Xenophon (*Ages.* 8.7) attests, was so old that it was believed to have been put in personally by Aristodemus (who actually died before the mythical ancestors of Spartans even conquered Lacedaemon). Xenophon also recounted that the sedan chair (*kannathron*) of Agesilaus's daughter was no more grand that those of other children (Plut. *Ages.* 19.5–7).

In Agesilaus's case, at least part of the tale is likely due to the king's political shrewdness; another part was Xenophon's propagandistic tendencies. Much later, Agis IV also deliberately (though perhaps in good faith) posed as a devout follower of old Spartan virtues and customs. He consciously referred to the old ways, "laid aside and avoided every extravagance (*polyteleia*), prided himself on his short Spartan cloak (*tribon*), observed sedulously the Spartan customs in his meals (*deipna*) and baths and general ways of living (*diaitas Lakonikas*), and declared that he did not want the royal power at all unless by means of it he could restore the ancient laws and discipline (*tous nomous kai ten patrion agogen*)" (Plut. *Agis* 4.2). There is no doubt that the "Spartan ways of living" (the Laconian *diaita*) differed

from that followed in other Greek poleis, as indicated by Thucydides. One of the more characteristic aspects of that lifestyle were common citizen messes.

Upon reaching adulthood, that is after the twentieth birthday (see Lavrencic 1992, 19–20), a Spartiate was obliged to dine together with other citizens on a daily basis. The only valid reasons for his absence were: offering a sacrifice to the gods or participating in a hunt, yet even then the man had to send some of the meat to his *syssition* (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.4). In reality, the list of circumstances in which absence was permitted was likely longer, and included illness, completing tasks assigned by the State at home or abroad, the funeral of a relative, etc.

The term Spartans used for the public mess was *pheideition* (IG 5.1.128.13; 150.1; 155.6) or *pheidition* (IG 5.1.1507.1, cf. van Wees 2018, 237). Athenian authors called it *phidition*, or sometimes *syssition*. Alkman also mentions the word *andreion* (Alkman 98 Page), while Xenophon uses *syskenion* (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 5.2; for more on terminology, see Bielschowsky 1869, 9–13; Lavrencic 1992, 12–16; Rundin 1996, 207 n. 47).

Plutarch explains that the common meals (*syssitia*) were called *andreia* by the Cretans and *phiditia* by the Lacedaemonians. He suggests that the latter term might derive from *philia*, due to the friendly atmosphere at the messes, or from *pheido* (thriftiness, saving), due to the simplicity of the meals, or that the original name was not *pheiditia*, but *editia*, from the term *edode*, meaning "food" (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.1). The most general of these terms was *syssition* (pl. *syssitia*), used to denote all common meals (and also mess rooms). It could also be employed to mean a military unit (Hdt. 1.65.5; Polyainos, *Strat.* 2.1.15; 2.3.11). Herodotus mentions the *syssitia* in connection with military structure, stating that Lycurgus established the *enomotiai*, the *triakades* and the *syssitia* (cf. e.g. Meier 1998, 216–217). Another passage that likely points to the military context is the term *syskenia* (*skene* means 'tent') used by Xenophon (Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.20; *Lak. Pol.* 5.2; 7.4; 15.5; 9.4; 13.1; 7).

According to Xenophon, Spartans believed the custom of dining together to have been introduced by Lycurgus, who "found the Spartans boarding at home like the other Greeks, and came to the conclusion that the custom was responsible for a great deal of misconduct. He therefore established the public messes outside in the open, thinking that this would reduce disregard of orders to a minimum" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 5.2). "With a view to attack luxury still more and remove the thirst for wealth," adds Plutarch, "he introduced his third and most exquisite political device, namely, the institution of common messes", in which there was no place for wealth. If the poor dined at the same table as the rich, it was impossible to use or enjoy money, or even show it off to others through lavish surroundings. Thus, the saying that wealth was "blind, and lying as lifeless and motionless as a picture" was only considered true in Sparta and no other city under heaven. "For the rich could not even dine beforehand at home and then go to the common mess with full stomachs, but the rest kept careful watch of him who did not eat and drink with them, and reviled him as a weakling, and one too effeminate for the common diet" (Plut. *Lyk.* 10.1–3).

The custom of communal dining is often presented as a relic of the old tribal institution of "men's houses", existing in many primitive societies (Nilsson 1912, 319; Oliva 1971, 30; Welwei 2004, 80–81; cf. Rabinowitz 2009, 117). These were indeed mentioned in several Greek poleis: Thebes (Polyainos, *Strat.* 3.3.11; Polyb. 20.5; Plato, *Nomoi* 636b), Miletus and Thourioi (Plato, *Nomoi* 636b), Oenotria (Arist. *Pol.* 1329b), as well as Carthage (Arist. *Pol.* 2.272b) and the island of Lipara (Diod. 5.9.4). The closest parallel, however, comes from Crete (Oliva 1971, 30). Aristotle (*Pol.* 127la 26–37) criticises the Spartan custom of communal dining, believing the Cretan system to be superior, as the meals there were financed with public funds and not with citizen contributions (cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1272a 13–15).

Views on the origins of the Spartan *syssitia* differ (for an overview of the debate, see Lavrencic 1992, 6–11, and Węcowski 2014, 115 ff.). Oswyn Murray believes that the practice of communal dining may be traced back to warrior feasts described in Homer's poems. In most Greek poleis, these groups of warriors evolved into the aristocracy as a result of the hoplite reform, and the feasts gradually turned into communal meals called the *symposia*. In Sparta, this institution became the basis for the hoplite army. All citizens were "equal" and thus were regarded as aristocracy to the same extent, due to their participation in the military structure based on communal feasting (Murray 1983a, 267; 1983b, 196). The proponents of this view argue that acknowledging the aristocratic origins of the *syssitia* and the fact that the prototype for such meetings may be found in Homer's works does not mean that Sparta (or any other polis) made attempts to imitate Homer's reality. As John Rundin (1996, 211) rightfully observes, the idea for communal meals may have been an element of common cultural heritage, which found its expression both in Homer's poems and in Spartan messes.

Hodkinson (1997, 91) aptly noted that scholars seeking a connection with Homeric feasts all make a fundamental error in their assumptions. The participants of Homer's feasts do not constitute "groups of warriors". If it is true that the Spartan *syssitia* were directly connected to military structure, the custom was not a continuation of Homeric practices, but an entirely new structure of military organisation. In Homer's works, feasts had a social and not military purpose, which makes them more akin to *symposia* than to *syssitia*. Furthermore, as Ewen Bowie demonstrates (Murray 1990, 225 n. 16), *symposia* did exist in archaic Sparta, and it was they that were transformed into *syssitia* for the *homoioi* in the sixth century BC. Despite certain similarities between *symposia* and *syssitia* (the division into two parts, the number of participants, eating meals in a reclining position), it should be emphasised that the *syssitia* were a unique phenomenon in the fact that they involved the entire citizen community, took place within public space, and required monthly contributions – all of which illustrates the extent of state control over this aspect of social life. In the sixth century BC, the *symposia* were, as Powell (1998, 129) put it, "Lycurgised".

In general terms, the form of the *syssitia* known in the classical period emerged in the seventh century at the earliest (after the Second Messenian War, e.g. Welwei 2004, 79), in the mid-sixth century (Hodkinson 1997; Powell 1998; Thommen 2003,

45–50; Rabinowitz 2009, 117–118) or even at the end of the fifth century BC (van Wees 2018, 236, 255).

Member contributions at the *syssitia*

The Spartan *syssitia* were not "feasts" or, as Marek Węcowski calls them, "anti-symposia" (Węcowski 2014, 117); they were messes financed by their members. As Rabinowitz puts it: "The syssition, far from being the inverse of the *symposion*, thus becomes its perfect expression – in other words, they were what symposia should be" (Rabinowitz 2009, 166). A Spartiate who was unable to participate in these obligatory gatherings would lose his citizen rights (Arist. *Pol.* 2.9.1271a 30–35). Details about the member contributions are provided by Plutarch (*Lyk.* 12.3 and Dicaearchus (cited by Athenaeus 4.141a–c). The figures specified in the two sources differ. According to Plutarch, every month a Spartiate had to supply one *medimnos* of barley flour, 8 *choes* of wine, 5 *minai* of cheese, 2.5 *minai* of figs and "a very small sum of money" for the purchase of other foods (*eis opsonian*). In Dicaearchus, every member of the *syssition* contributed 1.5 Attic *medimnos* of barley, 11 or 12 *choes* of wine, a small amount of figs and cheese, and 10 Aeginean obols for the meat.

Attempts have been made to convert the units used by Plutarch and Dicaearchus to contemporary ones. Plutarch is believed to have used Lacedaemonian measures, which Dicaearchus switched to Attic ones (Lavrencic 1992, 36–37). Many authors follow Hultsch's (1882, 534) assumption that one Lacedaemonian *medimnos* was the equivalent of 73 litres, while the Attic *medimnos* measured 53 litres. Unfortunately, all estimates need to account for a margin of error, as local differences between weights and measures were often substantial, and for the difficulties in converting ancient Greek units of volume to contemporary ones, which are especially significant in the case of grains.

How did these amounts compare to the everyday needs of a Spartiate? The daily rations for soldiers in Sphacteria (Thuk. 4.16.1) recorded in 425 BC amounted to two Attic *choinikes* of barley flour (a *choinix* was 1.08 litre), which means 60 *choinikes* per month; yet this is not the equivalent of 1.5 Attic *medimnoi* (1 Attic *medimnos* = 48 *choinikes*). This indicates that *syssitia* contributions were higher than the rations (1.5 Attic *medimnoi* = 72 *choinikes*). Cartledge (1979, 171) suggests that the excess (12 *choinikes*) was consumed by the members of the citizen's household, or were stored in public granaries (differently Figueira 1984, 95 note 25).

Dicaearchus mentions 12 *choes* (= 144 *kotyle*, 1 *chous* = 12 *kotyle*, 1 *kotyle* = 0.273 litre) of wine per month. However, according to Herodotus (Hdt. 6.57.3), the daily consumption of wine in Sparta was one *kotyle*, while Thucydides (Thuk. 4.16.1) put it at two *kotyle*. Thus, Herodotus reports 30, Thucydides 60, and Dicaearchus 144 *kotyle* per month.

Bielschowsky (1869, 27) explains this difference with a significant increase in wine consumption in later periods (a claim that finds no evidence in source material); it is also possible that Plutarch's data is exaggerated and only Herodotus and Thucydides are close to the truth (Michell 1964, 290; Foxhall-Forbes 1982, 59).

It should be noted, however, that both Herodotus and Thucydides describe unusual situations when consumption could have been smaller. According to Foxhall and Forbes (1982, 58), Spartiates drank more than two litres of wine every day. The opinions recorded in ancient literature vary; some sources claim that Spartans drank little (Critias (D-K, fr. 88 B6; 33), others – that they enjoyed a lot of alcoholic beverages, in large quantities (Phylarchos ap. Athen. 4.142b). In reality, the matter of alcohol consumption in Sparta cannot be resolved without knowing the exact "norms" ancient Greeks followed in this regard, especially since no Spartiate drank all of the wine he provided alone. Some reserves (perhaps gathered from the mentioned *syssitia* contributions) must have been kept by the State to be used during holidays, in times of war, and when entertaining visitors from abroad (on surplus supplies from the *syssitia* see Hodkinson 2000, 196). Like other Greeks, Spartans drank wine mixed with water and, although white wine was not unknown, mostly enjoyed the red (Lavrencic 1992, 77–82).

According to Plutarch, a Spartiate was also obliged to supply 2.5 *minai* of figs. This translates to a monthly ration of 1.5 kg and only several figs per day. The quantity of cheese (not milk!) served at the *syssitia* (all year round?) was similarly small: only 5 *minai*, which means 3 kg per day. The meagre quantities of cheese and figs indicate either that the data is unreliable or that these products were reserved only for the *homoioi* (Michell 1964, 294). However, it is unlikely that Spartans consumed the same rationed portions of cheese and figs every day. They were not always available and thus may have been provided in larger quantities at other times.

Taking all the hitherto mentioned products into account, Foxhall and Forbes (1982, 48 and 49) estimated the nutritional value of the daily member contributions in the Spartan *syssitia* at 4230 calories. Hodkinson puts it at minimum 6500 calories (Hodkinson 2000, 191–192). In any case, if a Spartiate consumed all of the barley, cheese and figs and drank all the wine he provided for the feast, his meal would be within contemporary FAO norms, which amount to 3882 calories per day for healthy young men leading a very active lifestyle. However, it is uncertain whether a *syssition* member ate all that he brought to the meal; moreover, he was likely to eat other foods as well, as indicated (among other things) by the fact that he paid money for additional treats (*eis opsonian*).

Plutarch refers to a small sum of money, which Dicaearchus specifies to ten Aeginean obols. This raises the question: where did the money come from, if according to Lycurgus's laws, the use of money (excepting iron currency) was allegedly forbidden in Sparta? Thus, if Dicaearchus is not mistaken, this means that money was never banned in Lacedaemon, and the so-called iron currency was rarely used (Michell 1964, 291). For a very long time, Sparta minted no coins of its own, so the passage must refer to foreign money or to converting iron obols to silver currency (Cartledge 1971, 173). According to another theory, Spartiates did not pay money at all, only provided a ten obols worth of additional food (Figueira 1984, 89). The most likely explanation, however, is that the monetary part of the contributions was a late addition.

We have essentially no information on where a Spartiate could get money from or how it was spent. If – which seems rather obvious – it was used to buy any and all products not included in the contribution, it would be beneficial to establish what these products were and who sold them. As to the latter question, we can only speculate that the sellers were either the *perioikoi* (in a more traditional image of Spartan society) or Spartiates (if we assume the community had more and less affluent members). The answer to the question of products appears to be easy. Ancient authors provide us with the information that the money was spent on *opson.* However, the term may denote vegetables, but also cheese, meat and fish, as well as practically anything that is eaten with bread (Lavrencic 1992, 44). Thus, the imprecise nature of the word prevents us from establishing what exactly *opson* meant in this particular case.

Perhaps, the most obvious commodity to be purchased with the extra money was meat, a product not mentioned among the mandatory citizen contributions (Bielschowsky 1869, 24; Michell 1964, 291). If that was the case, the funds were for pork, the necessary ingredient of "black broth", the famous blood soup. This would mean that pork was not something Spartans received from their *kleroi* (Lavrencic 1992, 44–45). According to Hans van Wees, the mentioned sum was enough to buy a boar, two sows, or several piglets (van Wees 2018 [2], 241).

Sources contain no clues on the technicalities of offering contributions. We do not know whether the helots delivered the produce of their *kleroi* directly to the *syssitia* or sent them to their master's household, where a part of it was set aside to be taken to the mess. It does not seem probable that Spartiates personally managed the transport of goods from their estates (Lavrencic 1992, 43), the task was certainly done by helots; yet its details remain unclear. Cartledge (1979, 171) surmises that a central mill existed somewhere in the vicinity of Sparta, perhaps near the town of Alesiai (the precise location of which is not known). This supposition does not seem accurate. The helots' duties to their Spartiate masters were defined on a yearly basis, yet the citizen obligations related to the *syssitia* had to be fulfilled monthly. This indicates that the monthly distribution of food among the *syssitia* was not regulated by the state – and no source implies such an arrangement. The establishment of a monthly contribution suggests that the *syssitia* (where the food was ultimately sent) had some organisational framework and infrastructure to keep the supplies, but nothing large enough to be able to store food for long periods of time.

Number of members

Each *syssition* had about fifteen members (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.3; although the scholion to Plato (*Nomoi* 633a) mentions only ten, it is regarded as erroneous (Bielschowsky 1869, 15; Lavrencic 1992, 23 n. 28). When Agis IV attempted to revive the old system by increasing the number of citizens to 4500 through accepting *perioikoi* and foreigners into the fold, the plan was to establish fifteen messes with four hundred and two hundred members (Plut. *Agis* 8.4).

These data have been interpreted in a number of ways. Bielschowsky (1869, 29–31) believed that the 4500 were to be divided into three hundred public messes, fifteen members each (see also Lazenby 1985, 182 n. 30). However, no ancient source contains a passage that would corroborate this thesis (see Michell 1964, 296). Clauss (1983, 79), as well as Jones (1964, 153) believe that Agis planned to change the form of the syssitia, transforming them from intimate dinner clubs into large mess halls. Forrest in turn, argues that the earliest *syssitia* did indeed have 300 members each (1980, 45–46). If each *syssition* had 15 members, whose seating arrangement was two per sofa and one on a stool (see e.g. van Wees 2018, 238–240), the number of participants was exactly the same as at a classic *symposion*.

Accepting new members

Whether a given candidate would be accepted to the mess was decided by a secret ballot by all current members; even a single vote against him meant he would be rejected (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.9–11, cf. Lavrencic 1992, 20–23). The voting procedure (*dokimasia*) was thus: each member of the *syssition* silently dropped a piece of bread into a bowl which a servant carried around on his head. The ones that approved of the candidate simply threw in their piece. Those voting against crushed the bread with their fingers. If even one crushed piece was found in the bowl, the prospective member was not accepted. Such a candidate was said to be rejected through *kaddichos*, from the name of the vessel into which the bread was tossed. Plutarch explains that the requirement of unanimity was due to the lawgiver's wish that the *syssitia* proceed in a friendly atmosphere.

While there existed the possibility (at least in theory) that a given candidate would be rejected by several messes, no source mentions that as a practical problem. Apparently, the number of *syssitia* was large enough to ensure that everyone found a place for himself. Moreover, it may be surmised that there was an informal hierarchy of messes and that a young Spartiate's prospects in life depended to a great extent on his participation in a given *syssition*. Before the first half of the fifth century, all mess members may have come from one and the same village; later, after the military reform, they hailed from different places (Hodkinson 1983, 251–252).

According to Hodkinson (1983, 252), there was little freedom in choosing what *syssition* to apply to. The matter was actually decided much earlier; opportunities for it were provided by the youth's visits to the *syssitia* (*paidiskoi* – Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 3.5; *paides* – Plut. *Lyk.* 12.6). As Hodkinson argues, paederastic relationships were of importance in this respect. A young man may have been introduced to the *syssition* by his older lover (*erastes*) (Hodkinson 1983, 253).

Age differences between members

The members of a *syssition* differed in age. Xenophon (*Lak. Pol.* 5.5) emphasises that while in other states feasting is mostly done in peer groups, Lycurgus of

Sparta deliberately introduced mixed-age companies, so that young men might constantly receive the guidance of their more experienced seniors (it should be noted that this essentially makes the *syssitia* no different from *symposia*). The age diversity in *syssitia*, to which Xenophon ascribes educational influence, stemmed primarily from the needs of the Lacedaemonian phalanx, composed of *syssitia* members (Hodkinson 1983, 252 n. 32).

Boys at the *syssitia*

Plutarch also puts emphasis on the educational functions of the common messes. Young boys (*hoi paides*) were taken to the *syssitia* as if they were schools of good manners; there the youth listened to discussions on politics, watched examples of noble behaviour and learned how to interact with each other, joking without vulgarity, and how not to lose control over oneself when joked about. The ability to bear a jibe with good grace was deemed a typically Lacedaemonian quality, yet if one was not able to stand the ridicule any longer, he could always ask for it to cease. Upon entering the mess hall, the eldest member would address the others, saying: "Through that door no word goes forth outside" (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.6 cf. Link 1998, 89–112).

Plutarch's passage refers generally to *paides*, yet Xenophon mentions *meirakia*, who were no longer regarded as *paides* (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 3.1 ff.). Both authors describe the presence of children and youngsters at the *syssitia* not as exceptional or extraordinary, but as an obvious element of everyday reality. Such visits certainly provided an opportunity to assess the potential of a given youth before his admittance to the *syssition* (Hodkinson 1983, 252 ff.). It should also be remembered that children had their own messes and probably also came to adults' *syssitia* after the main meal was done (Lavrencic 1992, 32).

The atmosphere at the *syssitia*

Apophthegmata Laconica informs that King Archidamus II (469–427 BC) rejected the idea of serving finer wine at the messes, stating that this would only increase its consumption, and the men's messes would become even more silly than they already were (Plut. *Mor.* 218c, cf. 240d – Cleomenes and Gorgo, who advises her father: "Then, father, there will be more wine drunk, and the drinkers will become more intemperate and depraved"). The factual atmosphere at the *syssitia* naturally remains a mystery, yet we do know, for instance, that the meals were an occasion to discuss public matters (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.6). The *syssitia* were likely a forum for shaping political views, where a Spartiate developed his attitude towards political matters and, more generally, where the Spartan public opinion was formed (see Hodkinson 1983, 253). Although the communal meals fostered solidarity (Rundin 1996, 179–215), their primary function was defining and enhancing the political life of citizens (Fornis, Casillas 1997, 37–46).

Social hierarchy within *syssitia*

Members of a *syssition* were not equal in status (Cartledge 1987, 131, and esp. Węcowski 2014, 111)). Each mess had its own hierarchy, reflected in the seat taken by each of the diners (Persaeus ap. Athen. IV 140f. see Hodkinson 2000, 356; van Wees 2018, 243–244). Rich men who contributed additional food occupied better seats, as did the ones who brought the game they hunted, distinguished themselves in battle, or had seniority (Athen. 4.140e, 141d) (cf. Lavrencic 1992, 90–93). The names of the contributors were announced by the cooks (*mageiroi*), as the dishes were brought to the table (Athen. 4.14ld).

Relations between *syssitia* members

Specific bonds developed between members of the same *syssition*. Plutarch claims that Agesilaus befriended Agesipolis precisely because they belonged to one *phidition* (Plut. *Ages.* 20.8). The most famous *erastes/eromenos* couple, that is Agesilaus and Lysander, also probably dined in the same mess. According to Sallares (1991, 166), this was to an extent a typical situation: the poor boy Lysander became the lover of Agesilaus, a man from a rich and influential family. The problem is that, in reality, Agesilaus was not a scion of any rich or influential house. It was he who owed his later career to Lysander, not the other way around. In the 430s/420s, when the two became close, neither of them was likely to make a spectacular career.

The hierarchy of *syssitia*

There also was a hierarchy to the common messes, with some of them more important than the others (Cartledge 1987, 131). The ephors for a given year dined together for the duration of the term (Plut. *Kleom.* 8.1), along with ten lesser officials. Their *syssition* was located near the Temple of Phobos, Fear (Plut. *Kleom.* 9.4); it was a convenient place for discussing current political matters (Bielschowsky 1869, 16; Michell 1964, 285). Both of the two kings belonged to the same mess (*phidition* – Plut. *Ages.* 20.8, *syskenousi* – Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.20), where they were given double the normal portions of food. If a king was absent, his share was sent to his household (though in this case it was not doubled) (Hdt. 6.57.3; Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 15.4, Plut. *Lyk.* 12; cf. Lavrencic 1992, 27). Kings could not decide whether or not they wanted to participate in the *syssitia*; like all other citizens, they were obliged to do so. This is made evident by the story of King Agis II, who wanted to dine at home with his wife after returning from a military campaign against Athens. He sent servants to the mess to get his food, yet the polemarchs disallowed it. When the king, in his anger, did not offer the customary sacrifice on the following day, he was fined (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.5).

Foreigners at the *syssitia*

Foreigners were sometimes allowed into the *syssitia* as guests (more in Lavrencic 1992, 33–35). One such visiting participant was probably Alcibiades, who behaved as a true Spartiate would, earning the respect of the local community (Plut. *Alk.* 23). Michell considers it possible that during his stay in Lacedaemon, Alcibiades became a permanent member of a *syssition* (1964, 286). If this is true (which is unlikely), his case was an exception. Spartiates tried to keep the *syssitia* for themselves, entertaining foreign guests at separate feasts.

Sources are regrettably vague on where the *syssitia* were held. Xenophon mentions "tents" (*skenai,* sing. *skene,* Dor. *skana*), but does not specify how they looked like (cf. Lavrencic 1992, 103–108). Assuming the number of citizens to be nine thousand, Bielschowsky believed there may have been 600 *skenai,* which would require much space. In Bielschowsky's view, this space was found in the vicinity of "Via Hyakinthia", connecting Sparta to Amyclae (see also Cartledge 1979, 190; Hodkinson 1997 [2] 91; Rabinowitz 2009, 141). Describing Carnea celebrations, Demetrius of Scepsis talks of nine places called *skiades* due to their similarity to tents (Athen. 4.14l f). This passage adds little to our pool of knowledge about the spaces in which the common meals were taken. It is uncertain whether they took place in tents, or in some more solid structures (Michell 1964, 287). Welwei opines that "Offenbar handelte es sich um einfache, aber stabile Hutten, die vielleicht entlang den Straße von Sparta nach Amyklai standen" (Welwei 2004, 84). I am not inclined to believe that each *syssition* had its own building (so in e.g. Clauss 1983, 152); Wees suggests that "the messes were housed in a public building or buildings" along the so-called Hyakinthian Way (van Wees 2018, 244). According to Sebastian Rajewicz, in the Classical period, "the existence of large complexes of stoas standing by the road seems unlikely in a state that had no defensive fortifications or other massive structures" (Rajewicz 2020).

Meal times

Syssitia took place daily, with the exception of holidays involving sacrifices to the gods (Hesychius s.v. *apheiditos*). Xenophon (*Lak. Pol.* 5.7) and Plutarch (*Lyk.* 12) indicate that the communal feasts were organised in the evening. Little is known about other meals (Lavrencic 1992, 101–102). Most likely, a Spartiate had some modest breakfast at home in the morning, probably consisting of bread dipped in wine (*akratisma*). The midday meal (*ariston*) may have been eaten in the mess (Michell 1964, 284). "Lycurgus had also observed the effects of the same rations on the hard worker and the idler; that the former has a fresh colour, firm flesh and plenty of vigour, while the latter looks puffy, ugly and weak. He saw the importance of this; and reflecting that even a man who works hard of his own will because it is his duty to do so, looks in pretty good condition, he required the senior for the time being in every gymnasium to take care that the tasks set should be not too small for the rations allowed" (Xen. *Lak. Pol* 5.8). If the term *gymnasion* – which

is Schenkl's emendation of the passage – refers to the *syssitia* (cf. MacDowell 1986, 69), it might indicate that Spartiates consumed two meals in their *syssition*. However, the only certain information is that they had their main evening meal (*deipnon*) there: "And the system of feeding in the open has other good results. They must needs walk home after the meal, and, of course, must take good care not to stumble under the influence of drink (for they know that they will not stay on at the table); and they must do in the dark what they do in the day. Indeed, those who are still in the army are not even allowed a torch to guide them" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 5.7). A Spartiate returning home at night could not carry a light (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 5.7; Plut. *Lyk.* 12.14), which was intended to sharpen his senses in the event of a sudden attack (MacDowell 1986, 68–69). It appears that Spartans returned from the *syssitia* after sundown. However, this does not necessarily mean that their "feasts" dragged on late into the night. If the diners exercised before going to the mess, it must still have been light outside.

What was eaten and in what quantities?

Ancient authors emphasised that Spartans showed much restraint when eating and drinking (Hdt. 9.82; Plut. *Mor.* 230e). Xenophon writes:

> As to the food, he required the prefect to bring with him such a moderate amount of it that the boys would never suffer from repletion, and would know what it was to go with their hunger unsatisfied; for he believed that those who underwent this training would be better able to continue working on an empty stomach, if necessary, and would be capable of carrying on longer without extra food, if the word of command were given to do so: they would want fewer delicacies and would accommodate themselves more readily to anything put before them, and at the same time would enjoy better health. He also thought that a diet which made their bodies slim would do more to increase their height than one that consisted of flesh-forming food. (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.5–6)

Table 2. The intakes of barley (after: Foxhall-Forbes 1982, 86–89)

barley (*alphita*) intake	ancient unit	litres	kilograms	weight per person per year (kg)	weight per day	cal-ories per day	% of require-ment for a very active person	% of require-ment for an ex-tremely active person

average Greek norm	1 Attic *choinix* per day	1.087	0.839	306	0.839	2803	84	73
rations for Spartans in Sphacteria	2 Attic *choinikes* per day	2.174	1.4	510	1.4	4641	139	121
rations for Spartan slaves in Sphacteria	1 Attic *choinix* per day	1.087	0.698	255	0.698	2320	70	61
contribution to *syssitia* (Plut. *Lyk.* 12.2)	1 *medimnos* per month	48	30.9	376	1.03	3416	102	89

The compilation presented in Table 2, which refers only to barley (*alphita*), indicates that a Spartiate ate more than the average Greek. On the one hand, we may suspect that some of the food allotted to the *syssitia* was in fact intended for the service personnel (Figueira 1984, 91, 104). On the other, apparently the famous Spartan restraint in food pertained not so much to the quantity, but rather the simplicity of the food. Exotic or sophisticated dishes were not found on Spartan tables (Hdt. 9.82; Athen. 4.138d; Plut. *Lyk.* 12.13). The main part of the meal was called the *aiklon*. The staples of the Spartan diet included barley bread (*maza*) and various pastries made with barley flour (Lavrencic 1992, 63–66). The "national dish" was the famous "black broth" (*ho melas zomos*), blood soup (*haimatia*), also referred to as *bapha* (Pollux 6.57; Hesychius s.v. *bapha* and *baphe*). Its main ingredients were blood and boiled pork (Poll. 6.57; Plut. *Lyk.* 12; Athen. 4.141b) (Kokoszko 2020, 9–28).

The "black broth" was so well-liked that elderly men allegedly did not even ask for meat, but left it for the youngsters, contenting themselves with the soup (Plut. *Lyc.* 12.6). Spartans were aware that their culinary preferences differed from that of other Greeks. During the reign of Cleomenes III, when the polis returned to the customs and meals of old, foreign guests were not forced to partake in the food. When one of Cleomenes's friends served to foreigners only Spartan broth and barley bread (*zomon melana kai mazan*), which was the customary content of everyday meals (*en tois phiditiois*), the king admonished him for being overly zealous.

The "Spartan taste" was also deemed peculiar throughout Greece. There was even an anecdote about a king of Pontus who bought a cook from Sparta and ordered him to prepare the famous Lacedaemonian broth, only to discover it was not

at all to his liking. The cook saved himself from the king's wrath with a witty re-
mark, stating that to be able to enjoy that broth one must first bathe in the Eurotas
(Plut. *Lyk.* 12.13. In another version of this anecdote, the broth is served not to the
king of Pontus, but to the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius (Plut. *Mor.* 236 f (*Inst. Lac.* 2).
In any case, both variants emphasise the strange taste of the soup.

The *syssitia* also featured other dishes, served in the second part of the meal
(called *epaiklon*, which followed the *aiklon.* Although no source mentions the
helots delivering olives and/or olive oil, and the absence of this staple of the "Med-
iterranean dietary triad" seems conspicuous (Cartledge 1979, 173), there can be
no doubt that olives did make an appearance at the common messes (Dicaearchus
ap. Athen. 4.141b), and olive oil was consumed during the *epaiklon* (Persaeus ap.
Athen. 4.140f). Despite popular opinions, olives were not cultivated in all of Greece
and could have been regarded as something of a delicacy in Lacedaemon. Members
of the *syssitia* also enjoyed dried and fresh figs, as well as cheese made of sheep
and goat milk. "But many extras are supplied from the spoils of the chase; and for
these rich men sometimes substitute wheaten bread (*arton*; manuscripts contain
the word *argon*, jobless, yet most publishers accept this emendation, cf. Proieti
1987, 53 n. 15). Consequently the board is never bare until the company breaks up,
and never extravagantly furnished" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 5.3).

Another thing which was abolished was "compulsory drinking, which is the un-
doing alike of body of mind. But he allowed everyone to drink when he was thirsty,
believing that drink is then most harmless and most welcome" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 5.4).
Indirect confirmation for this may be found in the custom of getting helots drunk
to demonstrate to youngsters the detrimental effects of intoxication (Plut. *Lyk.* 28).
The example of Cleomenes, believed to have gone mad because he adopted the
Scythian practice of drinking unmixed wine, was probably used as a cautionary
tale for the young. Herodotus informs us that "Ever since, as they themselves say,
whenever they desire a strong drink they call for 'a Scythian cup'" (Hdt. 6.84.3).
This passage alone indicates that there were situations in which the Spartiates did
engage in vigorous drinking.

Service

Service at the common messes was done by helots, who worked as cooks and
waiters (see Lavrencic 1992, 94–100). We do know, however, that the profession
of a cook (*mageiros*) was hereditary in some Spartan families (Hdt. 6.60), which
may indicate its social significance. Another known function was that of a meat
carver (*kreodaites*) (Plut. *Ages.* 8.1; *Lys.* 23), who – as Nilsson (1912, 317) believes –
presided over the *syssition* (so Rundin 1996, 208; differently Hodkinson 1983, 253
n. 39). According to Rundin, the *kreodaites* and the *mageiros* could have been the
same person. In any case, neither of them dealt with cooking meals. Special cooks
(*zomopoioi*) were assigned to making the "black broth" (Plut. *Lyk.* 10); others
(*opsopoioi*) prepared the meat (Athen. 12.550d). Sources also mention other staff,

such as the *keraon*, who mixed the wine, and the *oinochoos*, who served it (Athen. 11.463e).

Table manners

No information has survived on the topic of Spartan table manners. However, Dicaearchus (Athen. 4.141b) mentions a certain order of dishes. Each Spartiate was given a piece of pork and as much bread (*maza*) as he wanted, served on special plates *(mazonomia* – Pollux 6.87). Then it was time for the soup (*zomos*) in which the meat had been boiled. Each of the diners had his own wine vessel, filled on his request (Athen. 4.14lb). In contrast to the customs followed at Greek *symposia*, the Spartans drank during the meal, not after it. They ate with their fingers, wiping them afterwards on pieces of bread; since these Spartan "napkins" were then thrown to their dogs, they were known as *kynades.*

Military functions of the *syssitia*

As mentioned above, the *syssitia* were more than simply places to dine. They constituted an important element of the "Spartan order", serving a number of functions, and were an integral part of the "military camp" to which Plato (*Nomoi* 666e) and Isocrates (*Archidamos* 81) compared Lacedaemon. The very emergence of communal messes may be linked to the organisation of the army. Xenophon refers to the *syssitia* as *syskenia*, while Herodotus states that in matters of war, Lycurgus established *enomotiai*, *triekades*, and *syssitia* (Hdt. 1.65.5). Polyaenus (*Strat.* 2.3.11) says that the Spartan army was divided into *morai*, *lochoi*, *enomotiai* and *syssitia*. According to Oswyn Murray (1983a, 267; 1983b, 196), Herodotus's account of the structure of the Spartan army clearly indicates that its origins lay in the aristocratic world of *symposia* and groups of *hetairoi*. Since neither Thucydides nor Xenophon connect the *syssitia* with the army, it is possible that the messes gradually lost their original function (Michell 1964, 238), but Plutarch may suggest this was not the case: when Lycurgus was asked why he introduced such an order and divided citizens into *syssitia* and had them dine together lightly armed, he apparently answered that it was to make sure they could receive orders more swiftly (Plut. *Mor.* 226e, cf. Dion. Hal. 2.23).

This being said, academics are still divided on the issue of the messes' military nature. Lazenby (1985, 17, 13) is convinced that the *syssitia* were not a part of army structure, even though (as everything in Sparta) they were military in character (1985, 55). Many other scholars, however, regard the *syssitia* as the "smallest army unit", at least in Herodotus's time (Michell 1964, 235, 238; Lavrencic 1992, 112 and n. 15). It is possible that members of the same *syssition* made up a single *enomotia* (Hodkinson 1983, 258). Since Thucydides's time, when the composition of *enomotiai* was increase to 32 soldiers, the unit was made up from two *syssitia* (Toynbee 1969; Michell 1964, 237 ff.). However, the mathematical relation between *enomotiai* and *syssitia* does not match: two *syssitia* with fifteen members each are

not enough to fill an *enomotia* comprising forty soldiers, especially since some members of the messes would have been over sixty years of age, and thus no longer eligible to serve in the army. There is also the additional problem of the relations between Spartiates and non-Spartiates within the *enomotiai* (Hodkinson, 1983, 258 n. 57). Lastly, the thesis raises the question of how the (formal?) hierarchy within a *syssition* translated to military hierarchy within an *enomotia*. It might be surmised that these were not identical, even in Sparta.

The connection between the messes and the army is certainly one of the most enigmatic issues in the already mysterious history of Sparta. The Lacedaemonian penchant for simple solutions may suggest that the *syssitia* were not a separate institution, but did, in fact, constitute the basis for Spartan military organisation. There is no reason not to believe the statement (ascribed to Lycurgus) that the syssitia were meant to facilitate the smooth issuing of orders. A *syssition* was not only the basic "unit" of social and political life in Sparta; even if it was not, in itself, the basis for military mobilisation, it would be surprising if Spartiates did not use their messes for such a purpose.

Did Sparta have its own *symposia*?

As noted by Adam Rabinowitz, "The *syssition* and the *symposion* have been treated as mutually exclusive models since antiquity. The *syssition* is public, moderate, harmonious, de-emphasises drinking and builds civic values; the *symposion* is private, excessive, fractious, celebrates wine and gives rise to elitist, anti-polis conspiracies" (Rabinowitz 2009, 113, cf. inspiring observations by Węcowski 2014, 110–117). The traditional image of Sparta, where the youth is subjected to the rigorous regime of the *agoge,* and adults divide their time between gymnastics, "defensive" sports and *syssitia*, obviously has not place for *symposia*. The sources' silence on that topic might lead to the conclusion that *symposia* were indeed absent from Lacedaemon's social life, if it were not for our awareness that the views presented by ancient authors are to some extent stereotypical. Incidentally, one text mentions that kings were allotted double portions of food when invited to dine with private individuals. With the loosening of rules that took place in fourth century BC, Sparta became more similar to other Greek poleis, also with regard to how citizens spent their free time. Iconographic material confirms that feasts resembling *symposia* took place even in earlier periods. Sixth-century Lacedaemonian vases feature depictions of banquets which cannot be *syssitia* due to the number of participants and the presence of women (incidentally, *syssitia* are not portrayed anywhere in the iconographic material!). Although Maria Pipili claims that women did participate in the common messes, only later authors made no mention of them (Pipili 1987, 72 n. 694), this sounds like heresy in the light of everything we know about the *syssitia*. Unless we assume that vase decorations have nothing to do with the actual Spartan reality (which is possible), these scenes ought to be regarded as depictions of Spartan *symposia*, apparently not much different from those organised in other Greek poleis.

Chapter 6 The universe of war

> Nobly comes death to him who in the van
> Fighting for fatherland has made his stand
> (Tyrtaeus 11 (8), trans. J. O. Burtt)

While to us the Spartans might seem warlike, in Greece their reputation was quite different, as shown by a comment delivered by the Corinthians at the Spartan apella in 432 BC: "You, Lacedaemonians, of all the Hellenes are alone inactive, and defend yourselves not by doing anything but by looking as if you would do something; you alone wait till the power of an enemy is becoming twice its original size, instead of crushing it in its infancy. And yet the world used to say that you were to be depended upon; but in your case, we fear, it said more than the truth" (Thuk. 1.69.4–5). This opinion seems to be to some extent shared by King Archidamus, who highlighted the fact that moderation had always served Sparta's interests well.

> And the slowness and procrastination, the parts of our character that are most assailed by their criticism, need not make you blush. If we undertake the war without preparation, we should by hastening its commencement only delay its conclusion: further, a free and a famous city has through all time been ours. The quality which they condemn is really nothing but a wise moderation; thanks to its possession, we alone do not become insolent in success and give way less than others in misfortune; we are not carried away by the pleasure of hearing ourselves cheered on to risks which our judgment condemns; nor, if annoyed, are we any the more convinced by attempts to exasperate us by accusation. We are both warlike and wise, and it is our sense of order that makes us so. We are warlike, because self-control contains honor as a chief constituent, and honor bravery. (Thuk. 1.84)

Let us note, in passing, that military topics are not represented on Laconian vases in any particular manner (Powell 1998, 128). However, most probably both the Spartans' attitude to war and the role of war in their lives changed in the course of the fifth and fourth century BC. After the year 431 BC, Sparta's military involvement begins to increase. Throughout the fourth century Sparta is constantly conducting military operations, sometimes in very distant areas. And in this, Sparta changes.

Although Sparta went down in history as a great military power, surprisingly little is known about its army (e.g. Makólski-Świercz 2018; main authorities: Sekunda; Lazenby). The organisational structure of the Spartan army belongs to the most thorny issues (Hodkinson 1983, 255–258). Both Herodotus and Thucydides mention the military units: the *lochoi* (Hdt. 9.53.2; 57.1–2; Thuk. 5.68.3), *enomotiai* (Hdt. 1.65.5; Thuk. 5.68.3), and Thucydides – also the *pentekostyes* (Thuk.

5.68.3). As commanders, Herodotus mentions the *polemarchos* (7.173.2), and
Thucydides – the *polemarchos*, *lochagos*, *pentekonter* and *enomotarchos* (5.67.3).
From Thucydides it transpires that the lowest-ranking unity, the *enomotia*, was
commanded by an *enomotarchos*, and the *pentekostys* by a *pentekonter*. The ques-
tion of what unit would be commanded by a *lochagos* or a *polemarchos* remains
open. At the first glance, it might seem obvious that a *lochagos* stood at the head
of a *lochos*; if, however, a *lochos* was the largest unit, as Herodotus and Thucyd-
ides seem to suggest, the *polemarchos* would be left without a unit to command
(cf. Lazenby 1985, 42). The missing unit is found only in Xenophon; it is the *mora*,
mentioned in connection with the events of the year 403 BC. The fact that the
morai are not mentioned by Herodotus or Thucydides may, of course, indicate that
they emerged later (between 418 and 403 BC). The likelihood of some changes
occurring in the structure of the Spartan army is also indicated by the fact that the
later authors do not seem familiar with the *triekades* and *syssitia*, which are men-
tioned by Herodotus (1.65.5). Lazenby (1985, 42–43) rejects this option, assuming
that Thucydides confuses the *lochoi* and the *morai*. In his view, the Spartan army,
which Thucydides described in connection with the Battle of Mantinea, had an
identical structure as in Xenophon's lifetime. Apart from the helots (*brasideioi*), the
neodamodeis and the Sciritae, in 418 BC it allegedly consisted of 6 *morai* of 1024
men each, that is, 6144 men in total (and not 3072 = 6 × 512 men). A reform was
carried out at some point in the middle of the fifth century; when precisely would
be difficult to establish. While in the year 479 BC the Spartan units consisted solely
of Spartiates, in 425 BC, at the Battle of Sphacteria, there were also non-citizens in
them. In the earlier period, the army was organised in keeping with the division
into five *obai*, each of which would bring in one unit, although Lazenby (1985)
considers it improbable that in 479 BC citizens belonged to five *phylai* based on
five *obai*, while the army consisted of five *lochoi*. The division of those units into
smaller ones is unclear.

At Plataeae, 5,000 citizen hoplites were divided into five *lochoi*. According to
the general belief (Wade-Gery 1958, 37–85; Michell 1964, 235 ff.; Jones 1964, 31–32;
Cartledge 2007, 256; differently Lazenby 1985, 50 ff.), the Spartan army consisted of
five *lochoi* organised by five *phylai* identical with five *obai* (Pitana, Mesoa, Limnai,
Konooura and Amyclae).

A fundamental problem is connected with Amompharetus, "the leader of the
Pitanate battalion" (*lochegeon tou Pitaneteo lochou* – Hdt. 9.53.2). On the one hand,
Thucydides (1.20.3) categorically denies the existence of such a *lochos*. Still, He-
rodotus mentions Amompharetus as one of "(*e*)*irenes*" when speaking of the three
graves in which the Spartiates, eirens and helots were buried separately (Hdt.
9.85.1–2). Regardless of whether the term *eiren* applied to a young man of twenty or
a little older, nothing indicates that the eirens had their own units within the army;
and even if they did, it is hardly probable that an eiren would have commanded
such a unit. Thus, either Amompharetus was not an eiren or he did not command
the eirens – or Herodotus speaks of two different men bearing the same name.

The remark that the Spartiates, eirens and helots were buried in separate graves, in the absence of any mention of the *perioikoi*, would certainly be surprising – except that in reality it was not Herodotus but the scholars that invented the eirens' grave by "correcting" his text. The version given in manuscripts is *ireas/irees* (priests) (Hdt. 9.85.1–2). Since it was considered improbable for Spartan priests to be buried separately, the word was emended to *irenas/irenes*; which, however, requires a further assumption that this was the Ionian form of the word *eirenas/ eirenes*. The correctness of the emendation is suggested by the fact that the *Lexeis Herodotou* contains the word *eiren*, which does not appear anywhere in Herodotus; so perhaps originally it was indeed located in the discussed passage. The problem is, however, that the *Lexeis* contains some words that Herodotus had never used, so there is no guarantee that Herodotus did use the word (*e*)*iren* (den Boer 1954, 288 ff.). In addition, a different emendation can also be proposed, for instance *hippeas* instead of *ireas* or *erees*, from *heros* (cf. den Boer 1954, 288–298). In essence, the exchange of *irees* to *irenes* creates rather than solves problems. Also, apart from the accord of the majority of scholars, there is little validation for rejecting the version found in manuscripts (Kennel 1995, 14–16). In other words, apart from the "corrected" text by Herodotus, there are no other fifth-century sources on the subject of the eirens in the army.

A Spartiate served in the army for forty years from the moment of reaching adulthood (*tettarakonta aph'hebes* – Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.13; Plut. *Ages.* 24.3), that is until his sixtieth year. Throughout that time he had to take part in physical training (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 5.8; 12.5). Military service was mandatory for all citizens from the age of twenty to fifty-nine, but in practice only the age classes from twenty to forty-nine would be mobilised. The *enomotiai* included one soldier from each age class.

In the second half of the fifth century, the Spartan units no longer consisted of only fully enfranchised citizens. Among the 292 prisoners of war taken at Sphacteria in 425 BC there were some 120 Spartiates (Thuk. 4.38.5). In fact, the number of Spartiates in the army was constantly falling: the Spartiates constituted 41% prisoners of war taken at Sphacteria in 425 BC, but after the Battle of Leuctra, in which four *morai* (4480 soldiers in total) took part, only 400 men plus a separate unit of 300 *hippeis*, that is only 9%, were Spartiate.

Who were the others? They may, of course, have been *perioikoi*, although as far as we known the latter, unlike the Spartiates, were not professional hoplites. It is also possible that the Spartan units, at least in the late fifth century, included not only fully enfranchised Spartiates, but also men who for one reason or another lost the full citizen rights. This would explain why Thucydides does not give an exact number of Spartiates among the prisoners of war from Sphacteria, while if there were Spartiates and the *perioikoi* among them, this should not be difficult (Lazenby 1985, 45). From the middle of the fifth century onwards, soldiers of a *lochos* did not come from one village. Xenophon tells us that in 390 BC soldiers from Amyclae served in various units (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.11). In the new army, each *enomotia* still consisted of one soldier from each age class, but it was customary to mobilise men aged from 20 to 54 years.

The king was a commander-in-chief. During a campaign, he was accompanied by members of his *syssition* – the "public (tent)" (*hoi peri* [*tan*] *demosian* [*skanan*]) (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.8; 6.4.14; *Lak. Pol.* 13.7) who were, in a sense, his staff (differently Cartledge 1987, 212–213). Under the king's command were five polemarchswho in the fourth century BC commanded the *morai*. The *lochoi* were units within the *morai*, each commanded by a *lochag*, and these, in turn, were divided into *pentekostys*, each commanded by a *pentekonter*. The lowest unit were enomotiai each with an *enomotarchos* (Thuk. 5.66.3–4; Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 9.4). The Spartan army was divided into 6 *morai*, 12 *lochoi* (1 *mora* = 2 *lochoi*), 48 *pentekostyes* (1 *lochos* = 4 *pentekostyes*) and most probably 192 *enomotiai* (Lazenby 1985, 69). If we accept Lazenby's assumptions, in Xenophon's lifetime the Spartan army in full force would have numbered 7980 men (6 *morai* 1280 men each plus 300 *hippeis*). An *enomotia* numbered 40 men, a *pentekostys* – 160 men, a *lochos* – 640 men, and a *mora* 1280 men. This would chime in with the information that 9,000 *kleroi* were in existence, as well as with the words of Demaratus, who speaks of there being 8,000 men in Sparta (Lazenby 1985, 75). Only in Xenophon's lifetime the Spartan army no longer consisted only of fully enfranchised citizens.

The manner of selecting commanders is not known. They were most likely gradually promoted. The enomotarchs, lowest officers, were selected from among those who had completed the *crypteia* and later served in the *hippeis* unit (Cartledge 1987, 204). An *enomotia* had six functionary soldiers, each of which commanded one row (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 11.4–5). Thus, the Spartan army had both a rigid hierarchy and a division of roles, which made it extremely effective in action. Because during peacetime, members of one *enomotia* most probably spent their time together, eating meals in one mess room and exercising together, its members were extremely familiar with each other and had a perfect mutual understanding (at least in military matters). At the same time in both periods of existence it showed many features typical of hoplite armies. The fundamental difference lay in the fact that here, the army consisted of men who were professional soldiers.

The Spartiates were considered to be masters at waging war (*technitai ton polemikon*) (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.5; Plut. *Pelop.* 23.3). A story related by Plutarch conveys the essence of the issue. When his allies complained that it was they who constituted the majority of the Lacedaemonian army, Agesilaus, wishing to prove them wrong, made the allies' soldiers and the Lacedaemonians sit apart, in two groups. "Then his herald called upon the potters to stand up first, and after them the smiths, next, the carpenters in their turn, and the builders, and so on through all the handicrafts. In response, almost all the allies rose up, but not a man of the Lacedaemonians; for they were forbidden to learn or practise a manual art. Then Agesilaus said with a laugh: 'You see, O men, how many more soldiers than you we are sending out'" (Plut. *Ages.* 26). On the other hand, with the decrease in the number of citizens decreased also the percentage of Spartiattes – not only in the *morai*, *lochoi* and *enomotiai*, but generally in the armies sent out on behalf of the Symmachia.

If a *syssition* constituted the basis for the structure of the Spartan army, the mobilization of troops must have proceeded with extreme efficiency: "The Ephors issue a proclamation stating the age-limit fixed for the levy, first for the cavalry and infantry, and then for the handicraftsmen. Thus the Lacedaemonians are well supplied in the field with all things that are found useful in civil life. All the implements that an army may require in common are ordered to be assembled, some in carts, some on baggage animals; thus anything missing is not at all likely to be overlooked" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 11.2). The mobilization was conducted by the ephors, who formally declared war and made Sparta combat ready. To them, writes Xenophon, belonged also further technical procedures, such as stating the age groups to the mobilised and the number of *morai* to be sent out.

All other issues connected with the arming the soldiers, whose weapons and armour were most probably provided by the state, were strictly regulated. Each soldier had an identical shield (which by 425 BC at the latest was clad in bronze) and marked with the letter Λ, beside which the bearer was allowed to put his personal emblem (Hodkinson 1983, 256). A "red cloak" was mandatory for each soldier (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 11.3, cf. Thommen 2013, 333–340).

The Spartan army was a hoplite army. The troops and their armaments were similar in each unit. There was one elite unit, which consisted of three hundred *hippeis* – riders by name, but in reality, hoplites as well (cf. Richer 1998, 470–472; Figueira 2006, 57). Contrary to what might be expected, the rules of their recruitment are not clear to us; neither do we know for how long a man would serve in this unit. The *hippeis* were most probably selected from the ten youngest age groups, that is from men aged 20 to 29, keeping the unit constantly at three hundred by admitting a new *hippeus* when an existing member of the unit died, was disabled or turned thirty (Cartledge 1987, 204). Contrary to Cozzoli (1979, 88), however, it does not seem that a *hippeus* served until his sixtieth year. The unit was commanded by three *hippagretai*, selected by the ephors from among Spartiates above the age of thirty (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 4.3). It were the *hippagretai* that selected men to join the *hippeis*, most probably preferring men originating from the Spartan elite and, according to Cartledge (1987, 205), those with whom the current *hippeis* were connected by paederastic relations dating from the last years of the candidates' *agoge*. A troop of the *hippeis* may have taken part in the *crypteia* (cf. Jeanmaire 1939, 550 ff.). The view that at Thermopylae Leonidas commanded the *hippeis* (Hooker 1981, 164) is erroneous. True cavalry units were established relatively late. The existence of Spartan cavalry is confirmed by the sources for the first time in 424 BC, when mobile units were created to repel the Athenian attacks on the shores of the Peloponnese (Thuk. 4.55.2). Xenophon's unenthusiastic opinion of Spartan cavalry (Hell. 6.4.11) indicates that candidates to this unit were probably not recruited from the elite (although the latter most likely provided the horses), but perhaps from among the Spartans who had fallen on hard times (*hypomeiones* – Lazenby 1985, 47–48).

The Spartan army developed strict procedures not only with respect to mobilisation, but also to tactics and logistics. Xenophon writes: "When the King leads,

provided that no enemy appears, no one precedes him except the Sciritae and the mounted vedettes. But if ever they think there will be fighting, he takes the lead of the first regiment and wheels to the right, until he is between two regiments (*morai*) and two colonels (polemarchs)" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.6). This remainds us that the Spartan army consisted not only of Spartiates, but also of troops manned by the *perioikoi* or by members of the Symmachia: a separate unit of foot soldiers (and not riders; cf. Lazenby 1985, 176 n. 16), consisted of the Sciritae (Skiritai), the *perioikoi* who lived in the mountainous region of Sciritis, and in the battle formation it always occupied a position on the left wing. Also the military camp was always made in the same way:

> I will now explain the method of encampment approved by Lycurgus. Seeing that the angles of a square are useless, he introduced the circular form of camp, except where there was a secure hill or wall, or a river afforded protection in the rear. He caused sentries to be posted by day facing inwards along the place where the arms were kept, for the object of these is to keep an eye not on the enemy but on their friends. The enemy is watched by cavalry from positions that command the widest outlook. To meet the case of a hostile approach at night, he assigned the duty of acting as sentries outside the lines to the Sciritae. In these days the duty is shared by foreigners, if any happen to be present in the camp. (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 12.1–3)

Military training was not neglected when the troops were encamped.

> Moreover the law requires all Lacedaemonians to practise gymnastics regularly throughout the campaign; and the result is that they take more pride in themselves and have a more dignified appearance than other men. Neither walk nor race-course may exceed in length the space covered by the regiment, so that no one may get far away from his own arms. After the exercises the senior colonel gives the order by herald to sit down – this is their method of inspection – and next to take breakfast and to relieve the outposts quickly. After this there are amusements and recreations until the evening exercises. These being finished, the herald gives the order to take the evening meal, and, as soon as they have sung to the praise of the gods to whom they have sacrificed with good omens, to rest by the arms. (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 12.5–7)

Conduct before battle was regulated by custom as well: "When a goat is sacrificed, the enemy being near enough to see, custom ordains that all the flute-players present are to play and every Lacedaemonian is to wear a wreath. An order is also given to polish arms" (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 13.8). There are no clear indications where the officers would have stood in the battle formation, but it seems that they occupied a position to the right of the unit under their command (Lazenby 1985, 178 n. 38). The king stood in the centre; this was, at least, the case during the Battle of Mantinea in 418 BC (Thuk. 5.72.4).

The account of the Battle of Mantinea indicates that on the battlefield, too, the Spartans behaved differently than other Greeks: "After this they joined battle, the Argives and their allies advancing with haste and fury, the Lacedaemonians slowly

and to the music of many flute-players – a standing institution in their army, that has nothing to do with religion, but is meant to make them advance evenly, stepping in time, without breaking their order, as large armies are apt to do in the moment of engaging" (Thuk. 5.70). If we believe Thucydides, the Spartans were satisfied with victory alone, as "the bulk of the picked body of the Argives made good their escape. The flight and retreat, however, were neither hurried nor long; the Lacedaemonians fighting long and stubbornly until the rout of their enemy, but that once effected, pursuing for a short time and not far" (Thuk. 5.73.4). Most probably the reason for this was no more than prudence: if the troops continued the pursuit, they could run too far and get into trouble (Lazenby 1985, 45).

Obedience to command during battle was of paramount importance: when King Agis gave orders "in the moment of the onset, and at short notice, it so happened that Aristocles and Hipponoidas would not move over, for which offence they were afterwards banished from Sparta, as having been guilty of cowardice" (Thuk. 5.72.1). Another well-known example of insubordination on the battlefield concerns Amompharetus (cf. Thuk. 5.65.2; Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.22).

Whereas the Spartan officers and soldiers were not required to obey blindly, bravado was not tolerated either. Aristodemus did not receive honour for his deeds, because he achieved them when he "rushed out and left the battle column behind" (*lyssonta te kai ekleiponta ten taxin* – Hdt. 9.71.3): he went against the hoplite code, as this way he endangered those who stayed in the line of the phalanx (Lazenby 1985, 57).

Courage was certainly greatly valued among the Spartans, and cowardice, as the attitude to the *tresantes* amply demonstrates, met with utmost contempt (on *tresantes*, esp. Ducat 2006). Those who achieved outstanding deeds on the battlefield were respected by all (cf. Hodkinson 1983, 259 n. 60). A soldier's death (*kalos* or *euklees thanatos*) constituted an element of hoplite morality (Loraux 1977, 105) and thus was an important topic in the Spartan polis. Regardless of whether laws concerning the "beautiful death" (cf. Xen. *Cyrop.* 3.3.52–53) truly existed in Sparta or whether we are dealing with no more than a custom, it is clear that it occupied an important place in the Spartan ideology. Men fallen in battle were accorded the honour of having their names placed on a tombstone (Plut. *Lyk.* 27, 3; *Mor.* 238d [*Instituta Laconica* 18]; cf. Low 2006, 85–109). Some of those inscriptions have survived (IG 5.1. 701–703 and 707), including the tombstone erected for the Spartiates who were killed in the year 403 BC in Athens (Willemsen 1977).

Death for the homeland was one of the main themes of songs that were popular in Sparta (Plut. *Lyk.* 21.2). Songs in praise of the three hundred (or, in reality, 299 or 298) men who fell in the "Battle of the Three Hundred" in 545 BC were sung during the Gymnopaedia. A most valiant man was honoured with a public eulogy for his bravery – *aristeia* (e.g. Brasidas in 431 BC). Alpheius and Maron, distinguished themselves in the fighting at Thermopylae, had their sanctuaries in Sparta just like Leonidas (Paus. 3.12.9; 14.1). The names of all the Spartiates fallen at Thermopylae were engraved on a stone tablet and festivals commemorating their heroic deed

were held every year. Brasidas, who fell at Amphipolis in 422 BC, was honoured with a cenotaph (Paus. 3.14.1).

In Sparta, valour was the highest virtue; a Spartiate, according to a well-known anecdote, returned from wars with his shield or upon it (Plut. *Mor.* 241; see also Kulesza 2008; Burliga 2014, 66–83). As Demaratus tells Xerxes while describing the Spartans' character, their laws commanded them "not to escape from the battlefield before any mass of foes, but to stand in line, and to be victorious or die (*epikrateein e apollysthai*)"; if the opposite was the case, what awaited the man was "disgrace and dishonour" (*oneidos kai atimien*)" (Hdt. 7.231; 9.71.2) or even punishment. Herodotus and Xenophon describe social ostracism to which such men were subjected (Hdt. 7.253; Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 9.4–6; cf. Ducat, 2006, 1–55).

According to Xenophon, cowards were treated differently than in other poleis:

> But in Lacedaemon everyone would be ashamed to have a coward with him at the mess or to be matched with him in a wrestling bout. Often when sides are picked for a game of ball he is the odd man left out: in the chorus he is banished to the ignominious place; in the streets he is bound to make way; when he occupies a seat he must needs give it up, even to a junior; he must support his spinster relatives at home and must explain to them why they are old maids: he must make the best of a fireside without a wife, and yet pay forfeit for that: he may not stroll about with a cheerful countenance, nor behave as though he were a man of unsullied fame, or else he must submit to be beaten by his betters. (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 9.4–6)

Plutarch, in turn, writes that those who survive the battle, that is the *tresantes*, meet with *atimia*: "For such men are not only debarred from every office, but intermarriage with any of them is a disgrace, and any one who meets them may strike them if he pleases. Moreover, they are obliged to go about unkempt and squalid, wearing cloaks that are patched with dyed stuffs, half of their beards shaven, and half left to grow" (Plut. *Ages.* 30.2–4). Some of the restrictions mentioned by Xenophon and Plutarch appear to be legal measures; others are elements of a social custom the aim of which was to stigmatise reprehensible behaviour. The entire society participated in that process. The Spartans in a way needed the *tresantes* in order to reinforce the accepted system of values (cf. Loraux 1977, 112 n. 52).

When the news of the defeat at Leuctra arrived at Sparta, the ephors did not permit to interrupt the Gymnopaedia in order for the families of the fallen to be informed of their deaths. The following day, when it was already known who had died in the battle and who had survived it, the families of the fallen walked proudly in public and the families of the survivors went into mourning (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.16; Plut. *Ages.* 29.2–7). Parents of men who died in the Battle of Lechaeum in 390 BC similarly displayed their joy (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.10).

It remains unknown whether the Spartans examined the reasons why a citizen would not come up to expectations or whether they called all survivors as *tresantes*, i.e. those who had behaved in a cowardly manner. There are reasons to suppose that they were mostly guided by pragmatism. The praise of honourable death served the practical aim of achieving victory (cf. Loraux 1977, 110–111);

punishing everyone who had managed to survive would have been against the very foundations of the civic community.

Plutarch praises Agesilaus for advising the Spartans after the Battle of Leuctra that, the circumstances being exceptional, the laws against those who had survived, and who were named *tresantes*, should be suspended (Plut. *Ages.* 30.2–6). According to Diodorus, a similar course of action was adopted by the Spartans after the Battle of Megalopolis in 331 (Diod. 19.70.5). We also know that other penalties for "cowardice", ones not mentioned by the above authors, were also applied; for instance Thucydides, in the already quoted passage, tells us that Aristocles and Hipponoidas failed to comply with the orders of King Agis given at the start of the attack "and at short notice, for which offence they were afterwards banished from Sparta, as having been guilty of cowardice" (Thuk. 5.72.1). The Spartiates whom the Athenians took prisoner on Sphacteria were treated still differently. Asked by their compatriots on Sphacteria for decision (Thuk. 4.38.3), the Spartans forbade them to act ignobly.

> Those however of the Spartans who had been taken prisoners on the island and had surrendered their arms might, it was feared, suppose that they were to be subjected to some degradation in consequence of their misfortune, and so make some attempt at revolution (*neoterisosin*), if left in possession of their franchise. These were therefore at once disfranchised (*atimous epoiesan*), although some of them were in office at the time, and thus placed under a disability to take office, or buy and sell anything. (Thuk. 5.34.2)

On the other hand, however, Sparta energetically tried to effect the release of the prisoners (Thuk. 4.41.3; 5.18.7; 24.2). This approach seems intriguing. Certainly the Spartans did not want to get their men back only in order to punish them; the more probable reason was that the Spartan prisoners of war being kept in Athens, which would remind everyone of their defeat on Sphacteria, would be a blemish on Sparta's honour (cf. Diod. 12.76; Thuk. 5.34.2). In this case, Thucydides assures us, the disfranchisement (*atimia*) was temporary: "After some time, however, the franchise was restored to them (*epitimoi egenonto*)" (Thuk. 5.34.2). The reasons for this approach being adopted are unknown; the penalties may have been suspended because of some doubts concerning the assessment of the prisoner's conduct or perhaps because of their social standing, or for both those reasons together. It is not known whether the *atimia* for the *tresantes* was always of a temporary nature, nor even whether the word *tresantes* was a technical term routinely used in such cases.

Unfortunately, all these questions remain unanswered. Still, in contrast to MacDowell (1986, 44–46), who views a *tresas* as having all the penalties mentioned in the sources applied to him, I am of the opinion that the penalties were graded depending on the nature of his misdeed and the current situation. It is even possible that the term *tresantes* was not used in every case; it may not be accidental that Thucydides never employs it in reference to the men taken on Sphacteria. To say it was otherwise, we would have to see the Spartiates as extreme doctrinaires who did consider it worthy of their effort to understand the nature of a particular

case and did not review the consequences of their decisions concerning those they called the *tresantes*.

Part II The History of Sparta in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC

Chapter 7 The Sparta of Cleomenes and Leonidas

From the end of the seventh century BC onward, Sparta's affluence and power were steadily increasing. Its victory in the Second Messenian War sealed the fate of Messenia; but this did not put a stop to Sparta's expansion; its attention focused on the neighbouring Arcadia. The Spartans moved against Tegea, confidently bringing with them manacles and measuring tools to be used in dividing the acquired land (Hdt. 1.66.2–4); they clearly wished to deal with Tegea the same way they had previously dealt with Messenia. This time, however, their enterprise failed. Defeated in the decisive battle, they ended up tilling the Tegean land, shackled in the same manacles they had brought. Asked for advice, the oracle at Delphi told the Spartans that if they acquired the bones of Orestes, they would defeat Tegea (Hdt. 1.67.2–4). The Spartans made use of a truce to steal the bones of a giant that had shortly before been found in Tegea and declared them to be the bones of Orestes: "Ever since then the Spartans were far superior to the Tegeans whenever they met each other in battle" and they "subdued most of the Peloponnese" (Hdt. 1.68.6, trans. A. D. Godley). Herodotus's account is, alas, rather vague; above all, it does not explain in what way the Spartans extended their subdued the Peloponnese. Herodotus remarks that in the times of kings Leon (an Agiad) and Agasicles (an Euripontid), which is to say, ca. 575–560 BC, Sparta was victorious in all of the wars it had fought (Hdt. 1.65.1), but he himself mentions only the war with Tegea. In the times of the next generation, that is during the reign of Anaxandridas and Ariston, most of the Peloponnese was allegedly already ruled by the Lacedaemonians (Hdt. 1.68, 6). In any case, the Spartans defeated Tegea (Hdt. 1.68–69); by force of the resulting treaty Tegea undertook to expel all Messenians from its territory (Hdt. 1.65–68; Plut. *Mor.* 292b, cf. Whitby 1994, 92–93).

Stealing the bones of Orestes symbolised the change in Spartan policies that occurred after the victory over Tegea. Sparta ceased to annex new territories and, professing itself the true heir to the "Achaean" rulers of the Peloponnese – Menelaus, Agamemnon and his son Orestes, began to vie for hegemony over the Peloponnese and even the entire Greece (cf. Cartledge 1979, 139). The cause of this change is not known. According to Cartledge, in the middle of the sixth century BC, influenced by the earthquake mentioned by Cicero (*Div.* 1.112) and Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 2.191), Sparta abandoned its aggressive, imperialistic policies and began to extend its hegemony over the Peloponnese by means of diplomacy and propaganda (Cartledge, 1976b). In reality, however, Sparta simply had no more potential to extend its territory and was therefore forced to arrange its relations with other Peloponnesian states in a different manner.

Sparta's new policy – the author of which is sometimes (Naffisi 1991, 124–138, cf. Luther 2002, 1–16) thought to have been Chilo, the eponymous ephor of ca. 556

BC, although this view does not find solid confirmation (Hodkinson 1997, 87) –
was in many cases fruitful. The chronology of events cannot be reconstructed even
approximately, but it is clear that actions undertaken by Sparta caused tyrants
to be deposed and substituted with pro-Spartan oligarchs in many cities of the
Peloponnese (certainly in Sicyon, Phlius and Megara). The new rulers provided
Sparta with help against Argos and against a potential Helot rebellion, and at the
same time, being dependent on its support, they became members of a system of
alliances Sparta was in the process of constructing. Thus, Sparta became the main
power of the Peloponnese in the sixth century BC.

This was the reason why, when in 555 BC Croesus, the king of Lydia, was looking
for an ally in Greece and turned to the Delphic oracle for advice, he was told to
turn to Sparta, to which he extended the following proposal: "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 (*philos*) and ally (*symmachos*), without deceit or guile (*aneu te
dolou kai apates*)" (Hdt. 1.69.2).

Sparta and Lydia made a pact of friendship and alliance (Hdt. 1.68–70); but
when Croesus asked for military assistance against the Persians (Hdt. 1.77.3;
1.82–83), Sparta failed to provide it, because in the middle of the sixth century
BC it was occupied with a war against Argos (Hdt. 1.82). In this conflict, Sparta
was the aggressor, as its invasion of Thyrea provoked the Argives. After some
negotiations, "the two armies agreed that three hundred of each side should fight,
and whichever party won would possess the land" (Hdt. 1.82.3). Five hundred and
ninety-seven warriors perished in this battle; the only survivors were Alcenor and
Chromios of Argos and Othryades of Sparta. At nightfall, the two men ran off to
Argos to report their victory. Then the Spartiate stripped the dead Argives and
carried their armour to the camp. When the Argives and the Spartans arrived there
on the following day, they began to quarrel, each side saying that it had won the
battle – one because more of its members had survived and the other because the
enemy (they argued) had run away and their single survivor had stayed in place
and took possession of the armour of the fallen men. The argument escalated into
an open battle, eventually won by the Spartans.

> The Argives, who before had worn their hair long by fixed custom, shaved their heads
> ever after and made a law, with a curse added to it, that no Argive grow his hair, and
> no Argive woman wear gold, until they recovered Thyreae, and the Lacedaemonians
> made a contrary law (*nomos*), that they wear their hair long ever after; for until now
> they had not worn it so. Othryades, the lone survivor of the three hundred, was
> ashamed (*aischynomenon*), it is said, to return to Sparta after all the men of his com-
> pany had been killed, and killed himself on the spot at Thyreae. (Hdt. 1.82.7–8, trans.
> A. D. Godley)

This battle decided the future of the Peloponnese. According to Herodotus, the
Spartans subsequently conquered the lands east of the Parnon Mountains and the
eastern part of the Malea peninsula, as well as the island of Cythera, which all

had previously belonged to Argos. Even if we share the reservations expressed by Cartledge (1979, 140) as to the existence of such an extensive Argive "empire" in the period in question, and if we resign ourselves to the fact that the process by which Sparta reached its final boundaries in the east cannot be reconstructed, it is beyond doubt that the victory over Argos sealed Sparta's supremacy in the Peloponnese.

The Peloponnesian League

By the third quarter of the sixth century BC "most of the Peloponnese" had been subdued (Hdt. 1.68.6). The lands of the Spartan state occupied two-fifths of the Peloponnese. Almost all the states of the Peloponnese entered an alliance, headed by Sparta, now known as the Peloponnesian League. Its official name, in Antiquity, was "the Lacedaemonians and their allies (*symmachoi*)". Towards the end of the sixth century, the League included the coastal cities, Corinth, Sicyon, most probably Megara and Aegina, the cities of the Argolis, and perhaps Achaea as well. The early history of the League is obscure (Wickert 1961). It is generally assumed that at its root lay the above-mentioned alliance between Sparta and Tegea. Cartledge (1987, 248) considers it probable that Sparta's first alliance was not with Tegea, but with Elis, when in the second quarter of the sixth century BC it helped the Eleans to gain leadership over the Olympic Games (to the detriment of Pisa). It is not known when exactly particular cities entered the League, although it seems probable that most of them did so soon after the Battle of Tegea, that is sometime in the second half of the sixth century BC (Roy 2018, 355–356; according to Wolicki (2018), in the mid-fifth century). In essence, Sparta and its Symmachia guaranteed peace in the Peloponnese (on the relations between Sparta and particular Peloponnesian states, Woll 2010).

Also, it is not known for certain whether already in this early period the formula of the oath of allegiance given when accessing the League was identical for all its members and whether it included the concept of "following the Lacedaemonians wherever they might lead". In this form, the oath is confirmed only by an inscription, dating most probably from the fifth century, found in the Spartan acropolis, which contains the text of a treaty between Sparta and Erxadieis in Aetolia (SEG 26, 461). The treaty confirmed the friendship (*philia*), peace (*hirana*) and alliance (*symmachia*) between the two sides. As per its terms, the Aetolians undertook to have the same friends and enemies as Sparta and to never accept a peace treaty without the Lacedaemonians' consent; the two states were also to come to each other's aid in case of attack. The terms of the treaty also included an undertaking not to accept exiles, which must be assumed to have encompassed the helots (Peek 1974, 6–7; Ste Croix 1972, 102–105; Cartledge 1976c, 87–92; 1978b 189–190; Kelly 1978, 189–190; Cozzoli 1985, 67–76).

"The policy of Lacedaemon," writes Thucydides, "was not to exact tribute (*phoros*) from her allies, but merely to secure their subservience to her interests by establishing oligarchies among them" (Thuk. 1.19). The Symmachia was an

offensive-defensive alliance whose member states were linked by their treaties with Sparta as the hegemon; they did not have separate alliances with one another. If an allied polis was attacked, Sparta was to come to its aid. In case of an attack on Sparta, its ally had the same duty. In the late sixth century BC, the Symmachia as a whole took action on Sparta's initiative; if necessary, Sparta bid representatives of the allied cities to assemble in order to make the final decision. However, since their armies constituted a large portion of the joint military forces of the Symmachia, both then and later Sparta, whose will was declared formally by the apella, had to take their wishes into account.

The presence of coastal cities in it forced the Symmachia to take a stand when Lydia was replaced by Persia in the East and when Persian control extended to include the eastern part of the Greek world. When envoys from Ionia and Aeolia came to Sparta to beg for aid, the Spartans refused, but they sent a ship to, as Herodotus supposed, "see the situation" (Hdt. 1.152.1–2). Having arrived at Phocaea, these envoys "sent Lacrines, who was the most esteemed among them, to Sardis, to repeat there to Cyrus a proclamation of the Lacedaemonians, that he was to harm no city on Greek territory, or else the Lacedaemonians would punish him" (Hdt. 1.152.3).

> When the herald had proclaimed this, Cyrus is said to have asked the Greeks who were present who and how many in number these Lacedaemonians were who made this declaration. When he was told, he said to the Spartan herald, "I never yet feared men who set apart a place in the middle of their city where they perjure themselves and deceive each other. They, if I keep my health, shall talk of their own misfortunes, not those of the Ionians." He uttered this threat against all the Greeks, because they have markets (*agoras ktisamenoi*) and buy and sell there; for the Persians themselves were not used to resorting to markets at all, nor do they even have a market of any kind. (Hdt. 1.153.1–2, trans. A. D. Godley)

Interests of the League's members forced Sparta to take a stand on a number of other issues which they considered important. The most influential of Sparta's allies was Corinth – the Symmachia's presence in the Isthmus and its capability to extend its policies beyond the Peloponnese depended on its stance – hence Corinth, being aware of its military might and its strategic location, had the most say. Jeffery (1988, 351, 353) considers Corinth's hostility towards Argos, with which it vied for control over the temple of Zeus at Nemea, to have been its main motive for joining the Symmachia: Sparta shared that hostility. Corinth's position within the Symmachia is confirmed by the outcome of the conflict between Plataeae and Thebes.

Corinth had most probably belonged to the Symmachia by the time when ca. 525 BC the league went against Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos. Apart from the exiled aristocrats of Samos, who begged the Spartan ephors for help (Hdt. 3.46), it was precisely Corinth that most energetically urged Sparta to take up arms against Polycrates (Hdt. 3.48.1); no wonder, since many Corinthian aristocratic families were joined by ties of friendship with the leading houses of Samos. Corinth

provided a large contingent of ships (Hdt. 3.54.1) that participated in the forty-day siege which, in the end, failed to overthrow Polycrates (Hdt. 3.44–56).

Sicyon joined the Symmachia most probably in the same period as Corinth, similarly because of its hostility towards Argos. The date when coastal cities and villages west of Sicyon joined the league is unknown; it may have happened only as late as in the fifth century BC. Those cities were of no significance in terms of either politics or military power until the sixth decade of the fifth century BC, when Athens conquered Patrai in Achaea and Naupactus in Aetolia and thus threatened Corinth's western communication lines.

Having been joined by Megara, possibly in 519 BC, the Symmachia significantly increased its sphere of influence (Burn 1984, 171). Surrounded on all sides by Attica, Boeotia, Corinth and the sea, Megara was a *sui generis* buffer state; hence – from the Symmachia's point of view – its significance lay in the fact that its territory constituted a corridor linking the Peloponnese with Boeotia. Megara had its own problems. It was entangled in a conflict with Athens, Eleusis, and Salamina being the bone of contention, and with Corinth over Geraneia. Helped by Argos, Megara defeated Corinth in the late sixth century BC and subsequently founded a treasury at Olympia. If by that time Megara had already belonged to the Symmachia, it is all the more interesting that this did not prevent it from fighting with another member state. In 460 BC, the border conflict between Megara and Corinth resulted in the former leaving the Symmachia and allying itself to Athens and Argos (Thuk. 1.103.4).

Sparta's main opponent in the Peloponnese, Argos, naturally remained outside the Symmachia. For many member states, it was their conflict with Argos that constituted if not the reason to join the league, then certainly a factor that unified it and made it durable. In the end, Argos lost the fight for hegemony in the Peloponnese; the emergence and expansion of the Symmachia sealed its defeat. But the treat presented by Argos remained one of the principal factors determining Sparta's foreign policy. In the third quarter of the sixth century BC, Argos stood alone in the Peloponnese, but it had some influence outside it. It had particularly friendly relations with Athens under Peisistratus, whose second wife came from Argos. Argive mercenaries came to his aid in a moment of crisis.

Mutual hostility between Sparta and Argos obviously influenced the fact that the two states assumed radically different positions regarding the Persian successes in the East. When, seeking military aid against the Persians, Croesus turned to Sparta – because he had assumed that the words of the Delphic oracle urging him to seek the aid of "the leaders of Hellas" referred precisely to Sparta – his move constituted a clear affront to Argos. This probably gave Argos the impulse to establish, at some unspecified moment, friendly relations with Persia. According to Jeffery (1988, 354–355), the Argives meant to establish some kind of an alliance (*philia kai xenia*), which was represented by the propagandistic myth that their hero Perseus had been the Argives' and the Persians' shared ancestor.

The Sparta of Cleomenes I

Cleomenes I (ca. 521 – ca. 490 BC), the son of Anaxandridas and his second wife, became Sparta's king from the elder royal house of the Agiads ca. 521 BC. The other king, Demaratus (ca. 515–491 BC), from the Eurypontid dynasty, stood in his shadow for almost the entire reign. Cleomenes was an outstanding yet extremely controversial personage. His reign was a source of debate already in Antiquity; as a result, Herodotus cites mainly hostile opinions of him, but they are mixed with opinions that are favourable, or perhaps simply objective.

His early deeds did not provoke such strong reactions. They indicate that Cleomenes did not wish to embroil the Symmachia in military enterprises outside the state, most probably, at least in part, for fear that this could strengthen some of Sparta's allies (especially Corinth), and also, perhaps to a greater extent, mindful of Sparta's internal security – the Messenian threat and the danger posed by the helots if the expedition lasted long and caused considerable loss of life.

Thus, in 517 BC, Cleomenes, supported by the ephors, refused the Symmachia's help to Maiandrios of Samos, who wished to supplant Syloson, Polycrates's brother (Hdt. 3.148). Ca. 514 (cf. Wade-Gery 1958, 158–163), he refused the Scythians, who wanted the Greeks' help to cut off Darius's army in Thrace (Hdt. 6.84). In 499, when Aristagoras came to Sparta, Cleomenes did not agree to support a rebellion in Ionia (Hdt. 5.38; 49–50). Interestingly, Aristagoras turned for help to the king, and not to the ephors. Herodotus, whose opinion of Cleomenes was rather low, admitted he did not allow Aristagoras to bribe him – even though he ascribed this to the eight- or nine-year-old Gorgo, the king's daughter, who was present during their conversation: "Then Aristagoras began to promise Cleomenes from ten talents upwards, if he would grant his request. When Cleomenes refused, Aristagoras offered him ever more and more. When he finally promised fifty talents the child cried out, 'Father, the stranger will corrupt you, unless you leave him and go away.' Cleomenes was pleased with the child's counsel and went into another room while Aristagoras departed from Sparta" (Hdt. 5.51.2–3). Let us point out, however, that Cleomenes had refused the request earlier, having heard that the journey from the Aegean Sea to Susa would take three months.

Those decisions clearly indicate that Sparta under Cleomenes I did not wish to engage its resources in distant territories and thus risk a conflict with Persia. This deserves all the more notice considering that Sparta was consistently hostile to Persia. On the one hand, it had good, even cordial relations with Persia's enemies: Croesus, Amasis or the Scythians, and on the other, it stood against its actual or potential friends, for instance the tyrants of Samos and Athens.

At the same time, however, Sparta's actions indicate a desire to extend its influence beyond the Peloponnese. In 519 BC, for instance (on the possibility of a different dating, to 509 or even 499 BC, cf. Gomme 1956, 358), Cleomenes led the Symmachia's army beyond the Isthmus; Herodotus does not report the reason for his expedition, but it may be assumed it was the annexation of Megara (Hdt. 6.108.2). Plataeae, threatened by Thebes, had asked Cleomenes to immediately send aid, and

he most probably considered the city to small and too distant to be worth the risk of including them into the Symmachia. In any case, he advised the Plataeaens to turn to Athens. This proved the origin of the later enmity between Thebes and Athens (Hdt. 6.108.2–3), as Plataeae followed Cleomenes's advice and soon after struck an alliance with Athens. Corinth, called upon to arbitrate in the conflict between Thebes and Athens (and being distinctly pro-Athenian at the time), settled the matters in Athens' favour. The war, inevitable in the circumstances, ended with Thebes being defeated.

In 514–510 BC, the Symmachia's army marched on Athens, then ruled by the tyrant Hippias. In this case, Sparta's policy is purported to have been influenced by Delphi, since it was where the Alcmaeonids found shelter there after they had been exiled from Athens; they won the priests' gratitude by collecting funds for the reconstruction of the temple of Apollo and for this reason the oracle urged the Spartans to crush the tyranny. According to one version (Hdt. 5.63.1), the Alcmeonids actually amplified the admiration which they had won by causing the temple to be rebuilt, by bribing Pythia herself (Hdt. 5.61.1; 66–3–4; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 860c–d). As a result, later, whenever the Spartans turned to the oracle with a question, her response would always begin with a call to free Athens from tyranny (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 19.3).

The connection between the irrational and rational causes of Sparta's intervention in Athens is not easy (if, of course, we allow that the former had any influence on the Spartan policies of the era). Political interest certainly favoured the intervention. Some groups in Sparta had inherited the awareness of Persia's growing might from the previous generation and even though the fiasco of the expedition against Samos in 525 BC made their members reject the earlier concept of anti-Persian action as doomed to failure (Hdt. 3.148; 6.84), they were ready to take up arms against Athens governed by a pro-Persian ruler (cf. Cartledge 1979, 146). Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 19.4) considered the friendship with the house of the Peisistratidae of Argos to have been an important factor. The importance of this friendship is now unclear, but Sparta may have seen it as a threat to its own position in the Peloponnese.

Sparta's hostility towards the very concept of tyranny is mentioned as one of the irrational motives. This is contradicted by the fact that the Peisistratidae themselves were Sparta's *xenoi*. Incidentally, it seems impossible to determine when exactly that hostility of the Spartans, for the first time assumed as a given by Herodotus (5. 92a I), may have arisen. On the other hand, it seems that the Spartans were hostile not so much towards tyranny as such, but towards some tyrants, and that they mainly strove to replace tyrants with pro-Spartan oligarchs.

The other irrational motive refers to the Spartans' obedience to the guidelines provided by the oracle. I fully agree with Lewis (1988, 301), that the view that Delphi influenced the Spartans' approach should not be dismissed lightly. Regardless of the plans the Delphic priests may have harboured, or the influence of the oracle may have had on Cleomenes, it created a convenient justification for taking action (cf. Kulesza 1994, 161 n. 86), the aim of which was to attain various political

goals; and the justification was, in this case, still necessary because the Spartans had to explain why they moved against the Peisistratidae despite the *xenia* that linked them to Sparta.

The Spartan intervention in Athens failed to bring immediate results. During the first expedition, possibly in 511 BC, the troops commanded by Anchimolius were brought to Phaleron by sea and riders from Thessaly, which was allied to the tyrant, rebuffed them (Hdt. 5.63.3–4). Anchimolius was killed and buried at Alopecae in Attica, near to the temple of Heracles in Cynosarges (Hdt. 5.63.4; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 19.5).

The second, much stronger expedition departed in the early summer of 510 BC, this time by the land route through the Isthmus, commanded by Cleomenes himself (Hdt. 5.64; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 19.5). He managed to remove the tyrants, but the political victory slipped from the Alcmaeonidae, since Cleomenes struck a *xenia* with their rival, Isagoras. According to Herodotus, some role in this outcome may have been played by Isagoras's wife, who, possibly encouraged by her ambitious husband, allowed Cleomenes to seduce her.

When the Spartan army left Athens, a conflict broke out between Cleisthenes and Isagoras and the latter called on Cleomenes to help (Hdt. 5.70.1). Cleomenes arrived shortly before the midsummer of 507 BC, leading a small troop, but having expelled Cleisthenes's supporters from the city, he was beaten and expelled himself (Hdt. 5.72; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 20.2–3). In answer, the Symmachia attacked Athens with all its might in the spring of 506 BC, its troops commanded by both the Spartan kings, Cleomenes and Demaratus. According to Herodotus, at this point Cleomenes wanted to proclaim Isagoras the tyrant (Hdt. 5.74.1), but this report sounds suspicious, as it is contrary to the Symmachia's official propaganda. In any case, the allies left, again by the Corinth route, heedless of their vow obliging them to obey Sparta. To make matters worse, Demaratus retreated as well (Hdt. 5.75.1), which caused a serious political crisis in Sparta; as a result, the Spartans agreed that from then on, only one king would be sent out with the army. In the future, this was to protect Sparta against conflicts between kings that would have been detrimental to its foreign policy (not to mention its image). For the present, it may have strengthened Cleomenes's position (cf. Richer 1998, 402–404). This may be confirmed by the fact that while in 517 BC it was the ephors that commanded Maiandrios to leave Sparta, in 499 BC the only person with whom Aristagoras negotiated was Cleomenes.

The withdrawal of the Corinthians and Demaratus eased Athens, but did not remove the threat completely, since the Symmachia's attack was the most important, but not the only part of the three-side assault of the Lacedaemonians, the Thebans and the Chalcidians. However, after the departure of the Symmachia's army the Athenians managed to defeat Thebes and Chalcis.

The fiasco of his machinations with Isagoras in Athens in 508/7 BC humiliated Cleomenes as a leader of the Symmachia and the league's relations with Boeotia and Chalcis were seriously damaged by the failure of the joint expedition in 506 BC. In connection with that, the plan to restore Hippias to the position of the

tyrant of Athens (Hdt. 5.90–94) failed because of the resistance of Sparta's allies. The plan had been debated ca. 504 BC, at the first recorded (and possibly the first ever) meeting of the Symmachia. The allies rejected the idea, their rejection inspired by the Corinthians, and Hippias, who had at the time come to Sparta at the time, had to return to Persia.

Cleomenes's next move was a successful attack on Argos in 494 BC (Hdt. 6.76–80). There were attempts to date this event to some quarter a century earlier (Lenschau 1921, 697), but a perusal of Herodotus indicates that the expedition against Argos occurred before the Persian invasion in 490 BC and shortly after the fall of Miletus in 494 BC (Zwolski 1964, 198). Cleomenes's father took Thyrea and Cynuria away from the Argives and Cleomenes wanted to keep these valuable possessions at all costs; this explains the attack on Argos in 494 BC.

Cleomenes's victory over Argos in the Battle of Sepeia, near Tirins, was spectacular (Hendriks 1980). The Argive losses were very large: according to Herodotus, 6,000 (Hdt. 7.148.2), according to Pausanias – 5,000 (Paus. 3.4.1), according to Plutarch – 7,777 of their men perished (Plut. *De mul. virt.* 4). In Argos itself, a coup was staged and, losing its dominance over the Argolis plain, the polis ceased to be a threat to Sparta for a long time (Kulesza 1998, 33; Kulesza 2007, 219–233).

Yet despite Cleomenes's great victory, "after his return his enemies brought him before the ephors, saying that he had been bribed not to take Argos when he might have easily taken it". Today, his reference to religious issues as an explanation of his failure to take Argos seems hardly convincing, but his plea "seemed to the Spartans to be credible and reasonable, and he far outdistanced the pursuit of his accusers" (Hdt. 6.82.1–2).

The time around the Battle of Sepeia proved the peak of his fortunes; a few years later Cleomenes was to go through the darkest period of his life. When in 492/1 BC the envoys of the king of Persia arrived in Greece demanding "earth and water", they were given them by, among others, the Aeginetans. The Athenians, who were quarrelling with them, feared that the island might serve as a Persian base for an attack on their polis and turned to Sparta for help.

Heeding their petition, King Cleomenes "crossed over to Aegina intending to arrest the most culpable of its people" (Hdt. 6.50.1). Yet he went there without military support or with a relatively small troop; and this was what gave his opponents in Sparta, King Demaratus the strongest among them, an opportunity to add force to the Aeginetan resistance. Persuaded by Demaratus, the islanders refused to yield any person, saying that Cleomenes "had no authority from the Spartans for what he was doing; instead he had been bribed by the Athenians" (Hdt. 6.50.7–8). Herodotus emphasised that Cleomenes "was working for the common good of Hellas", whereas Demaratus was driven by "jealousy and envy (*phthonos kai age*)" (Hdt. 6.61.1). Upon his return to Sparta, Cleomenes began to plot Demaratus's removal, accusing him of not being the son of King Ariston (Hdt. 6.61–66) (Christopoulos 2015). Considering that Demaratus had been king since ca. 515 BC, a focus on his pedigree in 491 BC was purely political, even though Herodotus is clearly exaggerating when he says that Demaratus was "a man who had gained much renown in

Lacedaemon by his many achievements and his wisdom, and by conferring on the state the victory in a chariot-race he had won at Olympia; he was the only king of Sparta who did this" (Hdt. 6.70.3).

The excuse to focus on his bloodline was provided by a tale which until then had been largely forgotten in Sparta, but from then on became famous again. The point was that early in the third decade of the sixth century BC King Ariston, the future father of Demaratus, not having any children from his first two wives and certain that the lack of offspring had not been his fault, decided to take a third wife. He chose an extremely beautiful one – the wife of his friend Agetus. He therefore allowed Agetus to choose the most valuable item from his possessions, first having made him swear that he would allow Demaratus to choose one from his. Agetus fell into the trap and thus he was obliged, albeit unwillingly, to hand over his wife to his treacherous friend. When his new wife gave birth to a son, Demaratus, after a period shorter than expected, Ariston, who had been informed of this while he was speaking to the ephors, publicly commented that the boy could not have been his (Hdt. 6.63.2). Ariston later regretted those words, truly believing Demaratus to be his son, and the gossip died down; but it was remembered well enough for Cleomenes had a ready weapon against his opponent.

He achieved his aim having "won over a man of great influence among the Delphians, Cobon son of Aristophantus", who "persuaded the priestess, Periallus, to say what Cleomenes wanted her to" and assured the cooperation of Leutychides, an Euripontid (Hdt. 6.66) (cf. Bonnechere 2013). Leutychides was motivated not only by the desire for power, but also hostility towards Demaratus based on a personal offence: "Leutychides was betrothed to Percalus, daughter of Demarmenus, but Demaratus plotted and robbed him of his marriage, stealing Percalus and marrying her first" (Hdt. 6.65.2). In 491 BC, Leutychides accused Demaratus of being a bastard and called the ephors in whose presence almost fifty years before Ariston declared the newborn boy could not have been his son, as witnesses (Hdt. 6.65.4). This seems incredible (cf. Richer 1998, 399), although not impossible when we realise that in 491 BC the former ephors could be around eighty years old. Stripped of his royal office, Demaratus went first to Elis, and then, fleeing the Spartans who pursued him, to Persia, where he was graciously received (Hdt. 6.67–70; 7.3). Herodotus's surprisingly positive assessment of Demaratus – who, after all, landed on the side of the Greeks' greatest enemy – and the equally critical assessment of Cleomenes may result, at least in part, from the fact that his informants could have been the descendants of the deposed king, who in the fourth century BC lived in Troas (cf. Cartledge 1979, 201), but above all in Sparta.

Demaratus was replaced by Leutychides II (491–469), the son of Menares (Hdt. 6.71.1), and the two kings went together to Aegina to bring "hostages" from there to Athens (Hdt. 6.73). But shortly afterwards Cleomenes too left Sparta in some haste:

Later Cleomenes' treacherous plot against Demaratus became known; he was seized with fear of the Spartans and secretly fled to Thessaly. From there he came to Arcadia and stirred up disorder, uniting the Arcadians against Sparta; among his methods of

binding them by oath to follow him wherever he led was his zeal to bring the chief
men of Arcadia to the city of Nonacris and make them swear by the water of the Styx.
(Hdt. 6.74)

This would indicate that Cleomenes wanted to draw the Arcadians into the
machinations against Sparta (Zwolski 1964, 207). The emergence, in the early fifth
century BC, of coins bearing the word ARKADIKON may point to an attempt at
uniting the Arcadians (Wallace 1954; Cartledge 1979, 152).

It is unfortunately unclear for how long Cleomenes stayed outside Sparta;
worse still, it is not known what was happening in Sparta during his absence.
Nicolas G. L. Hammond (1955, 406–411), who dates the debacle to 491/490 BC, is
of the opinion that Cleomenes was in exile for only two weeks (from late October
to mid-November). Nonetheless, Cleomenes certainly would not have been able
to get to Thessaly, return from there to Arcadia, persuade the Arcadians to coop-
erate with him, and take the oath in such a short time. In addition, Wallace (1954,
32–35) considers it probable that in the same period Cleomenes may have had
some dealings with the helots and the Messenians. Also, Cleomenes most probably
did not travel to Arcadia through Thessaly, as stated by Herodotus, but through
Sellasia (Hdt. 6.74.1) (Hereward's emendation: *Sellasien* instead of *Thessalien*). He
must have stayed in exile for a longer time, especially if it is correct to associate the
synoecism of Heraia with this period of his activity (Strabo 8.3.2 (337); cf. Kulesza
1998, 145–146).

The Spartans were obviously worried about the possible results of his actions
abroad: "When the Lacedaemonians learned that Cleomenes was doing this, they
took fright and brought him back to Sparta to rule on the same terms as before,"
Herodotus reports, and he soon went mad, ending his life with a suicide (Hdt. 5.75):

> Cleomenes had already been not entirely in his right mind (*eonta hypomargoteron*),
> and on his return from exile a mad sickness (*hypelabe manie nousos*) fell upon him: any
> Spartan that he happened to meet he would hit in the face with his staff (*skeptron*). For
> doing this, and because he was out of his mind, his relatives (*hoi prosekontes*) bound
> him in the stocks. When he was in the stocks and saw that his guard was left alone,
> he demanded a dagger (*machaira*); the guard at first refused to give it, but Cleomenes
> threatened what he would do to him when he was freed, until the guard, who was
> a helot, was frightened by the threats and gave him the dagger. Cleomenes took the
> weapon (*sideros*) and set about slashing himself from his shins upwards; from the shin
> to the thigh he cut his flesh lengthways, then from the thigh to the hip and the sides,
> until he reached the belly, and cut it into strips; thus he died [...]. (Hdt. 6.75.1–3, cf.
> Paus. 3.4.5)

The image of the last period of Cleomenes's reign arouses considerable doubts.
Most Greeks, including Herodotus himself, perceived his death as a punishment
for godlessness (Hdt. 6.75.3). The Spartans also associated his death with insanity
caused by drunkenness (Hdt. 6.84, cf. Bradford 1994, 61). Some scholars see the
traditional view that he committed suicide as credible (Luria 1928, 27–29), but

many questions have been posed as well (Roobaert 1985, 59; Richer 1998, 403; cf. Devereux 1995, 92–96). Some consider Cleomenes to have been an epileptic (Giusti 1928, 54–76) or a schizophrenic (Forrest 1968, 93; Devereux 1995, 141–181). Georges Devereux actually considers Cleomenes's putative illness to be a "classic case of paranoid schizophrenia" (1995, 180). The manner of his death, according to Devereux, constitutes the most eloquent proof of his illness (doubts as to Cleomenes's illness: Griffith 1989, 51–78). In addition, Devereux points to the negative factors that impacted the formation of his personality during his childhood and adolescence, including the bigamy practiced by his father, King Anaxandridas, abnormal relationships within the family and with his father, the influence of a mother who lived in sexual abstinence, rivalry with his much more talented half-brother Dorieus (Devereux 1995, 71–88). When all came to ruin and his defeat was increasingly obvious, Cleomenes foresaw his inevitable fall and took his own life (Devereux 1995, 106 and n. 1). Alternatively, we may be dealing with a very successful attempt of his enemies to blacken his reputation; also, appearances of a suicide (cf. Cartledge 1979, 153) may have been created to disguise what in reality was a brutal assassination. On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that the impending fall of a leader who shortly before had been powerful and influential pushed him to desperate deeds that went against the Spartan code. Viewed against the background of other Spartan suicides, the one committed by Cleomenes is certainly unusual (cf. David 2004, 32–34).

Another conjecture is that Cleomenes, perceiving himself threatened, tried to incite the helots against his political opponents. Its proponent, Guy Dickins (1912, 24, 26, 30), assumes that by attempting to strengthen royal power, destroy the ephorate and restart foreign invasions, Cleomenes actually planned to extend civic rights to the entire helot community. His view was to a greater or lesser extent accepted by many scholars, e.g. (1954, 32, 34), Wolski (1954, 76 n. 2; 1963, 198 ff.) and Huxley (1962, 98). However, as correctly pointed out by Oliva (1971, 146–147), this view finds no confirmation in the sources. Herodotus is silent on this possibility. To assume that Cleomenes incited the helots we would have to link him to the putative helot rebellion which according to Plato (*Nomoi* 698d–e) was the reason why the Spartans did not come on time to aid the Athenians in 490 BC (cf. Cartledge 1979, 153–154). Whereas it is beyond doubt that there were conflicts within the ruling group, of which the quarrel between Cleomenes and Demaratus was a symptom recorded in the sources, it would be difficult to follow Dickins and seriously treat the possibility that a "royalist party", a group with a clearly monarchical programme aimed at putting power in the hands of one man, with Cleomenes at its head existed in Sparta at the time. But whatever the case, towards the end of the ninth decade of the fifth century BC Cleomenes became Sparta's exceedingly embarrassing problem.

Did the Spartans have a hand in its solving? This question was reviewed by David Harvey (1979, 253–260, cf. Griffiths 1989, 51–78) in his analysis of the likelihood that Cleomenes had been assassinated. Herodotus reports that when Cleomenes went mad, "his relatives (*hoi prosekontes*) bound him in the stocks" (Hdt.

6.75, 2); this phrase may indicate his two half-brothers Leonidas and Cleombrotus, his juniors by a year or two (the third, Dorieus, had died some time before), and his daughter Gorgo, then about seventeen. The eldest of those three, Leonidas, not only might have felt responsible for a mentally unstable relative, but also was the most obvious candidate for the throne. As Herodotus tells us elsewhere, Leonidas became king quite unexpectedly (Hdt. 7.204), which means that until the critical moment he had no hope of ever ascending the throne – which was obvious as long as his two elder brothers, Cleombrotus and Dorieus, and Cleomenes who held the royal power, were alive. After the death of Dorieus, the madness of Cleomenes opened this opportunity to him; if we accept the theory of a conspiracy against Cleomenes, this makes Leonidas the most suspicious person involved. It is, unfortunately, not known when Leonidas married Gorgo; it was certainly a dynastic marriage, strengthening his right to the throne to the detriment of his brother (possibly his twin) Cleombrotus (Hdt. 5.41.3: 7.205.1).

The succession to the throne began to be debated in Sparta even before Cleomenes's return, soon after his machinations that led to the deposition of King Demaratus came to light. Incidentally, it is interesting that the lawfully appointed king fled Sparta, whereas Leutychides, who ascended the throne as a result of the intrigue, remained. We might, of course, say that this was because no other candidate was available, since Demaratus went to Persia (Hdt. 6.70.3), but it is nevertheless curious that this problem does not arise in the sources at all. This probably results from the fact that Herodotus's informants were biased; hostile towards Cleomenes, they presented his enemies, the pro-Persian Demaratus and the leader of a failed colonising expedition Dorieus, in a better light than their actions, and the opinions of the Spartans themselves, would most likely have indicated.

When Cleomenes went into exile, it proved impossible to place his son on the throne, as was the custom in Sparta, since he had no son. Thus, his successor was, or hoped to become, Leonidas. Those hoped were dashed when the Lacedaemonians invited Cleomenes, then staying in Arcadia, to return to Sparta with the same rights as before, that is, as the rightful king (Hdt. 6.75.1). This made Leonidas "an obvious centre for palace intrigue" (Harvey 1979, 257). Did it make him also a murderer? The fact that all the sources are silent on this constitutes the main indication that he was not guilty of his half-brother's death.

However, can this silence be surprising when the man involved was the hero of Thermopylae? Considering how much Cleomenes was hated by the Spartans, Athenians and Argives, it must be noted that whereas the debacle must have been widely discussed throughout Greece (although probably all that was known about it was what the Spartans decided to reveal), very few had reasons to mourn him. But if Herodotus learnt the tale from the aging Gorgo, the wife of Leonidas, or from their son Pleistarchus (Harvey 1979, 254–255), it might be assumed that the mention of Cleomenes's "relatives" did not, in their opinion, put Leonidas in a bad light. The whole case is, all in all, highly ambiguous and it is unlikely that we will ever learn the truth.

The death of Cleomenes had international repercussions. The Aeginetans "sent messengers to Sparta to cry out against Leutychides concerning the hostages that were held at Athens. The Lacedaemonians then assembled a court and gave judgment that Leutychides had done violence to the Aeginetans". The Aeginetans initially intended to seize him, but in the end "made an agreement that Leutychides should go with them to Athens and restore the men" to them (Hdt. 6.85). Leutychides went to Athens, but achieved nothing (Hdt. 6.86 ff.).

The fall of Cleomenes raised his enemies, and it was them that created the unfavourable image of his deeds and his policies. Contrary to Devereux (1995, 199), in whose view the genius of Cleomenes was born only in the scholars' imagination, he was certainly the greatest Spartan king of the fifth century BC. It was he, after all, that strengthened Sparta's position on the Peloponnese by defeating Argos and through his actions in Central Greece created the foundations of Sparta's pan-Hellenic authority. Sparta's leadership in the period of the Persian Wars was to a large extent owed to a king who died in disgrace and was discredited in the eyes of the posterity by his many enemies, who found an eloquent spokesman in Herodotus.

The Persian Wars. Leonidas and Pausanias

Sparta's internal troubles soon faded into the background in the face of a threat faced by the entire Greece. In 491 BC, the envoys sent by Darius demanded the tribute of "earth and water" from the Greek cities, which symbolised their acceptance of the Persian king as their overlord. All the island states of the Aegean and many on the mainland complied; the Athenians and Spartans rejected the demand. According to a legend, in Athens the envoys were thrown into a pit and in Sparta – into a well, and told that this was where they could get "earth and water" for their king. The inevitability of a war with Persia, which by 491 BC was already evident, united the Greeks, even though the two cities getting ready to fight, Athens and Sparta, were their largest. However, Sparta was not directly threatened by the Persians. Their first and the most important target was to be Athens.

The Athenians could count on the help of their ally Plataeae. Sparta's involvement was uncertain, even though its past policies placed it as one of the Persians' enemies; but most probably the Spartans promised the Athenians to send military aid. When in the early September 490 BC the Persian army, having conquered Eretria, entered Attica, the Athenians sent to Sparta a runner named Philippides, who asked for immediate help (Hdt. 6.106.1–2). The Spartans promised to come as soon as possible, "but they could not do this immediately, for they were unwilling to break the law. It was the ninth day of the rising month, and they said that on the ninth they could not go out to war until the moon's circle was full" (Hdt. 6.106.3). This sounds mysterious, if not outright suspicious. Is it possible that the Spartans did not wish to render assistance to the Athenians and thus used an excuse that cannot deceive a modern, critical reader? Let us note that similar reservations

were voiced also by the Greek authors in search of a rational explanation for the Spartans' absence at Marathon.

Plato informs us in his writings that the Spartans could not come because they were dealing with a helot rebellion (Plato, *Nomoi* 3.98e, 692d). Historians harbour varying opinions as to that helot revolt in the period of the Battle of Marathon. Some believe it (e.g. Kiechle, 1959, 117; Huxley 1962, 88–89; Zwolski 1964, 206–207; Oliva 1971, 48, 142–146), others do not (e.g. Roobaert 1977, 142–144; Ducat 1978, 26, 1990, 142 ff.; Clauss 1983, 198), and the surviving sources do not permit an unequivocal answer. Isocrates is of the opinion that the Spartan army moved out without delay but simply did not manage to arrive on time. Plutarch of Chaeronea underlines strongly that the Spartans did not wait for the full moon at all, and he repeats Isocrates's version (Plut. *De malignitate Herodoti* 26).

What did really happen? When Philippides arrived, the Spartans were celebrating a festival in honour of Apollo Karneios, as was customary in the month of Karneios. In fact, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the Spartans' intentions; their contemporaries did not question them either, all the more since the Spartans missed the Persians by a hair – they arrived when the Persian fleet had already left, but having left Sparta immediately after full moon, they crossed the more or less 230 kilometres between Sparta and Athens in just three days. Two thousand Lacedaemonians came to Attica, but the whole affair being over, they looked at the battlefield at Marathon, congratulated the Athenians on their victory and went back to Laconia (cf. Luther 2007).

The Athenians must have rejoiced at the victory for a long while, and enthusiastically; but finally the euphoria was replaced by fear for the future. The entire Greece was aware that the defeat would goad the Persians to attack in a much more serious manner. A change on the Persian throne delayed the assault, but not by much. The new king, Xerxes, was determined to start a great war with the Greeks. The preparations took him four years. The Greeks, in fact, were not unaware of their course. According to Herodotus, it was Demaratus, still resident in Persia, that warned his compatriots of the impending danger.

> He, however, feared detection and had no other way of informing them than this trick: – taking a double tablet, he scraped away the wax from it, and then wrote the king's plan on the wood. Next he melted the wax back again over the writing, so that the bearer of this seemingly blank tablet might not be troubled by the way-wardens. When the tablet came to Lacedaemon, the Lacedaemonians could not guess its meaning, until at last (as I have been told) Gorgo, Cleomenes' daughter and Leonidas' wife, discovered the trick herself and advised them to scrape the wax away so that they would find writing on the wood. When they did so, they found and read the message, and presently sent it to the rest of the Greeks. This is the story, as it is told. (Hdt. 7.239, 3–4)

This may or may not have happened; but the developments taking place in the East were known to the Greeks even without this warning.

> The professed intent of the king's march was to attack Athens, but in truth all Hellas was his aim. This the Greeks had long since learned, but not all of them regarded the matter alike. Those of them who had paid the tribute of earth and water to the Persian were of good courage, thinking that the foreigner would do them no harm, but they who had refused tribute were afraid, since there were not enough ships in Hellas to do battle with their invader; furthermore, the greater part of them had no stomach for grappling with the war, but were making haste to side with the Persian. (Hdt. 7.138)

The growing anti-Persian coalition centred on Sparta, which was the leading military power in Greece, and Athens, which defeated the Persians at Marathon. And it was Athens that were to be the target of Persian attack.

Delphi did not encourage resistance (Hdt. 7.139 ff.). Spartan envoys learnt there that Zeus favoured the Persians and either Sparta was to be conquered or its king was to be killed in battle (Hdt. 7.220.4). Considering that up to that time no Spartan king had ever fallen in combat it is easy to guess that Delphi tried to dissuade the Spartans from fighting the Persians. The Athenians, in turn, were advised by Apollo to flee to the ends of the earth. Others were similarly discouraged.

The Spartans sent two envoys to Persia, Sperthias son of Aneristus and Boulis son of Nicolaus. Those, as Herodotus puts it, "Spartans of noble birth and great wealth (*andres Spartietai physi te gegonotes eu kai chremasi anekontes es ta prota*)" were ready to pay with their lives for the deaths of Darius's envoys in 492 BC (cf. Hdt. 7.134.2). While they indeed might have expected they would be put to death, Xerxes proved extremely merciful. But if the Spartans had hoped to persuade the Great King to abandon the plan of invasion, they were disappointed.

Yet despite doubts, which must have been expressed also in Sparta, the state decided to join forces with the small number of other states that were ready to fight the Persian threat. In the autumn of 481 BC Sparta's representatives attended a meeting arranged on the Corinthian Isthmus. As its result, there emerged the offensive-defensive alliance which we today call the Hellenic League. Regrettably, the manner in which Herodotus describes its materialisation does not explain the details of its operation; but it is certain that members of the Isthmus meeting discussed military matters and entrusted Sparta with the highest command during both land and sea operations. Members of the League agreed to put all the conflicts between themselves on hold. They also decided to send spies to Asia and to appeal to Argos, Syracuse and the cities of Crete for help (Hdt. 7.145.2).

In Argos, the envoys were received by a council. Going contrary to the advice of the Delphic oracle, the Argives reported their readiness to join the alliance; but they stated conditions for their joining which they could be sure would be rejected, demanding that Sparta give them a truce for thirty years and turn a half of the command over the allied forces over to them. The Spartan envoys were ready to present the first of these conditions to the apella; regarding the second, they offered to relinquish one-third of the command. This did not satisfy the Argive council, who ordered the envoys to leave Argos before sunset of the same day

(Hdt. 7.149). It is quite clear this was a ploy; by stating those extreme terms, the Argives were seeking an excuse to sever the negotiations.

Whether in this period Argos had entered a closer cooperation with Persia was a point of debate even in Antiquity (Hdt. 7.152). Whatever the case, the allies were certainly aware that if Xerxes managed to enter the Peloponnese, Argos would become his ally. Maintaining neutrality would make Argos a pro-Persian state. Clearly Argos was strong enough for its participation in the coalition to make a difference, and at the same time too weak to adopt a policy of open hostility towards Sparta and its allies. The situation that emerged was quickly made use of by Argos' two neighbours, Tiryns and Mycenae, who took part in the war against Persia. In 480 BC, the Mycenaeans raised a troop of 80 hoplites (Hdt. 7.202), and in the following year, this time together with Tiryns, one of 400 hoplites (Hdt. 9.28.4). The Mycenaeans and Tirynthians' involvement on the side of the coalition assured them complete protection against the Argives, both during the war and immediately after its ending.

The cities of Crete initially seemed favourably disposed towards the proposals put forward by the Hellenic League, but when the answer from Delphi arrived, they refused to render any help whatsoever (Hdt. 7.169 ff.). In Corcyra, the envoys were promised some reinforcements, but the fleet of sixty ships failed to circumnavigate the Peloponnese in time, which gave rise to suspicions as to the Corcyrans' true intentions (Hdt. 7.168 ff.). In Syracuse, the tyrant Gelon agreed to join, but stated a condition which was entirely unwarranted, and ultimately impossible to fulfil: that he would receive the supreme command. The inevitable refusal allowed him to wash his hands of the entire affair (Hdt. 7.153 ff.). Clearly the Argives, Cretans, Corcyrans and Gelon not so much did not want to help, but were looking for the most convenient way of avoiding involvement in the impending war.

In the end, the anti-Persian coalition included thirty-one states: Lacedaemon, Athens, Corinth, Tegea, Sicyon, Aegina, Megara, Epidaurus, Orchomenus, Phlius, Troezen, Hermione, Tiryns, Plataeae, Thespiae, Mycenae, Keos, Melos, Tenos, Naxos, Eretria, Chalcis, Styra, Elis, Potidaea, Leucas, Anactorion, Kythnos, Siphnos, Ambracia and Lepreon. Together, they raised an army of nearly 40,000 hoplites, 70,000 light infantry, 400 triremes and slightly fewer penteconters. The leader of the coalition was Sparta, entrusted with high command on the land and sea.

The first military action of the League, undertaken in May 480 BC, was to send 10,000 hoplites by sea to the area of the Tempe plain separating Macedonia from Thessaly. Soon, however, the defence of the vast plains of Thessaly was discovered to be unviable and these troops were withdrawn. The allies decided to defend the pass of Thermopylae, the only convenient route from Thessaly to Phocis.

Thus, the troops were sent to Thermopylae, while the fleet was positioned close to the cape of Artemisium, where it protected the entrance to the Euboea Strait (Hdt. 7.175). The fleet was commanded by Eurybiades, a Spartiate, and consisted of 271 triremes, 177 of which came from Athens, Plataeae and the Athenian cleruchy in Chalcis, which made the Athenian naval commander Themistocles the most influential person in Eurybiades's entourage. The force stationed

in the gorge of Thermopylae counted six to seven thousand hoplites, including four thousand Peloponnesians (of which 300 were Spartiates and 900 to 1,000 were Lacedaemonians) (cf. Diod. 11.4.2.5; Isokr. 6.90–93), seven hundred Thespians, four hundred Thebans, and contingents of Phocians and Locrians from Opus (Hdt. 7.202–203). The commander-in-chief was King Leonidas (on Leonidas: Bradford 2011; Christien, 2013; Kulesza 2019), who "came to Thermopylae with the appointed three hundred he had selected, all of whom had sons" (Hdt. 7.205.1). This was the vanguard of the main force, which was to arrive after the conclusion of the Carneia in Sparta and the games at Olympia (Hdt. 7.206).

The criterion following which Leonidas selected his soldiers suggests that he was aware of the suicidal nature of the mission or at least considered the annihilation of his whole troop as possible. What was, therefore, the point of this heroic undertaking, apart from the fact that it served to fulfil the words of the Delphic oracle? Why did the main forces of the League not come to their aid? Why were not more soldiers sent to the area of the expected battle, since there had been enough time to select the three hundred – a process that certainly required some time for deliberation, and most probably also the selected men's consent? Alas, no satisfactory answers to these questions are available (Hignett 1963, 119–127; Matthew 2013, 60–99; Kulesza 2019); certainly those answers cannot be replaced by pointing to the threat to Sparta on the part of its enemies on the Peloponnese (cf. Cartledge 1979, 205). The subsequent developments show that in 480 BC the Greeks were not at all planning to fight a decisive battle with the Persians in Greece. Everything they knew about the potent Persian army told them to delay its march as much as possible, in order to better prepare themselves for the defence of the Corinthian Isthmus.

Xerxes arrived slightly later than expected, but the Greek reinforcements failed to come and Leonidas decided to take a stand on his own (Hdt. 7.207). His soldiers occupied a narrow strip of land between the mountains and the sea (on the topography, Hignett 1963, 127–141; Szemler, Cherf, Kraft 1996; Rapp (Rip) 2013, 39–61). Leonidas sent the Phocians to guard a mountain path which made it possible to circle around his forces, the existence of which he discovered only after his arrival. Having arrived at Thermopylae, Xerxes sent out a mounted scout. This man passed the narrowest point of the gorge, and there he saw only three hundred Spartiates. Some of them were combing their hair, others were occupied with physical exercises; they paid no attention to a single rider (or so the scout thought). He returned to the camp unhindered and reported his findings to the king (Hdt. 7.208). Xerxes shared his astonishment with Demaratus, who was present in his camp; Demaratus apparently warned him not to underestimate the Spartans, for they were "the very best" in Hellas (Hdt. 7.209, 4). Xerxes waited four days, but the Greeks, contrary to his expectations, did not withdraw. The king therefore gave the orders for attack (Hdt. 7.210). The battle is assumed to have lasted from 12 to 14 August 480 (cf. Deman 1958, 96–102; Lazenby 1993, 118–119), although there are also other views as to its precise dating: according to Jacek Balcer, Thermopylae fell most probably on 19 September (Balcer 1995, 254, cf. Sachs 1976, 245).

The Greeks repelled the Persian attacks for two days (Hdt. 7.211–212; on the battle, Daskalakis 1962; Bradford 1980; Szemler, Cherf, Kraft 1996; Matthews 2006; Cartledge 2007; Fields 2007, Malye 2007). In the evening of the second day, Ephialtes of Trachis showed the Persians the mountain path (Hdt. 7.213–214). He served as a guide to Hydarnes, leader of the elite troop known as the Immortals (Hdt. 7.215). The Phocians heard the approaching Persians at dawn on the third day (Hdt. 7.218). It was still before sunrise when Leonidas, down in the gorge, learnt that the Persians were moving along the path (Hdt. 7.219) and called a council. He ordered all the troops to depart (Hdt. 7.219–220); only the Spartiates and the Thebans were to stay. The seer Megistias of Acarnania and the Thespian hoplites defied his order (Hdt. 7.221–222); they stayed and died with the king.

Leonidas moved his men to the wider part of the gorge. Before noon, he led them out of the narrows and attacked the enemy (Hdt. 7.223). Soon the Greeks' spears were shattered and they fought on with swords. When Leonidas fell, the battle rolled over his dead body four times, until finally it was carried away by the Greeks (Hdt. 7.224). This was when Hydarnes and his Immortals arrived. The Greeks fell back to the narrows of the gorge. There, the Thebans left and surrendered to the Persians with raised hands; after the battle, they were branded with the king's mark (Hdt. 7.233). The rest fought to the end, surrounded on all sides and showered with missiles (Hdt. 7.225–226). They were killed to the last man.

Two Lacedaemonians, Alpheus and Maron, sons of Orsiphantus, were the most courageous (Hdt. 7.227), and beside them a Spartiate named Dieneces, who having learnt that the Persians were so many that the sky would grow dark with their arrows, allegedly said that this was good news, for the Greeks would fight in the shade instead of in the sun (Hdt. 7.226).

Xerxes gave orders for Leonidas's head to be cut off and impaled (Hdt. 7.238); the rest of the corpses were burnt. When the war was over, the amphictyons of Delphi honoured the Spartans by erecting a monument at Thermopylae, bearing the famous line ascribed to Simonides: "Foreigner, go tell the Spartans that we lie here obedient to their commands (*tois keinon rhemasi peithomenoi*)" (Hdt. 7.228.2; cf. Podlecki 1968, 257–275; Flower 1998, 365–379).

Two Spartiates, Eurytus and Aristodemus, had a chance of saving their lives, for they had severe ophthalmia and Leonidas sent them away (Hdt. 7.229.1), but Eurytus, having heard that the Persians were approaching through the mountains, "demanded his armor and put it on, bidding his helot to lead him to the fighting. The helot led him there and fled, but he rushed into the fray and was killed" (Hdt. 7.229.1). Aristodemus, in contrast, "lost his strength" and failed to join the battle. Whatever he himself thought of his stance, the Spartans were cruel: "When Aristodemus returned to Lacedaemon, he was disgraced and without honor (*oneidos kai atimien*). He was deprived of his honor in this way: no Spartan would give him fire or speak with him, and they taunted him by calling him Aristodemus the Trembler (*ho tresas Aristodemos kaleomenos*). In the battle at Plataeae, however, he made up for all the blame brought against him" (Hdt. 7.231). Further on, Herodotus adds: "It is said that another of the three hundred survived because he

was sent as a messenger to Thessaly. His name was Pantites. When he returned to Sparta, he was dishonored and hanged himself" (Hdt. 7.232.1).

Two hundred and ninety-eight Spartiates were killed at Thermopylae – and only their deaths were deemed worthy of being remembered. Herodotus allegedly learnt the names of all of them (cf. Paradiso 2009, 521–535). It is, however, certain that they were not the only men who gave their lives defending the Greek freedom at Thermopylae. Herodotus cites an inscription stating that four thousand Peloponnesians had fought at Thermopylae (Hdt. 7.228.1) and elsewhere he seems to assume that this was the number of soldiers (not only from the Peloponnese) who had died (Hdt. 8.25.2). Since earlier he stated that the Peloponnesian contingent was 3,100 strong (Hdt. 7.202), it suggests (Cartledge 1979, 204) that he had forgotten about some nine hundred to a thousand hoplites hailing from the *perioikoi* settlements and, in addition, the helots who accompanied the Spartiates during all of their battles; he focused solely on the heroism of the Spartiates. What is interesting here is not only his approach, but also the effectiveness of the Spartan propaganda managing to bestow a higher rank on the deaths of Sparta's citizens. Men who fought and died at Thermopylae had been citizens of many states, there were also the *perioikoi* and the helots there; but only the Spartiates became heroes. They appropriated the "beautiful failure" (on the history of the Thermopylae legend, cf. e.g. Trundle 2013, 150–163; Brown 2013, 100–116; Albertz 2006; also Kehne 1997, 21–47).

Throughout the time fighting had been going on at Thermopylae, the allied fleet of 271 ships stood at anchor at Artemisium (on the battle, Hignett 1963, 149–192). As it has already been mentioned, even though Sparta had brought in only ten ships, most probably manned by *perioikoi* sailors, the fleet's commander was a Spartiate, Eurybiades, "for the allies said that if the Laconian were not their leader, they would rather make an end of the fleet that was assembling than be led by the Athenians" (Hdt. 8.2.2). All the allies had agreed to his nomination, although not all of them enthusiastically; Herodotus (8.3) mentions that the Athenians were resentful.

Eurybiades, whom Herodotus describes as "a Spartan but not of royal descent" (Hdt. 8.42.2), was from the very beginning contemplating a withdrawal, but he could not proceed with it while the fighting at Thermopylae continued. In addition, skirmishes with the Persian fleet, which had been weakened by a storm, usually ended well for the Greeks, which made the withdrawal less urgent (the chronology of the Thermopylae/Artemisium campaign is discussed by Hignett 1963, 379–385).

The Euboeans begged Eurybiades to keep the fleet at Artemisium until they managed to evacuate "their children and households" to safety, but without success, so they went to Themistocles, the Athenian commander, and bribed him with thirty talents (Hdt. 8.4.2). Themistocles gave five of those talents to Eurybiades and three to Adimantus, the Corinthian naval commander, persuading them to stay and fight at Artemisium (Hdt. 8.5). The battle proved indecisive, and when the news of the defeat at Thermopylae came, the fleet sailed south (Hdt. 8.21).

The Hellenic League decided to build a wall in the narrowest, six-kilometres-wide part of the Isthmus and take a stand there, while the fleet was placed in the Salamis Bay (Hdt. 8.40). The commander at the Isthmus was Leonidas's brother Cleombrotus, at Salamis – Eurybiades son of Eurycleides. When the Persians took Athens and burnt the Acropolis, the terrified Greeks wanted to withdraw from Salamis to the Isthmus. Eurybiades yielded to them, if not immediately, and gave the order to withdraw. In the night of the same day, however, Themistocles persuaded him to call one more council. At that council, Themistocles argued in favour of accepting a battle at Salamis, and when the Corinthian naval commander called him, very offensively, "a man without a city (*apoli andri*)" (Hdt. 8.61), he threatened to sail away with the Athenian fleet, which was 200 ships strong, in order to establish a colony in the West. His arguments finally persuaded (or at least frightened) his opponents and Eurybiades cancelled his order. Then for about three weeks nothing happened. In the end, fearing that the Peloponnesians would eventually force Eurybiades to withdraw, Themistocles resorted to a ruse, namely, he sent his slave Sikinnos to Xerxes with a warning that the Greeks intended to withdraw; an action that would deprive the king of the opportunity to rout them in a pitched battle. Having thus guaranteed himself an attack of the Persian fleet, Themistocles got his desired battle. The Greeks achieved a colossal victory at Salamis (cf. Balcer 1995, 257–272, and Hignett 1963, 193–247). It was to great extent owed to the Athenians, who provided the Greek fleet with the largest number of ships and a brilliant (and cunning) commander and politician. Certainly the Spartans had the least input in the victory at Salamis, as they were represented there by Eurybiades and sixteen ships.

After the Battle of Salamis, Xerxes withdrew his fleet from Greece and marched overland to Hellespont, taking most of his army with him. In Greece he left only a part of it, commanded by Mardonios. Soon after the victorious battle the Hellenes sailed to the Isthmus "to award the prize of excellence (*aristeia*) to him who had shown himself most worthy of it in that war" (Hdt. 8.123.1). It proved impossible to establish who that man was, however, for each commander voted for the prize to be awarded to himself; but the majority voted for the second prize to go to Themistocles.

> The Greeks were too jealous to assign the prize and sailed away each to his own place, leaving the matter undecided; nevertheless, Themistocles was lauded, and throughout all of Hellas was deemed the wisest man by far of the Greeks. However, because he had not received from those that fought at Salamis the honor due to his preeminence, he immediately afterwards went to Lacedaemon in order that he might receive honor there. The Lacedaemonians welcomed him and paid him high honor. They bestowed on Eurybiades a crown of olive as the reward of excellence (*aristeia*) and another such crown on Themistocles for his wisdom (*sophies*) and cleverness (*dexiotetos*). They also gave him the finest chariot in Sparta, and with many words of praise, they sent him home with the three hundred picked men of Sparta who are called Knights (*hippeis*)

to escort him as far as the borders of Tegea. Themistocles was the only man of whom we know to whom the Spartans gave this escort. (Hdt. 8.124)

The Greeks had reasons to rejoice, and since the threat was not yet completely over, it must be assumed that the squabbles did not prevent Themistocles's merits from being appreciated; at least, as it turns out, not in Sparta. Hence the suggestion posed by Cartledge (1979, 211) that the "escort of honour" mentioned by Herodotus accompanied Themistocles to make sure that he went to where the Spartan authorities wanted him, and not to some area of the Peloponnese where he might threaten Sparta, seems a sign of excessive suspiciousness.

Mardonios, who spent the winter of 480/79 with his troops in Thessaly, was seeking a rapprochement with Athens (Balcer 1995, 280 ff.). The situation was delicate. Athens had no intention whatsoever to enter negotiations with the Persians, but at the same time Sparta was clearly reluctant to fight Mardonios, pinning all its hopes on the defensive wall across the Isthmus, which by then was finally ready. In 479 BC, despite the Athenians' demands, the Spartans were loath to leave the Peloponnese. Just as in 490 BC they had waited for the full moon and were late for the Battle of Marathon and in 480 BC they had been delayed by the Carneia and thus only their vanguard stood at Thermopylae, this time they cited the Hyacinthia as the reason. Only the fear that Athens might go over to the Persian side – of which option they have been made aware by Chileus of Tegea (Hdt. 9.9.1–2) – made Sparta act (Hdt. 9.9–10). Answering the Athenians' call, the Spartans decided to march north. The army of the Hellenic League was commanded by Pausanias – son of the late King Cleombrotus, Leonidas's nephew and the regent for King Pleistarchus son of Leonidas, who was a minor (Hdt. 9.10.1–2; cf. Lazenby 1975, 235–251). For his co-commander Pausanias chose Euryanax, the illegitimate son of Dorieus (Hdt. 9.10.3; cf. Lazenby 1985, 194 n. 31).

At night, five thousand Spartiates moved out (Hdt. 9.10.1); they were probably divided into troops of a thousand men, one from each village. If Demaratus was correct in speaking of 8,000 Spartiates in 480 BC (Hdt. 7.234.2), it means that two-thirds of citizens of an age suitable for military service were called to arms. After them went five thousand of the Lacedaemonian *perioikoi* (Hdt. 9.11.3). Each Spartiate was accompanied by seven helots, which means that there were 35,000 of them in total (Hdt. 9.10.28–29).

The Spartan army was awaiting the arrival of the rest of their allies at the Isthmus, but even before they gathered, a thousand men had been sent to Megara (Hdt. 9.14.1). Twenty-four states were represented in the allied army, which in total counted 38,700 hoplites and close to 70,000 of light infantry (a half of the latter were helots). The almost complete absence of cavalry was an obvious weakness.

When the Argives reported to Mardonios, then staying in Athens, that the army had moved, the latter first demolished Athens, and then marched first to Megara, then to Boeotia (Hdt. 9.13). In the meantime, the army commanded by Pausanias moved from the Isthmus to Eleusis in Attica, and from there to Boeotia (Hdt. 9.19). The hostile armies met at Plataeae. For a long while both sides tried to avoid a

clash, but finally difficulties in obtaining provender and the continuing attacks of the Persian cavalry made Pausanias accept a battle. He called a council, during which it was decided to move slightly closer to Plataeae. The army marched out in the night. Fearing an attack of the Persian cavalry, the troops in the centre of the formation marched quickly all the way to Plataeae.

Pausanias's situation was further complicated by "the leader (*lochagos*) of the Pitanate battalion (*lochos*)" (Hdt. 9.53.2), one Amompharetus, who had not been present at the council and did not follow the order, considering withdrawal to be a sign of cowardice (Hdt. 9.53–55). Pausanias and Euryanax, who feared that leaving Amompharetus and his men behind would sentence them to certain death, tried to reason with him. The debate continued throughout the night.

At dawn, Pausanias gave the marching orders and Amompharetus and his men stayed behind. The Athenians marched across the plain while Pausanias led his army through hills.

> Now Amompharetus at first supposed that Pausanias would never have the heart to leave him and his men, and he insisted that they should remain where they were and not leave their post. When Pausanias' men had already proceeded some distance, he thought that they had really left him. He accordingly bade his battalion (*lochos*) take up its arms and led it in marching step after the rest of the column, which after going a distance of ten furlongs, was waiting for Amompharetus by the stream Moloïs and the place called Argiopium, where there is a shrine of Eleusinian Demeter. The reason for their waiting was that, if Amompharetus and his battalion should not leave the place where it was posted but remain there, they would then be able to assist him. No sooner had Amompharetus' men come up than the barbarians' cavalry attacked the army […]. (Hdt. 9.57)

The Battle of Plataeae ended with the Persians' crushing defeat. Their army scattered and fled north in panic. The triumphant Pausanias had a herald announce that the spoils of war, which the helots had collected and gathered in one place, was protected and could not be taken away. "Much of all this the helots showed, as much as they could not conceal" comments Herodotus, "but much they stole and sold to the Aeginetans. As a result the Aeginetans laid the foundation of their great fortunes by buying gold from the helots as though it were bronze" (Hdt. 9.80.1). The process of gathering and dividing the spoils is not clear to us, since Herodotus does not write about all the details. The remark concerning the Aeginetans growing rich on the helots' gullibility may be ascribed to Herodotus making use of information provided by the Athenians (Cartledge 1979, 209). Conversely, it is certain that tithes for the Delphic Apollo the Olympian Zeus and Poseidon at the Isthmus were set apart. "When they had set all this apart, they divided what remained, and each received, according to his worth, concubines (*tas pallakas*) of the Persians and gold and silver, and all the rest of the stuff (*alla chremata*) and the beasts of burden," says Herodotus (9.81.1), "but tenfold of every kind, women, horses, talents (*talanta*), camels, and all other things (*talla chremata*) also, was set

apart and given to Pausanias" (Hdt. 9.81.2). Later on he comments on the burial of the fallen men:

> But the Greeks, when they had divided the spoils at Plataea, buried each contingent of their dead in a separate place. The Lacedaemonians made three tombs; there they buried their "irens" (*tous (e)irenas*, younger men, but "priests" in manuscripts), among whom were Posidonius, Amompharetus, Philocyon, and Callicrates. In one of the tombs, then, were the "irens" (*hoi (e)irenes*, but "priests" in manuscripts), in the second the rest of the Spartans (*hoi alloi Spartietai*), and in the third the helots (*hoi heilotes*). This, then is how the Lacedaemonians buried their dead. (Hdt. 9.85.1–2)

And this is what Herodotus has to say about the combatants:

> [...] the Lacedaemonians excelled all in valor. Of this my only clear proof is (for all these conquered the foes opposed to them) the fact that the Lacedaemonians fought with the strongest part of the army, and overcame it. According to my judgment, the bravest (*aristos*) man by far was Aristodemus, who had been reviled and dishonored (*oneidos kai atimien*) for being the only man of the three hundred that came alive from Thermopylae; next after him in valor were Posidonius, Philocyon, and Amompharetus. Nevertheless, when there was a general discussion about who had borne himself most bravely, those Spartans who were there judged that Aristodemus, who plainly wished to die because of the reproach hanging over him and so rushed out and left the battle column behind, had achieved great deeds (*erga megala*), but that Posidonius, who had no wish to die, proved himself a courageous fighter, and so in this way he was the better man (*andra agathon*). This they may have said merely out of jealousy (*phthono*), but all the aforesaid who were killed in that fight received honor, save Aristodemus; he, because he desired death because of the reproach previously mentioned, received none. (Hdt. 9.71.2–4)

Having buried the men who had fallen at Plataeae, the Greeks marched to Thebes and demanded that men who had sided with the Persians be surrendered to them (Hdt. 9.86). The Thebans withstood a twenty-day siege and then surrendered all those traitors to the Greek cause who had failed to flee the city (Hdt. 9.87 ff.). Later, Pausanias had them executed at Corinth.

According to the Greek tradition, the Greeks triumphed at Plataeae in the morning, and in the sea battle at Mykale in the evening of the very same day (Hdt. 9.90.1;100; Balcer 1995, 290–291). In the latter, the fleet was commanded by King Leutychides, who in the spring of 479 BC had replaced Eurybiades.

After the victory at Mykale, the Greeks sailed to Samos, where they debated the future of Ionia. The Peloponnesians were in favour of leaving Ionia to the Persians and resettling the Ionians to Greece, to those of the coastal cities whose residents dishonoured themselves by taking the Persian side (Hdt. 9.106). A part of the issue was certainly Sparta's fear of involvement in distant territories. Also, Sparta was aware that, being a land power, it could not succeed at tasks requiring a strong fleet; in other words, it had neither the power to defend Ionia nor the means to ever

acquire such power by itself. What is more, the Spartans probably understood, or at least sensed, that a defence of Ionia in which Sparta would take part would shift the balance of power towards the maritime states, especially Athens, who already had a large fleet at their disposal.

The issue of what to do with the Ionians triggered the first serious clash among the victors: Sparta wanted to leave them to their own devices, whereas Athens maintained that the evacuation of Ionia was not even to be considered. In the end, the fleet sailed to Hellespont, and this was where the former allies went their separate ways: "The Peloponnesians then who were with Leutychides decided to sail away to Hellas, but the Athenians, with Xanthippus their general, that they would remain there and attack the Chersonesus. So the rest sailed away, but the Athenians crossed over to the Chersonesus and laid siege to Sestus" (Hdt. 9.114.2). From then on, the Athenians acted on their own.

After Plataeae, the residents of Athens returned to the city and began to re-build its walls. Sparta demanded that the works cease, professing the view that all fortifications in the central and northern Greece should be razed in case of another invasion; the Persians would then not be able to find a foothold there. The Peloponnese, the Spartans said, would provide shelter to all Greeks. This was certainly an attempt to make use of Athens' trouble: deprived of its walls, the city would be easy prey, not only to the Persians, and would find itself practically at Sparta's mercy. The Athenians were perfectly aware of this, especially Themistocles, who was at that time at the peak of his fortune and influence. Following his advice, the Athenians chose to follow an independent policy. Xanthippus was ordered to besiege Sestus until the city fell and Themistocles went to Sparta, ready to bargain for the rebuilding of the walls in Athens at any cost (Thuk. 1.90–93).

Themistocles arrived in Sparta before the other members of the embassy left Athens and made use of his popularity among the Spartans to make them drop their guard. Following an earlier agreement, the remaining envoys left Athens only when the walls rose to a sufficient level. When the news of this began to reach Sparta, Themistocles feigned astonishment and persuaded the Spartans to send envoys to Athens to investigate the problem on the spot. The Athenians followed the instructions which Themistocles had left them and took those envoys hostage. When the rest of the Athanian embassy finally arrived at Sparta, Themistocles launched the final match. He announced that the city now ready for defence and that it will indeed defend itself. During the war, he argued, Athens had proved their capability of choosing a course of action that suited both the city's own interests and those of its allies. Athens adopted a similarly constructive course of action in rebuilding the walls, so at present they were asking Sparta to respect that decision. Faced with this, Sparta willy-nilly agreed. Themistocles and his compatriots returned to Athens and the Spartan envoys to Sparta.

The shared Persian threat overshadowed the political differences between Sparta and Athens for a while; but Themistocles's intrigue left a trace of distrust, and perhaps also aversion, among the Spartans (this would be especially true if the Spartans' intentions in demanding the cessation of wall reconstruction were not

entirely pure). For the time being, however, sincerely or not, Athens and Sparta officially remained in the most cordial relations they ever had throughout their history.

In addition, Sparta was not inclined to give up the leadership of the Greek world – a leadership which, owing to the effectiveness of the Spartan high command during the Persian wars, won Sparta general respect. However, both at that time and in Sparta's later history there existed within the political elite, and more broadly – within the body politic, differences of opinion regarding the most favourable courses of action. The changing fortunes of Spartan political leaders certainly, at least in part, resulted from political intrigues, but they also to some extent reflected the changes in public opinion.

After the victory at Salamis and Plataeae, Sparta was able to continue the war on the sea, which was what the Ionians demanded. It was also able to begin revenge actions against the pro-Persian states in central and northern Greece, and to limit its own interests to matters concerning the Peloponnese, strengthening its hold on the area at the cost of states which in 480–479 BC had chosen the wrong side or showed insufficient enthusiasm and readiness to make sacrifices for the common cause. Most probably, the Spartans proved unable to reach a consensus as to the optimum course of action, since each of these concepts was being implemented only in some measure; but this limited the horizon of the Spartan policies to the Peloponnese, albeit for a limited time.

In the summer of 478 BC, according to Cartledge (1979, 212), and only in 469/468 BC, according to Rooabert (1985, 246–252 cf. also Richer 1998, 546, 471), the Hellenic League sent out two expeditions. One, led by Leutychides, the king of Sparta, was to punish the supporters of the Persian side in the north of Greece, mainly the Aleuadae of Thessaly. Most probably at the same time, at the council of the Amphictyonic League, Sparta put forward a motion that "all cities be excluded from the Alliance which had not taken part in fighting against the Mede" (Plut. *Them.* 20; cf. Zeihofer 1959, 41). The second expedition, which included twenty ships from the Peloponnese, thirty from Athens and many others belonging to the remaining allies (Thuk. 1.94) commanded by the victor of Plataeae, the regent Pausanias, conquered a part of Cyprus and Byzantion. Actions undertaken by Sparta in 479/478 BC clearly indicate the state's desire to strengthen its leading position in the Greek world, a policy which found its greatest advocate in Pausanias, with Leutychides most probably its strong supporter. Its failure was caused by its opponents inside Sparta and Sparta's enemies outside it.

Leutychides failed to drive the Aleuadae from Larissa. Having returned to Sparta, he was put on trial and found guilty of corruption: his accepting bribes from the Thessalians was deemed the reason for the collapse of the expedition (Hdt. 6.72.5). The king, made famous by his victory at Mykale, was sentenced to lifetime banishment. He was probably not officially stripped of kingship, but his house was demolished and he himself left Sparta forever; he settled in Tegea, where he died ca. 469 BC. Meanwhile in Delphi Themistocles prevented the motion introduced

by Sparta from being accepted by making the other states see the danger that if it were, the Amphictyonic League would come to be dominated by Sparta.

In the north, Sparta incurred another defeat. Apparently, Pausanias's autocratic ambitions (Thuk. 1.95.1) made some Ionians and Aeolians, with the representatives of Chios, Lesbos and Samos at the fore, turn to Aristides with the proposal that being the founder of the Ionian cities, Athens become their leader.

In the spring or summer of 477 BC, Pausanias returned to Sparta: "In the meantime," writes Thucydides, "the Lacedaemonians recalled Pausanias for an investigation of the reports which had reached them. Manifold and grave accusations had been brought against him by Hellenes arriving in Sparta; and, to all appearance, there had been in him more of the mimicry of a despot than of the attitude of a general" (Thuk. 1.95.3). Later events make us wonder whether it were not the Athenians, wishing to take over the leadership of the Greek fleet, that stood behind those accusations (Wolski 1956, 76 ff.). These suspicions are, to some extent, confirmed by Plutarch: "For most of the allies, because they could not endure the severity and disdain of Pausanias, attached themselves to Cimon and Aristides, who had no sooner won this following than they sent also to the Ephors and told them, since Sparta had lost her prestige and Hellas was in confusion, to recall Pausanias" (Plut. *Cim.* 6). "On his arrival at Lacedaemon," Thucydides continues, "he was censured for his private acts of oppression (*pros tina adikematon*), but was acquitted on the heaviest counts and pronounced not guilty; it must be known that the charge of Medism (*medismos*) formed one of the principal, and to all appearance one of the best-founded articles against him" (Thuk. 1.95.5; 1.128).

Later on, Thucydides explains what this pro-Persian attitude involved. Apparently, it was found out that during his stay at the Hellespont Pausanias, wishing to take control over Greece, entered negotiations with the Persians. In order to win Xerxes's favour, he secretly returned some important captives ("connections and kinsmen of the king") to him, telling the Greeks that they had escaped. He also sent a letter to the king, whose contents came to light only later and whose tenor was allegedly as follows: "Pausanias, the general of Sparta, anxious to do you a favour, sends you these his prisoners of war. I propose also, with your approval, to marry your daughter, and to make Sparta and the rest of Hellas subject to you. I may say that I think I am able to do this, with your co-operation. Accordingly if any of this please you, send a safe man to the sea through whom we may in future conduct our correspondence" (Thuk. 1.128.7).

Xerxes accepted the proposal with delight and sent off Artabazus, son of Pharnaces, who was to replace Megabates as the governor in the satrapy of Daskylion, with an order to support Pausanias and a letter for him, which, according to Thucydides,

> contained the following answer:—'Thus saith King Xerxes to Pausanias. For the men whom you have saved for me across sea from Byzantium [Byzantion], an obligation is laid up for you in our house, recorded forever; and with your proposals I am well pleased. Let neither night nor day stop you from diligently performing any of your

promises to me, neither for cost of gold nor of silver let them be hindered, nor yet for number of troops, wherever it may be that their presence is needed; but with Artabazus, an honorable man whom I send you, boldly advance my objects and yours, as may be most for the honor and interest of us both.' (Thuk. 1.129.3)

Having received this answer, Pausanias

became prouder than ever, and could no longer live in the usual style, but went out of Byzantium [Byzantion] in a Median dress, was attended on his march through Thrace by a bodyguard of Medes and Egyptians, kept a Persian table, and was quite unable to contain his intentions, but betrayed by his conduct in trifles what his ambition looked one day to enact on a grander scale. He also made himself difficult of access, and displayed so violent a temper to every one without exception that no one could come near him. Indeed, this was the principal reason why the confederacy went over to the Athenians. (Thuk. 1.130)

This was also, adds Thucydides, the reason why the Spartans recalled Pausanias (Thuk. 1.131.1). To replace him, they

sent out Dorkis and certain others with a small force; who found the allies no longer inclined to concede to them the supremacy. Perceiving this they departed, and the Lacedaemonians did not send out any to succeed them. They feared for those who went out a deterioration similar to that observable in Pausanias; besides, they desired to be rid of the Median war, and were satisfied of the competency of the Athenians for the position, and of their friendship at the time towards themselves. (Thuk. 1.95.6–7)

Thus, Thucydides (1.130), and especially Herodotus (8.3.3), blame Pausanias for hegemony going over to the Athenians. In 478/477 BC, Athens founded a *symmachia* now known as the Delian League, which was to continue fighting the Persians on the Aegean (on the dating, Powell 2001 (1988), 11–12).

Sparta had to come to terms with the defeat it had incurred, owing to Athens, in northern Greece and on the Aegean in 478 BC. The sources are silent on the subject of the attitude of its residents to those events, but – in contrast to what Thucydides and Herodotus have to say on the matter – it seems that a massive political shock ensued. The decisive political clash centred upon the topic of foreign policy is reported by Diodorus (Diod. 11.50). The Spartan gerousia and the Assembly discussed the future relations with Athens in 477/476 BC (or in 476/475 BC). Many, in both councils, argued for a war that would take the leadership of the Hellenic League on the sea away from Athens and return it to Sparta. The clash involved the supporters of an active foreign policy, among whom Diodorus counts the "younger men" (*hoi neoteroi*), who advocated going to war with Athens and regaining hegemony on the sea. The opponents of the idea of fighting for hegemony were represented by Hetoemaridas, a member of the gerousia, "who was a direct descendant of Heracles and enjoyed favour among the citizens by reason of his character (*arête*)". While Diodorus does not clarify who his supporters were, Paršikov (1968, 134–135) is of the opinion that he represented "a policy adopted

by some Spartan circles and was supported by the Spartan aristocracy and all the advocates of 'the order of Lycurgus'". According to the way in which Diodorus reports the matter, Hetoemaridas managed to persuade the Spartans to abandon the idea of an active maritime policy, arguing "that they leave the Athenians with their leadership, since it was not to Sparta's interest, he declared, to lay claim to the sea". For this reason, the following years saw a dual hegemony, so to speak, with Sparta and Athens each standing at the head of its own *symmachia* yet allied to each other, and the Greek world remained in balance.

In the middle of 477 BC, the Spartan advocates of an active foreign policy incurred a serious defeat; but they did not give up, as demonstrated by Pausanias undertaking a new journey to the Hellespont; which brings us to the exceedingly complicated matter of the "treason" and the fall of the victor of Plataeae.

Pausanias went to Byzantion for the second time (in the spring or summer of 477 BC; Wolski 1956, 78), intending, as stated by Thucydides, to renew his secret talks with the king of Persia (Thuk. 1.128.3). Then, in 476/475 (Wolski 1956, 80), forced by the Athenians to leave Byzantion, he went to Colonae in the Troad and from there he continued his dealings with the Persians (Thuk. 1.131.1). The correct view of the character of his mission is certainly central to the assessment of his endeavours in this period. Thucydides leaves no room for doubt that Pausanias acted as a private person, saying that "he took a galley of Hermione on his own responsibility, without the authority of the Lacedaemonians, and arrived as a private person in the Hellespont. He came ostensibly for the Hellenic war, really to carry on his intrigues with the king, which he had begun before his recall, being ambitious of reigning over Hellas" (Thuk. 1.128.3).

Thucydides clearly harbours no doubt at all that those endeavours were of a private nature, since later on he repeats that Pausanias acted on his own accord and that

> after his second voyage out in the ship of Hermione, without their [the Lacedaemonians] orders, he gave proofs of similar behavior. Besieged and expelled from Byzantium [Byzantion] by the Athenians, he did not return to Sparta; but news came that he had settled at Colonae in the Troad, and was intriguing with the barbarians, and that his stay there was for no good purpose; and the Ephors, now no longer hesitating, sent him a herald and a scytale with orders to accompany the herald or be declared a public enemy (*polemon auto Spartiatas pro agoreuein*). Anxious above everything to avoid suspicion, and confident that he could quash the charge by means of money, he returned a second time to Sparta. At first thrown into prison by the Ephors (whose powers enable them to do this to the king), he soon compromised the matter and came out again, and offered himself for trial to any who wished to institute an inquiry concerning him. (Thuk. 1.131)

This report is questionable in many respects (cf. Powell 2001 (1988), 104–107). Let us note that the entire story of Pausanias's dealings as related by Thucydides seems to be uncritically repeated after someone else (Charon of Lampsacus?), which, incidentally, would be less surprising in Herodotus than in Thucydides.

But while the great historian is absolutely certain that Pausanias acted on his own accord, the matter does not seem to be clear-cut. This point is raised by Gomme (1945, 433), who maintains that it was the state that had sent Pausanias on his journey, but that this fact was carefully concealed (similarly Wolski 1956, 88). This is confirmed by the fact that a herald sent by the ephors arrived to Pausanias, then at Colonae, bearing a *scytale* ordering him to return to Sparta. Considering that a *scytale* consisted of two identical wooden batons, one of which would be kept by the ephors and the other taken by a messenger being sent out with some task (Plut. *Lys.* 19.8–12), it can be assumed that in reality, Pausanias was not a private person at all. If the above reasoning is correct (however, cf. Richer 1998, 483–490), the fact of sending Pausanias to Hellespont may have been the last success of the advocates of an active foreign policy.

Thucydides also says that the ephors demanded that Pausanias return to Sparta, threatening that otherwise the Spartiates would declare him a public enemy (*polemon proagoreuein*) (Thuk. 1.131.1). According to Dunker (1883), the phrase used by Thucydides was a technical term in Sparta, denoting the act of a person being declared outlaw. This view is difficult to accept; more probably, the ephors were warning Pausanias that in case of disobedience he would be treated as an enemy (Oliva 1971, 148).

Further on, we learn from Thucydides that Pausanias returned to Sparta counting on his ability to bribe the judges. This is certainly an *ex post* explanation, made up by his enemies, whose interests were not served by the alacrity with which Pausanias submitted to the ephors' command. Incidentally, the very fact of his return clearly indicates that Pausanias was either unaware of how immense was the danger over his head or he hoped to deal with it.

> Now the Spartans had no tangible proof against him—neither his enemies nor the nation—of that indubitable kind required for the punishment of a member of the royal family, and at that moment in high office; he being regent for his first cousin King Pleistarchus, Leonidas' son, who was still a minor. But by his contempt of the laws and imitation of the barbarians, he gave grounds for much suspicion of his being discontented with things established; all the occasions on which he had in any way departed from the regular customs (*nomimon*) were passed in review [...]. (Thuk. 1.132.1–2)

It is quite clear that the men who urgently recalled Pausanias to Sparta had nothing of what the victor of Plataeae (and, in addition, the only active king of Sparta, since Leutychides had been banished and Pleistarchus was a minor) could be accused during a public trial. The alleged proofs of his treason that were finally presented seem to be thinly disguised fabrications. Our doubts concern, first and foremost, the putative correspondence between Pausanias and Xerxes. Those who defend the authenticity of letters "cited" by Thucydides raise linguistic arguments, such as, for instance, the use of *tade* instead of *toiade* or similarities in the phrasing between those letters and the letter of Darius to Gadates, and the phrasing known from Spartan-Persian treaties from the period of the Peloponnesian war (Waszyński 1900, 113–117, cf. Gomme 1945, 432; reliability of the Pausanias/Xerxes

correspondence questioned also by Fornara 1966, 261 ff.). In reality, however, it is the contents rather than the form that is crucial to the assessment of the authenticity of these letters. The proposal of his marriage to Xerxes's daughter, put forward by Pausanias in the letter to the Persian king (Thuk. 1.128.7), is clearly suspicious; it was probably intended to offend the Greek, and especially the Spartan public opinion. In contrast to Thucydides, Herodotus is aware only of Pausanias's betrothal to the daughter of a Persian aristocrat Megabates – a tale which, incidentally, he finds unconvincing (Hdt. 5.32). Let us also note that whereas according to the letter cited by Thucydides, the Persian king promised Pausanias all possible aid in money and men (Thuk. 1.129.3), Thucydides is unable to say anything concrete about it (even though in various places he categorically confirms Pausanias's guilt). What is more, as Thucydides says, the contents of Pausanias's letter was discovered only later (*hysteron*), which means it had not been the basis for the action taken against the regent in Sparta (Thuk. 1.128.6).

According to Thucydides, his desperate situation forced Pausanias to give the helots a promise – criminal in the eyes of the Spartans – of granting them freedom in return for their help:

> Besides, they were informed that he was even intriguing with the Helots; and such indeed was the fact, for he promised them freedom and citizenship (*politeia*) if they would join him in insurrection, and would help him to carry out his plans to the end. Even now, mistrusting the evidence even of the Helots themselves, the Ephors would not consent to take any decided step against him; in accordance with their regular custom towards themselves, namely, to be slow in taking any irrevocable resolve in the matter of a Spartan citizen, without indisputable proof. (Thuk. 1.132.4–5)

Some scholars consider inciting the helots as the "direct cause of the regent's fall" (Wolski 1964, 208; Welwei 1974, 122; cf. Oliva 1971, 146–152), but Thucydides seems to point in a different direction:

> At last, it is said, the person who was going to carry to Artabazus the last letter for the king, a man of Argilus, once the favorite and most trusty servant of Pausanias, turned informer. Alarmed by the reflection that none of the previous messengers had ever returned, having counterfeited the seal, in order that, if he found himself mistaken in his surmises, or if Pausanias should ask to make some correction, he might not be discovered, he undid the letter, and found the postscript that he had suspected, viz., an order to put him to death. (Thuk. 1.132.5)

It was allegedly only at this point that the ephors decided to act, albeit again very circumspectly.

> On being shown the letter the Ephors now felt more certain. Still, they wished to hear Pausanias commit himself with their own ears. Accordingly the man went by appointment to Taenarus as a suppliant, and there built himself a hut divided into two by a partition; within which he concealed some of the Ephors and let them hear the whole matter plainly. For Pausanias came to him and asked him the reason of his suppliant

position; and the man reproached him with the order that he had written concerning him, and one by one declared all the rest of the circumstances, how he who had never yet brought him into any danger, while employed as agent between him and the king, was yet just like the mass of his servants, to be rewarded with death. Admitting all this, and telling him not to be angry about the matter, Pausanias gave him the pledge of raising him up from the temple, and begged him to set off as quickly as possible, and not to hinder the business in hand. The Ephors listened carefully, and then departed, taking no action for the moment, but, having at last attained to certainty, were preparing to arrest him in the city. (Thuk. 1.133–334.1)

It is interesting that while earlier Pausanias had been given a chance to refute the accusations, this time his fate depended solely on the law enforcement prerogatives of the ephors:

It is reported that, as he was about to be arrested in the street, he saw from the face of one of the Ephors what he was coming for; another, too, made him a secret signal, and betrayed it to him from kindness. Setting off with a run for the temple of the goddess of the Brazen House, the enclosure of which was near at hand, he succeeded in taking sanctuary before they took him, and entering into a small chamber, which formed part of the temple, to avoid being exposed to the weather, lay still there. The Ephors, for the moment distanced in the pursuit, afterwards took off the roof of the chamber, and having made sure that he was inside, shut him in, barricaded the doors, and staying before the place, reduced him by starvation. When they found that he was on the point of expiring, just as he was, in the chamber, they brought him out of the temple, while the breath was still in him, and as soon as he was brought out he died. (Thuk. 1.134.1–3)

The least doubt is raised by the king's tragic end, which certainly was remembered well enough owing to the greatness of the man involved and the unusual character of the measures taken against him. For the ephors to be able to resort to such measures, Pausanias must have earned them, or at least the ephors must have taken pains to make it appear he had earned them. Thus, it is not impossible that there existed no concrete evidence of Pausanias's guilt, only rumours and insinuations, and that this evidence was provided only by the intrigue in which the key role was played by the man of Argilus.

Let us note that Thucydides's testimony shows the ephors in an extremely positive light. They delay action until they obtain irrefutable evidence of guilt. Yet Thucydides mentions, though only in passing, that one of the ephors present at the arrest warned Pausanias of the danger with a slight nod (Thuk. 1.134, 1); this indicated there existed some difference of opinion inside the body that seized the initiative in the matter. The rest of the Spartans were certainly not unanimous either, as indicated by, for instance, the difference of opinion as to what to do with the body of the regent:

They were going to throw him into the Kaiadas, where they cast criminals, but finally decided to inter him somewhere near. But the god at Delphi afterwards ordered the Lacedaemonians to remove the tomb to the place of his death—where he now lies in

the consecrated ground, as an inscription on a monument declares—and, as what had been done was a curse to them, to give back two bodies instead of one to the goddess of the Brazen House. So they had two brazen statues made, and dedicated them as a substitute for Pausanias. (Thuk. 1.134.4–5)

Was Pausanias truly guilty of the crimes of which he had been accused? His duties made it necessary for him to contact the Persians and it was not difficult to construct a tale of his treason on that basis. It seems that today, few scholars believe Pausanias was guilty of Medism (Wolski 1979, 7–19), as opposed to, as has already been mentioned, his inciting the helots – a charge which many sincerely accept as true (Oliva 1971, 150–151; Grundy 1912, 267; Jordan 1990, 45 n. 14). It cannot, of course, be ruled out that Pausanias, knowing himself cornered, in his darkest hour did consider this step; but even that seems doubtful. No concrete information on the matter ever surfaced, there are no details of it whatsoever, and it would be difficult to ascribe this absence to the supposition that the helots were a taboo topic while Pausanias wished to strike to the very heart of Sparta. Particularly unconvincing are the hypotheses that his inciting the helots formed a part of a plan of a general reorganization of the state, especially since they are constructed in absolute separation from the source material. The idea that Pausanias, like Themistocles, incited the helots with the thought of forming a great fleet in which they would serve as oarsmen seems to be a misunderstanding (Wolski 1979). The hypothesis (Lazenby 1975, 246–48) that Pausanias wished (as Brasidas did later) to use them as hoplites is to an even greater extent based on a loose play of associations. Enfranchisement would not have been indispensable in either of those cases. Generally, it seems improbable that the charge of inciting the helots brought against Pausanias had any reflection in reality (cf. Roobaert 1977, 144–145; Clauss 1983, 113–114; Cartledge 1987, 175; Ducat 1990, 129–130).

The justification for Pausanias's ordeal was addressed to two different audiences, the non-Spartan one, to which the issue of the helots would have been too weak as a reason to slay a hero of Plataeae and which had to be shown a monstrous visage of a king who betrayed all the Greeks, and the Spartan one, who would have seen the helots as a cause enough but who also felt more comfortable knowing that the king's punishment had been for betraying Sparta and Greece.

Yet if we believe, even for a moment, that Pausanias was innocent of betraying his homeland and the whole of Hellas, the question arises of how this terrible conflict, a conflict that must have profoundly shocked the Lacedaemonians, should be explained. Considering the force of tensions then present in Sparta, the diagnosis posed by Oliva (1971, 150) – that the source of the conflict between Pausanias and the ephors should be sought in Sparta's internal situation – sounds too impassive; but even if it does not lead far, it points in the right direction.

His deeds, and his ambitions as well, made Pausanias outgrow his homeland. Sparta became too constraining for him. On the other hand, it was probably not the fact that his homeland could not, or would not, bow to his wishes that caused the tragedy. The men who stopped at nothing to destroy Pausanias were not necessarily guided by the noble desire to protect Lycurgus's regime. The jealousy and ambitions of his enemies

can be considered the most important, although never expressly stated reason. The death of the regent resulted (as possibly happened in the case of Cleomenes as well) from the actions of a group of men determined enough and organised enough to not only carry out a political murder, but also convey to the public a picture of events which fully and forever eliminated the issue of their responsibility for it. What is more, this picture was so blunt and so suggestive that Thucydides himself accepted it unconditionally, thus yielding to the propaganda spread by Pausanias's enemies (Wolski 1956, 76 ff.) and at the same time acting in the interests of the Athenians, who gained from his account an image of the circumstances of their seizing control over the Greek fleet which was favourable to them.

Pausanias was charged with treason and *hybris*, and "being ambitious of reigning over Hellas" (Thuk. 1.128.3). But while his ambitions were certainly far-reaching, it is hard to find irrefutable evidence of his wishing to rule the entire Greece. One of the alleged proofs of that was an inscription cited by Thucydides, which Pausanias ordered to be placed on a tripod dedicated at Delphi in commemoration of the victory at Plataeae: "Having defeated the Medes, the leader of the Hellenes / Pausanias in praise of Phoebus raised this monument" (Thuk. 1.132.2; trans. K.M.).

In calling himself "the leader of the Hellenes" (*Hellenon archegos*), did Pausanias see the victory over the Persians as mainly his own achievement? Later, this view was indeed expressed throughout Greece; the Plataeaens (possibly prompted by the Athenians) placed a complaint about it at the council of the amphictyony (Dem. 59.97–98) and finally the Spartans themselves removed the inscription. This, however, does not settle the question of Pausanias's intentions. And although some scholars (Paršikov 1968, 132) tried to prove that the phrase *Hellenon archegos* expressed the great ambitions harboured by Pausanias, it seems that Wolski (1956, 82) is the closest to the truth in saying that *archegos* was a neutral word denoting a military leader, although at the same time it underscored Sparta's claim (and right) to pan-Hellenic hegemony. The case of a bronze crater which after his victories in Cyprus and Byzantion Pausanias dedicated at the Pontic shore is different. On that crater, as seen by Herodotus (Hdt. 15.81, 3), Pausanias described himself as *archon Hellados eurychorou* (Nymphaios ap. Athen. XI1.536a).

Thus, Pausanias's enemies not necessarily were unconvinced of his guilt or conscious of the case against him being fabricated; they could have believed they were standing against a monster and defending a noble cause. When a few years later an earthquake destroyed Sparta, soon followed by the great helot rebellion in Messenia, it was believed that the calamity was a punishment for the sacrilege the Spartans had committed by slaying some helots who sought sanctuary in the temple of Poseidon at Tainaron and for their profanation of the temple of Athena Chalkioikos, in which Pausanias had taken refuge (Thuk. 1.128.1; Diod. 11.63.3)

Concurrently, there is no reason to see the alleged act of inciting the helots as the spark that started the Third Messenian War (although by saying that Pausanias incited the helots, the ephors may have unwittingly influenced their later actions). The remark on the suppliants at Taenarus does not indicate there had been a large number of them. Even if that event took place concurrently with the death of

Pausanias and was linked with it (the sources do not settle this issue), it not necessarily confirmed the charges against the king. The ephors actually needed to punish at least a few helots "involved" in his criminal schemes. We can guess that the helots did not have to be presented with detailed evidence of their guilt and it remains for us to regret that we do not know more about the Taenarus issue (cf. Ducat 1990, 130–1); this does not permit us to grasp the entirety of the plan aimed at destroying the good name, and the very person, of Pausanias.

The death of Pausanias had been variously dated, placing the events described above between the years 474 and 470 BC (Cartledge 1979, 213), in 473 BC (with the latest dating given by Forrest 1960, 237 ff.), ca. 470 BC (Dickins 1912, 34; Powell 2001 (1988), 107), in 470/469 BC (Wolski 1954, 93), between 470 and 467 BC (Lippold 1965), in the early sixties of that century (Oliva 1971, 151 n. 2), in 467/466 BC (White 1964, 140–152; Jordan 1990, 45). The most probable version is that the whole business occurred ca. 471 BC. The Spartan enemies of Pausanias who conducted the entire intrigue demanded that Athens make a gesture of solidarity with Sparta and imprison Themistocles, who was implicated in the matter by Pausanias's intercepted letter. At that time Themistocles was staying at Argos, having been ostracised by the Athenians; he managed to escape from there before he was captured by the Spartans and his own compatriots.

In the case of Themistocles, Sparta was also looking for excuses and not justice. The details of Themistocles's activity on the Peloponnese are not known (Thuk. 1.135.3; Plut. *Them.* 23), but a general sense of his dealings at the time is possible to grasp (cf. Kulesza 1998, 36). It was most likely under his influence that the small villages (*damoi*) of Elis coalesced into a city in a process known as synoecism (*synoikismos*); this city became a capital of a more centralised state and probably adopted a democratic system of government. Sparta, which had always supported the Peloponnesian oligarchies, correctly saw it as an action aimed against it. It had even more reason to worry if Themistocles had stood behind the introduction of democracy in Argos itself, the synoecism of Mantinea and the rebellion of Arcadia – and this is not impossible (Kulesza 1998, 36).

With the fall of Leutychides II and Pausanias in Sparta and Themistocles in Athens, ca. 470 BC the generation of the victors of the Persian Wars exited the political scene. After that, the political situation in Sparta and Athens, and generally in Greece, underwent a radical change.

Chapter 8 Sparta between the wars

Anton Powell rightly observes: "It is both difficult and intriguing to reconstruct Sparta's problems, and Spartan strategic thinking, in the (almost) half-century between the defeat of Persia and the beginning of the great war – the 'Peloponnesian War' – which Sparta began against Athens in 431" (Powell 2018, 292).

After the fall of Pausanias and the banishment of Leutychides II, the Agiad throne in Sparta came to Pleistarchus (480–459 BC), Leonidas's son, then still a minor, and the Europontid one to the young Archidamus II (469–427), a grandson of Leutychides. In practice, actual power was in the hands of the same elite who had eliminated Pausanias and Leutychides. Yet while their authority over Sparta remained uncontested, the situation on the Peloponnese was about to get out of hand. A focus on internal matters meant not only its withdrawal from the war against Persia, but also acceptance of the growing status of Athens. It may be argued that Sparta was forced to face the consequences of Themistocles's actions taken against the Lacedaemonian state in Argos, Elis and Arcadia. Herodotus recounts that between 479 and 457 BC the Spartans fought three major battles against Tegea and Argos: at Tegea against the Arcadians (although without Mantinea), at Dipaea (or Dipaieis), and against the Messenians at Ithome (Hdt. 9.35.2). Unfortunately, we do not know when exactly these battles took place or how each of the conflicts unfolded; we have no choice but to follow conjectures and only very hypothetical reconstructions of that period in Sparta's history.

In the late 470s and early 460s BC, the state of Argos, which had thus far been pushed into the defensive, took full advantage of the ongoing disintegration of the political balance achieved during the Persian Wars. Strabo (8.6.11 (373)) states that the Argives allied with Tegea against Sparta and attacked Mycenae. The conquest of Mycenae, which Diodorus dates at 469/467 BC, provoked Sparta to attack and defeat the united forces of Argos and Tegea on the latter's home ground. However, Sparta's difficulties were far from over, as the Arcadians rebelled soon afterwards. The situation became slightly less dire due to a settlement with Argos. It is possible that after the battle of Tegea, the Argives signed a pact promising to cease all hostilities against the Spartans in return for a *carte blanche* in Argolis, which facilitated their conquest of Tiryns (Tomlinson 1972, 108–109).

Free of the threat of an Argive attack, Spartans dealt with the insurgent Arcadians, defeating them at Dipaieis. The Argives, in turn, were able to continue the already initiated but not yet concluded task of "unifying" Argolis, to which Sparta gave its consent.

Most probably, the conquest of the Argolid lands began not with a confrontation with Mycenae, but with resettling the Tirynthians around the year 468 BC (Paus. 8.27.1; 2.17.5; 25.8; 5.23.3; Strabo 8.6.11 (373)), followed by an attack on Hysiai and Orneai (Paus. 8.27.1; 2.25.6), and finally, presumably in 465/464, on Mycenae (Paus. 6.25.5–7; 8.27, 1; Diod. 11.65; Strabo 8.6.19 (377)). The Argives first defeated the

Mycenaeans in the field and afterwards captured the city. Sparta was unable to come to its aid, as it had been weakened by recent earthquakes (Diod. 11.65).

Sparta was hit by a major earthquake in the mid-460s (Diod. 11.63–64; Plut. *Cim.* 16–17; Polyaenus 1.41.3). According to Diodorus, it destroyed many buildings and killed nearly twenty thousand Lacedaemonians (Diod. 11.63.1). Plutarch recounts that the damage was so great that only five houses were left standing (Plut. *Cim.* 16.4). It is likely that the urban population of Lacedaemon suffered greater losses than the communities living in hamlets and small settlements. The helots took advantage of the chaos and decided to mutiny against their masters (Thuk. 1.101, 2; Diod. 11.63–64; Paus. 1.29.8–9; 4.24, 5–7; Ar. *Lys.* 1137–1145 *cum schol.*; Ael. V. H. 6.7).

The helots marched on Sparta, but were halted by the quick response of young King Archidamus. He managed to assemble and organise a force of the remaining Spartiates, which discouraged helots from attacking the city (Diod. 11.63–64; Plut. *Cim.* 16.7). According to Diodorus, the helots then retreated to Messenia, whereas Plutarch states that they turned their attention to the *perioikoi* cities, many of which changed sides. Thucydides, however, reports that only two cities joined the helots' rebellion: Thouria in Messenia and Aethaea in Laconia (or Messenia) (Thuk. 1.101.2; cf. Ducat 1990, 132). Ancient sources are not entirely consistent when describing the nature of the uprising: some (Thucydides, Pausanias) present it as a Messenian rebellion, some (Diodorus) as a joint effort by the helots and Messenians, still others (Plutarch) emphasise that the unrest was caused by the Lacedaemonian helots. In any case, it was Messenia that soon became the major stage for that conflict.

The exact course of events remains unknown. The final stage of the uprising is associated with a siege of the rebel positions on Mount Ithome in Messenia. Before retreating there, the insurgent troops probably engaged the Spartans in several smaller or larger clashes in the field. Herodotus informs us that a Spartiate named Arimnestus, who had slain Mardonios at Plataeae, was killed during the Messenian War, at Stenyclerus (*en Stenyklaro*) along with three hundred men (Hdt. 9.64.2). Elsewhere, Herodotus mentions the battle which the Lacedaemonians and Messenians fought at Isthmos (Hdt. 9.35.2). Some scholars identify this with the battle of Ithome, yet Herodotus mentions Isthmos along with open field battles and the siege of Ithome could hardly be categorised as such (cf. Oliva 1971, 154). Cartledge (1979, 219) therefore suggests that what Herodotus meant in this passage was the "isthmus" between Ithome and the Taygetus, which separates the northern part of the Pamisos Valley (Stenyclerus) from the south (Macareae). Moreover, there remains, at least theoretically, the possibility that neither the Sterynclerus nor the Isthmos battle took place during the uprising in the 460s (cf. Ducat 1990, 141).

The Spartans were unable to capture Ithome on their own, so they turned to other Greek poleis for assistance. Cities that sent their contingents included Plataeae (Thuk. 3.54.5), Aegina (Thuk. 2.27.2; 4.56.2), Mantinea (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.3) and Athens (Thuk. 1.102.1–2). The Athenian help was particularly appreciated, as their troops

had experience in storming fortified locations. The Athenians sent to Ithome four thousand hoplites, led by Cimon (Ar. *Lys.* 1143 ff.). However, when their presence did not lead to the desired results, the disappointed Lacedaemonians grew suspicious, fearing that their Athenian allies might side with the rebels (Thuk. 1.102.3) and they dismissed them. Upon arriving in Messenia, were Athenians shocked to discover that the Spartan "slaves" were, in fact, Greek (Ste Croix 1972, 179 ff.)? It seems unlikely. Thucydides suggests that the Athenian troops had good intentions, but did not live up to their fame in terms of skill in siege warfare. In any case, Spartans did not disclose the reasons for sending the Athenians away, stating only that they did not need them. Since the Athenian contingent was the only one to be dismissed, the decision caused an outrage in Athens. As Oliva puts it (1971, 155), the Athenians realised that their allies did not trust them. As a result, that small episode in the so-called Third Messenian War became one of the reasons for a rapid deterioration in the relations between the two poleis. The Athenians "went away deeply offended, and conscious of having done nothing to merit such treatment from the Lacedaemonians; and the instant that they returned home they broke off the alliance which had been made against the Mede, and allied themselves with Sparta's enemy Argos; each of the contracting parties taking the same oaths and making the same alliance with the Thessalians" (Thuk. 1.102.4), and a period of mutual hostility followed.

However, the above version of events raises many doubts. What gives us a pause are the request Spartans made of Athens and the seemingly sudden decision to send the Athenian reinforcements away. The request is particularly surprising in the light of what happened before the major earthquake in Sparta. As French (1955, 108–118) points out, the Battle of Plataeae marked the beginning of a fifteen-year period of friendship between Athens and Lacedaemon. The two states cooperated on numerous occasions and there was no indication of a cooling of relations after Athens founded the Delian League, and although small missteps did happen, the sources imply that the two states collaborated rather than clashed with each other. In the matter of Themistocles, the Athenians did exactly what the Spartans wanted. The philo-Laconian mood in Athens is apparent not only from Cimon's position, but also from the fact that Athens aided Sparta in their conflict with Messenia.

It was around that period that the Spartan-Athenian relations irrevocably worsened. Thucydides informs us that the Thasians, defeated and besieged by Athens, turned to Sparta for help, asking the Spartans to mount an invasion on Attica. The Lacedaemonians secretly promised to comply with that request and intended to keep their word, but, as Thucydides claims, were prevented from doing so by the earthquake (Thuk. 1.101.2).

If Thucydides's account is accurate (and there is no reason to doubt it), the Spartans must have found themselves in a situation dire enough to appeal to a polis which they intended to take steps against; and indeed, there is much to suggest that the very existence of the Spartan state was threatened. Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* shows us a terrified Spartan emissary begging the Athenians for help. It is no coincidence that the envoy is Pericleidas (Ar. *Lys.* 1138), who named his son

Athenaeus (Thuk. 4.119.2), just as Cimon named one of his sons Lacedaemonius. For his part, Cimon pleaded with his countrymen, asking them not to cripple Greece by allowing Lacedaemon to fall (Plut. *Cim.* 16).

Thus the Athenians became involved. However, Thucydides mentions only one Athenian campaign to the Peloponnese, while Plutarch writes of two (Plut. *Cim.* 16–17). According to French (1955, 114), these morsels of information need not be contradictory, since Thucydides probably focuses on the most important expedition that ended with the Athenians being sent away, whereas Plutarch – who gives a more detailed account of Cimon's life – describes two expeditions. As mentioned above, the Spartans sent the Athenians away because they suspected double play. Given the protection Athens gave to Messenia, such fears were not entirely groundless. Moreover, if the Spartans had indeed promised to aid Thasians in their cause, they may have been afraid that should this matter come to light, the Athenians would be provoked into betrayal. This seems especially plausible if not one, but two campaigns took place, and the first one allowed Sparta to bring the situation under control. Once the fears were allayed, a change in the course of the Spartan politics (or a return to the previous one) could be expected. It is also likely that the mood in Athens also changed between the first and the second expedition, perhaps at the news of Lacedaemonians colluding with Thasos, and the Spartans had good reason to be suspicious. Although the act of sending Cimon away would not have been the reason for the growing hostility, it certainly constituted an expression thereof. From that moment on, the relations between Sparta and Athens became strained. Sparta's troubles lifted spirits in Athens, as they weakened (permanently, as some may have thought) the military and political might of the Lacedaemonian state. However, the Spartans soon shattered these hopes by defeating Athens in the Battle of Tanagra in 457 BC; which brings us to the abstruse chronology of the events under analysis.

It is not known for how long the rebellion lasted; more precisely, the entire chronology of the conflict has been disputed. It is generally assumed that the earthquake occurred in 464 BC (cf. Oliva 1971, 155 ff.). Thucydides discusses the helot uprising in connection with the Thasian rebellion (465–463 BC), before recounting Megara's alliance with Athens and the Athenian expedition to Egypt (Thuk. 1.101–103). According to his report, the rebels surrendered after ten years (*dekato etei*, Thuk. 1.103.1), which points to 455 BC. Diodorus (11.63) and the scholiast on Aristophanes (Ar. *Lys.* 1144) both indicate that the rebellion began in the year 469/468 BC. Similarly to Thucydides, Diodorus claims that the conflict lasted a decade (Diod. 11.64.4), but dates its end to 456/455 BC (Diod. 11.84.8).

The information we have on the situation in Greece in the 450s BC calls this dating to question, given that the Spartans fought the Athenians at Tanagra in 457 BC. It seems unlikely for Lacedaemon to be able to risk a campaign far from its borders before the Messenian War ended. This seems congruent with the claim made by the Old Oligarch, who stated that Spartans went to war with Athens after defeating the Messenians (Ps. Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 3.11). Consequently, the original passage from Thucydides has been amended and/or translated in many different ways.

In his edition of *The Peloponnesian War*, Classen (1862–1863) followed Kruger's (1836) suggestion to replace the *dekato etei* found in the manuscript with *tetarto etei*. This change meant that the rebellion ended not after a decade, but after four years. Others theorised that it lasted six years (Steup), five or six years (Gomme 1945, 401–411), or four or six years (Cartledge 1979, 217); yet authors willing to believe in Thucydides's ten years also abound (Lewis 1954, Scharf 1954, Sealey 1957). Opinions differ as to the beginning and the end of the revolt as well (a summary of the discussion in Oliva 1971, 156–161), even though all agree that the events took place in the 460s BC. Wilamowitz (1893, 295 ff.) believes the war to have broken out in 468 and ended in 459 BC (cf. Scharf 1954/55, 153 ff.; Hammond 1955; 1959.; Zwolski 1964, 208–209).

In the chronology proposed by Ernst Badian (1990, 289–320), which is followed in the present work, the insurgents besieged on Mount Ithome, finding themselves unable to offer further resistance, surrendered to Lacedaemon in 458/457 BC. The resulting truce allowed them to leave the Peloponnese unmolested, but forbade them to return. Anyone who set foot in the peninsula again was to become the slave of his captor (Thuk. 1.103.1 Diod. 11.84.8; Paus. 4.24.7).

Taking into account the sheer length and the nature of the war, as well as the Spartans' attitude towards the helots, the provisions of this peace agreement seem surprisingly benevolent. Thucydides explains them with religious concerns and the influence of the Delphic oracle: he writes that even before the events unfolded, the Pythian priestess advised Lacedaemonians to free everyone who had put themselves under the protection of Zeus at Ithome (Thuk. 1.103.2). Pausanias, in turn, associates the release of the Messenians with the easily defensible nature of their chosen stronghold and with the Pythia's warning that calamities would befall the Lacedaemonians should they harm the suppliants of Zeus Ithomata (Paus. 4.24.7, cf. 3.11.8; on the role of the oracle, Powell 2018, 301).

The modern scholars' tendency to rationalise led them to seek hidden, non-religious motives to Spartan's actions. Gomme (1945, 303) emphasised the strength of Messenian resistance, which gave them an advantage during negotiations. According to Fischer (1937, 73 ff.), the Spartans were unable to deal the Messenians a decisive blow and were forced to compromise. Cartledge (1979, 221) perceives the decision to release the Messenians as a conciliatory gesture towards Athens. Karavites (1982, 66–68) stresses the influence of public opinion, which was allegedly sympathetic towards the helots (although there is no evidence to support this view). In any case, the Spartans clearly could not, and probably did not want to, send the rebels back to their *kleroi*, afraid that they may have a bad influence on other helots (Oliva 1971, 162).

The very scale of the problem put Lacedaemonians in a difficult position. The number of expatriated Messenians is estimated at between fifteen and twenty thousand including women and children; four thousand were adult men (Kiechle 1958, 85–86). It was certainly a factor that influenced Sparta's decision. The state was getting rid of the most rebellious helots, effectively, as it would seem, preventing them from affecting their remaining compatriots. It is impossible to

ascertain whether or not this was a deliberate move on the part of Lacedaemon, which had striven towards destroying the helot "elite" since the early fifth century BC. Likewise, there is no reason not to believe the sincerity of the Spartan's religious concerns. If the earthquake was seen as an act of divine punishment for killing the helot *hiketai* in the temple of Poseidon, the Lacedaemonians were likely to be afraid of the consequences of harming the Messenian *hiketai* under the protection of Zeus Ithomata. The Spartans did not want to anger the gods again, and since they were unable to destroy their enemies, they wished to send them as far away from the Peloponnese as possible.

The Athenians settled the Messenian families driven out of the peninsula at Naupactus (Thuk. 1.103.2 Diod. 15.66.5; Isokr. 12.93; Paus. 4.24.7). It is unlikely that the exiles travelled there directly, they may have been taken to Athens first; but whatever the case may have been, it was in that city that their future was decided (Kulesza 1998, 40).

The answer to the question of why the Athenians decided to offer help to the Messenians lies in the political situation in the Athenian state. The dismissal of the reinforcement contingent under Cimon must have affected his status in Athens. In practice, ostracising Cimon meant a victory for the anti-Lacedaemonian faction in the Athenian government. This is the reason for the political shift from aiding Sparta in its war against the helots (by sending Cimon's expedition) to helping the helots (by locating them at Naupactus).

The dismissal of the Athenian contingent at Ithome was explained by Sparta suspecting Athens of harbouring sympathy towards the helots (on the potential threats to the Laconian authorities associated with the presence of the Athenians, cf., recently, Powell 2018, 360). While we have no way of knowing to what extent these fears were justified during the siege of Ithome, the later decision to settle the rebels at Naupactus indicates that the allegations were not entirely groundless. It would be difficult to dismiss the Athenian involvement in the matter of the exiles simply as an act of retaliation for the treatment they had received from Sparta. The Athenians' decision seems to have been carefully premeditated. In 456/455 BC, they settled the Messenian expatriates in a town from which they had recently (*neosti*) evicted some of its residents (Thuk. 1.103.3; Paus. 4.24.7; Diod. 11.84). If Thucydides's *neosti* refers to the Athenian conquest of Naupactus, we may even wonder whether that campaign was not fought precisely for the purpose of finding a place to settle the Messenians. However, as Badian (1990) demonstrates, *neosti* is likely to refer to settling Messenians in Naupactus. The Athenians thus gained a very convenient base for future operations against Sparta (Kagan 1969, 79), which the Lacedaemonians quite justifiably interpreted as a sign of open hostility. This seemingly unimportant event which barely deserved a mention in the sources caused a rift between the two states, beginning a period of mutual suspicion that soon bred hatred.

Taking the Messenians under their wing was a part of a broader scheme in the Athenian politics, which had taken a decisively anti-Laconian turn. Athens entered an alliance with Argos, a polis that laid claim to hegemony in the Peloponnese in

general and to Cynuria in particular (the region had been conquered by Sparta in the sixth century BC). Soon after Megara left the Peloponnesian League, striking an offensive-and-defensive alliance with Athens (Thuk. 1.103.4). The Athenians thus blocked Sparta's connection to the north through Megaris. The threat was felt particularly acutely in Corinth, as the presence of the Messenians in Naupactus and Megara's alliance with Athens put the Corinthian control over the Bay of Corinth at risk. To make matters worse, in 457/456 BC the Athenians captured Aegina, formally a member of the Peloponnesian League, and forced it to pay tribute. The vigorous efforts of the Athenians, who were evidently using (and, as it would soon turn out, overestimating) Sparta's moment of weakness, finally spurred Lacedaemon into action.

The pretext was provided by Doris's conflict with Phocis, which had taken Delphi. By coming to aid Doris, believed to be the homeland of the Dorians, Sparta wished to reclaim its authority as the leader of the Peloponnesian League which had been undermined by Athens' recent successes. In 457 BC, Nicomedes led an army of 1,500 Lacedaemonians and around 10,000 allies to central Greece. Since Megaris was controlled by Athens, with whom Sparta was not formally in a state of war, the troops were probably transported by sea through the Bay of Corinth. As expected, the arrival of Peloponnesian reinforcements allowed Doris to prevail over Phocis; yet the army found itself with no safe route back home, for when the Spartans were busy in Boeotia, the Athenians sent fifty ships around the Peloponnese to Pagae, thus cutting off Nicomedes's army from the sea. It was equally impossible to retreat by land, since the Athenian forces guarded Megara and all passes through the Geraneia leading towards the Isthmus.

Left with no other choice, the Lacedaemonians remained in Boeotia. The Athenians called for reinforcements from Argos and other allied poleis, preparing for war. However, it was Sparta that emerged victorious from the battle that ensued at Tanagra (Thuk. 1.108). Although the Spartans could finally return home, it was not an overwhelming triumph. It should be noted that the victory at Tanagra was only commemorated in Olympia (Meiggs, Lewis 36), which also indicates that the changes brought about by Spartan presence in Delphi were not long-lasting. What is more, the defeat which the Athenians suffered at Tanagra did nothing to weaken their morale.

In August 457 BC, two months after the Spartan forces managed to retreat, an Athenian army led by Myronides vanquished the Boeotians at Oenophyta, thus acquiring control over all of Boeotia (Thuk. 1.108.3). Having gained an advantage in central Greece, the following year the Athenians undertook an action aimed directly against Sparta: a fleet of fifty triremes commanded by Tolmides sailed around the Peloponnese and set fire to the dockyards in which Spartan warships were built (Thuk. 1.108.5), probably located in Gytheion (Diod. 11.84.6). Tolmides's ships also laid waste to Cythera and the Laconian city of Boeae (Paus. 1.27.5), as well as Methone in Messenia (Diod. 11.84.6), before heading for Naupactus. Sparta's position in the Peloponnese was weakened even further when the Athenians allied themselves with Achaia and Troezen (Thuk. 1.111.3–1.115.1). We do not know how

the Lacedaemonians reacted to this provocation; in any case, Athens spent the next few years dealing with problems caused by the rebellious members of the League, perhaps quietly supported by Sparta.

In 451 BC, Sparta normalised its relations with Athens by striking a five-year truce (Thuk. 1.112.1). In the same year the Lacedaemonians agreed to a thirty-year peace treaty with Argos; the latter then withdrew from its alliance with Athens. It might seem that Sparta gained an advantage; yet in reality postponing the conflict benefited Athens more, as it gave the state the freedom to act. In 448 BC, the so-called Peace of Callias ended Athens' war with Persia. From then on, the relations between Athens and Lacedaemon entered a new stage. Still in 448 BC, Pericles attempted to organise a "pan-Hellenic congress" to discuss the rebuilding of temples destroyed by the Persians and securing peace throughout the Greek world (Plut. *Per.* 17). This initiative, in which Athens acted as the new leader of all Greeks, was (justifiably) interpreted in Sparta as an usurpation of its position, so Sparta promptly quashed the idea, many Greek states also decided not to respond to the invitation, and the congress never took place.

The outcome of the conflict was decided on the battlefield. Once again, events in central Greece provided the pretext for a move. Probably around 454/453 BC, Athens entered an alliance with Phocis and helped it regain control over Delphi. Sparta retaliated by declaring a holy war and depriving Phocis of its authority over Delphi. By proclaiming Delphi as autonomous, Sparta was standing up for the freedom of Hellas, which Athenians were now violating. Athenians were not idle either; in the summer of 447 BC they got things back to the way they had been by offering Phocis military aid. Inscriptions on the bronze statue of a wolf in the temple of Apollo in Delphi, left first by Sparta and then by Athens and proclaiming their right to be the first to seek advice from the oracle (*promanteia*), are a trace of the successive interventions of these two powers.

This being said, the conflict over Delphi was nothing but a secondary issue, especially since neither state was able to secure a decisive victory on that front. Even though the Athenians seemed to (temporarily) take the lead in 447 BC, their success was overshadowed by the defeat Athens suffered that same year at Coronea, which forced them to withdraw from Boeotia.

But the real trouble was yet to come. The revolt of Euboea, an island which had a profound strategic and economic importance for Athens, was far more dangerous. To make matters worse, in the autumn of 446 BC the armies of the Peloponnesian League led by Sparta's young king Pleistoanax entered Megaris and marched down to Eleusis in Attica. It seemed that the fate of Athens was sealed; yet instead of forcing the Athenians to give battle, Pleistoanax unexpectedly withdrew (Thuk. 1.114; 2.21). It appears that both the king and his advisor Cleandridas had been bribed by Pericles not to advance. After returning to Sparta, they were tried and sentenced – not entirely without grounds, it seems (differently Powell 2018, 302), since even many years later the Athenians still joked about how Pericles saved the state (Plut. *Per.* 22–23; Diod. 12.9).

After the Spartans departed, Pericles loaded 5,000 hoplites onto fifty ships and made a swift expedition to Euboea, pacifying the island. In the winter of 446/445 BC, Athens signed a thirty-year peace with Sparta, withdrawing from Achaia, Troezen and Megara, which only left them with Naupactus (Thuk. 1.115, cf. Cartledge 1987, 8–9; 1979, 230). The Athenians also promised autonomy to Aegina, which nonetheless remained a member of the Delian League. Both states signed the treaty on behalf of themselves and their allies. Poleis not mentioned in the pact were allowed to ally with either Athens or Sparta, which automatically extended the provisions of the treaty to them as well. Unique conditions applied to Argos, as it was forbidden from entering treaties with either of the sides (in practice this, naturally, meant Athens) but could, and ought to, maintain amicable relations with both. In another important provision, both Athens and Sparta (plus their allies) promised to settle any and all disputes through an arbitration court.

With the peace signed in 446 BC, the balance of power between the two blocs of states led by Athens and Sparta was struck (or rather restored).

Chapter 9 The Peloponnesian War

The Peloponnesian War broke out due to a growing tension which Thucydides described as follows: "The real cause (*alethestate prophasis*) I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm (*phobos*), which this inspired in Lacedaemon" (Thuk. 1.23.6). The fact that no armed clashes occurred after the year 446 BC might indicate that Athens and Sparta were finally at peace. In reality, however, Lacedaemon watched the successive moves made by the Athenians with a growing anxiety. Athens' might and aspirations to the status of a regional superpower were very apparent in the suppression of the Samos revolt in 440/439 BC. If Sparta was indeed willing to offer Samos help (Ste Croix 1972, 117, 143, 200–203), it would mean she not only rooted for Athens' enemies, but was ready to actively support them. Athens' victory, and especially their ruthlessness towards the defeated foe, strengthened their position within the Delian League, and made many other states apprehensive as to the direction Athenian politics might take.

However, in spite of Athens' decisive victory (or perhaps because of it), the city's enemies remained rather passive for several years afterwards. It might seem that for this entire period the Athenians held the initiative, while their opponents only reacted to their moves. But, as time would soon tell, either the Athenians went a step too far or Sparta and its allies had had enough. In his account of the events preceding the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides emphasises the role of Corinth, which was the most vocal advocate of fighting Athens because of their interference in the matters of former Corinthian colonies: Corcyra and Potidaea. It was the issue of Potidaea and the conflict between Corinth and the Athens-supported Corcyra over Epidamnus that became a catalyst for the war.

Their own failures prompted the Corinthians to seek aid from Sparta. At their instigation, other members of the Peloponnesian League also started to complain about Athens' conduct. Pressured from all directions, the Spartans finally called their allies to voice their grievances at the People's Assembly. "Last of all the Corinthians came forward, and having let those who preceded them inflame the Lacedaemonians, now followed with a speech" (Thuk. 1.67.5). Unfortunately, Thucydides fails to specify which states addressed the Assembly before the Corinthians; the leading role of Corinth is further emphasised by the fact that only their speech (or rather their point of view) is presented in his work. The Corinthians accused Sparta of allowing Athens to grow strong in the wake of the wars with Persia and of not reacting to their aggressive behaviour.

> You, Lacedaemonians, of all the Hellenes are alone inactive, and defend yourselves not by doing anything but by looking as if you would do something; you alone wait till the power of an enemy is becoming twice its original size, instead of crushing it in its infancy. And yet the world used to say that you were to be depended upon; but in

your case, we fear, it said more than the truth. [...] against Athens you prefer to act on the defensive instead of on the offensive, and to make it an affair of chances by defer-ring the struggle till she has grown far stronger than at first. And yet you know that on the whole the rock on which the barbarian was wrecked was himself, and that if our present enemy Athens has not again and again annihilated us, we owe it more to her blunders than to your protection. Indeed, expectations from you have before now been the ruin of some, whose faith induced them to omit preparation. (Thuk. 1.69)

Then the Corinthians pointed to the differences between Athenians, who con-stantly set new challenges for themselves, and the peace-loving Lacedaemonians, who avoided all risk and novelty.

Such is Athens, your antagonist. And yet, Lacedaemonians, you still delay, and fail to see that peace stays longest with those, who are not more careful to use their power justly than to show their determination not to submit to injustice. On the contrary, your ideal of fair dealing is based on the principle that if you do not injure others, you need not risk your own fortunes in preventing others from injuring you. Now you could scarcely have succeeded in such a policy even with a neighbor like yourselves; but in the present instance, as we have just shown, your habits are old-fashioned as compared with theirs. [...] though fixed usages may be best for undisturbed communi-ties, constant necessities of action must be accompanied by the constant improvement of methods. Thus it happens that the vast experience of Athens has carried her further than you on the path of innovation. Here, at least, let your procrastination end. For the present, assist your allies and Potidaea in particular, as you promised, by a speedy invasion of Attica. (Thuk. 1.71)

The Corinthians not only tried to convince Sparta that an attack on Athens could be delayed no longer, but even resorted to blackmail, threatening to look for allies elsewhere should their plea be left unanswered (Thuk. 1.71.4). Nevertheless, it seems to have been just empty words, since an alliance between Corinth and Athens was rather obviously impossible, and hardly any state besides Sparta was able to stand against Athens at that time. In reality, the Corinthians only wished to impress their listeners, aptly playing their role in a game whose course and aim had been consulted, at least in general terms, with the proponents of war inside the Lace-daemonian state. The speech of the Athenian envoys present in Sparta at the time failed to elicit the desired reaction. The emissaries pointed to Athens' contributions in the Persian Wars (Thuk. 1.73–74), and tried to convince the Spartans that the Athenian policy towards members of the Peloponnesian League did not differ from their own (Thuk. 1.76–77). They also warned that a Spartan victory would soon put Lacedaemon in the same position in which Athens now found itself: "If you were to succeed in overthrowing us and in taking our place, you would speedily lose the popularity with which fear of us has invested you. [...] Not only is your life at home regulated by rules (*nomima*) and institutions incompatible with those of others, but your citizens abroad act neither on these rules nor on those which are recognized by the rest of Hellas" (Thuk. 1.77.6). The Athenians warned against a

needless risk of starting a war and agreed to resolve the conflict through arbitration (Thuk. 1.78).

Until that point, Thucydides presents the situation in a way which suggests that Corinth was the state that urged a discontented but passive Sparta to take action; this image is, however, contradicted by later events. Sparta dealt with the Athenian propagandist offensive very cleverly, trying to shift the blame for starting the war onto their opponents. The success of their endeavours is apparent in the modern-day discourse, which usually presents Athens as the guilty party. Those Lacedaemonians who advocated war had to keep up appearances, especially since they needed to convince not only members of the Peloponnesian League and the public opinion in all of Greece, but also other Spartans, many of whom were opposed to the idea of military confrontation.

Having listened to what their allies had to say, the Spartans asked the foreign envoys to leave the assembly and continued to discuss the situation amongst themselves (*ebouleuonto kata sphas autous peri ton paronton*) (Thuk. 1.79.1; Bloedow 1981, 129–143). The majority thought war to be inevitable; yet this opinion was not shared by King Archidamus, "who had the reputation of being at once a wise and a moderate man (*aner kai xynetos dokon einai kai sophron*)" (Thuk. 1.79.2), and who thus addressed the assembly:

> I have not lived so long, Lacedaemonians, without having had the experience of many wars, and I see those among you of the same age as myself, who will not fall into the common misfortune of longing for war from inexperience or from a belief in its advantage and its safety. This, the war on which you are now debating, would be one of the greatest magnitude, on a sober consideration of the matter. (Thuk. 1.80.1)

He drew attention to Athens' vast financial resources and overwhelming preponderance at sea, while emphasising Sparta's own shortcomings on that front.

> For unless we can either beat them at sea, or deprive them of the revenues which feed their navy, we shall meet with little but disaster. Meanwhile our honor will be pledged to keeping on, particularly if it be the opinion that we began the quarrel. For let us never be elated by the fatal hope of the war being quickly ended by the devastation of their lands. I fear rather that we may leave it as a legacy to our children.

What Archidamus saw as the optimum solution was to buy some more time by delaying the war and making all necessary preparations. As regards the grievances put forward by Sparta's allies, he advised that Athens be put under diplomatic pressure:

> If they listen to our embassy, so much the better; but if not, after the lapse of two or three years our position will have become materially strengthened, and we can then attack them if we think proper. Perhaps by that time the sight of our preparations, backed by language equally significant, will have disposed them to submission, while their land is still untouched, and while their counsels may be directed to the retention of advantages as yet undestroyed. (Thuk. 1.82.2–3)

Archidamus was similarly opposed to the Corinthians' idea to strike against Attica. He advocated caution, and refuted the allegations made against Sparta by its allies:

> And the slowness and procrastination, the parts of our character that are most assailed by their criticism, need not make you blush. If we undertake the war without preparation, we should by hastening its commencement only delay its conclusion: further, a free and a famous city has through all time been ours. The quality which they condemn is really nothing but a wise moderation; thanks to its possession, we alone do not become insolent in success and give way less than others in misfortune; we are not carried away by the pleasure of hearing ourselves cheered on to risks which our judgment condemns; nor, if annoyed, are we any the more convinced by attempts to exasperate us by accusation. We are both warlike and wise, and it is our sense of order that makes us so. We are warlike, because self-control contains honor as a chief constituent, and honor bravery. And we are wise, because we are educated with too little learning to despise the laws, and with too severe a self-control to disobey them, and are brought up not to be too knowing in useless matters,—such as the knowledge which can give a specious criticism of an enemy's plans in theory, but fails to assail them with equal success in practice. (Thuk. 1.84.1–3)

> And we must not be hurried into deciding in a day's brief space a question which concerns many lives and fortunes and many cities, and in which honor is deeply involved,—but we must decide calmly. This our strength peculiarly enables us to do. As for the Athenians, send to them on the matter of Potidaea, send on the matter of the alleged wrongs of the allies, particularly as they are prepared with legal satisfaction; and to proceed against one who offers arbitration as against a wrongdoer, law forbids. Meanwhile do not omit preparation for war. This decision will be the best for yourselves, the most terrible to your opponents. (Thuk. 1.85.1–2)

Although, as may be surmised, this speech made quite an impression on the assembly, the ephor Sthenelaidas, who took the floor after Archidamus, swayed the crowd by delivering a very *laconic* address: he simply stated that the Athenians were causing Sparta's allies harm and should be punished for it. "And let us not be told that it is fitting for us to deliberate under injustice; long deliberation is rather fitting for those who have injustice in contemplation. Vote therefore, Lacedaemonians, for war, as the honor of Sparta demands, and neither allow the further aggrandizement of Athens, nor betray our allies to ruin, but with the gods let us advance against the aggressors" (Thuk. 1. 86.4–5).

Sthenelaidas then exercised his right as the chairman of the meeting and called for a vote. He clearly wished to intimidate those Spartiates who seemed hesitant or perhaps allowed themselves to be convinced by Archidamus. In his desire for the assembly to openly advocate for war, he pretended not to be able to discern which of the two notions was greeted with a louder acclamation: "'All Lacedaemonians who are of opinion that the treaty (*hai spondai*) has been broken, and that Athens is guilty, leave your seats and go there,' pointing out a certain place; 'all who are of

the opposite opinion, there'" (Thuk. 1.87.2). When the Spartans complied, it turned out that the majority wanted war.

Thucydides believed that Spartans opted for war "not so much because they were persuaded by the arguments of the allies, as because they feared the growth of the power of the Athenians (*phoboumenoi tous Athenaious*), seeing most of Hellas already subject to them" (Thuk. 1.88).

In any case, the decision to engage in military conflict was taken in Sparta, not Athens. Thus, it was Sparta and not Athens (which was ready to agree to arbitration, in accordance with the peace treaty of 446 BC; a solution favoured by Archidamus) that became the aggressor (cf. Thuk. 7.18.2, 1.23.6 and 1.23.88). Determined to go to war, Sparta followed the procedures of the Peloponnesian League and summoned the Assembly of Allies, with which the final decision formally lay (Thuk. 1.119). Through the efforts of the Corinthians, who managed to persuade the envoys of most of the remaining states to act, in the autumn of 432 BC the assembly of the League passed a resolution identical to the one approved by the Spartan apella (Thuk. 1.125). The following year went by with the League preparing for war and Sparta stretching its diplomatic muscles to shift the responsibility for starting the conflict to Athens. Naturally, the Delphic oracle was consulted; speaking through the priestess, Apollo advocated for war and promised to assist the Lacedaemonians asked or unbidden. Meanwhile the Spartans kept sending envoys to Athens "in order to obtain as good a pretext (*prophasis*) for war as possible, in the event of her paying no attention to them" (Thuk. 1.126.1). They demanded that the Athenians redeem themselves for the murder of the followers of the would-be tyrant Cylon, who were killed in Athena's temple on the Acropolis where they had taken refuge. The incident had occurred nearly two centuries prior at the instigation of the Alcmeonids; thus the request was aimed against Pericles, who was related to the Alcmeonid family through his mother and was not only the most influential person in Athens at the time, but also presented an entirely unyielding stance towards Sparta, "urging the Athenians to war". It is unlikely that the Spartans believed Athenians could be persuaded to banish Pericles. At best, they could only hope that Pericles would be discredited in the eyes of the Athenian people (Thuk. 1.127). Even that goal was not accomplished; in fact, Spartan provocations brought the opposite effect, "for in place of suspicion and slander, Pericles won even greater confidence and honor among the citizens than before, because they saw that their enemies hated and feared him above all other men" (Plut. *Per.* 33.1).

The Athenians, who had deservedly enjoyed the opinion of intelligent and witty, repaid Sparta in kind. They demanded that Lacedaemonians redress the crime they committed early in the fifth century BC by murdering the helots who had been staying as suppliants in the temple of Poseidon at Tainaron (Thuk. 1.128.1). They also called for the rectification of the fault against Athena Chalkioikos, in whose temple the ephors had starved Pausanias to death (Thuk. 1.128.2 ff.). Neither side of this war of words showed itself willing to compromise, absurdly ordering the other party to banish certain people to make amends for ancient crimes. Nevertheless,

the exchange of embassies continued, with each successive envoy bringing more demands. The Spartans ordered Athens to withdraw from Potidae and grant autonomy to Aegina; ultimately, they proclaimed their decision to go to war to be dependent on whether Athens would repeal the resolution that excluded the Megarians "from the use of Athenian harbors and of the market of Athens" (Thuk. 1.139.1).

The Athenians did not yield to any of these demands, regarding these moves, quite correctly, as a test of strength. The Lacedaemonians, in turn, having won no concessions from Athens, suddenly demanded everything. The ultimatum was delivered by three envoys: Rhamphias, Melesippus and Agesander. "Lacedaemon wishes the peace (*eirene*) to continue," the Spartan envoys explained, "and there is no reason why it should not, if you would leave the Hellenes independent" (Thuk. 1.139.3). Apparently, either the Spartans felt ready for war or believed to have exhausted all their arguments. Athens' refusal to comply would show all of Greece that Lacedaemon was left with no other choice. Following Pericles's advice, the Athenians told the Spartan ambassadors that they would allow Megarians to use their ports and the market if the Spartans ceased to deport the Athenians and their allies, granted autonomy to states that had enjoyed it when the treaty of 446 BC was signed, and also allowed their allies to govern themselves as they pleased and not following Sparta's best interest; they also emphasised their willingness to put the matter before a court of arbitration. The concluding statement was that "we shall not commence hostilities, but shall resist those who do commence them" (Thuk. 1.144.2).

That was the end of the propaganda war between Athens and Sparta. The Lacedaemonians obtained evidence for Athens' obstinacy which, in the absence of better arguments, had to suffice as justification for a war intended to free the Hellenes from the grip of that tyrant state, Athens (Thuk. 2.8.4). In reality, however, even if the Athenians did not show themselves amenable to concessions, it was Sparta that acted as an aggressor. The Lacedaemonians and their allies were spurred to war by the Corinthians, and within Sparta itself the proponents of war (the same whose opinion Sthenelaidas represented at the apella) gained the majority. As Thucydides put it,

> Peloponnese and Athens were both full of young men whose inexperience made them eager to take up arms, while the rest of Hellas stood straining with excitement at the conflict of its leading cities. [...] The good wishes of men made greatly for the Lacedaemonians, especially as they proclaimed themselves the liberators of Hellas. No private or public effort that could help them in speech or action was omitted; each thinking that the cause suffered wherever he could not himself see to it. So general was the indignation felt against Athens, whether by those who wished to escape from her empire, or were apprehensive of being absorbed by it. (Thuk. 2.8)

In essence, the Lacedaemonians were not prepared for the war, which is all the more remarkable given that they were the ones who started it. A fleet was needed to confront the naval power that Athens had become; yet Sparta had none and

intended to fight the Athenians in their own territory. This strategy was apparently predicted by Themistocles, who made every attempt to surround the city with defensive walls. In 431 BC, the only way for Sparta to be able to beat Athens was if the latter invited defeat by giving battle on land; but the Athenians were determined not to do this. Pericles's strategy was to bring people from Attica to Athens and try to hold out the seasonal attacks from Sparta, which could not go on for longer than a month, a month and a half at best. Thus, Athens wanted to defend itself on land and to attack by sea, using the advantage guaranteed by its mighty fleet. Consequently, for several years both sides waged war on their own terms: Athens on the seas, Sparta on land. And since neither was able to deal the opponent a decisive blow on its own turf, it looked like war was going to continue for a long time. The tide could change only if one side decided to follow its opponent's *modus operandi*; and this is what happened when the Lacedaemonians learnt to fight naval battles and defeated the Athenian fleet. However, in 431 BC that goal was still far ahead.

The Peloponnesian War started in March 431 BC with a surprise attack of Thebes on Plataeae. The Thebans either consulted this with Sparta or, which seems more likely, tried to take advantage of the confusion into which all of Greece had been thrown. Soon afterwards, the Spartans declared a mobilisation of the Peloponnesian League armies. The troops assembled at the Corinthian Isthmus, and marched north in May 431 BC (Thuk. 2.10). Archidamus tried to open negotiations with Athens one more time, but his envoy Melesippus was not even allowed into the city (Thuk. 2.12.1).

In the early summer of 431 BC, Archidamus entered Attica, whose population Pericles had evacuated to Athens (Thuk. 2.14). The Spartan king hoped that by burning the fields he might force the Athenians to leave the city and give battle, yet they refused to be provoked. They responded to the Spartan invasion in early July (Thuk. 2.19.2) by sending a hundred ships carrying a thousand hoplites to attack coastal villages on the Peloponnesian Peninsula. The Lacedaemonian troops soon withdrew from Attica and returned home. The first expedition lasted a little over a month.

Bothersome as they were, the exploits of the Athenian fleet did not put Sparta under any serious threat. At Methone in Laconia, a brave counterattack of a hundred Spartans led by young Brasidas (Boeldieu-Trevet 1997, 147–158; Sinitsyn 2019) forced the Athenians to beat a retreat (Thuk. 2.25, 2; Diod. 12.43.2–3). Brasidas was the first officer during that war to receive an official commendation (*epainos*) from the state (Thuk. 2.25.2) and was chosen for the post of eponymous ephor (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.10) (Lewis 1977, 42). What Athens could undoubtedly call a success was conquering the Acarnanian cities Sollion and Astakos, previously under Corinthian rule, and gaining the support of the Cephallenians.

When Athens drove the Aeginetans out of their homes in the summer of 431 BC, many of them accepted Sparta's invitation to be settled at Thyrea in the Peloponnese (Thuk. 2.27.2; 4.56.2). In extending their offer, the Lacedaemonians not only aided the victims of the Athenian tyranny, but also rewarded the Aeginetans

for their help during the helot revolt in the 460s. At the same time, the choice of Thyrea was a shrewd political move on Sparta's part, for the Aeginetans had traditionally been on friendly terms with the Argives; by settling on lands to which Argos had laid claim, Lacedaemon protected its interests in the region. Not only did the Spartans cease to be present in Thyrea, but no longer had to worry that the Argives would take advantage of the chaos to recover the contested area. They also provided the entire Hellas with evidence that their claim of fighting a just war was not entirely empty.

In 430 BC, Athens suffered an outbreak of a plague (Thuk. 2.47–54; 3.87), while Archidamus's army invaded Attica again. Heedless of these setbacks, the Athenians sent a fleet to the Peloponnese, this time with Pericles himself in command. After ravaging the lands of Epidaurus, Troezen, Halieis and Hermione, and capturing (and destroying) Prasiae in Laconia, the Athenians sailed home (Thuk. 2.56). Upon arriving in Attica, they did not find any Spartan soldiers, as the troop had left after forty days (Thuk. 2.57.2) out of fear of the plague.

The situation in the city itself was dire. The disease was claiming thousands of victims. The total death toll between 430 and 426 BC most likely amounted to 1/3 of the population. The blame for all the misfortunes was laid on Pericles, who was promptly removed from the post of *strategos*. The People's Assembly took the decision to send an embassy to Sparta, yet the Lacedaemonians refused to even speak to the envoys (Thuk. 2.59.1) – they preferred to wait, believing time to be on their side. Evidently Apollo, who was, after all, the divine bringer of plague, truly intended to come to Sparta's aid.

As the hope for a settlement with Sparta was lost, Pericles returned to favour; but he died soon after. His successors in office, Nicias and Cleon, both wanted to continue the war, despite their personal rivalry and differences. The Spartans, in turn, began to tire of the war and finally understood Archidamus's arguments from 432–431 BC which they had then disregarded, since they sent envoys to the Persian king, attempting to secure his financial and military aid. However, their emissaries fell into the hands of the Athenians, who put them to death (Thuk. 2.67.1–4).

In 429 BC the Spartans did not raid Attica for fear of the plague, but gathered their allies and moved against Plataeae in mid-May (Thuk. 2.71). After Thebes' unsuccessful attempt at conquering Plataeae in 431 BC, the majority of the city's population was evacuated to Athens. Several hundred soldiers and a small Athenian contingent remained in the city. The Plataeans reminded Archidamus of the pledge Hellenes had taken after their victory over Persia in 479 BC, according to which nobody was allowed to wage unjust war against or attempt to conquer Plataeae, and should this come to pass, Plataeae would be aided by "all allies". It was a very delicate situation, and the Spartans were well aware of the fact. They could not break the oath taken in 479 BC just because Plataeae was – by Lacedaemon's own doing – an ally of Athens. This was most likely the reason why Archidamus initially invited Plataeae to join the war for Hellenic independence or remain neutral and, when the Plataeans rejected these ideas, suggested that they leave the country for the duration of the war, leaving it under Lacedaemon's care (Thuk.

2.72). By Archidamus's consent, the Plataeans asked the Athenians for advice; Athens promised aid and encouraged them to resist. When Plataeae rejected that offer as well, Spartan troops laid siege to the city. Having failed to make the conquest quick, Spartans retreated, leaving a contingent of Thebans and other allies from the Peloponnese (Thuk. 2.78).

Spartans continued the war with varying degrees of success. They failed to gain control over the pro-Athenian region of Acarnania. Phormio defeated the Lacedaemonian fleet at Spartolos. In May 428 BC, Archidamus made another foray into Attica. A new opportunity arose when Mitylene on Lesbos rose in revolt against Athens and secretly sent to Lacedaemon asking for help (Thuk. 3. 2 ff.). The Spartans decided to allow Lesbos into the League and aid it by organising yet another raid on Attica. However, if they hoped that the revolt in Lesbos would make the Athenian involvement in other regions less pronounced, they were sorely disappointed – the Athenians manned a hundred ships and, as in previous years, had them sail to the Peloponnese. The tactics of attacking Lacedaemon's coastal villages worked once again, forcing the Spartans to retreat. The Athenians then recalled their fleet and deployed all their troops to Lesbos. After Mithylene surrendered, only the oligarchs responsible for the rebellion were punished, even though many Athenians were in favour of a mass extermination of the locals (Thuk. 3.49–50).

This approach was in stark contrast with what Sparta did to the Plataeans, whom the shortage of food forced to capitulate shortly after Mithylene surrendered to the Athenians. The Lacedaemonians, who could have taken the city in an assault, preferred to wait for its residents to yield it to them. This was a security measure in case they ever signed a peace treaty with Athens that would oblige them to hand over all cities taken during the war (Thuk. 3.52). The Spartans promised the Plataeans that they would be tried by Lacedaemonian judges and no harm would come to them. With no help from allies and no way to continue their resistance, the Plataeans had to take Sparta at her word.

The trial before the judges sent from Sparta proved to be a mockery of justice. The only question that they asked the Plataeans was whether they had done any service to the Lacedaemonians or their allies in the ongoing war (Thuk. 3.52.4). Ultimately, the Plataeans forced the court to allow their representatives to present their own standpoint; yet the arguments of those speakers fell on deaf ears. Two hundred Plataeans and twenty-five Athenians who had defended the city were executed; the women were sold into slavery (Thuk. 3.68.1–3). We get the impression that the case of the Plataeans ended on a note highly discordant with the tone set by Archidamus's proposals. Was it because they had been just an act? Or, perhaps, the long siege had made Spartans less likely to show mercy? It could also have been connected with political changes on the Spartan scene: King Archidamus II had died in 427 BC and the Eurypontid throne was inherited by Agis II (427–400/399 BC).

In 426 BC, Spartans did not invade Attica. The League's armies assembled at the Corintian Isthmus under the command of Agis, son of Archidamus, all marched home upon hearing the news that the Peloponnese had been struck by

an earthquake (Thuk. 3.89). Soon after, Lacedaemon organised an unsuccessful raid against Naupactus, where the Athenians had settled the rebels from Messenia. In the decisive battle, the Athenians and their allies commanded by Demosthenes defeated the Aetolians led by Eurylochus from Sparta.

In May 425 BC, King Agis personally led an expedition to Attica (Thuk. 4.2.1). As per usual, the Athenian fleet sailed south, but this time the Peloponnese was not the main target of attack – the forty Athenian warships under the command of Sophocles and Eurymedon were headed for Sicily, stopping at Corcyra to aid the local democrats.

Upon reaching the Laconian coast, the Athenians heard that Sparta had sent sixty ships to Corcyra. Sophocles and Eurymedon wanted to make for the island as soon as possible, but Demosthenes, who had been a part of their expedition, advised them to stay at the nearby peninsula of Pylos, which could become a convenient base to harass Sparta on its own land. Although he failed to convince the other commanders, the fleet was unable to sail due to unfavourable winds. Lacking any other task, the soldiers started to fortify Pylos just to kill time (Wilson 1979). When the Athenian fleet set sail after a few days, Demosthenes chose to remain at Pylos with only five ships (Thuk. 4.3–5). Initially, Spartans underestimated the threat which the Athenian presence on their territory might pose, yet soon they began to panic. After just fifteen days, Agis turned back from Attica (Thuk. 4.6), a general mobilisation was called in Sparta, the sixty warships were summoned back from Corcyra and told to head for Pylos, as was the land army (Thuk. 4.8.1–2). Sophocles and Eurymedon's ships also turned back, sent for by Demosthenes.

The Spartans used their ships to block the narrow strait between Pylos and the island of Sphacteria, where they deployed a garrison of 420 men. The makeup of that unit changed several times, its members chosen through drawing lots. The final unit was commanded by Epitadas son of Molobrus, whose task was to stop the Athenians from landing there. Other units were told to cut them away from the mainland (Thuk. 4.8.3–9).

The Spartans were determined to force the Athenians out of Pylos. They attacked from land – a section protected by the strongest defences, where Demosthenes had deployed the most soldiers. Over forty warships were used to attack from the sea, where the fortifications were weaker, but the lie of the land and the coastal rocks made advancing very difficult. "It was a strange reversal of the order of things for Athenians to be fighting from the lands and from Laconian land too, against Lacedaemonians coming from the sea; while Lacedaemonians were trying to land from shipboard in their own country, now become hostile" (Thuk. 4.12.3). After two days of unsuccessful attacks, the Spartans gave up and decided to use all of their forces to strike from the land. This was when the Athenian fleet appeared. It entered the harbour through the strait by Sphacteria, and destroyed the enemy ships anchored at Pylos. The Athenians gained control over the surrounding waters, while the Spartans were cut off from their soldiers in Sphacteria (Thuk. 4.13–14).

The blockade of Sphacteria created an unprecedented situation. Eager to get their men out of the island, the Spartans asked for an armistice and sent envoys to Athens to sue for peace (Thuk. 4.15–16). Sparta was in a state of panic. In exchange for securing the armistice, the Lacedaemonians agreed to give up sixty Peloponnesian ships and to not attack the Athenian fortifications. The Athenians permitted two Attic *choinikes* of barley, two *kotyle* of wine and some meat for each of the stranded soldiers, and half these rations for the servants (Thuk. 4.16.1).

The Spartans probably thought that Athens would welcome their offer of peace. Unfortunately for them, the speech promising peace, alliance and friendship (*eirene*, *xymmachia*, *philia)* (Thuk. 4. 19.1) delivered by the Lacedaemonian ambassadors (Thuk. 4.17–20) failed to convince the Athenians. Aware of the advantage they had now gained, they wanted much more, and their hopes were nurtured by Cleon, whose influence at that time was vast. At his request, the People's Assembly demanded for the Sphacteria garrison to surrender and be transported to Athens and for Sparta to give up Nisaea, Pegae, Troezen and Achaia as the preliminary condition for commencing peace talks. Taken by surprise, the envoys did not discuss these terms. They may have, however, been ready to make some concessions, since they asked for confidential talks with the special committee the Assembly established for the purpose. Cleon used that request to his advantage, insinuating that the wish to conduct secret negotiations spoke ill of the Spartans' intentions, as they did not want to present their stance openly, in front of the people (Thuk. 4.21–22). This was the end of the peace talks. The fate of Sphacteria would be decided on the battlefield.

The Athenians did not return the ships which the Spartans had surrendered, and made every effort not to lose their advantage. By night, the waters around Sphacteria were patrolled by the entire Athenian fleet, which now, after the arrival of reinforcements, counted seventy ships. By day, two ships continued to circle the island in opposite directions. Spartan repeated attempts to take Pylos from land invariably proved unsuccessful (Thuk. 4. 23).

The Athenians had hoped that the Sphacteria garrison would surrender quickly due to lack of food and water; yet the campaign dragged on and was becoming bothersome. The Spartans offered high rewards (money to a freeman, freedom to a helot) to anyone who delivered flour, cheese or any other food to the stranded soldiers (Thuk. 4.26.5) and many brave men, especially helots, managed to reach the island by boat. Attempts were also made, with a relatively high degree of success, to transport food underwater. Divers would swim the strait dragging behind them "by a cord in skins poppy-seed mixed with honey, and bruised linseed" (Thuk. 4. 26.6–7) cf. Lazenby 1985, 196 n. 18).

As the siege dragged on, the jubilant mood in Athens faded, to be replaced by creeping doubt. Cleon felt that the atmosphere might soon turn against him, and when the issue of Sphacteria and Pylos came up yet again at the Assembly, he attacked Nicias (who then held the office of *strategos*) saying that "if they had men for generals, to sail with a force and take those in the island, and that if he had himself been in command, he would have done it" (Thuk. 4.27.5). Taking advantage

of what seemed to be recklessness on Cleon's part, Nicias declared that given that Cleon finds the task so easy, the *strategoi* authorise him to lead the expedition. Cleon tried every trick to extricate himself from this predicament, yet was encouraged by so many voices that he ultimately conceded, fearing that refusal might bring him discredit. He promised to take the Spartan soldiers prisoner and bring them to Athens within twenty days. The Athenians mocked Cleon for his boastful attitude, while his opponents rubbed their hands in joyful anticipation, convinced that he had dug his own grave.

The person Cleon chose as his aide was Demosthenes, who knew much about the situation around Pylos and had himself planned a landing on Sphacteria. The island's defenders also faced an unforeseen setback: the island, thitherto covered with trees, had been ravaged by a fire. The Athenians attacked at dawn, both from the open sea and from the harbour. The fighting continued throughout the day; ultimately, Spartans retreated to their fort at the coast. Because of the local topography, the Athenian troops were able to attack it only from the front, which meant that the Spartans could defend the post to the last man. However, a Messenian unit advancing along the shore managed to circle the fort and come at its defenders from behind.

At the critical moment, Cleon and Demosthenes, fearing that the entire Spartan garrison might be wiped out, ordered the fighting to stop and offered the defenders the chance to surrender. Cleon wanted to keep his promise and deliver Spartan prisoners to Athens. Through Athenian envoys, the defenders of Sphacteria addressed their commander on the mainland, who in turn relayed the following message: "The Lacedaemonians bid you to decide for yourselves so long as you do nothing dishonourable (*meden aischron poiountas*)" (Thuk. 4.38.3). After consulting among themselves, the 292 surviving members of the original crew of 420 surrendered to Athens. A hundred and twenty of the prisoners were Spartan citizens (Thuk. 4.38.5).

Cleon kept his word (Thuk. 4.39). Within twenty days, the contingent of Spartan prisoners was brought to Athens in chains. The entire Greek world was stunned. It was expected that Spartiates would choose to die fighting; their surrender was both unanticipated and shocking. Thucydides reports:

> Nothing that happened in the war surprised the Hellenes so much as this. It was the opinion that no force or famine could make the Lacedaemonians give up their arms, but that they would fight on as they could, and die with them in their hands: indeed people could scarcely believe that those who had surrendered were of the same stuff as the fallen; and an Athenian ally, who some time after insultingly asked one of the prisoners from the island if those that had fallen were men of honor (*kaloi kagathoi*), received for answer that the atraktos—that is, the arrow—would be worth a great deal if it could tell men of honor (*tous agathous*) from the rest; in allusion to the fact that the killed were those whom the stones and the arrow happened to hit. (Thuk. 4.40)

The Athenians were now in command of the situation. Spartan prisoners constituted a valuable bargaining chip, while the outpost at Pylos was an ideal base

for attacking Laconia. The annual raids into Attica also ceased once the Athenians threatened to kill their prisoners of war should even one Spartan soldier set foot on Attic soil (Thuk. 4.41.1). Sparta sent envoy after envoy; yet the Athenians, trusting their luck, had no intention to negotiate. What they were after was an unconditional victory and the total humiliation of their opponents.

The Peloponnese became the crucial issue. Messenians from Naupactus, Athens' most trusted allies, were settled at Pylos. Their hatred for Spartans, familiarity with the region and the fact that they spoke the same dialect as the Lacedaemonians made them a very troublesome presence: "The Lacedaemonians, hitherto without experience of incursions or a warfare (*lesteia*) of the kind, finding the Helots deserting, and fearing the march of revolution in their country" (Thuk. 4.41.3). Sending away the sixty ships that sailed for the Peloponnese, commanded by Nicias and Autocles, in 424 BC, the Athenians were hopeful. Nicias managed to force a surrender on the island of Cythera, inhabited by Lacedaemonian *perioikoi* (Thuk. 4.53–54). Fearing a recurrence of the Sphacteria scenario, the Spartans had most likely withdrawn their garrison from the island beforehand (Cartledge 1979, 245). Cythera was a very valuable acquisition. Located near the Laconian shores, the island had thitherto protected Sparta from pirate raids. By capturing it, Athens gained another outpost that was dangerously close to the heartland of the Spartan state. Expecting Nicias to follow the conquest of Cythera with a direct attack on the Peloponnese, the Spartans guarded the coast using mobile units that could quickly move to the area currently under threat. They also formed small units of cavalry and archers (Thuk. 4.55). The Athenians laid waste to coastal areas and retreated to Cythera, and later set sail for Thyrea (Thuk. 4.56.2), where the Spartans had settled Aeginetan refugees, placing them close to the Argos border. Despite the pleas for help, the Spartiates present in the region did not dare take up the fight with Athenian soldiers, declaring that they were not *axiomachoi*. Apparently, the Sphacteria incident had planted a seed of fear in Spartan souls; in any case, they had lost their usual confidence.

Nicias's soldiers captured and burnt the city of Thyrea and transported the Aeginetans whom they took prisoner to Athens (Thuk. 4.57.4; Diod. 12.65.9). Among these prisoners of war was their Spartan commander Tantalus, who had been wounded (Thuk. 4.57.5). The Athenians' lucky streak continued. They managed to take Nisaea and were planning an attack on Boeotia. Yet when victory seemed within reach, the tide of the war turned again. In the summer of 424 BC, to draw the Athenians' attention away from the Peloponnese, Sparta sent Brasidas and his 1,700 hoplites to Chalcis (Thuk. 4.78.1).

Spartan aid was requested by residents of Chalcis, by the Macedonian king Perdiccas, and also by Thracians, who had broken their alliance with Athens and feared retribution. This gave Lacedaemon an opportunity to stretch the theatre of war further away and to solve the state's internal problems. After what happened at Pylos, there were serious concerns that the Athenian presence could lead to a helot revolt. In order to find the most dangerous among them, Spartans invited those who believed to have greatly distinguished themselves in the war to come

forth so that they could be given their freedom. The two thousand that were chosen soon disappeared "and no one ever knew how each of them perished" (Thuk. 4.80, 3–4, cf. Diod. 12.67.4). Some scholars debate the authenticity of this helot massacre (most recently arguments in favour were presented by Harvey 2004, 199–217, and against by Paradiso 2004, 179–198). The desire to get rid of would-be rebels was certainly one of the reasons why Brasidas's expedition to Chalcis included seven hundred helots who were to serve as hoplites (Thuk. 4.80.5).

The northern campaign brought the success Sparta now desperately needed. Brasidas displayed not only a talent for strategy, but also considerable political acumen (Thuk. 4.81). He not only resisted Perdiccas's attempts to goad him into fighting his enemy Arribaeus, but even managed to talk the latter into an alliance. He spoke to all Hellenes as the one defending them from Athenian tyranny (Thuk. 4.85.1–5; 86.1; 108.2; 114.3; 121.1), winning many over with his gentle treatment of defeated foes and his willingness to reach sensible compromises. These qualities allowed him to take Akanthos and Stagirus away from Athens. Brasidas's next target was the Athenian colony of Amphipolis. The arrival of Spartan troops took the Athenian garrison stationed there by surprise; its *strategos* Eucles barely managed to send for the strategist Thucydides (the author of *The Peloponnesian War*), who was then staying near Thasos. Expecting relief forces to arrive soon, Brasidas announced that within five days every resident of Amphipolis would have to decide whether to remain in the city or leave. The residents regarded these terms as moderate and therefore surrendered before Thucydides arrived with his ships. Seeing that Amphipolis had fallen into enemy hands, Thucydides sailed for Eion, where Brasidas was also headed. In his own estimation, Thucydides's arrival in Eion, where he received the refugees from Amphipolis, was what saved the city.

Be that as it may, from that point on, the initiative in the north lay entirely with Sparta. Brasidas's conciliatory tactics paid off; he was gaining many supporters among the Thracians, but not among the Lacedaemonians, many of whom were envious of his fame. It was these voices that decided that Sparta did not send the reinforcements Brasidas requested. In spite of that, he scored another victory, taking Torone.

Beaten in the north, Athens also suffered a defeat in central Greece, losing the Battle of Delium to the Boeotians. For the first time since the beginning of the war, Athens and Sparta decided they needed a break. In March 423 BC, both sides agreed to a year-long armistice (*ekecheiria*) (Thuk. 4.117.1). The Athenians needed time to take precautions against Brasidas's further moves; if favourable terms could be negotiated, they even entertained the thought of making peace with Sparta. The Lacedaemonians, in turn, hoped that the Athenians could finally be persuaded to think of peace and would free the survivors from Sphacteria.

As the armistice was being signed, of which fact Brasidas was unaware, Scione switched allegiance and sided with him. When envoys arrived to announce the terms of the armistice, the Athenian emissary declared that Scione had seceded after the agreement was signed, and thus should return to Athens. Brasidas, however, refused to hand the city over. The Athenians were outraged, but Spartan

authorities took Brasidas's side, agreeing to settle the matter only through arbitration. For Athens, this was out of the question. Cleon moved that Scione be destroyed and its inhabitants executed, and this was voted. Preparations for an expedition began. At the same time, Mende on the Pallene peninsula also broke away from Athens. Brasidas decided to take the city under his protection, believing that the Athenians would not abide by the truce. Anticipating an attack, he had the women and children of Scione and Mende evacuated to Olynthus and manned both cities with his soldiers. In the summer of 423 BC, while Brasidas and Perdiccas were away fighting an unsuccessful campaign against the latter's enemy Arribaeus, the Athenians managed to retake Mende and marched on Scione. Brasidas made a stop at Torone. He did not want to risk confrontation with the Athenian army, which had the advantage of numbers: it comprised fifty warships, one thousand hoplites, six hundred archers and one thousand peltasts from the allied cities, plus mercenaries. As the Athenians spread out to surround Scione with a wall and to block access to the city, Perdiccas, who had by the fallen out with Brasidas, struck a deal with the enemy. Using his influence in Thessalia, he foiled Sparta's plan to find reinforcements for Brasidas. The Athenians were able to lay siege to Scione unimpeded and after the principal fortifications were complete, they withdrew their main army, leaving only the necessary crew.

From a formal standpoint, the truce was still in force. In reality, however, few people paid heed to the fact, even though the Spartan and Athenian forces did not engage in direct confrontations. There was fighting between the allies of the two sides. The Mantineans and Tegeans clashed at Laodocion in Orestis, while Brasidas made an attempt to capture Potidaea in the early spring.

In the spring of 422 BC, after the armistice had expired, Cleon arrived at the Thracian coast with thirty ships carrying 1,200 hoplites, 300 horse-riders and some units of allied troops. From Scione, which was still holding out, he moved to Torone, for the news had arrived that Brasidas left it manned by a small crew. Brasidas did not manage to bring relief forces back in time and hearing that the city had been taken, he did not try to recover it. Cleon sold the women and children of Torone into slavery and sent the men – Toroneans, Peloponnesians and Chalcians, seven hundred in total – to Athens. After a peace treaty was signed in 421 BC, the Peloponnesians were set free, while the others were exchanged for Athenian prisoners caught by the Chalcians.

Having left Torone, Cleon headed for Amphipolis, where Brasidas was waiting. Before the reinforcements requested by Cleon arrived from Macedonia, the two sides clashed in a battle that ended with an overwhelming defeat for the Athenians, who fled the field. Cleon was killed; Brasidas, heavily wounded, was carried off to the city and soon died (Thuk. 5.10). He was buried with much pomp, with games and sacrifices in his honour (Thuk. 5.11.1). The Athenian army sailed home.

The Battle of Amphipolis had no great military importance, yet the death of Cleon and Brasidas, both staunch proponents of war, profoundly affected the turn of events. Sparta, who had failed to send reinforcements to Thrace, was ready to make peace with Athens (Thuk. 5.12–13). The hope of securing victory by annual

expeditions to Attica had failed. On Sphacteria, Sparta had suffered defeat and hu-miliation that was almost unprecedented in its history. The thirty-year peace treaty with Argos was to expire in 421 BC and the Argives made its extension conditional to the return of the disputed border territory, namely Cynuria. The helots' actions were a reason for worry, especially given the Athenian presence in Pylos. Faced with the treat of a destructive war on two fronts, with Argos and Athens, and of another helot revolt, Sparta wanted peace. The Athenians also seemed to regret not using the opportunity provided by their unexpected success on Sphacteria. Defeated at Delion and at Amphipolis, they considerably softened their stance. After Brasidas and Cleon died, their posts went to men who advocated peace: King Pleistoanax, recently recalled from exile, in Sparta, and Nicias in Athens.

Thus, a fifty-year peace agreement, known as the Peace of Nicias, was signed in 421 BC. As Powell rightfully observes, so decisive was the role of the Spartan king that the pact may as well have been called the Peace of Pleistoanax (Powell 2018, 310), whose position it greatly affected (the same was true for the other Spartan king, Agis; Powell 2018, 313). The agreement stipulated that all territories captured in the war should be returned and all contentious issues brought before a court of arbitration. Sparta and Athens with all their allies promised to uphold the pact and keep the peace. The oath was taken by representatives of both sides and was to be renewed on an annual basis. The text of the agreement was written on stone steles displayed in Olympia, Delphi, the Corinthian Isthmus, on the Acropolis in Athens and in the temple at Amyclae in Sparta.

The sides drew lots to determine which of them should be the first to surrender the conquered regions; the duty went to Sparta. This is when problems began. The Boeotians, Corinthians, Eleans and Megarians objected to the peace terms. The Spartans, not wanting to come into conflict with Argos and unable to control their allies, made an individual defensive pact with Athens, which obliged both states to offer mutual aid against a third-party attack. Moreover, the truce specified that Athens would help Sparta in the event of a helot rebellion:

> The Lacedaemonians shall be allies of the Athenians for fifty years. Should any enemy invade the territory of Lacedaemon and injure the Lacedaemonians, the Athenians shall help them in such way as they most effectively can, according to their power. But if the invader be gone after plundering the country, that city shall be the enemy of Lacedaemon and Athens, and shall be chastised by both, and one shall not make peace without the other. This to be honestly, loyally, and without fraud. Should any enemy invade the territory of Athens and injure the Athenians, the Lacedaemonians shall help them in such way as they most effectively can, according to their power. But if the invader be gone after plundering the country, that city shall be the enemy of Lacedaemon and Athens, and shall be chastised by both, and one shall not make peace without the other. This to be honestly, loyally, and without fraud. Should the slave population rise (*he douleia epanistetai*), the Athenians shall help the Lacedaemonians with all their might, according to their power (*panti sthenei kata to dynaton*). This treaty shall be sworn to by the same persons on either side that swore to the other. It

shall be renewed annually by the Lacedaemonians going to Athens for the Dionysia, and the Athenians to Lacedaemon for the Hyacinthia, and a pillar shall be set up by either party; at Lacedaemon near the statue of Apollo at Amyclae, and at Athens on the Acropolis near the statue of Athena. Should the Lacedaemonians and Athenians see fit to add to or take away from the alliance in any particular, it shall be consistent with their oaths for both parties to do so, according to their discretion.

Those who took the oath for the Lacedaemonians were Pleistoanax, Agis, Pleistolas [the eponymous ephor], Damagetus, Chionis, Metagenes, Acanthus, Daithus, Ischagoras, Philocharidas, Zeuxidas, Antippus, Alcinadas, Tellis, Empedias, Menas, and Laphilus; for the Athenians, Lampon, Isthmionicus, Laches, Nicias, Euthydemus, Procles, Pythodorus, Hagnon, Myrtilus, Thrasycles, Theagenes, Aristocrates, Iolcius, Timocrates, Leon, Lamachus, and Demosthenes. (Thuk. 5.23–24.1).

Despite Sparta's willingness to bypass its allies to strike a deal with Athens, neither Pylos nor Cythera were returned to Lacedaemon, as they were unable to honour their other commitments. The Peace of Nicias, which promised to restore the *status quo ante*, brought only a temporary cessation of hostilities, beginning the period of the so-called Armed Peace (421–415/414). For nearly seven years, Athens and Sparta were not openly at war; but neither was it a time of true peace. The source of tension was, as before, the discontent of Sparta's allies. Boeotia was reluctant to hand over Plataeae, claiming that a city that surrendered willingly should not be counted as taken by force. Corinth, in turn, was hatching plots in Argos, trying to build a new anti-Athenian alliance around a state hostile to Sparta. The Argives, who harboured dreams of dominance over the Peloponnese, seem to have taken the bait. They invited Hellenic states to an alliance, leaving Sparta and Athens out. Mantinea and Elea joined this new league; Corinth did not make an open declaration but was playing for time, trying to convince others, particularly Boeotia. When the Boeotians refused to enter the Argive coalition, Corinth tried to use them as an intermediary to secure an armistice with Athens. The Athenians, however, had a truce with Thebes, renewable every ten days, and did not want to enter a similar agreement with Corinth, stating that since the Corinthians were allies of Sparta, the provisions of the general peace agreement applied to them as well. Thus, although Athens and Corinth were, in practice, at peace, no formal pact settled the relations between them.

The peace was fragile at best, and both sides eyed each other with suspicion. The Athenian public, for instance, was affronted by the fact that Sparta did not withdraw from Amphipolis or forced its allies to keep to the agreement. The Lacedaemonians, in turn, resented the Athenians for keeping their outposts in Pylos and other places. The mutual animosity stemmed from distrust, which led each side to suspect the other of ill will, and from the fact that Sparta was indeed unable to get its discontented allies to do its bidding. Both Sparta and Athens were full of people who believed that a peace agreement was not enough in terms of protecting the interest of their state. In Lacedaemon, the ephors chosen for the year 421/420 BC were all opponents of the Peace of Nicias. They even secretly

approached Corinth and Boeotia, trying to incite them into striking an alliance with Argos, which would give them a foothold for collaboration with the Argives – something they believed more valuable than peace with Athens. Although these plans failed, the Argives got scared when Sparta formally made an alliance with Boeotia, and, fearing they would be left to fight on their own, promptly signed a fifty-year truce with Lacedaemon (Thuk. 5.41).

In settling its affairs with Argos, Sparta was working towards its next goal, which was persuading Boeotia to return Panactum, which it had taken, and surrender the Athenian prisoners, which was the *conditio sine qua non* for getting Athens out of Pylos. But even then the Athenians refused to be persuaded, reproaching Sparta for various lapses in the implementation of the treaty, especially for not consulting the decision to strike an alliance with Boeotia (an action which had indeed gone against the provisions of the pact) and handing Panactum over only after the Boeotians had razed it.

An Athenian who tried to gain recognition amidst all this founded and unfounded distrust was Alcibiades son of Cleinias. At his instigation, first the Argives and then the Eleans and Mantineans arrived in Athens to begin negotiations towards an alliance. Their visit coincided with that of Philocharidas, Leon and Endius, envoys sent by Sparta, where the moves made by Argos were a source of concern. Speaking before the Council of the Five Hundred, the Spartans showed themselves ready to make significant concessions: they stated that they had come with full powers to settle any contentious issues (Thuk. 5.45.1). Afraid that if the same message was delivered to the Popular Assembly, the Athenians could be swayed by the envoys' conciliatory tone, Alcibiades promised the envoys to settle everything in their favour as long as they never mentioned their powers when speaking to the Athenian public. The envoys complied – and Alcibiades promptly addressed the Assembly himself, vilifying the Spartans for saying one thing at the Council and another in front of the people. He argued that they could not be trusted and that Athens should therefore enter the alliance with Argos, Elis and Mantinea. His intrigue may have worked had the session of the Assembly not been interrupted by an earthquake (Thuk. 5.45).

When the Athenian people reconvened the next day, most of them chose to support Nicias, whose advise was not to break the alliance with Sparta too hastily, but rather send an embassy to find out the Lacedaemonians' true intentions. The Lacedaemonians were told to show their goodwill by returning Panactum to Athens and breaking off their agreement with Boeotia if the latter would not join the Athens-Sparta alliance. The emphasis on Boeotia prevented the envoys from reaching an agreement, which made things easier for Alcibiades (Thuk. 5.46). Thus, the Athenians made a one-hundred-year pact with Argos, Mantinea and Elis. The agreement with Sparta was still valid, despite the existence of the Athens-Argos treaty with contradicted its intention. Corinth did not join either of these alliances, believing that its participation in a league with Argos, Elis and Mantinea would suffice.

Squabbles continued in the years that followed and local conflicts arose over new issues. To repair its standing in the Peloponnese, Sparta sent King Agis on an expedition against Argos (Thuk. 5.57). Despite the considerable advantage in numbers, the Spartan forces failed to capture the city. Thucydides reports that "the Lacedaemonians, upon their return from Argos after concluding the four months' truce, vehemently blamed Agis for not having subdued Argos, after an opportunity such as they thought they had never had before", and when the news came that the enemy had taken Orchomenus, the discontent among the public was so great that

> departing from all precedent, in the heat of the moment had almost decided to raze his [Agis's] house, and to fine him ten thousand drachmae. Agis however entreated them to do none of these things, promising to atone for his fault by good service in the field, failing which they might then do to him whatever they pleased; and they accordingly abstained from razing his house or fining him as they had threatened to do, and now made a law, hitherto unknown at Lacedaemon, attaching to him ten Spartans as counsellors, without whose consent he should have no power to lead an army out of the city. (Thuk. 5.63)

An opportunity for redemption soon presented itself, as the Lacedaemonian army set out once more, this time due to concerns that Tegea might side with Argos. At the Battle of Mantinea in 418 BC, the combined forces of Sparta, Tegea and Arcadia clashed with the Argives, Athenians and Mantineans (Thuk. 5.66–74). The casualties included around three hundred Lacedaemonians, seven hundred Argives, two hundred Mantineans and as many Athenians.

The battle ended in a resounding victory for Sparta, clearing the mark of dishonour left by what happened on Sphacteria (Thuk. 5.77.6). It also brought changes in Argive politics. Argos broke off its confederacy with Mantinea, Athens and Elis, entering a fifty-year peace treaty and alliance with Lacedaemon in winter 418/417 BC (Thuk. 5.77, 5.79). Mantinea soon followed this example and signed a similar agreement (Thuk. 5.81.1; Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.2). Elis most likely returned to the Peloponnesian League. Still, the situation was far from stable. It might seem that the oligarchic revolution in Argos consolidated the state's pro-Lacedaemonian course; yet it was soon followed by civil war which ended in the restoration of democracy. With the oligarchs either banished or dead, Argos's ties with Athens strengthened again; even Sparta's military intervention did not turn the tide.

Nonetheless, despite these numerous incidents, the situation in Hellas was relatively tranquil. The events that threatened to destroy that peace unfolded in Sicily.

In 416 BC, envoys from Segesta and Leontinoi arrived in Athens seeking aid against Selinunt, which was a colony of Megara and an ally of Syracuse. After a heated debate at the Popular Assembly, the Athenians decided to send their forces to Sicily. A large fleet under the command of Alcibiades, Nicias and Lamachus set sail in June 415 BC, yet the situation soon grew complicated, since immediately after his arrival in Italy Alcibiades was recalled to Athens to be tried for his involvement in vandalising the statues of Hermes and profaning the mysteries. Syracuse, which became the main target of Athenian attack, was meanwhile preparing

for war and turned to Corinth and Sparta for help. Its emissaries tried to encourage Sparta to resume its conflict with Athens, their arguments supported by none other than Alcibiades, who defected to Sparta and offered his services in the fight against his homeland. For greater effect, Alcibiades fed his Spartan audience sordid tales of Athenian imperialism:

> We sailed to Sicily first to conquer, if possible, the Siceliots, and after them the Italiots also, and finally to assail the empire and city of Carthage. In the event of all or most of these schemes succeeding, we were then to attack Peloponnese, bringing with us the entire force of the Hellenes lately acquired in those parts, and taking a number of barbarians into our pay, such as the Iberians and others in those countries, confessedly the most warlike known, and building numerous galleys in addition to those which we had already, timber being plentiful in Italy; and with this fleet blockading Peloponnese from the sea and assailing it with our armies by land, taking some of the cities by storm, drawing works of circumvallation round others, we hoped without difficulty to effect its reduction, and after this to rule the whole of the Hellenic name. Money and corn meanwhile for the better execution of these plans were to be supplied in sufficient quantities by the newly acquired places in those countries, independently of our revenues here at home. You have thus heard the history of the present expedition from the man who most exactly knows what our objects were; and the remaining generals will, if they can, carry these out just the same. (Thuk. 6.90–91)

The frightening vision of Athenian hegemony served its purpose – the Spartans followed Alcibiades's advice, agreeing to help Syracuse and strike at the very heartland of Athens by fortifying Decelea in Attica.

In 414 BC, they supported the Syracusan army by sending them a commander: Gylippus son of Cleandridas (Thuk. 6.93.2). His competent decisions and the reinforcements sent in 413 BC – six hundred of the most capable helots and *neodamodeis* (Thuk. 7.19.3; 58.3), three hundred hoplites from Boeotia, five hundred from Corinth and two hundred from Sicyon – granted the Syracusans a huge success. Additional forces dispatched from Athens to help Nicias and Lamachus failed to offer relief, and the entire Athenian army was obliterated.

Sparta decided to strike at Attica (Thuk. 6.93.2) most likely in 414 BC. It was in that year that the Spartans made two raids into Argolis (Thuk. 6.95.1; 105.1). Argos responded to the first attack by invading Thyrea. When the Spartans took to the field for the second time, Argos received aid from Athens, whose fleet sailed to the eastern shores of Laconia (Thuk. 6.105.2), laying waste to Epidaurus, Limera and Prasiae. The Athenians were taking aggressive action, sometimes utilising their base at Pylos, and refused to settle matters through arbitration, which put Sparta in a very different situation than the one in which it had found itself in 431 BC. This time its cause was truly just. Furthermore, on his way back from Sicily in 413 BC, Demosthenes plundered the lands of Epidaurus and Limera one more time, and erected a fort opposite Cythera, possibly near an islet presently called Elaphonios (Thuk. 7.26.2). The decisive factor was, of course, the fiasco of the Sicilian campaign of 413 BC.

Spartan forces led by King Agis entered Attica in the spring of 413 BC, ravaged a part of the region, took Decelea, located about a dozen kilometres from Athens, and proceeded to build fortifications around it (Thuk. 7.27 ff.). The occupation of Decelea marked the beginning of the final phase of the conflict, known as the Decelean War. From then on, the Spartans were a constant presence in Attica, cutting the Athenians off from their fields.

The fiasco of Athens' Sicilian campaign and Sparta's invasion of Attica changed the situation in Greece. However, even though it seemed that all Hellenes would turn against them, the Athenians chose to stand their ground at all costs (Thuk. 8.1–2). Meanwhile, the Lacedaemonians were preparing to deal the enemy a decisive blow (Thuk. 8.3), assembling their armies and a fleet of a hundred ships in the winter of 413/412 BC. Pleas for help came to Sparta from Euboea, Lesbos, Chios and Eritrea; all of these states wished to break off their connection to Athens. The satrap Tissaphernes offered help, hoping that he would be able to collect tribute from Greek poleis once Athens was defeated. This was also the reason why another satrap, Pharnakes, sent encouragement for an expedition to the Hellespont. Persian involvement in the war was pivotal, since financial aid from Persia proved invaluable (cf. David 1979/1980, 31–37). After long deliberations, the decision was taken to give the most support to the Chians and Tissafernes. The plan was to first organise an expedition to Chios, then to Lesbos and finally to the Hellespont.

Preparations for the Chios expedition took too much time. Athens guessed the enemy's intention and managed to both prevent the revolt and counter its support by discouraging Sparta from naval operations. The Athenian defector Alcibiades urged the Spartans to continue their efforts and promised to kindle an uprising in Ionia himself and arrange a pact with the king. Having secured the ephors' support, Alcibiades was given five ships to sail to Chios together with Chalcideus (Thuk. 8.11.3). Resorting to a lie – he claimed that a massive Spartan fleet was on its way – he inspired the Chians, Eritreans and Clazomenaeans to rebel. The Athenians responded by sending Strombichides and a fleet of eight ships. The fleet of Alcibiades and Chacideus, which had in the meantime grown to twenty-three ships, forced him to retreat and pursued him as far as Samos. Alcibiades then succeeded in persuading Miletus to secede from Athens; soon afterwards Chalcideus – on behalf of Sparta – struck an alliance with the king of Persia (cf. Lewis 1977, 85–107; Levy 1983, 221–241), represented by the satrap Tissaphernes:

The Lacedaemonians and their allies made a treaty with the king and Tissaphernes upon the terms following: Whatever country or cities the king has, or the king's ancestors had, shall be the king's; and whatever came in to the Athenians from these cities, either money or any other thing, the king and the Lacedaemonians and their allies shall jointly hinder the Athenians from receiving either money or any other thing. The war with the Athenians shall be carried on jointly by the king and by the Lacedaemonians and their allies; and it shall not be lawful to make peace with the Athenians except both agree, the king on his side and the Lacedaemonians and their allies on theirs. If any revolt from the king they shall be the enemies of the

Lacedaemonians and their allies. And if any revolt from the Lacedaemonians and their allies they shall be the enemies of the king in like manner. (Thuk. 8.18)

The fact that Persia sided with Sparta would ultimately tip the scales of the war in Lacedaemon's favour, yet did not bring an immediate victory. The Athenians orchestrated a democratic coup on Samos. The core of the Athenian fleet, 109 ships in total, was stationed at Samos in the winter of 412/411 BC. Thirty-five of them were deployed to Chios, yet the rest remained at the island, from which raids against Miletus were launched.

When Astyochus arrived in Miletus to take command of the fleet, a new pact with Tissaphernes was signed, as the earlier one was found insufficient. This agreement included a promise that the Persian king would bear the expenses for the maintenance of Greek armies whenever they entered his territory answering his summons (Thuk. 8.37).

Meanwhile, the Lacedeamonians began to suspect Alcibiades of double dealing and ultimately sent Astyochus an order to kill him (Thuk. 8.45.1). Alcibiades's fall from grace was assisted by Agis, whose wife the Athenian had seduced during his stay in Sparta. Alcibiades fled to Tissaphernes to become his advisor and since then worked against Sparta. By his instigation, in 411 BC the oligarchs of Athens staged a successful coup and seized power in the city. One of the new government's first moves was to contact Agis in Decelea with an offer of peace. However, neither this proposal nor the later attempts at negotiating with Agis and directly with Sparta brought any lasting result. Agis hoped that a popular uprising would break out in Athens, allowing him to take the city, yet he hoped in vain (Thuk. 8.71).

Athens' problems emboldened Sparta, however. As the oligarchs maintained control of the city while the fleet at Samos refused to abandon democracy, Astyochus with his 112 ships arrived at the coast of Samos (Thuk. 8.79). The Athenians did not want to risk giving battle, but moved towards Miletus to engage the Spartans when Strombichides returned from the Hellespont with naval reinforcements. Nevertheless, the confrontation did not ensue and the ships returned to Samos. Deciding that their numbers were insufficient to defeat the Athenians and disappointed by the lack of proper support on Tissaphernes's part, the Spartans gave Clearchus, son of Ramphias forty ships and sent him to Pharnabasus at the Hellespont. The aim was to capture Byzantion, which until then had remained loyal to Athens (Thuk. 8.80).

Meanwhile at Samos, Thrasybulus managed to convince the soldiers to summon Alcibiades, believing that he could be capable of winning Tissaphernes over to the Athenian cause. When Alcibiades did indeed assure them of the satrap's support, the Athenian generals elected him *strategos* and "put all their affairs into his hands" (*ta pragmata panta anetithesan*) (Thuk. 8.82). Alcibiades cleverly manoeuvred between Tissaphernes and the Athenians, assuring the satrap of his influence with the Athenians, and showing the Athenians how much the Persian official valued his opinion. The news of Alcibiades's contacts at Samos alienated Lacedaemonians from Tissaphernes even further. Evidently, Alcibiades's tricks managed to fool

both the Athenians and the Spartans, yet the man was about to do his city a great favour. He managed to dissuade the commanders at Samos from launching an attack on Piraeus, a move which would have started a civil war and effectively caused Athens to lose the war.

While these events were unfolding, discord arose among the oligarchs in Athens. The moderate faction led by Theremanes and Aristocrates started to press for the implementation of the concept of the rule of the Five Thousand, while the more radical oligarchs (most notably Antiphon, Pisander and Phrynichus) – aware that they were losing ground – desperately strove for peace with Sparta. The first embassy they sent was intercepted by a warship *Salaminia*; the second reached Lacedaemon but accomplished nothing (Thuk. 8.90.2). When the envoys returned to Athens, Phrynichus was murdered in broad daylight in the Athenian agora. Athens was on the brink of civil war, with the radical oligarchs holding power in Athens and the moderates in Piraeus. For a while it seemed that they might be reconciled by the arrival of the Peloponnesian fleet, which sailed into the Saronic Gulf in September 411 BC and attacked Aegina. Faced with hostile forces approaching from both land and sea, the oligarchs decided to convene in the theatre of Dionysus to settle their differences. On the planned day of the assembly, the news broke in the city that enemy fleet was headed for Salamis. People rushed to Piraeus to prevent Spartans from landing. Ships were hastily manned and sent to fetch the fleet at Euboea; 42 ships anchored at Oropus and 36 in Eretria. When Athenian troops dispersed to forage for food, the Eretrean population signalled the Peloponnesian fleet (which had arrived in the region) to attack. Twenty two Athenian ships were lost in that confrontation. The defeat spurred a rebellion in Euboea; all cities in the region with the exception of the Athenian colony of Oreus (former Histiaia) now sided with Sparta. Yet the Lacedaemonians failed to take advantage of that opportunity, although they could have either captured Piraeus or mounted a blockade and at least forced the fleet at Samos to answer the threat to their homeland. Sparta's tardiness worked in the Athenians' favour. They introduced the Rule of Five Thousand citizens in September 411 BC, to last until June 410 BC.

In reality, the moderate oligarchs whom that move effectively put in power helped Athens to gently work her way out of the crisis caused by the earlier coup. They dismissed Alcibiades and cooperated with the democrats at Samos, fully engaging in the war effort. The collaboration between the Samian democracy and the Athenian moderate oligarchy meant that Sparta once more faced an enemy that was united. At the critical junction, when Athens was still governed by the radical oligarchs and Samos – by the democratic factions, the state was saved by a fortunate coincidence. Had Sparta decided to move against the fleet gathered at Samos at that time, the Athenians would likely have suffered a crushing defeat. Yet the attack never came. This was due to a combination of factors, not least of them being indecisiveness on the part of the Spartan commander Astyochus, but also the ambiguous attitude displayed by Tissaphernes, who tarried with providing effective support, as well as by Miletus and the allies of Sparta, who were in no haste to send their ships to fight.

The situation changed when Astyochus was replaced by Mindarus (Thuk. 8.85.1), who allied not with Tissaphernes, but with his rival Pharnabazos – a satrap that had long been declaring his willingness to finance Sparta's naval operations (Thuk. 8.99). Mindarus managed to enter the Hellespont waters, where his 86 ships posed grave danger to Athenian interests. A contingent of Athenian forces, only eighteen ships strong, was stationed at Sestos. Mindarus destroyed four of its ships, but the main fleet under Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus soon arrived from Samos to relieve the remaining contingent. Seventy-six Athenian ships gathered by Elaeus at the mouth of the Hellespont; in the battle that ensued at the promontory of Cynossema, Athens carried the day, having sunk twenty-one enemy ships and lost fifteen (Thuk. 8.104–106). Since the Asian shore was guarded by Peloponnesian troops, the Athenians were unable to capitalise on their victory, but it still allowed them to sail the Hellespont unimpeded and finally turn their thoughts to seizing the mutinous Cyzicus.

That success was soon followed by others. The Spartan fleet of fifty ships anchored at Euboea met with disaster as it was rushing to aid Mindarus. Alcibiades sent word that he had secured Tissaphernes's support, fortified Cos and sailed to Samos to defend it with twenty-two ships (Thuk. 8.108.1). After joining the contingent under Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus, he managed to deal the enemy another powerful blow and capture thirty ships. Athens once again looked to the future with hope.

In April or May 410 BC, Alcibiades's efforts gave yielded more victories for the Athenian fleet. The battle of Cyzicus ended with the capture of sixty enemy ships. Having won at sea, Alcibiades sent his troops ashore, defeated the combined forces of the Peloponnesian League and Persia, and seized Cyzicus itself. It was a resounding success, as it made the Athenians once more masters of the entire Hellespont. Sparta's naval offensive ended with an utter fiasco. Mindarus was slain in battle and his successor dispatched the following note to Lacedaemon: "The ships are gone. Mindarus is dead. The men are starving. We know not what to do" (Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.23). It took Sparta three years to recover from the defeat and build a new fleet able to challenge the Athenian one. The Lacedaemonians asked for peace. Addressing the Popular Assembly, the Spartan envoy Endius rightfully indicated that war was a heavier burden on Athens than on their enemies. He suggested an exchange of prisoners and peace that would maintain the *status quo*. His speech was, in fact, filled with anti-war sentiment (Diod. 12.52.3–8). Nevertheless, the Assembly decided to listen to Cleophon, who swayed them with his vision of ultimate victory.

Both Athens and Sparta were suffering from lack of funds. The war was consuming the last of the reserves – both sides even made use of votive gifts deposited in temples, and tried to extract as much as possible from their defeated enemies. The Athenians risked the wrath of the Persian king by entering his lands (at Caria) in search of plunder. Sparta's financial situation was slightly less dire. The money regularly provided by Pharnabazos allowed them to maintain their ships in Ionia and the Hellespont, and a garrison in Byzantium (which had been captured in 410

BC). In the winter of 409/408 BC, the Lacedaemonians regained control of Pylos, while the Megarians retook Nisaea. The Athenians responded by launching an attack on Megara and defeating its forces in an open battle. They took control of Byzantium by treachery.

The end of the war was nowhere in sight. Substantial Persian aid for the Spartan army would certainly bring Athens to its knees; yet Persia hesitated. In 408 BC, Darius's envoys talked to envoys from both sides of the conflict, but the court was already leaning towards the thought of giving Lacedaemon more support. In 407 BC (or 408 BC, cf. Podrazik 2018, 69–70), the king sent his younger son Cyrus to undertake more decisive action, which was – for the time being – to be kept secret.

The Athenians believed the worst to be behind them. In late May 407 BC, after eight years of absence, Alcibiades returned to the city with rich spoils of war, but left again in early autumn with a hundred ships to retake control over the Hellenic seas. Not long before that, Lysander as the new commander (*nauarchos*) of the Spartan fleet reached Ephesus with seventy ships under his command (Xen. *Hell.* 1.5.1; Plut. *Lys.* 3; cf. Lotze 1964; Bommelaer 1981). Having received Persian funds for increasing the seamen's pay and welcomed twenty more warships that arrived from Chios, Lysander was set to wait for an opportune moment. When Alcibiades left for Phocaea, Antiochus, who replaced him as commander, inadvertently provoked Lysander into a confrontation. In the early spring of 406 BC, Lysander defeated the Athenians at Notium (Xen. *Hell.* 1.5.14). Although soon afterwards he avoided fighting a more numerous fleet commanded by Alcibiades himself, yet it was apparent that Athens was losing ground again. To show dissatisfaction with Alcibiades's performance, the Athenians did not invite him to the council of the *strategoi* for the year 406/405 BC and passed a special resolution to hand supreme command over to Conon.

Conon reduced the number of warships to seventy, but made efforts to increase their efficiency in combat. The opponent he would face was Callicratidas, whom Spartans chose as the new commander after Lysander's term had ended (Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.1–2; Diod. 13.76.2; Plut. *Lys.* 7). Although his relations with both Cyrus and Lysander were strained, Callicratidas initially scored a number of victories. He assaulted Conon's fleet with 140 ships, capturing thirty units and blocking the rest at Mytilene. The *strategos* Diomedon, who tried to come to Conon's aid with twelve ships, lost ten of them. The Athenians were clearly in trouble, and as the news reached the city, full mobilisation was declared. Within just a month, the state managed to equip 110 ships; another forty were provided by Samos and other satellite poleis.

Hearing that a large Athenian fleet was approaching, Callicratidas left Eteonicus to continue the blockade of Mytilene with fifty ships, and sailed with the remaining 120 to Cape Malea on Lesbos, around a dozen kilometres from the Arginusae Islands where the Athenians were anchored. Then, at midnight, wishing to launch a surprise attack, he moved for the Arginusae. His plans were foiled by the arrival of a thunderstorm, yet, heedless of the difficulties, he still chose to strike at daybreak, initiating the Battle of Arginusae (Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.28 ff.), which ended with a tragic

defeat for Spartan forces and cost the commander his life (Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.38; Diod. 13.100). That victory gave the Athenians a chance to end the conflict in a peaceful manner. The beaten Spartans declared their readiness to leave Decelea and sign a peace treaty that would allow both sides of the conflict to keep the territories they had conquered. However, persuaded by Cleophon, the Athenians again refused the offer, demanding that Sparta withdraw from all the cities within the Delian League. They were to pay a heavy price for their stubbornness, as no such opportunity presented itself again.

Left with no other choice, the Spartans resumed their preparations for war. The allied states forced Lacedaemonian authorities to reinstate Lysander as supreme commander; since Spartan law did not allow the same citizen to hold that office twice, formally he was only a deputy (*epistoleus*) of the nominal *nauarch* Aracus (Xen. *Hell.* 2 1.7; Plut. *Lys.* 7.2). Taking advantage of his good relations with Cyrus, Lysander equipped around two hundred ships with Persian money. He then sailed into the Hellespont and immediately captured Lampsacus.

Lysander's force was pursued by a hundred and eighty Athenian ships. They made a stop at the other side of the Hellespont, opposite Lampsacus, less than three kilometres away from the city. Aware of their arrival, on the very next day Lysander took all of his fleet and sailed for Aegospotami. Athenian ships lined up to withstand an attack, yet Lysander did not press forward; so the Athenians withdrew to Aegospotami. After four days of evasive manoeuvres, Lysander finally struck and ultimately won a great victory over Athens (Xen. *Hell.* 2. 1.20–30; Diod. 13.105.1–106.7; Plut. *Lys.* 10–11). When the state ship *Paralos* brought the news of the defeat to Athens, fear spread through the city like a wave. Nevertheless, the Popular Assembly decided to put up resistance.

Lysander was heading for Athens with two hundred ships. On his way, he removed the Athenians from the cities of the former Delian League and established oligarchic governments. Freeing the poleis from Athenian rule, he introduced Spartan governors (harmosts), who ruled with the aid of oligarchic councils of ten archons (decarchies) (Plut. *Lys.* 19), thereby strengthening his own position and that of Sparta, and Athenian garrisons he sent "home to Athens, giving them safe conduct if they sailed to that one place and not if they went to any other; for he knew that the more people were collected in the city and Piraeus, the more quickly there would be a scarcity of provisions" (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.2; Plut. *Lys.* 13). Upon his arrival in Aegina, he "restored the state to the Aeginetans, gathering together as many of them as he could, and he did the same thing for the Melians also and for all the others who had been deprived of their native states" (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.9). Finally, in November 405 BC, he reached Salamis and sailed into Piraeus, barring Athens' access to the sea.

Meanwhile, the armies of the Peloponnesian League had assembled in full force at Decelea, where Agis was still stationed. The other Spartan king, Pausanias, arrived with them. From Decelea the Peloponnesian troops moved towards Athens, making camp at Academia by the Cephissus river. Besieged from land and sea, the Athenians lost everything: their fleet, their allies, and even their

supplies of food. Knowing that they would be given harsh treatment if they surrendered, the people "held out steadfastly, refusing to make overtures for peace even though many were dying in the city from starvation" (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.10). Yet by December 405 BC their granaries had begun to empty and they sent emissaries to Agis, declaring their readiness to make peace and strike an alliance with Sparta in exchange for a promise to spare their city walls. Agis replied that it was a decision he was not authorised to make and told the envoys to present their case in Lacedaemon (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.11–12). As they reached Sellasia near the Laconian lands, the ephors, having learnt the goal of their embassy, sent them away and bade them not to return without considering the matter thoroughly (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.13). Sparta refused to accept any preliminary terms. The Spartans were perfectly aware that the Athenians had found themselves in an impossible situation and would sooner or later have to accept any terms they might offer. This time they truly could afford to wait.

Disheartened by their envoys' failure and afraid that the enemy might enslave them, the Athenians did not leave the city. They realised that the Lacedaemonians were adamant to destroy the fortifications of Athens, but could not fathom the underlying reason for that desire. Speaking at the Popular Assembly, Theramenes offered to go to Lysander as an emissary in order to find out the Spartans' intentions (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.16). He stayed with Lysander for over three months, thinking that hunger would soon force the Athenians to concede the issue of the walls. After his return to Athens, he succeeded in organising another embassy to Lacedaemon. The emissaries, himself among them, were authorised to make any decision they saw fit. This time the ephors allowed them to address the People's Assembly. Other speakers included representatives of Sparta's allies; those from Thebes and Corinth loudly "opposed making a treaty with the Athenians and favoured destroying their city" (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.19). Anton Powell argues that it was Lysander who wanted to see Athens razed (Powell 2006, 287) and that Sparta did not allow "to enslave or plunder Athens" because his enemies feared that in such a scenario he would become "uniquely rich. And such wealth threatened to give him supreme influence within Sparta" (Powell 2018, 318, cf. 316–318).

> The Lacedaemonians, however, said that they would not enslave a Greek city which had done great service amid the greatest perils that had befallen Greece, and they offered to make peace on these conditions: that the Athenians should destroy the long walls and the walls of Piraeus, surrender all their ships except twelve, allow their exiles to return, count the same people friends and enemies as the Lacedaemonians did, and follow the Lacedaemonians both by land and by sea wherever they should lead the way (*kata gen kai kata thalattan hopoi an hegontai*). (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.20; Plut. *Lys.* 14.4–5; Diod. 12.107; Andok. 3.11)

These were the terms Theramenes and the other envoys carried back to Athens. The city breathed a sigh of relief. Few citizens protested when the Assembly voted to accept the conditions dictated by the victors. "After this Lysander sailed into Piraeus, the exiles returned, and the Peloponnesians with great enthusiasm began

to tear down the walls to the music of flute-girls, thinking that that day was the beginning of freedom for Greece" (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.23; Plut. *Lys.* 15.5). With that, in April 404 BC the Peloponnesian War was finally over.

Chapter 10 Sparta in the reign of Agesilaus

The end of the Peloponnesian War made Lysander the most important man both in Sparta and in Greece. His career demonstrates how high a talented commander could go in Sparta during a war. Lysander son of Aristocritus probably came from an aristocratic family, since he could claim he was descended from Heracles, but he grew up in poverty; Phylarchus (FGrHist 81 F 43) claims he was born a *mothax* (Lotze 1964, 11–14; Cartledge 1987, 28). Little is known about his life before 408–407 BC, except that he had been a lover (*erastes*) of Agesilaus (Plut. *Ages.* 2.1; Lys. 22.3), which may have facilitated his political career (Rahe 1977; Cartledge 1987, 29).

In 404 BC, Lysander was undoubtedly the most powerful man in Greece – and he behaved like a sovereign ruler. He sailed to Samos before Agis even left Decelea; once there, he overthrew democracy and, having driven out the democrats, established the rule of a restricted oligarchy, the so-called decarchy (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.6–7). After that, the oligarchs changed the name of the main Samian festival dedicated to Hera, the Heraia, to Lysandreia (Plut. *Lys.* 18.6). They were neither the first nor the only Greeks to court Lysander by granting him various honours. At least sixteen monuments were erected in his honour (Bommelaer 1981, 7–23); "For he was the first Greek, as Duris writes, to whom the cities erected altars and made sacrifices as to a god (*hos theo*)" (Plut. *Lys.* 18.3, trans. Bernardotte Perrin).

From Samos, Lysander sailed for Sparta, "taking with him the prows (*akroteria*) of the captured ships, the triremes from Piraeus except twelve, the crowns which he had received from the cities as gifts to himself individually, four hundred and seventy talents in money, being the balance that remained of the tribute money which Cyrus had assigned to him for the prosecution of the war, and whatever else he had obtained during the course of the war. All these things he delivered over to the Lacedaemonians at the close of the summer – with which ended the twenty-eight years and six months of the war" (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.8–9, trans. Carleton L. Brownson). He had previously sent a part of the money to Sparta through Gylippos (Plut. *Lys.* 16.1).

Lysander was at the height of his career. And this was what made him enemies in Sparta; men who had kept silent when he was winning for Sparta and raised their heads when, with the conclusion of the war, he was no longer so very needed. Lysander's opponents revealed themselves for the first time on the occasion of the debate as to what to do with the money he had brought (Plut. *Lys.* 16–17), but outside the city they made themselves known when Sparta once again had to decide the future of Athens.

Thirty citizens were elected in Athens to draft an outline of state system based on the "ancestral regime". Those thirty, including Critias, Theramenes and other oligarchs, delayed the assigned work and began to rule the city arbitrarily. Issues

of the Athenian system were probably agreed upon when Theramenes stayed with Lysander for a long time during the latter's time as an envoy, persuading him (if he needed to be persuaded) that an extreme oligarchy was the best solution (Proieti 1987, 84). At the oligarchs' request, Lysander sent a garrison of seven hundred soldiers (possibly *neodamodeis* – Cartledge 1979, 269; 1987, 349) (for which they had asked) and the harmost Callibius (for which, as Proieti [1987, 84] wrongly points out, they allegedly did not ask) (Xen. *Hell*. 2.3.13–14), under whose protection, under the Spartan banner, as it were, the "Thirty Tyrants" acted in an increasingly ruthless manner.

A conflict which evolved among them divided Critias and Theramenes, who protested against the brutal methods used to subdue political opponents. Critias publicly accused Theramenes at a meeting of the Council of Five Hundred, declaring that when a regime was being changed, casualties were unavoidable, especially in a city like Athens, where the commoners were used to freedom. "Now we, believing that for men like ourselves and you democracy is a grievous form of government," he argued, "and convinced that the commons would never become friendly to the Lacedaemonians, our preservers, while the aristocrats (*beltistoi*) would continue ever faithful to them, for these reasons are establishing, with the approval of the Lacedaemonians, the present form of government. And if we find anyone opposed to the oligarchy, so far as we have the power we put him out of the way" (Xen. *Hell*. 2.3, 25–26).

Declared an "enemy within" by Critias, Theramenes tried in vain to defend himself. Taking refuge at the altar of Hestia, he demanded a fair trial. He was dragged out of the building and forced to drink a cup of hemlock. The Council, intimidated by the threatening presence of Critias's men and Spartan soldiers, did not react. From then on, the Thirty increased the repressions even further. Those who were not on their list of three thousand fully enfranchised citizens were banned from entering the city. People were thrown out from their farms, their land was taken, one and a half thousand Athenians were murdered and five thousand fled the city. In defiance of Sparta's express prohibition to receive them, Athenian refugees found shelter in Argos, Megara, as well as in Corinth and Thebes, the same cities which had not long before demanded that the Spartans demolish Athens.

In Thebes, Thrasybulus gathered a group of seventy exiles, with whom, in the winter of 403 BC, he took the fortress of Phyle, twenty kilometres from Athens. Later, as increasing numbers of refugees came to him, he managed to defeat a detachment of soldiers sent by Critias. Frightened by the failure, Critias fortified Eleusis as a precaution.

In May 403 BC, Thrasybulus with a thousand men occupied Piraeus and defeated the troops sent by the oligarchs in a battle in which Critias was killed. In the end, the Thirty withdrew to Eleusis, the democrats entrenched themselves in Piraeus, and the moderate oligarchs took power in Athens. Sparta was then approached for help by both the extreme oligarchs of Eleuzis and the moderate ones of Athens (Xen. *Hell*. 2.4.28; Arist. *Ath. Pol*. 38.1). Lysander made sure that the command of the fleet went to his brother Libys, and himself took control of the land army (Xen.

Hell. 4.28–29). His plan was to blockade Piraeus with the fleet and strike at Athens with the land forces. Everything seemed to indicate that the democrats' fate was sealed. And that was when Lysander's Spartan enemies stepped in.

"While matters were proceeding in this way," Xenophon writes, "Pausanias the king, seized with envy of Lysander because, by accomplishing this project, he would not only win fame but also make Athens his own, persuaded three of the five ephors and led forth a Lacedaemonian army" (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.29). Plutarch in turn, says that "the kings were jealous of him, and feared to let him capture Athens a second time; they therefore determined that one of them should go out with the army" (Plut. *Lys.* 21.3) and thus Pausanias left for Athens intending thwart Lysander's plans. Xenophon speaks of Pausanias's personal motives, but it must be remembered that the decision was made, at least formally, by the Assembly (which, of course, does not mean that it shared the feelings that the authors of the intrigue bore Lysander) and by the ephors (cf. Proieti 1987, 86–87). In addition, Pausanias and Lysander may have been divided not only by mutual dislike, but also by differences in their visions of Sparta's policies (cf. Cartledge 1987, 351–352).

In these circumstances, Lysander was forced to hand over the command to the king, who did everything in his power to bring about an accord between the oligarchs and the democrats, with the result that the latter regained Athens and Lysander lost his foothold there. This was because Pausanias soon entered into a secret arrangement with Thrasybulus's group (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.35), feigning attacks on Piraeus (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.31 ff.) and manipulating the oligarchs and democrats of Athens in such a way as to prevent Lysander from seizing Piraeus. The envoys from Piraeus, instructed by Pausanias as to the conduct of their embassy, met with a favourable reception in Sparta (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.35 ff.): "When the ephors and the members of the Lacedaemonian assembly (*hoi ekkletoi*) had heard all the ambassadors, they dispatched fifteen men to Athens and commissioned them, in conjunction with Pausanias, to effect a reconciliation in the best way they could" (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.38). The terms of peace agreed upon as a result included the restitution of property (from which, however, the Thirty and their closest associates were barred). Those who feared to remain in Athens were permitted to settle in Eleusis. Until 401/400 BC Athens had consisted of two states, a democratic one in Athens and an oligarchic one in Eleusis, but when King Pausanias left Attica in September 403 BC, the unity of Athens was saved. During the archontate of Eucleides (403/402 BC), the core of the old laws that had formed the basis of the democratic system was restored. An archaeological trace of the last Spartan intervention was the erection, sponsored by the democrats, of a monument at Kerameikos for the twenty-six Spartans killed at Piraeus (Willemsen 1977; Stroszeck 2006). An inscription with the names of the two polemarchs, Chaeron and Thibrachus, and olympionikos mentioned by Xenophon (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.33) survives to this day.

Lysander lost; but this time he had not been in command of troops paid for by the Persians. With the end of the war, he had to disband his fleet and return to Sparta, where his military abilities were no longer as necessary as before and where there was no institutional basis for his influence (Proieti 1987, 88). The

defeat at Athens, however, represented not only a personal disappointment for Lysander, but also a failure for Sparta. Conflicts within the Spartan power elite that had led to that failure certainly made all other problems recede into the background, but the heated debate which the whole affair provoked in Sparta just had to touch upon the problem of the Spartan *raison d'état*. As a result, Sparta finally abandoned the aggressive imperialism as practised by Lysander, in which Spartan influence was safeguarded by the rule of restricted oligarchies (Andrewes 1971, 206–216; Cartledge 1979, 271).

Lysander refused to accept defeat. In 403 BC, King Pausanias, having returned home, was brought before a court of geronts and ephors (cf. Cartledge 1987, 133–135). Only a half of the gerontes and King Agis found him guilty (Paus. 3.5.2); this very clearly indicates that all the ephors had sided with Pausanias, leading us to the conclusion that it was the ephors, together with Pausanias, who stood at the head of Lysander's enemies in Sparta (Oliva 1971, 183). Unable to strike directly at the victor of the Battle of Aegospotami, Pausanias and his supporters seem to have attacked his followers. Lysander's friend Thorax was accused of possessing precious metals, which the laws of Lycurgus supposedly prohibited (Plut. *Lys.* 19.7). But Pausanias had to forgo defeating Lysander himself, at least for the time being. The conflict was certainly smouldering under the surface, but judging from the silence of the sources, it did not influence Sparta's fundamental decisions.

Sparta ended the Peloponnesian War as a Persian ally. The situation became more complicated when, after the death of Darius in 405/404 BC, Artaxerxes Mnemon ascended the Persian throne and his younger brother Cyrus, who held power over Asia Minor as governor, decided to vie for power. Setting out for war against Artaxerxes in the spring of 401 BC, he turned to the Spartans for help. The ephors decided to grant it. In the summer of 401 BC, the Spartan nauarch (Samios or Pythagoras) with thirty-five ships and seven hundred mercenary hoplites commanded by Cheirisophos reached the coast of Cilicia (Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.2). Sparta found itself effectively at war with Persia. Cyrus's ambitions ended with his death in the Battle of Cunaxa, in which thirteen thousand Greek mercenaries took part, commanded by Klearchos, a Spartiate.

In 400 BC, Sparta clearly changed its policy in the East (Cartledge 1987, 191). Having defeated Athens, it no longer needed Persian financial assistance, and Cyrus's death at Cunaxa released the Spartans from their obligations towards him. What Sparta now needed was justification for its ambition to play the role of "leader of all Hellas"; an ambition which, incidentally, the Ionians skilfully exploited (Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.3). One fact in favour of helping the Ionians was that the oligarchs seconded the idea, being grateful to Lysander for the power that had been taken from them by Tissaphernes, who supported the democrats. In the following years, Sparta's involvement in the East would increase further due to the change on the Spartan throne which was soon to occur (cf. Cartledge 1979, 273). Other factors may also have come into play. It is possible that many Spartans saw the war in Asia as an opportunity to make a name for themselves and acquire some wealth (cf. Hamilton 1991, 88–89)

When Artaxerxes ordered the satrap Tissaphernes to occupy the Greek cities, Sparta, responding to the request of the Greeks of Asia Minor, sent Thibron with four thousand the Peloponnesian League infantry, one thousand *neodamodeis* from Laconia, and three hundred Athenian horsemen to defend Ionia (Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.4). In addition, Thibron's army included six thousand soldiers recruited among the survivors of the retreat from Kunaxa (Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.6; *Anab.* 7.8.24). Also, Sparta had a huge fleet, whose rule on the Aegean was unchallenged. The ephors ordered Thibron to enter Caria, hoping that the Carians would go over to the Spartan side. Thibron followed their orders, initially not without some success, but when in the winter of 400/399 BC he plundered the lands belonging to the Greek cities, he was recalled by Sparta. In the autumn of 399 he was replaced by Dercylidas, who was to lead the operations in Asia until 396 BC. In fact, soon after his appointment Dercylidas concluded a truce with Pharnabazus, renewed in the spring of 398 BC.

At the same time, the Spartans pursued an active policy in mainland Greece. The war against Elis in 401/400 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2, 21–31) attests to Sparta's ambition to maintain its hegemony in Greece and at the same time to revive the old traditions of the Peloponnesian League. This action was a show of strength, but at the same time it served as revenge against a state that had become autonomous during the Peloponnesian War (cf. Oliva 1971, 184). Also, the conquest of Elis gave Sparta control over the north-west coast of the Peloponnese and access to the Adriatic and the sea-routes in the west (Falkner 1996, 17–25). Sparta demanded that Elis free the settlements in Elaea and Triphylia, whose population it had turned into *perioikoi*, as well as pay a part of the costs of the Peloponnesian War. When Elis refused, Sparta declared war. Agis entered its territory with an army (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2, 21 ff.), but an earthquake soon made him retreat (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2, 24).

In 399 BC, "the ephors again called out the ban against Elis" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.25). This time, Sparta managed to persuade its allies to join the war, but the Boeotians and the Corinthians refused to send troops. The weakened and therefore obedient Athens, in contrast, complied. The Spartans ravaged Elis. In the end, the democratic leaders of Elis agreed to enter into an alliance with Sparta and to surrender their fleet, to demolish two fortresses and free the settlements demanded by Sparta (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.30–31). The Elis face-off was of considerable significance in terms of propaganda. It certainly frightened Sparta's Peloponnesian allies; but it also made other states associated with it apprehensive. In fact, at about the same time the Spartans expelled the Messenians from Naupactus and Kefallenia. The refugees went to Cyrenaica and Sicily, where they enlisted as mercenaries in the service of Sparta's ally, the tyrant Dionysius I of Syracuse.

Having concluded peace negotiations with Elis, Agis went to Delphi "and offered to the god the appointed tithe of his booty, [and then] on his way back fell sick at Heraea, being now an old man, and although he was still living when brought home to Lacedaemon, once there he very soon died; and he received a burial more splendid than belongs to man. When the prescribed days of mourning had been religiously observed and it was necessary to appoint a king, Leutychides,

who claimed to be a son of Agis, and Agesilaus, a brother of Agis, contended for the kingship" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.1).

The fight for the throne took place in the spring of 400 BC (Cartledge 1987, 354) or in 399/98 BC (Hamilton 1991, 18 n. 46). Agesilaus accused Leutychides of being not the son of the king, but of Alkibiades (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3, 2). It is hard to judge today how much truth there was in that accusation. The affair between Timaia, the wife of Agis II, and the Athenian Alkibiades was generally known, but this does not establish Alkibiades's paternity, which is believed by some scholars (Cartledge 1987, 113) and denied by others (Luria 1927; Kelly 1975, 46–49). In any case, this issue was the focus of a huge political deabte in Sparta, the crux of the matter being succession in the royal house of the Eurypontids (Cartledge 1987, 110–115; Hamilton 1991, 26). A collector and interpreter of oracles (*chresmologos*) Diopeithes of Athens, who in the 450s made himself famous by taking part in political attacks on Anaxagoras, a man close to Pericles, defended Leutychides by invoking an oracle of Apollo that recommended caution against lame royal power (*ten cholen basileian*) (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.3; cf. Plut. *Ages.* 3.3–4; *Lys.* 22.5; *Paus.* 3.8.9) (Luther 2000). Agesilaus was indeed lame in one leg, most probably from birth (Plut. *Ages.* 1.1–2; Nepos *Ages.* 8.1); "Lysander, however, made reply to him [Diopeithes], on behalf of Agesilaus, that he did not suppose the god was bidding them beware lest a king of theirs should get a sprain and become lame, but rather lest one who was not of the royal stock should become king. For the kingship would be lame in very truth when it was not the descendants of Heracles who were at the head of the state. After hearing such arguments from both claimants the state chose (*he polis heilonto basilea*) Agesilaus king" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.3–4).

It is beyond doubt that it was Lysander's support that swayed (if not outright determined) the election of Agesilaus (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.1–4; Plut. *Ages.* 3.3–5; *Lys.* 22.3–6; *Alkib.* 23.7–8; *Paus.* 3.8.7–10; Nepos *Lys.* 1.5). Short in stature and lame, Agesilaus was above forty at that time. With his wife Cleora, whom he had married not earlier than in 420 and not later than ca. 400 BC, he already had the son Archidamus (III) and daughter Proauga (cf. Cartledge 1987, 146). Nothing foretold his election to the throne. As the elder half-brother of the late Agis II (Plut. *Lys.* 22–23; *Ages.* 3) he could not dream of ever becoming king. Whereas we may wonder how, considering his lameness, he managed to survive the inspection of infants and then go through the *agoge*, little is known about his childhood and young years (cf. Hamilton 1991, 12 ff.) with the exception of the fact that when young, he had an intimate relationship with Lysander. Electing the son of Archidamus II from his second wife Eupolia (his son from the first marriage was Agis), the Spartans had chosen Lysander's man, and thus they declared themselves in support of a vigorous foreign policy (Hamilton 1991, 28–29).

When Leutychides was declared illegitimate and exiled, Agesilaus inherited, together with the throne, the huge assets of the late King Agis. He distributed half of the wealth among the members of his mother's family (Plut. *Ages.* 4.1), thus beginning to build his own political base. It was soon to become clear that Agesilaus was a master of political intrigue and an excellent diplomat, able to combine in

his actions an outward respect for Spartan customs with a skilful use of political structures to strengthen his position in the state. He was downright ostentatious in his respect for ephors and the gerousia. When summoned by the ephors, he did not wait for the third summons, but arrived immediately. When the ephors came to him, he did not remain seated as custom dictated, but rose, thus showing them his respect. But while he paid meticulous attention to outward forms, in practice he dealt mercilessly with his opponents and he was not above winning supporters through corruption. For instance, to each newly elected geront he would send a robe and an ox. He also tried to win the sympathy of his compatriots with his simple way of life and attachment to old customs; and indeed he gained great popularity. The ephors actually fined him (which, however, Cartledge [1987, 144, 399] doubts), "alleging as a reason that he made the citizens his own, who should be the common property of the state" (Plut. *Ages.* 5.2).

The domestic situation in Sparta: the Rhetra of Epitadeus and Cinadon's plot

The ancient authors were of the opinion that its victory in the Peloponnesian War changed Sparta completely; its opening to the world allegedly destroyed its archaic social structures and ruined the state. According to Plutarch, "the Lacedaemonian state began to suffer distemper and corruption soon after its subversion of the Athenian supremacy filled it with gold and silver" (Plut. *Agis* 5.1). Even if this view is not entirely correct, Sparta undeniably became the richest state in Greece almost overnight. Shortly after the decisive victory in the Battle of Aegospotami, Lysander sent to Sparta, through Gylippos, money and objects to the total value of a thousand (Plut. *Nic.* 28.3) or even a thousand and a half talents (Diod. 13.106.8–10); the difference between sums cited by Diodorus and Plutarch may be due to lack of precision or to an error (David 1979/80, 39). Lysander himself returned to Sparta in the late summer of 404 BC, carrying the spoils of war, wreaths he had received from the cities, and four hundred and seventy talents of tribute collected, with Cyrus's permission, as a fund for waging the war (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.7–9). Not heeding the demands of Thebes and Corinth, who claimed one-twelfth of the spoils for themselves (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.5; Plut. *Lys.* 27.2), Sparta kept all this for itself; the wealth it thus acquired totalled about 1,470 to 1,970 talents. Adding the income of over a thousand talents a year from tribute (Diod. 14.10.2), we find that Sparta found itself in possession of such riches as had never been seen there before (cf. David 1981, 5–10).

This resulted in far-reaching internal changes (David 1979/80, 45; cf. also Cartledge 1987, 168; Hodkinson 1993, 150 ff.) and, as the sources indicate, caused heated discussions as to what to do with such a mass of money. Plutarch claims that some of the Spartans were against allowing money into the city. A motion to this effect was put forward by one of the ephors – Skiraphidas according to Theopompus and Phlogidas according to Ephorus (Plut. *Lys.* 17.2). The supporters

of Lysander were in favour of leaving the money in the city. Finally, a compromise was reached: the money was to remain, but only in possession of the state; its possession by private individuals was to be punished by death (Plut. *Lys.* 17.4). And indeed, Thorax, Lysander's friend, being found to possess some of that money, was allegedly sentenced to death (Plut. *Lys.* 17.4–6; 19.4). If this is true, this would have made Thorax the first and the last person in Sparta to be condemned for this reason (David 1981, 9). Certainly not many years later the Spartans not only ceased to fear punishment, but actually began to flaunt their wealth (Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 14.3). In fact, the whole story related by Plutarch sounds like a tale for naïve children. The question of what to do with the sudden windfall was, naturally, pondered. But, contrary to what Plutarch claims, no-one contemplated not letting it into the city. In the latter case, one might ask what the followers of Skiraphidas/Phlogidas intended to do with the funds: send them back to their former owners or perhaps destroy them? The Spartiates needed the money, and certainly the Spartan polis needed it. Differences of opinion might have related to the issue of dividing it, or perhaps to the question of whether it was time for Sparta to start minting its own coinage. But whatever the matter of the debates, the ancient authors do not inform us about it. On the other hand, neither do they talk about any changes, which may indicate that the old customs (rather than the laws) remained in force.

Plutarch also says that despite the influx of wealth, for as long as "the number of families instituted by Lycurgus was still preserved in the transmission of estates [*kleroi*], and father left to son his inheritance, to some extent the continuance of this order and equality sustained the state in spite of its errors in other respects" (Plut. *Agis* 5.1). They were only destroyed "when a certain powerful man (*aner dynatos*) came to be ephor (*ephoreusas*) who was headstrong and of a violent temper, Epitadeus by name" (Plut. *Agis* 5.3). This happened because "he had a quarrel with his son, and introduced a law [rhetra] permitting a man during his lifetime to give his estate (*oikos*) and allotment (*kleros*) to any one he wished, or in his will and testament so to leave it. This man, then, satisfied a private grudge of his own in introducing the law; but his fellow citizens welcomed the law out of greed, made it valid, and so destroyed the most excellent of institutions" (Plut. *Agis* 5.2–3). According to Plutarch, this rhetra ruined the entire system of Sparta: "For the men of power and influence (*dynatoi*) at once began to acquire estates without scruple, ejecting the rightful heirs from their inheritances; and speedily the wealth of the state streamed into the hands of a few men, and poverty became the general rule" (Plut. *Agis* 5.3). In the end, Plutarch concludes, "there were left of the old Spartan families not more than seven hundred, and of these there were perhaps a hundred who possessed land and allotment (*kleroi*); while the ordinary throng, without resources and without civic rights, lived in enforced idleness, showing no zeal or energy in warding off foreign wars, but ever watching for some opportunity to subvert and change affairs at home" (Plut. *Agis* 5.4).

No author except Plutarch mentions Epitadeus and his rhetra, and Plutarch himself does not indicate clearly when this rhetra may have been accepted. Only from the context can it be inferred that it was introduced after the end of the

Peloponnesian War in 404 BC and before the Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC. Various hypotheses have been put forward as to its date (discussed by Oliva 1971, 189 n). Niese (1909) thought that Epitadeus might be identical with Epitadas, the Spartan commander mentioned by Thucydides (Thuk. 4.8.31; 33; 38) who was killed in 425 BC during the fighting at Sphacteria. This would mean, however, that the rhetra was introduced while the Peloponnesian War was still in progress; this seems unlikely. According to Toynbee (1913, 272), who dated the rhetra to around 357 BC, the time after the loss of Messenia would have been a better context for it than the Peloponnesian War. Cary (1926, 187) was in favour of as early a dating as the middle of the fourth century BC (1926, 187). It is now generally accepted that the rhetra was introduced soon after the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War, that is in the late fifth or early fourth century BC (Oliva 1971, 190; Christien 1974, 202–209; David 1981, 67; Hamilton 1991, 84). The significance of the rhetra was allegedly huge: "In itself the 'rhetra' encouraged the new tendencies which culminated in the Hellenistic period. The 'rhetra' is thus a landmark in the economic and social history of Sparta" (Oliva 1971, 192).

The question remains why it was introduced at all. If (despite the suspicions this may raise) the whole affair was truly triggered by a conflict between Epitadeus and his son, then it explains the motives of the ephor – but not those of the Spartiates who would have had to vote in favour of such a law. Many hypotheses have been developed attempting to explain the motives of the latter. According to one, the rhetra was supposed to encourage mercenaries who had grown rich abroad to return home and buy a *kleros* in Laconia (Toynbee 1913, 272 ff.). According to another, on the contrary: the rhetra was supposed to create favourable conditions for those who wished to leave Sparta to serve in mercenary armies and wanted to sell their *kleroi* (Cary 1926, 186 ff.). According to a variant of the latter hypothesis, the men in question were only the young, unmarried, or in any case childless Spartiates thinking of mercenary service (Michell 1964, 218). Still other interpretations linked the rhetra to the issues of debt (Asheri 1961) or saw it as a means of finding heirs for 9,000 *kleroi* (MacDowell 1986, 99) or a cure for the decline in population (Toynbee 1969, 337–343; Michell 1964, 219).

The most likely answer is that Epitadeus's alleged rhetra, as was suggested already by Eduard Meyer (1892, I, 258 n. 3), is entirely unhistorical (Cartledge 1979, 167–168; 1987, 167; Hodkinson 1986, 391; Flower 1991, 89; 1993, 150 n. 1). The rhetra is mentioned solely by Plutarch. On the other hand, the supporters of the rhetra's historicity refer Aristotle's remark that "the lawgiver made it dishonorable to sell a family's existing estate, and did so rightly, but he granted liberty to alienate land at will by gift or bequest; yet the result that has happened was bound to follow in the one case as well as in the other (Arist. *Pol.* 2.1270a) precisely to Epitadeus. But the allusion to "the lawgiver" here refers to Lycurgus, the only lawgiver of whom Aristotle speaks. From this, it follows that in Aristotle's time the regulations introduced by, according to Plutarch, the rhetra of Epitadeus were widely practised and regarded as belonging to the corpus of laws introduced by Lycurgus. Had that law been fresh, we might expect Aristotle to highlight this fact.

Let us also note that Aristotle traces the causes of Sparta's contemporary difficulties precisely to the original legislation of Lycurgus.

This means that the sources refer to two contradictory traditions explaining the decline of Sparta in the fourth century BC. The first of them (e.g. Aristotle) attributes it to the internal weakness of the system, which was revealed in all its force precisely in the fourth century. The second one (e.g. Plutarch) explains the collapse by the fact that the old laws fell into disuse, initially as the result of an influx of great quantities of gold and silver after the Peloponnesian War, then in connection with the adoption of the rhetra and its effects. Xenophon also explains the weakness of Sparta by the fact that the Spartans ceased to obey the old laws, he knows nothing of the rhetra of Epitadeus.

And it is precisely this silence of their contemporaries that raises the greatest suspicion about Epitadeus and his rhetra. As Eckart Schütrumpf (1987, 441–457) has convincingly demonstrated, Plutarch's description of social relations in Sparta before Agis as found in in his *Life of Agis* is based on a paragraph from the *Republic* in which Plato describes the deterioration of social relations as resulting from the concentration of property in the hands of a small group of rich men. The source used by Plutarch presents the history of Sparta according to the interests of Agis IV, who in the third century BC, while advocating a return to the system introduced by Lycurgus, had to ascribe all the weaknesses of the state down to the errors of someone other than Lycurgus; otherwise his plans would have lost any legitimacy. In other words, he had no choice but to show Lycurgus's legislation, corrupted in the fourth century BC, needed to be mended. According to Schütrumpf (1987, 456–457), however, it was not Phylarchus, the principal author on whom Plutarch relied for his *Life of Agis*, but rather the stoic Sphairus of Borysthenes, a pupil of Zeno and teacher and collaborator of Cleomenes, who should be held responsible for the emergence of the historical fiction that is the rhetra of Epitadeus.

But while the rhetra of Epitadeus is a fiction, a part of the Spartan myth created in the third century BC, it is true that after the Peloponnesian War Sparta was indeed experiencing faster changes than it had in the fifth century. The long war increased Sparta's contact with the outside world, influenced changes in its citizens' lifestyles, and unequal participation in war-related gains contributed to the impoverishment of some and the enrichment of others. Under Spartan conditions, this meant a reduction in the number of fully enfranchised citizens, leading to social tensions. Their manifestation was the conspiracy of Cinadon (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.4–11, cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1306b 33–35; Polyaenus 2.14.1). Xenophon places the conspiracy in the first year of the reign of King Agesilaus (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.4), which means, depending on the adopted dating, that it took place in 399 BC (Cartledge 1987, 164; Ruzè 2018, 326) or 398 BC (David 1979, 243–244; cf. also Oliva 1971, 192 n. 3; Pečatnova 1984, 133 n. 1). Some propose dating the conspiracy to 397 BC (Chrimes 1952, 228 n. 2; 354 ff.; Hamilton 1991, 78; for an overview of the debate, cf. Hamilton 1982, 292), and also to 401/400 BC (Luther 2004, 96).

Evil omens were seen, Xenophon informs us, while Agesilaus was offering sacrifice to Apollo, which indicated that something untoward was happening inside

the state, making it endangered as if amidst enemies. It is not hard to guess that soon afterward, exactly five days later, a dangerous conspiracy was discovered. Its leader, Cinadon, was a free man, although he not one of the *homoioi*; he may have belonged to the ranks of impoverished Spartiates (e.g. the *hypomeiones*, only ever mentioned in connection with this conspiracy) who had lost out to the changes taking place in Sparta at that time. He was "a young man," writes Xenophon, "sturdy of body and stout of heart, but not one of the peers" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.5). The description of Cinadon as *neaniskos* does not conclude the issue of his age. He was certainly an adult, although he probably looked young. Pečatnova (1984, 134–135) believes that he was between eighteen and forty years old, although it would probably be more reasonable to say that he was approaching or even already past the age of thirty.

The ephors learnt of the brewing plot from a young man Cinadon had tried to recruit. He revealed to the ephors that Cinadon had taken him to the agora and told him to count the Spartiates there.

> "And I," he said, "after counting king and ephors and senators and about forty others, asked 'Why, Cinadon, did you bid me count these men?' And he replied: 'Believe,' said he, 'that these men are your enemies, and that all the others who are in the market-place, more than four thousand in number, are your allies'." In the streets (*en tais hodois*) also, the informer said, Cinadon pointed out as enemies here one and there two who met them, and all the rest as allies; and of all who chanced to be on the country estates (*en tois choriois tychoien*) to Spartiatae, while there would be one whom he would point out as an enemy, namely the master (*despotes*), yet there would be many on each estate named as allies (*symmachoi*). (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.5)

This description seems to indicate that by then the Spartans were already a small minority. In addition, it appears that not all of them lived in Sparta, some of them staying (probably temporarily) on their estates, although again, it is not clear how this should be understood, since the deterioration of the community was based on the fact that a few men owned many estates. Is it possible that those Spartans had deliberately aimed to take over *kleroi* in one area and for this reason they could live "on the country estate", as if in a residence that was a centre of their land?

It does not seem that the conspiracy was very well organised, or perhaps vice versa: its members were so deeply buried that in the end they could not be caught. In any case, neutralising the leader solved the problem, although Xenophon's account may suggest that the conspirators were many:

> When the ephors asked how many Cinadon said there really were who were in the secret of this affair, the informer replied that he said in regard to this point that those who were in the secret with himself and the other leaders were by no means many, though trustworthy; the leaders, however, put it this way, that it was they who knew the secret of all the others – Helots, freedmen, lesser Spartiatae (*tois hypomeiosi*), and Perioeci; for whenever among these classes any mention was made of Spartiatae

(*logos peri Spartiaton*), no one was able to conceal the fact that he would be glad to eat them raw (*homon esthiein*). (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.6)

It seems that Cinadon was simply counting on the disgruntled; he did not have an exact plan of action, or at least he did not reveal it to the ephors' informant. The helots certainly had enough reason to be dissatisfied. In the case of the *neodamodeis*, perhaps their disillusionment with their new status (or with their continued participation in war campaigns) came into play. The *hypomeiones*, like Cinadon himself, may have been painfully aware of the social degradation that had become their lot. On the other hand, certainly not of all the *perioikoi* had an identical attitude to the Spartiates. Cinadon had probably hoped to gain the support of the poorer ones, but not of those who ruled the poleis (Cartledge 1987, 178). Nor does Xenophon's description settle the geography of the conspiracy. Although Vidal-Naquet points to its essentially Laconian character (Austin, Vidal-Naquet 1972, 280 n. 7), it is difficult to speak here of anything more than a feeling. We have no way of knowing whether the conspiracy included Laconia and Messenia or only Laconia itself.

The ephors, however, were alarmed by the news they had heard and they immediately, in the greatest secrecy, took action. They did not even summon, Xenophon says, the so-called Little Assembly (*ten mikran kaloumenen ekklesian*) (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.8), but discussed the matter only with the gerontes. Some scholars consider Xenophon's *mikra ekklesia* to have been an apella convened as a matter of urgency and attended only by those Spartiates who happened to be present in the city. In the light of the atmosphere in which the ephors operated this option, proposed by Kahrstedt (1922, 258; cf. also Witkowski 1938, 169–170; Kelly 1981a, 55), does not seem likely. According to Busolt, the *mikra ekklesia* was a body cosisting of the oldest and most respected citizens (Busolt, Swoboda 1926, 693). On the other hand, Jones (1964, 27) and David (1979, 255) believe that this was a popular term for the gerousia. The lack of other testimonies does not allow us to completely exclude any of these hypotheses; but the most reasonable seems to be the one suggesting that the *mikra ekklesia* was a possibly informal body consisting of the gerontes, ephors and probably other generally respected Spartiates, officials and former officials, who in case of emergency could be gathered to take essential decisions justified by an imminent threat to the state (cf. Cartledge 1987, 130–1; Hamilton 1991, 69). Presumably, the ephors tried at all costs to avoid publicity so as not to frighten Cinadon and his men and they had to act in considerable haste, so they did not convene the apella or even the gerousia, but consulted only those they could locate quickly, and those were the gerontes.

As a result of those hasty councils, the ephors "decided to send Cinadon to Aulon along with others of the younger men (*syn allois ton neoteron*), and to order him to bring back with him certain of the Aulonians and Helots whose names were written in the official dispatch (*skytale*). And they ordered him to bring also the woman who was said to be the most beautiful (*kalliste*) woman in Aulon and was thought to be corrupting the Lacedaemonians who came there, older and younger alike" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.8). It is not clear why Cinadon was sent to Aulon of all places,

a city situated somewhere – the precise location is impossible to ascertain – in north-western Messenia, between Ciparissos and the river Neda (Cartledge 1979, 274; Shipley 2004b, 559–560). The mention of the helots is also unclear; contrary to a hypothesis posed by Welwei (1974, 109 n. 5) they did not belong to the *perioeci*, but tilled the land belonging to Spartiates, somewhere nearby.

Cinadon was not worried by the assignment, because the ephors had already sent him on such missions before. He was ordered to turn to the most senior of the *hippagretai* to be assigned some six or seven men from the elite squad of the three hundred *hippeis*: "In fact they had taken care that the commander should know whom he was to send, and that those who were sent should know that it was Cinadon whom they were to arrest" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.9). Fearing the extent of the conspiracy, the ephors did not want to have Cinadon arrested in Sparta. When he left for Aulon, they dispatched an entire *mora* of cavalry after him (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.10).

The ephors' plan proceeded smoothly. When Cinadon was captured, a rider was sent back to Sparta with the names of the conspirators revealed by Cinadon. The ephors immediately had them arrested, including "the seer Tisamenus and the most influential of the others" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.11). Cinadon was brought back to Sparty, and when under torture he "confessed everything and told the names of his confederates, they asked him finally what in the world was his object in undertaking this thing. He replied: 'I wished to be inferior to no one in Lacedaemon' (*medeis hetton einai en Lakedaimoni*)" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3, 11). In the light of what had been said about the cause and the aims of the conspiracy, the meaning of his words may have been different and the ephors deliberately twisted them to serve their purpose. After all, Cinadon was not aiming for everyone to become *homoioi*. According to David, *hettones* was a synonym to *hypomeiones* (1979, 246); in other words, Cinadon wanted not to topple the system, but to regain his rightful place in it (Flower 1991, 94). This is stated outright by Aristotle, who says that Cinadon, a brave man, did not occupy in the state a position he merited (Arist. *Pol.* 5.1306b). The fact that Cinadon did not want to be *hetton* to anyone testifies to his ambition and explains the reasons for his frustration. It probably also reveals the most important of his motives. He was certainly driven by ambition. This is all the more understandable if the fact that Cinadon commanded a group of *hippeis* indeed indicates, as Figueira (2006, 59–60, similarly Ruzè 2018, 326) believes, that he had belonged to this group himself, but he fell out of it due to poverty. However, if we recall on whose support Cinadon counted, it is difficult to believe that he goal he wanted to achieve was the same for him and for other participants or supporters of the uprising (cf. Hamilton 1991, 70).

"Thereupon," writes Xenophon, "he was straightway bound fast, neck and arms, in a collar, and under scourge and goad was dragged about through the city, he and those with him. And so they met their punishment" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.11). His death in front of the crowds – not mentioned by Polyaenus (2.14.1) – was to be a punishment for Cinadon, a warning for anyone who might wish to follow in his footsteps, and also a testimony to the power of the minority, who with steady hands was throttling the majority. Apart from Cinadon, the only member of his

group mentioned by name was the seer Teisamenus (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.11). He was probably descended from the priestly family of the Iamidai from Elis, two members of which, Teisamenus and his brother Agias, obtained Spartan citizenship in 480 BC (Hdt. 9.33–36; Paus. 3.11, 5–8; cf. Poralla, 119; David 1979, 246). The brother of the conspirator Tisamenus, Agias (grandson of Theisamenus and son of Agelochus) was a seer to Lysander at Aigospotamoi. According to David (1979, 246–247), it is possible that Agias the seer inherited the *kleros* of his father Agelochus, with the result that his brother Tisamenus, being *akleros*, fell into the category of the "disenfranchised" and for this reason joined Cinadon's conspiracy. This is as possible as all the other conjectures, but of course has no corroboration in the sources. There is slightly more to support Pečatnova's (1984, 137) suggestion that it was Agias who drew Agesilaus's attention to the conspiracy (cf. Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.4).

Cinadon was counting on the popular discontent. Since the conspiracy was nipped in the bud, we do not know whether he could truly hope for mass support. It is undoubtedly tempting to link the conspiracy to the increasing stratification of wealth in Sparta after the Peloponnesian War, and to the unfulfilled hopes presumably held by the *hypomeiones*, the *neodamodeis* and the *perioikoi*, who had shed blood during the war and after its end may have felt disappointed with a return to the social *status quo ante*. In contrast, nothing seems to support the view that the conspirators had been Lysander's men or even that Lysander himself was behind the conspiracy (Pečatnova 1984,139). While Pečatnova's (1984,140) hypothesis that Cinadon's conspiracy prompted the Spartan authorities to start the war in Asia in order to defuse social tensions also seems controversial, we may wonder whether the Asian expedition was not used as an opportunity to get rid of potentially dangerous elements by sending two thousand *neodamodeis* to the war together with the rest of the army (Xen. Hell. 3.4.2). Cinadon's conspiracy (cf. also Lazenby 1997; Gish 2009) was undoubtedly a manifestation of social tensions, but the fact that the ephors dealt with it quickly and efficiently, and that it represented an isolated incident in the history of fourth-century Sparta, argues against exaggerating its significance.

The expedition to Asia

In 396 BC, thanks to his friends among the Greeks in Asia Minor who approached the Spartan authorities officially about the matter, Lysander caused the supreme command in the war against the Persians to fall to Agesilaus (Plut. *Lys.* 23.1–2; *Ages.* 6.2). Sparta had been present in the area for a long time, and Lysander hoped to restore his former protégés to power in the Greek cities.

Still in 397 BC, Dercylidas and the nauarch Pharax struck at Caria (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.13). Pharnabazus jointed his land forces to those of Tissaphernes, who governed the southern satrapy. Together, they tried to protect a fleet of forty ships stationed under the command of the exile Conon at Caunos. This prevented Dercylidas and Pharax from carrying out a concerted action on land and sea. When Dercylidas entered Caria, Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus moved towards Ionia, thus forcing

him to retreat. The two armies came to face each other in the end, but neither was willing to fight. In the summer of 397 BC Dercylidas concluded a truce with both satraps. The Persians promised to recognise the sovereignty of Greek cities in Asia, the Spartans, to recall their harmosts and garrisons from those cities. The truce was to last until these arrangements were accepted by the Persian king and the Spartan authorities (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.20). Meanwhile, Pharax and his hundred and twenty ships blockaded Conon at Caunos, but in the end, seeing that the latter was being supported by a superior land army, the Spartan fleet retreated to Rhodes.

Sparta had hoped to come to an agreement with Persia regarding the terms tentatively agreed by Dercylidas and Tissaphernes. It was also then that the Spartans decided to increase their involvement in the East. This was influenced by, among others, the disturbing news coming from Asia that a powerful Persian fleet was under construction in Phoenicia. It was easy to guess that the Persian king intended to use it against the Spartans. Clearly the Persians were preparing to finally and completely drive them out of Asia.

The official purpose of the expedition was to protect Greek cities from the Persians. According to Xenophon (*Hell.* 3.4.2), Lysander persuaded Agesilaus to undertake an armed expedition to Asia in order to restore, with Agesilaus's help, the decarchies he had established in the cities, which had been abolished by the ephors (cf. Plut. *Lys.* 23, 1–2; *Ages.* 6, 1–3). Given Agesilaus's ambitions, he probably did not have to argue very hard; Lysander was certainly deeply involved in the undertaking of the Asiatic expedition, but Agesilaus himself must have been among its staunchest advocates, since was from the outset very aware of the opportunity that the war with Persia presented to him. What we do not know is how strongly they had to argue the case before the Assembly. Sparta had by then been used to campaigning in very distant areas; but never before had a Spartan king led an expedition to a place as remote as Asia. In 396 BC, this probably gave rise to much discussion and doubt, and alongside the enthusiasts of the venture there were also its enemies, who could recall the history of a hundred years before, when King Cleomenes I rejected Aristagoras's request to send Spartan troops to Asia Minor.

Lysander was one of the thirty Spartiates who accompanied the king as his advisers (*symbouloi*). The army, counting some fifteen thousand in total, included, among others, two thousand *neodamodeis* and six thousand soldiers of the Peloponnesian League. Having made appropriate sacrifices, Agesilaus moved out, demanding reinforcements from the allies and heading for Aulis, since he wished to "offer sacrifice [at] the place where Agamemnon had sacrificed before he sailed to Troy" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.3). The ceremony had a clearly symbolic character: Agesilaus, like a new Agamemnon, was beginning a great pan-Hellenic campaign against an old enemy. Also, it shows the depth of Agesilaus's ambitions; until recently living in obscurity, he had finally been given a chance to fulfil his dreams of power and glory.

He was painfully thwarted: "When he had reached Aulis, however, the Boeotarchs, on learning that he was sacrificing, sent horsemen and bade him

discontinue his sacrificing, and they threw from the altar the victims which they found already offered. Then Agesilaus, calling the gods to witness, and full of anger, embarked upon his trireme and sailed away. And when he arrived at Gerastus and had collected there as large a part of his army as he could, he directed his course to Ephesus" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.4 cf. Plut. *Ages.* 6, 4–6). The incident at Aulis offended the king deeply; it is not impossible that it lay the foundations for his determined hatred of the Thebans, which during his long reign he was to repeatedly express (Hamilton 1991, 9, 11, 30–31, 95).

Upon Agesilaus's arrival in Ephesus, the satrap Tissaphernes offered him a truce and promised to respect the freedom of the Greek cities, in return expecting that the latter would refrain from hostilities until the Great King had agreed to a final settlement. Agesilaus agreed to a three-month truce. After his visit to Aulis, this may seem surprising; Xenophon maintains that Agesilaus was well aware of Tissaphernes's devious game and he acted as if he wanted the Persian to commit perjury before the gods (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.5–6). The true reason for Agesilaus's decision, however, probably lies quite elsewhere: the king needed time to discern the situation, acquire necessary information, settle issues related to the governance of Greek cities (since, by force of the decisions taken by the ephors in 397 BC their former system was to be restored), and solve his own problems, not the least of which was related to the person of his former lover and protector, Lysander.

Despite Xenophon's silence on the matter, it can be assumed that there was no disagreement between Lysander and Agesilaus regarding the aims of the expedition (Proieti 1987, 97), especially since Agesilaus owed to his former lover not only the very idea of the expedition and the supreme command in it, but also the smooth execution of the necessary preparations (Hamilton 1991, 30). Nonetheless, a conflict soon arose between them on the grounds that the Greeks of Asia Minor showed more respect for Lysander than for the king (Plut. *Lys.* 23). Xenophon says that, according to all appearances, the true king (*basileus*) was Lysander, whose favour the local Greeks were courting, while Agesilaus looked like a private person (*idiotes*) (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.7). The situation was unacceptable to Agesilaus, but otherwise completely understandable: unlike Lysander, Agesilaus was completely unknown in Asia. It is, incidentally, worth noting that if Lysander sinned in this matter, it was by his behaviour and not by his actions (Proieti 1987, 98). The conflict grew increasingly serious. The royal advisers were also hostile towards Lysander. Agesilaus had to (or at any rate wanted to) show Lysander his place. This certainly required firm steps. In the end, however, it was up to Agesilaus to decide how elegant his action would be and what place in the ranks, or in front of them, he would assign to the man with whom he had been close in the past and to whom he owed tremendous gratitude for his recent elevation. This was how he decided to indicate his displeasure: "When [...] Lysander now began to introduce people to Agesilaus, the king would in every case dismiss, without granting their petitions, those who were known by him to be supported in any way by Lysander" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.8; Plut. *Lys.* 23).

Lysander soon grasped where the problem lay and personally discouraged people from seeking his protection. In order to humiliate him even further, Agesilaus appointed him his carver of sacrificial meat (*kreodaites*) (Plut. *Ages.* 8.1, cf. Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.7–10; Plut. *Lys.* 23. 2–24.2). Lysander could not help feeling bitter and, "being distressed at his disgrace, he went to Agesilaus and said: 'Agesilaus, it seems that you, at least, understand how to humiliate your friends.' 'Yes, by Zeus, I do,' said he, 'at any rate those who wish to appear greater than I; but as for those who exalt me, if I should prove not to know how to honour them in return, I should be ashamed.'" (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.9). Following Lysander's own request, Agesilaus sent him to the Hellespont, where he was not unsuccessful (he persuaded Spitridates to come to his side); afterwards he returned to join Agesilaus (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.10; Plut. *Lys.* 24). When in the spring of 395 BC his term of office drew to a close, he went back to Sparta. Ephraim David is probably right when he writes that "the conflict between Agesilaus and Lysander was motivated by personal ambition, not by differences of opinion in matters of foreign policy" (David 1981, 21). Lysander's removal was certainly brutally effected (the bias of our sources, particularly Xenophon, is exposed by the fact that the issue of Agesilaus's ingratitude does not arise in them at all), but it was also a condition for Agesilaus to achieve full autonomy. Only from this point on did he become a true king; and his subsequent actions showed him not only most willing, but also able to rule and command on his own. He came to believe in his greatness.

In 396 BC, Agesilaus successfully raided Phrygia, then subjected to Pharnabazus, and in 395 BC fought against Tissaphernes in Caria. In the spring of 395 BC, he defeated the Persian cavalry in the battle on the river Pactolus near Sardis (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4, 21–25; *Ages.* 1. 28–33; *Hell. Oxy.* 11. 4–6; Diod. 14.80.1–4; debate on the course of the battle and relevant literature, Anderson 1974a; Hamilton 1991, 97–102). Tissaphernes was executed by order of the Great King and his successor Tithraustes offered Agesilaus a ten-month truce and financial support (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4, 26; Diod. 14.80). Agesilaus was popular among his soldiers. He won considerable booty. The trust he enjoyed in Sparta led the Spartan authorities to give him the supreme command of all operations on land and sea, agreeing to let him personally appoint the nauarch (Plut. *Ages.* 10, 9–11). As a favour to his wife, Cleora, he chose her brother (Xen. *Hell.* 3.27–29; Plut. *Ages.* 10, 11). "But in putting Peisander in charge of the navy at this time," writes Plutarch, "he was thought to have made a mistake; for there were older (*presbyteron*) and more competent (*phronimotaton*) men to be had, and yet he gave the admiralty to him, not out of regard for the public good, but in recognition of the claims of relationship and to gratify his wife, who was a sister of Peisander" (Plut. *Ages.* 10.6; cf. Hamilton 1991, 54–55). He called on "all the island and coastal cities" to send him ships and was preparing for further operation. This time, the target was to be Conon, who had incited Rhodes to rebel against Sparta (*Hell. Oxy.* 15).

It was around this time that Lysander, according to the tradition, decided to seize supreme power in Sparta. He returned to Sparta in disgrace, angry with Agesilaus and full of hatred for the entire Spartan system. It was then, Plutarch

argues, that he decided to put into effect the plan which he had long been considering: to abolish the hereditary throne within two families and to introduce the election of kings from among all the descendants of Heracles, or perhaps even from among all the Spartiates. In planning that, he imagined that he himself would become king (Plut. *Lys.* 24.4–6). Initially, he intended to personally persuade his fellow Spartans to adopt this scheme by means of a speech prepared for him by Cleon of Halicarnassus. Later, he also decided to manipulate the oracles: he tried to bribe a priestess at Delphi and then at Dodona, and when this failed, he personally made a similar attempt at the oracle of Amun. There, too, the proposal was rejected, and the priests informed Sparta of his dealings (Plut. *Lys.* 25.1–4). Aristotle claims, although with some hesitation, that Lysander attempted to abolish the institution of monarchy in Sparta (Arist. *Pol.* 5.130lb5). Diodorus, in turn, maintains that Lysander's aim was to abolish the Heraclid monarchy and to replace it with a monarch elected from among all the Spartiates. If Lysander was indeed making such plans and they came to light, he managed to exonerate himself. It was only after his death that the aforementioned speech was found in Lysander's house as alleged evidence that he wanted to persuade the Spartans to choose their kings from among all the Spartiates (Diod. 14.13.2 and 8; Plut. *Lys.* 24; 26).

The origin of the tradition attributing to Lysander plans to change the system is curious (cf. also Nepos *Lys.* 3). It is undoubtedly an invention, even though many scholars, e.g. Oliva (1971, 186) and Frolov (1972, 33–37), think otherwise; yet it is difficult to accuse Ephorus of its creation, since the rumour accusing Lysander of the intention to overthrow the monarchy was already known to Aristotle; this makes us look for its originators among Lysander's contemporary enemies, perhaps even those outside Sparta, if we assume that the person who invented the reference to the speech prepared by Cleon did not know that not everyone was allowed to speak at the Apella (Flower 1991, 81–83). Naturally, Lysander may have been thinking about political change (it would actually reflect badly on his intelligence if it had not occurred to him at all), but it is unlikely that he tried to put his thoughts into action. Insinuations concerning Lysander's revolutionary plans refer to his last adventure in Asia, where Agesilaus's entourage and Lysander himself suffered from role reversal, Agesilaus being treated as a private person and Lysander as a king. We should also look for the sources of the rumour in Agesilaus's circle, for it was he that "discovered" the speech, the crowning evidence of the crime, among Lysander's belongings.

After his return from Asia, Lysander had little time to be concerned with his "infamy" because new opportunities for action opened up before him when fighting broke out in central Greece. The Theban leaders Ismenias and Androcleides provoked a clash between Locris, which they supported, and Phocis, and the latter turned to Sparta for help. The ephors categorically forbade the Boeotians to take hostile measures against Phocis and ordered them to submit the dispute to the arbitration of the Spartan Symmachy. The Boeotian League disobeyed the order and at the end of the summer of 395 BC launched an invasion on Phocis. Sparta then declared war on the Boeotians. Theban envoys went to Athens to seek help

(Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.8–15) and the Athenians allied themselves with Boeotia and Locris, pledging military assistance.

Lysander was sent to Phocis (hardly a sign of infamy!) with the order to gather the troops which were later to join with those brought by Pausanias (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.6). Lysander managed to persuade Orchomenus to leave the Boeotian League and then attacked Haliartos, where he was defeated and killed (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.17– 19; Plut. *Lys.* 27–28). Pausanias arrived at Haliartos with his forces a day after the battle and decided to enter negotiations with the Thebans, but their bargaining position was strengthened by the arrival of reinforcements from Athens (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.21–24; Plut. *Lys.* 29). In the end, therefore, Pausanias left empty-handed, for which reason he was brought to trial in Sparta, at which he failed to appear (David 1981, 18–19). He was accused of having deliberately arrived at Haliartos too late. Apparently few doubted this, since Pausanias fled to Tegea, where he spent the rest of his life (around fifteen years) in exile as a supplicant at the shrine of Athena Alea (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.21–25; Plut. *Lys.* 29–30; Paus. 3.5.4–6). Although Pausanias was blamed for Lysander's death and accused of arriving to the battlefield too late, ac- cording to Xenophon it was Lysander who arrived at Haliartos too early. In fact, Xenophon may be closer to the truth here. Lysander had great military experience, but he had great political experience as well, and he knew that – as it happened before at Athens – when Pausanias arrived, being king he would automatically as- sume command, so he tried to achieve a victory before that, on his own (Westlake 1969, 222–223).

With Lysander's death Pausanias's conviction the period of power struggles in Sparta came to an end. The great victor, or perhaps the only one, was Agesilaus, who continued Lysander's aggressive foreign policy and in Sparta itself sought to strengthen the royal power, which had also been Pausanias's vision. The place of the exiled Pausanias was taken by his son Agesipolis, then still a minor. Agesilaus made sure of his acquiescence by arranging a homoerotic relationship for him (Plut. *Ages.* 20, 7–9; cf. Cartledge 1987, 146).

The Corinthian War

Timocrates of Rhodes, an envoy of the Persian king, arrived in Greece in 395 BC and handed large sums of money to the leaders of cities that were hostile to Sparta: Thebes, Corinth and Argos (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.1). He also informed the Athenians (who refused the money) that the Persian fleet would soon begin an offensive cam- paign in the Aegean. Timocrates's mission certainly gladdened Sparta's enemies, although contrary to Xenophon's opinion, it was not Persian money that created the anti-Spartan coalition: as the author of *Hellenika Oxyrynchia* (7, 2) maintains, the Athenians had long been waiting for an opening. At the end of 395 BC they entered, as has already been mentioned, an alliance with the Boeotian League and with Locris. A few months later they were joined by Corinth, Argos, Acarnania, Leucas, Ambracia, Euboea and the Chalcidian League (on the Corinthian War, Tuplin 1993). Early in 394 BC, the Spartan authorities, fearing an invasion on the

Peloponnese, recalled Agesilaus from Asia (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.1–2; Plut. *Ages.* 15.2). The Spartans, as Cartledge (1979, 280) believes, may have truly feared an attack on La-conia. They were well aware that precisely this strategy had been recommended to the allies by the Corinthian Timolaus (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.11–12).

Soon after the ephors declared war. King Agesipolis was a minor, so the com-mand of the army was entrusted to Aristodemus, "who was of the royal family and the boy's guardian" (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.9). On the early summer of 394 BC, the anti-Spartan coalition began the "Corinthian War" (cf. Cartledge 1987, 218–226). Instead of taking advantage of Agesilaus's absence, however, the allies wasted time in Corinth on idle debates (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.11 ff.).

Meanwhile, the Spartans, gathered at Sicyon twenty thousand heavy infantry, including six thousand "Lacedaemonian hoplites (*hoplitai Lakedaimonion*)" and six hundred horsemen under Aristodemus (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.16). The "six thou-sand Lacedemonian hoplites" mentioned by Xenophon may have included about two thousand Spartiates, and the rest were probably *perioikoi* and *neodamodeis* (Cartledge 1979, 280–281). The opposing side was slightly stronger. Its army consisted of twenty-four thousand hoplites (7,000 from Argos, 6,000 from Athens, 5,000 from Boeotia, 3,000 from Corinth and 3,000 from Euboea) and some 1,500 horsemen (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2, 17). However, Sparta proved victorious in the Battle of Nemea (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2, 18–23). The Spartans later claimed that only eight of their soldiers and a very large number of the opponents were killed (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.1). The overall losses were certainly higher. Diodorus speaks of 1,100 fallen Lacedaemonians and their allies and 2,800 fallen on the opposing side (Diod. 14.83.2). Apparently disheartened by this, the anti-Spartan coalition refrained from taking offensive action for a long while. It waited for a convenient moment, in-tending to strike against Agesilaus when he appeared in Central Greece.

Agesilaus crossed the Hellespont and moved through Thrace and Macedonia (Plut. *Ages.* 16). At Amphipolis he learnt of the Battle of Nemea from Dercylidas. Much worse was the news that after the Battle of Haliartos, the Thessalians, through whose lands he had to pass, had joined the Thebans (Diod. 14.82.5 ff.). However, he managed to break through southwards near Mount Narthakion, defeating the Thessalian horsemen with his mercenary cavalry (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.4 ff.). As he prepared to invade Boeotia on the day of the partial solar eclipse, 14 August 394 BC, he received news that Peisander's fleet had been broken up at Knidos and that Peisander himself had been killed (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.10–12; Diod. 14.79. 81, 83; Plut. *Ages.* 17.4). While Agesilaus was returning from his expedition to Asia – which, contrary to what Xenophon writes, did not achieve any gen-uine success – Pharnabazus and Conon defeated the Spartan fleet at Knidos (Diod. 14.83.4–7). "And that was the end of Sparta's hegemony at sea," says Ruzé (2018, 331); Agesilaus, however, announced that Peisander's fleet had won against the Persians and set off into the interior of Boeotia (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.13–14). At Koroneia, he won a victory over the combined forces of Boeotia, Argos, Athens, Corinth, Eu-boea, Locris and Aenania (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.14–21; Plut. *Ages.* 18). It was not a crushing victory that would have deprived the opponents of their will to fight once and

for all, but it certainly proved the Spartans' military superiority (Lazenby 1985, 143–148). Apart from the mercenaries and allied troops, in the battle fought one *mora* of Lacedaemonians from Corinth, half a *mora* from Orchomenus and fifty young men who had come from Sparta as volunteers, as well as the Lacedaemonian *neodamodeis* who had gone with Agesilaus to Asia (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.10, 15–16). Plutarch says that two *morai* had been sent from the Peloponnese (Plut. *Ages.* 17.1–2), but a witness to the events, Xenophon, clearly states that Agesilaus had one and a half *morai* of Lacedaemonians (Xen. *Ages.* 2.6).

The victory was paid for with some losses. The polemarch Gylis, Pelles and about eighteen Spartiates were killed (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.23). Diodorus speaks of over six hundred killed on the Theban side and three hundred and fifty in the Spartan army. Agesilaus sent the allies home and himself returned to the Peloponnese by sea through the Gulf of Corinth (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.1). Part of the army remained, retreating to Phocis. It was during an attack on Locris launched from Phocis that the commander-in-chief, the polemarch Gylis, was killed.

For the next two years, we do not see Agesilaus in action. This is possibly because of the defeat at Knidos, which was somehow his fault, or because of his dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Battle of Koroneia or the results of the Asian expedition in general, the positive effects of which were practically non-existent (cf. Hamilton 1991, 109–110). Certainly not all the Spartans shared Xenophon's enthusiasm for Agesilaus (even though it was obviously infectious, judging by the scholars' opinions on the Spartan king). Agesilaus's "discovery" in Lysander's house of the alleged evidence of the latter's planned coup may be a trace of the struggle that the king waged against his enemies, who after 396/395 BC must have included Lysander's supporters.

Two years later Agesilaus attempted to push through the enemy-occupied Isthmus, access to which was defended by double walls running down from Corinth to the port of Lechaion on the Corinthian Gulf. In 392 BC, he won a battle for the "long walls" of Corinth (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.6–13), and in 391 BC he occupied Lechaion, installing a Spartan garrison there (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.17). In the early summer of 390 BC he led a great campaign against Corinth (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.1). He captured the walls connecting Corinth and Lechaion and broke up the Isthmian games (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.1–2; Plut. *Ages.* 21.3–6). Fearing that Agesilaus, who was accompanied by exiled Corinthian oligarchs, might capture the city through treachery, the Corinthians turned for help to Iphicrates, who with his light infantry (peltasts) was stationed at nearby Peiraion. They were to play a special role in this campaign.

Agesilaus's expedition of coincided with the festival of Hyacinthia in Sparta, to which the inhabitants of Amyclae always came, even if they happened to be abroad; such was the custom (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.11). This time, too, Agesilaus gave those Amyclaeans that were in his army a leave, together with the escort of a *mora* of six hundred hoplites from Lechaion and a small detachment of cavalry. In the vicinity of Sicyon, the commander of the *mora* entrusted the Amyclaeans to the horsemen and set off with his men back to Lechaion. On the way back the *mora* fell into an ambush and was cut down by Iphikrates's peltasts (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.12–17).

The matter of the Spartan losses, however, is not clear. According to Xenophon, although few managed to escape to Lechaion, only about two hundred and fifty men were killed. This probably refers only to the Spartiates: "Now inasmuch as such a calamity had been unusual with the Lacedaemonians," Xenophon writes, "there was great mourning throughout the Laconian army, except among those whose sons, fathers, or brothers had fallen where they stood; they, however, went about like victors, with shining countenances and full of exultation in their own misfortune" (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.10). Agesilaus escorted the remnants of the destroyed *mora* to Sparta by night, ashamed to go near Mantinea by day lest he expose himself to the mockery of the Mantineans (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.18). The Spartans soon abandoned their plans to open the Isthmus, and warfare entered a period of stagnation.

The foundation, in 392 or 391 BC, of a "union" (or rather an isopoliteia) between Corinth and Argos was a great blow to Sparta, since with it, for the first time in the Classical period, Argos – Sparta's greatest enemy in the Peloponnese, even though always remaining on the defensive – emerged from isolation (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.6; 8, 34; Diod. 14.92.1). To protect themselves against the predictable diversion from the Argive side in the event of military action against Athens and the Boeotians, Sparta decided to begin the campaign with Argos. The Spartan army, led by King Agesipolis, entered Argolis and the Argives soon sued for peace. Agesipolis rejected the offer and the Spartans did not stop their campaign (which consisted mainly of looting the country) even when there was an earthquake. Eventually, however, unfavourable omens forced them to retreat (Xen. *Hell.* 4.1.1). Although Agesipolis's expedition did not bring any tangible benefits, it clearly showed to whom the decisive voice in the Peloponnese belonged. In 389 BC Agesilaus crossed the Gulf of Corinth and ravaged Acarnania, forcing it to sue for peace and enter an alliance with Sparta (Xen. *Hell.* 4.7.1).

After the massacre of the Lechaion *mora*, the centre of gravity of the Corinthian War shifted to the east. Victory in the battle at Knidos made the Persian fleet rule the sea (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.1 ff.). Conon and Pharnabazus removed the Spartan harmosts from the cities of the Aegean Sea, declaring them autonomous. The Persian offensive in the western Aegean began in the spring of 393 BC. Conon and Pharnabazus sailed through the Cyclades to Melos. The island became their outermost base, from which they intended (on the advice of Messenian exiles in Conon's entourage, cf. Cartledge 1979, 283) to launch attacks on Lacedaemon (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.7). They attacked Pharai (the modern Kalamata) and other settlements on the coast of Messenia. However, these operations were hindered by the lack of convenient harbours in the south of the Peloponnese, the scarcity of food and, ultimately, by the fact that the Spartans directed their troops to the most threatened areas. Having ravaged the coasts of the Peloponnese, they occupied Cythera (and, according to Cartledge [1979, 284], citing archaeological finds, Anticythera as well). The Cytheraeans were allowed to leave for Laconia. Before Conon and Pharnabazus sailed from Cythera, they left the Athenian Nicophemus on the island as their governor (harmost) (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.8; Diod. 14.84.5). Having reached the Isthmus, Pharnabazus offered both rousing speeches and pecuniary encouragement to

persuade the leaders of the anti-Spartan coalition to continue the war (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.8). From the Isthmus, Pharnabazus returned to the East, while Conon sailed to Piraeus. With his support, the rebuilding of the fortifications in Piraeus and the Long Walls, which had begun in 394 BC, was completed (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.9–10).

In the spring of 392 BC, the Spartan envoy Antalkides went to Sardis to conduct peace negotiations with Tiribazus, the successor of Tithraustes (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.12). The Spartans were prepared to cede Greek cities in Asia Minor to the Great King in return for his recognition of the autonomy of all other Greek states. With this offer, Sparta officially renounced the aims of Agesilaus's expedition (or at least its ostensible aims). Ancient authors who cast Agesilaus in the role of a pan-Hellenic leader (notably Xenophon, but also Plutarch), dismiss the charge of his abandoning the Greeks of Asia Minor. Plutarch additionally emphasises the mutual hostility between Agesilaus and Antalkides (Plut. *Ages.* 26, 2–3), with the result that it is sometimes suggested that Antalkides may have represented a different vision of Sparta's foreign policy (let us note, in passing, that the "freedom" of the Greek states in Asia Minor had already been proclaimed by Pharnabazus and Conon). The entire concept of recognising the cities' autonomy was also opposed by the envoys of Athens, Boeotia, Corinth and Argos who came to Sardis, since if it came into force, Athens would lose three of its cleruchies, for Thebes it would mean the dissolution of the Boeotian League and for Argos – the loosening of its control over Corinth. But Tiribazus clearly favoured Sparta, which he demonstrated by throwing Conon into prison and giving Antalkides funds to continue the sea war with Athens (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.16). The Persian king, however, disowned the decisions of his satrap and sent Struthas, who was pro-Athenian, to oversee naval operations.

Since direct negotiations with Persia had failed, in the winter of 392/91 BC (or the spring of 391 BC) Sparta put forward the idea of concluding a universal peace (*koine eirene*), bypassing Persia (Andoc. 3). Its basis was to be, again, the recognition of the autonomy of all the states, only with Athens retaining Lemnos, Imbros and Skyros and with the continuance of the Boeotian League (although Orchomenus would retain its autonomy). The Spartans hoped that concessions to Thebes and Athens would divide the coalition; but they were disappointed, since by then the Athenians were already hoping to rebuild their former naval power. Thus the war continued, with varying fortunes, throughout 391–387 BC, until finally it stalled again, this time for good.

In the winter of 388/387 BC, the nauarch Antalkides set out again from Sparta to Persia for negotiations. This time King Artaxerxes was more willing to make a deal with Sparta. Athens' support for Euagoras, who in 391 BC had captured most of Cyprus and was vying for autonomy, indicated that it was against Persia's interests to continue to support Sparta's enemies. In the spring of 387 BC, Antalkides was thus able to report to the Spartan authorities that the long-awaited alliance with Persia had been concluded and Sparta could henceforth count on Persia for money and assistance. This allowed Antalkides to assemble eighty ships (twenty of which ships had been delivered by Dionysius of Syracuse) in the waters of the Hellespont. Having a strong fleet, Antalkides gained control of the Hellespont, cutting off the

Athenians from grain supplies, while a second Spartan fleet, stationed at Aegina, blockaded Piraeus. The end of the war seemed imminent.

In the autumn of 387 BC Tiribazus summoned the envoys of Greek cities to read out to them the conditions offered by the Persian ruler: "King Artaxerxes thinks it just that the cities in Asia should belong to him, as well as Clazomenae and Cyprus among the islands, and that the other Greek cities, both small and great, should be left independent, except Lemnos, Imbros, and Scyros; and these should belong, as of old, to the Athenians. But whichever of the two parties does not accept this peace, upon them I will make war, in company with those who desire this arrangement, both by land and by sea, with ships and with money" (Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.31; Diod. 14.110). Thebes, who wished to make a separate peace on behalf of the Boeotian League, did not agree; but the mere announcement, in the spring of 386 BC, of the mobilisation of the Spartan Symmachy's army was enough for it to yield, consent to the dissolution of the Boeotian League and recognise the autonomy of all the cities of Beotia. Around 384/383 BC, Sparta deployed garrisons at Thespiae and at Plataeae, having rebuilt the latter (Paus. 9.1.4), and thus the Corinthian War came to an end.

The course of this war had been decided by the Persian money and diplomacy, which forced Sparta first to withdraw from Ionia and then to cease to defend its freedom. Thus, looking at the Corinthian War from a broader perspective, we see it as the result of Persian diversionary activity that weakened the Greeks (an aspect which the participants in this war certainly did not perceive) and strengthened Persia's role as an arbiter in Greek affairs. The so-called King's Peace seemingly restored the old *status quo*, Sparta regained its hegemony. But in the changed political situation in Greece, Sparta's authority and capacity to act were quite different from what they had been (a fact which the Spartans most probably did not fully grasp). The advocates of a moderate policy, whose views were expressed by King Agesipolis and, after his death, by the young Cleombrotus, lost to Agesilaus, a partisan of an aggressive imperialist policy (cf. Diod. 15.19.4 and comments by Hamilton 1991, 121–124). The ambitions and phobias of Agesilaus, who hated democracy and wholeheartedly resented Thebes, had a lethal impact on the future of Sparta.

Invoking the provisions of the King's Peace, Sparta caused the exiled oligarchs of Greek cities, who guaranteed that the policy of their states would unfold in accordance with Spartan interests, to return to power. When in 385 BC Mantinea and Phlius refused to abolish their democratic systems, Sparta took advantage of the fact that the thirty-year truce had just expired and demanded that Mantinea demolish its defensive walls (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.1–3; Diod. 15.5.4). This was to be a punishment for the fact that, while formally remaining a member of the Symmachy, Mantinea had supplied grain to Argos during the Corinthian War and had refused to send Sparta reinforcements. The Mantineans indeed proved untrustworthy allies (cf. Cartledge 1987, 259–261). The leader of the expedition was Agesipolis, since "Agesilaus requested the state to relieve him of the command of this expedition, saying that the city of the Mantineans had rendered his father many services in the

wars against Messene" (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.3). Agesipolis agreed, "even though his father, Pausanias, was on exceedingly friendly terms with the leaders of the popular party in Mantinea" (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.3). Hidden behind these political machinations concerning the command were the real initiators of the expedition. They should probably be sought in the entourage of Agesilaus, since if the young Agesipolis failed to perform as a commander, he would have gained an opportunity to demonstrate his military competence, and in case of Agesipolis's success, he would employ the young king (perhaps even against his will) to implement his policy. In either case, the true winner would thus be Agesilaus (Rice 1974, 168–169).

Mantinea rejected the Spartan dictate, but soon found itself in a hopeless situation, as Athens and Argos refused their help. Still, the city defended itself bravely; it fell only when the Spartans diverted the course of a river in such a way that it washed away part of the defensive walls, which were constructed of unbaked brick (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.4–5). In 384 BC, Mantinea surrendered. The city was demolished, its inhabitants resettled to five (or four) villages in which they had previously lived (Diod. 15.5.4–5; 12.1–2; Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.6–7; Paus. 8.8.9; 9.14.4), and "the partisans of Argos and the leaders of the popular party expected that they would be put to death, but the father of Agesilaus [i.e. Pausanias, who was in exile in Tegea] obtained from him the promise that safety should be granted them as they departed from the city, being sixty in number" (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.6).

From Phlius, the ephors demanded the readmission of the oligarchs who had been exiled in the 390s BC (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.8–10). The oligarchs did return to the city, but disputes with the democrats soon arose. Sparta's policy in this case was influenced both by the pro-Spartan attitude of the oligarchs and by the fact that Agesilaus had close friends among them (Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.13), so when in 381 BC they came to Sparta asking for military assistance, they obtained it without much difficulty. This time Agesilaus personally led the expedition. The siege dragged on for twenty months and ended with the surrender of the city in 379 BC (cf. Cartledge 1987, 226–229). A Spartan garrison was placed in Phlius for six months, provided protection to the authority of the pro-Spartan oligarchs.

In 382 BC, an opportunity arose for Sparta to strike against the Chalcidian League, which had assisted Athens and Thebes in the Corinthian War (cf. Cartledge 1987, 266–273), when the king of Macedonia and the cities of Acanthus and Apollonia asked for help against Olynthus, the leader of the League (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.12–19; Diod. 15.19.2–3). The ephors admitted their envoys to the Apella, which voted in favour of the expedition. The Assembly of the Allies took a similar position (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.20). Considering that the operations in the north were expected to take a long time, the cities which did not want to send their own soldiers were allowed to pay instead: three Aeginetan obols per day for a hoplite and twelve for a horseman (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.21 ff.). This money was to be used to pay mercenaries. This arrangement provided Sparta with greater freedom of manoeuvre during the constant fighting; but on the other hand, it indirectly shows that the allies were not keen on the expedition. It also very clearly shows that the principles which had governed the League for the past two hundred years had become obsolete.

The Spartans mounted two expeditions against Olynthus. Fro the first of them, in 381 BC, it was decided to send ten thousand soldiers. A troop of two thousand *neodamodeis*, *perioikoi* and Sciritae set out immediately, commanded by Eudamidas. His brother Phoebidas was to gather the rest of the army and march after him (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2, 24). Having arrived in Boeotia, Phoebidas was persuaded by Ismenias, the leader of the Theban aristocrats, to seize Cadmea by means of a stratagem (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.25–36; Plut. *Ages.* 23.3–7; 24.1; *Pel.* 5; Diod. 15.20.1–3). Three hundred supporters of Androcleidas and Ismenias escaped to Athens and Leontiades went to Sparta, where "he found the ephors and the majority of the citizens angry with Phoebidas because he had acted in this matter without authorization by the state," writes Xenophon. "Agesilaus, however, said that if what he had done was harmful to Lacedaemon, he deserved to be punished, but if advantageous, it was a time-honoured custom that a commander, in such cases, had the right to act on his own initiative. 'It is precisely this point, therefore,' he said, 'which should be considered, whether what has been done is good or bad for the state'" (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.32). Leontiades, too, pointed out the advantages Sparta would gain by occupying Cadmea.

The Cadmea affair caused widespread indignation in Greece and probably much more doubt in Sparta itself than the surviving testimonies suggest. This was because the seizure of Cadmea stood in flagrant contradiction not only to the principle of autonomy, but also to not just political fairness, but ordinary decency. In essence, it was an act of political hooliganism. This makes it all the more interesting that the Spartans decided to keep Cadmea and to bring Ismenias to trial. They sent to Thebes three judges from Lacedaemon and one each from the allied cities. Ismenias was accused of treason in favour of Persia, tried and executed (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.35–36). The person punished was thus Ismenias and not Phoebidas. This was an example of the ruthless and brutal policy of power that Sparta had decided to implement. Its enthusiast was Agesilaus, the man behind Phoebidas's acquittal and probably also behind Ismenias's conviction; the latter, even though he had nothing to do with the incident at Aulis (cf. Hamilton 1991, 114), became a symbolic victim of the king's anti-Theban wrath. The Cadmea affair seemed an excellent the opportunity to neutralise Thebes once and for all. The vision of "Spartan Thebes" tempted the supporters of Great Sparta. The apella came to believe in this vision and the coming years might even have reassured its members that they had done the right thing. From then on, Leontiades and his supporters ruled in Thebes and, as Xenophon acidly comments, "gave the Lacedaemonians their support in even more than was demanded of them" (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.36).

Since as the result of these events Phoebidas never reached Chalcidice, the Spartans appointed Teleutias, Agesilaus's half-brother, in his place, giving him supreme command of the operation (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.37). When in the summer of 381 BC Teleutias was killed during the fighting, the Spartans decided to send one of their kings to save the situation. Before the year 381 BC was over, a great expedition set out for Chalcidice under the command of Agesipolis, accompanied by a staff of thirty Spartiates (Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.8). Considering that until that point

operations in the north had been commanded exclusively by men associated with Agesilaus, the decision to send Agesipolis may at first seem surprising. It is, however, possible that Agesilaus wanted to temporarily remove the young king from Sparta in order to end the Phlius affair unhindered (cf. Rice 1974, 177–178). Both the victory and the defeat (and even the death) of Agesipolis served Agesilaus admirably, and the composition of Agesipolis's staff probably guaranteed a manner of campaigning consistent with his intentions: "There followed with him also many of the Perioeci as volunteers, men of the better class (*kaloikgathoi*), and aliens who belonged to the so-called foster-children of Sparta (*trophimoi*), and sons of the Spartiatae (*nothoi ton Spartiaton*) by Helot women, exceedingly fine-looking men, not without experience of the good gifts of the state. Furthermore, volunteers from the allied states joined the expedition and horsemen of the Thessalians, who wished to become known to Agesipolis" (Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.9). Agesipolis died during the siege of Olynthus, but his successor Polybiades starved the city into submission. In 379 BC, the Chalcidian League was dissolved and in the treaties signed with Sparta its members pledged themselves to take part on its side in any war it might wage (Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.26).

Thus, Sparta had achieved great success in the north; but its position in Central Greece suddenly collapsed when in late 379 BC the Theban exiles Melon, Epaminondas and Gorgidas conducted a coup in Thebes. With one and a half thousand soldiers at his disposal, the Spartan harmost of Cadmea decided to abandon Thebes in exchange for permission to depart safely – a decision for which he was later executed (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.11–13; cf. Diod. 15.25–27). Of the three governors of Thebes, the Spartans sentenced two, Herippidas and Arcissus, to death, and the third, Lysanoridas, to a heavy fine and banishment (Plut. *Pel.* 13). Meanwhile, an army under Cleombrotous, the brother of the recently deceased Agesipolis, was sent to Beotia (Plut. *Pel.* 13). When in Beotia, Cleombrotus did not, however, attack the city itself and, content with making a display of force, ordered a retreat, leaving a third of his army under Sphodrias in Thespiae (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.15). Upon their return to Sparta, his soldiers said that their commander's conduct had been such that they did not know whether they were at peace or at war with Thebes (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.14–18). It is possible that Cleombrotus did not want to inflame the situation, counting on a peaceful settlement of matters, and considering that he had been appointed the leader of the expedition (perhaps thanks to Agesilaus), he may have hoped to frighten Thebes and Athens into cooperation – an aim which he might have succeeded in achieving had it not been for a critical error by Sphodrias, who tried to occupy Piraeus on his own. Some believed that Sphodrias had been persuaded to do so by Cleombrotus (Diod. 15.29.5–6), others – that he had been bribed by Theban leaders (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.20; Plut. *Pel.* 14; *Ages.* 24). There are scholars who regard the Sphodrias debacle as part of the struggle between the factions of Cleombrotus and Agesilaus (David 1981, 33–38).

The Spartan envoys who happened to be in Athens at the time tried to placate the Athenians by arguing that Sphodrias had not acted on Sparta's orders and that he would be severely punished for his irresponsible act (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.22).

However, contrary to these assurances, Agesilaus caused Sphodrias to be acquitted (cf. Cartledge 1987, 136–138):

> But the ephors recalled Sphodrias and brought capital charges against him. He, however, out of fear did not obey the summons; but nevertheless, although he did not obey and present himself for the trial, he was acquitted. And it seemed to many that the decision in this case was the most unjust ever known in Lacedaemon. The reason for it was as follows. Sphodrias had a son Cleonymus, who was at the age just following boyhood and was, besides, the handsomest and most highly regarded of all the youths of his years. And Archidamus, the son of Agesilaus, chanced to be extremely fond of him. (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.24–25)

Cleonymus begged Archidamus to procure his father's support for Sphodrias (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.26 ff.). Despite his (possibly feigned) hesitation, Agesilaus was persuaded, allegedly saying that "it is impossible that Sphodrias is not guilty of wrong-doing; but that when, as child (*pais*), boy (*paidiskos*), and young man (*hebon*), [he] has continually performed all the duties of a Spartan *(panta ta kala)*, it is a hard thing to put such a man to death; for Sparta has need of such soldiers" (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.32). The court promptly acquitted Sphodrias (Plut. *Ages.* 26).

Nonetheless, there may have been a less beautiful reality behind the whole affair than that portrayed by Xenophon and Plutarch. In the fact that Archidamos became the lover (*erastes*) of Cleonymus, the son of Sphodrias, Cartledge (1987, 147) sees the hand of Agesilaus. Given that Sphodrias belonged to the opposing political circle, one centred around the person of the second king, Cleombrotus, this would have provided Agesilaus with influence over political opponents. In helping to save his life, Agesilaus put Sphodrias and his associates in his debt for life (Cartledge 1987, 158).

Yet in this way Agesilaus was partially responsible for an alliance between Athens and Thebes, as a result of which the Athenians sent Chabrias with five thousand infantry and two hundred cavalry to aid the Thebans (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.34 ff.). The Spartan army invaded Boeotia in the latter half of 378 BC, led by Agesilaus (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.38–41; Diod. 15.32–33). Unable to seize Thebes, Agesilaus ravaged the Theban territory and then withdrew, leaving garrisons in several cities of Boeotia. Phoebidas, left at Thespiae, continued fighting the Thebans on a smaller scale (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.41). Reinforcements – one *mora* under a new polemarch – were sent from Sparta only when Phoebidas was killed in a clash with the Theban army and Thebes began to gain the upper hand in Boeotia. In 377 BC, Agesilaus once more entered Boeotia, ravaged an even more extensive area, but yet again failed to force a decisive battle (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.47 ff.; Diod. 15.34).

Sparta's allies were tired of constant wars. Their resentment, according to Plutarch, was directed against Agesilaus, whose hatred of Thebes was supposed to be the cause of all the evil. When the allies complained about being year after year summoned to expeditions and bearing the main burden of them, Agesilaus decided to make them vividly aware of the Spartans' true contribution. He ordered the allies and the Lacedaemonians to sit down separately. Then he ordered the potters,

smiths, builders and other craftsmen to stand up in turn. And when almost all were standing, and only the Spartiates, who were forbidden by law to practise any craft, were sitting, Agesilaus said: "You see, O men, how many more soldiers than you we are sending out" (Plut. *Ages.* 26.5).

On the return journey, Agesilaus fell ill (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.58; Plut. Ages. 27.1–2) and he is practically not heard of until 371 BC. Cleombrotus did not even manage to cross the Kithairon (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.59). To make matters worse, at Naxos the Athenians defeated a Spartan fleet of sixty ships under Pollis, which was to blockade Athens from the sea (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.60–61; 65; Diod. 15.34–35; Plut. *Phok.* 6). When in 375 BC the Spartans were contemplating another invasion of Beotia, the Athenians, persuaded by the Thebans, sent Timotheus with sixty ships around the Peloponnese; this move tied the Spartans' hands and gave Thebes freedom of action in Boeotia (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.62–63). The scales of victory were clearly tipping in favour of Sparta's opponents. The Thebans defeated the Spartan garrison stationed at Thespiae. In 375 BC, the Sacred Band, consisting of three hundred elite hoplites under Pelopidas, won a great victory at Tegyra, forcing two Spartan *morai* to flee, the polemarchs Gorgoleon and Theopompus at the fore (Plut. *Pel.* 16.1–17, *Ages.* 27.3; Diod. 15.81.2). According to Plutarch, "this battle first taught the other Greeks also that it was not the Eurotas, nor the region between Babyce and Cnacion, which alone produced warlike fighting men" (Plut. *Pel.* 17.6).

By then, the last supporter Sparta had left in Boeotia was Orchomenus; in all other cities the pro-Theban democrats had seized power. The growing power of the Boeotian League on land and of the Second League founded by Athens in 378/377 BC at sea put Sparta in an increasingly difficult position. However, everything depended on the unity of the anti-Spartan coalition, which had been joined by Jason, the tyrant of Pherae (cf. Sprawski 1999). When the Thebans, buoyed up by their victory at Tegyra, had subjugated the Boeotian cities, they struck at Phocis. Its citizens turned for help to Sparta, which sent King Cleombrotus with four *morai* and allied troops (Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.1). Jason was probably well aware of the predicted failure of this mission and Agesilaus's illness, since he allegedly told his opponent Polydamas of Pharsalus, a Thessalian, that he could go and seek help from Sparta if he wished.

Accordingly, in 375 BC, Polydamas attempted to persuade the Spartan apella to help him against Jason of Pherae, a Theban ally (Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.2 ff.). In this, he was trying to get a picture of Sparta's capability, or perhaps he preferred to avoid the Spartans' symbolic involvement in Thessaly. In any case, he asked the Spartans to move with their full force and, he said, if they were unable to do so, they had better not set out at all: "But if you imagine that emancipated Helots (*neodamodeis*) and a private individual (*andra idioten*) as commander will suffice, I advise you to remain quiet" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.14). The Lacedaemonians debated for two days, calculating how many *morai* they had in Lacedaemon and how many outside its borders, and what their military requirements were, and finally they informed Polydamas that they could not help him and advised him "to go home and arrange his own affairs and those of his city as best he could" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.17).

In the meantime, the relations between Athens and Thebes began to deteriorate, in 375 BC resulting in a peace treaty between Athens and Sparta, or according to another interpretation, a universal peace (*koine eirene*) with Theban participation (Diod. 15.38.1–4; Xen. *Hell.* 6.2.1; cf. Ryder 1965, 124–126; Hamilton 190–195). The new peace settlement reiterated the principle of the autonomy of all the poleis and therefore imposed the duty to evacuate all garrisons from occupied cities.

Xenophon regarded the peace of 375 BC as short-lived. This was because the Athenian Timotheus, when on his way back to Athens, dropped off the banished democrats on Zakynthos, and they attacked the oligarchs. Sparta then intervened in Athens; but the Athenians decided to aid the democrats from Zakynthos. This was tantamount to a resumption of hostilities and Sparta instructed Mnasippus to take the fleet to Zakynthos and Corcyra. This raises some reservations, for Mnasippus was nauarch in 374/373 BC, while the Athenian expedition of Timotheus and Iphicrates moved westwards in the second half of the summer of 373 BC. From this, it must be inferred that Xenophon simplifies matters by suggesting that the fighting resumed soon after the peace had been signed (cf. Hamilton 1991, 195–198). Certainly, however, the affairs of the distant Corcyra and Zakynthos pulled Athens and Sparta into a new conflict. At the same time, the relations between Athens and Thebes, which strengthened its rule over Boeotia, were cooling. Athens again asked Sparta for peace, informing Thebes of this decision.

The peace talks, which took place at the end of June or more likely in July 371 BC in Sparta, were attended – in addition to the envoys of the Greek states – by the envoys of King Artaxerxes (Xen. *Hell.* 6.3; Diod. 15.50.4). The Persian king's involvement was merited by the fact that his recovery of rebellious Egypt required him to enlist Greek mercenaries and those he could not procure as long as the Greeks continued fighting each other. The support of Athens and Persia contributed to the acceptance of Sparta's proposals, which guaranteed the autonomy of the Greek states, the withdrawal of all garrisons and general peace. Nonetheless, the day after the peace treaty was confirmed by oaths, a complication arose: the Thebans demanded that the word "Thebans" be replaced by "Boeotians". This would have amounted to recognizing the Boeotian League, something neither the Athenians nor the Spartans were willing to do (Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.19). A special role seems to have been played by Agesilaus, turning a deaf ear to the arguments posed by the Thebans (Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.19; Plut. *Ages.* 27.4–28.2). Faced with this, the Thebans demanded that Thebes be deleted from the peace treaty and left Sparta.

It may have appeared to Agesilaus that he had finally achieved his desired goal, the political isolation of Thebes, but for this to become reality, he had to defeat the Thebans in battle as well. The question remained how and when to strike. The Spartan army was in Phocis. Cleombrotus had been sent there back in 375 BC, but he had certainly not stayed there permanently for four years. Probably his presence in central Greece in 371 BC was related to another expedition, one about which Xenophon neglected to write (Hamilton 1991, 203). In any case, on hearing that a peace treaty had been signed, Cleombrotus sent to Sparta for instructions.

At the apella, Prothoos argued that in accordance with the provisions of peace, Sparta should first withdraw its troops and only then take further steps (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.2–3). It was decided, probably through Agesilaus's instigation, to do otherwise. Cleombrotus was ordered to issue an ultimatum demanding that the Thebans liberate the cities of Boeotia. If this was rejected, Cleombrotus was to strike at the Thebans (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.3).

Less than three weeks after the conference in Sparta, ten thousand hoplites and a thousand horsemen under Cleombrotus arrived at Leuctra, sixteen kilometres from Thebes (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.4 ff.). The core of his army consisted of four Spartan *morai*, some 2,250 Lacedaemonians in all, including around seven hundred Spartiates (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.15; cf. Cartledge 1979, 294). Cleombrotus's weak point were horsemen, for, as Xenophon opines, "the cavalry of the Lacedaemonians was exceedingly poor at that time. For the richest men kept the horses, and it was only when the ban was called out that the appointed trooper presented himself; then he would get his horse and such arms as were given him, and take the field on the moment's notice. As for the men, on the other hand, it was those who were least strong of body and least ambitious who were mounted on the horses" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.10–11).

Victory in the Battle of Leuctra went to the Thebans (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.4–16; Diod. 15.55–56; Plut. *Pel.* 20–23; Paus. 9.13.3–12; cf. Lazenby 1985, 151–162). Four hundred Spartiates were killed, among them King Cleombrotus; the polemarch Deinon; Sphodrias and his son Cleonymus (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4, 13–14; Plut. *Ages.* 28; *Pel.* 23.1–4; Paus. 9.13.9–10). Diodorus claims that four thousand Lacedaemonians were killed (Diod. 15.56.4), but Xenophon seems closer to the truth when he says that about a thousand of them died, including four hundred out of the seven hundred Spartiates (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4, 15; Paus. 9.13.11–12).

The polemarchs decided to negotiate a truce and the surrender of the bodies. The news of the defeat reached Sparta on the last day of the Gymnopaedia (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.16; Plut. *Ages.* 29). The ephors order the festival to be celebrated as usual; they informed the families of the death of their loved ones, but forbade any show of grief (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4, 16; Plut. *Ages.* 29). In the morning of the next day there was no one left in Sparta that did not know of the catastrophe. The relatives of the fallen were walking around with happy expressions and those of the survivors stayed home for shame. When later the army returned to the city, mothers greeted their surviving sons sadly and in silence, while those mothers whose sons had died went to the temples to offer thanks to the gods, their faces glowing with pride and joy (Plut. *Ages.* 29.5–7).

Meanwhile, a mobilization of all men up to the age of sixty was called and the ephors "ordered those who at that time had been left behind in public office to join their regiments" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.17). Archidamus, the son of the still ailing Agesilaus, marched the army north. He was soon joined by allied troops from Tegea and Mantinea, summoned by Sparta, and "the Corinthians, Sicyonians, Phliasians, and Achaeans followed him with all zeal, and other states also sent out soldiers" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.18). But upon meeting the survivors of Leuctra at Aigosthena and

seeing how disheartened they were, Archidamus returned to Corinth, "dismissed the allies and led the citizen troops back home" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.26).

The defeat at Leuctra was a huge test for the Spartan state. In the past, the Spartans had learnt how to win, but not how to lose. By law, those who had failed on the battlefield needed to punished. But this time, the authorities faced quite a dilemma. The Spartiates had fled at Leuctra; but Sparta needed every soldier, now more than ever. An additional fear was that punishing the guilty may prompt them to foment unrest (Plut. *Ages.* 30.2–3).

Desperate times call for desperate measures. It seems that the highest law-giving power was entrusted to Agesilaus (Plut. *Ages.* 30.2). But he did not change the existing laws in any way; instead, he announced that "the laws must be allowed to sleep for that day, but from that day on must be in sovereign force. By this means he at once saved the laws for the city and the men from infamy" (Plut. *Ages.* 30.4; *Mor.* 191c; 215b; *Comp. Ages. et Pomp.* 2; Polyaenus 2.1.13). Also, although perhaps he did not turn the three hundred survivors and their families into his clients by this (cf. Richer 1998, 365), he certainly secured the gratitude of about a half of the citizens – a feat not without significance for Agesilaus's position in the Spartan state. The community's rallying around Agesilaus was a condition for its survival. Sparta was soon to face a hostile invasion and a severe internal crisis, whose military and political effects were to reveal themselves in the late 370s BC (cf. Hodkinson 1993, 147), causing, for the first time in Sparta's history, its citizens to revolt.

Chapter 11 In the shadow of Thebes and Macedonia

After the Battle of Leuctra, Athens invited those states that wished to take part in the "universal peace" (*koine eirene*) for negotiations (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.1 ff.). When the envoys arrived, they swore the following oath: "I will abide by the treaty which the King sent down, and by the decrees (*psephismata*) of the Athenians and their allies (*symmachoi*). And if anybody takes the field against any one of the cities which have sworn this oath, I will come to her aid with all my strength (*boetheso panti sthenei*)" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.2). The Athenians wanted the "universal peace" upheld, so with the aid of other states, they tried to prevent Thebes from taking advantage of the victory at Leuctra.

But peace was threatened not only by the ambitions of Thebes. There was widespread democratic opposition to the rule of pro-Spartan oligarchs in the cities of the Peloponnese. The Mantineans, whom Agesipolis had resettled to the countryside in 385 BC, also tried to take advantage of Sparta's weakness. The Spartans tried to prevent the rebirth of the city by sending Agesilaus himself as an envoy, but his attempts to dissuade the Mantineans from rebuilding the city and the defensive walls were in vain. In 371/370 BC, the Mantinean democrats rebuilt the city, its former residents returning to it from the villages, and they helped the democrats in Tegea to gain power. The two states formed the Arcadian League, which soon allied itself with Elis. The host of Sparta's enemies in the Peloponnese was growing. Diodorus reports that "in the city of Argos civil strife broke out accompanied by slaughter" – by bludgeoning to death during the famous "club-law" (*skytalismos*) – "of a greater number than is recorded ever to have occurred anywhere else in Greece" (Diod. 15.57). The democratic Argos sided with Elis and supported the Arcadian League against Sparta. The Arcadian League, having failed to obtain the expected help from the Athenians during Agesilaus's expedition, summoned the Thebans to the Peloponnese (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.15; Diod. 15.62.3). It is difficult to say to what extent Agesilaus provoked the whole situation himself by intervening in the old Spartan style in favour of the Tegean exiles. While he was certainly a master of intrigue, he was not a subtle diplomat and could not act except from a position of strength. He was certainly not the statesman that Sparta needed at the time. But it is also true that, as a result of his many years of political activity and supporting only people associated with him, he was the only leader Sparta had in those difficult times.

The Thebans accepted the Arcadians' invitation and in the late 370 BC set out for the Peloponnese with their allies, led by Epaminondas and Pelopidas. When they arrived, it turned out that there was no one to fight with, as the Spartans had long since returned home. The invasion of Laconia was contemplated in Mantinea (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.22–23; Diod. 15.62.4–5; Plut. *Ages.* 31.1–2). The Arcadians, the

Argives and the Eleans were trying to persuade the Boeotians to attack as soon as possible (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.23 ff.). The Thebans hesitated (cf. Diod. 15.63.4), fearing that the border was well guarded; and indeed, "Ischolaus was at Oeum, in Sciritis, commanding a garrison composed of emancipated Helots (*neodamodeis*) and about four hundred of the youngest of the Tegean exiles; and there was another garrison also at Leuctrum, above Maleatis" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.24). The Thebans' reluctance was overcome only after the arrival of the news from Caryae in Laconia.

> But when people had come from Caryae telling of the dearth of men, promising that they would themselves act as guides, and bidding the Thebans slay them if they were found to be practising any deception, and when, further, some of the Perioeci appeared, asking the Thebans to come to their aid, engaging to revolt if only they would show themselves in the land, and saying also that even now the Perioeci when summoned by the Spartiatae were refusing to go and help them — as a result, then, of hearing all these reports, in which all agreed, the Thebans were won over, and pushed in with their own forces by way of Caryae, while the Arcadians went by way of Oeum, in Sciritis. (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.25)

Due to the size of the army, which numbered some thirty thousand soldiers (Lazenby 1985, 166), there were many problems with provisioning and transport. For this reason, Epaminondas divided the troops into four marching columns that were to take different routes to Lacedaemon and reconvene there. "Now if Ischolaus had advanced to the difficult part of the pass and had made his stand there" – notes Xenophon wistfully – "no one, by all accounts, could have accomplished the ascent by that route at least; but in fact, since he wished to employ the Oeans as allies, he remained in the village, and the Arcadians ascended the pass in very great numbers. There, in the face-to-face fighting, the troops with Ischolaus were victorious; but when the enemy showered blows and missiles upon them from the rear, on the flank, and from the houses upon which they mounted, then Ischolaus was killed and all the rest as well, unless one or another slipped through unrecognized" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.26).

Thus, for the first time in the history of Sparta, enemy forces entered its territory (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.25–32; Diod. 15.63.3–65.5; Plut. *Ages.* 31 ff; *Pelop.* 24). What was the purpose of this first Theban invasion? Some scholars believe that the Thebans had a well-defined plan (the so-called Epaminondas Plan). Sparta's communications with the northern Peloponnese, Attica and central Greece went, by necessity, through Arcadia and Argolis, while its prosperity depended on the resources of Messenia. Thus, the blocking of communication routes to the north and the loss of Messenia meant that Sparta automatically lost its status as a Greek superpower. As is apparent from the events that followed, Epaminondas was well aware of this when he set out for the Peloponnese. Although in this case the effects may easily be confused with the causes, it seems that in their endeavours to separate Sparta from the rest of the Greek world by a *cordon sanitaire*, the Thebans were indeed guided by some deeper thought.

The army commanded by Epaminondas and Pelopidas entered the Lacedaemonian territory. Sparta had no defensive walls, no large forces; the situation seemed hopeless. However, the enemy decided not to launch an attack on the city: "Now they did not even make the attempt to cross over by the bridge against Sparta, for in the sanctuary of Athena Alea the hoplites were to be seen, ready to oppose them; but keeping the Eurotas on their right they passed along, burning and plundering houses full of many valuable things (*porthountes pollon kagathon mestas oikias*)" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.27).

Why did the Thebans not enter Sparta? The questions are sometimes even more interesting than the answers. Why did the Thebans not destroy Sparta? Why did the Spartans (against the urging of the Thebans) not destroy Athens? Xenophon provides a ready answer. Firstly, because they were afraid. Secondly, because Agesilaus prevented them from conquering the city. The significance of Theban fear is impossible to determine. The fact remains that they did not even attempt an attack. Perhaps they really did not have the courage; or perhaps, as Cartledge (1987, 235) suspects, they did not want to conquer or destroy the city at all. Yet another possibility is that they did want to do it, but Sparta was saved by the arrival of winter and by the surging waters of the Eurotas (Oliva 1971, 195). In any case, ancient authors unanimously agree that Sparta's saviour was King Agesilaus, then around seventy-five years old (Xen. *Ages.* 2.24; Plut. *Ages.* 33.2). It was he who prevented his countrymen from facing the enemy in the open field, which under the circumstances would have meant an inevitable defeat. "It was also determined by the authorities (*tois telesi*) to make proclamation to the Helots that if any wished to take up arms and be assigned to a place in the ranks, they should be given a promise that all should be free who took part in the war. And it was said that at first more than six thousand enrolled themselves" – reports Xenophon, while Diodorus (15.65.6) mentions one thousand – "so that they in their turn occasioned fear when they were marshalled together, and were thought to be all too numerous" (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.28–29).

Another matter that raised the authorities' concern was the attitude displayed many citizens. Spartan women who were unable to bear the sight of smoke rising from burning homesteads certainly did not live up to the ladies of legend. But shock and fear were not the only threat Sparta found itself facing: a group of two hundred men occupied Issorion, a naturally defensible site around the temple of Artemis. Lacedaemonians wanted to attack them without delay, but Agesilaus stopped them, fearing some greater conspiracy. He went to Issorion unarmed, accompanied only by a single slave, and began to shout to the assembled people that they had misunderstood their orders; that they had not been instructed to go up there together, but that some of them were to head to quite another place and the rest to elsewhere in the city. Thinking that their treachery had not yet been discovered, the assembled men immediately moved to the places indicated by Agesilaus. The king promptly manned Issorion with an army loyal to himself and then by night ordered the execution of fifteen leaders of the two hundred (Plut. *Ages.* 32.6–9; Nep. *Ages.* 6.2–3; Polyaenus 2.1.14).

Soon Agesilaus was informed of yet another conspiracy. The conspirators, all of them fully enfranchised citizens, had gathered in a certain house. Having made the ephors aware of the matter, Agesilaus sentenced all those men to death without trial (Plut. *Ages.* 32.10–11). What was the crime of the Issorion rebels and the conspirators gathering in the mysterious house? The winter air of 370 BC seems to have reeked of treason. The severity of the punishment suggests that this was indeed the case. However, although the sources are silent on the matter, Sparta was probably not only making preparations for defence, but also asking itself the reason for the misfortunes befalling the state. And since the task of saving the city was in the hands of the king who, as a person bearing him ill will could easily argue, was instrumental to its decline, some citizens could (overtly or behind his back) point to Agesilaus as the guilty party, even if they did not share Hamilton's view (1991, 214) that Leuctra had been the price to pay for Agesilaus's obsessions. The Spartan citizens (*andron Spartiaton*) gathering in secret were most likely not enemies of Lacedaemon herself, but of Agesilaus, whom they blamed for the state's many troubles and wished to dethrone (Flower 1991, 87). This seems all the more probable given that in both cases it was Agesilaus himself that destroyed the "conspiracies" and eliminated their leaders. In the atmosphere of prevailing confusion it was easy for Agesilaus to blur the line between hostility towards him and high treason. However, the discontented *perioikoi* fleeing the city and the helots being armed were unlikely to hold any personal grudges against Agesilaus.

Luckily for Sparta, its allies from Phlius, Corinth, Epidaurus, Pellena and a few other cities come to its aid. Epaminondas withdrew from the city and moved south, intending to cross the Eurotas at Amyclae. There he suffered a defeat in a clash with Spartan cavalry, which supposedly discouraged him from marching on the city (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.30–31). The invading army marched south and, ravaging the country, reached Gytheion, which they seem to have failed to capture (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.32). Epaminondas' army wrought havoc upon Lacedaemon for three months. Meanwhile, reinforcements sent by states loyal to Sparta started to arrive. When the Spartans appealed to the Athenians for aid, the latter decided to extend it. At the same time, many of Epaminondas's Peloponnesian soldiers returned home with their booty. Having thoroughly ravaged Laconia, the Thebans believed their goal to have been achieved. According to Theopompus, just as the boeotarchs made the decision to withdraw, a Spartan envoy named Phrixus arrived, offering them ten talents for pulling back their troops, thus, as Plutarch emphasises, paying them for what they had already chosen to do (Plut. *Ages.* 32.7).

From Laconia, the army of Epaminondas marched to Arcadia and from there to Messenia. Construction of the Messenian capital began on the slopes of Mount Ithome in 369 BC, in the early spring. Epaminondas called the Messenians scattered in the four corners of the Greek world to return home. Still, the population of the new city consisted mainly of the helots and the *perioikoi*.

Having left some of his troops in Messenia, Epaminondas left the Peloponnese in April 369 BC but, prompted by the Arcadians, he moved into the peninsula again early in the summer of that year, leading seven thousand infantry and six hundred

riders (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.15; Diod. 15.68.1). The second Theban invasion strengthened the position of the Arcadian League. Epaminondas initiated the construction of its capital – Megalopolis, the "great city", at the source of the Alphaeus. Epaminondas's two invasions resulted in Laconia being ravaged, Messenia being separated from it and an autonomous state hostile to Sparta arising in its territory. The Thebans did not want to just crush their opponent; by creating Messenia and Megalopolis, they aimed to bring about changes in the Peloponnese that would permanently and effectively weaken Sparta. And at that, they succeeded. Surrounded on all sides by a chain of hostile states, Sparta was confined to the southern part of the Peloponnese. The fact that it was not completely destroyed was determined by the ambitions of old and new enemies. Since the Battle of Leuctra, Athens had feared Thebes enough to consistently support Sparta and enter into a formal alliance with it in 369 BC.

The activities of the Arcadian League, which attempted to extend its influence in the Peloponnese had a considerable impact. New opportunities, as well as threats, were associated with the arrival, in 368 BC, of Philiscus of Abydos, the envoy from King Artaxerxes, whose task was to enlist mercenaries in his name. For the sake of the enterprise, Philiscus tried to reconcile the feuding parties, hoping to bring them all to support his mission, but he failed. In the end, having gathered two thousand mercenaries, he bestowed them on Sparta. Dionysius of Syracuse also sent soldiers to it. The strengthened Sparta was able to strike at the Arcadians. Boeotia, then having its own internal and external problems, could not hasten to Arcadia's aid; but Messenia could. When the mercenaries of Dionysius, having decided that their period of service was over, moved towards Sparta, the Messenians came down from the hills above Malea and cut them off in a narrow passage. The ambush failed, however, as Archidamus and his troops arrived in time, turning what seemed a certain victory for the Arcadians and the Argives into a defeat (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.28–32; Diod. 15.72.3; Plut. *Ages.* 33.3–8).

> Then as soon as the battle had ended and he [Archidamus] had set up a trophy (*tropaion*), he immediately sent home Demoteles, the herald, to report the greatness of his victory and the fact that not so much as one of the Lacedaemonians had been slain, while vast numbers of the enemy had fallen. And when the people at Sparta heard this, it is said that all of them wept, beginning with Agesilaus, the senators, and the ephors; so true it is, indeed, that tears belong to joy and sorrow alike. On the other hand, both the Thebans and the Eleans were almost as well pleased as the Lacedaemonians at the misfortune of the Arcadians – so vexed had they become by this time at their presumption. (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.32)

That "tearless battle" (*adakrys mache*) (Plut. *Ages.* 33; Diod. 15.72) not only raised hopes in Sparta, but also, to some extent at least, restored the Spartans' badly damaged military reputation.

In 367 BC, seeking help against the Boeotians, Sparta and Athens sent an embassy to Persia. Boeotia, Arcadia, Elis and Argos promptly sent their own envoys. Of them all, it was Pelopidas, representing Thebes, the strongest state in Greece at

the time, who won the king's ear (Plut. *Pel.* 30). Consequently, the terms of peace dictated by the king took into account mainly the interests of Thebes. The so-called Peace of Pelopidas proclaimed the autonomy and freedom of Greek states and required Sparta to recognise the independence of Messenia and Athens to surrender its great fleet and Amphipolis (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.36; Plut. *Pelop.* 30.3–5; Diod. 15.81.3).

In the spring of 366 BC, Thebes invited envoys of the Greek states; but they refused to accept the offered peace terms. In the case of Sparta, the main obstacle was the issue of Messenia. With regard to this, Sparta's position was likely to cause problems to itself, since no state's would support it. Then, still in the spring of 366 BC, Epaminondas attacked for the third time, and in 362 BC he once more entered the Peloponnese. In the pitched battle, again at Mantinea, his thirty thousand hoplites clashed with twenty thousand men from Sparta, Athens, Mantinea, Elis and Achaea (Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.4–5; Diod. 15.85). In this battle, Epaminondas received a mortal wound.

News of the battle caused great joy in Sparta. Greece entered a period of an even greater chaos than before. The situation of Sparta deteriorated as well, since it was increasingly severely affected by the wars which had been waged for many years, recently also on its territory. Faced with the decay of the Peloponnesian League that had occurred in the 360s and completely deprived of allies, Sparta found itself in complete isolation.

In order to recover Messenia, or at least to deal with Arcadia and its other enemies in the Peloponnese, Sparta needed money to pay its mercenaries. Its foreign policy was thus largely determined by the financial needs of the state (cf. Oliva 1971, 196; Lazenby 1985, 169). Related to this was the fact that between 366 and 364 BC, Agesilaus, then eighty, was sent to Asia Minor. Xenophon claims that he went there as an envoy (Xen. *Ages.* 2.25–27) to the satrap Ariobarzanes, but his further account indicates Agesilaus had been serving as a mercenary commander (cf. Hamilton 1991, 239–240 n. 82). This certainly does not mean that the Spartans were cruelly using a venerable elder. We might even wonder whether it was not some kind of expiation on Agesilaus's part, since the Spartans would have been justified in feeling resentment towards a king during whose reign they had lost Messenia (Plut. *Ages.* 34). In fact, this was not the last such mission in his life. In 361 BC, Agesilaus with thirty advisers went to Egypt, where he took service with the pharaoh, Tachus, as a mercenary commander (Xen. *Ages.* 2.28–29; Diod. 15.90.2; 92.2; Plut. *Ages.* 36–40; cf. Cartledge 1987, 314–330). He died in the winter of 360/359 BC on the coast of Libya, during the voyage home (Xen. *Ages.* 2.31; Diod. 15.93.6; Plut. *Ages.* 40; Nepos *Ages.* 8.7), most probably of old age. He was eighty-four then; this is a lot for a mercenary.

At the beginning of Agesilaus's reign, Sparta was the greatest power in Greece. Yet the Sparta he left to his son Archidamus was already a defeated state, humiliated and financially exhausted. Thus, it is all the more surprising that the popular opinion painted Agesilaus as the most outstanding (*epiphanestatos*) man of his time (Theopompus FGrHist 115 F 321 ap. Plut. *Ages.* 10.10). The unexpectedly high – that is, for a king involved in the ruination of his state – evaluations

of Agesilaus are largely due to Xenophon. He created an idealised image of the ruler, shifting the responsibility for wrong decisions away from him and exaggerating his successes. Perhaps more interesting than the idealisation of the figure of Agesilaus is the durability of his image. When pondering the ups and down of Agesilaus reign, one remembers the statement of Theopompus on the one hand, and – on the other – the ephors' misgivings that made them punish Agesilaus's father for marrying Eupolia. There can be no doubt that Agesilaus began his rule as a king and ended it as a kinglet.

While Agesilaus's mercenary services did not fill the state's coffers with gold, they must have been more or less effective in addressing pressing concerns, since the same practices were later used by his son Archidamus III. He fought at the head of mercenary forces first in Crete (Diod. 16.62.4) and later in southern Italy (Diod. 16.63.1; 88.3). Not much is known about the reign of Archidamus, who ascended to the throne, at the age of over forty, in 360/359 BC. That same year Philip II seized power in Macedonia; an event which in the long run proved crucial for the history of Greece, and Sparta in it, yet for the first few years brought very few changes to the political situation in the Greek world. Nevertheless, the year 360/359 BC, with the demise of Agesilaus II and the ascension of Philip II, is a ceasura that marks the ending of one era and the beginning of another.

Sparta was involved in the so-called Third Sacred War (356/5 to 346 BC), the pretext for which came from an old dispute between Phocians and Locrians over Delphi. Sparta's support for the Phocian claim was to prevent Locrian allies – namely: Thebes – from providing aid to Sparta's allies in the Peloponnese. Using their influence in the Delphic Amphictyony, Thebes forced Sparta to pay a fine of five hundred talents for seizing and occupying Cadmea in 382 BC. In 356 BC, the Amphictyony doubled this fine (again, at the instigation of Thebes) and imposed another one on Phocis for cultivating sacred lands. Due to the difficult situation in the Peloponnese, Sparta did not launch a military operation in Central Greece, but Archidamus secretly sent the Phocian leader Philomelos fifteen talents to be used to enlist mercenaries. When Philomelos seized Delphi, the Amphictyony declared holy war. Philomelos was defeated and killed in the year 354 BC, but his successor Onomarchus continued the war with much fervour, enlisting mercenary troops using money from the Delphic treasury. This allowed him to score a victory over Philip, who came to the aid of the Thessalians in 353 BC. However, it was Philip who won the battle of Crocus Field in 352 BC, which made him lord of Thessaly and began the period of Macedonian supremacy. In an attempt to stop it, Phocians occupied Thermopylae, with the help of Athenians and Spartans, who sent a thousand men-at-arms (mostly *perioikoi*), forcing Philip to retreat.

The Peloponnesian coalition of Argos, Megalopolis and Messenia may have been able to defend itself from Sparta by joining forces, yet the success of their active policies depended on acquiring external aid in substantial numbers. Around the year 356 BC Messenia entered into an alliance with Athens, which promised assistance in the event of aggression by Sparta (Dem. 16.9). However, in the following years, under Eubulus's leadership, Athens adopted a more cautious policy

in the following years – despite the urgings of Demosthenes (*In defence of the Megalopolitans*) – and refused to help the Megalopolitans, who wanted a similar deal to that obtained earlier by Messenia. The alliance with Athens effectively protected the Messenians from Spartan attack (cf. Roebuck 1941, 48). Athens' refusal to ally with Megalopolis brought consequences in the form of Spartan invasion of southern Arcadia. Messenia, Argos and Sicyon then aided Megalopolis; Thebes could not do so immediately, but only a year later (Diod. 16.39). The Spartans were thus successful in the first phase of the campaign, but the arrival of Thebans changed the situation. With neither party managing to achieve a decisive victory, out of necessity they made peace, which acknowledged the independence of all sides of the conflict. This peace therefore restored the balance (or rather imbalance) of power in the Peloponnese. In the year 353 BC the Spartans, then allied with Onomarchus, defeated Argos at the Battle of Orneae. Taking advantage of their victory, they made a proposal to return all lands to their former owners. Had this plan been carried out, Phocis would have kept Delphi, Sparta would have regained Messenia, and Athens would have retaken Oropos, while Thebes would have lost Orchomenus, Thespiae and Plataeae. Uderstandably, the idea did not meet with universal enthusiasm in Greece.

In 351 BC, Lacedaemon went to war against Megalopolis, led by Archidamus and his son, the future king Agis III. They were aided by Phayllus's successor Phalaecus of Phocis, who sent three thousand mercenary soldiers. Megalopolis, in turn, received support from Argos, Sicyon, Messenia and Boeotia. Commanded by King Archidamus, the Spartans were victorious; a truce was signed and the Phocians and the Boeotians left the Peloponnese. In the north, however, Philip gained the upper hand in 347/346 BC and, as an ally of Thebes, defeated the Phocians, taking their place in the Amphictyonia. In the Peloponnese, Macedon effectively assumed the role that had earlier been played by Thebes, supporting the anti-Spartan coalition of Argos, Megalopolis and Messenia. Philip II warned Sparta against mounting an offensive against Messenia and sent money and mercenary forces to aid Argives and Messenians. In the autumn of 344 BC, Athenians sent an embassy, led by Demosthenes, to dissuade Messenians from an alliance with Philip, yet their efforts were unsuccessful. Argos and Messenia entered a coalition with Macedon. However, the next Athenian diplomatic mission (again involving Demosthenes) managed to persuade Megalopolis, Messenia, Achaia and Mantinea.

In the spring of 342 BC, Athens entered an alliance with Messenia (*IG* II.1.225) and other states, most likely at the same time. This did not mean that these states renounced their ties with Philip II (Roebuck 1941, 51). Soon enough, not without assistance from Philip's agents and bribes and Athenian losses in other territories, the situation returned to its previous state.

When Athens tried to assemble an anti-Macedonian coalition in 340 BC, Demosthenes's mission only led to the Achaeans and Corinthians joining. Messenia, Argos and Megalopolis refused to participate, and Sparta withdrew from Greek politics altogether. Archidamus, like his father before him, was seeking money for the state as a mercenary, and preferred to give his support to Lyctus in Crete and

then get into the fighting in southern Italy. It was there that he died (in 338 BC) fighting for the former Spartan colony of Taras (Theopompus FGrHist 115 F 232; Diod. 16.16.62–63; Strabo 6.280). Consequently, Thebes and Athens fought against the Macedonians alone, clashing at Chaeronea in 338 BC. The victorious Philip II settled the affairs of the Peloponnese in favour of his allies who had made territorial claims against Sparta, that is Argos, Arcadia and Messenia. In the autumn of 338 BC, Philip II invaded Laconia (Polyb. 9.28 et al.). The matter of territorial claims was formally settled by the Corinthian League, of which Messenia became a member. By the decision of the League, the Argives obtained the border lands in the north of Laconia. Messenia received Ager Denthaliatis (Tac. *Annales* 4.43.3) and the coastal territories along the Gulf of Messenia south of the Pamisos River. The *perioikoi* cities outside these territories, that is Asine, Mothone and Thouria, were probably given to Messenia, although no direct evidence for this exists. As a result, outside the Eurotas valley Sparta kept a part of the Tainaron peninsula and Cape Maleas. Deprived of their traditional sources of income, for the first time in centuries Spartiates had to cultivate their land themselves.

Sparta was the only Greek state that did not become a member of the Corinthian League and did not participate in the expedition of Alexander the Great. The inscription on the votive offerings of the spoils taken in the Battle of Granicus proclaimed that these items were won by Alexander, son of Philip, and all Hellenes except the Lacedaemonians (Arr. 1.16.7; Plut. *Alex.* 16.8). The root cause was certainly the issue of Messenia. Otherwise the Spartans would likely have reminded themselves (and others) of their past victories over the Persians, and the successes from the early days of Agesilaus's reign. Weakened and humiliated by Philip II, the Lacedaemonians looked on passively as Thebes revolted and Alexander's destruction of the city certainly reassured them that keeping away had been the right strategy. In 335/334 BC, as Alexander was preparing to march against Persia, the Spartans held talks with the envoys of King Darius III, yet the negotiations came to nothing. Alexander had no reason to worry. Sparta's isolation in the Peloponnese could not be broken.

Nevertheless, by sending money to Greece Darius III made an attempt at creating an anti-Macedonian coalition, with Sparta at the lead. In 333 BC the Spartiate Euthicles arrived in Suza for talks with the king of Persia. At the end of 333 or early in 332 BC Agis III met with the successors of Memnon, a Greek in Persian service, on the island of Sifnos. Following Agis's advice, ten ships and thirty talents were then sent to his brother Agesilaus, who was to recruit mercenaries in the territory of Tainaron and set out with them for Crete. The idea was to take action that would force Alexander to withdraw from Asia. Yet while capturing Crete was a feasible goal, Alexander's victory over the Persian fleet crushed all hope of achieving domination over the sea. Agis, who had joined Agesilaus on Crete, had to return to Laconia late in 322 BC.

In the winter of 332/331, as Antipater travelled to Thrace to quash the revolt of the Odrisian king, Sparta tried to persuade Athens to make a joint stand against Macedonia. Despite Demosthenes' encouragement, Athenians rejected the

proposal. Sparta decided to take up arms nonetheless (cf. Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, 22–23). Early in 331 BC, the Spartan army led by King Agis III and aided by troops from Elis, Arcadia and Achaia, defeated the Macedonian army and laid siege to Megalopolis. However, their winning streak ended with the arrival of Antipater with the main Macedonian forces in the Peloponnese. The battle of Megalopolis (331 BC), in which King Agis III fell, ended with a Macedonian victory (Diod. 17,62–63; Paus. 3.10.5; Curt. 6.1, 21). Although Alexander referred to it as "a war of mice" (*myomachia*), the confrontation was of substantial importance to the ultimate fate of his expedition.

Even after Alexander's death, during the so-called Lamian War (323–322 BC), Sparta never dared to take up arms against the Macedonians. Partially, this may have been due to the attitudes displayed by Messenia and Argos, and the fact that Antipater still kept Spartan hostages. Yet what seems to have played a far greater role is Spartans' awareness of their own weakness, which was also responsible for their inaction during the wars of the diadochi, fighting over Alexander's dominions. Polyperchon's intervention in the Peloponnese, however, prompted the Spartans to build defensive fortifications around the city. Lacedaemon was thus put on the defensive. All it could offer the world were mercenary soldiers and commanders. One of these was Acrotatus, the eldest son of Cleomenes II, who defied the advice of the ephors and accepted the invitation of Sicilian cities looking for a commander to fight Agathocles of Syracuse (Diod. 19.70.5). He stayed in Sicily for a while, but was expelled when the locals found his autocratic tendencies excessive. He did not outlive his father Cleomenes, who died in 309 BC.

Chapter 12 Sparta on the wane

Although Sparta did not play a prominent political role during the Hellenistic period, it was still an important state at the turn of the fourth and third centuries BC. The former greatness of Athens and Sparta gave them a special place in the politics of Hellenistic rulers. Spartan soldiers still had a formidable reputation. Many Spartans sought their fortunes as soldiers and mercenary officers in Hellenistic armies, sometimes amassing considerable wealth. Despite her obvious weakness (primarily resulting from the loss of Messenia), Sparta remained one of the major states of the Peloponnese. While losing its unique qualities over time and becoming increasingly similar to the other states of the period, Sparta was still actively involved in the political theatre of the third century BC, especially at the initiative of her ambitious kings, who tried to make up for the losses suffered in the fourth century BC.

The history of Hellenistic Sparta is a tale of kings and conflicts among the elites. It is interesting in itself, especially since the small-scale political game does not differ from what we know from Sparta's earlier history (more details in Cartledge, Spawforth 1989). The present book shall only focus on the essentials.

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Sparta actively participated in the political struggle after the death of Alexander the Great. In the first half of the third century BC the most important showdown with international consequences took place between Areus I and his uncle Cleonymus.

King Areus I (? – 263/262 BC) sought to restore Sparta's standing in the Peloponnese. His actions show that he wanted to reconstruct Lacedaemon, making it more similar to other Hellenistic states. During his reign, Sparta began minting silver coins (with the image of Areus and the inscription "King Areus") for the first time in its history. Sparta was slowly becoming a part of the Hellenistic world. It even acquired a theatre similar to those that existed in other Greek cities. As Stewart aptly notes: "Prior to Areus, Sparta was clinging to the classical model of governance, trying to enforce classical policies on a post-classical world. After the revolt of Kleonymos, Sparta entered the Hellenistic world [...]. The third-century age of reform began with Areus and Sparta would spend the rest of the century dealing with the repercussions of life as a Hellenistic *polis*" (Stewart 2018, 90).

Agis IV and Cleomenes III

The socio-economic and political crisis afflicting Sparta in the fourth and third centuries BC led to a reduction in the number of fully enfranchised citizens, a concentration of property (primarily land) and more debt for the majority of the population. This process went hand in hand with a gradual political and military decline of the state.

King Agis IV (244–241 BC), and later Cleomenes III (235–219 BC), both sought to exploit the general feeling of discontent to rebuild the structure of the state. They tried to secure themselves a place among the Hellenistic monarchs by appealing to the image of Sparta's former glory. Proclaiming a return to the "laws of Lycurgus", Cleomenes (and perhaps Agis as well) wished to "modernise" the state by introducing changes that increased the number of citizens (and therefore soldiers), strengthened royal authority and created a stable social and economic system (cf. Flower 2002, Naffisi 2018). However, neither of them succeeded in implementing their plans to the full.

Agis IV of the Eurypontid dynasty came to the throne at the age of twenty. Probably wishing to increase Sparta's military potential, he decided to reform the state. As Plutarch reports, Agis turned away from the pleasures of life despite his wealthy family background, stripping himself of all ornaments which were supposed to provide him with grace and majesty, and renouncing and avoiding all grandeur and extravagance (*polytheia*). He proudly wore the old-fashioned short Spartan robe called *tribon*, and dined and bathed according to old Spartan custom (*diaita*). He was also fond of saying that he only wanted royal power in order to be able to restore the old laws and customs of the fathers (*tous nomous kai ten patrion agogen*) (Plut. *Agis* 4).

Although both Agis and his followers later emphasised the contrast between the young king and the attitude displayed by the majority of his contemporaries, there is no doubt that mid-third-century Sparta did not resemble the state of the classical period. The old customs had been abandoned, the syssitia had disappeared, the state education had ceased to function. The composition and nature of the civic community had undergone profound changes. According to Plutarch, "there were left of the old Spartan families not more than seven hundred, and of these there were perhaps a hundred who possessed land and allotment; while the ordinary throng (*ho allos ochlos*), without resources (*aporos*) and without civic rights (*atimos*), lived in enforced idleness, showing no zeal or energy in warding off foreign wars, but ever watching for some opportunity to subvert and change affairs at home (*metaboles kai metastaseos ton paronton*)" (Plut. *Agis* 5.4).

In Sparta, the problem of *oliganthropia* and the concentration of land in the hands of a small number of wealthy individuals was nothing new. The rapid decline of citizen numbers in the fifth and fourth centuries BC slowed down at the turn of the fourth centuries BC (although, it seems, with seven hundred citizens Sparta was on the verge of becoming a dependent state). Having lost Messenia, Lacedaemon was unable to save its old system and its position in the Greek world.

Who, then, were the seven hundred citizens, if only one hundred of them possessed "land and allotment"? All of them probably held formal civil rights, but differed in material status. The six hundred lived in poverty; they owned some land (otherwise they would not have been citizens), but were probably in debt. Debt and the threat of losing their land explains both their frustration and their indifference to the affairs of state. Certainly, many found themselves outside the nucleus of the civic community, becoming "underprivileged" Spartiates, conventionally referred

to as *hypomeiones*. Cartledge estimates their number at around two thousand (Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, 43).

Agis certainly may have made use of their discontent. He gained the support of young men (*hoi neoi*) who were ready to abandon their old ways in the name of liberty (*eleutheria*), (Plut. *Agis* 6.1). Although not insignificant, their backing could not compare to the support of influential people. Moreover, the majority did not favour the idea of returning to "Lycurgian" laws. Particularly strong opposition came from Spartan women, who were extremely influential. They did not change their mind even after Agis's mother Agesistrata and his grandmother Archidamia – who were the greatest landowners in Sparta at that time – expressed support for his policies (Plut. *Agis* 7.3–4). Fortunately for Agis, some of the elders also sided with him; most notably Lysander son of Libis, Mandrocleidas son of Ekphanes and Agesilaus, the uncle of the young king.

Agis and his supporters managed to get Lysander elected as one of the ephors for the year 243/242 BC. Through him, the king appealed to the gerousia and presented a project involving the cancellation of debts and redistribution of land. After being approved by the gerontes, the rhetra was submitted to be discussed by the Assembly. The aim was to establish four thousand five hundred *kleroi* for Spartan citizens and fifteen thousand for the *perioikoi* (Plut. *Agis* 8.1–2). The latter allotments were to be given to the *perioikoi* "capable of bearing arms" (*tois hopla pherein dynamenois*). Agis wished to distribute the four and a half thousand *kleroi* among genuine Spartiates, whose numbers "should be filled up from the provincials and foreigners (*xenoi*), who had received the rearing of freemen and were, besides, of vigorous bodies and in the prime of life" (Plut. *Agis* 8.2). The intention was to return to the traditional Spartan way of life (*diaita*), featuring the *agoge* and the syssitia. What was new, however, was the number of syssitia, of which there were to be fifteen, consisting of four hundred or two hundred members (Plut. *Agis* 8). We do not know either why some syssitia were to have two hundred and others four hundred members, or what was the reason behind introducing larger messes (instead of the old syssitia of about fifteen members). The problem is that four thousand five hundred men cannot be equally divided into fifteen syssitia of two and four hundred members each. Perhaps the actual meaning of the passage is that Sparta traditionally had fifteen syssitia of two hundred members and fifteen syssitia of four hundred members (nine thousand citizens in total); or maybe Agis IV wished to establish three hundred messes of fifteen members (Lazenby 1985, 182 n. 30). This may have been an attempt to speed up the integration of the community, and to counter the consequences of particularism associated with the old, elitist syssitia (Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, 46). The success of the reform was largely dependent on overcoming the resistance of those who would be forced into the syssitia system against their will. If the number of the dissatisfied did not exceed the one hundred great landowners mentioned by Plutarch, then getting their voices marginalised in great messes of about four thousand new citizens would not have been a problem.

Members of the gerousia did not manage to arrive at a consensus regarding the reform, so Lysander presented the project for discussion at the apella. Lysander, Androcleides, Agesilaus, Agis himself gave speeches arguing for the reform; Agis proclaimed himself ready to surrender his own wealth, estimated to be six hundred talents, for the purpose. Apella declared itself on the side of Agis, but the project of reform met with a vigorous opposition from rich men with the second king, Leonidas II son of Cleonymus, an Agiad, at their fore.

To put the reforms into practice, Agis had to resort to drastic measures. The condition for success was the removal of Leonidas, around whom the enemies of the reforms had gathered. His pedigree was apparently beyond reproach, so the old custom of asteroscopy was dragged out of oblivion (or invented for the occasion). An observation of the sky was ordered and Lysander claimed he saw a shooting star, which according to the old laws allowed the king to be removed from office. Leonidas was accused of having married a foreign woman while he was a cavalry commander under Seleucus. Fearing for his life, Leonidas took refuge in the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. His son-in-law, Cleombrotus, was installed as king. After these changes, the rhetra designed by Agis was finally decreed.

The situation changed completely when Lysander's term of office expired. The ephors selected for the 242/241 BC sided with Leonidas. Leonidas left the temple of Athena. Lysander and Mandrocleides were accused of bringing in a project to abolish debts and divide land anew. The supporters of the reform then deposed the ephors, appointing their own ones, Agesilaus among them. Leonidas had to flee to Tegea. The implementation of the reform proceeded. Then the project was dealt an unexpected blow by Agis's uncle, Agesilaus, who was a great landowner but also had many debts. Driven by self-interest and/or political calculations, he persuaded Agis to first carry out the cancellation of debts and only later introduce the remaining reforms: "So they caused the mortgages (the Spartans call them 'klaria,' or allotment pledges) to be brought into the market-place, heaped them altogether, and set fire to them" (Plut. *Agis* 13.3). From then on, Agesilaus was doing all he could to postpone the implementation of the new division of land.

While Plutarch highlights the role of Agesilaus, who perfidiously exploited the idealism of the young king, the abolition of debts may have also satisfied the expectations of other Spartiates, who had so far supported the reform plan. A *plethos* of six hundred Spartiates, including the young men, finally declared themselves in favour of them. The civic and material status of this group had been sufficiently secured and it is entirely possible that its members were actually hostile towards the rest of Agis's reforms.

Agis's reforms ended with the abolition of debts in 242 BC. It did not have to happen so. Agis's defeat was decided by events outside Sparta. Realising that a military victory would strengthen his position in the country and might also bring him booty, in the summer of 241 BC Agis set out with his army for the Isthmus of Corinth. Taking advantage of his absence, his enemies summoned Leonidas from Tegea and caused the reforms to be annulled. When the young king returned from his expedition, the situation was already controlled by Leonidas's men. Agis took

refuge in the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. Cleombrotus went to Tainaron, clearly preparing to leave Laconia. New ephors were appointed. Agis was tried and sentenced to death. He was hanged, together with his mother and grandmother, in 241 BC (Plut. *Agis* 18–20). His supporters, among them his brother Archidamus and Hippomedon son of Agesilaus, had to flee Sparta.

In 240 (or 239) BC, the Aetolian League attacked Laconia under the pretext of helping the exiles to return. In reality, the Aetolians were more concerned with consolidating their position in the Peloponnese and gaining booty (and while the latter objective was achieved, the former one was not even approached). In Sparta, the reactionary rule began. The diarchy was effectively replaced by a monarchy with Leonidas II as the sole ruler. Probably using the royal power to dispose of the hand of a heiress (*patrouchos*), Leonidas married Agiatis, the wife of the murdered Agis IV, to his son Cleomenes, still a minor (Plut. *Kleom.* 1.1). He did so not only because Agiatis had inherited the great wealth of her father Gylippus, but also to ensure that his branch of the Agiad family took precedence over Agis's line. Eudamidas, son of Agiatis and Agis IV, was to become king in the future as custom dictated, but he was to be replaced by a regent and guardian until he came of age. The obvious candidate for that office was his uncle Archidamus, but since he was in exile in Messenia, Cleomenes was appointed.

Paradoxically, Cleomenes III, who ascended the throne in 235 BC at the age of twenty-five, was to continue the policy desired by Agis IV (cf. Oliva 1971, 230–268). According to Plutarch's romantic, although perhaps at least partly true version, he was greatly influenced by his wife, who was his senior, for "as soon as Agiatis was his, [he] became passionately fond of her, and in a way sympathized with her devotion to the memory of Agis, so that he would often ask her about the career of Agis, and listen attentively as she told of the plans and purposes which Agis had formed" (Plut. *Kleom.* 1.3). In addition, when he came to the throne after the death of his father Leonidas, Cleomenes "saw that the citizens were by that time altogether degenerate. The rich (*plousioi*) neglected the common interests (*ta koina*) for their own private pleasure (*hedone*) and aggrandizement (*pleonexia*); the common people, because of their wretched state at home, had lost all readiness for war and all ambition to maintain the ancient Spartan discipline; and he himself, Cleomenes, was king only in name, while the whole power was in the hands of the ephors" (Plut. *Kleom.* 3.1).

Whatever his motivations, Cleomenes drew the lesson from Agis's experience. He bribed the ephors into resuming the war and in 227 BC he defeated the Achaeans. Taking advantage of the victory, he returned to the task of reforming the state. He left most of the army, his enemies in it, in Arcadia and returned to Sparta with mercenary troops. He exiled eighty of the most obstinate enemies of reform. He had four ephors killed; the fifth, Agylaeus, played dead and thus managed to escape with his life. Ten supporters of the ephors were also murdered.

Cleomenes was thus able to proceed with his programme to restore the Lycurgian system. He appointed his brother Eucleides the second king; thus the former diarchy was formally restored, but it assumed a grotesque form, since the

kings from the Agiad and Eurypontyd lines were replaced with two Agiad kings. He managed to persuade the apella to abolish the ephorate under the pretext of its being a non-Lycurgian institution (Plut. *Kleom.* 10). A new college of "guardians of ancestral laws" (*patronomoi*) was instituted. Whether he also abolished the gerousia is a debated issue. Pausanias says that King Cleomenes "destroyed the power of the senate, and appointed in its stead a nominal Council of Fathers (*patronomoi*)" (Paus. 2.9.11, trans. W.H.S. Jones; alternatively, Guardians of the Law). Similarly to the abolition of the ephorate, the change in the function of the gerousia was a condition for the success of the reform, since it was not only by its very nature a conservative body, but also its composition reflected the existing state of political and social relations. Its broad (or, at least, potentially broad) powers meant that being controlled by the enemies of reform, in the future it would become a serious threat to the planned changes. The institution of the college of *patronomoi*, and presumably the abolition of life membership of the gerousia and its replacement by an annual term of office for elected gerontes, were intended to protect the new regime against the designs of the Spartan oligarchy (cf. Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, 51–52).

Cleomenes spoke at the apella: "For all the rest, he said, the whole land should be common property, debtors should be set free from their debts, and foreigners (*xenoi*) should be examined and rated (*krisis kai dokimasia*), in order that the strongest of them (*hoi kratistoi*) might be made Spartan citizens and help to preserve the state by their arms" (Plut. *Kleom.* 10.6). Debts were cancelled again, since the abolition of 242 BC was most probably annulled after the murder of Agis IV. A new division of land was implemented and equal plots of land were allotted to citizens, although their number from the four and a half thousand planned by Agis was reduced to four thousand. "Then he filled up the body of citizens with the most promising (*chariestatoi*) of the free provincials (*perioikoi*), and thus raised a body of four thousand men-at-arms (*hoplites*)" (Plut. *Kleom.* 11.3), and the total of a thousand and four hundred allotments went to the *perioikoi* and *xenoi*, most probably mainly the mercenaries with whose help Cleomenes had conducted the coup. He used the occasion to change the weaponry used in the army, introducing the long spear (*sarissa*) and shield after the Macedonian model. His military reform, which allegedly consisted in creating a sixth *oba* (Neopolitai) and the sixth *mora* in the army, is a more problematic issue (Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, 53). Neither did he neglect education: "Next he devoted himself to the training of the young men and to the 'agoge,' or ancient discipline, most of the details of which Sphaerus, who was then in Sparta, helped him in arranging. And quickly was the proper system of bodily training and public messes resumed, a few out of necessity, but most with a willing spirit, subjecting themselves to the old Spartan regime (*Lakoniken diaitan*) with all its simplicity" (Plut. *Kleom.* 11.2).

Sphairus of Borysthenes, a disciple of Zeno of Cition, the originator of stoicism, played a crucial role as Cleomenes's adviser in the matters of the syssitia and the *agoge*, neither of which institutions had been seen in Sparta for about half a century. It is impossible to determine to what extent he referred to old Spartan models (and wherefrom he might have known them), or to what extent he adapted

the institutions he created to the new possibilities and needs of Sparta. In any case, all subsequent references to the syssitia and the *agoge* must refer primarily to the short-lived but highly publicised experiment of which Sphairus was the author. In the new reality, the old Spartan customs must have seemed as artificial to the Spartans as they may seem to the modern reader. Plutarch asserts that "the Spartan alone of Greek or Macedonian armies [...] was free from every kind of licence, scurrility, and general festivity; while for the most part the young men practised themselves and the elder men taught them, and for amusement, when their work was over, they had recourse to their wonted pleasantries and the interchange of Spartan witticisms" (Plut. *Kleom.* 12.4). Still, he consented to some relaxation of the customs for visitors and "indeed he censured one of his friends, when he heard that in entertaining guest-friends he had set before them the black soup and barley-bread of the public mess-tables; 'for,' said he, 'in these matters and before foreigners we must not be too strictly Spartan'" (Plut. *Kleom.* 13.3). Not all the changes could be explained by a desire to return to a Lycurgian solution; one of such changes was the introduction of the Macedonian long spear, the *sarissa*, in the army.

In many cities of the Peloponnese where demands for the abolitions of debts and new division of land were being put forward, these reforms were greeted with hope. The fate of the reform was swayed by the course of international relations and by the fact that Aratos and the Achaean League were hostile towards Cleomenes's vision. Thus, when in 225 BC military operations were resumed and Cleomenes proved successful, Argos and Corinth declared themselves on his side. When Aratos summoned Antigonus III Doson to the Peloponnese, Cleomenes was forced into the defensive. Contrary to what he had hoped, Ptolemy III Euergetes did not render him any effective aid. Since he failed to conduct the expected social reforms in the cities of the Peloponnese, he lost the support of the commoners there. Antigonus occupied Tegea, Orchomenus and Mantinea, thus locking Cleomenes inside Laconia. In 223/222 BC, the shortage of soldiers, or funds to enlist new mercenaries, made the king resort to extreme measures: "Cleomenes, now reduced to the narrow confines of Laconia, set free those of the Helots who could pay down five Attic minas (thereby raising a sum of five hundred talents) [and] armed two thousand of them in Macedonian fashion" (Plut. *Kleom.* 23.1). The fact that as much as five hundred talents were collected indicates that six thousand helots contributed the money. That only a third of them were incorporated into the army may have been be due to their age or physical condition; it may also be a testimony to Cleomenes's prudence, as he tried not to alarm the other citizens. Although doubts have also been raised about the total number of freedmen, it seems that there are no serious grounds to question the historicity of the whole event (Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, 56).

Cleomenes's attacks on Megalopolis and Argos did not fundamentally change his position, however, although he did raze Megalopolis almost to the ground, thereby earning Polybius's hatred. Finally, in 222 BC, Cleomenes was defeated by Antigonus in the Battle of Sellasia and had to flee to Egypt. Once there, he tried

and failed to persuade Ptolemy III to aid him. Cleomenes attempted to raise a revolt against his successor Ptolemy IV, and when that also failed, he committed suicide with his companions in the spring of 219 BC. The subsequent murder of his mother and children, however, indicates that there may have been something more behind the whole affair than suicide: "Ptolemy, when he learned of these things, gave orders that the body of Cleomenes should be flayed and hung up, and that his children, his mother, and the women that were with her, should be killed" (Plut. *Kleom.* 38.2). After the Battle of Sellasia, the victorious Antigonus entered Sparta. He left the city a few days later, leaving Brachyllas, a Theban, as a governor. Sparta possibly lost Dentheliatis, Belminatis and the lands east of Parnon.

Between 222 and 207 BC, internal struggles in Sparta led to several massacres and changes of government. The man who rescued Sparta from final collapse was Nabis son of Demaratus, one of the most prominent figures in its history. He was probably descended from Demaratus of the Euripontid family who went into exile in Persia in 491 BC (Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, 67–68). In 207 BC, Nabis succeeded Machanidas as a regent ruling on behalf of Pelops, whom he later removed (cf. Diod. 27.1).

Nabis destroyed the archaic political structure of the Spartan polis and created a new monarchy of the Hellenistic type (Texier 1975; Birgalias 2005). He surrounded himself with a guard of mercenaries, wore a purple robe symbolising royal power and lived in a royal palace. Contrary to old Spartan customs, he married a foreigner, Apia of Argos, thus securing the support of the Argives. Since his ties with Argos were important because of the relations with Achaea and Macedonia, he strengthened them by marrying one of the daughters he had with Apia to Apia's brother Pythagoras. He caused the abolition of the gerousia and the ephorate. The Assembly began to be convened only exceptionally and thus practically ceased to function; the citizens effectively became royal subjects. Nabis transformed Sparta's social structure by granting freedom to many thousands of slaves. Called *douloi* by Polybius (13.6.1–6; 15.13.1) and *servi* by Livy (34.31.11), they could have been either helots or ordinary slaves, or they could have come from both these groups. During the reign of Nabis, Sparta underwent true urbanisation for the first time in its history. Solid city walls were built. The city's water supply was seen to. Crafts began to develop.

The international situation favoured Nabis. Sparta formally remained allied with Rome, while the Achaeans were allies of Philip. The state of affairs changed with the outbreak of the Second Macedonian War (200–197 BC) between Rome and Macedonia. When in 198 BC the Achaeans went over to the Romans and Argos sided with Philip, Philip, unable to come to the Argives' aid, made a treaty with Nabis, ceding Argolis to him. Nabis promptly abolished debts in Argos (Liv. 32.38). These changes, which provoked protests from the Achaean League, were intended to consolidate Nabis's rule over the newly occupied territory. In the late winter or early spring of 197 BC Nabis went to Mycenae for a meeting with the consul Flamininus representing Rome and with Rome's Greek allies, among whom was Attalos I, the king of Pergamon. Nabis went over to the side of the Romans.

As Rome's ally, Sparta retained Argos in its possession, obtained several cities in Crete, and pledged small-scale military aid (six hundred Cretan mercenaries). In 197 BC, the Romans defeated Philip at Kynoskephalai in Thessaly, and at the Isthmian Games the following summer Flamininus proclaimed the "freedom of Hellas".

To fulfil their promise, the Romans should have withdrawn their legions from Greece. The uncertain situation in Aetolia and Thessaly, as well as the threat from the Syrian ruler Antiochus III, who could attack Greece, argued against this. Nabis, who according to Flamininus's proclamation should have left Argos but failed to do so, provided a solution. The Romans caused the pan-Hellenic congress at Corinth to adopt an appropriate resolution for war with Sparta. In the spring of 195 BC, Flamininus entered Laconia, leading an army of fifty thousand men. Nabis had an army of ten thousand Spartan infantry, two thousand Cretan soldiers and three thousand mercenaries.

Although outnumbered, Nabis took up the challenge. He "fortified the city with a moat and rampart. To prevent any internal disorder, he held the people in check with terror and severe punishments, since he could not hope that they would wish well to a tyrant" (Liv. 34.27, trans. Evan T. Sage). He had "about eighty of the most prominent young men" arrested and executed. "Then some of the Ilotae [helots], a rural people, who had been country-dwellers (*castellani*) from remote antiquity, were charged with trying to desert, driven with whips through all the streets, and put to death" (Liv. 34.27). Nabis did not wish to give a pitched battle; he intended to defend the city. But the Romans, having reached Sparta, did not attack it; they moved south, capturing Gytheion and other coastal cities. Eventually a peace was concluded, the terms of which were very hard for Nabis: Argos and the cities of Crete were to be relinquished, many *perioikoi* settlements in Laconia, including Gytheion, to be transferred to the Achaean League, warships surrendered, Messenian slaves returned, hostages released, and a contribution of five hundred talents paid (Liv. 34.35; 40; 43). Sparta was weakened, although not as much as its Peloponnesian enemies would have liked. Nabis in particular did not lose power. But Rome was not interested in completely crushing Sparta. As long as it posed a real threat to the Achaean League, Rome could be sure of the League's loyalty. And it was for this reason that Sparta was spared.

Neither the Achaeans nor Nabis could possibly be satisfied with this solution. Nabis allied himself with the Aetolians, enemies of the Achaean League. The choice proved fatal for him. Disagreements broke out, and in consequence Nabis was assassinated in 192 BC by the commander of a reinforcement unit who intended to have Sparta join the Aetolian League. This, however, did not happen due to opposition from the Spartans themselves. The Achaean League took advantage of the circumstances, Philopoemen entered Sparta with an army, securing the consent of some of the wealthy Spartans to join the Achaean League. Although Sparta's political system was not changed, it was stripped of its independence and suffered perhaps the greatest humiliation in its history. From the formal point of view, it was now nothing more than what the *perioikoi* cities used to be in the past. The pro-Achaean oligarchs begun their rule in Sparta. How unpopular they were

among the Spartans themselves is amply shown by the fact that in the autumn of 191 BC they were expelled from the city. Nabis's former supporters took over the power and soon turned to Rome asking for the return of the *perioikoi* cities and the surrender of five hostages held at Rome. Four of them were released, leaving Armenas, since he had a potential to become a leader of the opposition and the Romans feared him. In 189 BC, the Spartans won a victory over the exiles who had settled on the Tainaron peninsula. Philopoemen took advantage of this, demanding the surrender of those guilty of breaking the truce of 195 BC.

Sparta responded by slaughtering thirty supporters of the Achaeans, withdrawing from the League and placing itself under Rome's protection. Rome, however, remained passive. Seeing this, Philopoemen entered Laconia with the Spartan exiles and ordered the city walls to be demolished, the slaves whom Nabis had made citizens to be exiled (or, in case of resistance, to be sold into slavery), and Sparta to be incorporated into the Achaean League. Belminatis was returned to Megalopolis. Sparta's old system was abolished, including, among others, the *agoge* and the syssitia (Polyb. 21.32 c.3; Liv. 38.34.1–3; Paus. 8.51.3). The laws and institutions of the Achaean cities were introduced in place of the Spartan ones.

Neither the Achaeans nor Spartans were happy with those proposals and thus they were not implemented, although in 183 BC the exiles returned to Sparta. In the same year, some of the former exiles were expelled from the city. Among them was King Agesipolis III, who died shortly afterwards at the hands of pirates while trying to get to Rome in the hope that this would help him return to his homeland.

For next three decades, Sparta "sinks below the horizon of sources concerned only with 'big politics'" (Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, 84). The main episode of the period was the Third Macedonian War (171–168 BC). Perseus's defeat at Pydna in 168 BC decided the fate of not only Macedonia, but Greece as well.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The Roman period was a time of peace and prosperity in Sparta. With the disappearance of the helots as a social group, by the latter half of the second century BC Spartan society had finally became similar to the rest of the Greek world.

Luckily for them, during the civil war in Rome the Spartans sided themselves with the winners, first Julius Caesar, then Octavian. The personal contribution of Eurycles of Sparta into Octavian's victory at Actium furthered his own and his family's career, but also caused Sparta to rise in esteem (Kennel 2018, 644–646). It was most probably through his mediation that in 27 BC Laconia was divided into Sparta – its lands increased by the inclusion of Dentheliatis, at Messenia's cost, and Belminatis and Aigytis taken away from Megalopolis – and the "*koinon* of free Laconians" consisting of twenty-four *perioikoi* cities. In addition, Augustus gifted Kardamyle and Thouria to the Spartans and Cythera to Caius Iulius Eurycles as his personal land.

In the first and second centuries AD, Sparta deliberately archaised its image, becoming a *sui generis* open-air museum. Under the special protection of the Romans, who held its noble history in high esteem, from the first to the fourth

century AD the Spartans led a successful and prosperous life, their city becoming one of Greece's main tourist attractions for the Roman elite. The past was at the service of the present. In 395 BC, the city was razed by the Visigoths commanded by Alaric, who soon after attacked Rome itself. Towards the end of the fifth century Sparta became a Christian city.

The beginning of the Middle Ages was a very turbulent time for Sparta and for Greece as a whole. The emperors in office in Constantinople were unable to effectively defend their subjects in Greece. Slavs arrived in the Peloponnese in the sixth century, and in the following century Sparta was abandoned by its residents. Some of them, seeking a safe haven, moved to the Mani Peninsula (the former Tainaron); others fled further away, even as far as Sicily. When in the early ninth century Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas regained Peloponnese, he repopulated Sparta with settlers from Asia Minor.

Knights from France came to Greece during the Fourth Crusade. The recent Lakedaimonia, now called La Cremonie, became one of the seats of the princes of Achaea. One of them, William of Villehardouin, erected a fortress, known as Mystras (constructed 1246–1249), a few kilometres from the city. In the second half of the thirteenth century, the resurgence of the Byzantine Empire under the Palaeologue dynasty and the continuous fighting caused such a state of chaos in the southern Peloponnese that the inhabitants of Lakedaimonia were forced to move to Mystras to escape the continuous peril. Stone for the construction of houses was quarried from the buildings of ancient Sparta. A powerful impetus for the development of the new centre was provided by the relocation of the seat of the bishopric of Lakedaimonia to Mystras. Soon further churches and monasteries were built there and Mystras grew into an important centre of religious and scholarly life. From 1349, the Byzantine part of the Peloponnese was ruled by the *despotes* of the Morea, who had his seat in Mystras.

Turkish troops entered Mystras in 1460. From 1687, it was in the hands of the Venetians, but after thirty years they were forced to hand it over to the Turks. The destruction of Mystras in 1825 closes a certain phase in the history of Sparta. In 1834, King Otto, the monarch of the reborn Greece, founded the new city of Sparta. It was settled with refugees from Asia Minor and newcomers from various parts of the Greek world, including the nearby Mystras.

In contrast to its Roman predecessor, the twenty-first century Sparta is not pretending to continue the Lycurgian manner of living. It is a small town, ordinary though charming, whose residents earn their living from trade, agriculture, crafts and tourism. Its ancient past is less visible and more lifeless in Sparta than the Byzantine traditions, which are remarkably vigorous. But while few traces of its ancient past cannot be found in Sparta itself, the Spartan legend lives on.

Epilogue The afterlife. "Sparta", or the history of a myth

Ancient Sparta is an important symbol of our civilisation. Over the centuries, an extraordinary legend has grown around it, satisfying the desires and needs of its more or less conscious creators and recipients. The Sparta born of human imagination and desire has long been much more important than the Sparta that once really existed (Kulesza 2017, 542–563).

Even in Antiquity, thus still in its "lifetime", Sparta was already undergoing a *sui generis* idealisation (Ollier, 1933–1943; Tigerstedt 1965–1978). Even in the sixth to fourth centuries BC, when Sparta was still Sparta, whole hosts of the enemies of democracy regarded the Spartan *cosmos* – that is order – as the model of an ideal polity. This often resulted in Sparta being portrayed as anti-Athens. Everything that outraged the oligarchs in democratic Athens found perfect realisation in Sparta. It is also no coincidence that a significant number of Sparta's admirers who actively expressed their regard for it in writing had been born in Athens or at least lived there for a long time. Observing democracy did not necessarily make a person like it (or its diverse variations). Interestingly, Sparta was also one of the few poleis to find recognition in the eyes of ancient philosophers.

Much more numerous, however, were those who "sympathised" with Sparta, or, as the Greeks put it, "Laconised". They manifested their views in a variety of ways, not only by being actively or passively appreciative of the Laconians, but even by adopting, selectively of course, some attributes of "Spartannes"; they could, for instance, dress or attempt to behave like Spartans. In the third century BC the enemies of Sparta expelled from Corinth "not only those whom they knew for certain to be Lacedaemonians, but also all those they suspected to be such from the cut of their hair, or because of their shoes, their clothes or even their names" (Paus. 7.14.2).

According to Aulus Gellius, writing in the second century AD, the famous Cato the Elder in his *Origines* compared the valour of Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans to that displayed by Caedicius and his four hundred men during the First Punic War:

> The Laconian Leonidas, who performed a like exploit at Thermopylae, because of his valour won unexampled glory and gratitude from all Greece, and was honoured with memorials of the highest distinction; they showed their appreciation of that deed of his by pictures, statues and honorary inscriptions, in the histories, and in other ways; but the tribune of the soldiers, who had done the same thing, and saved an army, gained small glory for his deeds. (Aul. Gell. *Noctes Atticae* 3.7, trans. Rolfe, 1961).

Unfortunately, none of those presumably numerous *signae*, *statuae*, *elogiae* or *historiae* have survived to our times. In ancient texts, remarks and references

pertaining to Thermopylae are numerous, but very general. We cannot help but get the impression that the authors were referring to facts that were widely known.

Describing the events at Pylos, Thucydides writes that the Spartans found themselves in the same situation as at Thermopylae, if less consequential events may be compared with great ones (Thuk. 4.38). The Spartans themselves do not speak in their own voices, while Athenian authors such as Isocrates, Lysias or Lycurgus express Athenian patriotism or pan-Hellenic sentiment, and therefore always speak of Sparta in a somewhat detached manner (Tigerstedt 1965, 179–206). The one who gave the legend of Sparta (and, by extension, the legend of Thermopylae) its ultimate form was Plutarch, who supplemented Herodotus's narrative with new elements, including the motif of Leonidas's defiant *molon labe* as the answer to the Xerxes's demand that the Spartans surrender arms. Only from this point onward did Leonidas become the superhuman hero who was not afraid of death and who sacrificed his life for the freedom of Greece (Tigerstedt 1965, 20). Roman authors such as Cato found local analogies to this story in, for example, the Fabii during the battle of the Cremera, and wove it into more universal references – in the *Palatine Anthology*, in the *Suasoriae* by Seneca the Elder, and in works by other authors (Rawson 1969, 131). In the early modern period, the Thermopylean narrative was based primarily on Plutarch's account (Clough 2004, 364), given in the *De malignitate Herodoti* (*Mor.* 864f–867d) and in the *Apophthegmata* (*Mor.* 225a–e) which included and supplemented the earlier tradition.

The "imaginary Sparta" emerged still in the Classical period, with the help of the admirers of the true Sparta. Spartans living in the Hellenistic and Roman periods made a great contribution to its development. They could not impress the Romans with supreme achievements in poetry, sculpture or philosophy, like the Athenians, with magnificent buildings and works of art. Their asset lay in the bygone times; it was the monumental image of stern and valiant Spartans as personified by Leonidas, men cultivating unusual customs long forgotten elsewhere (Kennel 1995; 2018, 643–662). This image, in which the history of historical Sparta and the "Sparta" born from imagination merged in a completely impossible ways, was handed down to us by Plutarch and Pausanias, writing in second century AD. Not only generations of history lovers, but also generations of scholars who studied the ancient past, came to believe this image. For about half a century now, science has been recovering the knowledge of Sparta as it really was, dragging it from under the weight fairy tales and fantastic stories that make us question the intelligence of both those who passed them on and those who listened to them. This process is all the more difficult because first the "imaginary Sparta" and then its fairy tale form have over the centuries almost completely eclipsed the historical Sparta.

The "imaginary Sparta" in later tradition

Thanks to the efforts of Christian writers, the European Middle Ages preserved the knowledge about Sparta, although, admittedly, in a residual form (Rawson 1969).

The attitude of pagan Spartans, giving their lives for a false reward (i.e. fame), was of course condemned, but the aspects that chimed with the Christian worldview were appreciated. As early as in the second/third century, Tertullian compared the famous Spartan "test of endurance" (*karterias agon*), during which young men were flogged in the temple of Artemis Orthia, with Christian martyrdom. Clement of Alexandria, writing in the second/third century, appreciated the austerity of Spartan customs, the Spartans' endurance in the face of physical hardships and their disdain of luxury. Origen, also in the second/third century, cited the example of Leonidas, who willingly renounced his life, as helpful in understanding the sacrifice of Christ. In the thirteenth century, St Thomas Aquinas cited Sparta as an example of a "mixed government".

From the onset of the Renaissance, admiration for Sparta was steadily growing. The focus was on Spartan education, the simple food and clothing, the respect for elders. Over time, Sparta attracted more and more interest from thinkers. Machiavelli pointed to the obedience to the laws shown by the Spartan kings. Discussing control over state power, Calvin cited the ephors and kings in Sparta as models. Sparta as an "ideal" political system was referred to by Thomas More and Jean Bodin.

The literary career of Sparta is a separate matter. Shakespeare's associations with Sparta are rather meagre, mainly concerning dogs and hunting, but his audience was also reminded of the Spartan mother and the allegedly Spartan motto of "with the shield or upon it". A Spartan woman also appeared in a role which the ancients would have found alien: as a lover of hunting; for this, the image of the valiant Spartan woman, which was unknown in Antiquity, the goddess of hunting Artemis and the Amazon was merged into one. Spartans appeared as prototypes of the stoics, indifferent to worldly temptations. In the seventeenth century, Racine, Corneille and Dryden made Spartans their titular heroes.

In the eighteenth century, philosophers like Montesquieu and Rousseau continued to draw on the Spartan theme, but beyond theoretical considerations, Sparta ineradicably entered the service of politics, both as a positive and as a negative hero. In his poem *Leonidas*, Richard Glover censured the titular hero for choosing death for his homeland instead of living for it, but at the same time made him a model ruler. According to Voltaire, Frederick the Great was transforming the militaristic Prussia of Frederick William from the gloomy Sparta into the Athens of flourishing culture. On the other hand, the Spartan Lycurgus was cited as a parallel to the enlightened monarchs Frederick the Great and Catherine II.

The French Revolution brought about a great fashion for Antiquity; one French scholar actually termed it an *anticomanie* (Mossé 1989, cf. also Parker 1937). The interest in Sparta contributed to it to some extent. Busts of Solon and Lycurgus were placed in the meeting hall of the Convention; Marat, Saint-Just and Robespierre were seen as the French Lycuruses. To Robespierre and Saint-Just, the noble ideal of Spartan austerity was to be a model for the French nation, whereas the Girondists perceived Sparta as the anti-ideal. When "superstitious" and "royalist" town names were being erased from the map of France, the inhabitants of

Saint-Marcellin in Isere renamed theirs Thermopyles and Saint-Eusebe in Saone-et-Loire became Sparte. The antique sympathies became evident even in fashion. The French Revolution itself, however, was more "Roman" than "Greek": in the literature of the era, Athens was mentioned 188 times, Sparta – 105 times and Rome no less than 1149 times. While Rome provided models of republican virtue, Greece provided models of patriotic heroism: Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, Plataeae. In the nineteenth century, Thermopylae and Leonidas remained a constant source of inspiration to French authors. The famous painting *Leonidas in Thermopylae* (1800–1814) by Jacques-Louis David is the quintessence of the past and future; history presented in the images of Sparta, in a sense.

The above might suggest that France had a particular love for Sparta, but in reality, Rome was much more popular there; if Greece was mentioned, it would be Athens and democracy above all. Sparta was venerated in Germany the most (Christ 1986, 1–72). But this was not always the case. While noting the Germans' special attachment to ancient Greece, it is worth remembering that initially, again, not Sparta but Athens was the object of admiration. This pro-Athenian bias did not last long, however; about half a century, from Johann Joachim Winckelmann in the mid-eighteenth century (according to whom the Athenian liberal, democratic system was responsible for the unparalleled quality of Athenian art) to Wilhelm von Humboldt in the early nineteenth century. Over time, however, current trends, particularly those related to the politics and ambitions of Prussia, meant that in Germany, unlike in all other countries, the adoration of Greek antiquity shifted from Athens to Sparta and resulted, among others, in the praise of the Doric race, epitomised by the Spartan law and order. Finally, in the early twentieth century, admiration for classical Athenian democracy prevailed in England and France, while Germany opted for the Doric Sparta and the "Balkan Prussia", that is, the Macedonia of Philip II. In general, the perception of "Sparta" in Germany, as elsewhere, focused on the "Spartan" values that were considered useful at the time. For obvious reasons, valour and the willingness to lay one's life for the fatherland were in the foreground.

The connotations of Sparta are positive almost everywhere and almost always. Most of those who refer to the "Laconian" symbolism play the role of Spartans. Poles are not an exception. All the more unusual is the contribution of the Nobel Prize laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz, who in his short story *Z dawnych dziejów* [From ancient history] (1912, 1915) presented the history of the Messenians who in the seventh century BC fled from the Spartan occupation and enslavement as an example to be followed by Polish émigrés: in the story, as Messenia regains its freedom after the Battle of Leuctra in the 370s, their descendants are returning to the reborn homeland.

"Sparta" in film

Sparta, Thermopylae and Leonidas are now a part of mass culture, mostly due to their presence in cinematic productions. In speaking of Spartan-themed films,

Rudolph Maté's *The 300 Spartans* (1962) and Zack Snyder's *300* (2007) are impossible to overlook. But there are also others: David Mamet's political thriller *Spartan* (2004), Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer's parody *Meet my Spartans* (2008) or Noam Murro's *300: Rise of an Empire* (2014) to name but a few (for other "Spartan" films in cinema and television, cf. Makólski-Świercz 2020). In *The 300 Spartans* we see outstanding actors, but also an attempt to render various historical details. Jon Solomon (2002, 28) rightly observed: "Maté created one of the more exciting and authentic ancient battles ever put on film", that is, exactly what is missing in the film *300*. Produced at the height of the Cold War, *The 300 Spartans* omits inconvenient elements: there are no helots, for instance, or the *krypteia*, or the *xenelasia* (Clough 2004, 363–384; Levine 2007, 383–403; Murray 2009b, 28–30).

The two main "Spartan" films, *The 300 Spartans* and *300*, are strongly rooted in the universe of their audiences and creators. The *300* focuses on the clash of civilisations. Another "Spartan" film, Ted Post's *Go Tell the Spartans* (1978) starring Burt Lancaster, tells of the Vietnam War; it is set in the year 1964. In a Vietnamese village there is a cemetery where three hundred and two Frenchmen fallen in the fighting ten years previously are buried; above its gate is an inscription based on the epitaph by Simonides: *Etranger, dites aux Spartiates que nous demeurons ici par obeissance a leur lois.* Corporal Courcey translates this text to the American lieutenant, who comments: "Brave men, Corporal. They fought the battle and lost. But we won't lose. We're Americans" (Winkler 2009, 189–190).

In those films: *The 300 Spartans*, *Go Tell the Spartans* and *300*, under the guise of Thermopylae we recognise, in turn, the problems of the Cold War, the problems of the Vietnam War, and the conflicts current in the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century. The phenomenon itself is not new. Great events have always been used as symbols and those symbols were imbued with new meanings that suited the creators of the messages, and this true also of Spartan legend in its broadest sense. What is certainly new about the phenomenon is its scale.

"Sparta" in service

"The Italian humanists, the Spanish Jesuits, the French Calvinists, the English Puritans, the French revolutionaries, the German Romantics, the English ascetics, the French nationalists and the German Nazis all referred to the Spartan example, as interpreted by themselves and to their own ends" (Tigerstedt 1965, 17–18; cf. Rawson 1969, 131), and in each case, the legend was transformed into a pure projection of the present time onto ancient Sparta. Consequently, Sparta as seen during the French Revolution was very different from, for instance, Sparta as seen in the Third Reich (Tigerstedt 1965, 17–18; cf. Hodkinson, Macgregor Morris 2012).

From the very beginning, references to the Thermopylae motif were found in numerous works of literature, some of which were very influential and thus also very important. Their catalogue is long indeed; suffice it to mention *Leonidas* by Richard Glover (1737) and later, in connection with the philhellenic sentiment (Macgregor Morris 2000) in the period of the Greek War of Independence

(1821–1829), William Haygarth in 1814, the great philhellene Lord Byron (cf. *Don Juan*, Canto III, stanza 86.7), or the song essential to the Irish independence movement: *A Nation Once Again* by Thomas Davis (1814–1845), which brings up the motif of the "three hundred men", the Spartans. The poem *Grób Agamemnona* [The Tomb of Agamemnon] written by the Polish Romantic Juliusz Słowacki in 1839 deserves a separate mention, as do *Thermopylae* by Constantine Cavafy (1903), *Termopile polskie* [The Polish Thermopylae] by Tadeusz Różewicz (1947), or *Hot Gates* by William Golding (1965).

The career of the "imaginary Sparta" in German was particularly outstanding, as Helene Roche observed: "This country, in various forms – Prussia, then Germany, and later, for a short time, 'Greater Germany' – embarked upon what one might almost call a love affair with the Spartan ideal, which, under the influence of National Socialist racial ideology, metamorphosed into a passionate desire on the part of some contemporary Germans to claim the ancient Spartans as their true ancestors" (Roche 2013, 1). This approach has a long tradition. It was already J.C.F. Manso, a Prussian patriot, *Breslauer Gymnasialprofessor* and author of the first scholarly synthesis relating to Sparta (1800–1805), who observed that Sparta may serve the Prussian state as the "lehrendes und warnendes Beispiel" (cf. Christ 1986, 11). Then, in 1924, Ulrich Wilcken (1862–1944) wrote: "Mögen unserer Jugend Leonidas und seine Getreuen immer ein Vorbild und ein Gegestand der Verehrung bleiben!" (cf. Christ, *Spartaforschung*, 61 n. 213). In the academic circles of the Weimar Republic, Sparta was considered the epitome of the Doric valour (cf. e.g. Krüger 2009). The figure of Leonidas had a special place in the later Fascist education: "At Napolas, National Socialist racial ideology was used to portray Sparta as an ancient precursor of the Third Reich" (Roche 2013, 2).

In the Third Reich, the heroic defence of Stalingrad by the Russians was presented as the "German Thermopylae". On 30 January 1943, Hermann Göring addressed the soldiers in Stalingrad in a radio speech known as the *Thermopylenrede*, reminding them of Leonidas's stand against Xerxes. In that speech, he referred to the Thermopylae epigram, highlighting the Spartans' heroism: "They were 300 men, my comrades. Millennia have passed, and today that battle and that sacrifice there hold good as heroic, as the example of the highest warriorhood. And once again in the history of our own days will it be said: When you reach Germany, tell them that you have seen us fighting at Stalingrad, as the law, the law of the safety of our people, commanded us" (Rebenich 2002, 328).

"Sparta" in politics. The USA and Classical Greece

During the Cold War, comparisons were made in the USA between it and the period preceding the Peloponnesian War. Historical analogies were believed to help to understand the current situation and to formulate forecasts for the further course of events. The Americans represented the "free world" that controlled the air space and the sea. The opposing side was the Soviet Union and China – land-based, anti-democratic powers. However natural this interpretation might make

it to cast the US as Athens and the Soviet Union as Sparta, this did not happen immediately, for various reasons. First of all, in consequence of this allocation of historical costumes, further parallels had to be recognised: the Warsaw Pact as the Peloponnesian League, NATO as the Delian League – and these were no longer be convenient, if only because Sparta's allies enjoyed greater freedom in the Peloponnesian League than members of the Delian League, which in the mid-fifth century BC was transformed into a quasi-empire ruled by the Athenians with a very firm hand.

The various Greek analogies are puzzling not only for their exoticism but also for their depth, especially when the "American" Vietnam is juxtaposed with the Sicilian expedition of the Athenians (415–413 BC), when the Marshall Plan is compared to the peace meeting proposed by Pericles (449 BC), or when the Warsaw Uprising (1944) is shown as parallel to the slaughter perpetrated by the Athenians on the island of Melos (416 BC), observed by Sparta with supreme *désintéressement*, as described by Thucydides in the form of the Melian Dialogue (Hodkinson, 2012, 343–392).

On the other hand, the *Anziehungskraft* of the Spartan legend, or the then-current perception of Sparta composed of the many entirely fictitious themes, was too great to abandon "Sparta" completely. A fitting compromise was offered by James Calvert James F. Calvert in a speech given at the United States Naval Academy in 1970, where he suggested that the best choice would be "to walk the fine line between Athens and Sparta" (Hodkinson 2012).

It is difficult to offer conjectures as to the future of the American edition of Spartan symbolism in politics, but for the time being it seems that the identification (or self-identification) of the US with Athens remains valid. Its fate was to some extent sealed by the highest authorities: on 8 December 2010, Resolution no. 1704 was passed by the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, recognising the Battle of Marathon as one of the most important battles in the history of mankind and honouring the heroic Athenians, the founders of democracy, whose principles the United States has adopted. Thus, conveniently to all concerned, a bridge was created to link the Athenian democracy, Greece, Marathon and the United States of America.

"Sparta" of the twenty-first century?

In today's world, the Spartan myth is changing its meaning, often becoming far more shallow, globalised and transformed according to the spirit of the age. Sparta is most often associated with strength and physical prowess, so its particular popularity in the world of sport is not surprising. Sparta has become the patron image of hundreds of sports clubs. These are usually football clubs (e.g. Sparta Praha, Sparta Rotterdam, Sparta Lviv, Sparta Augustów); but there are also clubs which practise sports completely unknown to Spartans, such as rugby or motorcycle speedway. Sparta, in its various guises: as the "Spartan races" in the USA, the "Warsaw Spartans" in Poland, the "Knights of Sparta" in Louisiana, US,

or chocolates from the Belgian company Leonidas – is constantly expanding its range. The expert on the history of Sparta, Paul Cartledge (2006, 41–49) perceives "Leonidas" or "Spartan" to be "brands", a specific contemporary version "of what is variously called the myth, the legend or the tradition of Sparta", or the Spartan mirage.

Sometimes this "Spartan mirage" reveals itself most unexpectedly; and when it does, it often shows us a hitherto unknown face, thereby testifying to its ubiquity in the global culture. In 2012, during the European Football Championships, before the match between the German team (the favourite) and Greece, the famous Argentinian footballer Diego Maradona said at a press conference: "If three hundred Greeks were able to hold off ten thousand Persians at Thermopylae, then eleven Greeks certainly will have a chance against eleven Germans" (de Spuza, in: Matthew, Trundle 2013, ix). In the same championship, when the national anthem sounded before the Poland–Russia football match played in Warsaw as part of Euro 2012, Russian fans displayed a huge banner featuring a portrait of Dmitry Pozharsky, the leader of the popular uprising that drove the Polish-Lithuanian army out of Russia in the early seventeenth century, and the inscription "This is Russia". What does this have to do with Sparta? Nothing. At least with ancient Sparta. But it has a lot to do with Sparta *à la* Hollywood. After all, "This is Russia" is a creative adaptation of the "highly Spartan" words of Leonidas from Zack Snyder's *300*: when a Persian envoy, fearing for his life, reacts to threats incompatible with the norms of the civilised world by saying: "This is madness", the Spartan superman, obedient to the command he reads in the eyes of his wife, sends the envoy into the depths of a well with an impressive kick – thus testifying to the famous Spartan hospitality (*xenelasia*) and confirming the envoy's fear that he had come to the world of madness – but first, he answers: "This is Sparta."

Sparta of the scholars, and more

After the Second World War, Sparta was relegated to the scholarly purgatory. It was pronounced to have been a totalitarian state bent on raising the ideal Herrenvolk and inculcating unquestioning obedience in its soldiers. The reasons are easy to guess. Describing the Spartan education in his *History of Education in Antiquity*, Henri Irenne Marrou says: "The whole purpose of Spartan education was to build up character according to a clearly defined ideal – an ideal that has reappeared in all its savage and inhuman grandeur in the totalitarian states of twentieth-century Europe" (trans. G. Lamb, New York 1964, 45). It was not the first time – and it will not be the last, when the Spartans inadvertently found themselves on the wrong side, to a certain extent also because, until recently, the scholarly vision of their history coincided with the fictitious image found in the extant sources. Since at least the publication of François Ollier's book, scholars have been aware of the existence of a Spartan mirage that leads the public astray – but until very recently, they themselves have been doing very little to cast off its invisible shackles. Only since the last decades of the twentieth century there has been a complete change

in the traditional perception of an "archaic", austere Sparta that paid homage only to military values. As is often the case is such circumstances, in the general fervour to question everything, some overly radical theses have been put forward, which will not stand the test of time. In general, however, the new findings relegate most elements of Sparta's ancient history to the history of the "imaginary Sparta". As Nigel Kennel aptly observed: "In no other area of ancient Greek history is there a greater gulf [as] between the common conception of Sparta and what specialists believe and dispute" (Kennel 2010, 2). And it seems that with time, this gulf between the historical Sparta and the imaginary "Sparta" will be yawning wider and wider; not because of the hermetic nature of Spartan studies (although Spartans themselves would probably be astonished at their subtlety), but because the world needs, and always will need, "Sparta", and since the world is changing, this "Sparta" must change as well. Fortunately, not only both Spartas have a future, but also both are extremely interesting.

Sparta. A Bibliography

Ryszard Kulesza, Sebastian Rajewicz

The bibliography consists of two parts. Part one encompasses texts which focus on the historical Sparta. It includes publications referring not only to history, but also to archaeology, classical philology and art history pertaining to various periods of Antiquity. Most of them are devoted exclusively to Sparta, but we decided not to refrain from including books and articles which, while discussing other issues, provide a researcher or enthusiast of Sparta with essential information. Part two includes texts which focus on the reception of Sparta. We have set ourselves a task which was ambitious and yet to some extent doomed to fail: to gather the entire body of pertinent sources in one place. We attempted to reach texts written in other languages than the official languages of the Congress, and in many cases we succeeded, but our language competences made the task difficult. In the case of texts written in the Japanese and Korean languages, we decided to give the title in English, in each case making a note of the original language. In other cases, the English translation of the title is given in square brackets following the original title.

For obvious reasons this bibliography, although large, is by no means complete. Neither is it evenly distributed. We have, however, attempted to include in it texts published in various languages and countries. We hope that, being a confirmation of an enduring interest in Sparta worldwide, our bibliography will provide a basis for a subsequent, more complete bibliography, which might perhaps be compiled in cooperation with scholars from various centres of learning.

In the book, abbreviated references including the author's surname, the year of publication and the relevant page or pages (e.g. Cartledge 1987, 157) are used instead of traditional footnotes; hence we refer the Reader to the appropriate entry in the bibliography (which, of course, does not mean that all of them are quoted).

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Appendix 1: The list of Spartan kings

Aristodamus

THE AGIADS		THE EURIPONTIDS

1000 BC — Eurysthenes — twins — Proclus — 1000 BC

THE AGIADS:

- Eurysthenes (1000 BC)
- AGIS I
- ECHESTRATUS
- LABOTAS (900 BC)
- DORISSOS
- AGESILAUS I (800 BC)
- ARCHELAUS
- TELECLUS
- ALCAMENES
- POLYDORUS (700 BC)
- EURYCRATES
- ANAXANDRUS
- EURYCRATIDAS
- LEON (600 BC)
- ANAXANDRIDAS II

CLEOMENES I (c. 525–490) — LEONIDAS I (490–480) — Cleombrotus

LEONIDAS I → PLEISTARCHUS (480–458)

Cleombrotus → Pausanias → PLEISTOANAX (458–408) → PAUSANIAS (408–4395)

PAUSANIAS → AGESIPOLIS I (395–380) — CLEOMBROTUS I (380–371)

AGESIPOLIS I → AGESIPOLIS II (371–370)

CLEOMBROTUS I → CLEOMENES II (370–309)

AGESIPOLIS II → Acrotatus → AREUS I (309–265) → ACROTATUS (265– c. 260) → AREUS II (c. 260–256)

CLEOMENES II → Cleonymus → LEONIDAS II (c. 256–236) → CLEOMENES III (236–222)

THE EURIPONTIDS:

- Proclus (1000 BC)
- Eurythion "Prytanis"
- Polydectes "Eunomus" (900 BC)
- CHARILLUS (800 BC)
- NICANDRUS
- THEOPOMPUS
- ANAXANDRIDAS I
- ARCHIDAMUS I
- ANAXILAUS
- LATYCHIDES I
- HIPPOCRATIDAS

AGASICLES — Agesilaus

AGASICLES → ARISTON → DEMARATUS (519? –491)

Agesilaus → Menares → LEUTYCHIDES II (491–469) → Zeuxidamus → ARCHIDAMUS II (469–427)

ARCHIDAMUS II → AGIS II (427–400) — AGESILAUS II (400–360)

AGESILAUS II → ARCHIDAMUS III (360–338)

ARCHIDAMUS III → AGIS III (338–330) — EUDAMIDAS I (330– c. 300)

EUDAMIDAS I → ARCHIDAMUS IV (c. 300– ?) → EUDAMIDAS II (? –244)

EUDAMIDAS II → AGIS IV (244–241) — ARCHIDAMUS V (c. 228–227)

AGIS IV → EUDAMIDAS III (241– c. 228)

ARCHIDAMUS V → EUCLEIDES
an Agiad – brother to
Cleomenes III
(227–222)

NABIS
(207–192)

Appendix 2: The list of Spartan ephors

(eph.?) before the name indicates the eponymous ephorate is uncertain; names after the date belong to known ephors of the college in the given year who did not hold the office of the eponymous ephor.
(after Richer 1998, 525–533)

the eponymous ephor	year BC	
(eph.?) Elatus (?)	754/753 (?)	
(eph.?) Asteropus (?)	c. 610–600 (?)	
(eph.?) Chilon (?)	556/555	
	between 491 and 486	Demaratus
	450–401	Ecprepes
	447/446	Cleandrides
Daiochus	before 432/431 or after 404/403	
(eph.?) Sthenelaides	433/432	
Ainesias	432/431	
Brasides	431/430	
Isanor	430/429	
Sostratides	429/428	
Exarchus	428/427	
Hagesistratus	427/426	
Angenides	426/425	
Onomacles	425/424	
Zeuxippus	424/423	
Pityas	423/422	
Pleistolas	422/421	Damagetus, Chionis, Metagenes, Acanthus
Cleinomachus	421/420	Cleobulus, Xenares
Ilarchus	420/419	
Leon	419/418	
Charilias	418/417	
Patesiades	417/416	
Cleosthenes	416/415	
Lycarius	415/414	
Eperatus	414/413	
Onomantios	413/412	
Alexippides	412/411	
Misgolaides	411/410	
Isias	410/409	
Aracus	409/408	
Euarchippus	408/407	
Pantacles	407/406	
Pityas	406/405	
Archytas	405/404	Sciraphides, Phlogides
Eudicus	404/403	Naucleides
Thyionides	between 403/402 and 399/398	Aristogenides, Archistas, Sologas, Fedilas

the eponymous ephor	year BC	
Aristeus	between 403/402 and 395	
Echemenes	between 402/401 and 395	
Euippus	between 401/400 and 395	
	c. 400–350	Epitadeus
	395/394	Diphrides
(?) Lacratides	between 393 and 361	
Aristeus	c. 380	
Eudamides	c. 375–370	
	372/371	Prothoos (?)
	370/369	Antalcides
Hagehistratus	c. 365	
Autocratides	c. 365	
Eumelides	c. 350–340	
	338/337	Antiochus
	331/330 or 330/329	Eteocles
	fourth – third c. BC	Nicosthenides, Andrias
	243/242	Lysander, Mandrocleides
	242/241	Agesilas
	241/240	Amphares, Damochares, Arcesilas
	227/226	Agylaius
		abolition of the ephorate by Cleomenes III
	222	restitution of the ephorate by Antigonus Doson

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