HERODOTUS, SPARTA & AUSTERITY

Edited by

Anton Powell

and

Stephen Hodkinson

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Contributors

Andrew J. Bayliss, Nancy Bouidghaghen, Philip Davies, Thomas J. Figueira, Florentia Fragkopoulou, Stephen Hodkinson, Nigel Kennell, James Lloyd, Ellen Millender, Anton Powell†, Maria Pretzler

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The Classical Press of Wales, an independent venture, was founded in 1993, initially to support the work of classicists and ancient historians in Wales and their collaborators from further afield. It now publishes work initiated by scholars internationally, and welcomes contributions from all parts of the world.

The symbol of the Press is the Red Kite. This bird, once widespread in Britain, was reduced by 1905 to some five individuals confined to a small area known as 'The Desert of Wales' – the upper Tywi valley. Geneticists report that the stock was saved from terminal inbreeding by the arrival of one stray female bird from Germany. After much careful protection, the Red Kite now thrives – in Wales and beyond

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen Hodkinson

This volume has its origins in the International Sparta Seminar panel organised by Anton Powell and myself at the Celtic Conference in Classics at Montreal in July 2017, held jointly at McGill University and the Université de Montréal. The panel bore a double title, 'Origins of Spartan "Austerity": When and Why? / Herodotos and Sparta'; hence the title of the current volume, *Herodotus, Sparta and Austerity*. Before I discuss the papers in this volume and the purpose of the panel from which they mostly derive, it is appropriate to set both panel and volume within their wider context. That context is the International Sparta Seminar created by Anton Powell and co-organised for many years by Anton and myself before his untimely death in June 2020. Since this volume will be the last of eleven ISS publications edited or, more frequently, co-edited by Anton – six of them with myself – it seems fitting to start with a few words about the ISS and especially about Anton's contribution.

Anton Powell and the ISS

The origins of the ISS go back to 1986, when Anton organised a series of seminars on Sparta under the auspices of the London Classical Society, held at the Institute of Classical Studies, from which he subsequently produced the edited volume, *Classical Sparta: Techniques behind her Success* (1989). The invited speakers were all British, with the exception of Ephraim 'Freddie' David (Haifa). It was through Anton's invitation to participate in the series that I first encountered him. We had both recently moved our family homes to Nottingham, and our physical proximity in the late 1980s fostered a personal friendship which underpinned our academic collaboration. We co-organised our first joint 'colloquium' in 1991 at the University of Wales, Cardiff, where Anton was then lecturing. Our international reach began to expand, with papers by colleagues from the USA and New Zealand. The theme of the resulting co-edited volume, *The Shadow of Sparta* (1994) – 'effects of images of Sparta, whether realistic or not, upon the thought of non-Spartan Greeks' (p. vii) – was one to which Anton would later return.

Our second joint conference took place in 1997, at the Baskerville Hotel, Hay-on-Wye in Wales. It gave rise to *Sparta: New Perspectives* (1999). The conference marked a step change in our international ambitions. It embraced colleagues from four different continents and twelve countries;

our Introduction to the published volume described it as the 'first international conference on Spartan history' (p. ix). The intention was to recognise 'the notable resurgence of Spartan studies which has taken place around the world during the last generation': the fact that historical work on Sparta was now being conducted by a truly world-wide academic community, including by many early career colleagues and postgraduate students whose work we were especially keen to encourage. Hence we deliberately abstained from setting a fixed agenda. As we commented (p. xi),

> Since the purpose of the conference was internationalist in inspiration – to enable colleagues from different academic backgrounds to discuss and learn from each other's work – we judged it inappropriate to impose a common theme, which would inevitably … constrain the independent input of other colleagues, especially the fresh insights of younger scholars. Our only stipulation was that contributions should attempt to develop new perspectives on Spartan history which would point the way towards future research.

Thus far the International Sparta Seminar – though not yet 'branded' by that name, at least officially in our publications – had met only episodically at considerable intervals of time, through standalone meetings whose organisation, performed entirely by Anton, was time-consuming. That changed in the 2000s owing to another of Anton's initiatives, the creation of the Celtic Conferences in Classics (CCC). Hosted by a changing roster of different universities with 'Celtic' connections and held biennially in their early years, the conferences included multiple different panels within a single meeting. The sharing of organisational responsibilities with colleagues from the host universities freed Anton to hold the ISS more regularly. The Seminar met five times from 2000 to 2008 at CCCs in Maynooth, Glasgow, Rennes, Lampeter and Cork. Each meeting resulted in an edited volume: *Sparta: Beyond the Mirage* (2002), *Spartan Society* (2004), *Sparta and War* (2006), *Sparta: The Body Politic* (2010), and *Thucydides and Sparta* (2021). All were co-edited by Anton himself – the last one was published posthumously – except for *Spartan Society*, for which Tom Figueira generously acted as (to borrow his own phrase) 'respite caregiver'. In addition to these panels within the CCC, Anton also collaborated with colleagues at Lyon (Nicolas Richer) in 2006 and Regensburg (Vassiliki Pothou) in 2009 to hold ISS-linked conferences, subsequently published as *Xenophon and Sparta* (2020) and *Das Antike Sparta* (2017).[1] As is evident from their titles, the ISS in these years repeated its previous mixture of themed and theme-less meetings.[2]

During the early 2010s, owing to Anton's increasing pressures of work and my own health issues, ISS meetings took a temporary break.

A notable exception was a 2013 Cambridge conference, co-organised with Paul Cartledge, *The Greek Superpower: Sparta in the Self-Definitions of Athenians* (published in 2018), which marked a return to Anton's *Shadow of Sparta* interests.

In conjunction, Anton began to re-develop the idea of a short series, initiated at meetings in the late 2000s, which he termed 'Source + Sparta'. The series' primary purpose, as explained in a 'Publisher's Note' prefacing the entire series (*Xenophon and Sparta*, p. vii), was to examine 'our main sources of information about the city which was classical Greece's greatest military power – and most potent source of moral influence'. Papers from the 2006 Lyon conference were updated for the 2020 *Xenophon and Sparta* volume; those from the 2008 Cork meeting were developed and augmented by new papers for the 2021 *Thucydides and Sparta* publication. A Nottingham colloquium in 2015, organised by Philip Davies and Judith Mossman, was recruited as the basis for an edited volume on *Sparta in Plutarch's Lives* (2023). The present volume, deriving from the panel at the 2017 CCC, forms the fourth in the series. Finally, a few months before his unexpected death, Anton asked Adrien Delahaye and myself to organise a panel on 'Archaeology and Sparta' at the CCC in Lyon planned for July 2020. Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, the panel eventually took place in 2022; a two-volume publication, the last in the 'Source + Sparta' series, is currently in progress. Behind the primary Sparta-focused purpose of the series, Anton also intended a deeper purpose, outlined in the aforementioned 'Publisher's Note': a purpose grounded in a commitment 'to the principle of combining historical and literary analysis: to resist centrifugal and hermetic tendencies of modern research, and to promote a re-integration of Classics as a discipline'.

After this recitation of the history of the International Sparta Seminar, it is worth stepping back to remind ourselves of the overall scope of Anton's achievement in founding and leading the ISS: currently thirteen (ultimately, fifteen) collected volumes, the vast majority published by the press he himself founded, the Classical Press of Wales. When fully published, these volumes will contain some 159 main articles in total (plus several substantial 'Introductions') authored by 95 different colleagues. All this has been the product of Anton's wide vision for Spartan studies: a vision of an international community of scholars meeting face to face and exchanging ideas freely, both for their own personal academic and intellectual development and for the common good of the field and the wider discipline.

Anton's vision was founded on several interconnected principles. First, the ISS should be an international community welcoming colleagues from diverse countries. The above volumes include articles from colleagues

based in 17 different countries spread across five continents. Secondly, the Seminar should not be an closed group but should actively welcome new colleagues to our meetings, especially younger scholars. The 95 different authors mentioned above speaks volumes for the Seminar's openness to newcomers. By my reckoning, some 40% of those 95 authors were early career scholars or postgraduate students when their first article was published in an ISS volume. Several of these younger colleagues are now established figures in Spartan studies. Thirdly, recognising that the study of Sparta has traditionally attracted mainly male scholars, the Seminar should seek to promote the work of female colleagues. Here, the ISS has achieved partial success in swimming against the tide of powerful cultural forces in which Sparta is increasingly portrayed as a militaristic society primarily of interest to males. Women form some 32% of contributors to its volumes. Fourthly, the Seminar should aim to include colleagues who are not primarily Sparta specialists, in order to promote dialogue with and learn from colleagues with other areas of expertise. Such colleagues account for some 44 % of authors who have published in ISS volumes.

Fifthly, and linked to the previous principle, the Seminar should aim to promote the integration of different areas of our field. Although the ISS's primary subject was Spartan history and society (in the Archaic to Hellenistic periods), from its early days there has been a strong interest in its interrelationship with Greek literature and philosophy. The 1994 *Shadow of Sparta* volume, for example, included papers on Attic tragedy and comedy, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, Isokrates, Plato and Aristotle. As already observed, the principle of combining historical and literary analysis was strongly emphasised in the 'Publisher's Note' to the 'Source + Sparta' series. This attention to Sparta's receptions in antiquity has also been extended to its receptions in modern times through several articles in ISS volumes. Archaeological approaches to Sparta have yet to feature as such, although several historical articles have employed material and epigraphic evidence; but this gap, as Anton had long planned, will be filled by the forthcoming *Archaeology and Sparta* volumes.

The final principle, which has underpinned all the others, was that the spirit of the ISS should be collegial not competitive: that we should conduct our academic disagreements openly and vigorously, but in a constructive atmosphere of mutual respect; that there should be no pre-set agenda for or against one particular interpretation of Sparta; that all participants should feel free to express differences of opinion without fear of criticism or ridicule. This principle has, I hope, been evident in the different interpretations of Spartan society expounded, not least by frequent participants in the Seminar, in its published volumes over the last 30-plus years. It has certainly been evident in the convivial socialising

for which the ISS has become well known. This collegial atmosphere has been key to its success.

A marker of this success is the decision of colleagues to continue the Seminar beyond its founder's death. At the CCC in Coimbra in 2023 over 30 colleagues gathered for a panel titled *Following Anton Powell*, organised by Ellen Millender, Paula Debnar and Thomas Figueira. At the meeting it was unanimously agreed to continue to hold meetings of the ISS every three years, rotating the organisation of meetings and editing of their subsequent volumes around the international community of scholars that Anton did so much to create since those early beginnings in 1986.

I should like to end this section with a brief personal tribute to Anton and his achievement. He was my close friend for over 30 years. He was a truly supportive collaborator, always providing constructive and encouraging editorial comments on my work, even when he heartily disagreed. He modestly insisted that my role was essential to the Seminar's success, although from planning a meeting through to its ultimate publication he himself usually did by far the lion's share of the work. It is therefore as the smallest of repayments for many past favours that on this occasion it falls me to bring to completion this volume which originated from Anton's ideas for the Sparta panel at the 2017 Montreal CCC. His name justly remains in the role of the volume's primary co-editor.

The present volume

As already mentioned, the title and structure of the present volume, *Herodotus, Sparta and Austerity*, originate from the double title of the panel at Montreal: 'Origins of Spartan "Austerity": When and Why? / Herodotos and Sparta'. This double title reflected Anton's desire to combine two of his particular academic interests. One was the 'Source + Sparta' series outlined above. The other was his long-standing interest in Sparta's transition from the society of conspicuous and luxurious living depicted on sixth-century Lakonian painted pottery to the more austere society portrayed by fifth- and fourth-century writers. This interest is traceable back to his 1998 article, 'Sixth-century Lakonian Vase-Painting: Continuities and discontinuities with the "Lykourgan" ethos'.[3] In Anton's opinion, Herodotus, as our earliest surviving historical source and as a commentator writing in the later fifth century about Sparta in the late sixth and early fifth centuries, provided a body of evidence which might potentially bear on that important transformation.

The volume accordingly begins, in Part I, with this 'General Perspective' through Anton's own contribution, 'Herodotus, the Spartan Revolution and the Logic of Extremes', deriving from the written draft of the oral paper that he gave in Montreal. Comparing Sparta's transition

from luxury to austerity to a similar moral transformation from Georgian to Victorian culture in nineteenth-century England, Powell examines the rhetorical presentations involved in the transmission, or non-transmission, of such scandalous pasts to future generations. He draws attention to the exceptional number of instances in which Herodotus asserts that only on that single occasion had a particular event occurred at Sparta. He ascribes this phenomenon to the unusually homogeneous, sweeping and dogmatic accounts of their city's history presented by Spartan informants, not only to Herodotus but also to Thucydides. These accounts were frequently defensive in character, designed to exaggerate the antiquity and stability of Sparta's socio-political arrangements and to portray general weaknesses or backsliding as singular lapses whose significance could typically be dismissed as failings peculiar to particular rogue individuals.

The articles in Part II, 'Herodotus and Sparta', examine various aspects of the historian's account. In Chapter 2, Andrew Bayliss examines Herodotus' portrayal of Spartan obedience, particularly at the battle of Thermopylai, exploring how Herodotus presents the Spartans as epitomes of obedience to *nomos*. He also discusses the broader implications of Spartan obedience within Herodotus' work, noting that, while the Spartans are often shown as obedient, elsewhere in the *Histories* there are numerous instances of disobedience and military strategic retreats. Some scholars have viewed Herodotus' account as ironic or, influenced by Athenian perspectives, as portraying Spartan obedience as a negative stereotype. In contrast, Bayliss argues that Herodotus' portrayal is more nuanced and that the Spartans themselves viewed obedience as a positive quality which formed an essential component of both their freedom and their military success. Herodotus' depiction of Spartan obedience at Thermopylai served to highlight the cultural differences between Greeks and Persians. More fundamentally, it underscored the importance of a recurring theme in Herodotus' work, that of 'looking to the end' of a person's life as the basis for judging whether he, like the 300, had lived and died properly.

In Chapter 3 Nancy Bouidghaghen discusses Herodotus' portrayal of individual Spartans. She argues that, contrary to common perceptions of Spartans as inhabiting a conformist society in which they possessed minimal freedom of action, Herodotus once again presents a more nuanced picture, highlighting their individuality and agency. In a number of anecdotes key Spartan figures (such as Anaxandridas, Ariston, Dorieus and Kleomenes) are represented as acting independently and frequently negotiating with *polis* officials, who show flexibility in adapting the operation of standard norms in the face of exceptional circumstances, whilst also maintaining the image of an unchanging society. She concludes

by suggesting that the moralising spin in Spartan discourse emerged only during the fifth century, reflecting broader changes in Greek societal values.

My own article in Chapter 4 is more historical in character, examining the evidence provided by Herodotus regarding the commonly held view that the political influence of Spartan kings depended on their achievement of military success. I argue that the evidence of Herodotus and other writers demonstrates that a claimant's right to the kingship was based on heredity rather than on military prowess or achievement. Ancient accounts also maintain a clear distinction between a king's significant prerogatives as general on campaign and his limited constitutional powers during peacetime. Although kings could often draw upon extra-constitutional sources of influence to augment their limited formal powers, these sources were mostly non-military in character, grounded particularly in their superior wealth and deployment of patronage. Finally, I argue that Herodotus' account of one of Sparta's most influential kings, Kleomenes I, provides no support for the idea that his influence derived from successful military leadership; or, conversely, regarding his fellow king and rival, Damaratos, that lack of military aggression led to lack of personal influence.

Also in primarily historical vein, Thomas Figueira in Chapter 5 draws on Herodotus' text to discuss the sociopolitical status and identity of the 300 at Thermopylai. He demonstrates that they were not merely the *corps d'élite* known as the *Hippeis*. Herodotus' text suggests that the 300 were specifically chosen by Leonidas, whereas the *Hippeis* were selected through a different procedure outwith a king's control; the requirement that the 300 must have sons (*paides*) also distinguishes them from the *Hippeis*, who were primarily young men. Figueira suggests that Leonidas' selection of men with *paides* may well derive from their dispensability from participation in the important fertility aspect of the concurrent Karneia festival. The Thermopylai expedition was probably Leonidas' own initiative, exploiting personal links of allegiance and fellowship. It is unlikely, however, that he or the 300 approached their expedition as a suicide mission; their willingness to fight to the end was grounded rather in traditional hoplite and civic values which included but did not demand a 'noble death'.

In Chapter 6 Maria Pretzler analyses Herodotus' accounts of the origins of Sparta's Peloponnesian alliance, their military collaborations and conflicts during the late Archaic period, and their collaboration against the Persians in 480/79. She argues that Herodotus' accounts project the political landscape and power structures of his own time onto earlier periods. The foundation story of the alliance was significantly influenced by later Tegean perspectives of themselves as the last bastion

against Spartan aggression and the supposed key to dominance of the whole Peloponnese. The accounts of the alliance's development before the Persian Wars pay considerable attention to Sparta's rivalry with Argos, but much less to its important relationship with Corinth. The two passages which imply that the structures of the alliance took shape in the later sixth century – Kleomenes I's expedition against Athens c. 506 and the subsequent 'league congress' – represent anachronistic echoes of the alliance's more formal operation and structures in the late fifth century. Finally, Herodotus' emphasis upon Sparta's recognition of regional Peloponnesian concerns in his account of the Persian invasion may reflect the post-war period of regional disunity and conflict between Sparta and certain key allies. Overall, Pretzler's chapter casts large shadows of doubt on traditional interpretations of the development of the Peloponnesian League.

In the final paper in Part II (Chapter 7) Philip Davies approaches Herodotus' text from a different angle, discussing the intersection of Herodotus and Sparta within the writings of Plutarch. In the absence of his promised *Life of Leonidas*, the chronological range of Plutarch's Spartan Lives did not overlap with the period covered by Herodotus and hence precluded him from serving as a principal narrative source. Furthermore, in Plutarch's discussions of Sparta and Spartan society, Herodotus appears infrequently. Plutarch's often critical attitude towards him may provide a partial explanation; but considerations of genre were equally, if not more, important. In particular, Plutarch's discussions of Spartan society occur primarily in conversation with philosophical and constitutional authors rather than with historians. Conversely, in those Lives of notable Athenians for which Herodotus is a principal source, Sparta and Spartans appear largely as supporting characters who may be denigrated or diminished in order to aggrandise Plutarch's primary subjects, or to simplify and heighten a complex narrative. In doing so, Plutarch took pains to infuse these characters with what he viewed as typically Spartan traits, drawing substantially on Herodotus, both directly and indirectly, but often intensifying characteristics apparent in Herodotus' portrayal.

The papers in Part III, 'Spartan Austerity (and Herodotus)', explore the complex issue of austerity from a variety of perspectives, drawing on Herodotus' evidence where relevant. In Chapter 8 Nigel Kennell outlines developments in how the issue has been treated in historical scholarship since the first half of the twentieth century. He notes that, although Herodotus never mentions Spartan austerity, his reference to the low status of craftsmen at Sparta (2.167.2) has been over-interpreted as evidence for a ban on Spartiates' engaging in manual craft of any kind and hence as proxy evidence for austerity. Kennell's survey draws attention to competing and changing scholarly approaches to the questions of the

existence, timing and nature of Spartan austerity. Until the 1970s the field was dominated by 'positivist' approaches which took ancient accounts of austerity at face value; since that decade more sceptical 'contextualist' approaches, which consider the historical context of those accounts, have been more common. Archaeological evidence from the early British excavations at Sparta featured prominently, if somewhat simplistically, in historical discussions during the first half of the twentieth century, but fell out of favour in the third quarter of the century. Paul Cartledge's ground-breaking *Sparta and Lakonia* (1979), however, initiated a new phase in which a wider range of material evidence has been increasingly deployed, although much more remains to be done to exploit the wealth of new finds resulting from the increased number of rescue excavations conducted by Greek archaeologists since the 1990s. Some important new insights will become evident in forthcoming work, including in the ISS *Archaeology and Sparta* volumes.

Florentia Fragkopoulou's paper in Chapter 9 trenchantly outlines problems inherent in attempts to identify 'austerity'. Like Kennell, she highlights misinterpretations of Herodotus' comment regarding the low status of craftsmen at Sparta, especially the disjunction between this alleged sign of austerity and Herodotus' overall account, which shows no evidence of a distinctive Spartan attitude towards property or wealth. Her primary focus, however, is on how notions of Classical Sparta's distinctively austere character have affected interpretations of developments within Lakonia in earlier periods. Focusing on evidence regarding religious sanctuaries, especially the Amyklaion, she argues that Spartan state formation was a longer-term process than normally believed; and that the hierarchical classification of 'Spartan' and 'Lakonian' sanctuaries in the late Archaic and Classical periods has been anachronistically retrojected into the Geometric and mid-Archaic periods. In reality, the material record for these periods does not support the notion that 'Spartan' culture was imposed from a central core to peripheral areas. On the contrary, evidence for a degree of continuity from the Late Helladic IIIC and Protogeometric periods at the Amyklaion and elsewhere, along with the widely spaced distribution of sites, suggests the existence of some embryonic form of unity between populations across Lakonia. For most of the Archaic period Spartan state formation developed rather slowly; only in the seventh century does a Spartan core first become visible. Consequently, attempts to link changes in the Archaic material record to Classical literary evidence for Spartan 'austerity' misunderstand the nature and development of early Sparta and Lakonia.

James Lloyd's paper in Chapter 10 brings the evidence of Herodotus directly into relation with Spartan material culture. He highlights how

the Spartans' engagement with material objects, especially in public and elite contexts, appears frequently in the *Histories*. They are represented as possessing, desiring and consuming a range of local and non-local material culture. Lloyd explores a series of passages which indicate the various types of material culture with which the Spartans engaged, and why. Some episodes indicate how their fortunes depended on correctly recognising the symbolic value of particular objects. Some highlight their concern at the theft of precious objects intended as gifts to foreign rulers, but also their willingness to claim credit for religious dedications made by others. Herodotus' account of the disposition of Persian booty after Plataia contrasts the vastly different modes of acquisition and usage available to Spartans and helots. Especially prominent in his Spartan episodes are references to metal objects: more than for any other Greek *polis*. This observation leads Lloyd to re-evaluate the archaeological evidence from Sparta for the use of metals. Finds of iron spits at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia have often been taken as evidence for the existence of an iron currency; but their votive use was comparatively short-lived, ending around 620 BC. Moreover, rather than being a marker of austerity, they may have represented the conspicuous consumption of raw, unconverted dedications. Notably, the dedication of gold and silver jewellery not only coexisted with iron spits, but also possibly outlived the latter's period of popularity. Increasing evidence for metal-working at and around Spartan sanctuaries suggests that Herodotus' abundant evidence for the Spartans' use of precious metals may fit within a broader historical context of local metalworking and widespread use of metal objects, precious and otherwise.

In the volume's final paper (Chapter 11) Ellen Millender examines the issue of Spartan austerity through the literary evidence. Accepting its historical reality, despite much exaggeration of its content, she analyses austerity, not just as a means of limiting display, but also as a form of ostentatious performance that constructed and bolstered the worldview of both individual Spartans and the Spartan state, and vaunted their identity before audiences at home and abroad. Exploiting the wide range of meanings inherent in the term, she exposes the operation of austerity in diverse contexts of Spartiate life. In the phalanx Spartans publicly performed restraint and self-denial of their individual needs and emotions, as exemplified at several points in Herodotus' account of Plataia: their patient wait before the battle for favourable sacrificial omens in the face of Persian arrows, their disdain for Aristodemos who leaped out of the phalanx in search of death, and Pausanias' disdain for the luxurious Persian meal after the battle. Austerity was also performed in diverse aspects of Spartan life and death: in the severity of the boys' upbringing, in the

sexual restraint of young married men, in everyone's plain and uniform clothing, in their moderate consumption of food and drink; and finally, in the simplicity of their burials. All these were spectator sports performed under the surveillance of the community. Austerity was even performed through the purposeful cultivation of laconic speaking in political debate, with its potential for deployment as a verbal weapon, as in Herodotus' (possibly invented) account of the Spartans' rebuff to the prolixity of the Samian suppliants. The longevity of the Spartans' ideological commitment to austerity is evident in its continued deployment by Spartan kings during the fourth and third centuries, even as its application within everyday Spartan life increasingly declined.

* * *

It remains for me to express my thanks to a number of colleagues whose efforts have powerfully assisted the Sparta panel at the Montreal CCC and this present volume. Elsa Bouchard and Bill Gladhill and their student volunteers organised and ran the two-site conference with considerable smoothness and efficiency. The Sparta panel itself was graced by stimulating papers from a number of colleagues who are not represented here: Aaron Beck-Schachter, Jacqueline Christien, Alan Misenheimer and Nicolas Richer. Following Anton's untimely death, Ioanna Kralli, Nancy Bouidghaghen and the late (and much missed) Stephen Mitchell seamlessly took up the reins of the Classical Press of Wales, thereby ensuring that this and other volumes in the 'Source + Sparta' series have retained a publication home. As always, we owe a debt of gratitude to CPW's reader for his diligent scrutiny of the volume's papers and his critical advice; to Nancy Bouidghaghen for the meticulous Indexes; to Jane Burkowski for her laborious copy editing; and, last but by no means least, to Louise Jones and other colleagues at Gomer Press for their exemplary production of the printed publication.

Notes

[1] Ten articles in French, Italian and Spanish from the Lyon conference were published earlier in the journal *Ktèma* 32 (2007) 293–456, as a collection edited by Nicolas Richer. Seven of those articles appear in translated and updated form in *Xenophon and Sparta*.

[2] I should perhaps clarify that, despite certain reviews stating the contrary, the collected volumes S. Hodkinson (ed.) *Sparta: Comparative Approaches* (2009) and S. Hodkinson and I. Macgregor Morris (eds) *Sparta in Modern Thought* (2012) were not part of the ISS series. They resulted from a conference which was part of a University of Nottingham research project, 'Sparta in Comparative Perspective,

Ancient to Modern', funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. The confusion arises from the fact that Anton, who attended the conference, kindly agreed to publish both volumes through the Classical Press of Wales.

[3] Published in N. Fisher and H. Van Wees (eds.) *Archaic Greece: New Approaches and New Evidence*, London 1998, 119–46.

PART I

A GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

1

HERODOTUS, THE SPARTAN REVOLUTION AND THE LOGIC OF EXTREMES

Anton Powell†

[The following text is closely based on the written draft of the oral paper which Anton gave at the Sparta panel at the Celtic Conference in Classics at Montreal in July 2017. He had not developed the paper further at the time of his death in 2020. With the assistance of Ioanna Kralli, I have worked up Anton's somewhat compressed draft text into academic prose. I have sometimes expanded or amended the text a little, in order to give his arguments greater clarity; but I have made no substantive alterations to its content or argument. Since this is not an article, but a script intended for oral delivery, I have not provided additional bibliographic references beyond the modest number already included in Anton's written draft. Except for certain chapters in the Wiley-Blackwell, *A Companion to Sparta* (2018), which Anton was at the time seeing through the press, the text does not take account of work published since 2017. *Stephen Hodkinson*]

In some ways this paper is only a beginning, structured so as to invite and provoke your help.

Was there a Spartan revolution? The English and French words 'revolution', if we press them, prove unhelpful. A full revolution of a wheel brings it back to its *initial* position. The term is at best vague. Vast changes in ethos may or may not be violent, and large continuities may remain. One thinks of the Bolshevik monarchic government of the Soviet Union housed in a Tsarist palace; or, more recently, of 'jupitérien' (his own word) President Emmanuel Macron addressing members of a republican parliament at the palace of French kings at Versailles.

One of the best-documented examples of vast changes amid continuity is the transformation from Georgian to Victorian culture in Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century. Semi-public drunkenness and debauchery at the highest social levels and public displays of sexuality by women and men were replaced by an ethos of extreme *pudor* (modesty), albeit amid continuing high levels of drunkenness and prostitution in limited or hidden settings: 'The Victorian Underworld' (Chesney 1972), a phenomenon perhaps worth comparing with the 'double life' of the Spartiates of which Hans van Wees (2018a, 224) has written. This transformation took place all within a single generation. It was highly memorable: many Victorians who had been alive as adults in the Georgian period felt the full blast of both cultures, and would never forget. Even to exclude Georgian realities from Victorian public discourse involved much censorship, if not lying: the sort of withholding of truth that some of us claim occurred in Classical Sparta.

The transmission, or non-transmission, of such a scandalous past to future generations was a delicate matter. One recalls the advice of Plato's Athenian interlocutor in his *Laws* (7.798a–b) that a lawgiver should ensure, by hook or by crook, that there was no recollection or report that the 'pre-revolutionary' situation before his laws had ever existed. In contrast, William Makepeace Thackeray's 1854 review of John Leech's respectable and homely pictures in *Punch* magazine reminds his readers about the disreputable scenes pictured in an earlier age when Georgian ladies wore skimpy dresses and drunken young men of fashion beat up poor harmless old night-watchmen. He imagines genteel Victorian children viewing a Georgian picture and interrogating their grandmother about it:

> Grandmamma, did you wear such a dress as that when you danced …? There was very little of it, grandmamma. Did grandpapa kill many watchmen when he was a young man, and frequent thieves, gin-shops, cock-fights, and the ring before you married him? … He is very much changed. He seems a gentlemanly old boy enough now.[1]

Very much had changed.

Herodotus says that he went to Lakonia, to Pitane, one of Sparta's five villages, and spoke with Archias, grandson of the Archias who had distinguished himself by an exemplary death fighting in the Lakedaimonian forces at the siege of Samos (Hdt. 3.55): that is, as usually thought, not later than the 520s. Now, the 520s is the approximate period at which art historians date the fairly abrupt disappearance of figured Lakonian vases with their 'Georgian' scenes of elegant partying and drunken dancing. The 520s onwards are a leading candidate for the onset of Sparta's revolution towards austerity (van Wees 2018a; 2018b). We do not know

how old Archias the younger was or when Herodotus spoke with him: but if, as is quite likely, their meeting took place before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431, and *if* Archias was, say, 70 years old, we may even be going back to the revolutionary period within one lifetime, the lifetime of Herodotus' Spartan informant.

Herodotus, powerfully reinforced by Thucydides, controls modern scholarly views of the dating of the cultural revolution at Sparta. As we know, Herodotus writes that, 'Even before this the Lakedaimonians were almost the most lawless (*kakonomōtatoi*) of all the Greeks, both internally, towards each other, and being unsociable towards outsiders' (1.65). 'Even before this?' (τὸ δὲ ἔτι πρότερον τούτων)? Herodotus is talking of Sparta's failures in their war against Tegea in Arkadia, in the reigns of Leon and Agasikles, usually ascribed to the early to mid-sixth century.

'But this is how they changed to *eunomia*' (μετέβαλον δὲ ὧδε ἐς εὐνομίην). Then comes his account of Lykourgos (named), his reforms and their benign effect on Sparta's military strength and confidence and on its ambition to conquer Arkadia, which initially involved disastrous defeat. But then, under Kings Anaxandridas and Ariston, in the time of King Croesus of Lydia, Sparta overpowered Tegea. There is some vagueness in the text about the precise chronological relation of the *kakonomia* and the Lykourgan revolution to the reigns of Leon and Agasikles; but there is an implication of some close connection, if not overlap. So Lykourgos appears to be placed in the first half of the sixth century.

Thucydides, notoriously – I hope – seems to push the revolution even further back to the early ninth century when he says (1.18.1) that the Spartans by his day have been employing the same constitution for 'approximately 400 years and a little more' (μάλιστα τετρακόσια καὶ ὀλίγῳ πλείω). He suggests as clearly as Herodotus that the revolution was relatively rapid. He uses the same word, and in the aorist: ηὐνομήθη ('she obtained good laws': Jowett); compare Herodotus' οὕτω μὲν μεταβαλόντες εὐνομήθησαν at 1.66.1 ('Thus they changed their bad laws to good ones': Godley). Thucydides has his own extreme expression about Spartan *stasis*, about the Spartan exception, indeed in his case uniqueness: its *stasis* lasted ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ὧν ἴσμεν χρόνον ('longer than any country which we know': Jowett). Presumably he meant compared with all other Greeks. Thucydides does not mention Lykourgos; but, given that he was Herodotus' contemporary and wrote so similarly about this Spartan revolution, when he went on to write that Sparta had had one continuous constitution for a little over 400 years, it is overwhelmingly likely that he did not mean that this lengthy period had been interrupted by a further unmentioned stasis followed by a yet further, now 'Lykourgan', revolution. The late ninth century is therefore when Thucydides placed *the* Spartan revolution.

So Herodotus and Thucydides between them established the traditional bracket of time within which scholars until recently tended to place the Spartan revolution: somewhere between the late ninth century – the mists of time (ἐκ παλαιτάτου: Thuc. 1.18.1) – and the early sixth century.

Thucydides here indeed uses a characteristically Herodotean expression about the state of his own knowledge: ὧν ἴσμεν ('which we know'). Compare Herodotus' Ionic form of the same, τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν. This element is found in Herodotus' work some thirty-seven times. He tends to use it when talking of exceptions, of logical extremes, of *Guinness Book of Records* material. A few examples from many: Croesus was the first, τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν, of the barbarians to conquer Greeks (1.6.2); the Lydians were the first, τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν, to strike gold and silver coins (1.94.1); Polykrates of Samos was the first to aim at *thalassokratia* – apart from Minos and anyone before him, the first anyway 'in a so-called human generation' (3.122); grass in Skythia is the worst for cattle (4.58); the Atarantes are the only people not to use personal names (4.184). Is this qualifier τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν normally a boast? – as perhaps when he says, without using the phrase, that the Nile and Borysthenes are the only rivers whose source he does not know (4.53.5); note that he uses the singular this time (οὐκ ἔχω φράσαι τὰς πηγάς) and adds 'nor I think does any Greek'. Or does τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν tend to show laudable caution, acknowledging the vast scope of material, geographic and chronological, required to say, 'X – earlier coins, earlier attempted thalassocracy, worse grass etc. – does not exist, anywhere or ever'?[2]

Where does Sparta lie in all this? We shall shortly see. But, for the moment, note that for Herodotus 'the most glorious victory of all those we know' was that of the regent Pausanias at Plataia (9.64.1). And that the 'bravest act of all those we know', though not a Spartan's, was that of Hegesistratos the seer from Elis, who escaped from torture and death at Sparta by cutting off his own heel. That story too ends well, for Sparta: the Spartans catch and kill him in the end (9.37). However, my main point here is that the frequency of these references to his own knowledge shows that Herodotus is acutely aware of the problem of knowing.

Herodotus is on a cautious hunt for extreme cases. Another marker of this is his use of the term 'only', in his Ionic dialect *moun-*. To say 'only' is of course to generalise, often vastly: 'only' means 'otherwise *always* not'. And with this word we may be able to make some progress in identifying his sources. I have so far looked – that is, not quite exhaustively – at some 170 cases. There are, at first sight, striking concentrations of this word, concerning just a few of the many cultures Herodotus deals with.

He seems to be unusually confident in the case of the history of the eastern Greeks, as we might expect given his origins: 'the Milesians

alone', 'the Samians alone' (1.141–2, 143, 145, 147, 170; cf. 4.138; 6.25, 27; 8.30). In the case of Egypt, 'only' is used several times of the Nile (2.19, 25; also 2.68: the crocodile the only beast not to have a tongue); in Egypt only swineherds never enter temples (2.47–8; cf. 2.168; 9.32). In several cases Egypt is said to be unique among territories or at least a rare exception, i.e. with a very few others (2.80, 104, 105). Egyptologists tell us that among Egyptians the view that their country was an isolated and splendid exception was indeed particularly strong. Herodotus tells us of his personal contact with Egyptian sources (e.g. 2.91), which should perhaps fortify us in thinking that Herodotus owed his relative boldness to having local sources who were themselves confident about their information and its exhaustiveness, at least as regards Egypt.[3]

When Herodotus states that X happened first or only – in human history – in Y circumstances, he is of course implicitly making a statement about the history of every human or every Greek community – 'of those we know': as, for example, when he states that the Athenians were the first Greeks to attack the enemy at a run, and the first to withstand the sight of men in Median dress (6.112). We can guess which proud group gave him that sweeping idea (for internal evidence to the contrary on the latter point, 1.165 and 5.120). Very few of his positive statements involving 'only' (or similar words about exceptionalism) or, indeed, sweeping negatives involving 'never' or the like seem to be limited *explicitly* to sweeps of history of a particular people: i.e. to statements of the form, 'This was the only time that X people did Y.'[4]

But there is one exceptional category, Sparta, as the following statements indicate:

- The expedition to Samos in the late sixth century 'was the first expedition to Asia which the *Dorian* Lakedaimonians made' (1.56.2: N.B. 'Dorian Lakedaimonians' to distinguish this occasion from the expedition to Troy).
- Under Kings Leon and Agasikles, Sparta won all its wars except against Tegea (1.65).
- The *only* cases which the Spartan kings decide *alone* (δικάζειν δὲ μούνους τοὺς βασιλέας τοσάδε μοῦνα) concern heiresses, public roads and adoptions (6.57). There is a double use of μούν/μοῦν here. Herodotus definitely believes he has a good source.
- Likewise with Damaratos, who won the four-horse chariot race at Olympia, 'definitely the only one (μοῦνος … δὴ) of all the kings of Sparta to do this' (6.70).
- Themistokles was definitely the only man of all those whom we know (μοῦνον δὴ … τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν) to be given a public send-off by the

Spartiates (8.124). As in the previous case, Herodotus puts a large emphasis here: not just μοῦνον but μοῦνον δή.

- And once more in the case of the Elean prophet Teisamenos and his brother, who were 'definitely the only ones of all men (μοῦνοι δὲ δὴ πάντων ἀνθρώπων) to have been given Spartan citizenship' (9.35.1).
- The Spartiate Kallikrates (9.72.1; cf. 85), who was killed by a Persian arrow just before the battle of Plataia and died with fine Spartan words on his lips, was 'the most handsome man to join the Greek army, not just (οὐ μοῦνον) out of the Lakedaimonians themselves but out of the other Greeks' (Cf. also 9.54.1: at Plataia Amompharetos was the only one (μοῦνον) of Lakedaimonians and Tegeans left behind.)
- And, last but not least, the prehistoric case of the Minyans, whom the Spartans were planning to execute, evidently at night because (4.146.2) 'the Lakedaimonians execute those they execute by night, and no one by day'. We notice here the present tense, and the assumption that from the days of the Minyans to the second half of the fifth century Lakedaimonian custom had not changed.

If indeed Sparta is exceptional by a distance in Herodotus' text in being the subject of such statements about the history of a single particular polis, then why? Was it because Herodotus thought he knew *more* about Spartan history than about other Greek states, so as to afford to be dogmatic? Or because he knew less? If he had known as much about Sparta as about Athens, perhaps he would have formed a picture richer in complications. Perhaps Sparta was a case about which Herodotus knew less, and he was over-confident because he trusted sources which were impressive. Impressive, perhaps, for two or three reasons, because they were local (whom else would you trust on 'no other outsider admitted to citizenship ever'?), emphatic and homogeneous – not perhaps speaking with the contradictory polyphony which Thucydides (1.22.3) described of his (presumably largely Athenian) sources. I suggest, from the cases above – eminently subject to further research – not only that Herodotus drew often and confidently from Spartan informants, but also that those informants were unusual among his international sources in having a sweeping and dogmatic view of the history of their own community; they liked to talk about it holistically – Spartan history *tended* towards the present tense, 'this is what we do, who we are: ὁμοιότης (similarity) not just across a generation but up and down the generations'.

This is in keeping with Thucydides' view that the Lakedaimonians had had the same constitution for 'approximately 400 years and a little more': a statement utterly remarkable, because at odds with his caveat about finding the history of Greece largely unknowable before the

mid-430s (1.1.3).[5] Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere (Powell 2018, 10–11), several of Thucydides' statements about Sparta amount likewise to a wide-ranging claim to knowledge, sometimes in intimate and sensitive matters, knowledge often based on information from the Spartans themselves. These statements typically relate to occasions of Spartan vulnerability and involve the denial that such and such a situation or behaviour had ever occurred before. Such voluntary denials are all the likelier to come to the mind of the denier if they are conscious that they have just been caught in what is in fact a *general* defect. *Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*.

Thucydides' sweeping statements about Spartan history, being so clearly generated by vulnerable aspects of their position which Spartans knew to be perceptible to outsiders, help to understand Herodotus' large bold claims. The latter are, across the piece, less obviously defensive in character than those of Thucydides. But the claim in Herodotus that Spartan citizenship was almost never given to an outsider could obviously answer a suspicion that the Spartans were not so homogeneous as they claimed. The claim in Herodotus about defeat in the Tegean wars being a unique exception, 'otherwise even at that time we always won', sounds very like one particular claim in Thucydides. Describing how before the battle of Mantineia in 418 the Lakedaimonian troops became disorientated when they unexpectedly came upon the enemy already drawn up in battle order, he states that their panic was worse than any that they themselves could remember (5.66.1–2). This denial that any panic quite so bad had ever happened before came directly from the Spartans themselves, who were evidently very concerned about their military reputation.

So, how about those assertions of Thucydides and, to a rather lesser degree, of Herodotus, regarding the Spartan constitution and its antiquity? Could there be anything defensive about those statements? We think of Sparta's behaviour after those two rare defeats, on the island of Sphakteria and at Leuktra. The Spartans who had surrendered on the island, on their return, were pre-emptively and *en masse* deprived of their citizen rights – albeit temporarily – for fear that they would make a revolution (Thuc. 5.34). After Leuktra, we hear that King Agesilaos, in consultation with the ephors, promptly and without trial killed certain Spartiates who were proposing revolution (Plut. *Ages.* 32.6). Who knows what those 'deviants' were really proposing? History belongs to the ruling group. But the ruling group evidently thought that accusations of revolutionary plans were serious enough to justify hasty mass executions of numerically precious citizens. Similar reasoning applies to the charges of plotting against the regent Pausanias c. 470 (Thuc. 1.131–5) and against the privileged, formerly trusted, outsider Kinadon some 70 years later (Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.4–11). And, indeed, against Lysander, accused after his death of planning to abolish

the hereditary kingship (Plut. *Lys.* 30.3–4). Spartans evidently did not take the survival of their lauded constitution for granted. And some of the best propaganda for fortifying confidence in its survival was to claim that it was already of great antiquity: do the maths, do the induction. Here indeed was, to reapply Thucydides' word about the Spartan constitution, a *krypton*: Spartans might encourage talk about their traditions in the present tense, but private fears about change were deep and widespread.

I suggest then, not that Thucydides' and Herodotus' statements about the antiquity of the Spartan constitution are valueless, but that they are ambivalent. Either one of them (though clearly not both) is right, or they originated as manipulative untruths within Sparta, valuable as evidence of Spartan insecurity. I have argued elsewhere about the plasticity which Spartans attributed to human nature, and which might, it was feared, cause even Spartiates to fall away from their own standards (e.g. Powell 1994, 279). It was because of such plasticity that the *agōgē*, with all its *ponos*, was necessary; Spartans could not rely on the inherent nature of their own people. The speeches of the exiled King Damaratos, which Herodotus has him give to advise and correct King Xerxes in 480, are so lavish a eulogy of Sparta and its iron *nomos* as to be, in all probability, largely a Spartan invention. Not always noticed is a distinction which Damaratos makes, emphatically (7.102.1): Greece has *always* (αἰεί ποτε) been brought up with poverty: the word for 'brought up with', *syntrophos*, is itself a denial of genetics: Greek character is formed by its upbringing not its ancestry. But then his distinction becomes even more emphatic: poverty is part of Greece's upbringing, but virtue is an import (ἔπακτός ἐστι), the product of wisdom and iron (literally 'powerful') law (νόμου ἰσχυροῦ).

Hard won, it was artificial and might fail. Good men might become bad. And, remarkably, the reverse. We normally translate the crushing Spartan term *tresas* as 'trembler'. But here in implying the present tense, perhaps it is we – not the Spartans – who are being ahistorical. The word is an aorist, meaning 'one who has trembled'. Such men at Sparta were not always written off. Contrast the 'deserters of the interior', psychologically broken soldiers within the besieged French camp in 1953–54 at Diên Biên Phu, Vietnam (the French Thermopylai): mistrusted and confined to non-sensitive duties (Pellissier 2004, 522–3 = 2014, 731–2). The clearest case – for us – of an individual named and treated as a trembler, Aristodemos, who returned from Thermopylai alive (7.229–31), was able to redeem himself (9.71) by conspicuous – and predictably fatal – defiance of the enemy at the battle of Plataia a year later, where his Spartiate colleagues could see his fearlessness. Seemingly he was allowed a place in the front ranks. And since the Spartans presumably knew that a broken phalanx was 'useless', it seems that Sparta trusted that Aristodemos would not defect,

would not let his fellow phalangites down, that he would be a reformed character. In the event, the Spartans refused him posthumous honours, saying that this time he had wrongly wanted to die in an act of exceptional bravery and had gone berserk (λυσσῶντά τε); he had again 'left the rank' (ἐκλείποντα τὴν τάξιν) – this time in the opposite direction, forward towards the enemy. Poor Aristodemos had got it wrong again. Now he was an over-reformed character. But the idea of human plasticity remains.

Is it possible that Sparta's idea of human plasticity was itself somewhat remarkably plastic: that it was, not born from nothing of course, but still largely informed and shaped by Thermopylai? In the weeks after that utter defeat, the Spartans had every interest in improvising a story about their unyielding courage on the battlefield (Bouidghaghen 2017) It became, in short, a moral victory, produced ultimately by their education system. Note Xenophon's comment (*Lak. Pol.* 11.7) on military qualities 'not easily learned by those not brought up under the laws of Lykourgos'.

In any case, the idea of a Spartan revolution close to the turn of the sixth and fifth centuries is now in the air among students of Sparta. 'Anti-revolution' would be a better description, a moral reform perhaps more than a reform of property relations or of formal power; a reform aimed to protect against revolution in property and power. In that now-popular phrase of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, 'Everything needs to change so that everything can stay the same.'[6] (One thinks of the creation of the welfare state in Britain by Clement Attlee's post-war Labour government, consciously levelling to head off Bolshevism and the 'Common Wealth' movement within the UK.) My suggestions converge with Hans van Wees' potent set of arguments (2018a; 2018b) that it was in the very late sixth century that Sparta moved, in general, from luxury to relative austerity and, in particular, from *symposion* to *syssition* – of course with some important exceptions (the Spartans' 'double life'), the kind of continuity also visible in the transformation of Georgian into Victorian Britain.

Here we may highlight one strand among the many in van Wees' coverage: the case of drink. He wonders whether, in Herodotus' report that Spartans accused King Kleomenes – posthumously at least – of drinking unmixed wine in Skythian fashion, we have a trace of the 'Lykourgan' revolution *in progress* (2018b, 252). We recall the insistence of pro-Spartan sources on Spartan moderation in drinking, and especially the ferocious – perhaps slightly too ferocious – insistence of the Spartan character Megillos in Plato's *Laws* (637a) that drunkenness in Classical Sparta was severely punishable, prohibited even at festivals. Drunkenness in Kleomenes' case was associated with violence, hitting people in the face with his stick. Van Wees compares the non-Herodotean story (Plut. *Lyk.* 11.1–2) that Lykourgos during his reforms was half-blinded with a

stick wielded by a young man from the faction demonstrating against his suppression of *symposia*. His method here seems promising: looking for traces of general Spartan policy in stories of the particular. Evidently, and luckily for us, the Spartans did talk critically about the particular; it was the general which they tended to hide. In the case of excessive drinking, what was hidden was perhaps how general and threatening it may have been among powerful Spartans until all too recently.

If, with van Wees, we look for signs of a wide change in Spartan society, and one that went far wider than attitudes to drinking, there may also be something in the story of Sparta's expedition against Samos c. 525.[7] Archias and Lykopas were the only Spartans to follow the fleeing Samians within their city wall, and because isolated were killed. In Herodotus' view, 'if those (other) Lakedaimonians present had been "like" (*homoioi*) Archias and Lykopas that day, Samos would have been captured' (3.55.1). (As it was, the Spartans were obliged to admit failure and leave.) We cannot be sure that the term *homoioi* is being used in the Xenophontic sense, 'the Similars', products of the homogenising public upbringing. If it was, the phrase may be a fragment of a discourse amounting to: 'this was the sort of thing that happened just a couple of generations ago, before we had our Similars: we came apart in battle, brave men got isolated and we lost'. But even if Herodotus' Spartan source did not mean that, the values implicit in this tale may be significantly different from those applied to Aristodemos at Plataia. He had been denied posthumous glory, in spite of self-sacrificing acts, because he had left the *taxis*, albeit forward towards the enemy rather than back and because of his motive. Arguably, Archias and Lykopas had done the same thing, but were more positively remembered at Sparta – if Archias the Younger, Herodotus' source, was representative rather than just expressing family values.

In nearing the end of my paper, I want to sketch a few other recent developments in ideas about the Spartan 'revolution'. Drink, once more, is at the centre of arguments being put forward about the significance of the Lakonian black-figure vases of the sixth century, which notoriously – I hope, by now – at first sight seem to contradict the 'Lykourgan' ethos (Powell 1998). One recourse to protect the idea in Herodotus and Thucydides that the Lykourgan reforms were far older than the late fifth century, that they predated the lascivious vase-paintings, is that the vases were not produced by, or by implication at, Sparta but by *perioikoi* elsewhere. Now, if we think that the aforementioned chronological indications in Thucydides and Herodotus are deeply untrustworthy, then the assumption about the *perioikoi* begins to look like circular argument. Without the suspect chronology from Thucydides and Herodotus, we would have no reason to think that Spartans of the

mid-sixth century would have been averse to scenes of luxury, drunkenness and orgy.

Maria Pipili is the greatest authority, from an art-historical viewpoint, on the Archaic Lakonian vases. Her position over the years has evolved, partly in response to continuing discoveries of Lakonian vases in East Greece. In her monograph on *Laconian Iconography of the Sixth Century BC* (Pipili 1987) she argued for traces of distinctively Lakonian myth in the imagery on the vases, an argument which I myself was subsequently happy to take up (Powell 1998). That theme is not advanced in her most recent publication (Pipili 2018). There, in contrast, she argues that the motifs of extreme luxury, of drink and debauchery, on Lakonian vases were informed rather by the culture, the wishes, of wealthy overseas clients of the Lakonian industry, especially in East Greece. She is arguing, with some persuasiveness, from the distribution of finds – which has evolved in the direction of East Greece. A key element in her argument and that of others is the relative scarcity of such finds at Sparta. (However, the Lakonian vase with the most shocking scenes of violent rape and torture was found in Sparta at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia.)[8] The point is evidently of great significance; but its significance may just possibly lie less in the field of East Greek artistic tastes than of Lakonian politics. If there ever had been intensive use at Sparta of the high-stemmed wine cups which are a central element of Pipili's focus, and of Lakonian production, where might modern archaeology expect to have found them? Pipili is emphatic about the find-spots elsewhere: these vases are found very largely in shrines. This has implications politically as well as archaeologically. *If* Spartans at any stage wished to purge such vases, they would have known immediately where to go. To assume no Spartan censorship of their own physical record would be difficult. Spartans of the Classical period evidently were fluent at censoring their own political record in the form of oral history. They were also adept at the use of visual symbols to make political and military points: perhaps the most spectacular instance is Xenophon's account of the show that King Agesilaos in 395 put on at Ephesos, where repeatedly he states that 'you could see', 'you could see' something that resembled a workshop of war (*Hellenika* 3.4.16–18; *Agesilaos* 1.25–7). Such use of imagery we may study in its positive aspect: Spartans positively displaying their red cloaks or nudity or disciplined dancing – or, in the case of helots, undisciplined dancing. But hiding things: think of Agesilaos after the slaughter at Lechaion in 390 bringing home the depleted army clandestinely, so that it was seen as little as possible by the inhabitants of other Peloponnesian cities (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.19). Or Herodotus on the Spartans always carrying out their executions by night.

Surely such physical censorship was an entirely predictable part of Sparta's constitutional secrecy.

Moral censorship of images should be rather familiar to *us*. Think of the problems that arise with old films which glamorise smoking. Also, there was a time, 100 years ago, when it was in high society rather cool for a *woman* – North American or British – to keep a small syringe in her handbag, for cocaine. Even in our relatively open society, that now has been censored very successfully into near oblivion. The case of an admirable *man* attached to his syringe of cocaine, Arthur Conan Doyle's character Sherlock Holmes, is an awkward exception.[9] Now Greek vases had, as a genre, an aggravating element as compared with images of smoking or injecting. The instrument involved, the vase, typically was not only clear in its function, but also bore clear glamorising images of the function in question. It was doubly offensive, all the more so in a society, Sparta, attuned to attending to images.

I began with Thackeray's *jeu d'esprit* about children of the mid-nineteenth century, impressed by images of bygone (im)morality and trying to *imagine* their grandmother as a young woman in a Georgian *décolleté*. Even in Thackeray's text, realities of censorship of such images are clearly hinted at. Writing of Georgian cartoons, by Gillray perhaps or Cruickshank, he says,

> But if our sisters wanted to look at the portfolios, the good old grandfather used to hesitate. There were some prints among them very odd indeed; some that girls could not understand; some that boys, indeed, had best not see. We swiftly turn over those prohibited pages.[10]

George IV, perhaps, cartooned as riding an ample mistress. As was supposedly said of Cleopatra's court by a Victorian dame, 'How different, how very different, from the home life of our own dear Queen.' One wonders there whether Victoria's sexually passionate relationship with her deceased husband, Prince Albert, had been entirely forgotten.

If we reckon that reforming spirits in various societies, and Spartan qualities in particular, lent themselves to systematic suppression of images from the past which contradicted the ruling narrative, that would not prove that there was once an abundance of tell-tale images on view at Sparta, on vases, depicting un-Lykourgan frolics in the late sixth century, long after the great reformer had allegedly cast his blanket of morality. However, it surely should make us hesitate to assume the contrary. But could the eminently religious Spartans have intervened at shrines to suppress objects which had been dedicated to divinity? We think of what happened, in the early fifth century, to the regent Pausanias' inscription on the Serpent Column, dedicated at Delphi with a politically incorrect

inscription. Pausanias there had boasted that he, singular, as leader had destroyed the army of Persia. And how did other authorities at Sparta react? They at once erased the words and replaced them with a more politically acceptable inscription listing the cities which had taken part in defeating the Persians (Thuc. 1.132.2–3).

The disappearance, or near disappearance, of production of Lakonian black-figure in the last quarter of the sixth century is explicable perhaps by economic factors alone: by Athenian black-figure and then red-figure pottery becoming crushingly competitive. But, as van Wees points out (2018a, 214), in Lakonia the place – albeit rather small in surviving material – of Lakonian black-figure was not taken by Athenian imports. Salacious scenes, on Athenian pots, of sympotic carryings-on were widely welcomed elsewhere in the Mediterranean world; but not at Sparta. If moralising pressure for austerity remained at Sparta, that in itself may suggest a continuing sense of temptation. When Herodotus reports the tale of Kleomenes corrupted by Skythians' drinking of undiluted wine, he adds that this tale is the origin of a word the Spartans still use (in the present tense): ἐπισκῡθίζω, 'to Skyth it up'. But the form in which he quotes the word is ἐπισκύθισον (6.84.3). We might have expected a general negative imperative, in the present tense: 'We mustn't be like the Skyths.' But no, here it is, in all innocence apparently, in the positive and the aorist: 'Skyth it up, now!' As Herodotus says, 'They *[the Spartiates, N.B. not this time, 'the Lakedaimonians']*, say this whenever *[frequentative]* they wish to drink stronger wine'. If we seek elements of Greek normality among the Spartans, we may find them by exploring their very areas of abnormality.

Notes

[1] Thackeray 1854, 78. The characters Tom and Jerry mentioned elsewhere in Thackeray's review (p. 77), depicted in Pierce Egan's 1821 comic novel, *Life in London, or, The day and night scenes of Jerry Hawthorne, Esq. and his elegant friend Corinthian Tom*, lie indirectly at the origin of Hanna and Barbera's popular *Tom and Jerry* cartoon series, so fascinating to North American audiences.

[2] Sometimes Herodotus does also say ὅσον ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν ('so far as we know') of statements about obviously vast and remote territories: 'no one lives north of Skythia' (4.17.2); Africa ('Libya') contains only four races (4.197.2); the Satrae have never been subjected (7.111.1).

[3] Note, incidentally, Herodotus' statement about resemblances between the Egyptians and Lakedaimonians: in deferring to older men in the streets and in seating (2.80); in having the strongest snobbery among the Greeks against those who practise handicrafts (2.167). However, Herodotus explicitly queries whether the Greeks learned such snobbery from Egypt, because it was widespread among foreign peoples.

[4] The statements that Kallias was the only Athenian to buy the property of Peisistratos when it was put on public sale (6.121), or that Artabanos was the only

Persian to oppose Xerxes' planned invasion (7.18), are limited to what happened on specific occasions. They are not statements about the sweep of Athenian or Persian history.

[5] Contrast Xenophon, *Lak. Pol.* 14 on how the Spartans have changed.

[6] The original Italian wording, spoken by the character Tancredi, reads, 'Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi' (*Il Gattopardo*, 58th edition, Feltrinelli, Milan 1991, 41): more literally translated, 'If we want everything to remain the same, everything needs to change.'

[7] I owe my awareness of the significance of this episode to the Mémoire de Master 2 by Nancy Bouidghaghen, 'Les images du guerrier spartiate chez Hérodote' (Université Paris Nanterre, 2011), which I had the honour of co-supervising.

[8] Lane 1933/34, plate 40a; Pipili 1987, no. 179; Powell 1998, 130–3, with fig. 4.

[9] In the opening paragraphs of *The Sign of the Four* (1890) Holmes explicitly states that he is taking cocaine.

[10] Thackeray 1854, 79.

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PART II

HERODOTUS AND SPARTA

2

HERODOTUS AND SPARTAN OBEDIENCE

Andrew J. Bayliss

Herodotus' account of the battle of Thermopylai provides an almost irresistible image of the Spartans as men who were strikingly obedient. This image is revealed even before the reader reaches Thermopylai, geographically and chronologically, with Damaratos' famous warning to Xerxes (7.104) that the Spartans will oppose him even if they are outnumbered, and that they are the best soldiers in the world at fighting in groups because of their obedience to Spartan *nomos*:

> They are free (ἐλεύθεροι), but not wholly free: for custom (νόμος) is their master, and they stand in awe (ὑποδειμαίνουσι) of it yet more than your men do you. They do what it orders: and it always orders the same, not to flee from battle before any multitude of men but, remaining at their place in the line of battle, to conquer or die.

Although Xerxes laughed at Damaratos' testimonial to Spartan obedience in disbelief (7.105),[1] Herodotus reveals that not long afterwards he was forced to call upon Damaratos a second time to explain why the Spartans were exercising naked and combing their hair while they awaited the Persian onslaught at Thermopylai (7.208). Despite Damaratos' earlier warning, according to Herodotus (7.209), Xerxes 'could not understand that in actual fact they were getting themselves ready to kill or be killed, to the best of their ability'. Damaratos warned Xerxes that:

> These men (οἱ ἄνδρες οὗτοι) have come to fight us for this pass, and they are preparing for this. For this is their custom (νόμος): when they are about to endanger their life, they adorn their heads.

Herodotus (7.209) then has Damaratos reaffirm that the Spartans are 'the best men' (ἄνδρας ἀρίστους) in Greece, and insist that Xerxes can take him 'as a liar' (ὡς ἀνδρὶ ψεύστῃ) if things do not turn out as he says. Although Xerxes doubts Damaratos a second time, Leonidas, whom Herodotus (7.204) has already hailed as 'the highest object of wonder' (ὁ θωμαζόμενος μάλιστα), and his 300, whom Herodotus reports were chosen because they had living children to survive them (7.205), prove Damaratos correct,[2] fighting with such bravery and skill that Xerxes soon realises (7.210) that his massive army comprises 'many people (ἄνθρωποι) but few men (ἄνδρες)'.[3]

Even Herodotus' brief description (7.211) of the Spartans' tactics in battle has resonance regarding the theme of obedience, for the Spartans' repeated stratagem of feigned flight suggests that they will indeed violate the *nomos* that Damaratos insisted they hold in awe. But once the Persians were lured into wild pursuit by their sham retreat, the Spartans 'would turn about to face the barbarians, and … throw down countless Persians'. Damaratos' claims that the Spartans would be prepared to sacrifice themselves are validated by Herodotus' testimony that during such manoeuvres, 'a few of the Spartans themselves were also slain'; and the overall effectiveness of the Spartans' obedience is revealed in Herodotus' telling summary that, 'Since the Persians could gain no foothold of the pass, attacking by companies and in every other fashion, they withdrew.'

Herodotus' account has Damaratos' faith in the obedience of the Spartans vindicated once again on the final day of battle after their position had been betrayed by Ephialtes, when Leonidas and his men remain obediently at their post, and selflessly give their lives for Greek freedom. Although there were alternative, less glorious, versions of the story of Thermopylai, Herodotus (7.220) stresses that he believes the correct version of the story is that Leonidas chose to stay and fight to the death to gain *kleos*:

> I am very much of the opinion (γνώμην) that when Leonidas perceived that the allies were dispirited and unwilling to run all risks with him, he told them to depart. For himself, however, it was not good to leave; if he remained, he would leave a name of great fame (κλέος), and the prosperity of Sparta would not be blotted out.

Herodotus (7.224) insists that Leonidas fell as a 'man of excellence' (ἀνὴρ ἄριστος), and explains that he took the time to learn the names of the other Spartans who fell with Leonidas 'as men of worth' (ὡς ἀνδρῶν ἀξίων),

including the 'best' of the Spartan warriors – Dienekes and the brothers Alpheus and Maron (7.226–7). Herodotus then concludes his account of Thermopylai by quoting the epigram that reified Spartan obedience: 'Stranger, go tell the Spartans, that here, obedient (πειθόμενοι) to their orders we lie' (7.228), before recounting the 'rage' (μῆνις) the Spartans felt towards Aristodemos 'the coward', who returned home rather than fight on that final day due to an eye affliction which rendered him temporarily blind (7.229–30), and the sad fate of Pantites (7.230), who survived the universal slaughter after being sent away as a messenger, and hanged himself out of shame upon his return to Sparta.

Modern responses to Herodotus' portrayal of the Spartans at Thermopylai

With a narrative as long and complex as Herodotus' work, there are obviously different ways in which this smaller-scale vignette can be interpreted. We could, as many scholars have done, take Herodotus' account of the Spartans at Thermopylai in Book 7 at face value, and mine it for 'facts' about Spartan history, society, and practices. Modern scholars have often done just that, treating Herodotus' presentation of Damaratos' claims about the Spartans' fight-to-the-death ethos – as Ellen Millender succinctly puts it – as 'a panegyric of Spartan valour and lawfulness'.[4]

But more recently, modern commentators have been quick to point out that the rest of Herodotus' narrative raises concerns about the accuracy of Damaratos' claims about the Spartans' custom to conquer in battle or die trying. The supposedly atypically cowardly Aristodemos is by no means the only Spartan who failed to fight to the death in Herodotus' narrative. Herodotus (1.66) records Spartans surrendering at the 'Battle of the Fetters', with the captives winding up working the fields of the Tegeans wearing the iron fetters they hoped to use to shackle the Tegeans. Othryades, the sole Spartan to survive the so-called 'Battle of the Champions' between three hundred picked hoplites from each of Sparta and Argos only did so because the two Argives who survived the slaughter, Alkenor and Chromios, assumed that they were the victors, which presumably meant that they thought that Othryades would not dare face them alone (1.82).[5] Herodotus also describes the Spartans making strategic withdrawals when things went against them. When fighting at Samos (3.55), only two Spartans, Archias and Lykopas, fought to the death after they alone entered the fortress pursuing a fleeing crowd of Samians and were cut off. The rest of the army withdrew from Samos altogether. The Spartans withdrew again against the Athenians (5.63), after their commander Anchimolios and 'many more of the Lakedaimonians' fell