- 2 -

SPARTA AND SPARTAN SOCIETY

I

The Sparta I shall consider falls within a rather restricted period, from about the middle of the sixth century to the battle of Leuctra in 371 BC. I exclude the earlier history, apart from a few certain events and general trends, because I believe that our information is almost wholly fictitious (especially anything referring to Lycurgus); that all attempts to reconstruct that early history in detail, with names and exact dates, rest on totally unsound methodological principles; and that the excessive concentration on assumed distant origins in a legendary migration period is equally unsound in method.[1] I stop at Leuctra because I accept the virtually unanimous Greek tradition of qualitative change fairly early in the fourth century. Thereafter, despite certain continuities, Sparta was being transformed into a different kind of society again.

What this means is that I accept that the decisive turning-point in Spartan history came in or about the reign of Leon and Agasicles (Herodotus 1.65–66), soon after 600 BC, as the culmination of internal troubles going back perhaps a century, a period in which the so-called Second Messenian War was the main catalytic occurrence, and which produced persistently revolutionary potentialities and threats. Much about that war is obscure, not to say legendary, but the poetry of Tyrtaeus is contemporary and illuminating. It demonstrates that the Spartan army was in a disorder and turmoil unlike anything known from the later, classical period, the community in a state of civil disturbance (*stasis*); and that the Lycurgus legend was not yet current. Once the war was finally won, a number of profound changes were introduced: political, economic and ideological. I do not know how rapidly they were brought about (a question to which I shall return), or by whom, but in the end we have the Sparta which was a unique structure in the Greek world, which

Originally published in *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne*, ed. J.-P. Vernant (Paris and The Hague, 1968), and reprinted with the permission of the publishers, Mouton & Co, and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes.

the Sparta of the poet Alcman was not. I stress the word *structure* in order to divert attention from the customary over-concentration on certain elements in the system, and on what regularly goes with them in the modern literature, namely, a mystique about Dorians and Dorianism in general and a few largely irrelevant Cretan parallels in particular, the latter, in my judgment, essentially misleading constructs of fourth-century theories or propaganda (in which Carthage also figured, at least for Aristotle, let it be noted).

If the excavations of the shrine of Artemis Orthia were as revealing of the transformation in Sparta as it is sometimes said, we could date the break rather near the year 600 (or several decades later in Boardman's chronology).[2] However, apart from the rather problematical disappearance of ivory from the deposits, I do not see that Artemis Orthia provides evidence from which to prove anything. The 'evidence', which it had been rather more fashionable to stress ten or twenty years ago than it is now, turns out to consist of little more than highly subjective judgments about the quality of Laconian pottery in various periods, on which the experts do not agree. Besides, we do not know whether the Spartans ever made this pottery themselves or whether much (or even all) of it was already in the hands of the *perioikoi* (citizens of neighbouring communities who, though free men probably enjoying local self-government, were subject to Sparta in military and foreign affairs) well before 600, in which case the decline is irrelevant anyway, even if it really could be placed in the middle of the sixth century. On the other hand, if those who believe the ephor Chilon to have been the great reforming 'lawgiver' could be shown to be right, then we should have a firm date about 550, although I cannot imagine how we should fill out the very long interval between the end of the Second Messenian War and 550. Since all this is largely irrelevant to my subject, I propose to by-pass the chronological puzzles and speak, as a kind of shorthand, of the 'sixth-century revolution'.[3]

Let me elaborate a bit on this 'revolution'. Schematically (and rather inexactly) one may divide the classical Spartan structure into three broad strands: (1) the infrastructure of land allotments, helots and *perioikoi*, with everything that includes with respect to labour, production and circulation; (2) the governmental system (including the military); (3) the ritual system: *rites de passage*, the *agoge*, the age-classes, *syssitia*, etc. (*Agoge* is a conventional label for the system by which all Spartan boys were brought up by the state. There is good Greek authority for the term; 'education' in the normal modern sense is too narrow a translation.

Syssitia were the dining-groups or mess-companies to which every Spartan male belonged as a necessary condition of full citizenship.)

These strands had different origins and a different history; they did not develop and shift *en bloc*; and they did not have the same unchanged functions at all times. The 'sixth-century revolution' was therefore a complex process of some innovation and much modification and re-institutionalisation of the elements which appear to have survived 'unchanged'. I use the word 'revolution' even more loosely than is perhaps customary, but I do not use it capriciously. It is loose because I do not for a moment suggest, or believe, that the classical Spartan system was created at one stroke, or even in one reign. After all, the introduction of the hoplite army was one of its necessary conditions, and that must go back early in the seventh century, at least before the Second Messenian War. Helotage in some form was even older. And we must not rule out the possibility that other elements were effectively introduced, or raised to new prominence, as late as the fifth century (as we know certain changes in the army organisation to have been). On the other hand, it was not a system that somehow just evolved. Some innovations and modifications had to be introduced at a single stroke (whether one at a time or in combination). The Great Rhetra, for example, reflects something very fundamental of this kind.[4] In a negative way, the prohibition of the use of silver coinage by Spartiates was another obviously sharp decision made by somebody at some moment (and one, incidentally, which more than most can be almost exactly dated to the time of Leon and Agasicles).

By speaking of the 'sixth-century revolution', in sum, I am trying to underscore the necessity for looking at the structure, not at isolated elements and their antiquity or persistence. I include the whole of the ritual system in this argument, particularly in what I have called rather awkwardly 're-institutionalisation', because even if it were the case that the ritual externals were all very old and unaltered (a most unlikely possibility), their function within the new structure was necessarily a new one in significant respects, in effect if not always by deliberate intent. No one will pretend that the whipping ceremony at Artemis Orthia in Roman times, when a great theatre was built for the convenience of the spectators, bore any meaningful connection with the superficially similar rite of Xenophon's day.[5] *A priori* we must assume the same discontinuity in function between the fifth century and, say, the eighth, and sometimes we have evidence to confirm the assumption, for example, in the case of the *krypteia*, as we shall see shortly.

Classical Sparta may have had an archaic and even a pre-archaic look about it, but the function of the 'survivals' is what chiefly matters, not the mere fact of survival. Before the reign of Leon and Agasicles, writes Herodotus, the Spartans were the worse governed (*kakonomotatoi*) of all the Greeks; they then switched to good order (*eunomia*). Translation destroys the full sense of the judgment: both *eunomia* and *kakonomos* characterise a whole way of life, not only (or perhaps not at all) a form of constitution.[6] That transformation was the 'sixth-century revolution'.

II

At this stage I want to consider the structure as an ideal type. In what follows, furthermore, I am not much concerned with the accuracy of any individual text. Unless one believes that the picture the Greeks have left us is altogether a fiction, few of the details are of themselves crucial for an apprehension of the ideal type.

I go immediately to the adult male citizens, the *homoioi* as they were frequently called, who are our subject. We must, at the start, take the word in its full connotation – Equals.[7] At birth, if they were permitted to remain alive, all Spartan males were strictly 'equal' with two exceptions: (1) two of them were potential heirs to the kingship; (2) some were richer than others – the rich men (*anthropoi olbioi*) of Herodotus (6.61; 7.134); the wealthy (*plousioi*) of Xenophon (5.3),* who provided wheaten bread for the *syssitia*; or the winners of Olympic chariot-races, of whom there are eleven within my time-limits in Moretti's catalogue, one a king and another the daughter of a king.[8] Being equal meant sharing a common, well defined life-cycle, including: (1) a common, formalised, compulsory upbringing designed to inculcate obedience, valour, discipline and professional military skill; (2) a single vocation or profession, that of a hoplite soldier or officer; (3) economic security and complete freedom from economic concerns, all productive and ancillary services being provided by two distinct categories of dependents, helots and *perioikoi*; (4) a public (rather than private) life in an all-male community, with maximum conformity and anti-individualism. equal political rights ?

Structurally, however, the system then generated two further, unavoidable, closely interrelated inequalities apart from those inherent in each child at birth. One was the inequality, not very tangible but none the less real, that followed from inequality of performance, whether in

* All references in this chapter to Xenophon, unless otherwise indicated, are to his pamphlet which goes under the inaccurate title, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*.

the *agoge* or in games and hunting or in war. The other arose from the need for leadership and élites, not only at the top (kings, ephors and council of elders), but also in the smaller military units, and, because of the Spartan *agoge*, in the age-classes beginning at a remarkably early age. Xenophon's 'love of victory' (*philonikia*) produced losers as well as winners (4.4), a self-evident fact which is often overlooked by modern scholars, who then write as if everyone passed through every stage a prizewinner.

All this was massively buttressed, psychologically and institutionally. Living in public for so much of their lives, the Spartans were more strongly susceptible than most people to the pressures of public opinion and of the network of rewards and punishments, with its great stress in childhood on corporal punishment, and in adulthood on a rich and imaginative variety of expressions of social disfavour or even ostracism. Everything was harnessed into service, including piety and *rites de passage*. Perhaps the most dramatic example is the transformation of the *krypteia*. This ancient rite of initiation at the age of eighteen became rationalised, that is, re-institutionalised, by being tied to a new police function assigned to an élite youth corps. Significantly, policing the helots was one of their duties.[9]

An important part of the buttressing was negative, so to speak, the reduction to the barest minimum of the disruptive, centrifugal effects of property and the family. We may permit ourselves to be more 'sociological' and less moralistic than Xenophon, for example, in analysing the functions of the Spartan regime of property and family.

Property – extensive comment is unnecessary at this point, though I shall have to return in the next section to the inequality in wealth. The total withdrawal from economic (and not merely banausic) activity, the austerity, the sharing were meant to be cohesive factors, and they were.

Family – a mere enumeration of certain rites and institutions is sufficient to reveal the scale of the effort to transfer allegiance away from the family or kinship group to various male groups: the steps taken to insure procreation, with which Xenophon opens his booklet; the right of any father or indeed of any adult Spartiate to exercise authority over any child; the singularly joyless marriage ceremony with its rare transvestite ritual; the barrack life. The family, in sum, was minimised as a unit of either affection or authority, and replaced by overlapping male groupings – the age-classes, the homosexual pairings between younger and older men (whether 'Platonic' or not), the élite corps, the *syssitia*. Two

details are perhaps worth mentioning here, though I shall have to return to them at the end:

1. The age-class system was unusually ramified. I have no precise idea of what its effects were, but at least the complexity greatly increased the occasions for ritual reinforcement.

2. On entry into adulthood, the Spartiate was at least partly divorced from his age-class by the practice of individual cooptation into a *syssition*. Any device which cuts across a 'natural' grouping, whether family or age-class, can be seen as one more way of strengthening the structure as a whole against its individual parts.

So much buttressing was necessary, in part at least, because the Equals turned out, in the end, to be meshed in a complex of inequalities. There were leaders, élites, at all levels, and the primary principles of selection were appointment and cooptation – never, it should be stressed, selection by lot, the standard Greek device for imposing equality. All *homoioi* were eligible in principle, and that fact differentiated the Spartan army from those, like the Prussian, which had an officer corps drawn solely from a pre-existing and exclusive élite. The end-result, however, was the same in one respect: there was a chain of command in which the authority-obedience syndrome moved in one direction only, from the top down. To be sure, there were two exceptions in the method of selection: the council of elders and the ephors were elected in open competition. It is a pity that we know virtually nothing about this procedure or about the men elected. Were they usually the same men who had already come out on top through cooptation? That is what I should expect in this society, and I shall come back to the question shortly.

In so far as the success of the system is to be measured by its military successes, the verdict must, of course, be favourable. The Spartan army was better than any other, with more stamina and greater manoeuvrability, thanks to superior physical condition, better training and discipline, more obedience. Thought seems to have been given to military organisation; at least the not infrequent changes in organisation suggest that. On the other hand, there is no evidence of interest in tactics or weaponry beyond the maintenance of both at the best traditional level.

The production and distribution of weapons remain something of a puzzle. I think we can take it that the procurement of metals and the manufacture of arms were the responsibility (and also the privilege) of the *perioikoi*. But how did the individual Spartiate obtain his arms and armour? The traditional Greek conception of the hoplite as by definition the citizen (or metic) rich enough to equip himself, does not apply. All

Spartiates were 'rich' enough, but none had the proper market mechanism. The choice lies between (a) individual procurement from *perioikoi* by payment in kind (or, conceivably, iron spits), and (b) procurement and distribution by the state. I know of no ancient text which gives the answer. Nor does archaeology help in the absence of systematic excavation of any perioecic community. One can argue either way from the shields, all of which were required to have a Lambda inscribed on them, but many (if not all) of which also had a personal blazon. My own preference is for the public supply system, because the other seems insufficiently reliable and because we do have textual evidence that once the army had marched off, the state took responsibility for repair and replacement (as it must have done for the initial procurement even at home when helots were enrolled as hoplites).[10]

III

So much for the ideal type. In actual practice the system was filled with tensions and anomie.

1. To begin with, the Spartan army was not always big enough for its needs – needs which were more cause of the system than consequence. *Perioikoi* were an equal part of the hoplite army, and, at least on major occasions such as the Peloponnesian War, substantial numbers of helots and ex-helots (*neodamodeis*) were also enlisted. I have no answer to the very important question of how helots were selected and trained for hoplite fighting (or to any possible connection with the mysterious *mothakes*). Spartans were regularly accompanied by helot orderlies or batmen and there is no particular problem in using such people as light-armed auxiliaries. Hoplite training, however, could not be achieved casually; the essence was movement in formation, and it was for their unique skills at this in particular that the Spartans were commended by ancient writers. That helot and ex-helot hoplites were a serious flaw in the system is self-evident, psychologically as well as in its overt functioning.

2. For Aristotle the greatest vice was financial corruption. Perhaps he was thinking primarily of the changed Sparta of the later fourth century, but bribery is already a major theme in Herodotus.[11] The infrastructure was flawed. The regime of property and inheritance, like the political system, was a compromise. Heavy as the pressures of austerity and withdrawal from all economic activity may have been, they were insufficient to overcome completely the counter-pressures of inequalities in

wealth, or the fears of impoverishment whether through large families or otherwise. The prohibition of business activity (*chrematismos* is Xenophon's carefully chosen word) does not eliminate a desire for – and an ability to employ – wealth, not even if the prohibition can be perfectly enforced. Xenophon's statement (7.6) that the possession of gold and silver was prohibited must be understood, in my opinion, to refer only to coin, as his context implies. But gold and silver have other functions, revealed by Herodotus, perhaps unconsciously, when he employs the good old Homeric *keimelion* (treasure) in his story (6.62) of how King Ariston acquired his third wife, the mother of Damaratus. Coined money is not essential for exchange, and there were exchanges in Sparta. Even if one were for some reason unwilling to accept the accuracy of Thucydides' inclusion of buying and selling among the activities forbidden to a Spartiate when he suffered loss of civil rights (5.34.2), there is no getting away from the sportsmen Darmonon and his son Enymacritidas, who made a dedication to Athena Chalkioikos, probably in the middle of the fifth century BC, recording twenty or more victories.[12] The text stresses that they won with their own horses and their own chariots, and the latter had to be acquired by the exchange of wealth in some form. Presumably a sufficient equilibrium could be maintained despite the pressures so long as the Spartans remained safely cocooned within their own world. But not when they were drawn abroad.

3. There was structural tension within and about the leadership. I am not concerned with disagreements over policy which are inevitable whenever there is shared leadership – examples are abundant, as with respect to the situation in Athens after the overthrow of the Pisistratids, or whether to go to war with Athens in 431 – but with the tensions inherent in the positions themselves, in the efforts to attain and then to maintain and enhance positions of leadership. We must not allow ourselves to be bemused by the Greek obsession with the 'lawgiver': the sixth-century revolution had to strike some sort of balance among the social elements that were then in existence, and this balance meant failure to institute a unified leadership principle. Hence there were hereditary kings, elected elders and ephors, and appointed leaders at other levels. Again we must not be bemused by a Greek obsession, this time with the 'mixed constitution'. Instead of an equilibrium there was permanent conflict, which could not be cushioned by the self-confidence and stability which are generated, for example, by an exclusive leadership caste. Even the kings, in Aristotle's words, were compelled to court (*demagogein*) the ephors (*Politics* 1270b14).

The leitmotif, I think, was not so much a conflict between kings and ephors, as such, as between men of energy and ambition – the men imbued with excessive 'love of victory', a Lysander as well as a Cleomenes, actual and potential – and the rest. One source of *stasis*, Aristotle noted (*Politics* 1306b31–33), was the dishonourable treatment of men of virtue by others whose virtue was no greater but who had more honour, and the specific example he gave was the treatment of Lysander by the kings. That the kings were a persistently disruptive force of a special kind and magnitude in classical Spartan history needs no demonstration. What deserves notice, however, is that they were potentially disruptive by definition, so to speak, that their very existence was a contradiction of the ideal type of Spartan equality. Cleomenes I, wrote Herodotus (5.39), reigned not because of his own manliness but by heredity. That sums it up. Given the psychological underpinning of being born to high office and the various charismatic practices and institutions attached to Spartan kingship – Herodotus knew what he was saying when he called the royal funeral rites 'barbarian' – it depended solely on the personality of the individual king whether he was a force for civic peace or for strife, or no force at all.

The hereditary principle also injected the family into the picture, again in violation of the Spartan ideal. The various recorded manoeuvres on behalf of younger sons and other kin of kings, including the classic employment of allegations of illegitimacy, belong to the courts of tyrants and barbarian monarchs, not to a Greek *polis*. It then becomes necessary to consider whether kinship did not also play some part in the leadership struggles outside the kingship. I have already said that it is my guess that the men chosen for the council of elders, the ephorate and the magistracies were those who had earlier come out on top through the appointment procedures. All *homoioi* were, in a formal sense, equally eligible. But were they in practice? Who, then, were the men whom Herodotus called 'among the first by birth' (7.134); and what did Aristotle mean when he said that election to the council was 'oligarchical' (*dynasteutikos*, which implies manipulation as well), whereas everyone was eligible for the ephorate (*Politics* 1306a18, 1294b29–31)? It is true that such texts are very rare: the more common reference is to individuals being or wishing to be 'first' or 'among the most powerful', which need mean nothing more than to achieve leadership by their own efforts. But the few texts remain, and they say what we should have guessed without them, namely, that there were families who were able to influence the appointment procedures in favour of their own members, beginning at the first

opportunity, among the children. That means, in effect, that there developed an element of hereditary aristocracy within the system, far from closed, but not without considerable influence nevertheless. And I have no doubt that wealth played its part here (as Herodotus 7.134 implies). There were others, in sum, besides Cleomenes who achieved positions, lower or higher in the ranking, by birth rather than by manliness.

Inevitably when there is struggle for leadership, disagreements over policy reflect calculations of personal advantage in the struggle alongside, and confused with, calculations about the desirability of a proposed policy as such. Sometimes these differences were brought before the people in assembly, and that raises one further question respecting equals and unequals. The time has long passed when any serious historian or political scientist thinks in nineteenth-century liberal terms about voting behaviour, with its image of the 'reasonable man' weighing the issues 'rationally' and free from all prejudices, pressures and emotions. It is nevertheless legitimate to ask whether there was something in the Spartan structure which makes the 'reasonable man' approach even less applicable, even more of a caricature, than, say, for the Athenian assembly. I will put the question very bluntly. Can we imagine that the obedient, disciplined Spartan soldier dropped his normal habits on those occasions when he was assembled not as a soldier but as a citizen, while he listened to debates among those from whom he otherwise was taught to take orders without questioning or hesitation?[13] I do not think we have any evidence from which to answer concretely, but my guess is that the Spartan assembly was much closer to the Homeric than to the Athenian in function and psychology. Archidamus and Sthenelaides harangued each other before the assembled people as Agamemnon and Achilles did. That is not open discussion. But neither is it mere puppetry: when the leadership divided over policy, someone had to make the decision, and that was the people in assembly.[14]

4. There was too much social mobility in both directions, too much, that is, for a society which in principle was completely closed and rigid and which therefore lacked the mechanism (and the psychology) necessary to adjust the mobile elements properly in their new statuses:

(a) There were Spartiates who lost status, yet somehow remained within the community in a curiously inferior position (as distinct from exiles). These were not always economic failures (men who could not maintain their *syssition* quotas); a depreciation in status could also follow from failure at some stage in the *agoge*, failure in battle, loss of civic rights,

or the like. (b) There were helots who rose in status, many even achieving membership in the *damos*, the citizenry (for that is what *neodamodeis* has to mean, whatever inferior shading it may imply). I am frankly unable to visualise these people, how they lived or even, in many cases, where they lived. The helots who fought under Brasidas, says Thucydides (5.34.1), were first given permission to reside where they wished, but then they were settled with the *neodamodeis* at Lepreon on the Elean border to help serve as buffers against the hostile Eleans. Neither Thucydides nor anyone else explains what it meant in practice to be 'settled' or to reside where they wished, or where and how the degraded Spartiates lived. That all these groups were an undigested lump within the system is self-evident; the Spartan prisoners who had surrendered to the Athenians at Sphacteria were on their release treated as such by the regime, too, simply because they could anticipate loss of civic rights. Interestingly enough, this particular group came from the first families.[15]

Yet it must be recorded that neither separately nor together were the misplaced elements able to destroy the system directly. We are told of only one actual attempt, and that a failure, the abortive revolt led by Cinadon in 397 BC. Several aspects of that revolt are neatly symbolic. Cinadon himself had been employed by the ephors on secret missions. Aristotle (*Politics* 1306b34) described him as 'manly' (*androdes*), and it would be nice to know whether Aristotle had any more information than we have on which to base that perhaps surprising adjective. When asked why he had conspired, Cinadon's reply was, 'in order to be inferior to no one in Sparta' (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 3.3.11). Appropriately, the chief agents in suppressing the revolt before it started were drawn from the élite youth corps.

5. For the sake of completeness, I record without discussion two further sources of tension: (a) the women, if Plato and Aristotle are to be believed; and (b) experience abroad.

IV

I have said very little so far about war or warriors. The paradox is that militarism in Sparta was in low key. Among the more than 100,000 lead figurines found in the ruins of Artemis Orthia, neither soldiers nor arms are particularly prominent (though they exist). There were no war games, no warrior-graves. The latter disappeared abruptly throughout the Greek world, save for strikingly few exceptions on the fringes, more or less at the same time as the appearance of the hoplite, that is, with the

extension of the military role from the 'heroic' aristocrat to a broader sector of the population. Sparta was no exception. Sparta seems not even to have included removal from the army among the punishments for military disgrace. At least that is the implication in Herodotus' story (7.229–31 + 9.71) about Aristodamos, the survivor of Thermopylae who was permitted to die a glorious death (though officially not recognised as such) at Plataea. And the men who surrendered at Sphacteria, temporarily deprived of civic rights though they were, soon found their rights restored. There is also no trace of the 'war habit' characteristic, for example, of the Assyrians, the tendency to go out and fight simply because that is what warriors are for. After the Second Messenian War and the sixth-century revolution, Sparta was, if anything, less quick to join battle than many other Greek states. The Corinthians were not wrong when, in Thucydides' account in his first book, they made a special point of that.[16]

If we look on the whole of Laconia and Messenia as a unit, then of course we see a pyramidal social structure with the Spartiates as a military élite at the top. However, it was not a military élite in the sense of the Prussian Junkers or even of the Theban Sacred Band. Instead we must think of a (conceptually) closed system as a whole, which had a military function but not a wholly militaristic stamp. I am using these words as they are distinguished by Alfred Vagts: 'The military way is marked by a primary concentration of men and materials on winning specific objectives of power with the utmost efficiency. . . . Militarism, on the other hand, presents a vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actions and thought associated with armies and wars and yet transcending true military purposes.' In a sense both are of course visible in Sparta, but a further quotation from Vagts's book will show why I said 'not a wholly militaristic stamp'. Vagts continues: 'An army so built that it serves military men, not war, is militaristic; so is everything in any army which is not preparation for fighting, but merely exists for diversion or to satisfy peace-time whims like the long anachronistic cavalry today . . . enterprises for sheer glory or the reputation of leaders, which reduce the fighting strength of armies and wreck them from within, come under that head.'[17]

That may conceivably describe a Cleomenes I, for example, but he was rejected. It is not until the fourth century BC that the refrain becomes insistent in Greek writers that the Spartan state was like an army camp;[18] that was the sole aim of the lawgiver was war; that in consequence Spartans were too underdeveloped in all other human aspects (or,

contrariwise, that they were praised for precisely those narrow qualities which Plato and Aristotle condemned); that, in sum, they were not only efficiently military but also excessively militaristic. All this is well known and requires no elaboration. But it is not unnecessary or out of place to say that this was not the whole picture even in fourth-century writers. Why did Plato, who criticised Sparta so brutally in the eighth book of the *Republic* (547D–549A), not simply dismiss her? Why did he instead select a Spartan to be one of the trio who were to set up the new state of the *Laws*?

The answer, of course, is that for Plato Sparta had much to offer despite her one-sidedness, not in her laws or institutions narrowly conceived (which are hardly reflected in Plato's book) but in her fundamental conception of a total community, in her *eunomia* as a way of life, one which he wished to strip of its militaristic side (but not of its military function). Sparta had long been a bulwark against tyranny, after all, both at home and abroad; that may not be very true, especially not about Sparta's activities abroad, but it was firmly believed to be true by many Greeks, and it was repeated *ad nauseam*. Pindar believed it. There are not many references to Sparta in Pindar's surviving poems, but they are more significant than their rarity might imply precisely because they are all gratuitous. Pindar wrote no odes for Spartan victors and he did not have to drag Sparta in at all. In the *First Pythian*, celebrating a victory by Hiero I of Syracuse, the poet comments in these words on Hiero's new foundation at Etna (lines 61–70):

> that city in liberty built
> of gods, and ordinances of Hyllos' rule, and the
> descendants of Pamphylos,
> those, too, of Heracles' seed,
> who dwell beside Taygetos' slopes, are minded to abide
> for ever in the decrees of Aigimios,
>
> Dorians . . .
> By your (Zeus's) aid, this leader of men,
> enjoining it upon his son also, might glorify his people
> and turn them to peace and harmony.[19]

Some quite remarkable nonsense has been, and is still being, written about those lines. The absurd suggestion is offered that Hiero, following a brutal expulsion of population of the type so familiar in Sicilian history, actually planned to introduce the Spartan constitution and *agoge* at Etna under the kingship of his son Deinomenes.[20] If it is not obvious that all Pindar had in mind was a traditional royal and aristocratic set-up, in

which the people would find its freedom in discipline, piety and honourable rule by their betters, then Edouard Will has settled the point by drawing attention to the remarkably parallel lines in a fragment about Aegina.[21] If there was anything political, in the narrow sense, in Pindar's mind, then it was to whisper a reminder of Sparta's anti-tyrant tradition. There is never anything more in Pindar, never a suggestion that Sparta was somehow peculiar or unique; in particular, not that Sparta was militaristic in a way that set it apart from the states and the aristocracies of the old school in which the values he accepted were to be found.

> There they surpass in counsels of elders,
> And in the spears of young men,
> And in choirs, and the Muse, and Glory.[22]

That was sung about Sparta in another fragment; it could as well have been used for Thebes, Thessaly, Aegina or Cyrene, or even for the kind of Athens that Miltiades and Cimon stood for in his eyes.

Nor is the picture in Herodotus very different on the essential question. Given his subject-matter, Herodotus was bound to stress the military skill of the Spartans and their unfailing obedience to the rule never to retreat in battle. Being Herodotus, he was also bound to dwell on certain oddities, such as the honours and rituals surrounding the kings or the penalties meted out to cowards. Herodotus was alert to, and often very subtle about, nuances differentiating Greek states from one another. But that was still some way from the altogether odd Sparta of the fourth-century mirage. For him the Greek world was divided into two kinds of communities, those ruled by tyrants, which were a bad thing, and those ruled by themselves. The latter in turn were either fully democratic or they were not, and Sparta was the most important, the most powerful and the most interesting of those which were not.

I have gone on at some length about the way in which Sparta was classed with a whole category of Greek *poleis* because it is essential to be clear on what was really different and unique about Sparta. At the beginning I made the point that we must not think of the various strands in the Spartan structure as monolithic in their history and movement. If we look at these elements again, this time from the point of view of their uniqueness of familiarity, we find the following (details apart):

1. Helotage was not altogether rare; it was found in Thessaly, in Crete, in Sicily, and probably throughout the Danubian and Black Sea areas of Greek settlement. (I do not ignore the probability that the proportion, and therefore the potential menance, of helots to citizens was greater than elsewhere, as will be evident shortly.)

described as part of the police function. Sparta's tragedy thereafter stemmed from a familiar cause: she did not live in a vacuum. The Persian invasions foreshadowed what was to come in the Peloponnesian War. Against her will almost, Sparta was drawn into extensive military activity, genuinely military. That entailed severe pressure on manpower and a dangerously extensive incorporation of non-equals into the army if not into the ruling class, unprecedented opportunities for ambitious individuals, extensive travel abroad and a breach in the traditional xenophobia, the impossibility of holding the line against the seductions of wealth. The system could not and did not long survive. And so the final paradox is that her greatest military success destroyed the model military state.

- 3 -

THE ATHENIAN EMPIRE: A BALANCE SHEET

I

'Every doctrine of imperialism devised by men is a consequence of their second thoughts. But empires are not built by men troubled by second thoughts.'[1]

I start with that aphoristic formulation, the truth of which has been demonstrated in the study of modern imperialisms, as an antidote to the familiar practice of *beginning* a discussion of the Athenian empire with aims and motives and quickly sliding over to attitudes and even theory, thereby implying that the men who created and extended the empire also began with a defined imperialist programme and theories of imperialism. An outstanding current example of the procedure I have in mind is the attempt to date a number of Athenian laws and decrees (or to support a proposed date) by what may be called their imperialist tone. If they are 'harsh', it is argued, they smack of Cleon and should be dated in the 420s BC, and not in the time of the more 'moderate' Periclean leadership, the 440s or 430s.[2] In so far as the argument is not circular, it implies the existence of an identifiable programme of imperialism, or rather of both successive and conflicting programmes, and that requires demonstration, not assumption.

A second source of confusion is the unavoidable ambiguity of the word 'empire'. Stemming from the Latin *imperium*, 'empire' becomes entangled with the word 'emperor', and much of the extensive discussion throughout the Middle Ages and on into modern times ends in a tautological cul-de-sac: an empire is the territory ruled by an emperor.[3] Everyone knows that there are, and have been in the past, important empires not ruled by an emperor, and I see no purpose in playing word-games in order to get round that harmless linguistic anomaly. To suggest, for example, that we should abandon 'empire' as a category in Greek history and speak only of 'hegemony' does not seem to me helpful

Originally published in *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, ed. P. D. A. Garnsey & C. R. Whittaker (1978), and reprinted by permission of the Cambridge University Press.

in substance. All subsequent editions of the original two-volume core of *Der moderne Kapitalismus* were merely photographic reprints of the second.
26 – Sombart (1902) 2, 194.
27 – Bücher had published an earlier version of his theory in an obscure journal as far back as 1876, but it received no attention until the appearance of (1893); see von Below (1901) 8.
28 – See Will (1954); Finley (1965a).
29 – The three articles are reprinted in the posthumous two-volume collection of Pirenne's works (1939) I, 1–110.
30 – Pirenne (1939) 32.
31 – Lyon (1974) 146.
32 – Pirenne (1914) 264. The English translation in the *American Historical Review* omitted much of the annotation.
33 – Lyon (1974) 199. Weber was hardly noticed in the paper, and Lyon himself manages to confuse Bücher, Weber and Marx (e.g. p. 176).
34 – Weber (1924) 7–8 (originally published in the 3rd ed. of the *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, 1909).
35 – von Below (1901) 33; see also his review-article of the first edition of Sombart's *Der moderne Kapitalismus* (1903).
36 – Bücher (1922) 3.
37 – Bücher (1901), enlarged and reprinted as the one-hundred page first chapter of his *Beiträge*, a completely neglected work. I have collected the main contributions to the debate under the title, *The Bücher–Meyer Controversy* (New York, Arno, 1980).
38 – Bücher (1906) 370–1 (cf. 441–4). The quotation in my text does not appear in the English translation, made from the third edition, by S. M. Wickett under the grossly misleading title *Industrial Evolution* (London and New York, 1901). My other reference, however, will be found in the latter, pp. 371–4.
39 – Sombart (1916) I, 142–3. In the first edition there is only a fleeting hint of the concept: (1902) II, 222–3.
40 – See, e.g., Weber's references to Sombart in *The Protestant Ethic*, the references in Marianne Weber (1950) and Sombart's introduction to the second edition of *Der moderne Kapitalismus*.
41 – Bücher's importance for Weber is still more evident and more explicit in the second chapter of (1956), 'Soziologische Grundkategorien des Wirtschaftens'.
42 – Weber (1921) = (1956) II, 735–822 (I shall cite the latter). On the 'three layers' within the work, see Mommsen (1974) 15–17.
43 – Marianne Weber (1950) 375. The 1897 version does not refute my remarks.
44 – Heuss in the opening remarks of his centenary article (1965). His account would have been more complete, though perhaps only a little less gloomy, had he been less parochial and looked outside Germany.
45 – Weber (1956) II, 736–9.
46 – Weber (1956) II, 805–9; cf (1924) especially 139–46, 256–7.
47 – Weber (1924) 143–4.
48 – Weber (1956) II, 739.
49 – That this was Weber's own schema is shown by the most recent editors; see J. Winckelmann's introduction to Weber (1956) I, xi–xii; cf. G. Roth in his introduction to the English translation (1968) I, lxxvii, n. 87, xci–xciv.

50 – The lecture is reprinted as the first essay in Weber (1971).
51 – See Mommsen (1959); briefly in his (1974) ch. 2, with good bibliography.
52 – Marcuse (1968) ch. 3, at 201–3; cf. Habermas (1971) ch. 6.
53 – Weber (1956) II, 782.
54 – Weber (1924) 271–8.
55 – De Ste. Croix (1975a) 19–20.
56 – Weber (1956) II, 818.
57 – Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 137.
58 – See Kocka (1966) 329–35. An excellent starting point on Marx and Weber, with good bibliography, is provided by Mommsen (1974) ch. 3.
59 – Marx (1973) 256.
60 – The texts are conveniently assembled by Welskopf (1957) ch. 10.
61 – On the centrality of capitalism in Weber's work, see Abramowski (1966).
62 – Mommsen (1974) 50–1.
63 – Marx and Engels (1976) 472.
64 – I write 'ideal types' deliberately. On important similarities in the approach of both Marx and Weber, see Ashcraft (1972).
65 – Marx (1973) 484.
66 – Weber (1924) 6.
67 – Anderson (1974) 28.
68 – I trust that it is obvious that this approach to ideal types is fundamentally different from von Below's, quoted at n. 35 above.
69 – Frederiksen (1975).
70 – For one region, see briefly Frézouls (1973).
71 – In one field, the Greek 'colonies' of southern Italy and Sicily, the persistent efforts of Lepore to introduce a proper conceptual approach should be noted: (1968a & b) (1970).
72 – See, e.g., Alford (1972); Frisch (1970).
73 – For the evidence, see Kahrstedt (1954) 132–6.
74 – Galsterer (1976) part I; see Gabba (1972).
75 – Oliva (1962) 236–42.
76 – These figures are taken from the best modern account of the city in the later empire, Liebeschuetz (1972) ch. 2.
77 – See Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, ch. 5; Jones (1974) chs. 1–2.
78 – Magie (1950) I, 81.
79 – Alföldy (1974) 43.

2 – SPARTA AND SPARTAN SOCIETY

1 – Starr (1965) 258 defined the situation succinctly: 'We are, I fear, sometimes in danger of becoming Hellenistic rumour-mongering historians.' Anyone who cares can find the whole exhausting bibliography in the footnotes in Kiechle (1963), but not one sentence to explain how so much accurate information was transmitted to Pindar, who then assembled it in a sort of Burke's *Peerage*, not to mention the *Memoirs* of Stephanus of Byzantium.
2 – Boardman (1963).
3 – Cf. Mossé (1973).
4 – The so-called Great Rhetra, if authentic, was a brief, almost gnomic, early

enactment about government, particularly about legislative procedure. No agreement exists among historians even about the date, but most place it earlier than the 'sixth-century revolution', as do I without any hesitation.

5 – On the various rites, see den Boer (1954) part 3.

6 – *Eunomia* became an ambiguous term: 'good order' slid into 'stable government' and *eunomia* became a catchword of propagandists against political change, in particular change to democracy. Herodotus was surely thinking of the primary sense. See Andrewes (1938); Ehrenberg (1965) 139–58.

7 – The fact that *homoioi* first appears as a 'technical term' in Xenophon or that Xenophon alone speaks of *hypomeiones*, 'Inferiors', does not impress me as having any significance. Spartan social terminology was filled with common nouns and participles assigned a technical meaning, such as *tresantes* (tremblers), *agathoergoi* (well-doers), *neodamodeis* (those newly enfranchised).

8 – Moretti (1959).

9 – On the whole I follow the interpretation of the *krypteia* by Jeanmaire (1939) 540–69. Aristotle, according the Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 28, tied it entirely to policing the helots, but that this is too narrow seems a legitimate inference from Xenophon's carefully veiled generalities (4.4), from the few details we have about the suppression of Cinadon's revolt, and, if it is to be trusted, from the reference to *krypteia* in Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 28.3.

10 – Xenophon, 11.2, 13.11; cf. his *Agesilaus*, 1.26; Thucydides 4.80.5. Pierre Vidal-Naquet has reminded me that the Athenian state provided each ephebe with a shield and spear, at least in the fourth century BC (Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 42.4). This comparison reinforces my preference.

11 – The main passages in Herodotus are 3.148; 5.51; 6.50; 6.72; 8.5.

12 – The inscription is reprinted in E. Schwyzer, ed., *Dialectorum Graecarum exempla . . .*, no. 12.

13 – See Aristotle, *Politics*, 1334a35–39.

14 – See Andrewes (1966).

15 – Thucydides 5.15.1 (however one prefers to heal the corrupt text), 5.34.2.

16 – De Ste. Croix (1972) 94–101.

17 – Vagts (1937) 11, 13.

18 – Isocrates 6.81; Plato *Laws*, 666E.

19 – Translated by Richmond Lattimore (University of Chicago Press, 1947).

20 – E.g. Kirsten (1941).

21 – The fragment is no. 1 in Schroeder's edition; see Will (1956) 59.

22 – Translation by Bowra (1964) 152, of fragment 189 in his edition.

23 – Jeanmaire (1939) 463–5.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ADDENDUM

The most substantial contributions to the study of ancient Sparta since this essay have been *Sparta and Her Social Problems*, by P. Oliva (Prague, Akademia, 1971), and the publications of Paul Cartledge, adumbrated in a programmatic article entitled 'Toward the Spartan Revolution', *Arethusa* 8 (1975), 59–84, in which he saw not only the destruction of the 'Spartan mirage' as a necessary step to the correct study of the subject, but also the introduction of a more social-scientific approach ('pre-eminently the elaboration and application of Marxist theory'). In other specialist studies, such as his study of 'Literacy in the Spartan Oligarchy', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 98 (1978), 25–37, he has sought to analyse the impact of changed social forces on the structure and function of Spartan society as a whole – in this particular case taking issue with the general contention of Goody and Watt on the revolutionary impact of literacy *per se* on social structure. Unfortunately, not much of the new social scientific approach is readily available or obvious to the reader in his general monograph, *Sparta and Lakonia: A Regional History, 1300–362 B.C.* (London and Boston, RKP, 1979) where social institutions and relations do not receive isolated treatment (with the exception of the chapter on 'Helots and Perioikoi', 160–95, where he tends to follow the opinions of a line of thought that helots are 'essentially slaves'). On this latter problem, the most convenient recent surveys are those by J. Ducat, 'Le mépris des hilotes', *Annales (E.S.C.)* 29 (1974), 1451–64, and 'Aspects de l'hilotisme', *Ancient Society* 9 (1978), 5–46. In large part, however, he does not advance the arguments of Oliva or of Y. Garlan, 'Les esclaves grecques en temps de guerre', *Actes de colloque d'histoire* (Besançon, 1970), 29–62, esp. 40–8 on the status and functions of the helots. P. Oliva, 'Die Helotenfrage in der Geschichte Spartas' in *Die Rolle der Volksmassen in der Geschichte der vorkapitalistischen Gesellschaftsformationen*, ed. J. Hermann and I. Sellnow (Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1975), 109–16, reinforces his earlier views on the subject. On other peripheral groups in Spartan society see T. Alfieri Tonini, 'Il problema dei *neodamodeis* nell'ambito della società spartana', *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo* 109 (1975), 305–16. On the *perioikoi* see R. T. Ridley, 'The Economic Activities of the *Perioikoi*', *Mnemosyne* 27 (1974), 281–92, and the rejoinder by G. Berthiaume, 'Citoyens spécialistes à Sparte', 29 (1976), 360–4. The problem of the influence of wealth, distribution of property and social divisions in early Sparta has been broached by A. J. Holladay, 'Spartan Austerity', *Classical Quarterly* 27 (1977), 111–26; the iconographic side of Spartan culture, including the pieces referred to by Finley, may now be seen conveniently in the well-illustrated volume by L. F. Fitzhardinge, *The Spartans* (London, Thames & Hudson, 1979). Finally, the historical events surrounding Cinadon have been reviewed by E. David, 'The Conspiracy of Cinadon', *Athenaeum* 57 (1979), 239–59, though with inadequate attention to the problems of status-conflict noted by Finley.

3 – THE ATHENIAN EMPIRE

1 – Thornton (1965) 47.

2 – E.g. Mattingly (1961) 184, 187; Erxleben (1971) 161.

3 – See Folz (1953).

4 – Will (1972) 171–3; cf. Ehrenberg (1975) 187–97.

5 – As an outstanding illustration, note how the 454 'turning-point' dominates the analysis of Nesselhauf (1933). For an incisive critique, see Will (1972) 175–6. It is anyway far from certain that the transfer of the treasury occurred as late as 454; see Pritchett (1969).

6 – Larsen (1940) 191.

7 – Schuller (1974) 3. His central thesis of 'two layers' (*Schichte*) in the structure of the later empire and his listing of continuities and discontinuities, follow from his initial confusion between the psychological notion of 'an interest in being ruled' and the realities of power.

8 – Even if one thinks, as I do not, that at the end of his life the historian came to

ECONOMY AND SOCIETY IN ANCIENT GREECE

BY M.I. FINLEY

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
BRENT D. SHAW AND RICHARD P. SALLER