SPARTA

Comparative Approaches



Edited by

Stephen Hodkinson

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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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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of ancient sources and modern periodicals generally follow the forms used in standard works such as *LSJ*[9], *OCD*[3] or *L'Année Philologique*. In certain cases common and easily identified variants have been used. In addition, the following abbreviations should be noted:

CID II	J. Bousquet, *Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes. Tome II: Les comptes du quatrième et du troisième siècle*, Paris 1989.
Diels-Kranz	H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th edition, Berlin 1951–2.
FGrH	F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin 1923–.
FHG	C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, Paris 1848.
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*, Berlin 1873–.
IvO	W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold, *Olympia*: *Die Ergebnisse der von dem deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabung. V. Die Inschriften*, Berlin 1896.
LSJ[9]	H.G. Liddell, R. Scott and H.S. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edition, Oxford 1968.
ML	R. Meiggs and D.M. Lewis, *Greek Historical Inscriptions to the end of the Fifth Century*, revised edition, Oxford 1988.
OCD[3]	S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition, Oxford 1996.
OGIS	W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1903–5.
RE	A. Pauly, G. Wissowa and W. Kroll (eds.) *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Munich 1893–.
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden 1923–.
SIG	W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3rd edition, 4 vols., Leipzig 1915–24.
Staatsverträge ii	H. Bengtson, *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums, Vol. II: Die Verträge der griechisch-römischen Welt von 700 bis 338 v. Chr.*, 2nd edition, Munich 1975.

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen Hodkinson

This publication is the first of two edited volumes containing selected papers from the conference 'Sparta: Comparative Approaches and Classical Tradition' held at the University of Nottingham on 18–22 September 2007. The second volume, *Sparta in Modern Thought*, edited by Ian Macgregor Morris and myself, will be shortly published by The Classical Press of Wales.

The conference took place within the framework of my research project 'Sparta in Comparative Perspective, Ancient to Modern: history, historiography and classical tradition', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.[1] The project combines three interrelated strands of academic enquiry. Its first strand is substantive study of ancient Spartan society itself from the perspective of comparable institutions in other societies both in ancient Greece and at other times and places. A second strand is historiographical study of attempts by academic historians to illuminate Spartan society through comparison with other societies, ancient or modern. The third strand is examination of the broader appropriation of Sparta as a comparative model within modern Western socio-political thought and popular culture. The Nottingham conference brought together scholarly contributions on all three strands of the project.

From antiquity to the present, interpretations of classical Sparta have typically been infused with comparative perspectives. In the classical period itself ancient writers frequently emphasised the distinctiveness of Sparta's customs, portraying her either as deviant from Greek (and particularly from Athenian) norms or as the closest approximation to an ideal polis. In post-classical antiquity utopian images of Sparta became particularly prominent, especially in the idealised depictions in the hellenistic *Apophthegmata Lakōnika* and in Plutarch's *Life of Lykourgos*. In the Italian Renaissance and in early modern Western Europe Sparta was viewed, after Rome, as a prime exemplar within classical republican thought. Indeed, in the period from the English Revolution of the mid-17th century to the French Revolution at the end of the 18th, critics of the *ancien régime* frequently invoked her as a model to be emulated in the construction of a new social order. Since the American and French revolutions, in contrast, Sparta has normally been viewed as an atypical society, the archetypal contrast to modern

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political and social systems: representative of ancient as against modern liberty or of undeveloped agrarian as against advanced industrial societies, and emblematic of – and, in the notorious case of Nazi Germany, positively acclaimed by – authoritarian and militaristic regimes in conflict with Western democracies.

These varied ancient and modern comparative perspectives have produced diverse opinions in different periods regarding whether Sparta was a typical or an exceptional ancient society. Within modern classical scholarship, however – influenced by the 19th- and 20th-century political and intellectual perspectives mentioned above – comparative approaches have most frequently portrayed Sparta as an exceptional polis, often (and somewhat inconsistently) compared both to modern totalitarian regimes like the Third Reich or the Soviet Union and to the supposedly primitive societies of 'tribal' Africa or other undeveloped regions.[2]

The 'Sparta in Comparative Perspective' project was designed in part to combat such simplistic analogies. Its motivation has been the belief that, although comparative analogies emphasising Sparta's exceptional character have frequently impeded understanding of her society, the search for better understandings should not abandon comparative or cross-cultural perspectives. The challenge, rather, is to develop more sophisticated comparative analyses, alert not merely to correspondences with other regimes but also to the complex interplay of similarity and difference between Sparta and other societies, in order to provide a more firmly-based contextualisation of Spartan institutions.

The project conference was inspired by the conviction that such comparative analyses need to be informed by understanding of the modern intellectual and political trends that have influenced Sparta's academic historiography. Conversely, a comparative understanding of ancient Sparta provides an essential framework for understanding the nature of her appropriations in modern times. Accordingly, over the conference's four and a half days, sessions focused on historical comparison of Spartan society were interspersed with sessions examining the development of the Spartan tradition in medieval and modern thought.

Owing to the conference's size, it has been necessary to publish the selected papers in two separate volumes. Nevertheless, indications of the mutual interaction referred to above are clearly evident in the present volume: for example, in Nino Luraghi's combined assessment (ch. 7) of the nature of helotage and the historiography of comparative approaches; and in the 19th-century starting-point for the debate in Chapters 11–13 regarding the question of Spartan exceptionalism. It is noteworthy that Luraghi's paper commences in antiquity, locating comparative

presentations of helotage in ancient writings within the context of classical Greek politics and thought. Indeed, the interplay between the character of written accounts of Sparta and the political and intellectual environment in which they were composed is evident as much in antiquity as in modern times. This is especially apparent in the papers by Lydia Langerwerf and Rosie Harman (chs. 9–10), which examine comparative ancient representations of Messenians and Spartans, respectively, viewing them against the backdrop of contemporary ancient concerns.

Recent Spartan historiography: re-interpreting the 'theme park'

The 'Sparta in Comparative Perspective' project represents a more systematic investigation of a line of enquiry which has increasingly guided my research since my first encounter with Sparta as an undergraduate in the early 1970s. To contextualise the papers in this volume, it is important to examine briefly some of the analogies between Sparta and other societies prevalent in earlier scholarship and to outline the main trends of Spartan historiography over the last 50 years. Since space is limited, my account will focus on British scholarship: both because, as someone trained within the UK academic system, it exercised a particular influence on my early perceptions of the state of Spartan research; and because, as has often been remarked, since World War II British research has played a larger and a more continuous role in Spartan studies than has that of other countries – a distinctive phenomenon in view of the more evenly balanced representation of English, German, French and Italian publications within ancient historical scholarship as a whole.[3]

In assessing the development of Spartan historiography since c. 1960, the first point to highlight is the exponential increase in the quantity and quality of research over the last thirty years. The quantitative increase considerably exceeds the overall growth in the output of classical scholarship since the 1950s.[4] In his *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (1972), Geoffrey de Ste. Croix commenced his seminal chapter on Spartan foreign policy with the blunt judgement that 'Books on Sparta are numerous and mostly bad' (89 n. 1). In fact, the first part of Ste. Croix's comment was rather less true than the second. Of three works specifically exempted from his criticism, two (both by French scholars: François Ollier's *Le mirage spartiate* and Pierre Roussel's *Sparte*) had first been published as long ago as the 1930s.[5] Only the third work, W. G. Forrest's *A History of Sparta 950–192 BC* (1968), was a recent publication. In 1972 classical Spartan history was only just emerging from the doldrums of the years immediately following World War II, when its associations with Nazi Germany had made it an uncomfortable, and even a taboo, subject,

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especially in Germany.[6] Although more books on Spartan history had appeared in the late 1960s than in the entire 1950s, their numbers were few compared with the recent outpouring of publications since the turn of the millennium.[7] No new entrant to the ancient historical profession since the war had yet made Spartan history the central focus of his or her research career; in contrast, it is possible today to list almost thirty Spartan historians from countries around the world. Likewise, not until 1986, with the Centenary conference of the British School at Athens in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the commencement of the London Classical Society's seminar series,[8] were any UK academic conferences or seminars devoted specifically to Sparta. In contrast, nowadays there is hardly a year without a meeting on some aspect of Spartan history.

Nevertheless, as Ste. Croix's comment implied, the years preceding his monograph had witnessed a minor renaissance of books on Sparta: works such as A.H.M. Jones's *Sparta* (1967), W.G. Forrest's aforementioned *History of Sparta* (1968), and a book-length section (Part III: 'The rise and decline of Sparta') in Arnold Toynbee's *Some Problems of Greek History* (1969, 152–417).[9] The first two of these, however, were short general studies;[10] and Toynbee's study, though more detailed, was largely an elaboration of ideas published some 35 years previously in his *A Study of History* (1934).[11] These British accounts were shortly followed by another work rooted in past scholarship: the Czech scholar Pavel Oliva's *Sparta and her Social Problems* (1971), whose discussions of key controversies were largely summaries of the arguments of earlier German, Russian and eastern European scholars.[12] Of these works, as Ste. Croix expected, only Forrest's book has stood the test of time,[13] as a volume that 'began to strip Sparta of the layers of fantasy, symbolism, and implausibility...and allowed something far more realistic and, dare one say, normal, to appear' (Davies 1999, 478).

The other books, in contrast, gave good grounds for Ste. Croix's criticism. The preface to A. H. M. Jones's study is particularly revealing.

> I was impelled to write this book by having to prepare a course of lectures on Sparta as a special subject in the Cambridge Classical Tripos for 1965–6. I wrote it in Egypt in the winter of 1964–5, making use of the rather limited resources of the Classical Library at Giza University – which may account for, if not excuse, some of its errors, omissions and incoherencies (1967, v).

In assessing this confession, allowance should be made for the circumstances of Jones' study and for his distinctive working methods. The book was produced during a period of anticlimax following the publication of his multi-volume, epoch-making study, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), which had occupied him over many years. According to his

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Cambridge colleague, John Crook (1971, 435), 'needing to crystallize his views on the history of Sparta for the next year's lectures, [Jones] succumbed to the temptation to dash off a book'. Moreover, his evident method of writing the Sparta book directly from his knowledge of the sources, with minimal consultation of other scholarly work, was typical Jonesian practice, especially in his later years.[14] Nevertheless, the contrast between his perfunctory approach to the Sparta book and the painstaking effort devoted not only to his *magnum opus* on the Later Roman Empire but also to his work on Athenian democracy,[15] is symptomatic of the contemporary academic neglect of Spartan studies. Indeed, although Sparta's selection for the 1965–66 Part II Special Subject is evidence of its increasing significance in the Cambridge curriculum, its allocation to an academic (even such a versatile scholar as Jones) with few previous publications in the field speaks volumes for the unspecialised character of Spartan historiography in 1960s Britain.[16] Only the critical reception of Jones's book by other scholars was a sign of better things to come.[17]

Jones's practice in writing a one-off book on Sparta was by no means exceptional, but part of a wider trend which became increasingly prevalent among senior British academics over the following 20 years. As John Lazenby commented as late as 1985 in the preface to his book, *The Spartan Army*,

> It is an old joke among ancient historians that everyone, at one time or another, wants to write a book on Sparta, and it is easy to see why this is so… The study of Sparta is also a marvellous arena for both the beginner and the professional, since there is so tantalisingly little evidence that anyone can think they have a brilliant new solution to some old problem – how many of us, I wonder, have not thought up a new and completely satisfactory version of the *rhetra*? (1985, vii).[18]

In short, the study of Sparta was viewed by senior ancient historians as a kind of game, like solving a crossword puzzle: a game in the best tradition of British amateurism, which anyone within the academic community (note the 'us') could play, with or without significant specialist expertise. And play they did. The books by Jones and Lazenby, along with J.T. Hooker's *The Ancient Spartans* (1980) and D.M. MacDowell's *Spartan Law* (1986), were all works written by distinguished academics who, having made their reputations on other topics, briefly turned their attention to Sparta before rapidly moving on to pastures new.[19]

In such circumstances, it is unsurprising that, despite the considerable scholarly erudition evident in such works regarding particular aspects of Spartan history, their depictions of the overall character of Spartan society were often comparatively superficial and tended to repeat a standard set of

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'theme park' images.[20] We can view the most notable of these images through a representative selection of quotations from prominent British studies:

> The famous discipline of the Spartans…is undoubtedly very ancient fundamentally and has close analogies with the customs of many primitive warrior tribes throughout the world (Jones 1967, 34).

> A similar *agoge* was found in Dorian Krete; so too were *sussitia*…and in spite of the tradition that Lykourgos made use of Kretan models, it is far more likely that both Spartan and Kretan customs were inherited from their common tribal past…almost every aspect of the full Spartan practice can be paralleled among backward warrior tribes today. The age-groups, the communal life, the initiation ceremonies, all these had been handed down through the generations as have similar institutions among the Masai in Kenya, the Zulus or the Red Indians (Forrest 1968, 53).

> Her institutions were not necessarily peculiar in themselves, but as survivals of a more primitive type of society which anthropological research has made more familiar to us than it was to the Greeks and Romans… The Cretan system was the only one with which the Greeks, including the Spartans themselves, compared the *agoge*. Modern scholarship, accepting this connection as valid…sets both places in the light of anthropology and finds the same practices, *mutatis mutandis*, reflected in the training by age-classes of the youths in other warlike tribes: thus the Dorians of the Eurotas valley will have preserved, through conservatism as much as military necessity, a type of system commonly developed in primitive times… (Jeffery 1976, 111, 114).

> Sparta remains unique, if only as a totalitarian state which lasted, if not for 'a thousand years', at least for a good few centuries (Lazenby 1985, vii).

Note, first of all, the military, warrior imagery repeated in several of the passages; secondly, the equally frequent insistence on the antiquity of Spartan classical customs in a conservative society whose institutions were largely primitive survivals. Linked to these images are two recurring comparative associations: with the supposedly equally backward Cretan society and a cross-cultural analogy with 'primitive tribes' of Africa or the New World. A further comparative analogy is the totalitarian image in the quotation from Lazenby, with its clearly expressed connection with Adolf Hitler's self-proclaimed 'Thousand Year' Third Reich. Finally, there is the image of singularity, explicitly stated by Lazenby, but implicit (along with Crete) in the other passages too.[21]

I have emphasised these standard views because they set the tone for much subsequent Anglophone scholarship, not least in provoking an opposite reaction in subsequent research. Indeed, the more simplistic of

these stock images have now been thoroughly undermined by detailed studies by scholars from around the world, especially – though not exclusively – in the collective publications of the International Sparta Seminar:[22] studies which have produced a far richer perception of the complexities of Spartiate life. Fundamental to this new perception has been an increase in anthropological sophistication, which has exposed the alleged analogies between Sparta and so-called 'primitive' societies. In part, this increased sophistication has stemmed from an awareness of research within African anthropology which showed that the supposedly primitive customs used as analogies for Spartan institutions were often recently-invented traditions of societies re-constructing their cultural identities in times of modernisation and Western colonialism.[23] It has equally become clear that Sparta's classical institutions themselves were far from primitive survivals. In particular, the idea that Sparta underwent, in Moses Finley's formulation, a 'sixth-century revolution' (whether or not one dates it exactly to that century), involving a radical re-institutionalisation of earlier institutions and practices, has now become almost an orthodoxy.[24]

The issue which divides the present generation of Spartan specialists is the extent to which these new insights should lead us to abandon earlier depictions of Sparta as an exceptional society, whether in comparison with other contemporary Greek poleis or with societies at other historical times and places. We can best appreciate the divergent answers to this question through a brief survey of two major lines of research during the last generation.

The origins of the current resurgence of Spartan research lie to a large extent in two works in the late 1960s and early 1970s: Geoffrey de Ste. Croix's aforementioned *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (1972) and Moses Finley's 1968 essay on the character of Spartan society. Both scholars exercised a powerful influence in stimulating a younger generation of British ancient historians to undertake in-depth research in the field; and in several respects their work and that of their primary academic heirs conveniently illustrates the two overlapping but competing lines of approach in recent work. Significantly, the works of both men originated within the same context in which Sparta at that time typically made its appearance in classical scholarship: the study of war. Within his analysis of the Peloponnesian War's origins, Ste. Croix's chapter on Sparta contributed the first detailed examination of the internal socio-political structures that conditioned Spartan policy-making. The influence of *OPW* cannot be over-estimated. The work convinced me, as a final-year undergraduate, that Spartan history was a field sufficiently backward in its scholarship but important in its subject-matter to provide potential for

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significant original research. Ste. Croix and his oeuvre also exercised a major influence on the work of my long-standing Spartan collaborator, Anton Powell. His chief follower, however, has been Paul Cartledge, whose numerous studies of Spartan politics and society from the mid-1970s onwards brought Spartan studies back into the mainstream of ancient historical research.

The research of Ste. Croix and Cartledge developed Spartan historiography a considerable distance from the standard views depicted above. In revealing the influence of private patronage and wealth in Spartan society, their work suggested a move away from earlier exclusively state-centred, quasi-totalitarian perceptions of Spartan society. Cartledge's use of anthropological evidence critiqued the idea that classical Spartan practices were survivals from an ancient primitive past. Comparisons with other societies were carefully nuanced and confined to specific phenomena and institutions where there were potentially genuine similarities. Gone was the emphasis on Spartan conservatism. In particular, Cartledge – as a colleague of Finley's at Cambridge in the early 1980s – fully embraced the latter's idea of Sparta's 'sixth-century revolution'. Some of Cartledge's work also suggested that certain aspects of Spartan culture had much in common with those of other Greek *poleis*. Note especially his ground-breaking article, 'Sparta and Samos', which showed leading Spartiates fully engaged in the standard Greek practice of maintaining personal *xeniai* (guest-friendships) with their peers in other *poleis*.[25]

Nevertheless, both Ste. Croix and Cartledge held firm to certain key aspects of earlier views, primarily on account of their overriding emphasis upon the Spartiates' exploitation of the helot population and their assertion of an unremitting class struggle between the two groups. For both scholars this was an exceptional form of domination, which compelled the Spartiates to construct for themselves a uniquely state-controlled and militarily-oriented socio-political system. Indeed, one of Cartledge's early articles, subsequently selected two decades later for re-publication in his *Spartan Reflections* (2001), highlighted 'The peculiar position of Sparta in the development of the Greek city-state'. During his debate with Richard Talbert regarding the reality of the Spartan-helot class struggle, the authoritarian connotations of Cartledge's analysis were reinforced by his analogy between the Spartiates' repression of the helots and the oppression of the non-white populations by the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Hence a triad of standard images fundamental to earlier depictions – those of Spartan exceptionality, militarism and state control – remained very much part of this line of research.[26]

Moses Finley's 1968 essay was also published in a volume on war,

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though of a very different kind: a collection of papers from a Paris conference on *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* organised by the structuralist historian, Jean-Pierre Vernant. Though brief and impressionistic in character, it was nevertheless all-encompassing in scope, attempting an overall assessment of Spartan internal society. Some of its arguments anticipated those subsequently developed by Ste. Croix or Cartledge. As already noted, it dismissed current views of Sparta's classical institutions as primitive survivals, focusing attention instead on their re-institutionalisation in a 'sixth-century revolution'. It also highlighted the significance of private influence within the Spartan polis. Finley, however, took these challenges to standard depictions somewhat further: arguing, first, that the role of private influence was just one of several respects in which the 'ideal type' of Sparta's state-controlled system was in practice 'filled with tensions and anomie'; secondly, that this system 'had a military function but not a wholly militaristic stamp'; and thirdly, that few of the main institutions of Spartan society were in themselves unique – not even her exploitation of the helots. What was unique, in his view, was the combination of these institutions into an overall structure capped by Sparta's singular public upbringing. Although this last point represented a partial concession to existing views, Finley's essay nevertheless already went a considerable way towards questioning the triad of standard images subsequently retained by Cartledge and Ste. Croix.

As Finley's Spartan pupil,[27] my research has gradually extended this interrogation of the notions of Spartan exceptionality, state control and militarism across the range of Spartan socio-economic institutions and practices. My initial work in the 1980s highlighted the conflictual aspects of the official Spartan social order and counteracted current orthodoxies regarding public control over land tenure, arguing that Sparta's property system was a normal Greek system of private ownership (Hodkinson 1983; 1986). My 1997 article on the development of archaic Sparta developed these insights into a broader argument that Sparta's classical institutions were the product not just of Finley's 'sixth-century revolution' but of continual change resulting from situations of conflict in every period from the seventh century onwards; and that Spartan developments (including even the apparently unique public upbringing) frequently exemplified or reflected developments within the wider Greek world. One aspect of my argument was that there was nothing special about the helot problem that demanded the radical transformation of Spartan society, which was primarily driven by internal conflicts among the Spartiates themselves (Hodkinson 1997).

Nevertheless, these early works by no means abandoned all the previous

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orthodoxies, especially as regards the dominance of state control. My 1983 article on 'Social order and the conflict of values' took Sparta's distinctive public order as the starting-point for understanding her society, notwithstanding the numerous conflicts detected within it. Even my 1997 piece viewed Sparta as 'a society distinctive in the pervasiveness of its collectivity and in the application of state control over institutions and practices which were, in other respects, not qualitatively different from those of other Greek states' (p. 98). From this standpoint, Sparta's public system took centre-stage and the private activities of Spartan citizens remained largely peripheral matters, either permissible exemptions or illegitimate departures from the official order.

In recent years my research has moved towards a more radical perspective. The final chapter of my monograph, *Property and Wealth in Classical Sparta* (2000), on 'Property concentration and the emergence of a plutocratic society', concluded that already in the later fifth century Sparta was increasingly being transformed into a plutocratic society, as she had formerly been in the archaic period. This insight suggests an alternative perspective from which Sparta's distinctive public institutions were, on the long view, a temporary and only partially effective imposition upon a more enduring privately-oriented, wealth-based society. The main obstacle to such a perspective is the apparently overwhelming emphasis of the ancient literary sources on the priority and longevity of Sparta's public system. However, the significance, and even the reality, of that apparent emphasis now appear less clear-cut in the light of recent research highlighting the misrepresentations embedded in many of the accounts by non-Spartan writers, who provide almost all our surviving information and comment.[28] My article on 'The imaginary Spartan *politeia*' has questioned, moreover, whether the majority of contemporary sources really do depict Sparta as embodying a state-controlled fusion of state and society, and whether the viewpoint of those writers who do so should necessarily be preferred to those that do not (Hodkinson 2005). In similar vein, my article, 'Was classical Sparta a military society?', has challenged the common belief that most classical writers depicted Sparta as a polis specially oriented towards military values and war, questioning the extent to which an adult Spartiate's daily life was dictated by military duties and arguing that Sparta was far more than simply a military society (Hodkinson 2006).

This challenge to the triad of Spartan exceptionalism, state control and militarism has not been an isolated endeavour. It has been paralleled, and partly anticipated, by equally radical contributions over the last 20 years by the eminent French historian, Jean Ducat, directed at two of the cornerstones of established interpretations of Spartan society: helotage and

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education. Rigorously exposing the presuppositions of our ancient sources, Ducat's monograph *Les Hilotes* (1990) undermined many of the supposed certainties of Spartiate-helot relations, arguing that the helots were privately rather than publicly owned, but with a position more favourable than the 'total exploitation' which characterised the position of bought slaves elsewhere. His *Spartan Education* (2006) applied the same critical method to the other cornerstone of state-centred interpretations of Spartan society, her public upbringing, emphasising its limited scope and highlighting the important 'hidden face' of private education which made many aspects of a Spartiate boy's education not too dissimilar from that of boys in other Greek *poleis*.[29]

Underlying these revisionist understandings has been a trend to 'normalise' Sparta, to question older portrayals of her peculiarity or uniqueness. It is this feature which has proved most controversial among Spartan specialists, as illustrated in Paul Cartledge's review of Ducat's recent book (Cartledge 2007). Comparative and cross-cultural perspectives are self-evidently central to this debate. Older portrayals utilised comparisons with contemporary Crete and analogies with 'primitive' and totalitarian regimes to assert Sparta's peculiarity. Conversely, revisionist approaches make frequent recourse to comparisons with Athens and other city-states,[30] arguing that many aspects of Spartan society were similar to those in other *poleis* and that even her unusual features were variations on common Greek institutions. Similarly, cross-cultural comparisons with societies beyond the ancient Greek world often prove useful in distinguishing Sparta's commonplace from her exceptional features.

The present volume

The Nottingham conference represented a timely opportunity to discuss a variety of comparative approaches to the key issues in current debates over the character of Spartan society. In a spirit of self-critical awareness that the danger in any revisionist trend is that of swinging too far in the opposite direction, participants were invited so as to embrace a diversity of perspectives on Sparta's typicality or exceptionality. Since the practice of comparative history is necessarily a two-way process, the conference included not just Spartan specialists but also colleagues who could apply their expertise on other Greek *poleis* to fruitful comparison with Sparta and approach current Spartan controversies without prior commitment to either side of the existing debates. The final decision of principle, reflected in the volume's sub-title 'Comparative approach*es*' [plural], was that, in view of the diversity of current methodologies of comparative history,

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contributors should be free to adopt a variety of approaches to the enterprise of examining Sparta in comparative perspective.

The outcome in the present volume is a range of comparative approaches to Spartan society divided into five parts, each comprising a roughly balanced mix of papers by colleagues with and without previous specialist publications on Sparta. Some essays compare aspects of Spartan society with similar phenomena in particular *poleis* elsewhere in Greece; some compare Spartan institutions with Greek practice more broadly. Other essays discuss the merits of different modern comparative approaches or examine comparative representations in the works of ancient writers.

The papers in Parts I–III focus primarily on comparative analysis of the Spartiates' internal socio-political institutions and practices. In Part I, 'Political and hegemonic structures', Ellen Millender (ch. 1) analyses Sparta's dyarchy (dual kingship): a singular political institution, as is later emphasised by Mogens Hansen (pp. 402–6). Millender's study highlights the dyarchy's distinctive position as a rare example of hereditary kingship in classical Greece and the unusual degree of opportunity it offered for ambitious individuals and even prominent royal females to exercise personal influence. That very capacity for extra-constitutional influence, however, confirms the abandonment by recent scholarship of earlier notions of a political structure under tight public control. Moreover, despite the ideologically-charged associations asserted by certain Athenocentric sources, the Spartan dyarchy never attained the absolute rule of monarchies elsewhere in the Mediterranean, remaining part of a competitive political system that imposed limits on the kings' exercise of power.

In Chapter 2 James Roy brings his expertise on Sparta's neighbour and sometime ally Elis to bear on a comparison of Elean and Spartan hegemonic structures – also subsequently discussed by Mogens Hansen and myself (chs. 11-12).[31] Both *poleis* achieved an extensive regional territorial domination unparalleled by other Peloponnesian *poleis*; but the nature of their respective dominations differed greatly. Despite Elis' alliance with Sparta until the later fifth century, there is no evidence of cultural transfer. Elis' regional hegemony was based on a clear territorial and civic division between the Elean polis proper and the remaining non-citizen areas inhabited by her subordinate allies. In contrast, Sparta's hegemonic structures involved a unique system of dual citizenship which united the *perioikoi* with the Spartiate élite in their shared status as 'Lakedaimonians' (*Lakedaimonioi*).

Part II, 'Social institutions', addresses the key areas of education and commensality. Stefan Link's discussion of education and pederasty in

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Sparta and Crete (ch. 3) questions the supposed similarities between the two educational systems central to the 'primitive survivals' hypothesis asserted by Forrest and Jeffery. Comparing the respective accounts of Xenophon and Ephorus, he highlights fundamental differences in the social realisation of Spartan and Cretan education. In the Cretan *poleis* the lives of leading and lesser families were interwoven, and private and public interests interconnected, through the official role played by fathers from eminent families in educating poorer youths attached to their sons. In contrast, Spartiate fathers were excluded from official educational roles, which were confined to public officials. Consequently, Cretan pederasty operated as a quasi-public institution, whereas (contrary to one modern view) Spartan pederasty was neither institutionalised nor integral to the public education. Although, from one angle, this implies that Sparta's official education had a more purely public character, from another perspective the overall upbringing of Spartan boys was less tightly integrated, with pederasty and the 'hidden face of private education' operating in a separate non-public sphere in which there was minimal interaction between families of different status.

Adam Rabinowitz's discussion of late archaic commensality (ch. 4) proposes a new interpretation of the development of Sparta's *syssitia* (common messes), as part of a broader re-evaluation of archaic Greek *symposia*. Drawing upon contemporary poetry and archaeological evidence (especially from the well-excavated Greek *poleis* of Sicily), he argues that, in contrast to the politically marginal, private aristocratic *symposia* of classical times, their late 7th- and early 6th-century predecessors were competitive public occasions, constitutive of their participants' membership and social agency within the community. The later sixth century, however, witnessed major upheavals in drinking practices across the Greek world, as prominent individuals increasingly exploited *symposia* for self-promotion, material display and the acquisition of influence. Different *poleis* reacted in different ways. In several communities *symposia* moved to private locations and sympotic imagery became prominent in funerary and other private contexts. The Spartans, in contrast, curtailed sympotic display, as they sought to use the *syssitia* to re-work the *symposion*, shorn of its competitive elements, into a new, idealised commensal structure. Sparta's uniqueness lay not, as normally thought, in her rejection of 'aristocratic *symposia*' in themselves, but in her idealising reaction to changes in their character. In classical times upper-class Athenians like Kritias could praise both sober Spartan *syssitia* and similarly restrained 'traditional' aristocratic *symposia*. Spartan *syssitia* were not completely divorced from the character of commensal drinking elsewhere.

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The papers on 'Religious institutions and practices' in Part III adopt different comparative approaches. Michael Flower's methodologically sophisticated global comparison of Spartan and Greek 'religion' (ch. 5) constitutes a direct challenge to the trend to 'normalise' or 'domesticate' Spartan practice. Acknowledging the revisionists' argument that there are parallels for most peculiar features of Spartan religion, he insists that what distinguishes Sparta is the combination or aggregate of those features. Spartan religious practice was exceptional in its 'key symbols', its distinctive set of religious personnel, the different nature of its festivals, and in its worship of different gods and heroes from other Greeks. Equally significantly, it was perceived as different by 'insiders', those non-Spartan Greeks who had privileged access – unavailable to modern scholarly 'outsiders' – to observe Spartan rituals and converse with Spartiates. (The definition and relative value of insider/outsider, or 'emic'/'etic', perspectives in the Spartan context is the subject of vigorous debate between Hansen and myself in chs. 11–13.)[32] The uniqueness of Spartan religion, Flower argues, indicates not merely the singularity of one facet of Spartan society; rather, religion was the key factor in Sparta's long-term stability: not just embedded in her society, but coterminous with the Spartan polis. Flower's analysis provides a strongly state-centred account, in which the singularity of Spartan religion signifies the uniqueness of Spartan society as a whole.

Andrew Bayliss's contribution (ch. 6), in contrast, examines a specific and important aspect of religious practice, the swearing of oaths. His paper presents insights from the research project *The Oath in Archaic and Classical Greece*, directed by my colleague Alan Sommerstein, which ran concurrently – and with frequent interaction – with the Sparta project within the University of Nottingham's Department of Classics.[33] The evidence suggests that Spartans, in line with their well-known religiosity, were scrupulous in keeping their oaths, which perhaps played an even more central role in Spartan life than in other Greek *poleis*. Nevertheless, a notable aspect of the Spartans' reputation for duplicitous behaviour was a motif according to which they frequently duped opponents through carefully worded oaths: the practice of 'Laconic swearing'. Such deceptive swearing was not confined to Spartans, but they were perceived as being particularly skilled at exploiting oaths through deliberately misleading use of their distinctive brevity of speech (*brachylogia*). Such trickery was deemed acceptable by ancient writers when someone was acting with divine sanction or righting wrongs, though not generally in other cases. On this topic it is frequently impossible to separate historical reality from literary motif. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests perceptions of the Spartans'

greater-than-average engagement in a standard Hellenic practice, exploiting a distinctive Greek characteristic to its fullest extent.

The primary focus of Part IV, 'Helots, Spartans and barbarians: Historiography and representations', is the relationship between Spartiates and helots, whose key role in recent debates regarding the nature of Spartan society has already been highlighted. The papers devote specific attention to divergent ancient and modern approaches, and to their ideological and methodological premises. Nino Luraghi (ch. 7) examines the development of comparative approaches to helotage from antiquity to the present, highlighting a striking difference between ancient and modern approaches. Ancient writers typically used the helots as a case study for demonstrating general propositions regarding communal systems of dependent labour. In contrast, modern historians have mainly focused on using comparable servile systems in other societies to formulate interpretative models of helotage. The impetus for both approaches has been perceptions of Sparta's overall peculiarity; but historical comparison suggests that the 'peculiarity' of helotage is more apparent than real. Despite significant divergences, current explanations of the origins of helotage agree in playing down the difference between *poleis* that developed helot-like systems of unfree labour and those where chattel slavery was the norm. Likewise, classification of helotage in relation to other types of organised labour indicates that all the elements constitutive of slavery as a relation of domination are also present in helotage. The complex mixture of traits characterising the helots, moreover, becomes less puzzling from the cross-cultural perspective of other servile populations, such as the medieval Korean *nobi*, Russian serfs or pre-colonial rural African slaves. Although comparative approaches cannot illuminate every aspect, they suggest a coherent interpretation of helotage without postulating an unparalleled historical development.

Dorothy and Thomas Figueira (ch. 8) use the collective identity of those (Messenian) helots who resisted Spartan authority as a test case for the application of postcolonial analysis, currently prominent in modern literary studies, to ancient social history. Commencing with a critique of postcolonial theory, they emphasise its lack of cultural or historical specificity and its homogenisation of the experience of imperial subjects on the basis of modern Indian experiences of British imperialism. Suggesting six examples of how a postcolonial theorist might re-conceive the social location of the helots or emergent Messenians, they argue that the resultant insights would largely be reformulations of understandings already achieved by ancient historians through the application of existing methodologies of social history. They suggest, nevertheless, that sceptical

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consideration of postcolonial theory might make useful contributions: first, by broaching a particular set of questions about how to treat Sparta comparatively; and, secondly, by modifying the long-standing but excessively positivist conception of the Spartan 'mirage' towards a more sophisticated concept of the 'emplotment' of Sparta in Hellenic imaginations and discourses.

Messenian resistance is also the subject of Lydia Langerwerf's paper (ch. 9), which undertakes a comparative examination of our most extended ancient account of rebellion against Spartan rule, the depiction of the 'revolt of Aristomenes' in Pausanias' *Periegesis*, written in the mid-second century AD. Scholars have often interpreted Pausanias' account as evidence for Messenian attempts to create an early 'history' and identity following their liberation from Sparta in 370 BC. Such interpretations, however, typically lack consideration of Pausanias' own agenda and his presentation of the Messenian rebels. The dubious and purely military qualities ascribed to them and to their leader Aristomenes suggest an ambivalent portrayal connected to their depiction as unfree. Aristomenes' negative portrayal contrasts with the positive, civic-oriented qualities ascribed to another rebel leader, Drimakos of Chios, in Athenaios' *Deipnosophistai*, another Greek work from the eastern Roman Empire during the period of the Second Sophistic. The Roman imperial context is crucial: though both the Spartan and Chian servile systems receive criticism, neither account supports the overthrow of servitude *per se*. Drimakos' positive portrayal reflects his co-operation with the Chians in establishing a less extreme, more sustainable system of slavery. Conversely, Aristomenes' negative portrayal reflects his implacable military opposition to Sparta at the cost of providing civic leadership for his Messenian followers. Pausanias' account is more a product of contemporary thinking than a source for hellenistic Messenian identity or invented tradition.

A similar argument is suggested in Rosie Harman's comparative study of the representation of vision in Xenophon's *Polity of the Lakedaimonians* (ch. 10). The work's numerous portrayals of Spartans viewing each other or displaying themselves to view have been taken as evidence for the importance of visual scrutiny in Spartan society. Combined with repeated invitations to the reader to imagine gazing at the Spartans, however, they suggest an authorial intention to explore how to represent and relate to others, consonant with Xenophon's interests as a writer caught between cultures. The work's representation of vision may consequently tell us more about how the Spartans could be conceptualised than about Spartan society itself. Indeed, comparison with the visual presentation of barbarian peoples in the *Cyropaedia* and *Anabasis* reveals a shared ethnographic focus on

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visuality in cross-cultural contexts and a similarity of concerns which suggests that the Spartans occupied a comparable place in Athenian thought to that of non-Greeks – an interesting conclusion in view of Ellen Millender's similar claims about fifth-century Athenian ideology.[34]

The diversity of opinion regarding Sparta's distinctiveness in Parts I–IV is maintained in the volume's final part (Part V, 'Spartan exceptionalism? A debate'), a wide-ranging debate between Mogens Hansen (Director of the Copenhagen Polis Centre) and myself on the overall question whether Sparta was a normal or an exceptional polis. Hansen (ch. 11) accepts many of the specific revisionist conclusions of recent research and agrees that classical Sparta was much more dynamic than the frozen society suggested in pre-1970s interpretations. Nevertheless, he argues, she was exceptional in several important respects: in the singular double-citizenship possessed by both Spartiates and *perioikoi*; as an unwalled city, indeed an untypical consumer city, with an extreme specialisation of function between a privileged urban and a servile rural population; in her sharp citizen population decline (*oliganthrōpia*) during the fifth and fourth centuries; in her unusual fusion of state and society, with a unique public education system and military community and a strict control over private and economic activities; and finally, in her distinctive dual kingship.

My response (ch. 12) acknowledges some of these idiosyncrasies, especially the double-citizenship and dual kingship, but maintains that on most key issues Sparta was less exceptional than might appear and that her distinctive aspects were connected with her exceptional success in achieving goals shared by most *poleis*. So, for example, Sparta's control over the dependent perioikic *poleis* of Lakedaimon was not in itself atypical; the singular double-citizenship was closely linked to the enviable adherence of those *poleis* to Spartan leadership. Likewise, she was not that exceptional in lacking a wall around her residential areas and the absence of any wall at all was linked to her position as a polis unsacked by external enemies. Equally, her dichotomy between an urban-based master class and rural dependent population was neither that clear-cut nor unusual; what was exceptional was her success in maintaining control over the helots despite the liberation of similar populations elsewhere, a success rooted in her achievement of the widespread Hellenic ambition that all citizens should be free from working for their living. Furthermore, Sparta did not embody an abnormal fusion of state and society. Official intervention in citizens' private affairs was limited and sometimes less than in other *poleis*, reflecting the legitimate existence of a household sphere beyond the scope of public control. Although her public institutions embraced all male citizens, they neither monopolised Spartiate daily life nor operated without significant private inputs.

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Chapter 13 continues our debate, with mutual responses addressing the two areas of greatest disagreement: whether Sparta's subjugation of her rural population to collective servitude was a singular phenomenon or part of a wider trend within the Peloponnese; and, above all, the aforementioned controversy whether the Spartan polis constituted an exceptional fusion of state and society. Underlying both disagreements are divergent approaches to the use of evidence. Given the paucity of contemporary evidence for the archaic and classical Peloponnese, what degree of reliance should be placed on later evidence from the hellenistic and Roman periods? Even more fundamentally, in comparing Sparta with other *poleis*, to what extent should we base our assessment on contemporary Greek opinion (what anthropologists term an 'emic', or insider's, perspective) or on judgements founded on modern historical insights and concepts independent of contemporary perceptions (an 'etic', or outsider's, perspective). Hansen employs both perspectives, arguing that the insider's contemporary view inherently tends to perceive differences between *poleis*, while the modern observer's more distant view tends to perceive similarities. Disagreeing with this last claim, I employ primarily an etic perspective, partly on the methodological ground of its greater suitability for comparative analysis, partly owing to evidential problems deriving from the absence of authentic insiders' testimony from Sparta itself and the paucity of disinterested non-Spartan opinion. These wider disagreements over methodologies for the comparative study of ancient Greek society mean that the debate over Spartan exceptionalism will surely continue.

It remains to thank the many people who have contributed to the Nottingham conference and to the production of this volume. My primary thanks go to the core members of the 'Sparta in Comparative Perspective' project: Ian Macgregor Morris shared the conference planning from inception to realisation; and Rosie Harman, Lydia Langerwerf and Malcolm Nicholson provided invaluable assistance during the conference. The conference organisation would have been impossible without the expert administrative skills of Sheila Jones from the University of Nottingham's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Centre. The staff of Florence Boot Hall and of Nottingham Hospitality provided a comfortable and congenial environment for our academic discussions.

My colleagues in the Department of Classics at Nottingham have given consistent support to the Sparta project throughout its existence, and it is gratifying that Andrew Bayliss (now at the University of Birmingham), Lynn Fotheringham, James Roy and Kostas Vlassopoulos were willing to

apply their expertise in other aspects of antiquity to the conference themes – the papers by Fotheringham and Vlassopoulos will appear in the *Sparta in Modern Thought* volume. I am especially grateful to Lynn Fotheringham for taking capable responsibility for the speakers' IT and audio-visual requirements; and to Sarah Miles for her skilful work in copy-editing the present volume.

More generally, the research represented in the conference and in this volume has benefited immeasurably from its location within two broader academic contexts. The activities of the University of Nottingham's Centre for Spartan and Peloponnesian Studies (directed by Bill Cavanagh and myself) have provided a stimulating interdisciplinary local environment for the Sparta project's researchers over the past five years. Likewise, the biennial meetings of the International Sparta Seminar have provided an active multi-national academic environment for the project's work. The conference's aims and agenda were significantly influenced by the work and collective discussions of the Seminar's community of Spartan historians, several of whom are represented in the present volume. In this context my special thanks are owed, as always, to my fellow International Sparta Seminar organiser, Anton Powell, who has also – in his other guise as founder and General Editor of The Classical Press of Wales – guided this volume through to publication with his usual combination of critical acumen and common sense.

Finally, I am glad to acknowledge the generous support received by the 'Sparta in Comparative Perspective' project from its financial sponsor, the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Notes

[1] The other core project members have been my research assistant, Dr Ian Macgregor Morris, and doctoral students Rosie Harman, Malcolm Nicholson and Lydia Langerwerf – the last funded by the University of Nottingham's School of Humanities.

[2] On Sparta's association with Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, Hodkinson 2010a; 2010b; Losemann 2007; 2010; Roche 2010. On the recurring use of ethnographic parallels in 20th-century scholarship on Sparta, Lupi 2002.

[3] On the predominance of British scholarship on Sparta: Cartledge 1998, 46–7; Hodkinson 1999, ix–x; Whitby 2002, 11–17; on the more balanced linguistic representation within ancient history in general (up to 1992), Scheidel 1997, 284. A keyword word search of COPAC (the merged online catalogue of major UK and Irish academic and national libraries: http://copac.ac.uk/) throws up 27 British authored and edited academic books on archaic and classical Spartan history or society since 1945: 50% more than the next highest listing, 18 academic books in German. In particular, in the two decades during which publications on Sparta began to revive

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significantly following World War II (the 1960s and 1970s), COPAC records twice as many books published in Britain (eight in total) as in any other country. In the survey of work on archaic and classical Sparta between 1965 and 1982 by the French historian, Jean Ducat (1983), six out of the eight 'ouvrages d'ensemble' cited were books by British scholars. This was the core recent bibliography during my academic apprenticeship in Spartan history, before my first publication in the field (Hodkinson 1983). In the period before World War II German publications on Sparta had predominated, but in the late 1930s several of them were tainted by the ideology of the Third Reich: Losemann 2007; 2010; Roche 2010. For the period 1945 to 1989 COPAC records only eight academic books on Spartan history published within Eastern or Western Germany.

[4] Publications in Classics doubled overall between 1952 and 1992 (Scheidel 1997, 267–8), whereas books on Sparta increased by over 300% from the 1950s to the 1980s (n. 7 below).

[5] Ollier 1933–43; Roussel 1939. A second edition of Roussel's work had, admittedly, been published in 1960.

[6] Whitby 2002, 12; Losemann 2007, 456.

[7] COPAC records six books for the period 1965–69, the same figure as for the decade 1950–59. Ten books are recorded for the 1960s as a whole, compared with 14 in the 1970s, 20 in the 1980s, 21 in the 1990s, and 34 in the nine years from 2000 to 2008.

[8] The BSA conference was organised by A.J.S. Spawforth; the London Classical Society seminar series by Anton Powell (subsequently published as Powell 1989).

[9] It is noteworthy that Ducat (1983) chose 1965 as the starting point for his survey of Spartan historiography. Other notable works in the mid-late 1960s were Pietro Janni's *La cultura di Sparta arcaica*: *Ricerche* I–II (1965 & 1970) and Elizabeth Rawson's *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought*, including five chapters on archaic and classical Sparta (1969, 1–80).

[10] Ste. Croix himself (1972, 89) qualifies his positive comments on the book by adding 'but this is very brief (only 160 pages)'.

[11] Toynbee 1934, 50–79, 455–7. Some of the ideas go back even earlier, to a substantial article in 1913. In his Preface Toynbee notes that 'The problems discussed in this book have been in my mind since the years 1909–11, when I was reading for the Oxford School of Literae Humaniores' (1969, v).

[12] Note Ducat's judgement: 'Cette manière a ses limites : en conclusion, O. se borne le plus souvent à indiquer quelle thèse a sa préférence; tout au plus risque-t-il parfois un panachage...Mais alors, quelles perspectives nouvelles apporte-t-elle ?' (1983, 195).

[13] It was given a second and third edition in 1980 and 1995, respectively. It receives favourable comment in Whitby's brief survey of earlier scholarship (2002, 16) and from Ducat, who judged its account 'plus lié que celui de Jones' and 'le niveau et l'intérêt…nettement plus soutenus' (1983, 194–5). Interestingly, Toynbee's study was also highly regarded by Ducat ('Ce livre a été le point de depart de bien des recherches contemporaines': 1983, 195), but nowadays it is rarely cited.

[14] Crook 1971, 435–6; Garnsey 2008, 33–38, esp. 38. An anecdote from Richard Gordon, a student in Jones's 1965–6 Special Subject class, confirms this method regarding the Sparta book: 'As the Part II Special Subject lecturer, he was a very considerable disappointment: his presentation consisted in reading out…the proofs

of his little book on Sparta… What was incredible, however, and immensely impressive to us even then, was the fact that he had written the entire book while in Alexandria, from memory, having no books to hand. He simply knew all the sources' (cited in Garnsey 2008, 26).

[15] Jones (1957), a collection of four previously published papers, plus a fifth chapter based on Cambridge lectures given in 1956, is a highly regarded publication reprinted several times, most recently in 1995 (an accolade never accorded to his Sparta book).

[16] Jones had published one very short article partly on Spartan foreign policy some 15 years previously (Jones 1952/53) and subsequently produced an article on Spartan history around the time of his Sparta book (Jones 1966). Since 1979, Cambridge Special Subjects on Sparta have been taught by the world-leading expert, Paul Cartledge.

[17] In his preface, Jones acknowledges that Antony Andrewes and Geoffrey de Ste. Croix had 'heartily disapproved' of his book. G. L. Huxley's review judged it 'not the work which the Professor's many admirers would choose in order to exemplify the best of his scholarship' (1968, 90). Ducat's retrospective judgement was more severe: 'un résumé…sec et linéaire, où, faute de discussion, les affirmations de l'auteur peuvent parfois paraître arbitraires' (1983, 194).

[18] Lazenby's comment refers to the so-called 'Great Rhētra', an authentic constitutional document from archaic Sparta, recorded in Plutarch's *Life of Lykourgos* ch. 6, whose uncertain text has prompted diverse ingenious but uncertain 'solutions', essentially an exercise in 'intellectual gymnastics' (Ehrenberg 1968, 380; cf. Cartledge 1979, 113). The response to Lazenby's question in Christopher Tuplin's review ('how many of us, Lazenby asks, "have not thought up a new and completely satisfying version of the rhetra?" – well, the present reviewer can claim to be one': 1986, 25) symbolises the very different approach of the succeeding generation of British scholars which has subsequently transformed Spartan studies.

[19] Forrest published a couple of prior articles on Sparta before his book (Forrest 1963; 1967); but, apart from an article six years later on 'Democracy and oligarchy in Sparta and Athens' (Forrest 1983), even he did not return to the subject for the rest of his publishing career into the mid-1990s.

[20] Cf. P.J. Rhodes' reference (1997, 3) to 'the theme park in which scholars used to believe'.

[21] This image is clear in the book on Sparta by the Canadian scholar Humfrey Michell (1952), in prominent use in British universities owing to its publication by Cambridge University Press and its new paperback edition in 1964: '…they were a great people; but their greatness sprang from qualities violently and astonishingly different from those that the world regards as typically Greek… The Spartan way of life, the discipline to which its adherents were subjected, was a strange one, unequalled in severity in any other time or place' (Michell 1952, 1).

[22] Powell and Hodkinson 1994; Hodkinson and Powell 1999; Powell and Hodkinson 2002; Figueira 2004; Hodkinson and Powell 2006.

[23] Cf. Kennell 1995, 143.

[24] Finley 1968, 144–6; 1975, 116–17; cf. Brelich 1969; Lupi 2002.

[25] Influence of patronage and wealth: Ste. Croix 1972, 124–51, 353–4; Cartledge 1987, 139–59. Anthropological and comparative approach: Cartledge 1985; 1987, 24–5, 31-2. Sparta and Samos: Cartledge 1982.

[26] Spartan-helot class struggle and its ramifications; Ste. Croix 1971, 89–94; Cartledge 1987, 160–79. Peculiar position: Cartledge 1980. Class struggle debate: Talbert 1989; Cartledge 1991.

[27] I commenced doctoral research at Cambridge under Finley's supervision in 1975 and, despite leaving Cambridge in 1977 to take up a post at Manchester, remained in close touch with him until his death in 1986.

[28] Besides the idealisation in oligarchic and philosophical circles known as the 'Spartan mirage' (Ollier 1933–43, vol. I), note Millender's work on the 'barbarisation' of Sparta in democratic Athenian and Athenian-influenced thought (1996; 1999; 2001; 2002a; 2002b) and Flower's discussion of the Spartans' own 'invention of tradition' (2002).

[29] A similar point had already been made by Kennell 1995, 143.

[30] Cf. esp. Hodkinson 1997, 92–7, and the 150 entries in the index to Hodkinson 2000 (pp. 496–7), under the heading 'Sparta (classical) in comparative perspective'.

[31] Pp. 388, 423–5.

[32] Pp. 386, 419–22, 473–4, 480–2.

[33] For the publications of the *Oath* project and its online database of references to oaths in Greek texts down to 322 BC, see http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/classics/research/projects/oaths/intro.aspx.

[34] Cf. Millender's works cited in n. 28 above.

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PART I

POLITICAL AND HEGEMONIC STRUCTURES

Chapter 1

THE SPARTAN DYARCHY: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Ellen Millender

Sparta's hereditary dyarchy, a rare example of the survival of kingship in the Greek world along with the Battiads of Cyrene and the Macedonian kings, long fascinated other Greeks. Mythical and historical members of the Agiad and Eurypontid royal houses figure prominently in a number of ancient works, particularly Herodotus' *Histories*, Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War, several Euripidean tragedies, Xenophon's *Hellenica* and *Agesilaus*, and several of Plutarch's 'Spartan' lives. Given Sparta's unusual retention of kingship in the Greek world, it is not surprising that some ancient authors looked outside Sparta to make sense of its hereditary dyarchy. More significantly, several ancient sources, such as Herodotus and Euripides, associate the Spartan dyarchy with the various forms of one-man rule that the Greeks encountered around the Mediterranean.[1] Thucydides, in addition, recounts the ties of the Agiad regent Pausanias with the court of Achaemenid Persia and his transformation into a tyrant manqué (1.128.3–135.1). Plutarch's biographies of Agis IV and Cleomenes III, in turn, suggest that several of Sparta's Hellenistic dyarchs looked to Alexander the Great's Ptolemaic successors in Egypt and Seleucid successors in Asia for models of monarchic rule. Both biographies, moreover, provide portraits of politically powerful women reminiscent of the many females in Herodotus' *Histories* who exercise influence in the courts of Greek and non-Greek dynasts.[2]

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It is difficult to assess such posited linkages between the Lacedaemonians' unique dyarchy and non-Greek forms of kingship, given both the relative paucity of relevant archaeological material for Sparta and the powerful influence of Athenian democratic ideology on some of our most important ancient accounts of Sparta's dyarchy.[3] That ideology, in turn, equally colors certain key treatments of non-Greek regimes, especially those provided by Herodotus' *Histories* and by tragedies such as Aeschylus' *Persae* of 472 BCE. As such Athenian-based[4] works reveal, the Athenians had developed a relatively standardized vocabulary of 'barbarism' to describe everything non-Greek from sexual mores and attitudes toward the body to political and social structures.[5] Herodotus, building upon this vocabulary, provides a model of absolute rule via the portrait of autocracy that he attributes to the Persian Otanes (3.80.2–5). Along with Herodotus' numerous accounts of barbarian regimes, Otanes' speech furnishes a laundry list of autocratic must-haves: (1) hereditary rule, which is arbitrary and subject to disturbances; (2) *hubris*, which manifests itself in the autocrat's penchant for wickedness, impiety, violence, envy, and transgression of traditions and societal norms; (3) lack of accountability to other citizens or even the laws of the land; (4) aberrant sexual relations and destructive forms of sexual desire; and (5) inverted gender dynamics that give rise to powerful females.[6] Fortunately, enough work has been conducted on non-Greek regimes such as Achaemenid Persia that we can strip away a good deal of this exaggeration and misrepresentation to arrive at a more accurate picture of the basic historical characteristics of one-man rule that fifth-century Greeks encountered in the Mediterranean world. Such monarchies appear to have been hereditary in nature, absolute, and capable of offering – to varying degrees – female members of the ruling house opportunities to exercise political influence.[7]

To what degree did the Lacedaemonians' dyarchy correspond either to this more historically accurate picture of one-man rule or to the more ideologically charged portrait of autocracy in the speech ascribed to Otanes? In this chapter I intend to address this question through an examination of the Spartan royal houses from the sixth to the third centuries. Since full coverage of the ancient evidence is impossible within the limits of this paper, I have decided to focus on the detailed portraits of Spartan kings – and some of their female relations – provided by Herodotus, Euripides, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plutarch.[8] With the help of these literary sources and relevant archaeological and epigraphic material, I offer a chronologically organized study of the Spartan dyarchy divided into three sections. The first section of the chapter examines the members of the Spartan royal houses featured in fifth-century sources,

especially the Agiad Cleomenes I (reign *c.* 520–490) and his daughter, Gorgo. In the second section I turn to a study of the evidence that both Xenophon and other sources provide on the fourth-century Eurypontid king Agesilaus II (400–360) and his sister, Cynisca. The third section analyzes the literary and epigraphic evidence available on a number of Hellenistic royal figures, particularly those portrayed in Plutarch's biographies of the Eurypontid Agis IV (*c.* 244–241) and the Agiad Cleomenes III (*c.* 235–222). Within each section I commence with a historiographical analysis of the sources' representations of members of the Spartan royal houses. I then provide a historical analysis of their power and status in Lacedaemon.

Over the course of the paper, I examine the Spartan dyarchy from three different comparative perspectives. First, I compare literary representations of Spartan dyarchs and female members of the royal houses from all three periods to see if and how treatments of Spartan kings and their womenfolk changed over time. Second, I consider the relative prerogatives and position of kings like Cleomenes I, Agesilaus II, and the third-century dyarchs, examining how their power compared with that of their counterparts elsewhere in the ancient world, such as the Persian Achaemenids and the Ptolemies in Egypt. Third, I analyze the political influence that female members of the Spartan royal houses wielded in comparison both with one another and with their contemporaries elsewhere – contemporaries such as the Achaemenid queen, Atossa, and the Ptolemaic queens, Arsinoe II and Berenice II.

I. The Spartan dyarchy in the sixth and fifth centuries

Much of the information that we possess on the Spartan dyarchy comes from fifth-century sources. Herodotus' account of the Persian Wars features a host of Spartan royal figures and provides a wealth of detail on the prerogatives of the dyarchs. Thanks to Thucydides' study of the Peloponnesian War, we know a good deal about a number of fifth-century kings, particularly the Eurypontid Archidamus II (*c.* 469–427). While Euripides focuses on the mythical Spartan royal family in such tragedies as his *Andromache*, *Trojan Women*, and *Helen*, these works provide useful information on fifth-century Athenian notions regarding the Lacedaemonians' royal houses.

1. Sparta's 'despotic' dyarchs

As I have argued elsewhere, Herodotus forges close links between Sparta's kings and the many Greek and non-Greek autocrats whom he depicts in his text, both in his general comments on the Spartan dyarchy and in his

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individual portraits of Spartan rule.[9] His discussion of the origins of Spartan dyarchy, for example, traces the royal families' lineage back to the Egyptians and more obliquely connects them with the Assyrians.[10] Herodotus also makes explicit comparisons between Spartan and barbarian royal practices, especially in his account of the Spartan kings' funeral honors (6.58–9).[11] The *Histories*' description of the Lacedaemonians' royal obsequies, moreover, portrays the Spartan royal funeral as an institution that reifies and supports an autocratic political structure (6.58):

> The kings have received these prerogatives from the Spartan commonwealth during their lifetime, and when they die they receive the following honors. Horsemen carry news of the death throughout Laconia, and women go about the city beating cauldrons. When this has been accomplished, two free people from each house, one man and one woman, are compelled to put on mourning or incur heavy penalties if they fail to do so. The Lacedaemonians observe the same custom at the deaths of their kings as the barbarians of Asia, for most of the barbarians observe the same custom upon their kings' deaths. For, whenever a king of the Lacedaemonians dies, not only the Spartiates, but also a certain number of the perioeci from all over Lacedaemon, are obligated to attend the funeral. When the perioeci, the helots, and the Spartiates themselves have been assembled in the same place to the number of many thousands, mingled with the women, they zealously strike their foreheads and make endless lamentation, declaring that the most recently deceased king was the best king they had ever had.

Through their speechless display, self-mutilation, obligatory attendance, and compulsory externalization of their lamentation, the Lacedaemonian mourners abase themselves and establish the absolute superiority of the dead king.[12] Herodotus, in addition, notes that the funeral ceremony was one of the privileges (γέρεα) that the Spartan kings could claim from the *polis* (6.56–58.1; cf. 7.104.2). Functioning as a prerogative, the funeral associates Sparta with several autocratically governed societies in the *Histories*, in which both the giving and receiving of special privileges play a fundamental role.[13]

Finally, Herodotus constructs a number of parallels between the Spartan kingship and other forms of autocracy in his portraits of Spartan kings. For example, the Agiad king Anaxandridas II (5.40) and the Eurypontid king Ariston (6.61–2) share an excessive attachment to women reminiscent of the immoderate sexual desire (ἔρως) exhibited by autocrats in the *Histories*, such as the Lydian Candaules (1.8–12) and the Persian Xerxes (9.108–13).[14] The Agiad regent Pausanias reputedly fell prey to a similarly transgressive desire (ἔρως) to become tyrant of Greece, which inspired his illegitimate betrothal to the daughter of the Achaemenid general,

Megabates (5.32).[15] Most striking, however, are the correspondences between Herodotus' portrait of the Agiad Cleomenes I and his depiction of the Persian despot, Cambyses.[16] In his study of Cleomenes' ostensible madness, Alan Griffiths has aptly described these rulers as 'two almost contemporary, deranged, dipsomaniac, priest-flogging, skin-stripping, sacrilegious, sadistic warrior kings who are misled by place-name oracles and expire in circumstances symbolically retributive of their capricious cruelties'.[17]

The Spartan dyarchy also receives negative attention in Athenian tragedies that feature Sparta's mythical royal family: Helen, Menelaus, and Hermione. Sophocles' *Ajax*, produced at some point in the later 440s, mirrors Herodotus' contemporaneous representation of historical Spartan kings in its portrayal of Menelaus as a veritable despot (1047–62).[18] Through his quarrel with Teucer, Menelaus reveals his obsession with his own power and his belief that obedience to one's rulers should come before all else, including the unwritten laws protected by the gods. In addition, Menelaus argues that fear and reverence of one's betters are essential both to the preservation of the laws of the *polis* and the maintenance of discipline within the camp (1067–90).[19] In response to Menelaus' criticism of Ajax, Teucer launches into a vitriolic attack on 'Spartan' tyranny, which manifests itself in Menelaus' domination over his Spartan subjects and his desire to lord it over his allies abroad (1097–108):[20]

> Come, tell your story again from the beginning: do you really think that you
> brought this man here as an ally for the Greeks by your personal effort?
> Did he not sail forth as his own master?
> On what grounds are you this man's commander? What right do you have
> to rule the host which he brought from home?
> You came as Sparta's king, no ruler of ours.
> In no circumstances did the right of rule lie in your power
> to discipline him, any more than for him to discipline you.
> You sailed here as a subordinate commander, not as commander
> of the whole force, that you should ever claim the right to rule Ajax.
> Go lord it over those whom you [are entitled to] rule and punish
> them with those proud words of yours.

Menelaus appears in an equally negative light in several Euripidean tragedies, such as the *Andromache* of *c.* 425.[21] In this play the Spartan king's penchant for meddling in the affairs of other states leads him to interfere in the domestic concerns of his son-in-law's domain, Thessalian Phthia, in order to protect his daughter Hermione's matrimonial rights. Menelaus' aggression leads the aged Peleus to ask why he is not satisfied with ruling over his own house and Sparta (581–2). When Peleus puts an end to

Menelaus' machinations, the Spartan king immediately turns his sights on a new target, an unnamed city near Sparta that he plans to attack and subjugate (733–6).[22] Menelaus even more openly reveals his interest in expanding his sphere of influence in Euripides' *Orestes* of 408. When Orestes describes Menelaus' failure to speak in defense of his matricide at the Argive assembly, he hints that his uncle was already then contemplating usurpation of the Argive throne (1058–9). Later in the play he repeats this accusation (1596, 1600 ff.), which Menelaus confirms through his lack of rejoinder. At the conclusion of the tragedy, the Dioscuri further substantiate Orestes' suspicions, when they advise Menelaus to be content with his rule over Sparta (1660–5).[23]

Euripides, more importantly, twice links Sparta and tyranny in the *Andromache*.[24] As the chorus reflects upon the dangers that ensue when two wives share the same bed, it compares the strife that arises when two tyrants share one rule, add burden to burden, and lead to *stasis* among the citizens (471–5). The expression 'twofold tyranny' (473: δίπτυχοι τυραννίδες) most probably refers to Sparta's hereditary dyarchy and again recalls the connection between the Spartan kingship and tyranny that Herodotus emphasizes throughout his *Histories*.[25] This interpretation of the passage receives support from the scathing attack that Peleus later makes on the rule exercised by Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon. In this speech, which de-glorifies Menelaus' victory at Troy, Peleus accuses the Spartan king of unjustly taking credit for a battle won by others and criticizes the very institution of monarchy (693–705):[26]

> Ah me, how wrong is our Greek custom!
> When armies set up trophies over their enemies,
> they do not regard this as the work of the toiling privates,
> but the general reaps the credit,
> one man among ten thousand, who, wielding his spear,
> does the work of one man – no more – yet has more esteem.
> Those sitting arrogantly in power over the city
> think they are better than the people, though they themselves are nobodies.
> The common people, however, are infinitely wiser than they
> [and would become rulers] if boldness were allied with a common purpose.[27]
> So you and your brother just sit back, puffed up
> by your command at Troy,
> exalted high by the toils and hardships of others.

Thucydides, who devotes less attention to the Spartan dyarchy than Herodotus and Euripides, likewise associates Spartan kingship and tyranny in his account of the medism of the Agiad regent, Pausanias (1.128.3–135.1). Through his *hubris*, lawlessness, treachery, and violence,

Thucydides' Pausanias recalls the many autocrats, including several Spartan kings, who inhabit Herodotus' *Histories*. As Thucydides' account progresses, Pausanias becomes a veritable caricature of tyranny. The regent closely follows the pattern of the would-be despot, as if he had studied Herodotus' account of the foundation of the Median monarchy (1.96–100) and Otanes' speech in the constitutional debate (3.80.2–5).[28] Pausanias degenerates both morally and physically into a barbarian despot, as he intrigues with Xerxes (1.128.3–129), develops delusions of grandeur (1.130.1), adopts Median fashion and a bodyguard (1.130.1), puts on Persian-style banquets (1.130.1), and develops a harsh temper (1.130.2). He also shuts himself off from normal contact with other men (1.130.2), like the Median Deioces (cf. Hdt. 1.99). Thucydides' description of Pausanias' correspondence with the Persian king, moreover, links the medizing regent with the Herodotean autocrats who employ the written word and demonstrate a similar concern with the secrecy of their written communications.[29] Particularly noteworthy are the secret written instructions to kill the bearer of his messages that Pausanias appends to his letters to the Persian king (1.132.5). Herodotus claims that the Persian king Darius I similarly communicated his demand for the murder of Oroetes, the governor of Sardis (Hdt. 3.128.2–5).[30] The hubristic couplet that Pausanias had inscribed on the Delphic tripod to celebrate his role in the Greeks' victory over the Persians (1.132.2–3) even further bonds the Spartan would-be-tyrant to the Eastern autocrats he befriends and emulates.[31]

2. Herodotus, Euripides, and the women behind (or above?) the Spartan throne

The fifth-century sources further associate the Spartan dyarchy with autocracy through constructions of female members of the Spartan royal houses that parallel Herodotus' representations of powerful female members of dynastic courts.[32] The *Histories* furnishes detailed portrayals of a number of barbarian females who either exercise political power in their own right or exert influence over powerful men – all within the context of absolute power.[33] Over the course of this work, we learn about the public works of queens Semiramis and Nitocris of Babylon (1.184–7), the Massagetan queen Tomyris' struggle against the Persian Cyrus (1.205–14), the Egyptian queen Nitocris' vengeance against a number of her subjects on behalf of her brother (2.100), and the Carian princess Artemisia's involvement in Xerxes' expedition against the Greeks.[34] Herodotus also provides accounts of royal women wielding a more informal type of influence over their menfolk in both the Persian and other Eastern courts. His history of the rise and fall of various Eastern powers begins with such a tale of 'boudoir' politics, in which the outraged wife of

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the Lydian king, Candaules, engineers her husband's death and the accession of the Mermnad Gyges (1.11–13). Moving through the text, we encounter similar figures such as the Persian queen Atossa, who exploits a private moment in bed to convince her husband Darius to consider launching an expedition against Hellas (3.134).[35]

Herodotus introduces us to a similarly influential royal Spartan woman in his portrayal of Argeia, the mythical queen and mother of the twin founders of the Agiad and Eurypontid houses. According to Herodotus, Argeia's cleverness and desire that both of her sons be made kings were responsible for the foundation of the Spartan dyarchy (6.52.2–7). This account thus links the Spartan queen with the other women in the *Histories* who influence dynastic succession, such as the Persian Atossa (7.3.4).[36] The other Spartan female whose initiative and influence merits Herodotus' particular attention is Gorgo, the daughter of Cleomenes I and wife of Leonidas I (*c.* 490–480). When we first meet her in the *Histories*, the eight-year-old Gorgo assumes the role of wise advisor to her father in his dealings with the Milesian despot, Aristagoras (5.51.2–3). Gorgo thereby joins a select group of females in this text who perform a similar function in the courts of both Greek and non-Greek dynasts, such as the daughter of the Greek tyrant Polycrates (3.124) and the wife of the Egyptian king Sesostris (2.107).[37] Later, as the wife of Leonidas, Gorgo alone discovers the secret of the message sent by the exiled Spartan king Demaratus to the Lacedaemonians concerning Xerxes' plan to attack Hellas (7.239.4).[38] Argeia's and Gorgo's initiative and ability to outsmart the male leadership of their *polis* further associate them with many of the non-Greek royal women featured in the *Histories*, especially the Carian princess, Artemisia (cf. Hdt. 7.99; 8.87–8, 93).

Euripides, in turn, focuses attention on the female members of the mythical Spartan royal house in a number of his tragedies, especially the *Andromache* of *c.* 425 and the *Troades* of 415.[39] These dramas pair the tyrannically inclined Spartan king Menelaus with, respectively, his intemperate daughter, Hermione, and his licentious wife, Helen. Euripides portrays the Spartan queen and princess as similar in many respects, including their voracious appetite for wealth[40] and their excessive fondness for the opposite sex (φιλανδρία; cf. *Andromache* 229–31).[41] In the *Andromache* several characters also refer to these Spartan women's ability to manipulate and control Menelaus.[42] This topsy-turvy sexual dynamic, according to the Trojan Andromache, has repeatedly led the Spartan king to commit murder and other outrages for the sake of a woman (361–3). Peleus similarly claims that the sexual control exerted by the wanton Helen led Menelaus to commence the deadly war with the Trojans (605–18) and later induced him

to demand the sacrifice of his niece, Iphigenia (624–6). As Peleus points out in his description of the Spartan couple's later reunion, Menelaus' immoderate physical desire for his wife even forced him to spare her life. At the sight of Helen's breasts, Menelaus supposedly became overpowered with desire, threw away his sword, and proceeded to kiss and fondle the 'traitorous bitch' (627–31).

Helen's sexual domination of her husband also figures prominently in the *Troades*, which recounts Menelaus' judgment of Helen.[43] While offering arguments in favor of Helen's execution, Hecuba reveals her concern that the uxorious Menelaus' passion will never allow him to slay his wife (890–4, 1049, 1051). Menelaus himself indicates this lack of resolve when he makes the odd wish that Helen should go and find those who will stone her to death. The Spartan king thereby implicitly absolves himself of all responsibility for her punishment (1039–41).[44] The subsequent description of the couple's return to Sparta provided by the chorus of Trojan women seems to support Hecuba's fear and suggests that Menelaus already lost his resolve to kill Helen before their departure (1100–17).[45]

Euripides' *Andromache* portrays an equally dysfunctional relationship between Menelaus and Hermione, whose manipulation of her father impels him to take up arms yet again, this time against a defenseless woman and child (326–8; cf. 370–3). Menelaus appears to be just as incapable of exerting any influence over Hermione's behavior, as he was earlier unable to keep her mother, Helen, at home (590–5, 602–4; cf. *Troades* 943–4). The Spartan king's inability to control the females in his family leads several Euripidean characters to challenge his masculinity (cf. *Andromache* 353–4, 590 ff.; *IA* 945). Such gender role reversal even occurs in Euripides' more positive treatment of Helen and Menelaus in his *Helen* of 412. The reunited Spartan king and queen work together to effect their escape from the Egyptian king Theoclymenus. Nevertheless, it is Helen whose superior intelligence – reminiscent of Herodotus' Argeia and Gorgo – supplies the plan that eventually leads to their rescue (813 ff.).[46]

As this collection of Spartan representations demonstrates, several key sources on archaic and classical Lacedaemon suggest that the Spartan dyarchy had much in common with the various forms of one-man rule that the Greeks encountered. We need, however, to approach with caution Herodotus' treatment of the Spartan royal houses and Euripides' characterization of the mythical royal family. Both authors reflect an essentially Athenocentric conceptualization of a 'barbarized' Sparta, against which the Athenians could define themselves and validate their social, cultural, and political structures, along with their hegemonic aspirations in Hellas.[47] Scholars, in addition, have long been troubled by many aspects of

Thucydides' digression on Pausanias, which is, among other things, oddly reminiscent of Herodotus' *Histories* in its anecdotal tone, relatively loose relevance to the main narrative, and use of folk-tale motifs.[48] Thucydides' treatment of the correspondence between Pausanias and the Persians as authentic has likewise sparked suspicion regarding the entire episode.[49] Debate also continues to abound concerning Thucydides' sources for this excursus[50] and the true nature of Pausanias' intentions.[51] For these and other reasons, several historians have dismissed the whole account as an Athenian fabrication, along with the trumped-up charges of medism that were 'invented to facilitate the Athenian seizure and retention of hegemony'.[52]

3. The Spartan dyarchy: constitutional, collegial, and charismatic kingship

The influence of Athenian democratic ideology on Herodotus' and Euripides' – and very probably Thucydides' – accounts of the Spartan royal families, of course, does not mean that we should dismiss such treatments of Spartan kingship entirely, especially those in the *Histories*. It is true that many of Herodotus' depictions of both the Lacedaemonian dyarchy and individual members of the Spartan royal families conform closely to his model of one-man rule and help to construct Sparta as a society organized around the principles of absolute kingship.[53] Nevertheless, both Herodotus and Thucydides provide information about the dyarchy that counters such ideologically charged representations of Spartan kingship. As I argue below, scattered accounts of the dyarchs situated outside of this dominant narrative of Spartan despotism can help reveal a great deal about the actuality – as opposed to the representation – of Spartan kingship.[54]

Most of the disparate information on Sparta included in the *Histories* clusters around the figures of the Spartan kings and renders Herodotus' portrait of Sparta essentially a series of royal biographical sketches. For example, he constructs the bulk of his narrative of Spartan internal history in the late sixth and early fifth centuries around the stories of the birth and rivalry of Cleomenes I and his half-brother Dorieus (5.39–48), the conflict between Cleomenes and Demaratus (6.50–1, 61–70), and Cleomenes' madness and demise (6.74–84). He similarly situates several accounts of Sparta's external affairs in the context of his extended treatment of Cleomenes I, including the tyrant Aristagoras' visit to Sparta (5.38, 49–51), Sparta's conflict with the young Athenian democracy (5.70, 72–6), and Sparta's early fifth-century war with Argos (6.76–81).

The Cleomenes 'logos' thus dominates much of Herodotus' account of Sparta, and Cleomenes I, as stated above, often emerges from the text as the Spartan equivalent of the quintessential Herodotean despot, the Persian

Cambyses.[55] There are, nevertheless, a number of divergences among the host of Spartan royal figures who appear in the *Histories*. The Agiad Leonidas I, the heroic martyr at Thermopylae, does not conform to the tyrannical model established by Herodotus elsewhere in his text (cf. 3.80.2–5).[56] Herodotus, moreover, questions the reports of the regent Pausanias' tyrannical leanings (5.32; cf. 8.3.2) and provides a generally favorable account of this royal figure. For example, Pausanias fails to follow the example set by many Herodotean despots when he refuses to impale the Persian Mardonius' head in revenge for Xerxes' decapitation of Leonidas (9.79.1; cf. 7.238).[57] The Spartan regent's gentle treatment of the Persian Pharandates' concubine (9.76) and his comparison of Greek frugality with Persian luxury (9.82) further distance him from the despots that dominate the *Histories*.

Herodotus, more importantly, provides extensive evidence that illuminates the unique constitutional position of the Lacedaemonian dyarchs, as rulers circumscribed by both Sparta's other political organs and their own collegiality.[58] He understood that the kings were only one part of Sparta's complex political system and reveals his knowledge concerning the prerogatives and duties of the other organs of Spartan government: the gerousia, the ephorate, and the assembly.[59] Through his scattered comments on the powers that these various bodies enjoyed, Herodotus also demonstrates his awareness of the constitutional and judicial limits on the kings that these other organs of government imposed. We hear, for example, of the ephors' reception and expulsion of foreign visitors,[60] their authority to order out a levy and appoint its commander,[61] and their possible accompaniment of kings (or, in this case, a regent) on campaign.[62] Herodotus likewise acknowledges the Gerousia's joint deliberations with the dyarchs (6.57.5) and its role in the protection of the hereditary succession (5.40.1).[63] In addition, his brief list of the legal matters left to the sole discretion of the kings (6.57.4) both demonstrates his knowledge of the dyarchs' comparatively limited judicial powers and suggests that the majority of legal issues came under the purview of the other organs of government.[64]

Herodotus' account of the Agiad Cleomenes I's conflict with his Eurypontid colleague, Demaratus, also illustrates the ways in which collegiality could limit individual Spartan kings' exercise of authority (6.50–70; cf. 5.74–6).[65] When Cleomenes led a Peloponnesian force to Athens in order to avenge himself on the young Athenian democracy and to install Isagoras as tyrant, both the Corinthians and Demaratus experienced a change of heart and put an end to the operation (5.74–6). Demaratus later obstructed Cleomenes' attempt to punish the leading

medizers in Aegina (6.50–1, 61.1). In response Cleomenes engineered Demaratus' deposition on the grounds of illegitimacy and replaced him with his kinsman, Leotychidas (6.61–67.1).

Besides revealing the checks that the dyarchs could impose on one another, this episode demonstrates that the kings could be tried before the high court (composed of the ephors and gerousia) and could be deposed, if they were found guilty of the proffered charges.[66] Herodotus also recounts three occasions on which Spartan kings were brought into court on criminal charges. Cleomenes I's enemies brought him into court on a charge of bribery following his victory over Argos at the battle of Sepeia *c.* 494 (6.82).[67] The Eurypontid Leotychidas II (*c.* 491–469) twice appeared before the court, the first time for violence committed against the Aeginetans (6.85), the second time on a charge of bribery during his campaign in Thessaly *c.* 476 (6.72). Although this court found Cleomenes' plea credible and acquitted him, they found Leotychidas guilty on both counts, handed him over to the Aeginetans on the first occasion, and banished him on the second.

Herodotus provides other examples of the ephors' and elders' ability to modify kingly behavior that conflicted with the welfare of the state. His account of the circumstances surrounding the birth of Cleomenes I shows that both the ephors and gerousia could intervene in the kings' domestic affairs when matters of interest to the Spartiate commonwealth were concerned.[68] When King Anaxandridas II's first wife failed to produce an heir and put in jeopardy the hereditary succession of the Agiad dynasty, the ephors suggested that the king divorce his wife. Upon his refusal, both the ephors and the *gerontes* strongly advised Anaxandridas to take a second wife and threatened that his disobedience would force the Spartans to take unpleasant measures against him (5.40.1). The nature of the threat is unclear, but the above evidence suggests that Anaxandridas may have had to face prosecution if he continued to follow a policy contrary to the good of the community.[69] Cleomenes I's life seems to have ended with a similar intervention, when the kings' closest relations (προσήκοντες) ostensibly placed him in stocks (6.75.2).

Although Herodotus mentions no other participants in this last event, other ancient evidence suggests that the ephors would have been involved in Cleomenes' imprisonment, since they alone had the right to arrest and imprison the dyarchs. Thucydides' *History*, for example, recounts the Spartan ephors' surveillance and eventual arrest of the Agiad regent, Pausanias (1.131.2–134).[70] Thucydides also describes the travails of the regent's son, King Pleistoanax (458–445, 426–408). After Pleistoanax cut short the Peloponnesians' invasion of Attica in 446, the Spartans exiled

him on a charge of having been bribed by the Athenians to withdraw (2.21.1; 5.16.3; cf. 1.114.2). Even after he was restored to power in the nineteenth year of his exile, Pleistoanax was attacked by his enemies, who claimed that his restoration was illegal (5.16). The Agiad royal house's run of bad luck continued into the early fourth century. Pleistoanax's son, Pausanias (408–395), who had reigned briefly as a minor during his father's exile from 445 to 426, likewise went into exile after being sentenced to death in 395 for retiring without battle from Haliartus following Lysander's defeat.[71]

As Thucydides makes clear, the Eurypontid house had its own share of problems in the fifth century, during the reigns of Archidamus II (*c.* 469–427) and his son, Agis II (*c.* 427–400). In his account of the debate at Sparta in 432, Thucydides describes the Eurypontid Archidamus II's failure to persuade the Spartiates against war and his political defeat at the hands of the otherwise unknown Spartan ephor, Sthenelaidas (1.80–7). While the Peloponnesian troops later criticized Archidamus' sluggish invasion of Attica (2.18.2–5), this king's unpopularity pales in comparison to the anger incurred by Agis II's unilateral conclusion of a four-month truce with Argos in 418 (5.60.1–2). Agis' failure to crush the Argives in battle, when combined with the Spartans' enemies' capture of Orchomenus, led the enraged Spartans to threaten to pull down his house and fine him 10,000 drachmae (5.63). In the end the Spartans stipulated the election of ten Spartans of the officer class to act as advisers (σύμβουλοι) to Agis. Without their authority the king was not empowered to lead an army out of the city (5.63.4).[72] The fates of these kings confirm the exiled king Demaratus' eulogy of Spartan freedom in his dialogue with Xerxes in the *Histories*: Sparta's kings did not exercise the same domination over their subjects as their Persian counterparts (Hdt. 7.103–4).[73]

While the dyarchy was constitutionally limited and individual kings could be imprisoned, exiled, and deposed, Herodotus demonstrates that Sparta's kings were neither ineffectual nor under the thumb of the other organs of government. The information that the *Histories* provides on the dyarchy – especially in its account of Cleomenes I in Books 5 and 6 – suggests that individual kings could exercise considerable influence on the Lacedaemonians' conduct of foreign affairs.[74] Cleomenes, for example, appears as the principal, if not the only, representative of Spartan diplomacy and as fully responsible for negotiations with the Samian tyrant Maeandrius *c.* 516 (3.148), the Milesian tyrant Aristagoras in 499 (5.49–51), and the representatives from Scythia (6.84).[75] We also learn that Cleomenes was both responsible for Spartan intervention in Athens at the end of the sixth century and in control of certain expeditions from their inception

(5.70, 72, 74).[76] Herodotus' narrative of Cleomenes' conduct of the war against Argos *c.* 494 likewise suggests that the Agiad king alone was responsible for the choice of route, the conduct of the campaign, and the final decision to spare the city of Argos (6.76–82).[77] Cleomenes' attempt to punish the leading medizers in Aegina (6.50–1, 61.1) reveals the same personal initiative and assertion of royal authority (6.49–50, 61.1, 64, 73).[78]

Cleomenes' role in the *Histories* supports a theory concerning the Spartan kingship that Paul Cloché first put forward in 1949. Through a detailed examination of the careers of the Spartan kings from the late sixth to the late third century, Cloché concludes that while the Spartan monarchy was constitutionally based, capable and determined kings could successfully extend the purview of their functions without violating the law.[79] As both Herodotus and a number of modern scholars have recognized, numerous factors made it possible for the Spartan dyarchs to become dynamic political leaders.[80] First and foremost, the kings' hereditary role as Sparta's military leaders was the key to their power as well as the fact that personal leadership remained a considerable element in determining state policy.[81] Sparta's hereditary dyarchs, furthermore, possessed an exceptional status in relation to their fellow citizens both in life and in death that led Max Weber to describe the dyarchy as an example of 'family-charismatic' kingship.[82] One element of the dyarchs' unique position was their reputed lineal descent from the semi-divine Heracles, which set the kings above their fellow Spartiates and mortal men in general.[83] The close connection between the dyarchs and the twin Dioscuri, who accompanied them on their expeditions (Hdt. 5.75.2), also suggests that the kings functioned as guarantors of the divine protection of Sparta and again emphasizes the semi-divine nature of the Spartan kingship.[84] Similarly, the dyarchs' hereditary priesthoods of Zeus Lacedaemonius and Zeus Ouranius (Hdt. 6.56.1), together with their responsibility for conducting necessary sacrifices before setting out on expeditions, indicate their symbolic role as guardians of the state's continued welfare.[85]

The dyarchs' special prerogatives further underline their extraordinary position in Spartan society (Hdt. 6.56–8). The kings' numerous privileges at both public sacrifices and regular meals, especially their double rations (6.57.1–4), allowed them to exercise their patronage by inviting guests to dine with them on both occasions. The kings' right to appoint *proxenoi* and the messengers to the oracle at Delphi (6.57.2), along with their various judicial prerogatives (6.57.4), also served as important sources of patronage and potential political influence. Both kings, in addition, would have been able to exercise influence through their participation in the gerousia (6.57.5).[86] Finally, the elaborate funeral ceremony of the Spartan dyarchs

(6.58), to quote Paul Cartledge, 'symbolized, indeed created the honorand's posthumous status as a hero of more than merely mortal nature and thus naturally complemented and continued the charismatic status he had enjoyed in his lifetime'.[87]

The fifth-century sources thus present a complex portrait of the Spartan kings, as subject to constitutional limits and yet empowered by both the charismatic nature of their position in Sparta and their many opportunities to exert personal leadership in this society. The Agiad Cleomenes I is a good case in point, once we peel off the ideologically charged elements of Herodotus' treatment of this king. Cleomenes was an unusually energetic and capable ruler who exploited the opportunities for influence inherent in the dyarchy to push the boundaries of Sparta's constitutionally limited form of kingship without technically violating either those boundaries or the laws of the land. Cleomenes dominated Spartan foreign policy in the late sixth and early fifth centuries and seems to have pursued a consistent anti-Persian agenda, as manifested in his interventions in Athens (5.70–6, 90), Aegina (6.49–50. 61.1, 64, 73), and Argos (6.76–82).[88] Perhaps more significantly, Cleomenes overshadowed and then helped to depose the Eurypontid colleague who proved to be an obstacle to such policies (6.51.1, 61–73). Given the extent of Cleomenes' power and initiative, we should not be surprised by the negative reports of his madness and veritable tyranny that found their way into Herodotus' account.[89] Herodotus, however, could not hide the fact that Cleomenes was held accountable by his fellow citizens (6.74–5, 82) and was no absolute ruler, unlike his counterparts in Achaemenid Persia.

4. The roots of feminine political influence in Sparta

Herodotus' representation of Cleomenes I's precocious daughter, Gorgo (Hdt. 5.51.2–3) – like all other fifth-century constructions of influential Spartan royal women – needs to be approached with the same caution that I have advocated for our reading of Herodotus' Cleomenes. As I have argued elsewhere, the Athenian democratic ideology that shaped fifth-century Athenian-based treatments of Spartan kingship likewise underlies fifth-century sources' association of autocracy with female political power.[90] Aeschylus provides an early example of this conceptual linkage of female influence and despotism in his *Persae* of 472. The Persian queen Atossa's domination of the action in this tragedy until Xerxes' return (159–852) suggests her dominion over the Persian royal court in his absence.[91] Aeschylus later connects both female sexual power and gynecocracy with despotism in his *Oresteia* of 458, which depicts the triumph of both male over female and democracy over tyranny. In this

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trilogy Clytemnestra's murderous usurpation of her husband's political power overturns male order, and her sexual control over Aegisthus subverts the traditional Greek sexual hierarchy.[92]

As we have seen above, Herodotus' depictions of the courts of both Greek and non-Greek autocrats similarly posit a connection between undisciplined, dominating women and despotism.[93] With only one exception, all of the powerful and influential barbarian women in Herodotus' *Histories* are connected to various royal courts.[94] His treatment of Greek women reveals a similar picture. Apart from a number of priestesses and the Spartan wives of the Minyae (4.146.3–4), the only Greek women whose independent power or influence over powerful men merits Herodotus' notice are members of Greek tyrants' families, members of the ruling house of Cyrene, and members of the two royal dynasties of Sparta.[95] This association of feminine power and autocracy may explain Herodotus' inclusion of the anecdotes concerning both Argeia and Gorgo as well as Euripides' representations of the female members of the Spartan royal family.

Nevertheless, we should not summarily discount the belief that such feminine involvement in public affairs was a natural consequence of autocratic rule. While it is doubtful that Gorgo counseled her father on political matters at the tender age of eight (Hdt. 5.51.2–3), her privileged position as the daughter and wife of Spartan kings may have given her an unusual degree of access to these politically influential men and afforded her ample opportunity to wield an informal kind of political influence. More importantly, her position as the only child and heir of her very influential father (cf. Hdt. 5.48, 51.1) may have provided her with extra leverage in her husband's 'court' and could explain her involvement in decoding Demaratus' message. As Cleomenes I's sole heiress, Gorgo may have proved particularly beneficial in Leonidas' dealings with Demaratus. Her father had struggled with his Eurypontid colleague over Spartan foreign policy – particularly in connection with Persia's looming invasion – and had engineered Demaratus' deposition *c.* 491.[96]

Herodotus himself reveals an awareness of the dynastic roots of Gorgo's influence, when he cites Leonidas I's marriage to Gorgo as one of the reasons he succeeded to the throne *c.* 490 instead of his brother Cleombrotus (7.205.1). Stephen Hodkinson has offered an economically based interpretation of Herodotus' statement, arguing that 'the most likely explanation is that the marriage bolstered Leonidas' claim because Gorgo had inherited Kleomenes' property.'[97] Gorgo must have been an attractive heiress, since she inherited the land and other wealth possessed by her mother and her affluent father, Cleomenes I. Cleomenes would have

inherited one-fourth of the patrimony of his father, King Anaxandridas II, along with the entire estate of his mother, who belonged to a prominent family related to the famous Spartan ephor, Chilon.[98] Hodkinson has cogently argued that the Spartans' practice of universal inheritance likewise prompted other members of the Spartan royal houses to concentrate royal property through close-kin marriages, such as the unions between the Agiad Anaxandridas II and his niece (Hdt. 5.39–42) and between Lampito, daughter of the Eurypontid king Leotychidas II, and her step-nephew, the future king Archidamus II (Hdt. 6.71.2). The Agiads' and Eurypontids' interest in contracting such marriages would have rendered their wealthy female members valuable assets in the struggle that the royal houses waged with one another and with other elite Spartiate houses to improve their land-holdings and status.[99]

Gorgo's union with her half-uncle, Leonidas, may also have aided his accession to the Agiad throne by helping to legitimize his connection to the previous king, his half-brother Cleomenes I, and by strengthening his blood bond to their father, Anaxandridas II.[100] Such dynastic considerations figured in attested Persian royal marriages, including the series of unions between the Persian Darius I and (1) Cyrus the Great's daughters, Atossa and Artystone, (2) Cyrus the Great's granddaughter, Parmys, and (3) the noble Otanes' daughter, Phaidyme (Hdt. 3.88.2–3).[101] Through such marriages Darius pre-empted other Persians from contracting unions with these highly eligible females. At the same time he shored up his position, that of an illegitimate usurper of the Persian throne, by means of several links with the house of Cyrus the Great.[102] The later Macedonian dynast Ptolemy II Philadelphus' union with his sister Arsinoe *c.* 276 likewise strengthened 'the claim of his immediate family group to be the only legitimate descendants of Ptolemy Soter'.[103]

The dynastic interpretation of Leonidas' marriage to Gorgo deserves consideration given the contested succession to the Agiad throne in the late sixth century. As we have seen above, Herodotus reports that the ephors and *gerontes* forced King Anaxandridas II to take a second wife when his first wife, his own niece, failed to produce an heir (5.39–42). Herodotus' account of the second marriage and the ensuing rivalry between Anaxandridas' two wives and their offspring is, assuredly, enveloped in a heavy mist of folklore.[104] Nevertheless, his description of the questions that arose concerning the legitimacy of Dorieus, Anaxandridas' first child with his niece, reveals the dangers that the Agiad king's bigamy could entail for the sons born from both of his unions. Herodotus' discussion of Dorieus' contestation of Cleomenes' assumption of the throne on the ground that the latter was mad and inferior in manly virtue likewise reveals

the strife that attended the Agiad succession (5.42). If Dorieus' younger brother, Leonidas, had been the twin of his brother Cleombrotus, a possibility mentioned by Herodotus (5.41.3), his claim to the Agiad throne would have been even more tenuous and in need of the support that a marriage with his half-brother's daughter would confer.

Female members of the Spartan royal houses, in other words, probably had opportunities to exercise at least passive political influence, given the hereditary nature of the regime and the key roles that females necessarily played in marital alliances and reproduction. It is no wonder, then, that Herodotus mentions Spartan queens and princesses who affected dynastic succession through their beauty (6.61–2), their suspiciously brief pregnancies (6.63, 65.3), or their inability to produce an heir (5.39–42.2; 6.61.1–2). Finally, we need to keep in mind both the economic value of wealthy female members of the Spartan royal houses and the probability that the political privilege enjoyed by the kings spilled over onto their female relations. Whether or not Gorgo and other royal women were able to translate such dynastic, economic, and personal sway into real political influence over the dyarchs is another matter. The evidence permits no firm conclusions but suggests, at the very least, that the powerful Spartan queens and princesses that appear in fifth-century Athenian-based texts – like their despotic menfolk – are ideologically charged exaggerations of reality.

II. Agesilaus II and Cynisca

The next Spartan king who figures prominently in the sources is the Eurypontid Agesilaus II, who reigned from 400 to 360. Agesilaus II dominated Spartan politics throughout his reign and increased the power of the Spartan kingship to its greatest extent since the reign of the Agiad Cleomenes I.[105] Like Cleomenes I, Agesilaus not only receives a great deal of attention in the ancient sources but also shares the spotlight – albeit briefly – with one of his female relations, his sister, Cynisca. Agesilaus' reign thus provides an opportunity to assess both the prerogatives of royal power in the fourth century and the extent to which the female relations of an extraordinarily powerful Spartan king enjoyed corresponding political influence.

1. The sources on Agesilaus II's reign

Before considering the relationship between kingly prerogatives and female political power, we need to consider the source material on Agesilaus II's reign and its representation of Spartan kingship during the first half of the fourth century. Several authors provide information on Agesilaus II: Xenophon, Theopompus, the Oxyrhynchus Historian, Diodorus, and