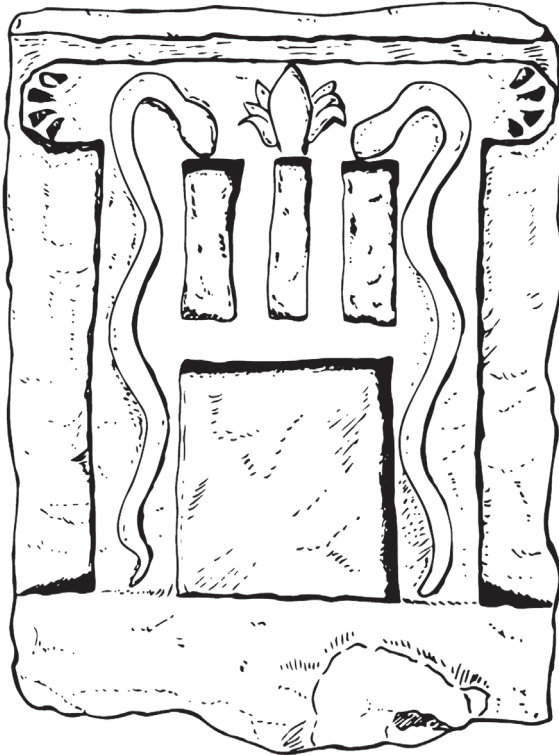




The

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF SPARTA



— *The* —

HISTORICAL
REVIEW
OF SPARTA

edited by
Giorgio Piras and Rita Sassu



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The Historical Review of Sparta

2023

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Contents

Preface	7
<i>Anastasia Kanellopoulou, Giorgio Piras</i>	
Foreword	11
<i>Jacqueline Christien</i>	
Introduction	17
<i>Rita Sassu</i>	
1. From Lycurgus to Cleomenes III: Spartan Constitutional Reform and the Cleomenic War	23
<i>David D. Phillips</i>	
2. Changing paradigms in Spartan religion and values in the 3 rd cent. BC	47
<i>Rita Sassu</i>	
3. The reverberations of the reform program of kings Agis IV and Cleomenes III on the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic Age: a relationship between power and intellect	75
<i>Christos P. Baloglou</i>	
4. Last kingdoms, new traditions in Hellenistic Sparta	95
<i>Stefania Golino</i>	
5. Rising threat: the reforms of Cleomenes III and the socio-political causes of Sparta's conflict with Macedonia	115
<i>Athanasios Grammenos</i>	
6. The conflict of Cleomenes III, King of Sparta, with Aratus, general of the Achaean League	133
<i>Stavros Giannopoulos</i>	

7. The Cleomenic War: could Sparta have won? 153
Constantinos Koliopoulos
8. Sellasia: a re-examination of the battle 167
Miltiades Michalopoulos
9. About the distance of 5 stades in the Phylarchaeon-Plutarchaeon
version of the battle of Sellasia 185
Jean-Christophe Couvenhes
10. From the battle of Sellasia to *In 200 B.C.* by Kavafis. 203
A poetic tour of the body of History
Paniagiota Laskari

List of abbreviations

Dilts = M.R. Dilts, *Scholia in Aeschinem*, Stuttgart-Leipzig 1992.

FGrHist = F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin-Leiden 1923-1958.

FHG = K.W.L. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, Parisiis 1848.

FIRA I = S. Riccobono, *Fontes iuris Romani antejustiniani, 1. Leges*, Firenze 1941².

Gigon = O. Gigon, *Aristotelis Opera. Volumen III: Librorum Deperditorum Fragmenta*, Berlin 1987.

IG II² = J. Kirchner, *Inscriptiones Graecae, II-III. Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriores. Editio altera*, Berlin 1913-1940.

IG II³ 1 = S.D. Lambert, M.J. Osborne, S.G. Byrne, V.N. Bardani, S.V. Tracy, *Inscriptiones Graecae, II/III. Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis Anno posteriores. Editio Tertia. Pars I. Leges et Decreta. Fasc. IV*, Berlin 2012-2014.

IG V = W. Kolbe, *Inscriptiones Graecae, V, 1. Inscriptiones Laconiae, Messeniae, Arcadiae. Fasciculus prior, Inscriptiones Laconiae et Messeniae*, Berlin 1913.

IvO = W. Dittenberger, K. Purgold, *Inschriften von Olympia*, Berlin 1896.

Keaney = J.J. Keaney, *Harpocration, Lexeis of the ten orator*, Amsterdam 1991.

PL = P. Poralla, A.S. Bradford, *A prosopography of Lacedaemonians from the earliest times to the death of Alexander the Great (X-323 B.C.)*, Chicago 1985.

PLAA = S.A. Bradford, *A prosopography of Lacedaemonians from the death of Alexander the Great, 323 B.C. to the sack of Sparta by Alaric, A.D. 396*, München 1977.

RE = A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, *Realencyclopaedie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart 1839 ss.

Rose = V. Rose, *Aristoteles pseudepigraphus*, Leipzig 1863.

SIG³ = W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, Leipzig 1915-1924³.

SVF 1 = H.F.A. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta, 1. Zeno et Zenonis discipuli*, Stuttgart 1968.

SVF 3 = H.F.A. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, 3. *Chrysippi fragmenta moralia. Fragmenta successorum Chrysippi*, Stuttgart 1968.

West = M.L. West, *Iambi et elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum Cantati*, 2. *Callinus, Mimnermus, Semonides, Solon, Tyrtaeus. Minora adespota*, Oxford 1972.

Preface

Anastasia Kanellopoulou *

Giorgio Piras **

The present volume gathers the contributions illustrated during the International Conference “The Battle of Sellasia (222 BC). Landmark of the last flash of Sparta”, held in Sparta on the 9th and 10th September 2022 and organized by the Institute of Sparta, in collaboration with the Municipality of Sparta, the Faculty of Human Movement and Quality of Life Sciences of the University of Peloponnese, the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation & Interpreting of the Ionian University and the Sellasia Cultural Association.

The Conference revolved around the Battle of Sellasia, which took place during the summer of 222 BC and saw the clash between the kingdom of Macedon and the Achaean League, headed by Antigonos III Doston, and Sparta, guided by king Cleomenes III. The battle itself was framed by a series of political, economical and constitutional reforms taking place in the Lakonian *polis* and affecting the whole Peloponnesian region, that are thoroughly examined in the papers of the scholars who joined the initiative. Besides the depiction of the novel socio-political scenario where the battle took place, another subject addressed by the speakers was the military strategies implemented in the battlefield, together with a reconstruction of the armies’ movements and of the geographical settlement of the historical event. The changes occurring in the customs, behaviours, mentality, ideology, perception of power and life were explored by further speeches, proposing an in-depth

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analysis of the ancient sources concerning some of the most iconic figures dominating the 3rd cent. BC Sparta, starting with Cleomenes III. The latter's actions and reforms are investigated from multiple perspectives, taking into account the king's familiar ties, education, philosophical insights and legacy. Finally, the modern reception of this turning point in the history of Sparta is dealt with, too.

The publication continues the series "The Historical Review of Sparta", by acting as its second issue. The editorial project was inaugurated by the publication of the Proceedings of the previous International Conference, entitled "International relations in Antiquity: the case of Sparta" and held in Sparta on the 11th and 12th September 2021, and the establishment of the International Journal.

As already stressed the last year, "The Historical Review of Sparta", issued by "Sapienza University Publishing House", is a shared initiative of Sapienza University of Rome, Department of Classical Antiquities, and the Institute of Sparta, aimed to create an interdisciplinary space where all the scientific disciplines variously connected to the ancient Greek *polis* can express their contribution in reconstructing the past of Sparta and reflecting on its impact and reception in the modern era, hopefully valorising its heritage for the future generations.

Hence, the journal means to include the research outputs of scholars with different academic backgrounds, linked by the common goal of discussing the cultural, artistic, historical, political and military role played by Sparta in the pre-Classical, Classical and post-Classical age. The volumes of "The Historical Review of Sparta" intend to cover all the fields of investigation directly or implicitly related to Sparta, such as history, epigraphy, archaeology, architecture, visual culture, philology, ancient and modern literature, topography, anthropology, religion, mythology, law, political sciences, international studies, warfare, economics etc.

In order to reach a wide audience, the journal is published both in printed version and in electronic one (in an open access form, freely downloadable and licensed under Creative Commons).

The publication of the volumes is a tangible result of the fruitful collaboration, initiated in 2020 through the signature of a Cooperation Protocol, between the Department of Classical Antiquity of Sapienza University of Rome and the Institute of Sparta to promote researches on Sparta through several means, such as scientific conferences, international meetings, workshop, seminars, public

events, publications, exhibitions, projects, archaeological surveys and excavations, educational programs dedicated to University researchers as well students, and High School students.

All the joint activities are implemented on common agreement, either in Greece or in Italy. In order to provide an overview of the extent of the collaboration, it is our pleasure to mention here some recent and forthcoming initiatives. Besides the two above-mentioned conferences, a third one, concerning “Ancient Spartan Religion: Cults, Rites, Sanctuaries and their Socio-Economic, Political and Military Implications” is being organised in Rome in October 2023, while the fourth one, dedicated to “The economic model of ancient Sparta and its inheritance law”, is expected to take place in Sparta in 2024. The Proceedings of these conferences will respectively feed the third and fourth issue of “The Historical Review of Sparta”. In addition to the conferences and the publications, another successful shared project is worth being mentioned, i.e. the Summer School taking place in Sparta in September 2023. This educational product, promoted by the Institute of Sparta, the partner Universities of Rome Sapienza and Unitelma Sapienza and the University of the Peloponnese, focuses again on the ancient city of Sparta, with the objective of increasing the knowledge of the ancient city, by combining lessons, seminars, technical workshops and visits to the most relevant archaeological sites and museums of Sparta.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all the institutions, the researchers, the experts and the collaborators involved in the preparation, implementation and diffusion of the present volume, the authors of the papers and the “Sapienza University Publishing House”.

Foreword

*Jacqueline Christien**

I decided to dedicate myself to the study of the Lacedaemonians 50 years ago because the previous research, concentrated on Plutarch and Sicily, had convinced me that by far the greatest historical actor was Sparta (J. Christien, *Mercenaires et partis politiques à Syracuse de 357 à 354*, in *REA* 77, 1975, pp. 63-73; J. Christien, *La loi d'Épistadeus: un aspect de l'histoire économique et sociale de Sparte*, in *RD* 54, 1974, pp. 197-221). But also that, at that time, many facts had been overlooked by Hellenists, either for ideological or scientific reasons. It is certain that the lack of any currency and the refusal of the Lacedaemonians themselves to write their own history, greatly contributed to this incomprehension.

Sparta was, however, the most important of the ancient Greek states by its territorial extent, its surprising political system (the dyarchy, the complexity of its society, largely misunderstood by the other Greek cities), and the great variety of its resources, which included not only agricultural but forestry and mining products. It was, indeed, a vast territory to decipher, a task that I decided to undertake.

For me it was both a blank page despite all that had been already written about it, and a chapter of history to be reinterpreted and rewritten. It turned out to be a lifetime's occupation, an obsession with research which gave surprising results concerning territorial relations and even the evolution of society in a state which I tried, as far as possible, to release from its mythical aura.

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Evolution

In view of this personal experience, I have decided to provide the audience with an overview of Lacedaemonian history.

Indeed, the events chosen for this talk occurred after a long period in the 7th and 6th cent. BC during which Sparta had flourished, taking advantage of its position in the heart of the Mediterranean, situated at the intersection of sea-routes from Asia Minor to Sicily and Gallia, and from the Balkans to Kyreneia. Following the example of the Egyptian and Libyan states, which were its diplomatic partners, Lacedaemon became a complex state, rather more than a city.

Then came the Persian expansion causing the decline of this trans-Mediterranean area. But Lacedaemon put a stop to that so-called expansion.

The Athenian empire, while organizing the region into the Aegean basin and the occidental basin, put Sparta into great difficulty, causing socio-political and military changes not well understood by the Athenians themselves. However, these military reforms enabled Sparta to win the Peloponnese war (M.C. Amouretti, J. Christien, F. Ruzé, P. Sineux, *Le regard des Grecs sur la guerre. Mythe et réalité*, Paris 2000. For the cavalry see P. Christesen, *A New Reading of the Damonon Stele*, Newcastle 2019, pp. 89-100).

Thebes brought about the first fatal strike by organizing the reconstruction of Messenia and creating Megalopolis. Then Philippe II, who was mythically linked to Argos, gave the Thyreatis to the Argians, a territory that they had long claimed.

From then on, the Spartan state was on the defensive. It did not oppose Philippe II because Archidamus III had gone to defend occidental Hellenism in Italy (J. Christien, *Archidamos III. In Memoriam*, in G. Hoffmann, A. Gailliot (edited by), *Rituels et transgressions de l'Antiquité à nos jours: actes du colloque, Amiens 23-25 janvier 2008*, Encreage 2009, pp. 243-258). Agis III tried to exploit Alexander's departure for Asia, but reduced to Laconia, Lacedaemon had insufficient armed forces to oppose Macedonia. He was defeated at Megapolis in October 331 BC and died heroically on the battlefield, making sure that a maximum number of his troops were saved (Diod. 17.63). Not only were the frontiers imposed by Epaminondas maintained, with the loss of Messenia and the loss of Beiminatis, but the regent of Macedonia took hostages to protect against any renewed Spartan offensive. Those who wished to fight went to Sicily or in the Adriatic (F. Ruzé,

J. Christien, *Sparte: Histoire, mythes et géographie*, Paris 2017, pp. 305-329). However, the Spartans resolutely refused to resign themselves to letting the Northern state rule over the Peloponnese, a region that they had protected and often led into combat, dominated by the Peloponnesian league, an instrument surprisingly well-adapted to the ancient Greek cities' need for autonomy and their necessity of uniting to obtain sufficient power (the modern NATO is modelled on this concept of many states in league with a hegemonic power).

Thus, at the beginning of the 3rd cent. BC, with Areus, the Lacedaemonians, supported by Egypt, attempted a return to hegemony (J. Christien, *Areus et le concept de symmachie au IIIe siècle. Les réalités hellénistiques*, in *DHA Suppl.* 16, 2016, pp. 161-175). The death of Areus, followed by that of his son Acrotatus in the struggle against Antigonos Gonatas in 365 and 362, had opened up an era of doubt and existential questioning. It appears probable that the Spartans had suffered a new loss of territory that included the ports of the eastern coast, with the important Macedonian fortresses of Zarax, and probably also Marios, leaving the plains of Leukai and Helos under Argo-Macedonian threat (J. Christien, *Deux forteresses de la côte orientale du Péloponnèse et la guerre de Chrémonidès*, in *Ktéma* 12, 1987, pp. 111-124; J. Christien, *The fortresses of Eastern Laconia. Retrospection on a lifetime of research*, Swansea [in press]).

It turned out that the successor of Areus/Acrotatus, king Leonidas II, was an unusual person. This son of Cleonymus had spent the best part of his life in the powerful Hellenistic state, the Seleucid kingdom, going as far as the Bactrian, and living for a while alongside the prince Seleucus, the son of king Seleucus. At the death of the prince, and perhaps also at the death of his father Cleonymus (around 265/4?), he returned to Sparta to claim his heritage and became regent, and then king (J. Christien, *Léonidas II. La royauté hellénistique à Sparte*, in *Ktéma* 40, 2015, pp. 243-255). However, for him, the Spartan tradition was of little significance as he had seen the immensity of the Asian kingdoms and the insignificance of ancient Greece. On the other hand, as traditional life was gradually disappearing, the process of reinventing tradition could begin. Sparta, and its poor political reality, gave way to Sparta fantasizing about its glorious past (N.M. Kennel, *The gymnasium of virtue: education and culture in ancient Sparta*, Chapel Hill-London 1995).

Around 250, both Macedonia and Lacedaemon were in the hands of aging men, mindful of keeping the peace. But the young Sicyonian,

Aratus, wanted to profit from and develop the Achaean league. And, soon afterwards, in Sparta, the young king Agis IV came to the throne of the Eurypontids and was in charge of the army. This military commander (and also, certainly, his political entourage) sensed the danger of a forthcoming new hegemony in the Peloponnese and set about implementing the military and social revival of Lacedaemon. The Aetolian and the Achaean leagues had revived the notion of citizen-soldiers. In Laconia, they also needed a new corps of citizen-soldiers. To this end, it was necessary to create cleruchies by making gifts of plots of land to support individual citizen-soldiers, and thus promote the reconstitution of a politico-military body. This system was applied in the Hellenistic orient, in Egypt and far earlier in the Athenian empire and above all, as was well known, during the Spartan expansion at the time of the territorial conquests, in Messenia and Thyreatis. Obviously, the reigning plutocracy whose lands were taken did not appreciate the project and Leonidas showed that, despite his age, he had learnt during his adventurous life how to survive. Indeed, by getting rid of his colleague Agis IV, he had in fact instated a monarchy, an obvious adaption of the model of the Hellenistic kingdoms, at the price of unprecedented sacrilege. Also, when his son Cleomenes III, who had grown up in Sparta, came to power, he initiated a phenomenon which, from then on, became well known "the reinvention of tradition". Because in 235 Megalopolis joined the Achaean league, and in 229, Argos, the secular enemy, did the same, the only choice for Sparta was to react or to disappear. Cleomenes thus revived the projects of Agis.

Cleomenes III and the Military Restoration

Cleomenes' reforms in 227 BC first concerned reconstituting a military force in Sparta, but incidentally, they also accentuated the Hellenistic monarchy already instated by his father, continually concealing it under the pretense of restoring tradition. But Plutarch, wanting a parallel to his life in Gracchus, warped the project by presenting it as a solution to the social crisis which at that time extended across the Peloponnese, once the pillaging of Asia was finished. The Greeks also succumbed to this misunderstanding and thus expected Cleomenes to divide up the land, as he had done in his own kingdom. This helped him to make rapid conquests. He even took Megalopolis and Argos, but disillusion came almost as rapidly, especially as Aratos, in view of the forthcoming restoration of Spartan hegemony, preferred

to form an alliance with Antigonos Doseon, turning his back on all his previous political choices. Cleomenes did not possess the troops necessary to oppose this coalition. Ptolemy III abandoned him and, in despair, the Agiad prepared to fight a battle near to Sparta.

He was nevertheless a great military strategist and he elaborated a plan which could have created a surprise. There are two principal routes of access into Sparta wide enough to be taken by a large army: that of Eurotas via Pellana, and that of Oinous, via Sellasia. When he realized that the invasion was to take place via the latter route, Cleomenes thought up a daring plan.

His army had only one phalanx whereas that of his enemy had two. He thus had to trap the enemy troops in a narrow passage where they could not fan out to surround the Spartan phalanx. Cleomenes and his brother occupied the high ground in order to attack the enemy from the flanks or from behind. But this plan did not take into account the military genius of one of his opponents, the Megalopolitan Philopoemen, or the incapacity of his own brother. Philopoemen, seeing that the movement of his troops was blocked, boldly attacked Cleomenes' brother, overthrowing his troops and thus opening the route for the invasion of Laconia (Plb. 2.67-69).

In view of this defeat, Cleomenes preferred to avoid the annihilation of his army and fled to Egypt in the hope of resuming the battle later (Justin 28.4.9), but Hellenistic priorities had changed. Egypt, from then on, feared the Seleucid renaissance rather than the power of Macedonia. Cleomenes III was killed in Alexandria as was his descendance.

The End

The Achaeans and the Macedonians thought that they had triumphed over Sparta. However, the Spartans did not see it in this eye. As there were no Heraclids left capable of becoming military commanders, they searched elsewhere for experienced soldiers to continue the fight: Lycurgus, Machanidas, Nabis...

It required the alliance of the Romans, the Macedonians, the Achaeans and even the Pergamenians and Rhodians to wear down the resilience of this small state lost at the end of the Peloponnesian peninsula, in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Rome immediately understood the strategic value of Sparta's position in the Mediterranean and the importance of occupying its coasts.

This time, Sparta lost on all fronts, and its importance was reduced, leaving a civil territory devoid of political or military power. It became a folkloric academy of traditions, revised and aggravated by Roman customs, but also a rich city which prospered economically in the *pax romana*, weighing socially and economically, it appears, throughout the region.

Conclusion

I would like to suggest that, in order to gain new knowledge on the subject of the present Colloquium, it is now time to perform archeological excavations on the site of the battle of Sellasia, in the Palaiogoulas and also of the fortress of Agios Konstantinos. We need to renew our current knowledge, and even to question what we believe to be the truth on the subject. The history of antiquity is still alive.



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Introduction

Rita Sassu

The volume gathers the contributions presented at the conference “The battle of Sellasia (222 BC), landmark of the last flash of Sparta”, held in Sparta on the 9th and 10th September 2022, and acts as the second issue of “The Historical Review of Sparta”.

The academic journal, whose first edition was dedicated to the Proceedings of the previous International Conference, entitled “International relations in Antiquity: the case of Sparta” and held in Sparta on the 11th and 12th September 2021, aims to study, investigate and promote the knowledge of ancient Sparta, in order to stimulate the scientific debate and valorize the cultural heritage and historical legacy of the Lacedaemonian city. In this perspective, the publication of an annual issue, each year devoted to a different topic connected to the *polis*, is expected. The next volume will be dedicated to the Spartan religion and will host the papers that are going to be illustrated in the forthcoming pertinent conference, to be held in Rome in October 2023, and the fourth one will include the Proceedings of the subsequent colloquium on Spartan economy, scheduled for October 2024 in Sparta. Besides the Proceedings of the conferences, the scholarly journal is open to contributions in all fields related to Sparta.

As just mentioned, the articles of the present volume focus on the battle of Sellasia, one of the last attempts carried out by Sparta to recover the ancient hegemony over the Peloponnese that had been lost with the catastrophic battle of Leuctra in 371 BC. The battle of Sellasia, occurred in the summer 222 BC, saw the clash between the Spartans led by Cleomenes III and the Achaean-Macedonian alliance guided by Antigonos III Doseon and resulted in the disastrous defeat of the Lacedaemonian army and the downfall of the Spartan king.

The fight between Sparta and the Achaean League supported by the Macedonian realm is just one piece of a broader history, where antagonist leaders compete to achieve a dominant position, in the context of a novel geo-political scenario dominated by monarchies and autocratic powers. In this unprecedented situation, following the collapse of the ancient conception of the city-State, a growing scramble for power takes place, in the midst of new behavioral models and moral beliefs. To study the battle of Sellasia means, in other words, to closely explore one of the many chapters of the complex and multifaceted Hellenistic age.

Therefore, the papers collected in the volume address the main subject of the conference from several perspectives, in the attempt to contextualize the specific historical event in a wider frame, able to consider the changes Sparta underwent in the Hellenistic period as well as those occurred in the neighboring regions, within the framework of a Mediterranean space dominated by new emerging powers, alliances and connections. Hence, in order to properly understand the battle itself, it is necessary to duly take into account the internal dynamics of 3rd cent. BC Sparta and its external relations with the other Greek *poleis*.

With this in mind, the following articles gradually approach the subject matter in a crescendo that, moving from the analysis of Hellenistic Sparta and of the reforms implemented during the 3rd cent. BC, reaches the key-topic of the battle of Sellasia by discussing the military strategies and tactics carried out, and ends with a reflection on its reception in modern literature.

After the Preface by A. Kanellopoulou and G. Piras and the Foreword by J. Christien, the volume opens with an in-depth examination of the Spartan constitutional reforms from Lycurgus up to Cleomenes III, with the aim of providing a coherent picture of the incidents resulting in the Cleomenic wars (*From Lycurgus to Cleomenes III: Spartan Constitutional Reform and the Cleomenic War* by D.D. Phillips). Despite the claim by Agis IV and Cleomenes III of restoring the ancient Lycurgus' laws, the two Hellenistic kings enacted a series of measures that deeply altered the core structure of Spartan government. Motivated above all by military necessity and personal ambition, Cleomenes' reforms, carefully illustrated by the author, ultimately paved the way to the conflicts ended in the battle of Sellasia. Cleomenes finally emerges as a figure marked by tyrannical features, who assumed supreme power

by force, summarily exiled opponents, eliminated the ephorate and the Eurypontid kingship, and restricted the influence of the γερουσία.

The subsequent three articles provide a nuanced picture of the transformations in collective mentality, society and economics that enabled Sparta to radically change its methods of governance and, in general, its attitude towards the State and the gods. Indeed, the 3rd cent. was marked by an increasing laxity in respecting ancestral religious prescriptions and sacred calendar, a weakened fear of divine punishment and a partial decline of the traditional divine beings worshipped by the Spartans, in some cases replaced by new gods (*Changing paradigms in Spartan religion and values in the 3rd cent. BC*). Anyway, it is not an era of decay, but rather of progressive abandonment of ancient ethical values and models of behavior, setting the ground for a new conception of kingship and of State government and distinguished by a novel relevance of philosophy, remarkably Stoicism. The impact of the teachings of Sphaerus on the program of Cleomenes III is assessed, too.

Exactly the role played by philosophy in the 3rd cent. is explored in the next contribution (*The reverberations of the reform program of kings Agis IV and Cleomenes III on the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic Age: a relationship between power and intellect* by C.P. Baloglou). The revolutionary political actions by Agis IV and Cleomenes III are examined in the light of Stoicism, a philosophy which tended to compromise with political reality. Moreover, the author points out, monarchy was consistent with stoic views and Sphaerus hoped to create, in Cleomenes III, a “philosopher-king”. At the same time, an interesting comparison with the Academy is developed, with specific regard to its long-established influence over another main city of the Peloponnese, alias Megalopolis. So, two apparently different philosophical schools widespread in Hellenistic Peloponnese are related. The author finally maintains that the reforms of Cleomenes III indirectly inspired those of Megalopolis and particularly the Cynic philosopher, orator and poet Cercidas.

Another fundamental innovation in Hellenistic Sparta, i.e., the introduction of the civic money, is addressed as well (*Last kingdoms, new traditions in Hellenistic Sparta* by S. Golino). After a brief reconsideration of the extent of the alleged Lycurgan ban on massive coinage, the monetary production initiated by Areus I is discussed, followed by an analysis of that issued by Cleomenes III and then by Nabis. Besides the

economic aspects entailed by the circulation of coined money, also the political messages delivered through its iconography are evaluated. In fact, as demonstrated by the author, the figures displayed over the coins intended to pursue a sophisticated political propaganda: for instance, the gradual predominance of Herakles over the Dioskouroi traditionally symbolizing the Spartan dual kingship reveals an increasing tendency to exalt a single ruler, in a general tendency to assimilate monocratic models attested in coeval Hellenistic courts.

The growing conflicts, with Macedonia from one side, and with the Achaean League from the other one, are dealt with in the subsequent two articles. The reasons behind Sparta's hostility with Macedonia are discussed in detail from the theoretical lens of the so-called realist tradition (and more specifically from the viewpoint of neoclassical realism) and lastly traced back to two main causes, respectively geopolitical and ideological in nature (*Rising threat: the reforms of Cleomenes III and the socio-political causes of Sparta's conflict with Macedonia* by A. Grammenos). First, Spartan operations in the Peloponnese were perceived by Aratus as a dangerous threat to the Achaean League, so that he resorted to seek an alliance with the Macedonians. Secondly, Macedonia foresaw the risk of social destabilization if Cleomenes' reformist ideas were to spread outside the Peloponnese. Given these circumstances, the author concludes that war between Sparta and Macedonia was inevitable.

The antagonism between Sparta and the Achaean League is carefully examined against the complex background of a turbulent and intricated system of alliances, formal agreements (and hidden betrayals) among different old and new powers in the Peloponnese, in whole Greece, including the islands and colonies, and with external Hellenistic kingdoms (*The conflict of Cleomenes III, King of Sparta, with Aratus, general of the Achaean League* by S. Giannopoulos). The consistent series of military expeditions organized by Cleomenes III on the Spartan side and by Aratus from the Achaean one, together with their respective attempts to establish ties with local and foreign authorities, are comprehensively illustrated in order to explain the conflict between the Lacedaemonian king and the Achaean general finally leading to the catastrophic battle of Sellasia. The latter is thus contextualized in a network of connections spanning from Arcadia to Argolis and Aetolia, from Egypt to Macedonia.

The subsequent three articles deal with the battle itself, reconstructing its scenario, the strategies implemented, the armies involved, their dispositions and actions, the battlefield. An objective evaluation of the actual chances of Sparta to gain victory in the battle is carried out in the first of this set of papers, which tries to answer a fundamental question – “could Sparta have won?” – by using counterfactual analysis, namely analysis of alternative courses of history that did not actually occur (*The Cleomenic war: could Sparta have won?* by C. Koliopoulos). The author carries out a keen strategic examination of the battle, of the pertinent political context, of the unchangeable and immutable parameters of the war (such as the political and military skills of Aratus and Antigonos Doson), of the turning points of the conflict (Cleomenes’ failure to cancel debts and redistribute land in Argos and the implication of Macedonian army in Peloponnesian affairs) and assesses the feasibility of alternative courses of action. Given the above and taking into account the strength of the forces arranged against Cleomenes together with the instability and unreliability of his allies, the author concludes that a Spartan victory in the Cleomenic war was almost impossible.

A detailed reconstruction of the course of the battle of Sellasia is proposed by the next article (*Sellasia: a Re-Examination of the Battle* by M. Michalopoulos), which accurately inspects and critically re-examines the main (and somehow controversial) ancient sources describing the course of the clash, namely Polybius, Plutarch and Phylarch, as well as the modern bibliography on the subject. The hypothetical actions put into place by the armies (attacks, advancements, retirements, encirclements, failures and successes), as they can be inferred by the available literary documentation, are compared to trace a factual description of the battle. Moreover, the consistency and internal organization of the troops, their weaponry and equipment, their strategic dispositions, movements and maneuvers, their military tactics and stratagems, the natural environment (made up of a plain, two hills and a river) where the clash took place, the setting and the topography of the site, are carefully narrated in a way to provide a vivid and realistic picture of the fight itself.

The just mentioned ancient authors’ description of the battle is once again the focus of the following contribution (*About the distance of 5 stades in the Phylarchean-Plutarchean version of the battle of Sellasia* by J.-Ch. Couvenhes), which discusses, inter alia, the distance of five

stadia that Plutarch quotes from Phylarch. The theory (generally dismissed as unrealistic) according to which Antigonus' phalanx was forced to step backward by five stadia due to the pressure of Cleomenes III is rehabilitated. In the author's opinion, such a distance corresponds to the distance from the entrance to the plain of Sellasia to the entrenchment of Cleomenes' phalanx and seems coherent with Polybius' account. Besides improving the proper understanding of the course of the battle, it gives the possibility to identify the position of the river Gorgylus. Furthermore, after an accurate narration of the battlefield, inclusive of a reconstruction of the armies' dislocations and movements, the author successfully reconciles the apparently different versions of the incidents occurred during the battle provided by ancient sources.

The volume ends with a reflection on modern reception in literature of the battle of Sellasia and its outcomes (*From the Battle of Sellasia to In 200 B.C. by Kavafis. A Poetic Tour of the Body of History* by P. Laskari). Attention is paid to the poetic production of Konstantinos Petrou Kavafis, well-known for his capacity of evoking historical figures and actual events that played pivotal roles in Greek culture. Particularly, four interconnected poems concerned with the history of Sparta are considered: *Thermopylae*, *In Sparta, Hail, king of the Lacedaemonians* and *In 200 B.C.* While the latter deals with the historical situation twenty-two years after the battle, the two central poems stage Cleomenes III and the mother queen Cratesiclea as main tragic characters. On the whole, the power of Kavafis' historical poetry engages the reader in an intellectual game which, through the means of irony, allegory and innuendos, merges and connects the past with the present and testifies the everlasting fascination with Sparta.

The ten articles approach the multi-faceted subject of the battle of Sellasia from different standpoints that, besides reconstructing and reflecting on the punctual event, outline the image of a Hellenistic city that struggles to recover its glorious past in a radically altered geopolitical context, hovering between the dissolution of ancient traditions, the necessity to adapt its societal structure to the novel situation dominated by kingdoms and new moral values, and the need to preserve its identity.



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From Lycurgus to Cleomenes III: Spartan Constitutional Reform and the Cleomenic War

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Key words: Sparta, Agis IV, Cleomenes III, Lycurgus, Great Rhetra

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Σπάρτη, Άγισ Δ', Κλεομένης Γ', Λυκούργος, Μεγάλη Ρήτρα

Abstract:

This article examines the reforms of Agis IV and Cleomenes III against the kings' claims that they were restoring the laws of Lycurgus. It is entirely probable that Agis and Cleomenes genuinely believed some of their measures to be Lycurgan. In fact, though, their reforms had little connection to actual Lycurgan precedent and involved numerous violations of Spartan substantive and procedural law, including the Lycurgan Great Rhetra. The revolutionary and tyrannical method and character of Cleomenes' reforms represented a drastic departure from Spartan tradition and hardened the resolve of Sparta's enemies in the Cleomenic War, which concluded with Sparta's catastrophic

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defeat at Sellasia, the downfall of Cleomenes, and the rescission of some, but not all, of his reforms.

Το παρόν άρθρο εξετάζει τις μεταρρυθμίσεις του Άγι Δ΄ και του Κλεομένη Γ΄ σε αντιπαράθεση με τους ισχυρισμούς των βασιλιάδων ότι επανέφεραν τους νόμους του Λυκούργου. Είναι εντελώς πιθανόν ότι ο Άγις και ο Κλεομένης πίστευαν ειλικρινά ότι μερικές από τις μεταρρυθμίσεις τους ήταν λυκούργειες. Στην πραγματικότητα όμως, οι μεταρρυθμίσεις τους είχαν μικρή σχέση με πραγματικά λυκούργεια προηγούμενα και περιέλαβαν πολλές παραβιάσεις και του ουσιαστικού και του διαδικαστικού δικαίου της Σπάρτης, συμπεριλαμβανομένης της λυκούργειας Μεγάλης Ρήτρας. Η επαναστατική και τυραννική μέθοδος και χαρακτήρας των μεταρρυθμίσεων του Κλεομένη αποτελούσαν μια δραστική παρέκκλιση από τη σπαρτιατική παράδοση και ενίσχυσαν την αποφασιστικότητα των εχθρών της Σπάρτης στον Κλεομενικό Πόλεμο, ο οποίος έληξε με την καταστροφική ήττα της Σπάρτης στη Σελλασία, με την πτώση του Κλεομένη, και με την κατάργηση μερικών αλλά όχι όλων των μεταρρυθμίσεών του.

The reform program of Agis IV

The constitutional revolution effected by Cleomenes III in fall 227¹, modeled upon an unsuccessful attempt by Agis IV sixteen years previously, radically transformed the Spartan state. To remedy the severe *oliganthrōpia* plaguing Sparta², Agis had proposed (1) the cancellation of debts; (2) the redistribution of land, with 4,500 lots located between the ravine at Pellana and Mt. Taygetus, Malea, and Sellasia to be granted to Spartiates, and 15,000 lots outside that area to be assigned to *perioikoi* capable of bearing arms; (3) the extension of Spartiate citizenship and the corresponding land grant to *perioikoi* and foreigners who had been brought up as free men, possessed the appropriate physical attributes, and were in the prime of life; and (4) the distribution of the Spartiates into fifteen *phiditia* of 200-400 men

¹ Date: Walbank 1970, p. 245.

² Plu. *Agis* 5.6-7: the number of (adult male) Spartiates possessing full civic rights had dwindled to no more than 700, of whom perhaps 100 possessed land and an ancestral allotment; this resulted in poor military morale and performance and the threat of *stasis*. On the phenomenon of Spartan *oliganthrōpia*, see Doran 2018 (discussing Agis and Cleomenes at pp. 80-82).

each³, and the revival of the ancestral way of life, including the *agôgê* (Plu. *Agis* 8; cf. 4.2).

The mistake that doomed Agis' reforms, and Agis himself, was his belief that he could revolutionize the constitution of the Spartan state in the broad sense while respecting the constitution in the narrow sense – at least in the beginning⁴. In 243/2, he had his ally, the ephor Lysander (*PLAA* 1), submit his reform package as a draft *rhêtra* to the *gerousia*, which failed to reach agreement, so Lysander referred the matter to the Assembly. After discussion and debate, the *gerousia* rejected the bill by a margin of one vote (*Agis* 9-11.1)⁵. Lysander then procured the exile of Agis' fellow king Leonidas II, the chief opponent of the proposed reforms, and his replacement by Cleombrotus II. But the next year's ephors sought to restore Leonidas and prosecute Lysander and his former colleague Mandrocleidas⁶

³ Plutarch says «400 or 200» (κατὰ τέτρακοσίους καὶ διακοσίους, *Agis* 8.4), but since no combination of *phiditia* numbering 400 and 200 yields 15 *phiditia* comprising 4,500 men, 400 and 200 must be the upper and lower limits of membership. Cf. Flacelière, Chambry 1976, p. 147.

⁴ The Spartan *politeia* or *politeuma*, as these terms were commonly used, embraced social and economic as well as political institutions: Th. 1.18.1, 1.68.1, 1.132.4, 5.31.6, 5.68.2; X. *Lac. passim*; Plb. 6.45-50; Plu. *Agis* 2.10, 3.9, 6.6, 10.3, 19.7; *Cleom.* 9.2, 10.9, 16.6, 30.1; *Comp. Ag. Cleom. Gracch.* 5.4; *Lyc.* 1.1, 4.7, 5.3, 5.4, 5.11, 6.3, 7.1, 7.5, 8.1, 10.1, 11.1, 11.9, 19.7, 27.6, 27.7, 27.8, 28.2, 29.1, 29.4, 29.6, 29.9, 29.11, 30.2, 30.5, 31.3, 31.10; *Comp. Lyc. Numa* 1.10, 2.2, 2.5-7, 2.11, 4.9. The Aristotelian (equation by way of) distinction between *politeia* (constitution) and *politeuma* (sovereign class) at *Pol.* 1278b8-15, 1279a25-28 (cf. *Pol.* 1283b4-8; *Rh.* 1365b26-1366a2) should not be presumed to influence other authors and is not consistently observed by Aristotle himself. Contrast, e.g., *Pol.* 1308a6-7, καὶ τοῖς ἔξω τῆς πολιτείας καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῷ πολιτεύματι, where the disjunction is exhaustive and the terms are thus synonymous; and cf. *Rh.* 1365b22-25, 1366a6-8, 19-22, which associates (but does not identify) characteristic *ethê*, *nomima*, and *êthê* with each form of *politeia*. Cf. Susemihl, Hicks 1894, pp. 365-366, 380-381, 410; Newman 1887-1902, vol. 3, pp. 185-186. See further *infra*, nn. 14, 61. On Agis' initial obedience to and subsequent violation of Spartan constitutional law, cf. Shimron 1972, pp. 20-21, 126; Michalopoulos 2019, pp. 61, 64-67, 75-76.

⁵ According to Plutarch's account, the *gerousia* had not approved the bill for forwarding to the Assembly, as provided by the Great Rhethra (*infra* with n. 29): the Elders were still divided on the matter (τῶν γερόντων εἰς ταυτὸ ταῖς γνώμαις οὐ συμφερομένων, *Agis* 9.1) when Lysander convened the Assembly to discuss it. So when the *gerousia* rejected the bill, it was not overruling the Assembly, as provided by the Rider to the Great Rhethra (*infra* with n. 30; so Jones 1966, p. 169, and, apparently, Walbank 1984, p. 253: «After being passed in the Assembly...»), but exercising its probouleutic power, as Plutarch explains: τοὺς γέροντας, οἷς τὸ κράτος ἦν ἐν τῷ προβουλευεῖν, δεόμενοι καὶ πείθοντες ἴσχυσαν [*scil.* οἱ πλούσιοι], ὅσον ἐνὶ πλειονας γενέσθαι τοὺς ἀποψηφισαμένους τὴν ῥήτραν (*Agis* 11.1). See Flacelière, Chambry 1976, p. 148.

⁶ For the identification of Mandrocleidas as one of the ephors of 243/2, see Africa

for illegally proposing the cancellation of debts and redistribution of land. Lysander and Mandrocleidas proffered the patently specious constitutional argument that Agis and Cleomenes should disregard the ephors' decisions, for (as they claimed) the proper function of the ephors was to decide cases in which the kings disagreed, and it was illegal for the ephors to obstruct the kings when they agreed⁷. Agis and Cleombrotus were persuaded – presumably without significant effort – and proceeded to violate the constitution and laws of Sparta by forcibly deposing the ephors, replacing them with a new board including Agis' maternal uncle Agesilaus (*PLAA* 2), and staging an armed jailbreak (*Agis* 11.2-12). Agesilaus, a large landowner with enormous debts, then convinced Agis and Lysander that the cancellation of debt must precede the redistribution of land (*Agis* 13.1-3). The former measure went into effect, with all mortgage documents (*klaria*, recording debts secured by ancestral land allotments, *klaroi*)⁸ destroyed in a bonfire in the agora (*Agis* 13.3-4). But Agesilaus successfully prevented the redistribution of land by abusing his power as ephor until popular outrage led to the restoration of Leonidas, the exile of Agesilaus and Cleombrotus, and the execution of Agis, along with his mother, Agesistrata, and his maternal grandmother, Archidamia, early and influential supporters of his reforms (*Agis* 6.7-7.4), in 241 (*Agis* 13.5-6, 16-20).

The revolution of Cleomenes III

Upon the death of Leonidas in 235, his son, Cleomenes III, assumed the Agiad throne (*Cleom.* 3.1); his Eurypontid colleague was Eurydamidas, the six-year-old son of Agis (Paus. 2.9.1, 3.10.5; Plu.

1961, p. 14; Jones 1966, p. 167, n. 15; Michalopoulos 2019, p. 66, n. 59.

⁷ M.G. Michalopoulos characterizes the consequent deposition of the ephors as being done «[μ]ε πρόσχημα μια ελεύθερη ερμηνεία του νόμου, σύμφωνα με την οποία η σύμπνοια καθιστούσε τους βασιλείς ισχυρότερους από κάθε άλλη συνταγματική εξουσία» (Michalopoulos 2019, p. 66) and maintains that «[ό]ταν υπήρχε σύμπνοια μεταξύ τους, η εξουσία τους (τουλάχιστον μέχρι τα χρόνια της βασιλείας του Κλεομένη Α΄) ήταν απερίοριστη» (*ibid.* n. 60). In my opinion, the former statement is too charitable, and the latter is too broad: Aristotle would hardly have characterized the ephorate as equivalent to a tyranny and the kings as subservient to the ephors (και διά τὸ τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶναι λίαν μεγάλην καὶ ἰσοτύραννον δημαγωγεῖν αὐτοὺς ἠναγκάζοντο καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς, *Pol.* 1270b13-15) if joint action by the kings neutralized the ephors.

⁸ *Klarion* may have denoted any document recording a debt, regardless of the form of security: MacDowell 1986, pp. 106-107; Michalopoulos 2019, p. 67, n. 65.

Cleom. 1.1). When Eurydamidas died in 227 (poisoned by Cleomenes, according to Pausanias), Cleomenes recalled Agis' brother Archidamus (V) from exile in Messenia, but immediately upon his return, Archidamus was assassinated, perhaps by Cleomenes or at least with his complicity (Plu. *Cleom.* 5.2-4, *Comp. Ag. Cleom. Gracch.* 5.2; Plb. 5.37.2-5, 8.35.3-5)⁹. Having learned from Agis' example, Cleomenes next launched a plot against the ephors, inaugurating a revolution even more radical than Agis' program with a gross violation of Spartan homicide law and a drastic change to the constitution. He engineered the assassination of four of the ephors (along with ten men who came to their aid; the fifth ephor was wounded but survived by taking sanctuary in the temple of Phobos), abolished their office, and drew up a proscription list condemning eighty Spartiates to exile. Only then did he convene the Assembly to explain his actions and to announce the redistribution of land, the cancellation of debts (the erstwhile creditors having presumably redrafted the *klaria* and reasserted their rights after the restoration of Leonidas and the death of Agis, and new debts having been accrued in the interim)¹⁰, and the examination of resident foreigners (*xenoi*) with an eye to enfranchising those best able to assist in the defense of Sparta¹¹ (Plu. *Cleom.* 7-10; Paus. 2.9.1).

These measures and more were swiftly put into effect: the land was redistributed (with eighty allotments reserved for the men just exiled); suitable *perioikoi* (and, presumably, *xenoi*) were enfranchised, raising the Spartan hoplite census to 4,000 men, now armed and trained in the Macedonian style; and the *agôgê* and *syssitia* (= *phiditia*: Plu. *Lyc.* 12.1) were revived (Plu. *Cleom.* 11.1-4). In order to deflect accusations of tyranny, Cleomenes appointed a regal colleague; but his choice was his own brother, Eucleidas (*PLAA* 1): as Plutarch observes, this was the only time in Spartan history that both kings belonged to the same

⁹ Much of this is highly uncertain, including not just the role of Cleomenes in the deaths of Eurydamidas and Archidamus, but whether the name of Eurydamidas was in fact Eudamidas (III), the date of Eurydamidas' death (which may have occurred some time before the recall of Archidamus), and whether Archidamus formally assumed the Eurypontid throne before his death. See Walbank 1970, pp. 568-569; *PLAA*, pp. 178 (s.v. Εὐρυδαμίδας), 75 (s.v. Ἀρχίδαμος 3); Cartledge 1989, pp. 50-51; Magnino 2020, pp. 186-187, nn. 16-17.

¹⁰ Old debts: Cartledge 1989, p. 52. New debts: Shimron 1972, p. 26; Michalopoulos 2019, p. 77.

¹¹ This qualification indicates that, as in the corresponding proposal by Agis (*Agis* 8.3), these *xenoi* were primarily mercenaries in Spartan service (Cartledge 1989, pp. 45, 52).

royal house (*Cleom.* 11.5). At this time or soon thereafter, Cleomenes decimated the power of the *gerousia* – at least revoking its right of *probouleusis*, and possibly reducing the term of office from life to one year – and created a new board of officials, the *patronomoi*¹². Finally, in 223/2, as an emergency measure, Cleomenes freed 6,000 helots, who paid five Attic minae (500 dr.) each for the privilege, and incorporated 2,000 of them into his phalanx (*Cleom.* 23.1)¹³.

Like Agis before him, Cleomenes represented his revolution as a return to the ancestral constitution, laws, and customs, invoking the venerable name of Lycurgus¹⁴. Yet little in the substance or procedure of their reforms was genuinely Lycurgan¹⁵.

¹² Paus. 2.9.1: τὸ κράτος τῆς γερουσίας καταλύσας πατρωνόμους τῷ λόγῳ κατέστησεν ἀντ' αὐτῶν. *Probouleusis* and term of office: Cartledge 1989, pp. 51-52. The original duties of the *patronomoi* may have included supervision of the restored *agôgê*, judging by the functions of their successors (a single eponymous *patronomos* and his assistants, the *sympatronomoi* and *bidyoï*) in the Roman period (Spawforth 1989, pp. 201-202; Kennell 1995, pp. 44-46); for a maximal hypothesis regarding the powers of the patronomate, both original and later, see Chrimes 1949, pp. 145-152.

¹³ See Cartledge 1989, p. 56.

¹⁴ Plu. *Agis* 4.2 (τοὺς νόμους καὶ τὴν πάτριον ἀγωγὴν), 19.7 (*politeia* of Lycurgus); *Cleom.* 10.6 (τὴν πάτριον...ἀρχήν), 10.9 (Lycurgus' μεταβολὴν...τῆς πολιτείας), 16.6 (τὴν πάτριον πολιτείαν, equated with a return to the law and way of life (νόμον καὶ βίον) of Lycurgus), 18.4 (*patria ethê* and *agôgê* of Lycurgus); *Comp. Ag. Cleom. Gracch.* 2.4 (αἱ πάτριοι ῥήτραι of Lycurgus *περὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ ἰσότητος*). Additional references to Lycurgus: Plu. *Agis* 6.2, 9.4, 10.2-8; *Cleom.* 10.2, 10.8-9, 18.2; *Comp. Ag. Cleom. Gracch.* 5.3-4. Cf. *supra*, n. 4. F. Ollier (Ollier 1943, pp. 113-114) and M.G. Michalopoulos (Michalopoulos 2019, pp. 63-64, 106) suggest that Agis and Cleomenes might have confessed that they were deviating from the letter of Lycurgus' laws in order to revive their spirit. But I think this would have been rhetorical suicide, at least for Agis. As Michalopoulos correctly observes (Michalopoulos 2019, p. 61), «Για κάθε Σπαρτιάτη ἡ ἔννοια τῆς Σπάρτης ἦταν ἀρρηκτα συνδεδεμένη με τὸν ἱερό νομοθέτη τῆς, ἀνεξάρτητα ἀπὸ τὸν τρόπο με τὸν ὁποῖο ἐρμηνεύε τὴ νομοθεσία του.» Admitting any deviation from the Lycurgan constitution would, moreover, have meant agreeing with the primary argument of the opponents of the reforms (Plu. *Agis* 10.3: see the next paragraph in the text) and either eliminating, or exposing the hypocrisy of, Lysander's prosecution of Leonidas for violating the allegedly Lycurgan laws that prohibited Heraclids from procreating with foreign women and punished with death Spartiates (specifically, Spartiate males of military age: Isoc. 11.18; Arist. fr. 543 Rose = fr. 549.1 Gigon = Harpo. s.v. καὶ γὰρ τὸ μηδένα τῶν μαχίμων ἀνευ τῶν ἀρχόντων γνάμης ἀποδημεῖν, κ 8 Keaney; MacDowell 1986, pp. 115-116; Manfredini, Piccirilli 2010, pp. 277-278) who left Sparta to settle abroad (Plu. *Agis* 11.2-9).

¹⁵ Scholars generally concur on this point but differ as to which reforms may be described as Lycurgan: see Ollier 1943, p. 113-114; den Boer 1954, pp. 130-131, 202-205; Africa 1961, pp. 14, 26; Forrest 1968, pp. 144-147; Shimron 1972, pp. 40-41, 54-55; Cartledge 1989, pp. 51-52; Kennell 1995, p. 11; Michalopoulos 2019, pp. 60-61, 104-107. K.M.T. Chrimes (Chrimes 1949, pp. 10, 13, 18-21, 424-425) is something of

(a) *Cancellation of debts, expansion of the franchise, and liberation of helots.* As Agis' detractors pointed out, nothing in the Lycurgan tradition credited the lawgiver with either of the first two measures (Agis 10.3); the same is true of the third. The most famous debt cancellation in Greek history was the *seisachtheia* enacted by Solon of Athens (Solon fr. 36.1-17 West = [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 12.4; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.2, 6.1-4; Plu. *Sol.* 13.4-5, 15.2-16.1, 16.5), which was cited, apparently, by Cleomenes himself (Plu. *Cleom.* 18.2). In the Classical period, naturalization occurred with great rarity, and normally on an individual basis, with the possible exception of the *neodamôdeis* created in or shortly before 421 (Th. 5.34)¹⁶. There was, however, solid Classical precedent for the mass liberation of helots in time of war. In 421, the Spartans manumitted by decree the helots who had fought under Brasidas (numbering 700 upon their dispatch in 424, Th. 4.80.5), and shortly thereafter detailed them to join the *neodamôdeis* in garrisoning Lepreum (Th. 5.34)¹⁷.

(b) *Redistribution of land.* By the time of Plutarch, an inconsistent tradition asserted that Lycurgus had carried out a redistribution of land, creating 30,000 *klaroi* for the *perioikoi* and either 9,000, 6,000, or 4,500 for the Spartiates (Plu. *Lyc.* 8). This tradition is highly suspect and appears to date from the fourth century, deriving ultimately from Ephorus¹⁸. During the First Messenian War, some Spartans, reduced

an exception, as she maintains that Cleomenes did not abolish the ephorate, and is accordingly more charitable to Cleomenes than others on this issue. On the perennial (cf. Plu. *Lyc.* 1) debate over the existence, date, and reforms of Lycurgus, which has generated a mammoth modern bibliography, see most recently Schmitz 2021; Dreher 2021. For a review of some earlier opinions, with particular regard to the Great Rhetra and Rider (*infra* with nn. 29-30), see Maffi 2002.

¹⁶ For the controversy over the identification of the *neodamôdeis* as liberated (and enfranchised?) helots, see Gomme, Andrewes, Dover 1945-1981, vol. 4, pp. 34-36; de Ste. Croix 1972, pp. 91-92; MacDowell 1986, pp. 39-42, 51; Cartledge 1987, pp. 39-40, 175; Cartledge 2002, pp. 214-215.

¹⁷ In 425, the Spartans had promised freedom and a large cash reward to any helot who ran the Athenian blockade of Sphacteria, and numerous helots did so (Th. 4.26.5-9; Thucydides does not tell us whether the promise was fulfilled). More ominously, shortly thereafter – and soon before the dispatch of Brasidas with his 700 helot troops – the Spartans, fearing a helot revolt, invited any helot who asserted that he had provided meritorious wartime service to present himself for judgment, guaranteeing freedom to those who passed examination. Two thousand were approved and then treacherously and secretly killed (Th. 4.80.2-4).

¹⁸ Versions of the tradition, without numbers of *klaroi*, appear in Polybius (6.48.3) and Justin (3.3.3). By contrast, Plato (*Lg.* 684e3-5) and Isocrates (6.20, 12.177-179) ascribe the division into *klaroi* to the original Dorian conquerors, and Aristotle mentions no

to poverty by the conflict, demanded a redistribution of land (Arist. *Pol.* 1306b36-1307a2 = Tyrt. fr. 1 West)¹⁹, but the compromise they effected (*infra* with n. 45) included no land reform. So Cleomenes' redistribution was actually the first in Spartan history²⁰, but in all probability it represented a *bona fide* effort to restore the supposed Lycurgan system.

The ephors of 242/1 had evidently reached the opposite conclusion. Their intended prosecution of their predecessors Lysander and Mandrocleidas for illegally (*παρὰ τὸν νόμον*, Plu. *Agis* 12.1) proposing Agis' debt and land measures may have had a procedural as well as a substantive basis. Ephors had the right to convene and bring proposals before the Assembly (Th. 1.87-88; Plu. *Agis* 5.3-4, the *rhêtra* of the ephor Epitadeus, *PL* 276; X. *HG* 5.2.11; cf. X. *HG* 2.2.19)²¹, but the ephors of 242/1 may have alleged that Lysander and Mandrocleidas had violated the Lycurgan Great Rhetra (*infra* with n. 29) in proposing Agis' *rhêtra* to the Assembly without obtaining prior approval of the bill by the *gerousia*. Their substantive argument with regard to debt surely reiterated Leonidas' objection that Lycurgus had never cancelled debts (Plu. *Agis* 10.3); as for land, they will have contended that the proposed redistribution annulled the Lycurgan system (subsequent gross deviations and distortions notwithstanding).

(c) *Agôgê* and *phiditia*. From the 5th cent. on, a nearly unanimous consensus credited Lycurgus with creating both of these institutions²². While either or both may have had some Lycurgan (or even pre-

Lycurgan redistribution in the *Politics*. See Jones 1967, pp. 40-43; Walbank 1970, pp. 728-731; Manfredini, Piccirilli 2010, pp. 246-249, 347.

¹⁹ This popular agitation for land redistribution within only a few generations of Lycurgus' reforms is the best evidence that the latter did not contain the former. Cf. Strachan-Davidson 1888, p. 260.

²⁰ In fact, «[t]his is the first, indeed the only recorded instance of an *anadasmus* not confined to the land belonging to opponents defeated in a *stasis*» (Cartledge 1989, p. 52). Cf. Isoc. 12.259: ἐν δὲ τῇ Σπαρτιατῶν [*scil.* πόλει] οὐδεὶς ἂν ἐπιδείξειεν...οὐδὲ πολιτείας μεταβολὴν οὐδὲ χρεῶν ἀποκοπὰς οὐδὲ γῆς ἀναδασμόν...

²¹ See Jones 1967, pp. 168-170. The date of the *rhêtra* of Epitadeus is disputed, but it was probably passed between 427 and 404 (MacDowell 1986, pp. 5, 99-110; Phillips 2022, pp. 32, 36-37).

²² Hdt. 1.65.2-5 (cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1272a1-4, on the importation of the *syssitia* from Crete); X. *Lac.* 2-5; Plb. 6.48.3; Justin 3.3.4-7; Plu. *Lyc.* 10-12, 16-22; Paus. 3.16.9-11; cf. Ephor. *FGrHist* 70 F 118. The exception is Hellanicus, who ascribed the arrangement of the Spartan *politeia* to Eurysthenes and Procles and nowhere mentioned Lycurgus (*FGrHist* 4 F 116).

Lycurgan) roots²³, the developed form of the *agôgê* described by Xenophon (not to mention Plutarch²⁴) cannot have come into existence before the conquest of Messenia and the consequent delegation of agricultural labor to the expanded helot population²⁵. Again, though, Agis and Cleomenes presumably acted in good faith in endeavoring to restore what were commonly believed to be Lycurgan institutions, despite the vast enlargement of the individual *phiditia* (200-400 members each: *supra* with n. 3) compared to their predecessors (15 members each: Plu. *Lyc.* 12.3)²⁶.

(d) *Appointment of Euclidas*. The appearance of the Agiad-Eurypontid dyarchy as an established institution in the Great Rhetra (see the next paragraph) shows both that it predated Lycurgus²⁷ and that Lycurgus did nothing to alter its composition. Nothing, then, could be less Lycurgan, or less traditional, than Cleomenes' abolition of the Eurypontid kingship and appointment of his Agiad brother²⁸.

(e) *Ephors, gerousia, and patronomoi*. Cleomenes' abolition of the ephorate involved a similar gross procedural violation of the Lycurgan (and post-Lycurgan) constitution. The proper procedure for changes to Spartan law, including constitutional law, had been laid down in the Great Rhetra, the foundational document of the Spartan constitution, which Aristotle and Plutarch attributed – correctly, in my view – to Lycurgus (Plu. *Lyc.* 6.1-6, citing Aristotle [fr. 536 Rose

²³ Some (e.g., Forrest 1968, pp. 51-55; Manfredini, Piccirilli 2010, p. 250) place the ultimate origins of the *agôgê* and/or the *phiditia* in Dorian prehistory.

²⁴ On the history of the *agôgê*, especially in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, see Kennell 1995.

²⁵ Cf. Cartledge 2001, pp. 88-89. Cleomenes' minting of silver tetradrachms with his head on the obverse and Artemis Orthia and a goat on the reverse, likely commemorating the restored *agôgê* (Cartledge 1989, p. 55; Kennell 1995, p. 11; Michalopoulos 2019, pp. 110, 113), was, of course, not a Lycurgan measure (cf. Michalopoulos 2019, p. 110, n. 92), as Lycurgus predated the introduction of coinage into the Greek world by some two centuries (*pace* Plu. *Lyc.* 9.2), and Sparta did not mint its first coins until the reign of Areus I (r. 309-265; Cartledge 1989, p. 35).

²⁶ Hence M.G. Michalopoulos characterizes the revision of the *phiditia*, most of whose members were either recently restored from the ranks of the *hypomeiones* or newly enfranchised, as «αντιλυκούργειο» (Michalopoulos 2019, p. 60, n. 39).

²⁷ It presumably originated with the formation of the *polis* of Sparta from the villages of Pitana, Mesoia, Limnae, and Conooura/Cynosoura (Paus. 3.16.9) in the ninth or early eighth century, whereupon two kings of two villages each agreed to share power in the new state (for various hypotheses, see Huxley 1962, pp. 16-17; Forrest 1968, pp. 28-29; Cartledge 2002, pp. 89-92).

²⁸ Cf. Chrimes 1949, p. 10 («the most unconstitutional act of Cleomenes' reign»).

= fr. 542.1 Gigon]). The Great Rhetra provided that the *gerousia* must present a proposal to the Assembly, which then voted to approve or reject it²⁹. Later, during the First Messenian War (c. 736/732 - c. 716/712), the kings Polydorus and Theopompus enacted the Rider to the Great Rhetra, which gave the *gerousia* the power to override the decision of the Assembly³⁰.

At the outset, as we have seen (*supra* with n. 4), Agis followed this venerable constitutional procedure; but Cleomenes completely ignored it, enacting most, if not all, of his reforms by *fiat*. Plutarch gives no indication that Cleomenes sought the advice and consent of any organ of government in his elimination of the ephorate, land redistribution, debt cancellation, enfranchisement of *perioikoi* and *xenoi*, revival of the *agôgê* and *phiditia*, and abolition of the Eurypontid kingship³¹. He also broke the law in exiling eighty of his opponents: by the fourth century at the latest, only the *gerousia* had the power to sentence a Spartiate to exile³². Some of these measures may have been formally ratified by the Assembly – after the fact, at least in the case of the ephorate and the eighty exiles. Certainly, though, Cleomenes cannot have carried out his attack on the *gerousia* (Paus. 2.9.1, *supra* with n. 12) by constitutional means: we can scarcely imagine that the *gerontes* voluntarily consented to their own loss of power.

Thus, in the process of enacting his reforms, Cleomenes committed multiple blatant violations of the Spartan constitution,

²⁹ Plu. *Lyc.* 6.2: Διὸς Συλλανίου καὶ Ἀθανᾶς Συλλανίας ἱερὸν ἰδρυσάμενον, φυλὰς φυλάξαντα καὶ ὠβὰς ὠβάξαντα, τριάκοντα γερουσίαν σὺν ἀρχαγέταις καταστήσαντα, ὥρας ἐξ ὥρας ἀπελλάζειν μεταξὺ Βαβύκας τε καὶ Κνακιῶνος, οὕτως εἰσφέρειν τε καὶ ἀφίστασθαι· ἑγαμωδανγοριανημνῆ† [δάμω δὲ τὴν κυρίαν ἤμεν Sintenis; δαμωδᾶν κυρίαν ἤμεν Chrimes; δάμω δ' ἀνταγορίαν ἤμεν Treu; alii alia] καὶ κράτος.

³⁰ Text of the Rider, Plu. *Lyc.* 6.8: αἱ δὲ σκολιὰν ὁ δᾶμος ἔροίτο [αἰροῖτο Reiske; ἔλοιτο Coraes; alii alia], τοὺς πρεσβυγενέας καὶ ἀρχαγέτας ἀποστατήρας ἤμεν. Polydorus and Theopompus: Plu. *Lyc.* 6.7-10, citing Tyrt. fr. 4 West (*infra* with n. 44). Date: Phillips 2022, p. 26 with references *ibid.* n. 20.

³¹ Shimron 1972, p. 38: «Plutarch does not report a *rhetra* of Cleomenes, who either revived that of Agis and carried it in the assembly, or possibly considered Agis' legislation the law of the land and proceeded to execute it. He might even have claimed that as he intended only to resuscitate the ancestral polity, there was no need of any special legislation. In any case, only Cleomenes' speech in the assembly and the consummation of the program is recorded.»

³² Arist. *Pol.* 1294b33-34, ὀλίγους εἶναι κυρίους θανάτου καὶ φυγῆς. Cf. X. *Lac.* 10.2 (the *gerousia* has jurisdiction over death-penalty cases); Plu. *Lyc.* 26.2 (κύριον ὄντα καὶ θανάτου καὶ ἀτιμίας καὶ ὄλωσ τῶν μεγίστων). See MacDowell 1986, pp. 127-128.

notwithstanding his claim of a Lycurgan precedent for the use of violence to effect constitutional change (*Cleom.* 10.8-10). In procedural terms, therefore, Cleomenes' reforms represent – to extend an American legal metaphor – the «fruit of the poisonous tree»³³. The relation between the substance of the other reforms and the Lycurgan (and later) constitution has been discussed above; we now turn to Cleomenes' abolition of the ephorate, hobbling of the *gerousia*, and creation of the *patronomoi*.

The last two present no problems. Cleomenes stripped the *gerousia* of the fundamental power granted to it by the Great Rhetra³⁴, and the establishment of a new office by definition departed from the Lycurgan constitution, though Cleomenes cleverly gave its occupants a name – the Guardians of the Ancestral Laws (*patrioi nomoi*), or, on the analogy of the preexisting *paidonomos* (*X. Lac.* 2.2, 4.6), the Regulators of the Ancestral Customs (*patria*)³⁵ – that advertised their function as upholding the laws of Lycurgus. With regard to the ephorate, however, things are more complicated. The ancients differed over whether the office was created by Lycurgus, Theopompus, Chilon, or an unnamed «third savior»³⁶; some moderns have added the theory, based on the

³³ Strictly speaking, this is an exclusionary rule of evidence; the phrase originates in the opinion of the Supreme Court delivered by Justice Felix Frankfurter in *Nardone v. United States*, 308 U.S. 338 (1939).

³⁴ Lycurgus was almost universally considered to be the founder of the *gerousia* (Hdt. 1.65.5; *X. Lac.* 10.1-3; *Pl. Ep.* 8. 354b1-c2; Arist. fr. 536, 537 Rose = fr. 542.1 Gigon (*Plu. Lyc.* 5.10-6.6); *Isoc.* 12.154; *Sphaer.* Stoic. *SVF* 1.142, nr. 629 (especially important, or at least ironic, given that Sphaerus taught and advised Cleomenes: *Plu. Cleom.* 2.2-3, 11.3-4); *Plu. Lyc.* 5.10-14). This may well be true, at least with regard to the number of non-royal members, which may have been set at 28 by the Great Rhetra (cf. Chimes 1949, p. 421; Forrest 1968, p. 46). On this reconstruction, before the passage of the Great Rhetra, the composition of the *gerousia* will have varied, presumably at the discretion of the kings, and/or the combination of the *gerousiai* of the two previously independent kings (cf. n. 27 *supra*) will have motivated the desire for a fixed number of participants in the new joint *gerousia*.

³⁵ For the former meaning, cf., e.g., Shimron 1972, p. 40; for the latter, cf., e.g., Kennell 1995, p. 11. K.M.T. Chimes' argument (Chimes 1949, pp. 145-146) that the name «must be interpreted as those who controlled the *πατέρες*» and «[t]hus...would be entirely appropriate if it meant 'controllers of the Gerusia'» is unconvincing.

³⁶ Lycurgus: Hdt. 1.65.5; *X. Lac.* 8; *Pl. Ep.* 8.354b1-c2; Ephor. *FGrHist* 70 F 149; Satyr. fr. 8 Müller, *FHG* 3.162 (D. L. 1.68); Justin 3.3.2; cf. Th. 1.18.1 (for slightly over 400 years, down to the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans have employed the same constitution); *Isoc.* 12.152-154, 259 (*supra*, n. 20). Theopompus: Arist. *Pol.* 1313a25-33; *Plu. Lyc.* 7.1-2; *Cleom.* 13.3. Chilon (*PL* 760): Pamphila fr. 2 Müller, *FHG* 3.520 (D. L. 1.68). «Third savior»: *Pl. Lg.* 692a3-6; this may be Theopompus (Manfredini, Piccirilli 2010, p. 245) or Eurysthenes or Procles (cf. Hellenic. *FGrHist* 4 F 116, n. 22 *supra*).

presence of ephors in Thera, Cyrene, and elsewhere, that the office is primordially Dorian and predates Lycurgus³⁷. This last theory lacks sufficient grounds: since the attestations of ephors outside Sparta all postdate the creation of the Spartan office, emulation of Sparta, at least to some degree, provides a better explanation than common Dorian origin³⁸. Pamphila's assertion that Chilon was the first ephor can likewise be dismissed, as it involves dating Chilon fifty Olympiads (200 years) before his actual *floruit*³⁹.

This leaves Lycurgus and Theopompus, and several considerations favor the latter over the former. First, the ancient historiographical and biographical tradition exhibits a well-known law of attraction that ascribes major events and institutions to great men, whether historical (such as Lycurgus and Solon) or legendary (such as Minos and Theseus), and Lycurgus was considered the greatest Spartan of them all. Moreover, antiquity equaled authority: the older an institution, the more venerable it was. It is therefore unsurprising that by the fifth century, Lycurgus was generally credited with creating virtually the entire Spartan constitution and way of life (Hdt. 1.65.2-5; X. *Lac. passim*)⁴⁰. In the 4th cent., though, serious investigators raised

Summaries of variant traditions: How, Wells 1928, vol. 1, pp. 88-89; Manfredini, Piccirilli 2010, pp. 244-246.

³⁷ E.g., Chrimes 1949, pp. 283-284, 406.

³⁸ Huxley 1962, p. 38; Jones 1967, p. 29; cf. How, Wells 1928, vol. 1, p. 89.

³⁹ Other, more reliable sources date the ephorate of Chilon to Ol. 56 = 556/5-543/2: D. L. 1.68, citing Sosicr. Hist. fr. 12 Müller, *FHG* 4.502; cf. Apollodor. *FGHHist* 244 F 335c. The tradition that Chilon increased the powers of the ephors as against the kings (πρώτος εισηγήσατο ἐφόρους τοῖς βασιλεῦσι παρασκευνύναι, D. L. 1.68; *contra* Satyr. fr. 8 Müller, *FHG* 3.162, ascribing this to Lycurgus) is credible and may have contributed to Pamphila's mistake. F. Jacoby proposed that Pamphila conflated the Apollodoran date for the creation of the ephorate (Ol. 6) with the date of Chilon's ephorate «wohl weil sie die bezeichnung des eponymen ephoren als πρώτος ἐφορος mißverstand» (Jacoby [1962] 1993, p. 804). See also Huxley 1962, pp. 69-71; Phillips 2003, p. 307.

⁴⁰ Herodotus ascribes the establishment of τὸν νῦν κατεστεῶτα κόσμον – specifically naming the division of the army into enomoties and *trièkades*, the *syssitia*, the ephors, and the *gerousia* – to Lycurgus, who either followed the instructions of the Pythia (presumably the contemporary Delphic view) or imitated Cretan institutions (the contemporary Spartan view). Cf. Th. 1.18.1, n. 36 *supra*. Pi. P. 62-65, which ascribes the laws of Sparta to Aegimius son of Dorus (θέλοντι δὲ Παμφύλου/καὶ μὰν Ἡρακλειδῶν ἔκγονοι/ὄχθαις ὑπὸ Ταῦγέτου ναίοντες αἰεὶ μένειν τεθμοῖσιν ἐν Αἰγυμίου/Δωριεῖς), should not be taken as evidence that Pindar either dissented from or was unaware of the Lycurgan tradition (*pace*, e.g., David 2020, p. 207). The ode celebrates a victory of Hieron I of Syracuse (and Aetna), and Pindar is here concerned with Dorian unity (cf. *I.* 7.12-15, Δωριδ' ἀποικίαν...Λακεδαιμονίων...)

doubts about the origin of the ephorate⁴¹, and Aristotle, relying on Spartan sources, assigns it to Theopompus (*Pol.* 1313a25-33)⁴². A Spartan tradition that challenged the prevailing Lycurgan centripetal tendency and passed muster with Aristotle (seconded by Plutarch, *Lyc.* 7.1-2)⁴³ should be taken seriously. Aristotle also cites Tyrtaeus' *Eunomia* for the (unfulfilled) demand for redistribution of land during the First Messenian War (Arist. *Pol.* 1306b36-1307a2 = Tyr. fr. 1 West, *supra* with n. 19). The same poem commemorates the enactment of the Rider to the Great Rhetra by Theopompus and his colleague Polydorus (Tyr. fr. 4 West; Plu. *Lyc.* 6.7-10; *supra* with n. 30)⁴⁴, and in another fragment Tyrtaeus praises Theopompus as the victor of the First Messenian War (ἡμετέρῳ βασιλῆϊ, θεοῖσι φίλῳ Θεοπόμπῳ/ὄν διὰ Μεσσηνίην εἴλομεν εὐρύχορον, Tyr. fr. 5.1-2 West). Evidently, then, Polydorus and Theopompus averted *stasis* by effecting a compromise whereby the people abandoned their demand for land redistribution in return for the creation of the ephorate as a check on

and thus motivated to downplay Spartan exceptionalism (cf. *I.* 5.22, praising Aegina as an εὐνομον πόλιν, with Bury 1892, p. xvii: «[t]he island under a Dorian constitution, which, especially perhaps in its Aeginetan form, Pindar regarded as the ideal shape of government...»).

- ⁴¹ In *Ep.* 8 Plato credits Lycurgus with creating both the *gerousia* and the ephorate, but in the *Laws* the latter development belongs to a «third savior» (n. 36 *supra*).
- ⁴² καὶ ἡ Λακεδαιμονίων [scil. πολὺν χρόνον βασιλεία διέμεινεν] διὰ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς τε εἰς δύο μέρη διαιρεθῆναι τὴν ἀρχὴν, καὶ πάλιν Θεοπόμπου μετριάζαντος τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ τὴν τῶν ἐφόρων ἀρχὴν ἐπικαταστήσαντος: τῆς γὰρ δυνάμειος ἀφελῶν ἠῤῥησε τῷ χρόνῳ τὴν βασιλείαν, ὥστε τρόπον τινὰ ἐποίησεν οὐκ ἐλάττωνα ἀλλὰ μείζονα αὐτήν (1313a25-30). The Spartan origin of this rival tradition is evident in the anecdote that follows (1313a30-33): Theopompus' wife asked if he were not ashamed of reducing the power of the kingship that he would leave to his sons, and he answered that he was not, since the office would endure longer.
- ⁴³ Plutarch maintains that the first ephors were appointed about 130 years after Lycurgus, in the reign of Theopompus, and repeats the anecdote about Theopompus and his wife. He also cites *Pl. Lg.* 692a4-5 (*supra*, n. 36), omitting Plato's ascription of the ephorate to the «third savior».
- ⁴⁴ Tyr. fr. 4 West (Plu. *Lyc.* 6.10; D. S. 7.12.6) reads: Φοῖβου ἀκούσαντες Πυθωνόθεν οἰκάδ' ἔνειακ/μαντείας τε θεοῦ καὶ τελέεντ' ἔπεα/ἄρχειν μὲν βουλῆς θεοτιμήτους βασιλῆας, οἷσι μέλει Σπάρτης ἱμερόεσσα πόλις, / πρεσβυγενέας τε γέροντας· ἔπειτα δὲ δημότας ἀνδρας/εὐθείας ῥήτραις ἀνταπαμειβομένους/ μυθεῖσθαι τε τὰ καλὰ καὶ ἔρδειν πάντα δίκαια, / μῆδ' εἰ βουλεύειν τῆδε πόλει <σκολιόν>/δήμου τε πλήθει νίκην καὶ κάρτος ἔπρασθαι. / Φοῖβος γὰρ περὶ τῶν ὠδ' ἀνέφηνε πόλει. Diodorus gives the first two lines as Δῆ [<ὠ>δε West] γὰρ ἀργυρότοξος ἄναξ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων/χρυσοκόμης ἔχρη πίονος ἐξ αὐτοῦ; a marginal note in the MS incorrectly describes this as the Pythia's response to Lycurgus.

the power of the kings, and the leaders of the old order, the kings and *gerontes*, protected themselves against further threatening innovation by arrogating to themselves the right to overrule the Assembly⁴⁵. The clinching piece of evidence against a Lycurgan origin of the ephorate is the absence of the office from the Great Rhetra, which mentions only the kings, the *gerousia*, and the assembly of the people⁴⁶.

Cleomenes was, therefore, correct in maintaining that the ephorate was a post-Lycurgan development, established during the First Messenian War (Plu. *Cleom.* 10.2), but he was wrong about the motives for its creation. His blatantly self-serving argument was that the kings appointed some of their friends as the first ephors, to exercise judicial power at home while the kings campaigned in Messenia, and later ephors gradually corrupted the office by asserting additional powers, until finally they posed a fatal threat to the kings (*Cleom.* 10.3-6). But the sole piece of evidence that Plutarch has Cleomenes cite to prove this argument – the rule providing that a king may refuse his first two summonses by the ephors but must obey the third (*Cleom.* 10.5) – does nothing of the sort. To the contrary, in fact, the third and binding summons clearly betrays the great antiquity of the rule, which recalls the triple sale that emancipated a Roman son from his father⁴⁷. Supposedly, moreover, the process of degeneration began with the ephor Asteropus (*PL* 164; *Cleom.* 10.5), but he is attested nowhere else, and we have no reason to believe that he is anything other than the fictional eponym of the ritual performed every nine years in which the ephors watched the stars for a sign mandating the deposition of the kings pending a ruling from Delphi or Olympia (Plu. *Agis* 11.3-6)⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Phillips 1992, pp. 15-17; cf., with varying terms and date of the compromise, Jones 1967, p. 28; Cartledge 2002, pp. 115-117.

⁴⁶ den Boer 1954, p. 202; Phillips 1992, p. 15. The absence of the ephors from the Rider is easily explicable, for that document deals only with the relation between the Assembly and the kings and *gerontes*.

⁴⁷ *Lex XII Tab.* IV.2: *si pater ter filium venum duit, a patre filius liber esto*. Cf. Gai. 1.132; D. H. 2.27, which posits that the law originated with Romulus (= *FIRA I lex regia* Romulus 8). Cf. Chrimes 1949, p. 405: «It seems more likely that there was some archaic magical significance in the triple summons, and that it had no special connection with the judicial power of the ephors, to which Cleomenes was referring».

⁴⁸ Jones 1967, p. 29.

The Cleomenic revolution and the Cleomenic War

Cleomenes, like Agis (Plu. *Agis* 5.6-7, *supra*, n. 2), was motivated above all by military necessity (as well as personal aggrandizement⁴⁹): the outbreak of war⁵⁰ with the Achaean League in 229/8 (Plb. 2.46) made the expansion and improvement of the Spartan army especially urgent (Plu. *Cleom.* 7.1), and the mass liberation of helots in 223/2 answered the military and financial emergency caused by setbacks in the war and the withdrawal of aid by Ptolemy III Euergetes (Plb. 2.63.1; Plu. *Cleom.* 23.1). The actual or supposed reforms of Lycurgus had led Sparta step by step to supremacy in the Peloponnese⁵¹, and Cleomenes' revolution brought immediate success in its train, with a string of military and diplomatic victories from Megalopolis to Lechaenum⁵² before the reverse at Argos (Plb. 2.53; Plu. *Cleom.* 20.7-21).

But the broadened scope and scale of conflict in the Hellenistic period was a far cry from Archaic inter-*polis* warfare, and the revolutionary method and character of Cleomenes' reforms only hardened the resolve of Sparta's enemies: «the gravest charge that Aratus leveled against Cleomenes» was his «elimination of wealth and rectification of poverty» (τὸ δεινότατον ὧν κατηγορεῖ Κλεομένους, ἀναίρεσιν πλούτου καὶ πενίας ἐπανόρθωσιν, Plu. *Cleom.* 16.7). While it is unlikely that Cleomenes wished to replicate his reforms

⁴⁹ Plu. *Agis* 7.3: ὄνομα καὶ δόξαν ὡς ἀληθῶς βασιλέως μεγάλου κτησόμενος; *Cleom.* 1.4: φιλότιμος...καὶ μεγαλόφρων; 3.1-2: ...αὐτοῦ δ' ὄνομα βασιλεύοντος ἦν μόνον, ἢ δ' ἀρχὴ πᾶσα τῶν ἐφόρων, εὐθὺς μὲν εἰς νοῦν ἔθετο τὰ παρόντα μεθιστάναί καὶ κινεῖν...

⁵⁰ On the Cleomenic War, see Kralli 2017, pp. 205-266; Michalopoulos 2019, pp. 93-203.

⁵¹ Hdt. 1.65-68; Th. 1.18.1; cf. Th. 1.10.2. The *eunomia* instituted by Lycurgus (and the subsequent creation of the ephorate) no doubt contributed to Sparta's victory in the First Messenian War, but much of the expansion of Spartan power that followed, including the victories gained between c. 560 and 546 over Tegea in the Second Tegeate War (Hdt. 1.67-68; Arist. fr. 592 Rose = fr. 609.1-2 Gigon, *infra* with n. 55) and over Argos in the Battle of the Champions (Hdt. 1.82-83), will have resulted to a large extent from the professionalization of the Spartan army after the conquest of Messenia (cf. *supra* with n. 25).

⁵² Megalopolis: Plu. *Cleom.* 12. Mantinea: Plu. *Cleom.* 14.1; Plb. 2.58.4. Dymae: Plu. *Cleom.* 14.2-5; Plb. 2.51.3. Langon (or Lasion): Plu. *Cleom.* 14.5. Pellene: Plu. *Cleom.* 17.6; Plb. 2.52.2. Pheneus: Plu. *Cleom.* 17.6; Plb. 2.52.2. Penteleion: Plu. *Cleom.* 17.6. Caphyae: Plb. 2.52.2. Argos: Plu. *Cleom.* 17.7-18; Plb. 2.52.2. Cleonae: Plu. *Cleom.* 19.1; Plb. 2.52.2. Phlious: Plu. *Cleom.* 19.1; Plb. 2.52.2. Troezen: Plu. *Cleom.* 19.6; Plb. 2.52.2. Epidaurus: Plu. *Cleom.* 19.6; Plb. 2.52.2. Hermione: Plu. *Cleom.* 19.6; Plb. 2.52.2. Corinth: Plu. *Cleom.* 19.6-9; Plb. 2.52.2. Sicyon: Plu. *Cleom.* 19.9; cf. Plb. 2.52.2-5. Lechaenum: Plu. *Cleom.* 20.3.

in other Peloponnesian states⁵³ – if for no other reason than that doing so might increase the strength of his rivals – his opponents obviously could not count on this⁵⁴. After all, Cleomenes openly aspired to recover the Spartan hegemony that had been lost at Leuctra in 371 (Plu. *Cleom.* 7.1, 15.2, 16.3, 18.4; cf. *Comp. Ag. Cleom. Gracch.* 2.5; Plb. 2.49.4-6), and his reforms at Sparta inspired demands for similar measures elsewhere. In 235, the cities of the Achaean League threatened to revolt for reasons including the demands of the poor for redistribution of land and cancellation of debts (Plu. *Cleom.* 17.5). Two years later, the discontent of the Argive masses, who had hoped in vain for Cleomenes to cancel debts at Argos (*Cleom.* 20.6), proved to be a major factor in his loss of the city.

These measures had long defined political revolution in the Greek world. Solon's *seisachtheia* inaugurated a thorough revision of the constitution and laws of Athens ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 6-12). The treaty between Sparta and Tegea that ended the Second Tegeate War (*ante* 546) included a provision mandating that Tegea expel fugitive Messenians and not enfranchise them (Arist. fr. 592 Rose = fr. 609.1-2 Gigon = Plu. *Mor.* 292b, *Quaest. Gr.* 5; *Mor.* 277a-c, *Quaest. Rom.* 52)⁵⁵. The charter of the League of Corinth (338/7) prohibited (*inter alia*) the overthrow of member cities' constitutions (*IG II² 236* = Rhodes, Osborne 2003, nr. 76, a 12-14; [D.] 17.10; according to [D.] 10.7, tyrannies were an exception), unlawful executions and banishments, the redistribution of land, the cancellation of debt, and the liberation of slaves for the purpose of revolution (ἐπι νεωτερισμῶ, [D.] 17.15).

The combination of the substance of Cleomenes' reforms with his assumption of supreme power by summarily exiling opponents, eliminating the ephorate and the Eurypontid kingship, and curtailing the power of the *gerousia* marked Cleomenes as not just

⁵³ Cf. Shimron 1972, pp. 45-46; Cartledge 1989, p. 53; Kralli 2017, p. 215; Doran 2018, p. 81, n. 328.

⁵⁴ Cf. Plu. *Arat.* 39.5: θόρυβος πολὺς ἄφνω περιεισπύκει τὸν Ἄρατον, ὀργῶντα τὴν Πελοπόννησον κραδαιομένην καὶ τὰς πόλεις ἐξανισταμένας ὑπὸ τῶν νεωτεριζόντων πανταχόθεν.

⁵⁵ The relevant clause in Plutarch's *Greek Questions* (Arist. fr. 609.1 Gigon) quotes the treaty as providing Μεσσηνίους ἐκβαλεῖν ἐκ τῆς χώρας καὶ μὴ ἐξείναι χρηστοὺς ποιεῖν. In the *Roman Questions* (Arist. fr. 609.2 Gigon) the corresponding paraphrase is μηδένα χρηστὸν ποιεῖν. For the interpretation of χρηστοὺς as «citizens» (not, as Aristotle supposed, «dead»), see Jacoby 1944; Phillips 2003, pp. 305-306.

a revolutionary but a tyrant. The hallmarks of tyranny⁵⁶ included the acquisition of power by force (Arist. *Pol.* 1313a9-10; D. L. 3.83, citing Plato), alteration and violation of ancestral laws and customs (Hdt. 3.80.5; Pl. *Plt.* 301b10-c5; X. *Mem.* 4.6.12), transgression of the traditional powers of kingship (Th. 1.13.1; Pl. *Plt.* 301a10-c5; Arist. *Pol.* 1279b4-7, 1310b18-20; Rh. 1365b37-1366a2), demagoguery (Arist. *Pol.* 1310b14-31), cancellation of debts (Pl. R. 566e2-3), redistribution of land (*ibid.*), expansion of the franchise (Pl. R. 568a4-5), and liberation of slaves (Pl. R. 567e5-6; X. *Hier.* 6.5; Arist. *Pol.* 1315a37-38). Some well-known comparanda, positive and negative, from the history of Athens may suffice as further demonstration. Solon, granted extraordinary individual power to overhaul the Athenian state ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 5.2), could have parlayed his position into a tyranny (Plu. *Sol.* 14.8-15.1, including Solon fr. 32-33a West; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 6.3-4), but he restrained the *dêmos* (Solon fr. 36.22, 37.7 West ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 12.4-5)) and declined to redistribute the land of Attica ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 11.2; 12.3, including Solon fr. 34 West). The Thirty were stereotypical bad tyrants⁵⁷ because, among other offenses, they executed and exiled thousands of real or potential adversaries (the canonical figures being 1,500 and over 5,000 respectively: e.g., Isoc. 7.67) and violated the constitution and laws of Athens by means that included stacking the *boulê* with their supporters and using it as a court of law, creating new offices, annulling the laws of Ephialtes and Archestratus regarding the Areopagus, repealing or amending laws of Solon, and altering the composition of the citizen body (see esp. Lys. 12; 13; X. *HG* 2.3-4; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 35-37). Peisistratus, by contrast, was remembered as a good tyrant because – apart from the fact that tyranny was a capital offense, [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 16.10 (*lex*) – he ruled largely in accordance with the constitution and the laws⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ See Newman 1887-1902, vol. 4, pp. lxi-lxx.

⁵⁷ According to Xenophon, the language of tyranny arose while the Thirty were in power: at *HG* 2.3.48, Theramenes characterizes the regime as τὸ ὑπ' ὀλίγων τυραννείσθαι τὴν πόλιν.

⁵⁸ Hdt. 1.59.6: οὔτε τιμὰς τὰς εὐόσας συνταράξας οὔτε θέσμια μεταλλάξας, ἐπὶ τε τοῖσι κατεστειώσι ἔνεμε τὴν πόλιν κοσμέων καλῶς τε καὶ εὖ. Th. 6.54.5-6: the rule of the Peisistratids enjoyed general popularity; τὰ δὲ ἄλλα αὐτῆ ἢ πόλις τοῖς πρὶν κειμένοις νόμοις ἐχρῆτο, πλὴν καθ' ὅσον αἰεὶ τινα ἐπεμέλοντο σφῶν αὐτῶν ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς εἶναι; several Peisistratids held the archonship. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 16, esp. 16.2: «Peisistratus...managed the city with moderation and more like a citizen than a tyrant»; 16.8: ἐν τε γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐβούλετο πάντα διοικεῖν κατὰ τοὺς νόμους,

The enemies of Cleomenes, both contemporary (Plu. *Arat.* 38.7; cf. *Agis* 7.8) and posthumous (Plb. 2.47.3), thus had good reason to label him a tyrant⁵⁹. And the tyrannical nature of his reign was itself revolutionary, for in its past days of glory Sparta had resolutely opposed the institution of tyranny. Not only did the Spartans never have a tyrant of their own, but they even deposed tyrants in the Peloponnese and beyond, including Aeschines of Sicyon and Hippias of Athens (Th. 1.18.1, 6.59.4; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 19.4-6; Arist. *Pol.* 1312b7-9; Isoc. 4.125; *FGrHist* 105 F 1 = *PRylands* 18; schol. Aeschin. 2.77 (164a Dilts); Plu. *Mor.* 859b-860c, *De Herod. malign.* 21-22)⁶⁰. Cleomenes, ironically, met the same fate at the hands of the victors of Sellasia, suffering *de facto* deposition as a result of his flight to Egypt, where he died two years later. Yet some of his reforms survived his fall. After the battle of Sellasia, Antigonus III Doson took control of Sparta and restored its ancestral constitution and laws (τὸ...πολίτευμα τὸ πάτριον, Plb. 2.70.1; καὶ νόμους καὶ πολιτείαν ἀποδοῦς, Plu. *Cleom.* 30.1; πολιτείαν τὴν πάτριον, Paus. 2.9.2). Exactly what this means is the subject of lively and ongoing debate⁶¹. It certainly involved the restoration of the ephorate but not the kingship⁶²; the *gerousia*, too, must have recovered at least some of the powers Cleomenes had taken

οὐδεμίαν ἑαυτῷ πλεονεξίαν διδούς, and he even answered a summons to appear as the defendant in a homicide trial at the Areopagus.

⁵⁹ Cf., e.g., Shimron 1972, pp. 13, 44; Cartledge 1989, p. 52; Michalopoulos 2019, p. 107.

⁶⁰ Thucydides credits the Spartans with overthrowing most of the tyrannies in Greece apart from Sicily; Aristotle comments that Λακεδαιμόνιοι πλείστας κατέλυσαν τυραννίδας καὶ Συρακούσιοι κατὰ τὸν χρόνον ὃν ἐπολιτεύοντο καλῶς. Plutarch calls Sparta μισοτύραννον and (with varying accuracy) lists the tyrants deposed by Sparta as Polycrates of Samos, the Cypselids of Corinth, Lygdamis of Naxos, the Peisistratids of Athens, Aeschines of Sicyon, Symmachus of Thasos, Aulis of Phocis, Aristogenes of Miletus, and Aristomedes and Agelaus of Thessaly. The scholiast to Aeschines lists the Peisistratids, Lygdamis, and the Orthagorids. The Rylands papyrus names Aeschines and Hippias and then breaks off. On the deposition of Aeschines, see Phillips 2003, pp. 306-308.

⁶¹ For the debate, see esp. Shimron 1972, pp. 53-63; Michalopoulos 2019, p. 205, n. 7. In the passages cited in the previous sentence in the text, *politeuma* and *politeia* have the same meaning (Walbank 1966, pp. 305-306; *contra* Shimron 1972, pp. 57-58; cf. n. 4 *supra*). When Polybius writes that Antigonus restored first the ancestral Spartan *politeuma* (2.70.1) and then the ancestral Tegeate *politeia* (ἀποδοῦς τὴν πάτριον πολιτείαν, 2.70.4), he is engaging in simple literary *variatio* (cf. Walbank 1966, p. 306).

⁶² Eucleidas was killed in action at Sellasia (Plu. *Cleom.* 28.7); the dyarchy was restored by the ephors, with the consent of the masses, in 220/19, upon the death of Cleomenes (Plb. 4.2.9, 4.35.8-15). See Forrest 1968, p. 148; Walbank 1970, p. 288; Shimron 1972, pp. 60, 63.

from it⁶³. On the other hand, the *patronomoi* and the *agôgê* survived⁶⁴, and the continuation of the latter may indicate that Cleomenes' debt and land measures remained in effect as well⁶⁵. But the enormous casualties of Sellasia (only 200 of 6,000 Spartan troops survived: Plu. *Cleom.* 28.8) resulted in a crisis of *oliganthrôpia* similar in scale (though differing in cause) to that which had motivated Agis and Cleomenes in the first place.

⁶³ This is implied in, e.g., Flacelière, Chambry 1976, p. 157, *ad* Plu. *Cleom.* 30.1 («[I]es réformes politiques de Cléomène furent donc abrogées», an overly broad statement); cf. the doxography in Shimron 1972, pp. 55-56.

⁶⁴ Chrimes 1949, pp. 20-21; Shimron 1972, pp. 60-62; Kennell 1995, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁵ Shimron 1972, pp. 61-62; cf. Chrimes 1949, p. 12.

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— 2 —

Changing paradigms in Spartan religion and values in the 3rd cent. BC

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Keywords: 3rd cent. BC, Hellenism, Sparta, battle of Sellasia, Cleomenes III, Stoicism, religion

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: 3ος αιώνας π.Χ., ελληνισμός, Σπάρτη, μάχη της Σελασίας, Κλεομένης Γ', στωικισμός, θρησκεία

Abstract:

The paper analyses the changes occurred during the 3rd cent. BC in Sparta, with regard to religion, societal beliefs, mentality, and ethical values. The loss of the sacred boundaries once defining Spartan territorial influence over Laconia acts as the starting point to examine the in-depth transformation detectable in the religious field. Several factors mark such a transformation: a reduced fear of divine revenge, a lack of respect of holy calendar, festivals and prescriptions, a progressive decline of the traditional local gods, a novel concept of moral behavior. These phenomena are counterbalanced by the spread of new cults and by the relevance of philosophy, remarkably Stoicism, which in turn resulted in a novel conception of kingship and of State government. In conclusion, Sparta entered Hellenism with a deeply changed religious and ethical structure, that, although in some respects incompatible with the ancient

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Spartan tradition, was nevertheless coherent with the novel geo-political situation.

Η εργασία αναλύει τις αλλαγές που συνέβησαν στη σπαρτιατική θρησκεία και τις ηθικές αξίες κατά τη διάρκεια του 3ου αι. Π.Χ. Η απώλεια των θρησκευτικών και εδαφικών ορίων που κάποτε καθόριζαν την εδαφική επιρροή των Σπαρτιατών στη Λακωνία λειτουργεί ως αφετηρία για να εξεταστούν σε βάθος οι μετασχηματισμοί στην προσέγγιση της θρησκείας, που σηματοδοτείται από τον μειωμένο φόβο της θεϊκής εκδίκησης και την παρακμή των παραδοσιακών τοπικών θεών, καθώς και στην έννοια της ηθικής συμπεριφοράς. Τα φαινόμενα αυτά αντισταθμίζονται από τη διάδοση νέων λατρειών και από τη σημασία της φιλοσοφίας, αξιοσημείωτα του στωικισμού, η οποία με τη σειρά της οδήγησε σε μια νέα αντίληψη της βασιλείας και της κρατικής διακυβέρνησης. Συμπερασματικά, η Σπάρτη εισήλθε στον Ελληνισμό με μια βαθιά αλλαγμένη θρησκευτική και ηθική δομή, η οποία ωστόσο ήταν συνεπής με τη νέα γεωπολιτική κατάσταση.

Introduction. The 3rd cent. BC: decay or transition?

The prelude to the battle of Sellasia coincides with a period of deep changes in the Spartan society, involving the ethical sphere and affecting individual and collective attitude towards religion, moral values, culture and mentality as a whole.

The 3rd cent. BC is often portrayed, both in ancient sources and in modern literature, as a period of decade and crisis.

In this regard, the scenario depicted by Plutarch, dominated by a society neglecting the public interest, the ancient Spartan discipline and the military education, being totally absorbed in individual self-gain, pleasure and apathy, is emblematic:

ἀπραγμοσύνη καὶ ἡδονὴ κατακεκλημένων τῶν πολιτῶν καὶ τοῦ βασιλέως πάντα τὰ πράγματα χαίρειν ἑῶντος, εἰ μηδεὶς αὐτὸν ἐνοχλοῖται σχολάζειν ἐν ἀφθόνοις καὶ τρυφᾷν βουλόμενον, ἀμελουμένων δὲ τῶν κοινῶν, κατ' οἰκίαν ἐκάστου πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔλκοντος τὸ κερδαλέον: ἀσκήσεως δὲ καὶ σωφροσύνης νέων καὶ καρτερίας καὶ ἰσότητος οὐδὲ ἀσφαλὲς ἦν τούτων τῶν περὶ Ἄγιν ἀπολωλότων μνημονεύειν.

The citizens had been lulled to sleep by idleness and pleasure; the king was willing to let all public business go, provided that no one thwarted his desire for luxurious living in the midst of his wealth; the public interests were neglected, while every man was eagerly intent upon his own private gain; and as for practice in arms, self-restraint in the young, hardiness, and equality, it was even dangerous to speak of these now that Agis was dead and gone (Plu. *Cleom.* 2.1)¹.

τῶν μὲν πλουσιῶν καθ' ἡδονὰς ἰδίας καὶ πλεονεξίας παρορῶντων τὰ κοινά, τῶν δὲ πολλῶν διὰ τὸ πρᾶττειν κακῶς περὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα καὶ πρὸς τὸν πόλεμον ἀπροθύμων καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀγωγὴν ἀφιλοτίμων γεγονότων, αὐτοῦ δὲ ὄνομα βασιλεύοντος ἦν μόνον, ἡ δὲ ἀρχὴ πᾶσα τῶν ἐφόρων,

The rich neglected the common interests for their own private pleasure and glorification; the common people, because of their wretched state at home, had lost all readiness for war and all ambition to maintain the ancient Spartan discipline; and he himself, Cleomenes, was king only in name, while the whole power was in the hands of the ephors (Plu. *Cleom.* 3.1).

Notwithstanding these premises, the 3rd cent. BC, as we shall observe, cannot be simply dismissed as an era of decline, but should rather be regarded, under a more nuanced standpoint, as a phase of transition towards new behavioral and ideological models, also affecting the relationship between Sparta and the other Lacedaemonians and the mode of interaction with the rest of the Hellenic world². Spartan internal dynamics and external relations entailed a series of transformations, ultimately resulting in the following phenomena, that are going to be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs:

- the loss of the religious/territorial boundaries once defining the Spartan geo-political influence over Laconia
- the weakening of the fear of divine revenge and the subsequent change in the perception of impiety

¹ This quotation, as well as subsequent ones by the same author, comes from the edition of Plutarch's *Life of Cleomenes* edited and translated by Bernadotte Perrin (Perrin 1921).

² Shipley 2009, p. 55. On Spartan external relations consider also: Piras, Sassu 2022; Powell 2018, pp. 291-353; Kralli 2017; Phillips 2003, pp. 301-313; Bernini 1981, pp. 205-223.

- the decline of the traditional local gods and the raise of new deities
- the novel relevance of philosophy, remarkably Stoicism
- the new conception of kingship and State government
- the unprecedented relevance of women in the State management.

It is indeed an era of radical change, reaching its climax with the reforms implemented by king Cleomenes III around 227 BC, that included, among others, the redistribution of land, the creation of new citizens, and the re-enactment of the lapsed public educational training, starting from the *agoge*, that once stood as one of the outmost relevant features of the Spartan system.

Loss of territorial/religious boundaries

The religious practices and institutions at Sparta, as those of the other ancient *poleis*, evolved in tandem with political and social change.

As elsewhere already stressed³, Spartans created and corroborated their civic identity through recognition of shared cults and performance of periodical collective rituals aimed to consolidate social bonds among the participants. Against this background, the network of sanctuaries tangibly defined Sparta's boundaries and territorial dominion.

Some of the Spartan urban sanctuaries were located in the hearth of the city, in the agora or in the Acropolis, such as the shrine consecrated to Athena *Chalkioikos* and *Poliouchos* on the Acropolis, marked by a polyadic significance and holding a primary position in guaranteeing and protecting its civic body.

Further sacred areas played a role in shaping the borders of the city and/or expressing its control over the surrounding region. The *polis*, although lacking a defensive wall until the Hellenistic age, was defended on all sides by its gods. In fact, from the 8th cent. BC the internal urban area was virtually encircled by a sacred boundary composed by a series of sanctuaries that articulated the relation between the urban centre and its *chora* and expressed its domination over the contiguous territory⁴.

Among the sub-urban sacred areas we find: the sanctuary of Artemis *Orthia*, at the eastern edge of the city, on the west bank of the river Eurotas; that of Helen and Menelaos at Therapne, south-east of city, on a hill on the eastern bank of the Eurotas, where the

³ On Spartan cults and sacred areas: Sassu 2022, p. 52, with pertinent bibliography.

⁴ Cartledge 1998, pp. 39-47.

Dioskouroi, Helen's brothers, were said to live under the earth; the *Eleusinion* dedicated to Demeter *Chthonia* and Kore *Soteira* at the foot of Mount Taigetos; that of that of Zeus *Tropaïos* at the southern limit of the settlement; the *Amyklaion* of Amyklai, in the strategic plain south of the city.

Still other sanctuaries, with an extra-urban location, acted as territorial markers, expressing the Spartan control of the region. This category includes the extra-urban sanctuary of Artemis *Limnatis* at Volimnos; that of Zeus *Messapeus* at Tsakona; that of Achilles, north of the city, on the way towards Arcadia; that of Poseidon *Tainareos*, at Cape Tainaron/Matapan; that of Apollo *Hyperteleatas* at Phoiniki on the Parnon massif.

In the aftermath of Leuctra (371 BC)⁵, as the Theban forces supported by the Arcadians expanded, several peripheral areas of the Spartan countryside, that hosted the above-mentioned sanctuaries, began to spin out of Spartan control.

Given that the religious borders played a crucial role in stressing the territorial power and supremacy of Sparta, the loss of some of the most relevant sacred liminal areas had strong political and religious consequences.

By conquering the Laconian territories once controlled by Sparta through its religious network, Epaminondas, in fact, intended to deprive the *polis* of the feeling of military and economic security. So, the Theban forces deeply altered the political and sacred geography of the Peloponnese. Epaminondas invaded the valley of Messenia, recalled expatriate Messenians and founded west of Sparta, at the foot of Mount Ithome, the *polis* of Messene⁶, protected by fortified walls and where an important sanctuary of Zeus stood.

One of the most significant blows for Sparta in the 4th cent. BC, besides the defeat of Leuctra, was in fact the foundation of this independent *polis* in the territory of its formerly subjugated neighborhood. Sparta did not only lose nearly half of the most productive territory under its control, but was threatened by this new foundation on its western border.

⁵ On the effects of the defeat of Leuctra over Sparta see: Shipley 2009, pp. 55-60. See also: Ruzé 2018, pp. 343-345; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002; Shipley 2000, pp. 367- 390; Flaig 1993, pp. 139-160.

⁶ Diod. 15.66.

In addition to this, Spartan population, already decimated by the wars, continued to drop and the city could not rely anymore on large numbers of Messenians helots for military support.

Moreover, in the campaign of 369/8 BC, the Thebans also contributed to the foundation of Megalopolis⁷, northwest of Sparta, in the southwest Arcadian plain, a new city that would have become a long-lasting antagonist to Spartan ambitions.

So, by 368 BC Sparta had been deprived of almost half of her surrounding territory, including the most fertile land and some strategically sensitive and symbolically sacred border-markers⁸.

These physical changes into the Spartan “sacred way” of controlling its neighborhood did not fail to impact the general approach towards religion and the attitude towards the gods, too.

The weakening of the fear of divine revenge and the change in the perception of impiety

As a result, a deep alteration of the traditional Spartan system occurred in the religious sphere, leading to a progressive weakening of the fear of divine punishment, accompanied by a change in the perception of impiety.

The novel “unreligious” behavior is widely reflected in the lack of respect for the sacred calendar, for the religious festivals and, in some cases, for the sanctuaries.

Previously, in the Classical period, Spartans were more inclined to delay military action rather than postpone a festival or ignore a religious prescription.

For example, in 479 BC, the Spartans did not march out against Mardonios because they were celebrating the *Hyakinthia*, and «they considered it of utmost importance to prepare the things of the god»⁹.

Later on, during a Spartan campaign against Corinth in 390 BC, king Agesilaos sent the soldiers from Amyklai back home because «the people of Amyklai, whether they are on campaign or for any other reason are away from home, always return for the *Hyakinthia* in order to sing the paian»¹⁰.

⁷ X. *HG* 7.1.28-32; Diod. 15.72.4.

⁸ Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 4-5.

⁹ Hdt. 9.7.

¹⁰ X. *HG* 4.5.11.

It was perhaps the *Karneia*¹¹ that held the Spartans at home, causing them to arrive late for the battle of Marathon in 490 BC, and this festival even prevented them from sending a larger force with Leonidas at Thermopylae in 480 BC¹².

The *Gymnopaïdai* could keep them from leaving the city, too. Thucydides reports that, in 417 BC, the Argive democrats waited for the celebration of the *Gymnopaïdai* before attacking the oligarchs who were in power and that the Spartans delayed giving assistance to their allies at Argos (although they did eventually postpone the festival, but by then the oligarchs had been defeated)¹³.

Conversely, during the late-4th and 3rd cent. BC, a series of impious acts – not compatible with the previous attitude towards religion – were in fact performed by Sparta, reflecting a gradual decline of the traditional conception of the sacred laws.

Just before the battle of Leuctra, in 382 BC, Sparta seized the acropolis of Thebes, the *Kadmeia*¹⁴. A Spartan garrison led by the Spartan commander Phoibidas occupied the citadel for three years. According to Xenophon, this was an illegal act of impiety, an unjust acquittal perpetrated in peacetime, for which Leuctra was the divine punishment¹⁵. Therefore, according to Xenophon's explanation¹⁶, reflecting the view of Spartans themselves, the catastrophic military defeat of the Spartans at the battle of Leuctra was the gods' revenge against the Spartans, who acted in disregard of traditional models of civil behavior, as oath breakers and wrong doers.

Later on, Sparta was involved in the outbreak of the Third Sacred War, adopting an ambiguous attitude towards the sanctuary of Delphi.

Formerly, Sparta was an active member of the Delphic Amphictyony and was deeply tied to the oracular sanctuary of Apollo, periodically consulted for any political and military matter. Meaningfully, following the earthquake and fire that wrecked the Temple of Apollo in 373 BC

¹¹ Hdt. 6.106.

¹² Hdt. 7.206.

¹³ Th. 5.82.

¹⁴ Stewart 2018, pp. 376-377; Ruzé 2018, p. 340.

¹⁵ X. *HG* 5.4.1.

¹⁶ X. *HG* 5.4.1 and 6.4.3.

the Spartans, both individually and as a state community, financed and administered its reconstruction out of devotion towards the god¹⁷.

Anyway, after the battle of Leuctra, Thebes manipulated the Amphictyony into charging Sparta an exorbitant fine of 500 talents for its impious seizure of the Theban acropolis, the above-mentioned Kadmeia¹⁸. In 356 BC, again at the instigation of Thebes, the Amphictyony doubled Sparta's unpaid fine and, at the same time, inflicted a penalty on Phokis for cultivating sacred land.

At this point Sparta supported Phokis and contributed to provoke the Third Sacred War, which kept Thebes occupied and out of Peloponnesian affairs for over a decade.

Archidamos in fact helped the Phokians, granting them a large – and, according to Diodorus, “secret” – sum of 15 talents, given to the Phokian leader Philomelos¹⁹. The latter used the money to assemble a mercenary force and seized the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Therefore, the Phokians gained access to the divine treasure – composed primarily of precious metals, which could be melted into coin – used to fund an even more significant mercenary army²⁰. Philomelos himself was defeated and killed in 354 BC, but his successor Onomarchus turned out to have even fewer religious principles²¹.

This action, albeit confirming the looseness in complying with the divine rules, proved the still-existing Spartan capacity of planning complex political strategies: Archidamos in fact used the broader distraction of the Sacred War to turn his attention to Megalopolis and Argos and keep Thebes busy and out of Peloponnesian domestic matters for over a decade.

After the incident, we find king Cleomenes II as a benefactor to Delphi in 336 BC, maybe suggesting the restored positive relation with the Pan-Hellenic sanctuary of Apollo²². Subsequently, in 281 BC, king Areus assaulted the Aetolians at Delphi, apparently to reestablish the traditional independence of the sanctuary of Apollo²³. Despite the fact

¹⁷ Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸ Diod. 16.29.2-3.

¹⁹ Diod. 16.24.2.

²⁰ Stewart 2018, p. 384. For an analysis of the Third Sacred War from the Phokian perspective see: McInerney 1999, pp. 205-215.

²¹ Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 9.

²² Stewart 2018, p. 386; *PL* 182.

²³ Stewart 2018, pp. 389-390.

he was soundly defeated, the episode may confirm the willingness of the Spartans to homage the oracular god and cancel their previous impious behavior in relation to his Pan-Hellenic shrine.

Another sanctuary, namely the Spartan *Athenaion* on the Acropolis, played the stage for further unreligious actions enacted by the Laconian *polis*. When, in 241 BC, king Agis IV returned to Sparta, he found the local community revolting against him and the once-exiled Leonidas II back in kingly office²⁴. Agis IV claimed asylum in the sanctuary of Athena *Chalkioikos*, widely renown as a sacred place of asylum, to no avail. He was summarily tried and condemned to death, despite the holiness and inviolability of the place where he sought protection. To make the incident even more wicked, two innocents were killed with him: we are talking about two women, i.e., his mother and grandmother²⁵.

A further emblematic case of Spartan impiety features Cleomenes III as the main actor. It looks like the king started his career by occupying the precinct of Athena at Belbina upon the orders of the ephors and took the opportunity to seize Argos while the Achaeans were busy with the celebration of the Nemean games:

ἐκ τούτου Κλεομένη ἡρώτων οἱ ἔφοροι πέμπουσι καταληψόμενον τὸ περὶ τὴν Βέλβιναν Ἀθήναιον, ἐμβολὴ δὲ τῆς Λακωνικῆς τὸ χωρίον ἐστὶ, καὶ τότε πρὸς τοὺς Μεγαλοπολίτας ἦν ἐπίδικον.

Upon this, the ephors began operations by sending Cleomenes to occupy the sanctuary of Athena at Belbina. This commands an entrance into Laconia and was at that time a subject of contention with the Megalopolitans (Plu. *Cleom.* 4.1).

ἐπεὶ δὲ φοβηθέντες οἱ Ἀχαιοὶ προδοσίαν τινὰ πραττομένην ἐν Κορίνθῳ καὶ Σικυῶνι τοὺς ἵππεις καὶ τοὺς ξένους ἀπέστειλαν ἐξ Ἄργους ἐκεῖ παραφυλάξοντας, αὐτοὶ δὲ τὰ Νέμεια καταβάντες εἰς Ἄργος ἦγον, ἐλπίσας, ὅπερ ἦν, ὁ Κλεομένης, ὄχλου πανηγυρικοῦ καὶ θεατῶν τὴν πόλιν γέμουσαν ἀπροσδοκίτως ἐπελθὼν μᾶλλον ταράξειν, νυκτὸς ἦγε πρὸς τὰ τεῖχη τὸ στράτευμα, καὶ τὸν περὶ τὴν Ἀσπίδα τόπον καταλαβὼν ὑπὲρ τοῦ θεάτρου χαλεπὸν ὄντα

²⁴ Stewart 2018, p. 392.

²⁵ Plu. *Agis* 15.3-20.1.

καὶ δυσπρόσοδον οὕτως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐξέπληξεν ὥστε μηδένα τραπέσθαι πρὸς ἀλικήν, ἀλλὰ καὶ φρουρὰν λαβεῖν, καὶ δοῦναι τῶν πολιτῶν ὀμήρους εἴκοσι, καὶ γενέσθαι συμμάχους Λακεδαιμονίων, ἔχοντος ἐκείνου τὴν ἡγεμονίαν.

Presently the Achaeans, who were afraid that some treachery was afoot in Corinth and Sicyon, sent their horsemen and their mercenaries out of Argos to keep watch over those cities, while they themselves went down to Argos and began celebrating the Nemean games. So Cleomenes, expecting, as was the case, that while the throng was holding festival and the city was full of spectators, his unexpected approach would be more apt to cause confusion, led his army by night up to the walls, occupied the region about the Aspis overlooking the theatre a region which was rugged and hard to come at, and so terrified the inhabitants that not a man of them thought of defense, but they accepted a garrison and gave twenty citizens as hostages, agreeing to become allies of the Lacedaemonians, and to give Cleomenes the chief command (Plu. *Cleom.* 17.4-5).

Actually, for the sake of truth, it must be recognized that the shift towards a new, looser and more relaxed vision of the religious duties was not a merely Spartan phenomenon but was indeed a quite widespread tendency in the 3rd cent. BC. Unreligious deeds were in fact committed by the enemies of Sparta as well, therefore reflecting a more general decline of the traditional conception of religion in the Greek post-Classical world.

In fact, Aratus, leader of the Achaean League and conceiver of an ambitious program aimed at unifying the whole Peloponnese under the Achaeans, offered sacrifices not to a god, but to a human being, i.e. the Macedonian king Antigonos III Dosoḿ, with the view to establish an anti-Spartan ally against Cleomenes III:

[...] Ἀντίγονον ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα καλεῖν καὶ Μακεδόνων ἐμπιπλάναι τὴν Πελοποννήσου, οὓς αὐτὸς ἐκ Πελοποννήσου μειράκιον ὦν ἐξήλασεν ἐλευθερώσας τὸν Ἀκροκόρινθον [...]

He [Aratus] invited Antigonos into Greece and filled the Peloponnese with Macedonians, whom he himself had driven out of Peloponnese when, as a young man, he delivered Acrocorinthus from their power (Plu. *Cleom.* 16.3).

[...] ἵνα μὴ Κλεομένει ποιεῖν δοκῆ τὸ προσταττόμενον, Ἀντιγόνηα θύων καὶ παιᾶνας ἄδων αὐτὸς ἐστεφανωμένος εἰς ἄνθρωπον ὑπὸ φθόγης κατασηπόμενον [...]

And that he might not be thought to obey Cleomenes, he offered sacrifices to Antigonus and sang paeans himself, with a garland on his head, in praise of a man who was far gone with consumption (Plu. *Cleom.* 16.5).

Nor did the Aetolians resist impiety, given that, in 240 BC, they invaded Laconia and despoiled the previously mentioned extra-urban sanctuary of Poseidon at Tainaron²⁶. The *temenos* of Poseidon was particularly sacred to the Spartans, who considered it the main local shrine of the god of the seas and earth-shaker, especially after the earthquake occurred in 446 BC. The shrine was also connected to the military field, its consistent treasure being composed, *inter alia*, by offers gifted by soldiers and mercenaries, and was considered a holy place for asylum²⁷.

In short words, the end of the Classical era seems to coincide with a novel conception of religion, embedded in an unmatched laxity in the respect of the sacred calendar, of religious provisions and consecrated precincts. This situation depends in turn on a new perception of deities.

The decline of the traditional gods and the raise of new deities

The just-mentioned change in the concept of impiety is accompanied by a decline in the worship of the Spartan traditional gods. Nevertheless, such a decline is not a radical one, given that it is softened by the revival of some ancient religious practices (with the view of implementing reforms in disguise of reappraisal of tradition, as we shall see) and the raise of new supernatural entities.

The traditional pantheon of the Laconian *polis* paid outmost respect to Athena, owner of the above mentioned polyadic sanctuary over the Acropolis, and to gods associated to the education and initiation of young Spartans, such as Apollo, Artemis *Orthia* and the Dioskouroi, who were also deeply connected to the Spartan dual monarchy.

As we previously stressed, the sanctuary of the polyadic Athena *Chalkioikos* was no longer regarded as a sacred place of refuge, given that Agis IV (245-241 BC) looked for asylum in the sanctuary in vain. The

²⁶ Plb. 4.34.9 and 9.34.9-10.

²⁷ Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 44.

ancient concept of inviolability of the shrine, as far as right to asylum was concerned, was thus over.

The Dioskouroi²⁸, besides supervising the preparation to adulthood of young citizens, symbolized the duality of the Spartan kingship²⁹. The two kings were entitled to carry images of the Dioskouroi to the battles, so that they could assist the army, and the battle itself was preceded by sacrifices offered to the divine brothers. Moreover, their respective features mirrored the basic Spartan values connected to the education of young boys: Castor was a soldier and a knight, while Pollux was an athlete and an ephebus³⁰.

In this era, the cult of the two divine twins gradually fell apart as a symbol of the two kings. Areus I (320-265 BC [reigned 309-265]) introduced a silver coinage bearing the name of one king only alongside the image of Herakles³¹, thus replacing the figures of Dioskouroi traditionally associated with the rulers.

Later on, Cleomenes III (260-219 BC [reigned 235-222]) declared himself a direct descendant of Herakles (see *infra*), whose figure gradually replaced that of Castor and Pollux in the exaltation of royal power.

So deep was the change in the conception of Spartan dual kingship, that Cleomenes installed as his co-king his own brother Euclidas, making it clear that the days of the ancestral Agiad-Euryptid dyarchy were over:

ὄμως δὲ τὸ τῆς μοναρχίας ὄνομα παραμυθούμενος ἀπέδειξε μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ βασιλέα τὸν ἀδελφὸν Εὐκλείδαν. καὶ τότε μόνον Σπαρτιάταις ἐκ μιᾶς οἰκίας συνέβη δύο σχεῖν βασιλέας.

And yet, desiring to give the name of absolute power a less offensive sound, he associated with himself in royal power his brother Euclidas. And this was the only time when the Spartans had two kings from the same house (Plu. *Cleom.* 11. 3).

²⁸ Sassu 2022, pp. 79-81, with pertinent bibliography; Lippolis 2009, pp. 117-159.

²⁹ On Spartan diarchy: Millender 2018a, pp. 452-479.

³⁰ Lippolis 2009, p. 143.

³¹ On the association of Herakles with ruling (and often absolutist) powers see: Belli, Sassu 2019, pp. 423-452, with reference bibliography. On Hellenistic Spartan coinage consider also the contribution of S. Golino (*Last kingdoms, new traditions in Hellenistic Sparta*) in this volume.

Anyway, despite the apparent decline of some of the most relevant Spartan deities and sacred places, some ancient cults and ritual practices were resumed.

Cleomenes III³² implemented his revolutionary reforms under the guise of an apparent restoration of old traditions³³, by using religion for the achievement of the objectives of his political program. First, with the view of making his reforms acceptable to the community, he revived and manipulated the cult of Artemis *Orthia*.

Symbolically, on the obverse of a silver tetradrachm he placed his own beardless visage, in the manner of the Seleucids, while Artemis *Orthia* was depicted on the reverse of the coin.

Also, he used some of the Egyptian financial aid granted by Ptolemy III to restore the temple of *Orthia*, and it is possible to associate the nearby "Great Altar" (devoted to the heroized Lyncurgus) to the same royal propaganda.

This was smart move to advertise his restoration of the *agoge*, many of whose religious manifestations were closely associated with the cult of Artemis *Orthia*.

Hence, even when the ancient cults were apparently resumed, the reasons were mainly political in nature.

Furthermore, a series of sacred places and cults replaced the older, more traditional ones, gradually raising their profile and their importance.

Besides the novel raise of Herakles, who partially substituted the Dioskouroi in the political realm, the oracular authority of the τέμενος of Ino-Pasiphae at Thalamae³⁴ acquired a greater relevance.

So, when Agis decided to send Leonidas away, he attributed the initiative not to the Delphic Apollo but to the Ino-Pasiphae oracle.

³² Cartledge 2002, pp. 35-54, especially pp. 47-48; Martínez-Lacy 1997, pp. 95-105; Martínez-Lacy 1983, pp. 105-120; Bernini 1981, pp. 205-223; Mendels 1981, pp. 95-104; Marasco 1979, pp. 45-62; Heuss 1973, pp. 1-72, especially pp. 11-12 and 37-46; Shimron 1972; Pozzi 1970, pp. 389-414; Oliva 1968, pp. 179-185; Pozzi 1968, pp. 383-402; Shimron 1966, pp. 452-459; Shimron 1964, pp. 147-155; Cloché 1943, pp. 53-71; Tarn 1925, pp. 108-140, especially 128-138; Ehrenberg 1929, pp. 1373-1453, especially p. 1428.

³³ Flower 2002, pp. 191-218; Porter, Teich 1986; Fuks 1984, pp. 29-34; Meier 1984, pp. 656-670; Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983; Kazarow 1907, pp. 45-51.

³⁴ Cartledge-Spawforth 2002, pp. 106, 196. The existence of the cult of Pasiphae at Thalamae dates to 5th cent. BC (IG V.1.1316); Spartan presence in the sanctuary goes back as early as 4th cent. BC, as indicated by a dedication by a member of the Spartan Gerousia (IG V.1.1317).

Subsequently, during the reign of Cleomenes III, it is again the oracular sanctuary of Ino-Pasiphae to predict in advance, through a dream, the removal – through killing – of the ephors³⁵.

It was in fact a common practice for the Spartan ephors to sleep at the shrine of Pasiphae, seeking prophetic dreams³⁶. The consultation of the oracle was in fact conducted by means of incubation by the ephors.

More remarkably, one of the ephors, the only survivor of the massacre perpetrated by Cleomenes, found salvation in the temple of Phobos, the Fear, thus underlying how the cult places of the *pathemata*, personifications of abstract concepts and feelings, became safer than the older traditional shrines ensuring asylum, such as the one of Athena *Chalkioikos*:

συνέβη δὲ περὶ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκείνας καὶ τῶν ἐφόρων ἕνα κοιμώμενον ἐν Πασιφάας ὄναρ ἰδεῖν θαυμαστόν: ἐδόκει γὰρ ἐν ᾧ τόπῳ τοῖς ἐφόροις ἕθος ἐστὶ καθεζομένοις χρηματίζειν ἕνα δίφρον κεῖσθαι, τοὺς δὲ τέτταρας ἀνηρῆσθαι, καὶ θαυμάζοντος αὐτοῦ φωνῆν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ γενέσθαι φράζουσαν ὡς τοῦτο τῇ Σπάρτῃ λῶθόν ἐστι.

Now, it came to pass about that time that one of the ephors, who was sleeping in the precinct of Pasiphaë, had an astonishing dream. He dreamed that in the place where the ephors were wont to sit for the prosecution of business, one chair only stood, but the other four had been taken away; and that in his amazement at this a voice came to him from the temple saying that this was better for Sparta (Plu. *Cleom.* 7.2).

ὁ μὲν οὖν πρῶτος Ἀγύλαιος, ὡς ἐπλήγη, πεσὼν καὶ τεθνάναι δόξας ἀτρέμα συναγαγὼν καὶ παρέλκων ἑαυτὸν ἐκ τοῦ οἰκῆματος ἔλαθεν εἰς τι δωμάτιον εἰσερπύσας μικρόν, ὃ Φόβου μὲν ἦν ἱερόν, ἄλλως δὲ κεκλεισμένον αἰεὶ, τότε ἐκ τύχης ἀνεωγμένον ἐτύγχανεν. εἰς τοῦτο συνεισενεγκῶν ἑαυτὸν ἀπέκλεισε τὸ θύριον. οἱ δὲ τέσσαρες ἀνηρέθησαν, καὶ τῶν ἐπιβοηθούντων αὐτοῖς οὐ πλείονες ἢ δέκα. τοὺς γὰρ ἡσυχίαν ἄγοντας οὐκ ἔκτειναν, οὐδὲ τοὺς ἀπιόντας ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἐκώλυον. ἐφείσαντο δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἀγυλαίου μεθ' ἡμέραν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ προελθόντος.

³⁵ Arist. *Pol.* 1313a26f; X. *Lac.* 15.7. See also Cartledge-Spawforth 2002, p. 115; Rahe 1980, pp. 385-401.

³⁶ Cic. *Div.* 1.96. See also Cartledge-Spawforth 2002, p. 41.

The first of them, Agylaeus, on receiving the blow, fell and lay still as though dead; but afterwards he quietly pulled himself together, dragged himself out of the room, and crept unobserved into a little building which was a temple of Fear. Usually it was closed, but at this time it chanced to be open. Into this building he betook himself and locked the door. But the other four were slain, and also about ten of those who came to their aid. For the people who kept quiet were not killed, nor were those who wished to leave the city prevented. And even Agylaeus was spared when he came out of the temple next day (Plu. *Cleom.* 8.2).

Besides the worship of the *pathemata*, the veneration of female heroines such as Helen and Cassandra/Alexandra spread. The phenomenon goes along with a novel relevance of women in the Spartan political situation.

For instance, during the Hellenistic period, in the sanctuary of Agamemnon and Cassandra/Alexandra at Amyklai, the religious focus gradually shifted in favor of the female counterpart. By at least the early Hellenistic period, Cassandra assumed a more prominent role than Agamemnon and was worshipped as the main owner of the sanctuary and rituals commemorating her death are recorded in an honorary decree establishing a specific set of rites. This ceremony included the *theoxenia* ritual, a solemn invocation, a sacrifice followed by a banquet with the participation of the ephors. The spread of her cult is testified by a Hellenistic marble throne with a dedicatory inscription (Sparta Museum n. 10994), too³⁷.

Conclusively, a multi-layered scenery transpires from the analysis of the available sources pertaining to Hellenistic Sparta with regard to the religious field, where the decay of traditional rules, sacred precincts and deities is complemented by the raise of new cults and sanctuaries. Therefore, from one side, we observe the Spartans carrying out impious acts of transgression of religious duties, calendar prescriptions, models of honorable behavior, together with the decline, in the role of asylum, of the sanctuary consecrated to Athena *Chalkioikos* and the retrenchment of the political role played by the Dioskouroi. From another side, we witness the rising relevance of the oracular shrine of Pasiphae, the progressive spread of previously secondary superhuman entities (such as Herakles, the *pathemata*, the heroines) and the introduction of new

³⁷ Golino 2022, pp. 97-127; Golino 2021; Greco 2014, pp. 50-58; Salapata 2014.

divine figures in the Spartan pantheon, such as Serapis³⁸. At the same time, some ancestral ritual practices and festivals are resumed with the goal of justifying the enactment of political innovations.

The novel relevance of philosophy, remarkably of Stoicism

Another novelty in the Spartan system is the increasing relevance of philosophy, which somehow took the place of the archaic firm devotion to religion, sacred rules, and divine calendar. In this framework, a pivotal role was played by Stoicism, with consequences that deeply impacted the Spartan politics, ethical world, and societal reorganization.

Particularly, Stoicism³⁹ played a crucial role in shaping the personality of Cleomenes III⁴⁰, who studied its principles since an early age under the guidance of Sphaerus of Borysthenes⁴¹ (on the northern shore of the Black Sea), one of the leading pupils of Zeno of Citium and author of a work on the “Spartan Constitution” in three books⁴².

In that respect, we should acknowledge at least two further innovations occurred in the 3rd cent. BC, *alias* the birth of a philosophical reflection on Spartan polity and the birth of Spartan historiography, given that after 250 BC Sparta produced in Sosibius its first home-grown antiquary and local historian.

Returning to the matter in hand, Sphaerus’ influence over Cleomenes III was multifold: the philosopher taught the young king the stoic principles of containment and scorn for earthly wealth, but at the same time he encouraged his political ambitions and possibly inspired his revolutionary plans. Yet, he did not succeed in properly delivering that sense of detachment from the world that could make a stoic leave this world without fear and in an honorable, noble and respectable way.

³⁸ According to Pausanias, the sanctuary of Serapis is the most recent one of Sparta (Paus. 3.14).

³⁹ Ollier 1936, pp. 536-570. On the impact of Stoicism on Spartan revolution see also: Bryant 1996, pp. 427-455; Erskine 1990 and the contribution by C.P. Baloglou (*The reverberations of the reform program of kings Agis IV and Cleomenes III on the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic Age*) in this volume.

⁴⁰ *FGrHist* 585; Plu. *Cleom.* 2.2.

⁴¹ Kennell 1995, pp. 98-114; Ollier 1936, pp. 536-570. Ancient sources on Sphaerus: Plu. *Cleom.* 2.2; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.53; Ath. 4.114c; 8.354; D. L. 7.37; 117.

⁴² D. L. 7.178; Ollier 1936, p. 547.

λέγεται δὲ καὶ λόγων φιλοσόφων τὸν Κλεομένη μετασχεῖν ἔτι μειράκιον ὄντα, Σφαιροῦ τοῦ Βορυσθενίτου παραβαλόντος εἰς τὴν Λακεδαιμόνα καὶ περὶ τοὺς νέους καὶ τοὺς ἐφήβους οὐκ ἀμελῶς διατρίβοντος. ὁ δὲ Σφαιρὸς ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις ἐγεγόνει τῶν Ζήνωνος τοῦ Κιτιέως μαθητῶν, καὶ τοῦ Κλεομένου εἶκε τῆς φύσεως τὸ ἀνδρώδες ἀγαπήσαι τε καὶ προσεκαῦσαι τὴν φιλοτιμίαν.

It is said also that Cleomenes studied philosophy when he was still a teenager, after Sphaerus of Borysthenes had made a voyage to Sparta and busied himself sedulously there with the youth and young men. Sphaerus had become one of the leading disciples of Zeno of Citium, and it would appear that he admired the manly nature of Cleomenes and increased the fires of his high ambition (Plu. *Cleom.* 2.2).

As already stressed, Sphaerus successfully managed to forge the personality and lifestyle of the controversial king, stoically molded on a simple way of living and marked by a humility when dealing with the audience, self-control and contempt for luxury and opulence:

πάντων δ' αὐτὸς ἐγίγνετο διδάσκαλος, εὐτελῆ καὶ ἀφελῆ καὶ φορτικὸν οὐδὲν οὐδὲ ὑπὲρ τοὺς πολλοὺς ἔχοντα τὸν ἑαυτοῦ βίον ὥσπερ παράδειγμα σωφροσύνης ἐν μέσῳ θέμενος: ὁ καὶ πρὸς τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς πράξεις ῥοπήν τινα παρέσχεν αὐτῷ. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἄλλοις ἐντυγχάνοντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι βασιλεῦσιν οὐχ οὕτω κατεπλήττοντο τοὺς πλούτους καὶ τὰς πολυτελείας, ὡς ἐβδελύττοντο τὴν ὑπεροφίαν αὐτῶν καὶ τὸν ὄγκον ἐπαχθῶς καὶ τραχέως προσφερομένων τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι: πρὸς δὲ Κλεομένη βαδίζοντες, ὄντα τε δὴ βασιλέα καὶ καλούμενον, εἶτα ὄρωντες οὐ πορφύρας τινὰς οὐ χλαίνας περὶ αὐτὸν οὐδὲ κλινιδίων καὶ φορείων κατασκευάς, οὐδ' ὑπ' ἀγγέλων ὄχλου καὶ θυρωρῶν ἢ διὰ γραμματείων χρηματίζοντα χαλεπῶς καὶ μόλις, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἐν ἱματίῳ τῷ τυχόντι πρὸς τὰς δεξιώσεις ἀπαντῶντα καὶ διαλεγόμενον καὶ σχολάζοντα τοῖς χρήζουσιν ἰλαρῶς καὶ φιλανθρώπως, ἐκηλοῦντο καὶ κατεδημαγωγοῦντο, καὶ μόνον ἀφ' Ἡρακλέους ἐκεῖνον ἔφασαν γεγονέναι.

In all these matters Cleomenes was himself a teacher. His own manner of life was simple, plain, and no more pretentious than that of the common man, and it was a pattern of self-restraint for all. This gave him a great advantage in his dealings with the other Greeks. For when men had to do with the other kings, they were not so much awed by their wealth and extravagance as they were filled with loathing for

their haughtiness and pomp as they gave offensive and harsh answers to their auditors; but when men came to Cleomenes, who was a real as well as a titled king, and then saw no profusion of purple robes or shawls about him, and no array of couches and litters; when they saw, too, that he did not make the work of his petitioners grievous and slow by employing a throng of messengers and door-keepers or by requiring written memorials, but came in person, just as he happened to be dressed, to answer the salutations of his visitors, conversing at length with those who needed his services and devoting time cheerfully and kindly to them, they were charmed and completely won over, and declared that he alone was a descendant of Herakles (Plu. *Cleom.* 13.1-2).

Surely, the confidence with which Cleomenes implemented his deceptively Lycurgan reform was influenced and inspired by the knowledge and erudition of Sphaerus.

Such a constitutional reorganization entailed the cancellation of debts, the equal redistribution of properties under the banner of equality, the expansion of the citizen body and the restoration of the ancient system of education or *agoge*, which had fallen into disuse sometime in the 270s.

τοῖς δὲ ἄλλοις ἔφη πᾶσι τὴν τε γῆν ἅπασαν εἰς μέσον τιθέναι, καὶ χρεῶν τοὺς ὀφείλοντας ἀπαλλάττειν, καὶ τῶν ξένων κρίσιν ποιεῖν καὶ δοκιμασίαν, ὅπως οἱ κράτιστοι γενόμενοι Σπαρτιᾶται σῶζωσι τὴν πόλιν τοῖς ὅπλοις [...]

For all the rest, he said, the whole land should be common property, debtors should be set free from their debts, and foreigners should be examined and rated, in order that the strongest of them might be made Spartan citizens and help to preserve the state by their arms [...]
(Plu. *Cleom.* 10.6).

ἐκ τούτου πρῶτον μὲν αὐτὸς εἰς μέσον τὴν οὐσίαν ἔθηκε καὶ Μεγιστόνους ὁ πατρώος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων φίλων ἕκαστος, ἔπειτα καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ πολῖται πάντες, ἡ δὲ χώρα διενεμήθη [...] ἐπὶ τὴν παιδείαν τῶν νέων ἐτρέπη καὶ τὴν λεγομένην ἀγωγὴν, ἧς τὰ πλεῖστα παρῶν ὁ Σφαῖρος αὐτῷ συγκαθίστη, ταχὺ τὸν προσήκοντα τῶν τε γυμνασίων καὶ τῶν συσσιτίων κόσμον ἀναλαμβάνοντων, καὶ συστελλομένων ὀλίγων μὲν ὑπ' ἀνάγκης, ἐκουσίως δὲ τῶν πλείστων εἰς τὴν εὐτελεῖ καὶ Λακωνικὴν ἐκείνην διαίταν.

Cleomenes himself placed his property in the common stock, as did Megistonous his step-father and every one of his friends besides; next, all the rest of the citizens did the same, and the land was parceled out [...] Next he devoted himself to the training of the young men and to the ‘agoge,’ or ancient discipline, most of the details of which Sphaerus, who was then in Sparta, helped him in arranging. And quickly was the proper system of bodily training and public messes resumed, a few out of necessity, but most with a willing spirit, subjecting themselves to the old Spartan regime with all its simplicity (Plu. *Cleom.* 11.1-2).

Cleomenes’ claim for a return to the ancient tradition eventually allowed him to innovate under the guise of restoration, in the attempt of fixing some of the most critical issues of Hellenistic Sparta, starting from demographic contraction and excessive indebtedment (somehow accompanied by unrestrained spread of poverty among certain social groups). This was part of a sophisticated and keen project aimed at reforming the Spartan State, the civic apparatus and the form of government by deceptively retaining the old tradition. In fact, he introduced revolutionary alterations of the long-lasting Spartan institutions by proposing invasive transformations as a means to return to the origins and, officially, to eradicate those evils that were damaging the *polis*. Actually, besides parceling and redistributing the lands and increasing the number of citizens, he limited the power of the *gerousia* by reducing tenure from life to a single year and created a new office, the *πατρωνόμος* or “guardian of tradition”, to replace the ancient institution of the ephors.

As this is not the place for an in-depth reflection on Cleomenes III’s reforms, which is provided by other contributions in this volume, we shall limit our observations to Stoicism. Regardless the apparent success of Stoicism as a tool to drive some novel changes in the Spartan society and the royal institution, the lessons of Sphaerus failed to teach Cleomenes that detachment from life, that would have allowed him to honorably die – as a Spartan of the old times would have done – in the battle of Sellasia with his fellow-citizens. The changes occurred in the 3rd cent. in the Spartan *ethos* were so intense that Cleomenes III did not hesitate to flee after the disastrous defeat of Sellasia, eventually arriving in Ptolemy III’s court at Alexandria. Such a behavior would have been unconceivable in the ancient Spartan mindset, where one of the most prominent values was the readiness to bravely give up life for

the sake of the *polis*⁴³. Therefore, even the ideal of the *del kalos thanatos* was now neglected.

In this deeply altered framework, where traditional moral and religious principles are being betrayed on a daily basis, we find some women epitomizing the ancient customs. It is here worth mentioning the figure of the mother of Cleomenes, Cratesicleia, who embodies, in the eyes of ancient authors, true loyalty to the ancient tradition. Stoically stuck to the behavioral codes of the ancestors, she did not hesitate to turn herself as a hostage to Ptolemy III for the sake of Sparta, having still an intact and genuine faith in the gods' will⁴⁴:

μέλλουσα δὲ τῆς νεῶς ἐπιβαίνειν ἢ Κρατησίκλεια τὸν Κλεομένη
μόνον εἰς τὸν νεῶν τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος ἀπήγαγε, καὶ περιβαλοῦσα καὶ
κατασπασαμένη διαλγοῦντα καὶ συντεταραγμένον, 'ἄγε,' εἶπεν,
'ὦ βασιλεῦ Λακεδαιμονίων, ὅπως, ἐπὶ ἄν ἔξω γενώμεθα, μηδεὶς ἴδη
δακρύνοντας ἡμᾶς μηδὲ ἀνάξιόν τι τῆς Σπάρτης ποιοῦντας. τοῦτο
γὰρ ἐφ' ἡμῖν μόνον αἰ τύχαι δέ, ὅπως ἂν ὁ δαίμων διδῶ, πάρεισι.'

And as Cratesicleia was about to embark, she drew Cleomenes aside by himself into the temple of Poseidon, and after embracing and kissing him in his anguish and deep trouble, said: "Come, O king of the Lacedaemonians, when we go forth let no one see us weeping or doing anything unworthy of Sparta. For this lies in our power, and this alone; but as for the issues of fortune, we shall have what the God may grant" (Plu. *Cleom.* 22.5-6).

Undoubtedly, one of the keys to success of Stoicism in Sparta was its claim to austerity, simplicity of life, contempt for luxury life, pleasures, and unnecessary worldly goods, that surely appealed those Spartans reminiscent of the glorious past of the city, believed to have been rooted in the ancient stern customs⁴⁵. The imported philosophy matched the Spartan model of a humble and severe lifestyle, based on hard work, endurance, devotion to the State, and, as such, was hence

⁴³ Piccirilli 1995, pp. 1387-1400.

⁴⁴ On the role of women in Sparta: Millender 2018b, pp. 500-524; Pomeroy 2002; Kunstler 1983; Piper 1979. On modern reception of the figure of Cratesicleia see the contribution of P. Laskari (*From the Battle of Sellasia to "In 200 B.C." by Kavafis. A Poetic Tour of the Body of History*) in this volume. In general, on modern reception of ancient Spartan past see Powell 2018, pp. 665-722.

⁴⁵ On luxury and austerity in ancient Sparta see van Wees 2018, pp. 202-235.

regarded as a possible effective solution to the degeneration attributed to the abandonment of the habits of the ancestors. In a context pervaded with impiety acts and neglect of religious rules, Stoicism could be skillfully used to propose a reform program presented as a return to the original pattern of behavior. Given that it was not a rigid and inflexible religion, the 3rd cent. Spartan population was more likely to share its views and welcome the reforms delivered under its banner.

In short words, with the goal of creating political consensus, Cleomenes III used Stoicism to enact a wide revolution affecting the political, social and economic fields. We cannot assess if he sincerely and genuinely embraced the philosophy, but for sure he exploited its charm for propaganda objectives. Moreover, he attempted to rehabilitate the image of the king, now a wise leader, expert in philosophy, and claimed a direct descendancy to Herakles. By doing so, he introduced himself to the population as a civilizing hero, solving the current chaotic situation by bringing civil rules aimed to establish an enlightened form of government, apparently based on equality (for instance in the possession of properties and in access to citizenship) and wisdom.

Conclusive remarks

In conclusion, Sparta entered Hellenismus with a deeply changed religious and ethical structure, which, instigated by external causes and primarily by the loss of the religious/territorial boundaries in the Laconian region, resulted in a faded respect for the ancient religious traditions, sacred festivals and calendars, in a weakened fear of divine avenge for impious actions, in a progressive abandonment of the worship of ancient gods and cult places, but, at the same time, in a new relevance of philosophical thought and in an unprecedented capacity to implement articulated political strategies (although in some cases deprived of the moral depth and sense of honor that marked the ancient Spartan tradition) that allowed Sparta to be active again in Greek affairs.

The 3rd cent. BC does not qualify as a mere period of decline, but rather as an era of change, the final step of a wide-spectrum transformation which ultimately began with the end of the Peloponnesian war and its high-impact consequences on the Spartan society and internal organization. The events that followed the victory over Athens did not fail in modifying the internal societal structure

and the external relations of Sparta with the rest of the Laconian (and in general Hellenic) cities.

The reduced fear of divine revenge, the decline of the main gods of the pantheon and the connected rise of minor deities in the 3rd cent. BC is actually a widespread phenomenon, which is not restricted to the Spartan *polis*. In the same way, as we observed, a certain degree of laxity in the respect of sacred celebrations and of consecrated areas is detectable in other Hellenistic cities, too. Yet, some factors, mostly coinciding with the quitting of ancient customs (e.g., the occasional avoidance of “honorable death”, the abandonment of the educational program of the young citizens, the break into the ban on massive coinage or even the building of the walls), clashed with the very principles of the Spartan traditional *ethos*. The latter seems in some cases better personified by some historical Spartan women.

In this compromised horizon, a partial answer to the pervasive abandonment of ancient habits seems to come in Sparta from the Stoic philosophy. The latter, particularly suitable for the Spartan society given that it included some of its ancient values, was poignantly exploited by Cleomenes III to clear the image of the king, to make an almost-absolute power tolerable, to enact revolutionary regulations. The diffusion of philosophy is complemented by the increase in the cult paid to minor superhuman beings, starting from the *pathemata*, somehow “closer” to human feelings, hopes and fears than the Classical deities.

Hence, new values and beliefs, new models of behavior and ideals, new political strategies dominated the scene. Nevertheless, the novel cultural contents, although in some respects incompatible with the ancient past of Sparta, were perfectly coherent with the novel geopolitical situation established in the 3rd cent. BC Mediterranean basin.

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The reverberations of the reform program of kings Agis IV and Cleomenes III on the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic Age: a relationship between power and intellect

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Keywords: Agis IV, Cleomenes III, Arcesilaus, Sphaerus, Stoa, Academy.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Κλεομένης Γ', Αρκεσίλαος, Σφαίριος, Στοά, Ακαδημία

Abstract:

This article focuses on the research of the socioeconomic reforms held by the kings of Sparta Agis IV and Cleomenes III as inspired by the Stoic philosopher Sphaerus and the Stoa in general. In contrast, the Academy, the second main philosophical school in Athens, inspired the leaders of Megalopolis, a city founded by Epaminondas of Thebes and organized by Plato's disciples in the Academy. From this point of view, we see two opposite trends in Peloponnese

* Hellenic Telecommunications Organization, S.A., Athens. I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Institute of Sparta and the Cultural Association of Sellasia for the excellent organization of this original Conference on the Battle of Sellasia, a battle that remains a landmark, not only in the history of Sparta, but also in the Hellenistic Age in general. The battle of Sellasia is original in the sense that it is the first battle between Greek city-states and larger states in which foreign soldiers participate. Gauls and Illyrians fought alongside the Achaeans and Macedonians (Plb. 2.65.2-4). Special thanks to the Scientific Committee for accepting my paper and to Mrs Anastasia Kanellopoulou for her generous hospitality. I extend my sincere appreciation to Mrs. Marion Kavallieros (M.A. Boston University) for translating this paper and Mr. Miltiades Michalopoulos for his critical comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

during the Hellenistic Times. The article proves that Cleomenes III's reforms influenced the socioeconomic conditions and reforms in Megalopolis.

Το παρόν άρθρο επικεντρώνεται στην έρευνα των κοινωνικοοικονομικών μεταρρυθμίσεων που πραγματοποίησαν οι βασιλείς της Σπάρτης Άγισ Δ' και Κλεομένης Γ', όπως εμπνέονται από τον στωικό φιλόσοφο Σφαίρο και τη Στοά γενικότερα. Αντίθετα, η Ακαδημία, η δεύτερη κύρια φιλοσοφική σχολή στην Αθήνα, ενέπνευσε τους ηγέτες της Μεγαλόπολης, μιας πόλης που ιδρύθηκε από τον Επαμεινώνδα της Θήβας και οργανώθηκε από τους μαθητές του Πλάτωνα στην Ακαδημία. Από αυτή την άποψη, βλέπουμε δύο αντίθετες τάσεις στην Πελοπόννησο κατά τους ελληνιστικούς χρόνους. Το άρθρο αποδεικνύει ότι οι μεταρρυθμίσεις του Κλεομένη Γ' επηρέασαν τις κοινωνικοοικονομικές συνθήκες και τις μεταρρυθμίσεις στη Μεγαλόπολη.

Introduction

Following the incomplete reform program of Agis IV, the reform program of king Cleomenes III has become the object of continuous and intensive research in the past decades. In the last fifteen years, Miltiades Michalopoulos' book *In the Name of Lykourgos*¹ (awarded by the Academy of Athens in 2008) presents an in-depth analysis of the subject, received many favorable reviews² and has become a significant reference book.

Cleomenes III's reforms³ take place in a period of geopolitical developments in Eastern Mediterranean marked by the rise of Rome and its clash with Carthage and also by Rome's expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Greek Peninsula with the help of the Illyrians and the Acarnanians⁴.

¹ Michalopoulos 2009; Michalopoulos 2018.

² Excerpts of these reviews can be found in Michalopoulos 2018. Cf. Baloglou 2018, pp. 343-345.

³ From the huge literature on this subject cf. Cloché 1943, pp. 53-71; Gabba 1957, pp. 3-55, 193-239; Fuks 1968, pp. 161-166; Shimron 1964, pp. 147-155; Mendels 1978, pp. 161-166; Depastas 2004, pp. 79-12; Baloglou 2003, pp. 187-205; Baloglou 2004, pp. 187-205.

⁴ The attempt of king Pyrrhus (319-273) to imitate king Alexander the Great in the West failed. He won two battles against the Romans, first in Heracleia near river Siris (280) and then in Ausculum of Apulia (279), but with grave casualties. Therefore, after a third battle against them in 275, he was obliged to leave Italy. As a result, Rome's prestige increased in Western Mediterranean and the Ptolemies, who had helped Pyrrhus to rise to the throne in Epiros, came to friendly relations – concluding

First Agis and then Cleomenes base their reforms on the traditions of the Lyrgean polity which enjoyed very big popularity at the time. The period during which the two kings became active is marked firstly by the two great philosophical schools of the Hellenistic Age, the Academy on the one hand and the Stoa on the other, and secondly by the Achaean League which resists Cleomenes' ambitious plan to unify the Peloponnese under Sparta's rule.

Agis and Cleomenes move and act politically within the context of the Hellenistic kingdoms and the cosmopolitan concept of the rejection of the institution of the city, a concept deriving from Diogenes of Sinope (Sinope, Pontus 400-390 – Corinth 328-323 BC)⁵ who was the main representative of the Cynic School. The concept was further enhanced by Alexander's policy to integrate Greeks and Persians and by the Stoic philosophers⁶. It is essential to point out here that since the Stoics accept the Greek city state as the required context for social activity, they express two main views: they are positive predisposed towards the Spartan polity and they criticize democracy.

The Middle Academy, through its leader Arcesilaus in the period 268-264 BC, maintained friendly relations with the city of Megalopolis which had been established a century before. As Plutarch says, «Ecdemus and Megalophanes, of Megalopolis ... had been comrades of Arcesilaus at the Academy, and beyond all men of their day had brought philosophy to bear upon political action and affairs of state»⁷. The ties between Megalopolis and the Academy are also very old and well known; it is worth to remember that when Megalopolis was

an "*amicitia*" – with the rising power of the Western Mediterranean. App. Sic. Fr. 1. Kanellopoulos, 1982, pp. 427-464; Kanellopoulos 1982, pp. 218-225 with the relevant notes. Thanks to the long and disastrous First Punic War (264-241), which according to Plb. 1.11.1-63.3 was described as the «longest, non-stop, greatest» war in humanity (Chatzopoulos 2016, pp. 38-39) Rome acquired for the first time land overseas in Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. Also the two year First Illyrian War (229-228 BC) brought the Romans to Illyria (Plb. 2.8, 2.2.1-2; Zahrt 2007-2009, pp. 77-110; Kanellopoulos 1982, pp. 104-106). It also initiated the approach between Rome and Macedonia and Acarnania. Cf. Velissaropoulos, 1997, pp. 169-194; Buraselis 2017, pp. 120-137, 141-145, 150-153. During 262 BC Eumenes establishes the kingdom of Pergamon, and during the period 260-255 BC there is the Second Syrian War. Cf. Chaniotis 2021, pp. 79-90.

⁵ D. L. 6.63.

⁶ Touloumakos 1972, pp. 20-21.

⁷ Plu. *Phil.* 1; Paus. 8.49.2, 9.

established⁸ the Arcadians asked Plato to become the lawmaker of their newly established city⁹ but Plato declined the invitation¹⁰.

It is, therefore, interesting to examine the influence of the Stoa on Cleomenes III, since the Stoic philosopher Sphaerus of Borysthenes is connected to Cleomenes. On the other hand, the views of some members of the Academy who influenced the city of Megalopolis, a city that played a decisive role in the development of Cleomenes' reform program, conflict with the Stoic principles.

This study aims first at showing that Cleomenes' reforms were consistent with the stoic philosophy and, second, at showing the critical view and the negative predisposition against Cleomenes III and his reforms of some prominent Megalopolitan intellectuals as, for example, the famous philosopher, poet, lawmaker and military officer Cercidas.

Stoa and Sparta

During the period between Alexander the Great and Emperor Constantine the Great, the Stoic philosophy established a philosophical, religious and moral system, which became accepted by many intellectuals at the time. Consequently, it was righteously described as «the philosophy of the Hellenistic World»¹¹ and acknowledged as the most «important and longest-lived system of Greek philosophy after Aristotle»¹², for it expressed a new outlook on life which is a basic asset of intellectual prosperity and creative philosophical reasoning during the Hellenistic Age.

Although the Stoics were highly concerned with moral austerity, already from their first steps in political philosophy, they managed to percolate through the courts of the Hellenistic kings and the Roman

⁸ Paus. 8.27: « 1. Megalopolis is the youngest city, not of Arcadia only, but of Greece, [...] 2. And the founder of the city might fairly be considered Epaminondas of Thebes. For he it was who gathered the Arcadians together for the union and dispatched a thousand picked Thebans under Pammenes to defend the Arcadians [...] There were chosen as founders by the Arcadians, Lycomedes and Hopoleas of Mantinea, Timon and Proxenus of Tegea, Leolaus and Acriphius of Cleitor, Eucampidas and Hieronymus of Maenalus...». Cf. van Gaertringen 1895, col. 1167.

⁹ D. L. 3.23.

¹⁰ Lawmaker of Megalopolis became Aristonymos. Plu. *Adv. Col.* 32.1126c; Natorp 1895, col. 969; Isnardi Parente 1979, pp. 276-282.

¹¹ Tarn 1952, p. 325.

¹² Benakis 1974, pp. 280-305 [= Benakis 2004, p. 149].

politicians and emperors and influence them. They formed «a closely connected community around the world's rulers and became the disciples of their doctrines», wrote Marcus Renieris (Trieste, November 1815 – Athens, April 8, 1897)¹³, a versatile personality, judge, diplomat, professor and president of the National Bank of Greece who also produced a significant literary work on law, literature, philosophy and history.

According to Seneca¹⁴, the Stoics befriended the kings «*faciendarum amicitiarum artifices*» and assumed an important role in counseling them and writing political and philosophical essays that belong to «*speculum principis*», Fürstenspiegel, or mirror for princes¹⁵. These works aimed at representing the prince according to the stoic ideals. More specifically, in their works the Stoics painted the image of the successors based on their skills as military and political leaders in order to convince the public of the righteousness of monarchy¹⁶.

Monarchy was consistent with stoic views: the king was entitled to rule on earth in the same way Zeus ruled in heavens since the earthly crowned head imitates the heavenly king. This view was already expressed by Isocrates in his work *Nicocles* (*Nicocles* 26). The king is “a living law” for his subjects¹⁷. Monarchy expressed the logical principle of the function of the world. For the Stoic philosopher, any support toward the establishment of this principle seemed a duty of high importance. It is this sense of duty that prompts the ruler to care for the well-being of his subjects.

The revolutionary element in stoic political philosophy is the idea that universal Reason is immanent in the cosmos and that wise people will live their life into accord with that universal Reason¹⁸. As Plutarch states: «the admirable Republic of Zeno, first author of the Stoic sect, has an exclusive target, that neither in cities nor in towns should we

¹³ Renieris 1887-1888; Renieris 2005, p. 12. M. Renieris was an ingenious personality; he was a judge, a diplomat, academic, management of the National Bank of Greece and a proliferate author: his works include studies on the law, on literature, on philosophy and on history.

¹⁴ Sen. *Ep.* 9.5.

¹⁵ Hadot 1972, cols. 585-586.

¹⁶ Bengston 1991, p. 391.

¹⁷ Steinwerter 1946, pp. 250-255.

¹⁸ Stob. 2.93.19 = *SVF* 3.625; Stob. 2.108.5 = *SVF* 3.630. Chrysippus wrote a work entitled *On concord*; D. L. 7.122.

live under laws distinct from one another but that we should look upon all men in general to be our fellow-countrymen and citizens, observing one manner of living and one kind of order, like a flock feeding together with equal right in one common pasture»¹⁹. The question that arises now is following: what is “universal Reason”? The “universal Reason”, on which Zeno’s admirable “Republic” is based, is the idea that the life of gods and men goes beyond the strict boundaries of “cities” and “communities” and beyond the “laws” instituted by the cities. It is the universal Reason that is completely and utterly intertwined with the natural law and rational understanding of cosmos²⁰.

Living by the natural order of the world is the condition under which the citizens of this “cosmopolis” will live together, the natural state in which all important people belong. Arius Didymus, as cited by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesareia in Palestine, explains Zeno’s theory, if not directly, of the connection between the natural law and the city of men. He says that by the natural law of order the rulers govern the state as gods while the citizens obey the rulers. Society exists when all obey the natural law²¹.

The “norm” constitutes the expression of an integral utmost principle that governs the world of Providence. God is the embodiment of the Universal Law which exists in harmony with cosmos and is simultaneously king of all divine and human, almighty Ruler of the universe which, governed by the Law, constitutes a unified state, a universal state²². The Law is recognized as «ruler of all divine and human matters»²³.

The Stoic philosophers’ trend to compromise with political reality is expressed in the writings of Johannes Stobaeus, who has preserved their moral principles, although briefly. According to the Stoics’ political theories, the “perfect society” is connected with the kings’ studiousness that will benefit the country and also with their utilitarian estimation of the danger ensuing their involvement in politics²⁴.

¹⁹ Plu. *Mor.* 329 a-b, *De Alex.*

²⁰ D. Chr. 36.20.

²¹ Eus. *PE* 15.15.3-5. Cic. *Leg.* 1.23.60. Cic. *Fin.* 3.19.64 = *SVF* 3.333.

²² Philippides 1958, pp. 136-137.

²³ *SVF* 3.314. Cf. Isnardi Parente 1980, pp. 78-81; Erskine 1991, pp. 27-33; Scholz 1998, p. 335.

²⁴ Kanellopoulos 1982, p. 395.

The Stoics adhered to the idea of an ideal state whose features would combine the three true forms of government (democracy, monarchy and aristocracy)²⁵, a view that was commonplace in the Classical Ages²⁶, and also during the Hellenistic Age. Its main representative²⁷ then was Dikaiarchus of Messenia of the Peripatetic School²⁸ while in the Roman Times the view's main representatives were Polybius²⁹ and Cicero³⁰. The Stoics were looking for a distinguished ruler who would be wise and brave and glorious³¹ in order to reform the state according to the Stoic ideals. For this reason, they turned to Sparta.

The ties between Sparta and the Stoa were age-old and so was the interest of the Stoics for the city. This is testified in Zeno's work, in the works of his favorite student Perseus of Citium (300-243/2 BC)³² and also in the works of Sphaerus of Borysthenes (285-221)³³, another student of Zeno's who served as counsels in the courts of the rulers of their time.

Perseus, as Zeno's representative lived in the court of king Antigonos II Gonatas (283-239, r. 276-239)³⁴ who was educated in Athens when he was young³⁵. For Perseus, Antigonos II Gonatas was

²⁵ D. L. 7.131 = SVF 3.700.

²⁶ Pl., *Lg.* 3.693d; Arist. *Pol.* 4.13.1297a.

²⁷ When Zeno was invited by Antigonos II Gonatas to live with him and become a tutor not only of the king but of all Macedonians (D. L. 7.7), Zeno refused with the excuse that he was too old (D. L. 7.9).

²⁸ In his main work *Tripoliticus*, Dikaiarchus appraises the constitution of Sparta, as the mixture of the three true forms of government e.g. kingship, aristocracy and democracy. Wehrli 1967, pp. 67-72; Taiphakos 1975, pp. 124-129.

²⁹ Plb. 6.10-11.

³⁰ Cic. *Rep.* 1.

³¹ Pl. *Lg.* 4.709d.

³² Pers. Stoic. *Fr. Hist.*, *On Kingship*; Pers. Stoic. *Fr. Hist.*, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*; Pers. Stoic. *Fr. Hist.*, *Plato's Laws*. Cf. D. L. 7.36 = SVF 1.435. On the *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, written by Perseus cf. Ath. 4.140e = SVF 1.454; Ath. 4.140b = SVF 1.455. It is worth pointing out that we have now the first complete edition of Perseus' fragments and testimonies in Taiphakos 2007, *Testimonia* 1-32 and *Fragmenta* 1-13. Cf. the reviews of this edition by Kalogerakos 2010, pp. 199-205 and Conomis 2016, p. 122.

³³ Sphaer. Stoic., *On kingship*; Sphaer. Stoic., *On the Lacedaemonian Constitution*; Sphaer. Stoic., *On Lycurgus and Socrates*; Sphaer. Stoic., *On Law*. Cf. D. L. 7.177 = SVF 1.620.

³⁴ Themistius *Orat.* 32. Perseus was also the teacher of Alcynoeus; D. L. 7.36 = SVF 1.435.

³⁵ Between Spring 294 and 287 Antigonos attended the lessons of Zeno and Cleanthes (Plu. *Mor.* 830c-830d, *De vit.* 830c-830d) and of Arcesilaus, the Head of the Middle Academy. Cf. D. L. 4.39; Habicht 1998, p. 148.

an excellent model of a “philosopher-king”³⁶ and considered kingship as a “glorious slavery”³⁷. Perseus fought alongside king Antigonus II Gonatas against the Achaean League and fell in battle at Acrocorinth³⁸ or at Kenchreai³⁹, where he had found refuge after the conquest of Acrocorinth⁴⁰.

Sphaerus, Zeno’s student, spent time in instructing the Stoic doctrines to the youth of Sparta where he acted as advisor to king Cleomenes⁴¹ whose manly temper he admired. He used the Stoic philosophy on the youth of strong and fiery dispositions and soon became «the new Tyrtaeus of the Lacedaemonian youth» for he filled them with divine fury, as M. Renieris wrote about him⁴².

Sphaerus’ ambition was not to review the history of Lycurgus but rather to create a new Lycurgus according the Stoics’ principles, one who would serve as a model for a new government. Let us not forget, however, Plato’s principle that «the rulers of the city may, if anybody, fitly lie on account of enemies or citizens for the benefit of the state»⁴³.

Sphaerus’ perceived Lycurgus not as an age-old ruler and king but rather as the future reformer of Sparta. In his student and future king Cleomenes, Sphaerus saw the young, meritorious, sensible, of good memory skills, brave, noble – according to Plato⁴⁴ – Olympian, aiming to a massive reform of the city.

Indeed, Cleomenes’ most radical reform was the redistribution of the land, so that Sparta would become a city of equality for her citizens⁴⁵. In fact, the redistribution of land was consistent with the Stoic beliefs which rule out inequality and vice. Citizens are members of an integral state and the only difference among them is their virtuous

³⁶ Plu. *Mor.* 567f, *De sera*; Plu. *Mor.* 360d, *De Iside*.

³⁷ Ael. *VH* 2.20.

³⁸ This view has been supported by Paus. 8.8.3; Paus. 2.8.4 and Phld., *Ind.Sto.*, Col. XV = *SVF* 1.445.

³⁹ This view has been supported by Plu. *Arat.* 23, Polyæn. 6.5 and Hermipp. *Hist.* (Ath. 4.162b=*SVF* 1.152).

⁴⁰ For an exhaustive analysis of the passages related with the death of Perseus cf. Scholz 1998, p. 323, n. 4.

⁴¹ Plu. *Cleom.* 2.

⁴² Renieris 2005, p. 20.

⁴³ Pl. *R.* 2.389b.

⁴⁴ Pl. *Lg.* 4.709D.

⁴⁵ Plu. *Cleom.* 7.

or vicious nature⁴⁶. And although the Stoics were not proponents of communalism, they claimed that personal property should respect the principles of equality and fraternity⁴⁷. Plutarch, who probably based Lycurgus' bibliography on Sphaerus' work⁴⁸, testifies that Lycurgus persuaded his fellow-citizens to make one parcel of all their territory and divide it up anew, and to live with one another on a basis of entire uniformity and equality in the means of subsistence, seeking preeminence through virtue alone, assured that there was no other difference or inequality between man and man than that which was established by blame for base actions and praise for good ones. And it is said that on returning from a journey some time afterwards, as he traversed the land just after the harvest, and saw the heaps of grain standing parallel and equal to one another, he smiled, and said to them that were by: «All Laconia looks like a family estate newly divided among many brothers»⁴⁹.

The political, social and economic reforms of Cleomenes failed because of external factors, given that the other important center of power, the Achaean Confederacy, coalesced with its former opponent, Macedonia. Cleomenes managed to materialize the demands of the cities he liberated and proceed to the redistribution of the land and cancellation of debts for the sake of those who did not own land or were indebted. Consequently, Cleomenes did not meet the Argives' expectations. Sparta's social structure of *homoioi*, *helots* and *perioikoi* did not allow for his reform program to be implemented by other cities⁵⁰.

The repercussions of Cleomenes' reforms were important for Megalopolis, both for the followers of the Academy and also for the Cynic philosophers whose main representative was the orator, philosopher and poet, Cercidas.

⁴⁶ Marcus Aur., Των εις εαυτόν Β'. α' - Ζ' ιγ'. Plu. *De Alex.* 1.6.

⁴⁷ Cic. *Fin.* 3.20. Hildebrand 1860, p. 513.

⁴⁸ According Renieris 2005, p. 21: «Ο τοῦ Χαιρωνέως Λυκοῦργος φαίνεται ὡν κατ' ἐλάχιστον μόνον ἱστορικόν πρόσωπον φαίνεται ὡν κατά τὰ πλείστα ὁ Λυκοῦργος Σφαίρου τοῦ Βορσοθενίτου». Oncken 1870, p. 223.

⁴⁹ Plu. *Lyc.* 8.4.

⁵⁰ Cf. Baltrusch 2003, p. 122.

The Athenian Academy and Megalopolis

Arcesilaus (316/315-241/240), Head of the Academy, heir of a wealthy family of Pitane, Asia Minor⁵¹, maintained close ties with the courts of Pergamum and Macedonia. In fact, he resided in Pergamum for a while and praised the Olympic Games chariot race winner Attalus, adopted son of Filetaerus, father of king Attalus I Soter of Pergamum (r. 241-197)⁵². A close friend of king Eumenes I, from whom he received endowments, he introduced his student Archias of Arcadia to the king of Pergamum⁵³, attended the annual memorial service of Alcyoneus, son of king Antigonus Gonatas⁵⁴ and befriended Hierocles⁵⁵, commander of Munichia, Pireus appointed by Antigonus Gonatas⁵⁶.

Arcesilaus continued the long tradition of maintaining ties between the Academy and Megalopolis, a practice already apparent in the years of Plato, and created friendly relations with prominent Megalopolitans Ekdemus and Megalophanes who «had been comrades of Arcesilaus at the Academy and beyond all men of their day had brought philosophy to bear upon political action and affairs of state»⁵⁷. They finally came to assassinate Aristodemus, tyrant of Megalopolis and install democracy. At the same time, they contributed to Aratus' efforts, general of the Achean League, to overthrow tyrant Nikocles from the throne of Siceon.

In Sparta, however, things were quite different; Cleomenes proceeded to a radical change of the Spartan government. P. Kanellopoulos⁵⁸ calls him a «social defector» adopting the views of Max Weber – founder of the sociology of religions – on the first social defectors, Israel's prophets⁵⁹. The complexity of the Spartan polity saw that the two kings were under the strict supervision of the five ephors, that the ephors were elected every year by the congregation of

⁵¹ Mette 1984, pp. 7-94.

⁵² Mühl 1955, pp. 717-724.

⁵³ D. L. 4.38.

⁵⁴ Scholz 1998, p. 201.

⁵⁵ D. L. 4.39.

⁵⁶ Kanellopoulos 1982, p. 34.

⁵⁷ Plu. *Phil.* 1; Plb. 1.22.2.

⁵⁸ Kanellopoulos 1934, pp. 78-110.

⁵⁹ Weber 1921, p. 291.

the citizens, the *Apella*, and that the Senators – who were also elected, however for life – represented the oligarchy or the aristocracy of the old and wise. The joint type of government in Sparta ensured political stability and absence of mutiny and, therefore, historical continuation. Cleomenes came along only to overthrow this type of government, assigning himself as the only king.

With his authorship and advisory to the Spartan king, Sphaerus desired to restore the Lycurgan tradition of “an incomparable polity”⁶⁰ according to Plutarch.

In contrast to the Stoa which influences Cleomenes, the Academy influences the city of Megalopolis directly and also Aratus indirectly. After fleeing Megalopolis, Ekdemus and Megalophanes develop connections with Argos, a city that accepted “fugitives” and “spies”⁶¹.

The most characteristic attack against Cleomenes’ socio-economic reforms came from Megalopolis, and especially from an eminent citizen, Cercidas.

Cercidas and the influence of Cleomenes’ reforms

Interestingly, the reform program of Cleomenes was welcomed by the cities of Peloponnese, which were members of the Achaean League. It is not an exaggeration, we think, to adopt Tarn’s statement that Cleomenes’ reforms and war received «a wave of revolutionary enthusiasm such as Greece had never seen»⁶², while Cary thinks that the policy of Cleomenes «was correspondingly welcome to the debtor class in the cities of Peloponnese»⁶³.

The magistrates in some cities began to make concessions. In Boeotia, an otherwise unknown Opheltas was capable in the use of state resources to help the masses⁶⁴.

The most known attack against Cleomenes’ socioeconomic reforms came from Megalopolis, and especially from the aristocrat Cercidas⁶⁵.

⁶⁰ Plu. *Lyc.* 31.2.6.

⁶¹ Plu. *Arat.* 6.1-4. Paus. 8.27.11.

⁶² Tarn 1930, p. 136.

⁶³ Cary 1959, p. 158.

⁶⁴ Plb. 20.6.4.

⁶⁵ On Cercidas of Megalopolis see Gerhard 1921, cols. 294-308; Knox 1929, p. 195, *Meliamb II*; Dudley 1937, pp. 74-84; Rostovtzeff 1941, pp. 1941, 1367, n. 34; Barker 1956, pp. 52, 58-59; Pennacini 1955-1956, pp. 257-283; Michell 1953, pp. 248-249; Oliva 1971, pp. 248-250; Ferguson 1975, pp. 134-135; Williams 1984, pp. 351-357;

Few figures in the Hellenistic world were more impressively versatile than Cercidas of Megalopolis (ca. 290-217)⁶⁶, who combined the qualities of a statesman (he was the one who played a decisive role in the alliance between Aratus and Antigonos Doston convincing the latter that the alliance with the Achaean League would be profitable to him⁶⁷), a military commander (he was the commander of the thousand Megalopolitan exiles who fought on the Achaean side against Cleomenes at Sellasia⁶⁸), a legislator (he was the reformer of the new constitution in Megalopolis when the tyrant Lydiadas left the city in 235⁶⁹), a poet and a Cynic philosopher⁷⁰ who professed social justice and philanthropy. From this point of view, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to compare Cercidas with Solon the wise Athenian lawmaker, who applied his qualities as a poet and philosopher to statesmanship and legislation.

The paradox and "provocative" aspect of his poem is that a citizen of one of the cities of the conservative Achaean League should have been so radical an exponent of the idea of social justice. The explanation should be that Cercidas was a Cynic thinker and, therefore, an egalitarian. After the destruction of the city during a war with Sparta, and when plans for rebuilding it were being mooted, a proposal which caused much dispute in the city suggested that one third of the estates of the land-owning class be re-distributed⁷¹. In the most interesting and extensive fragments of his poetry known as the 'second meliamb', we see how Cercidas' lyricism influenced his political views:

(Why does not God) choose out Xenon, that greedy cormorant of the well-lined purse, the child of licentiousness, and make him the child of poverty, giving to us who deserve it the silver that now runs to waste?

Livrea 1984; Lomiento 1993; Goulet-Gaze, López Gruces 1994, pp. 269-281; López Gruces 1995, pp. 3-37 with a critical and detailed analysis of all the available sources.

⁶⁶ Cercidas' work is scattered in bibliography with the exception of the later source of Stephanus of Byzantium (6th cent. AD). In his article entitled *Megali Polis*, "that is where Cercidas came from, that excellent lawgiver and meliambic poet". Cf. López Gruces 1995, p. 35.

⁶⁷ Plb. 2.48.3-4, 50-53; Ael. *VH* 23.20.

⁶⁸ Plb. 2.65.3-4.

⁶⁹ Porphyrius in Eust., *Ad Iliadem* II 494; Photii Bibliotheca vol. 3, ch. 190, p. 64. 15-15 Henry.

⁷⁰ D. L. 6.76-77.

⁷¹ Dudley 1937, pp. 78-79.

What would prevent it (ask God that question, since it is easy for him to bring about whatever his mind resolves) that the man who ruins wealth by pouring out what he has or the filthy-dross-stained usurer, should be drained of their swine befouled wealth, and the money now wasted given to him that has but his daily bread, and dips his cup at the common bowl? Has Justice then the sight of a mole, does Phaethon squint with a single pupil, is the vision dimmed of Themis the bright? How can one hold them for gods that lack eyes to see and ears to hear? Yet men say that the dread king, lord of the lightning, sits in midolympus holding the scales of justice and never nods. So says Homer in the Iliad. 'He doth incline the scale to the mighty of valour, when the day of fate is at hand'. Why then does the impartial balancer never incline to me?⁷²

Dissatisfied with the existing order, Cercidas exhorted his wealthy friends to meet the threat of social revolution by healing the sick and giving to the poor. So, he emphasized the fact that «for sharing – with – others is a divinity, and Nemesis is still present on earth»⁷³.

“Nemesis” is a word which originally means “proper distribution of shares”. Cercidas is warning the ruling class to be generous and help the poor before they are overwhelmed⁷⁴.

Cercidas does not speak of himself as a member of the governing classes, but rather as one oppressed by the unequal distribution of wealth. The wealthy men of Megalopolis have to give of their riches to the less wealthy men and thus avert the catastrophe⁷⁵. It is worth noting that Cercidas’ tone of advice sounds Cynic as does his attack on luxury⁷⁶.

Final observations

If we accept the opinion of the Swiss historian of Culture and Art Jacob Burckhardt (Basel, May 25, 1818 – Basel, August 8, 1897) that exceptional personalities shape the history of their time, we should admit that Aratus of Sicyon and Cleomenes III contributed decisively in bringing a relatively small size area, Peloponnese, to the political scene in the 3rd cent. BC. This was done when world history was

⁷² López Gruces 1995, p. 251, vv. 1-21, with a translation in French. Cf. Dudley 1937, p. 79 with a translation in English.

⁷³ López Gruces 1995, p. 251, vv. 31-32.

⁷⁴ Baloglou 2004, pp. 198-199.

⁷⁵ Tarn, Griffith 1952, pp. 111, 279.

⁷⁶ Dudley 1937, p. 80.

already entering new paths opened by Alexander the Great in the East, and by Rome in the West. Thanks to them, Peloponnese emerged in the foreground of history. Peloponnese became the stage of sociopolitical developments that were equally important to the intercontinental developments in the East and West which the kings in Macedonia, the Ptolemies in Egypt and also the Romans could not ignore⁷⁷.

Cleomenes' innovative movement made a sensation in the Peloponnesian cities of the Hellenistic Age. Because of its wide appeal, it was criticized and shunned by the Cynic philosophers and the Academy.

⁷⁷ Kanellopoulos 1982, pp. 51-52.

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Last kingdoms, new traditions in Hellenistic Sparta

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Keywords: Sparta, coinage, Areus I, Cleomenes III, Nabis

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Σπάρτη, νομισματοκοπία, Ἄρεως Α, Κλεομένης Γ, Νάβις

Abstract

The 3rd and 2nd cent. BC are marked by a series of crucial events which reshaped the history of Sparta. After the end of the Spartan hegemony over the Peloponnese, in the period comprised between the disastrous battle of Leuctra (371 BC) and the Roman conquest of the Lacedaemonian *polis*, Sparta experienced a revival in arts and culture that was marked, for the first time, by the important local minting of silver coinage. The monetary system was introduced by king Areus I, attempting to assimilate the customs of the major courts of the Hellenistic world. Cleomenes III pursued the same course of action initiated by his predecessor, as well as the last Spartan ouster king Nabis did between the end of the 3rd cent. and the beginning of the 2nd cent. BC. The iconography of their coins – which attest the gradual disappearance of the Dioskouroi in favor of Herakles, namely the symbol of the new monarchy substituting the traditional dyarchy – was a political act of propaganda abroad, aimed to counteract the political and social weakness

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and set off the new Hellenistic period of the last Spartan kingdoms, also attempting to reassert the Lacedaemonian hegemony in central Greece before the Roman conquest.

Ο 3ος και ο 2ος αιώνας π.Χ. σηματοδοτούνται από μια σειρά κρίσιμων γεγονότων που αναδιαμόρφωσαν την ιστορία της Σπάρτης. Μετά το τέλος της σπαρτιατικής ηγεμονίας στην Πελοπόννησο, κατά την περίοδο μεταξύ της καταστροφικής μάχης των Λεύκτρων (371 π.Χ.) και της ρωμαϊκής κατάκτησης της λακεδαιμονικής πόλης, η Σπάρτη γνώρισε μια αναγέννηση των τεχνών και του πολιτισμού που σηματοδοτήθηκε, για πρώτη φορά, από τη σημαντική τοπική κοπή αργυρών νομισμάτων. Το νομισματικό σύστημα εισήχθη από τον βασιλιά Άρειο Α', επιχειρώντας να αφομοιώσει τα έθιμα των μεγάλων αυλών του ελληνιστικού κόσμου. Ο Κλεομένης Γ' ακολούθησε την ίδια πορεία που είχε ξεκινήσει ο προκάτοχός του, καθώς και ο τελευταίος Σπαρτιάτης εκτοπιστής βασιλιάς Νάβης έκανε μεταξύ του τέλους του 3ου αι. και των αρχών του 2ου αι. Π.Χ. Η εικονογραφία των νομισμάτων τους -που μαρτυρούν τη σταδιακή εξαφάνιση των Διόσκουρων υπέρ του Ηρακλή, δηλαδή του συμβόλου της νέας μοναρχίας και της αντικατάστασης της παραδοσιακής δυναρχίας- ήταν μια πολιτική πράξη προπαγάνδας στο εξωτερικό, που αποσκοπούσε στην αντιμετώπιση της πολιτικής και κοινωνικής αδυναμίας και στην έναρξη της νέας ελληνιστικής περιόδου των τελευταίων σπαρτιατικών βασιλείων, επιχειρώντας επίσης να επαναβεβαιώσει τη λακεδαιμονική ηγεμονία στην κεντρική Ελλάδα πριν από τη ρωμαϊκή κατάκτηση.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the battle of Leuctra, Sparta reshaped social, political and cultural values which resulted in a revival of ancient Sparta's memory¹.

In this particular framework, the introduction of the civic money marked an important revolution, due to the innovations occurred during the last kingdoms in Hellenistic Sparta, namely the major reigns of Areus I (309-265 BC), Cleomenes III (c. 235-222 BC) and the ouster king Nabis (207-194 BC), albeit it is traditionally acquired that the *polis'* rulers were initially against the mintage of money.

¹ On the history of Hellenistic Sparta see particularly Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 28-79; Stewart 2018, pp. 374-402; Shipley 2009, pp. 55-60.

Moreover, around the middle of the 3rd century BC, Sparta struggled with political and military weakness and a large amount of internal problems; furthermore, it was threatened by the new power of the Achaean League. Nonetheless, the difficult historical framework comprised between the battle of Leuctra occurred in 371 BC – which put an end to the Spartan dominance in the Peloponnese – and the battle of Sellasia fought in 222 BC – resulted in the Macedonian-Achaean victory –, up until the Roman conquest, is marked by a reassessment in arts and culture parallel to the intermittent efforts to corroborate the Lacedaemonian hegemony. Indeed, the aim of the last Spartan monarchs was to try to revive Sparta's former glory through a political maneuver, also resulted in the introduction of the first silver Spartan coinage.

This being said, the present paper particularly deals with the political and cultural aspects related to the introduction of the coinage in this last period before Roman occupation, firstly starting with a brief analysis of the supposed ban on precious metal coinage attributed to Lycurgus, attested by ancient sources, then attempting to contextualize the innovations of the reigns of Areus I, Cleomenes III and Nabis through the iconography of the surviving coins they struck.

Lycurgus' ban

The origin of the Spartan *nomisma* is still in doubt², as well as the origin of certain economic bans which contribute to the idealization of the image of Sparta as an antichrematistic society opposed to trade exchanges³. Although certainly not new, this widely debated topic is extremely difficult to address, therefore in this context only a brief recognition of the whole issue is provided.

A. Segré⁴ and then H. Michell⁵ initially identified two different typologies of primitive Spartan coinage, the *obelos* and the *pelanor*. While the first typology is materially attested in some Spartan

² Recent studies on the topic: Hodkinson 2009, pp. 417-472; 2000; Figuera 2002, pp. 137-170; 1998; Christien 2002, pp. 171-190.

³ First references to the topic: Mitchell 1946-47; Segré 1928; Köhler 1882; Müller 1839.

⁴ Segré 1928.

⁵ Michell 1946-1947, pp. 42-44.

sanctuaries⁶, the second one is quoted by literary sources⁷, which corroborate the idea of a nominal value despite the actual usage, because the *pelanor* was iron sweetened in vinegar⁸ – thus entailing the impossibility of being re-melted in order to create new tools for fundamental activities such as agriculture and war⁹.

Different hypotheses speculate about the shape of these first forms of coinage, although barely supported by archeological evidences. Previous studies assimilated the Spartan spits recovered in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia¹⁰ to the *obeloi* found within the Heraion at Argos¹¹ or Samos¹², that were likewise spit-shaped¹³; quite the opposite, no archeological evidences have revealed the existence of the *pelanores*, just cited by Hesychius¹⁴.

Otherwise, literary *testimonia* agree with the nominal – and not real – value of the Spartan *nomisma*, whose weight was comparable to the Aeginetic mine (630 gr)¹⁵, with a value of 4 *chalkoi*¹⁶.

A. Segrè argued that this was in any case a sort of “primitive coining” of Sparta¹⁷, thus because archaeological evidences attest the

⁶ Predominantly in the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia. See Tosti 2013, p. 28; Dawkins 1929.

⁷ X. *Lac.* 7, 5-6, albeit it is not mentioned the shape of this *pelanor*, nor the material.

⁸ H. Michell explained the use of iron because of the rich mines of the mount Taigetus (Michell 1946-1947, pp. 42-44). *Contra* G. Nenci noticed that other cities devoid of mining deposits, such as Byzantium, used as well iron money, arguing that in the case of Sparta choosing iron (sweetened in vinegar) was more probably related to a policy against the import of unnecessary goods (Nenci 1974, pp. 639-657).

⁹ Plu. *Lyc.* 9.3; *Lys.* 17.4.

¹⁰ Woodward 1929, pp. 391-393; Dickins 1906-1907, p. 173. The chronology date back to 8th cent. BC up to the 3rd cent. BC and the most recent of these objects seem congruent with the first minting of silver coins during the reign of Areus I (Hodkinson 2000, pp. 162-163). *Contra* Laum who identified these findings in the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia as the first Spartan *nomisma* (Laum 1925).

¹¹ Waldstein 1902, pp. 61–63.

¹² Furtwängler 1980.

¹³ According to V. Tosti, this pre-monetary system seems not different from others in use in the whole Greece starting from the 8th cent. BC, attesting commercial trades. See Tosti 2013, p. 37.

¹⁴ Hsch. s.v. *πέλανορ*, p 1286.

¹⁵ Plu. *Mor.* 226d. Plutarch noticed that there was a contradiction between the highest value that this money had in Sparta and the scarcest one outside the *polis*. In addition, Xenophon (X. *Lac.* 5-7) estimated that the correlation between the Spartan sweetened iron and the Aeginetic silver was 1:1800.

¹⁶ Hsch. s.v. *πέλανορ*, p 1286.

¹⁷ Segrè 1928, pp. 201-205.

introduction of a real Spartan coinage minted in precious material at least during the kingship of king Areus I, in the first half of the 3rd century BC.

First and foremost, this Spartan delay in monetary production is not surprising, since Spartan economy was based on an agricultural archaic model and profit-make businesses, such as trade, were considered immoral¹⁸; secondly, many *poleis* preferred to use foreign coinage, like the widespread Aeginetan silver coin and the Athenian one, rather than producing it on their own¹⁹; on the other side, there was the “spectrum” of the ban of using foreign coinage (*chrematismos*), presumably dating back to Lycurgus.

In the words of Plutarch, Lycurgus supposedly redistributed lands and likewise intended to fairly divide all the contents of the houses, with the aim of creating equality²⁰; even though he did not implement such a plan, he obtained the same result by banning coinage in precious material, namely gold and silver, replacing it with an iron currency²¹ which resulted both in the consequent ban on usage of foreign coinage and in a local low-value currency, thus making the Spartans unable to engage in trade and to buy any “luxuries”²². In addition, Xenophon notices that this local low-value currency made it impossible to acquire money “by unjust means” because it was too heavy to ride²³. In any case, it seems that the holding of precious metal coinage by the Spartan individuals was at this time made illegal.

Nevertheless, there is a thin boundary between “real” history and “legendary” history, as well as most of the discussions concerning Lycurgus and his affairs. In fact, the alleged ban of foreign coinage could not have been enacted in the 8th cent. BC or earlier, since the

¹⁸ Tosti 2013, p. 38.

¹⁹ Lupi 2017, p. 128.

²⁰ Plu. *Lyc.* 8.1. This alleged distribution of the Spartan territory amongst all citizens seems to have been formally formulated in 243 BC, during the propaganda of king Agis IV, who proposed a redistribution of land in order to level out inequality of wealth. He claimed that this was not a revolutionary change but *de facto* a return to the “true” Lycurgan system (Plu. *Agis* 6–10). His proposal was never implemented, but also Cleomenes III sought a prestigious precedent in the mythical Lycurgus in order to draw on for the propaganda of his own reforms, until a Macedonian intervention “restored” the old order (Plu. *Cleom.* 11, 30). On the regime of austerity in the *polis*, see van Wees 2018, p. 205.

²¹ Plu. *Mor.* 226c-d; *Lyc.* 9.1.

²² van Wees 2018, pp. 202-208.

²³ X. *Lac.* 7. 3-6.

first (silver) coinages were not minted in the mainland Greece before the 6th cent. BC²⁴. Moreover, it is possible to assume that the Spartan *nomisma* was produced at least after the battle of Aigospotamis (405 BC) and the victorious end of the war of the Peloponnese, followed by a period of wealth and opulence, resulted in the presence of a great quantity of precious metals in the *polis*²⁵, counteracted by a real unenforceable ban on private ownership of foreign coinage. In this framework, in order to oppose the politics of the victorious and powerful Lysander, who intended to bring foreign silver coins²⁶, the Spartans resorted to a “traditional” Spartan iron coinage, asserting that Lycurgus had banned foreign coinage. It is doubtful if the iron money was minted at that time, furthermore considering its weight and the difficulty in transporting it, it can be established, as previously stressed, that this Spartan coinage detained only a nominal value, rather than a real one.

Areus I

Despite the discussions concerning the use of foreign money and the iron Spartan coins, the first known official Spartan coinage is attested under king Areus I, albeit his reign is very poor documented²⁷. He was the son of the Agiad king Acrotatus and grandson of Cleomenes II, and technically acceded to the throne in 309/308 BC, but effectively reigned starting from c. 280 BC²⁸.

²⁴ Sassu 2011, pp. 274-279, with pertinent bibliography.

²⁵ Tosti 2013, p. 28.

²⁶ It has been proposed that after the battle of Aigospotamis, Lysander intended to mint in *symmachia*. In this regard, Christien argues that it could have been possible already in 407 BC at Ephesus, the central headquarter of Lysander (Christien 2002, pp. 176-178).

²⁷ Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 25. The reign of Areus lacks of solid literary *testimonia*, nor his figure attracted the biographers and historians of the period such as his predecessor, Agesilaus II, or his successors, Agis IV and Cleomenes III. In addition, his reign is not corroborated by archaeological findings, nor important material evidence, with the weak exception of the coinage. In general, cf. Marasco 1980 on Areus' life and deeds.

²⁸ The death of Cleomenes II in 309 BC led to succession crisis, since at that time Areus was a minor and could not succeed to the throne. Acrotatus' brother, Cleonimus, contested his accession, but the *gerousia* deliberated for the linear succession in advantage of Areus, despite his age. For an overview of the historical framework of these events, see, in particular, the recent studies of Stewart 2018, pp. 387-390; Lupi 2017; Christien 2014; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002.

Succeeding the events with Pyrrhus of Epirus, who was finally killed by Areus at Argos in 272 BC²⁹, the monarch managed to secure an alliance with the anti-Macedonian ruler Ptolemy II Philadelphus and a number of Greek states, Athens prominent among them, in a joint front against Macedonia, following the outbreak of the Chremonidean war (267-261 BC)³⁰.

Furthermore, the increased Spartan importance in foreign affairs was attested by the Decree of Chremonides³¹ dated back to c. 268/267 BC, an important document which records the Athenians' alliances both with Ptolemy II and with the Spartans and their allies, who were already allied to Ptolemy II.

Nonetheless, the inscription mentions Spartan officials and twice refers to "the kings" of the Spartans³², but Areus is the only Spartan honored with the specific mention of his name³³. Ptolemy II's contemporaneous dedication of a statue to the Spartan king at Olympia³⁴ similarly recognizes and celebrates the Agiad Areus'

²⁹ Pyrrhus of Epirus tried to put on the throne Areus' uncle, Cleonimus (Plu. *Pyrrh.* 26.16, 27.10; Ath. 141f-142b = *FGrHist* 81 F 44). In 272 BC he had invaded Sparta instigated by Cleonimus, but the *polis* was fiercely defended, according to Plutarch, by Spartan women and Areus' son, Acrotatus, before Antigonus Gonatas send Macedonian armies in helping and Areus returned to Sparta from Crete (Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 29-30; Plu. *Pyrrh.* 29.6). Succeeding these events, Pyrrhus reached Argos, where was killed by Areus, allied to the Macedonian king before he tried to regain supremacy over the Aegean Sea, unleashing the Chremonidean War (cf. n. 30).

³⁰ Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 31; Shipley 2000, p. 142. Areus himself fell victim to this war, following his enterprise at Acrocorinth against the Macedonians (perhaps in 265 BC). See Stewart 2018, p. 389; as for the Chremonidean war and its implications, see also Christen 2014, pp. 161-175; O' Neil 2008, pp. 65-89; Marasco 1980, pp. 153-156.

³¹ *SIG*³ 434/5; *IG IP* 1 912.

³² *SIG*³ 434/5 ll. 37, 90.

³³ *SIG*³ 434/5 ll. 26, 29, 40, 50, 55.

³⁴ Paus. 6.12.5, 15.8. In order to better understand the position of Areus in the coeval socio-political context, the Agiad king's portrait at Olympia – besides another dedication by the Eleans (Paus. 6.12.5) – was significantly located in the vicinity of that of Ptolemy I, Antigonus I Monophthalmus and his son, Demetrius Poliorketes. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the Macedonian Demetrius Poliorketes was the first issuing royal coinage after Alexander the Great (Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 21). However, the erection of - Spartan - statues at home and abroad was not Areus' innovation, since already Lysander, after the battle of Aigospotamis, dedicated bronze statuary groups with his portrait in the sanctuaries of Apollo at Delphi (Plu. *Lys.* 18.1) and the *Amyklaion* (Paus. 3.18.8).

monarchy, despite the presence of the Eurypontid co-ruling king Eudamidas II³⁵.

In this particular historical framework king Areus introduced the monetary system, plausibly in order to finance the needs of the Chremonidean war, besides exalting his image of a powerful ruler³⁶.

Iconography of the first Spartan silver coinage

Areus I has been traditionally described as the first Spartan monarch following the Hellenistic model of ruling³⁷. Other than crucial political affairs, this thesis is also supported by the introduction of the first silver coinage, which included both silver tetradrachms minted on the Attic standard with a weight of 17.2 g and modeled on Alexander the Great's issues, and obols based on the Aeginetan standard of c. 0.95 g³⁸.

Although the anti-Macedonian politics, the employment of the same standard of Alexander's coinage was formally justified by the fact that the recipients of these coins were not the Spartans themselves, but the foreign mercenary armies who fought during the Chremonidean War; in addition, this typology was the most acceptable currency of the period, thus easily exploitable abroad³⁹.

Unfortunately, only four silver tetradrachms of Areus have been found⁴⁰. The obverse shows the head of a youthful Herakles wearing

³⁵ Regarding the transformations from a "divine" dyarchy into a monarchy and, then, a tyranny, see Millender 2018, pp. 452-479; Cartledge 1987, p. 100; Carlier 1984, pp. 240-248.

³⁶ Pagkalos 2015, p. 147, with pertinent bibliography.

³⁷ Phylarch already accused Areus of imitating the Eastern courts (Ath. 141f-142b = *FGrHist* 81 F 44), albeit Sparta formally entered the Greek world after the revolt of Cleonimus and the alliances of Areus with the Hellenistic and anti-Macedonian rulers. Cf., especially, Stewart 2018, p. 390; Millender 2009, pp. 32-36; Palagia 2006, pp. 206-210; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 28, 33-37; David 1981, pp. 132-138; Marasco 1980.

³⁸ Pagkalos 2015, p. 147.

³⁹ Millender 2018; Pagkalos 2015, p. 147; Walker 2009, p. 61; Mørkholm 1991, p. 36; Price 1991, pp. 155-166. Furthermore, Cartledge argues that Areus was seeking to present himself at least as the same sort of ruler of the Hellenistic dynasts, therefore the introduction of the coinage was the representation of his policies of civic renewal. Indeed, this operation conveyed political messages especially to Ptolemy II of Egypt with a view to convincing him that Areus was a suitable partner in his anti-Macedonian foreign policy, as previously clarified. See Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Probably the king's coins have been reused in order to be melted down by his

the lion skin, while the reverse represents enthroned Zeus with an eagle in his right hand, a long scepter in the left, and a club⁴¹, as well as Alexander and the Successors' coin typology⁴².

Although Herakles was claimed as mythical ancestor of both the Spartan royal houses⁴³, it is noteworthy that the legend on the reverse mentions *ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΑΡΕΟΣ* (*basileos Areos*), totally ignoring – again as in the Decree of the Chremonides – the other king Eudamidas II. This action conveyed a precise political purpose, since Areus was presenting himself as the main authority, clearly switching to an autocratic – Hellenistic – monarchy; moreover, the use of the title *basileos*, thus departed from its association with the Spartan dyarchy, instead assumed dynastic significance⁴⁴.

As of the reign of Areus I, the figure of Herakles gradually came to substitute the traditional iconography of the Dioskouroi, who for centuries had symbolized the Eurypontid-Agiad Spartan dyarchy, especially during the Archaic and Classical period⁴⁵. The bronze obols probably struck by Areus I around 265 BC, or at least by his successors in 260-250 BC, still show their coexistence on coins, since Herakles is associated to the mythical twins. In particular, these coins show the head of Herakles in a lionskin cap on the obverse and the

successors (Troxell 1971, p. 70).

⁴¹ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, pl. 1, group I.

⁴² Palagia 2006, p. 212; Palagia 1986, p. 142. Furthermore, silver tetradrachms of this Alexandrine typology, bearing the legend *ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ*, were minted elsewhere, with an international circulation within the new empire (Price 1991, pp. 71-78).

⁴³ Tyrt. Fr 2 West; Hdt. 9.26.2, 27.2; Paus. 3.1-2; Pind. *Pyth.* 10. 1-4. Ancient authors, starting from the Spartan Tyrtus, directly linked the Agiad and Eurypontid families to the legend of the *Herakleidai* and their descent into the Peloponnese. Moreover, Herakles was involved in the killing of Hippocoön and his sons, following which he gave the throne of Sparta back to Tyndareus (Diod. 4.33.5). On the *Herakleidai* cf. particularly Greco 2014, p. 52; Hall 1997, pp. 56-66. Regarding the figure of Herakles in Spartan pantheon, see Sassu 2022, pp. 59-105.

⁴⁴ Millender 2009, pp. 32-33; Walker 2009, p. 61; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 28, 33-37; David 1981, pp. 132-138; Marasco 1980.

⁴⁵ Palagia 2006, p. 207; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 63. Considering the new Hellenistic historical framework of Sparta, the figure of Herakles appeared more suitable to identify the new monarchy rather than the Dioskouroi, also recalling Alexander the Great, who equally claimed Herakles as ancestor of the royal house of Macedonia. On the cult of the Dioskouroi in Sparta, cf. Sassu 2022; Lippolis 2009, pp. 117-159.

demigod attribute, the club, flanked by the stars of the Dioskouroi on the reverse⁴⁶.

Therefore, the coinage of king Areus I eventually resulted in the institution of a new form of kingship, established on the Hellenistic typology and founded on the bond between the new traditions and innovations of his reign and the mythical and recent past of the *polis*, through the use of the main Spartan symbolic figures conveying innovative political messages, especially to the outside world⁴⁷.

Cleomenes III

The reign of Cleomenes III (c. 235-222 BC) manifested the introduction of an extensive social reform of land redistribution and debt cancellation, attempting to rebuild Sparta's military strength over the Peloponnese, albeit his efforts ended with the failure in the battle of Sellasia⁴⁸.

Given that Areus I was the former Hellenistic Spartan king issuing coinage in his name, Cleomenes III was instead the first monarch

⁴⁶ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, pl. 1, group II; Mørkholm 1991, pp. 149-150.

⁴⁷ Indeed, Pagkalos questions the ability of the Spartan population to immediately recognize the subjects represented on the coins (either Herakles or Alexander), while this was not the case outside Sparta, especially in the Eastern courts (Pagkalos 2015, p. 152).

⁴⁸ Shipley 2017, pp. 281-297; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 49-58; Marasco 1979, pp. 45-62; Shimron 1972; Shimron 1966, pp. 452-459; Shimron 1965, pp. 147-155. Further fundamental information regarding the historical framework and Cleomenes' reforms are provided by many other contributions in this volume. Therefore, this paragraph focuses merely on the coinage of the Spartan king. However, coherently with the purpose of the paper, with a view to contextualizing the monarchy of the Spartan king marked by absolutism *de facto*, it is important to underline that Cleomenes III succeeded to the Agiad throne in c. 235 BC, at the death of his father Leonidas II who in 241 BC had the Eurypontid co-ruler, Agis IV, executed along with other family members (Plu. *Agis* 20.1-5). Cleomenes forcibly married Agis' widow, Agiatis, formally becoming the legal guardian (*kurios*) of the newborn Agis' son, Eudamidas III, who never reigned, firstly due to his minor age and then to the premature death occurred in 227 BC (Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 44-45). As for the Eurypontid side, Eudamidas III was succeeded by Agis IV's brother, Archidamus V, who had fled in Messenia after his brother was murdered. In 228 BC – or at least in 227 BC, Cleomenes recalled Archidamus to Sparta, in order to strengthen the alliance between the two Spartan royal houses, albeit he was killed soon after (Plb. 5.37.5 asserts that he was murdered by Cleomenes' order; *contra* Plu. *Cleom.* 5, who represents the death of Archidamus as not the work of Cleomenes). To conclude, Cleomenes already inherited from his father the ideology of an absolutistic monarchy (Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 45) and by finally placing on the Eurypontid throne his brother Eucleidas in 227 BC (Plu. *Cleom.* 6), *de facto* became "the" monarch of Sparta.

whose portrait was reproduced on coins⁴⁹; nonetheless, differently from the Agiad predecessor, Cleomenes' name is not present in the legend⁵⁰.

Coherently, Cleomenes had followed the example of Areus I – and perhaps Agis IV⁵¹ – in striking coinage of silver tetradrachms. On the obverse is represented the king's beardless portrait, wearing the royal diadem of the Successors⁵², likewise the portrait of Antiochus I and Antiochus II on Seleucid coins that circulated at Sparta at that time⁵³; conversely, the reverse shows the ancient aniconic image of Artemis *Orthia*, bearing the legend *AA* (La)⁵⁴. The representation of one of the most significant Spartan deities was aimed to corroborate the link between the current monarch and the ancient traditions of the *polis*, in this case concerning Cleomenes' restoration of the *agoge*⁵⁵, many of whose religious manifestations were closely associated to the cult of the goddess⁵⁶.

Therefore, the reference model is the silver tetradrachm of Antiochus I (281-261 BC), minted few decades before the reign of Cleomenes⁵⁷. The connection between Cleomenes and the Seleucids resided in his father Leonidas II, who spent many years at their

⁴⁹ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, pp. 7-16, pl. 2, group III; Mørkholm 1991, p. 149.

⁵⁰ Therefore, the coins minted in Sparta during the 3rd cent. BC are also anonymous (with the generic legend of *AA* or *AAKE*). Cf. Palagia 2006, p. 206.

⁵¹ Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 50.

⁵² This is a contradictory element compared to the severe lifestyle attributed to him by Plutarch (Plu. *Cleom.* 13).

⁵³ Palagia 2006, p. 209.

⁵⁴ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, pp. 7-16, pl. 2, group III; Mørkholm 1991, p. 149.

⁵⁵ Stewart 2018, p. 393. The *agoge* had fallen into disuse sometime in the 270s, perhaps it was reinstated by Cleomenes on the recommendation of the Stoic philosopher Sphaerus of Borysthenes (Plu. *Cleom.* 11.1-4). About the influence and the relationship between Cleomenes and Sphaerus cf. C.P. Baloglou (*The reverberations of the reform program of kings Agis IV and Cleomenes III on the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic Age: a relationship between power and intellect*) and R. Sassu (*Changing paradigms in Spartan religion and values in the 3rd cent. BC*) contributions in this volume.

⁵⁶ Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 50.

⁵⁷ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, p. 8.

court⁵⁸, probably as a glorified mercenary, before his accession to the Spartan throne⁵⁹.

Moreover, Cleomenes' relationships with the eastern monarchs were not restricted to the Seleucid court, since from 226/225 to 223/222 BC, Cleomenes' mercenary army was rewarded by Ptolemy III Euergetes⁶⁰.

Again, this is reflected in Spartan coinage issued from 226 to 223 BC: these bronzes represented an eagle standing on the thunderbolt on the obverse, and a winged thunderbolt on the reverse⁶¹, with the legend ΛΑ⁶². It is noteworthy that both the eagle and the thunderbolt were used on the reverse of Ptolemaic coins⁶³, therefore it is possible to assume that Spartan coinage of the period was surely influenced by the alliance with Ptolemy III⁶⁴.

Regarding the bronzes struck by Cleomenes III, he adopted the typology of the obols minted by Areus I, with a youthful (beardless) Herakles with his attributes on the obverse and the club flanked by

⁵⁸ Leonidas II (254-242 BC; 242-235 BC) was Cleonimus' son. His father's defection to Pyrrhus may have acted as a deterrent to his enforced exile (Plu. *Pyrrh.* 26.9).

⁵⁹ Plutarch notices that he spent many years at the court of Seleucus I Nicator (Plu. *Ages.* 3.6, 10.2), albeit it could be possibly Antiochus I. There he comprehended the typical traditions of the Eastern courts, and passed on this information to his son, who reused it to convey political messages to the other Hellenistic rulers and, above all, to deal with the mercenaries. Cartledge-Spawforth 2002, p. 50; Palagia 2006, p. 210.

⁶⁰ Plu. *Cleom.* 23.1; Plb. 2.63.1; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 49-50. In addition, Cleomenes III made use of part of the Egyptian financial aid to rebuild the temple of Orthia, again corroborating his political maneuvering and the ancient traditions of Sparta.

⁶¹ On the significance of the Ptolemaic iconography, see the recent paper of Amine, Zoair, Omran 2021, pp. 139-143, with bibliography.

⁶² Grunauer-von Hoerchelmann 1978, pl. 3, groups IV and V.

⁶³ In general, on Ptolemaic coinage, cf. the recent studies of Larbor 2018; 2007, pp. 105-118.

⁶⁴ Furthermore, as already occurred in the case of Areus I and Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Ptolemy III also made a dedication in honor of Cleomenes at Olympia (*IvO* 309; Millender 2018, p. 474). Conversely, Ptolemy III was the dedicatee of a statue in Sparta, whose head in Parian marble is now preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Sparta (inv. 5366). The sculpture, probably completed in wood and plaster (Kyrieleis 1975, pp. 130-136), may be dated to 226/225 or 223/222). As argued by O. Palagia, this portrait, more probably a private dedication rather than an official work, may be the representation of the establishment of a Spartan civic cult of Ptolemy III, such as in Delphi and especially in Athens, where he was worshipped as an eponymous hero in the *agora* (Paus. 1.5.5, 10.10.2). Cf. Palagia 2006, pp. 210-212.

the stars of the Dioskouroi on the reverse⁶⁵. Another series of bronzes shows the introduction of the *piloi*, together with the stars of the mythical twins, on the obverse⁶⁶.

Therefore, during the 3rd cent. BC Spartan coinage is marked by the progressive disappearance of the symbols of the Dioskouroi, increasingly replaced – or at most complementary – to those of Herakles, in a constant adaptation to the new form of monarchy, as for Areus I, Cleomenes III and the last independent ruler of Sparta, Nabis.

Nabis

In the aftermath of the defeat of Cleomenes III at the Battle of Sellasia, the last ouster king of Sparta, Nabis (207-192 BC)⁶⁷, following the previous monarchs Areus I and Cleomenes III, reintroduced the figure of Herakles, both emulating Alexander, namely a manifesto of a Hellenistic monarchy, and dismissing once again the Dioskouroi, symbols of the previous dyarchy, as hitherto discussed⁶⁸.

Formerly, Areus I had minted coins in his name, without showing his portrait; conversely, Cleomenes III's coinage represented the monarch's portrait on the obverse, even though the legends on both the silver coins and the bronzes were almost generic or anonymous.

⁶⁵ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, pl. 4, group VI.

⁶⁶ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, pl. 4, group VII.

⁶⁷ For the overview of the historical context see Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 54-73; Stewart 2018, pp. 374-402, especially pp. 396-399. Sparta's political events of the period are particularly complex. Nabis succeeded to Machanidas and claimed to be descendant of the mythical law-giver Lycurgus (Liv. 34.31.18) – as well as the political heir to Agis IV and Cleomenes III –, therefore his accession to the throne was made legitimate. In a contemporary vision of the historical facts, Nabis was one of the most important figure in 3rd cent. Spartan politics, albeit he is mainly remembered as the last ruler before the loss of Spartan autonomy (Stewart 2018, p. 396). Nonetheless, the literary tradition concerning Nabis is almost entirely negative and he had been described by ancient authors as a tyrant (Plb. 13.6.1-9; Diod. 28.1-2; Liv. 34.32; Paus. 4.19.10-11), although such a label has been re-discussed by modern scholars (Kennell 2003, p. 90; Birgalias 2005, pp. 139-140). Conversely, besides the critics moved to the king, Nabis acted as a reformer both in terms of laws and practices, likewise his predecessors, and attempted to modernize Sparta to place it in a prominent role in the Hellenistic world (Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 70-73). On Nabis' ideology and reforms cf. also Doran 2017, pp. 70-91.

⁶⁸ Furthermore, he claimed to be a lineal descendant of the Euryontid king Demaratus (515-491 BC), therefore the representation of Herakles on coins was also supported by the relationship with the royal family of Sparta (Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 62).

Nabis was the only one king of Sparta to mint coins in his name even providing them with his own portrait⁶⁹.

The surviving silver tetradrachm shows a new iconographical typology: the monarch is represented with the royal diadem on the obverse, while the figure of Herakles seated on the rock occupies the reverse, with the right hand resting on the club and the left placed on the rock, furnished with the legend *ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΝΑΒΙΣ* (*basileos Nabis*), in Doric Greek⁷⁰. The seated Herakles on the reverse finds a parallel in a group of silver tetradrachms, albeit lacking of the legend, probably dated back to Nabis predecessors, Lycurgus and Machanidas (219-207 BC)⁷¹.

Nonetheless, the head of a statue of Herakles preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Sparta (inv. 52), whose dating could be almost contemporary with the reign of Nabis (or Cleomenes III), has raised the doubt that the iconography used on the coins may derive precisely from this sculpture⁷². Conversely, detailed studies have finally established that the Herakles on the Spartan coins is not a statuary type, but derives by a coin used in the Seleucid mints of the Antiochus I and Antiochus II⁷³.

Conclusion

In the context of the Chremonidean War, Areus put an end to the discussed traditional Spartan ban on coinage and, at the same time, gave a stimulus to elude the Lacedaemonian aversion toward Alexander, through a deft manipulation of the Spartan symbols and values. Moreover, he established the basis of a Hellenistic autocratic monarchy, overshadowing the traditional dyarchy. The manifesto of his kingship became the coinage issued in his name, that may be identified as the focal point of his policy of civic renewal.

⁶⁹ Palagia 2006, pp. 205-217.

⁷⁰ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, pl. 6, group IX, n. 17.

⁷¹ Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, pl. 6, group IX, n. 1-16; Mørkholm 1991, p. 150. Such a group of coins represents the head of Athena on the obverse, probably inspired by a gold stater of Alexander with Nike on the reverse. This iconography may have circulated in Sparta through the imitation coins issued by Antiochus II (Palagia 2006, p. 215, with pertinent bibliography).

⁷² Palagia 2006, pp. 213-214. Probably commissioned by Cleomenes III, this statue is most suitable to the iconography of Lysippos' Herakles in Taras – representing Herakles cleaning the Augean Stables.

⁷³ Palagia 2006, p. 215.

Areus' successors continued to reign in a deeply compromised historical framework. The socio-political changes and the new alliances with the Hellenistic ruler are reflected in the coinage, predominantly used by means of propaganda abroad. The main iconographical typology of this last period attests the persistence of the figure of Herakles – the progenitor of both the two royal houses of Sparta, also claimed as ancestor by Alexander the Great – especially in the coinage minted by Cleomenes III and Nabis, who issued silver and bronze coins representing their own portrait wearing the royal diadem of the Successors on the reverse, and – mostly – Herakles on the obverse, nonetheless causing the gradual disappearance of the Dioskouroi and their symbols, traditionally identified with the dyarchy, corroborating the new idea of absolutistic monarchy *de facto*.

To conclude, Spartan coinage, rather than used to modernize and adjust the *polis* to the Hellenistic realities, served as the fundamental vehicle to convey political messages to the great Eastern courts, in a last attempt to reassert the Lacedaemonian power in the political coeval scenario, until Sparta was eventually dominated by the Romans.

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Rising threat: the reforms of Cleomenes III and the socio-political causes of Sparta's conflict with Macedonia

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Keywords: Cleomenes III, social reforms, security dilemma, Battle of Sellasia, Macedonia

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Κλεομένης Γ', κοινωνική μεταρρύθμιση, δίλημμα ασφαλείας, Μάχη της Σελλασίας, Μακεδονία

Abstract

After the defeat at Leuctra (371 BC), Sparta lost the powers that allowed the city to claim the hegemonic role in the political affairs of Greece. The unanticipated failure on the battlefield and the subsequent geopolitical weakening soon contributed to institutional and social decline and, ultimately, to recession. In the years that followed, social inequalities were exacerbated, and the number of warrior peers (*homoioi*) was significantly reduced. In contrast, the number of disenfranchised people (*hypomeíδnes*) increased, and thus the deteriorating economic situation led to social decay. The loss of Messenia and the foundation of the city of Megalopolis sealed the deadlock. However, in the middle of the 3rd

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cent., two kings, Agis IV and Cleomenes III attempted a radical social reform of land redistribution and debt cancellation, seeking to revive the Spartan model. Cleomenes sought to gain momentum in foreign policy and render Sparta in a position to dominate the Peloponnese again. His effort, though, provoked a rupture in the regional security system, alerting the rival Achaean League and later the “superpower” of Macedonia. The conflict between Sparta and Macedonia was thus the product of specific geopolitical and social reasons, which are examined in the following lines. More specifically, it is argued that Cleomenes’ policy directly threatened Achaean sovereignty, forcing the latter’s leadership to ally with the Macedonians. Simultaneously, Macedonia foresaw the danger of systemic and social destabilization if Cleomenes’ reformist ideas diffused among the Greek city-states. Under these conditions, war was inevitable.

Μετά από την ήττα στα Λεύκτρα (371 π.Χ.) η Σπάρτη έχασε τις δυνάμεις που της επέτρεπαν να διεκδικεί ηγεμονικό ρόλο στα πολιτικά πράγματα της Ελλάδας. Η αποτυχία στο πεδίο της μάχης και η γεωπολιτική της αποδυνάμωση σύντομα συνέδραμαν στη θεσμική απορρύθμιση και εν τέλει στον κοινωνικό μαρασμό. Στα χρόνια που ακολούθησαν, οξύνθηκαν οι κοινωνικές ανισότητες, ο αριθμός των ομοίων συρρικνώθηκε ενώ των υπομειόνων αυξήθηκε και, εν τέλει, η επιδείνωση της οικονομικής κατάστασης οδήγησε σε κοινωνικές αναταράξεις. Η απώλεια της Μεσσηνίας και η ίδρυση της Μεγαλόπολης σφράγισαν το αδιέξοδο. Ωστόσο, στα μέσα του 3^{ου} αιώνα, δύο βασιλείς, ο Άγισ Δ΄ και ο Κλεομένης Γ΄, εφάρμοσαν μία ριζοσπαστική κοινωνική μεταρρύθμιση αναδιανομής γαιών και παραγραφής χρεών, επιδιώκοντας την αναβίωση του σπαρτιατικού προτύπου. Ο Κλεομένης ειδικότερα, προσπάθησε να εξαγείψει τη δυναμική στο γεωπολιτικό του περιβάλλον έτσι ώστε η Σπάρτη να ηγεμονεύσει στο άμεσο περιβάλλον της Πελοποννήσου. Η προσπάθειά του προκάλεσε τριγμούς στο περιφερειακό σύστημα ασφαλείας κι έτσι τον οδήγησε σε ρήξη με την ανταγωνίστρια Αχαική Συμπολιτεία και στη συνέχεια με τη Μακεδονία του Αντίγονου Γ΄ Δώσων. Η ανά χειράς παρουσίαση αναλύει τους γεωπολιτικούς και κοινωνικούς λόγους που οδήγησαν σε αυτή τη σύγκρουση. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, ισχυρίζεται ότι ο Κλεομένης επιδιώκοντας να διευρύνει τη ζώνη επιρροής της Σπάρτης, προβάλλοντας δηλαδή μια ευθεία απειλή στην αχαική κυριαρχία, εξανάγκασε τον Άρατο και τους Αχαιούς να συμμαχήσουν με τους Μακεδόνες εναντίον του. Από την άλλη, ο Αντίγονος και η Μακεδονία διέβλεψαν τον κίνδυνο αποσταθεροποίησης εάν, σε περίπτωση επικράτησης των Σπαρτιατών, η μεταρρυθμιστική

φιλοσοφία του Κλεομένη μεταδιδόταν και σε άλλες πόλεις. Υπό αυτούς τους όρους, η σύγκρουση ήταν αναπόφευκτη.

Introduction

The events of the 3rd cent. BC have received little attention in Greek and international literature mainly because the days of glory for mainland Greece had long passed, and the geopolitical center had been transferred to the Hellenistic kingdoms of the East. History-making, however, continued, and the Greek city-states offer valuable case studies for political scientists today. The efforts of two Spartan kings, Agis and Cleomenes, to restore social justice (regardless of how this is interpreted) and increase their peripheral influence led to a series of international events that temporarily shook the security sub-system of the Peloponnese.

When king Cleomenes III (335-222 BC) was crowned, Sparta was a very different *polis* than the one that had won the Peloponnesian War two centuries earlier. Successive defeats on the battlefield had caused population decline (*oliganthropy*); the institutional decay had produced internal division and factionalism; severe economic disparities had appeared; and the abolition of *agōgē* had led Sparta's military power in decline. For this, the period of his reign is widely considered the last flash of Sparta¹ for a series of reasons that can be summarized in: (a) his vision to give Sparta a significant geopolitical role; (b) his ability to find the response to critical public issues; and, (c) his potential to mobilize his fellow citizens to create an ethno-regional movement of social renewal. His efforts led to the Cleomenean War between Sparta and the uneasy coalition of Macedonia with the Achaean League. Cleomenean War refers to the central conflict that took place in Greece from 228 BC to 222 BC and involved the city-state of Sparta, the Achaean League, and in its last phase, the Antigonid Kingdom of Macedonia. The landslide victory of the allies at the Battle of Sellasia, in 222 BC, marked the end of an era characterized by a program of gallant reforms in many sectors of the Spartan society.

The following pages will focus on these developments and examine the geopolitical situation in southern Greece during the period

¹ For the last flash of Sparta see Stewart 2018; Millender 2018; Lupi 2017; Cartledge, Spawforth 2005; Fisher 2022; Baltrusch 1998; Africa 1968; Shimron 1964.

mentioned above. More precisely, it will discuss the events related to the Cleomenean War and the Battle of Sellasia through the lens of international relations. The first part will present the historical context summarizing the important facts that shaped the political landscape of the above period. It will analyze the struggle of Cleomenes to expand his influence over the Achaeans and the interference of Macedonia in support of the latter. The second part discusses the political situation in Sparta vis-à-vis Cleomenes' socioeconomic reforms and their consequences for the regional security system of the Peloponnese. The third part will open up the theoretical discussion. It will assess the Cleomenean War from the viewpoint of neoclassical realism. The purpose of the analysis is to study the domestic political changes in Sparta under Cleomenes, their impact on Sparta's foreign policy, and the reasons for the war against Macedonia. Moreover, it aims to offer a valuable perspective for understanding how the international system, domestic politics, and the actions of individuals interact to shape the political landscape. The last part will present the conclusions about the significance of the Battle of Sellasia and the grand strategy of the rival powers.

Sparta from Agis IV to Cleomenes III: reforms or revolution?

A light of hope had shined for Sparta when king Agis IV (245-241 BC) tried to reverse the socioeconomic decline. He was the 25th king of the Eurypontid dynasty, and during his short reign, Agis sought to implement some political reforms to return Sparta to its traditional lifestyle. He held that the *polis* had become corrupt and decadent. For this reason, restoring the discipline and simplicity of the old days was necessary. Agis was also interested in improving the state of the economy; he believed that the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small elite had led to social inequalities and that a fair distribution of resources would provide the environment for a prosperous future. One of his major reforms was thus to redistribute land and wealth among the citizens of Sparta. In addition, he continued with a debt cancellation program regarding mortgages of heavily indebted citizens. Agis believed in these reforms and was the first with his family to surrender their property. However, his ideas were not welcome by those landowners who would be seriously affected and forced to give up their privileges. His attempt had one more enemy, the ephors, who supported the rich and wanted to overthrow him. The

chance was given to them in 241 BC when Agis was called out of Sparta for a military campaign. Upon his return, he found the dethroned king Leonidas II in power. He was arrested, summarily tried, and executed by the oligarchs².

Cleomenes ascended to the throne six years after Agis' death, in 235 BC, and in his tenure, he walked in the footsteps of his predecessor. He, however, moved more carefully and efficiently. Although he was in the entangled position to be the son of king Leonidas³, the nemesis of Agis, and the husband of Agiatis, his widow, Cleomenes was convinced that a social revolution was the only way forward. He was a young king, full of ambition to restore Sparta's past glory, become the sovereign of the Peloponnese and render his state fit for international competition. Equally ambitious was the series of measures he enacted to gather all the power in his hands. His reformist program aimed at healing long-lasting wounds produced by the abandonment of the Lycurgan model, the ineffective management of fiscal matters by previous administrations, and the rise of inequalities as an outcome of the above.

Consecutive wars and the loss of many men in battle had helped the concentration of wealth into a handful of citizens. At the same time, the remaining majority was indebted to them, having lost their property and political rights. In principle, it was targeted to broaden the social base through the redistribution of land and the abolition of debts, equalizing the impoverished Spartans at the expense of a small group of privileged feudal lords. More precisely, he divided the land into 4.000 lots, distributed 2.500 to the citizens of Sparta, and 1.400 to the class of *perioikoi* and mercenaries who helped him take power. At the same time, he reserved some lots for those who had been exiled as a gesture of goodwill. Debt abolition was a fundamental act of relief for many people. It is estimated that with the reforms, the number of citizens increased to about 5.000⁴.

These reforms helped Cleomenes to improve his army, too. For a very long time, the kings of Sparta had abandoned their ancestors' military tradition and relied on mercenaries for their battles, adopting the model of the Hellenistic East. However, the consequences for the

² Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 40-44.

³ Leonidas II reigned from 254 to 242 BC and from 241 to 235 BC.

⁴ Michalopoulos 2016, pp. 31-42; see also Cartledge 2002.

Spartan society were not negligible. The citizens' education and role in the city were waning, while the gap between the people and the oligarchs was widening. Cleomenes changed that: he reintroduced *agōgē* and rejuvenated Sparta's fighting spirit; he enfranchised some 4.000 *perioikoi*; he liberated 6.000 helots, raising 500 talents, and he enrolled 2.000 of them onto his army⁵. Furthermore, he studied the fighting style of the Macedonians, worked on essential improvements, and introduced the phalanx and its long spear (*sarissa*) into his army⁶. Rapidly, he managed to give Sparta the attitude of the winner for the first time in a century.

Unlike Agis, he paid particular attention to the domestic political frontier, securing his authority with radical moves and in a firm manner. Hadas wrote, «Cleomenes was as zealous as Agis had been, but less the saint and more the man of action»⁷. The political power was distributed unevenly, posing a problem that had to be sorted out at once⁸. In 228 BC, he recalled to Sparta Archidamus, Agis' exiled brother and rightful heir to the throne from the Eurypontid consort. It is not known what Cleomenes' intentions were. Still, Archidamus was murdered upon entering the city under unspecified circumstances, most likely for political reasons⁹. This fact benefited Cleomenes, who seized the opportunity to appoint his brother Eucleidas to the vacant position breaking with the Lycurgan tradition of having kings from the two royal lines¹⁰.

Simultaneously, he sent 80 political dissenters into exile, confiscating their properties¹¹. The next target was the ephors, whom he accused of abuse of power¹². For Cleomenes, the role of the ephors was interpreted as assisting the king. On the other hand, they had a somewhat different view, seeing themselves as an institution necessary to counterweigh the power of the dual Kingship. In the last decades, they enjoyed upgraded status, and therefore they would be averted in sharing them

⁵ Africa 1968, p. 4.

⁶ Austin 1981, p. 111.

⁷ Hadas 1932, p. 73.

⁸ See chapter 6 in Kralli 2017.

⁹ Archidamus was killed either by the ephors (Plu. *Cleom.* 5), or by Cleomenes (Plb. 5.37).

¹⁰ The two Spartan royal lines were the Eurypontid and Agiad.

¹¹ Fuks 1964, p. 162.

¹² Plu. *Cleom.* 10.

with a strong leader. In 227 BC, with a skilled maneuver while the army was on a campaign, he returned to the city backed by a cohort of mercenaries and had them assassinated¹³.

The concentration of power into the hands of Cleomenes was anything but smooth and explains why Polybius considered him a tyrant¹⁴. A fierce critic of Cleomenes, the historian suggested that although his policies were backed by public opinion and he seemed to have good intentions, they were still imposed violently and arbitrarily. These reforms, he continues, were not Lycurgan at all, as Cleomenes had been arguing, but they served only as means to promote his imperial ambitions¹⁵. Polybius's critique, however, was affected but his personal bias against Sparta, and there are no sources supportive of such a hideous attitude for Cleomenes. There is little doubt that he was an ambitious young king, «not averse to violence when his considerable powers of charm and persuasion failed»¹⁶. Still, he had achieved to unite the vast majority of Spartans under his leadership. After all, the success of Cleomenes' domestic policy is attested by the fact that he managed to assemble such a large army of 20.000 men at Sellasia.

However, one should not ignore the macroeconomic scope of Cleomenes' reformist policy. From that perspective, a valid question is whether the aforementioned socio-centric reforms were enough for Sparta to grow internationally. It would be reasonable to argue that the reforms balanced the domestic social equilibrium and helped Spartan society find a way out of the economic stalemate¹⁷. Nevertheless, given that Sparta no longer possessed Messenia with its valuable resources, the specific measures alone were not enough to make it richer shortly. For Cleomenes, his policy was enough to grant him popular support but not enough to provide the means for a grand-scale expedition. At the end of the day, he depended on foreign aid¹⁸, unable to fully

¹³ One of the ephors managed to escape.

¹⁴ Plb. 2.47.1.

¹⁵ For a commentary on Polybius' criticism, see Africa 1960, p. 266.

¹⁶ Africa 1960, p. 271.

¹⁷ Doran 2018, p. 81.

¹⁸ Ptolemy III, Euergetes, who wanted to control the naval trade routes, paid parsimonious but vital subsidies to Cleomenes, to keep Antigonos, his competitor, distracted. Cleomenes had even given him his own mother and children as hostages. Plu. *Cleom.* 22.3.

sponsor his foreign policy from the public coffers. To increase his finances, he sacked Megalopolis, but it was not a sustainable addition. He also welcomed the city of Argos, which joined him voluntarily (even if they changed their mind a little later and abandoned him, disappointed); yet, Sparta's finances remained weak. Once again, the reforms gave a new sense of social justice and pride, but they were not enough to build an empire.

Of course, it was not only Sparta in this situation. Greece was exhausted from the endless "civil wars" and tyrannized by poverty and oliganthropy¹⁹. In the first half of the 3rd cent. BC, the center of geopolitical and economic attention had moved to the Hellenistic kingdoms of the East. The Greek model of city-states with their local antagonisms was outdated, and Cleomenes failed to design a long-term plan for economic development. Regardless of the social character he gave to his reforms, he was ill-prepared to carry on the grandiose project of a military campaign against superior forces.

The regional security system and the road to Sellasia

The Cleomenean war was instigated by the rise of a new military power in Sparta with the aim of establishing itself as the dominant force in the (southern) Greek regional sub-system. The city's adversary was the Achaean League, a confederation of city-states of northern Peloponnese, traditionally in constant dispute with Macedonia. The latter was the hegemonic power in Greek politics, with garrisons in many city-states. One of the League's generals and most prestigious figures, Aratus from Sicyon, was no less hostile to the Macedonian presence than Cleomenes. Nonetheless, although he envisioned uniting the entire Peloponnese into one state under the Achaean League's rule²⁰, he realized that Sparta was too big to be part of it without having the upper hand.

Although neither side abandoned the efforts toward a political solution between Achaea and Sparta until late, certain divisions in the Achaean camp led to foreign policy decisions and prevented a successful approach. A crucial moment of the crisis was the entrance of the city of Megalopolis into the League in 235 BC. Megalopolis'

¹⁹ For the reasons of Greece's gradual decline after the Peloponnesian War, see: Grammenos 2022.

²⁰ Gruen 1972, p. 612.

neutrality was vital for Sparta's security for geopolitical reasons. Located northwest of Sparta, the city was founded as a buffer state by the Thebans after their victory at Leuctra (371 BC). Its accession to the enemy's confederacy raised strategic concerns challenging Sparta's response. Aratus, on the other hand, preferred a stable relationship with Sparta. He was well aware that reactions should be expected, and therefore he was reluctant to accept the Megalopolitans in the first place. However, the leader of Megalopolis, Lydiades, convinced the League to accept him, turning the rivalry into a zero-sum game. With his anti-Laconian dynamic, he even got elected general, emerging as the domestic opposition of Aratus.

Eventually, the Inter-League friction between Aratus and Lydiades triggered Sparta's counteraction. Cleomenes started by clearing his periphery out of the Aetolian presence²¹. His first victories displayed the potential of that army, a fact that alarmed the Achaeans, who, in 228 BC, escalated the situation by declaring war. In 225 BC, Sparta recaptured Mantinea and defeated the Achaeans at Hecatombaeum, while diplomatic talks between Cleomenes and Aratus failed. By 224 BC, much of Arcadia and, most importantly, the city of Argos had joined Sparta's camp. Cleomenes was so promising that Ptolemy III of Egypt offered him economic assistance²². According to Plutarch, optimism was coming from the city-states that hoped Cleomenes would keep up with his social reforms program beyond Sparta, relieving them in a similar fashion²³. For this reason, Aratus considered Cleomenes a radical political challenge and not just a military threat; had his reforms exported to other cities, they could destroy the existing power relations and the entire sociopolitical establishment²⁴.

Moreover, the partnership with Argos was critical for a strategic reason: it secured Cleomenes' back lines, making him comfortable to proceed up to the Corinthian Gulf. Indeed, the same year, after consecutive successes, he besieged Sicyon, Aratus' native city, and sent a delegation to the Achaeans, providing a list of terms required to bring the war to an end. One of the important concessions would be the "absorption" of the Achaean League into a virtually new Peloponnesian

²¹ Africa 1960, p. 229.

²² Stewart 2018, p. 393. Plb. 2.51.2; Plu. *Cleom.* 22.

²³ Plu. *Cleom.* 17.3.

²⁴ Lupi 2017, p. 172.

League, with Cleomenes serving as the *hegemon*²⁵. Unable to even discuss the ultimatum, and with the Spartan threat at the gate, Aratus was short of options. At last, he chose to reverse his anti-Macedonian policy of two decades and seek his political survival in the courtyard of king Antigonus III (Doson)²⁶. However, under no circumstances did he wish to be charged with that remarkable turnaround in foreign policy. It was he who had achieved to oust the mighty Antigonus Gonatas from the Peloponnese, recapturing the fortress of Acrocorinth in 243 BC, which now he had to pledge to his successor Antigonus in return for his help to combat Cleomenes. Thus, to avoid being exposed before his fellows, Aratus arranged for Megalopolis to send two envoys to the League and ask it to invite the Macedonians on their behalf²⁷.

In the meantime, the Spartans were controlling the narrow passage of the Isthmus, blocking the entrance of Antigonus into the Peloponnese. That problem was solved the same year when Corinth and Argos defected from Sparta. The motives for that sudden change of camps have been generally neglected; however, they indicate certain political aspects of the Spartan point of view. These states had great expectations from Cleomenes, hoping he would be a liberator from the debts and the widespread inequalities. His rise was an opportunity for systemic change and redistribution of wealth in the struggling societies of Greece. To their disappointment, Cleomenes was not the reformer they imagined. The new orbit states were expected to pay the price for the abolition of debts in Sparta. When the real objectives of Cleomenes became evident, the Argives protested for not bringing about the social reforms change he stood for and defected. Without Argos, Cleomenes had his backlines exposed, so he decided to retreat and reorganize his defense in a more favorable location in Laconia.

On his way back, he received information that Ptolemy had cut his subsidies off. Running out of money, he preferred to give a quick battle before his mercenaries learn the news and give up. Cleomenes selected Sellasia to give the fight in 222 BC but lost to the allied front of Macedonians, Achaeans, and others. Antigonus emerged victorious, crushing the Laconians, and he consolidated his power in the region

²⁵ Kralli 2017, pp. 226-255.

²⁶ Shimron 1964b, p. 147.

²⁷ Plb. 2.48.1.

by entering Sparta and restoring some of its traditional laws²⁸. With Cleomenes fleeing to Ptolemaic Egypt, Sparta experienced the installation of a foreign garrison for the first time in its history.

The Cleomenean War before the neoclassical realist tradition

In international relations, the main driver of state behavior is the pursuit of power. This process is by no means blind, but it is affected by both systemic conditions and domestic factors. On the one hand, the international system is anarchic, meaning that there is no supreme authority to regulate the actions of states. The states are driven to constantly watch the power and intentions of other states and take measures to protect themselves from potential threats. Hence, this anarchy leads states to pursue self-help and to build up their military capabilities as a means of self-protection. As Mearsheimer has argued, states are rational actors who make decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis. The distribution of power among them is a critical determinant of their behavior and the stability of the international system²⁹.

On the state level, A. Platias and C. Koliopoulos emphasize economic, military, psychological, and other factors in state security analysis³⁰. They draw on Thucydides' theory to argue that the logic of conflict remains constant in time and is not shaped exclusively by the anarchic character of the system. For neoclassical realists like G. Rose, «relative material power establishes the basic parameters of a country's foreign policy»³¹. When Argos returned to the Achaean League, Cleomenes was in Corinth and found himself in between two hostile forces. With his means reduced, he had to retreat from his position. When Ptolemy's help was interrupted, he provoked the decisive battle at Sellasia because he could no longer sustain the conflict. Similarly, in case of conflict between two states, the international system may provide opportunities for third-party intervention to mitigate or control the outcomes of the dispute. Such interference may occur by the dominant states for whom changes in the balance of power provoke friction and insecurity. If, for instance, one state becomes more robust in a given sub-system, the other state may perceive this as a threat

²⁸ Shimron 1964a, pp. 237-238.

²⁹ Mearsheimer 2001, pp. 29-35.

³⁰ Platias, Koliopoulos 2010, pp. 12-13.

³¹ Rose 1998, p. 146.

to its security and respond by increasing its military capabilities or engaging in aggressive actions to maintain the balance of power. The great systemic forces will possibly take sides offering support to the player that serves their geopolitical interests better. Antigonos, for example, gladly accepted Aratus' invitation for two reasons: the first was that with the Spartan problem resolved and the Achaean League turned into a protectorate, he could later focus on more menacing threats, such as the barbarians' invasions at his northern borders. The second reason was that two weakened rivals in the Peloponnese were better than one firm and rising. Antigonos descended to the south not to crush Sparta and wipe it off the map but to overthrow the rebellious Cleomenes and restore the balance of power.

For this reason, after the victory in Sellasia, he left Sparta intact, and, as Polybios puts it, he treated the defeated state «in all respects with great generosity and humanity»³². Stating that the war was merely against Cleomenes³³, the Macedonian king was thinking of the next day, and he chose to leave one power watching the other, with none of them strong enough to prevail. His sovereignty could be safe and the situation under control in the foreseeable future. Ptolemy III was interested in keeping Antigonos and the Macedonian army occupied to prevent him from aiding the Seleucids³⁴. Sparta was a promising agent, and thus he decided to offer his support in the form of subvention. However, he sent nothing more than that; neither arms nor troops. And, as soon as he realized Cleomenes did not have the military and financial means to exert dominant pressure in the Peloponnese, he withdrew his aid. From a systemic perspective, Ptolemy abandoned Cleomenes, possibly in a similar fashion he had done to Aratus two decades earlier³⁵. It is reasoned to believe that Sparta, with lower chances of victory against the Macedon, could not offer him any increase to his relative power anymore. The Ptolemaic interests and priorities were oriented to his Seleucid competitors, and stability in Egypt's relations with Macedonia would be a more nuanced option. Even the limited assistance provided until 222 BC reveals that Ptolemy

³² Plb. 2.70.

³³ Stewart 2018, p. 394.

³⁴ Grabowski 2012, p. 94.

³⁵ A temporary alliance based on anti-Macedonian policy objectives was formed in ca. 245 BC. Aratus had received financial support from Egypt. Gruen 1972, p. 611; Plb. 2.

thought his resources and troops would be of better use anywhere else than the theater of Greece against the military advantage of Antigonus.

Aratus, from his side, was motivated by his dislike for the Spartans, and even more, he was aware of the two evils he had to choose. But this reasoning does not seem adequate to explain his decision to forge an uneasy alliance and advocate for it before his peers. Personal beliefs and mindset play a role in decision-making but are neither the primary nor the exclusive. Essentially, Aratus poses a typical “surprising outcome puzzle”³⁶, frequently taken as a victory of Realpolitik (and balance of power) over ideology and Innenpolitik. If this is the case, why did Cleomenes not pursue a similar alliance with the Macedon against the League?

It is the author’s opinion that balancing was not an Achaean but a Macedonian concern. It was Antigonus who had the power to define power relations in the Peloponnese; Aratus was in desperate need of support in his survival struggle. Indeed, the troops of Antigonus provided an opportunistic and temporary alliance for the price of stopping Sparta’s advancement. However, according to the neoclassical realist tradition, one should consider other domestic variables, such as power distribution and cost-benefit calculations within the Achaean League. As has already been discussed above, the League’s leadership was on edge not only with a new reverse regional status quo but with the threat the social revolution in Laconia constituted for their authority³⁷.

Conclusions

The Battle of Sellasia and the Sparta-Macedonia rivalry is not independent of the efforts of Cleomenes to revive the state’s military and economic power, to address the social and economic issues that had led to the decline of Sparta, and in the long run, to recreate a regional hegemony in the Peloponnese. He reorganized the Spartan army and introduced new training methods, improving the effectiveness and discipline of the troops. He also increased the size of the military by extending citizenship to a broader range of people, allowing more soldiers to be recruited. In the economic field, he implemented a land redistribution policy to reduce inequalities. His social reforms aimed

³⁶ See the analysis of Christensen 1996.

³⁷ Shimron 1964a, p. 238.

to increase the participation of citizens in the city-state's political life. He abolished the ephors, a group of magistrates who had held significant power and had been used by the oligarchs to control the population. He also extended citizenship to a larger number of people, which increased participation in the political life of the city-state. The strengthening of Sparta's military and its first victories over the Achaeans alerted Aratus, who feared he could lose his leadership. In addition, Cleomenes' social reforms and his gradual expansion to the northern Peloponnese sent a warning sign to Antigonos, for whom a potential domino effect of such transformations would threaten the balance of power in his southern sphere of influence. For Antigonos, stability in Greece was a bulwark against the threats posed by the Illyrians and the Dardanians. In brief, Macedonia saw Cleomenes' reforms as a direct threat to their security and power and responded by declaring war on Sparta.

From the theoretical lens of the realist tradition, and more precise the viewpoint of neoclassical realism, the actions of states are driven by both (a) systemic factors, such as the distribution of power in the international system, and (b) domestic factors, such as the system of government and foreign policy decision-making processes. In the case of Sparta and Macedonia, the Cleomenean War can be understood in terms of power and security in southern Greece, including the power relations of the Achaean League's leadership. As an ambitious city-state, Sparta sought to reassert its dominance in the Peloponnese and establish its sphere of influence at the expense of the Achaeans. Had Cleomenes' foreign policy succeeded, the domestic reforms already implemented could be sustainable as he would control his orbit states politically and economically.

On the other hand, Antigonos was primarily concerned with stability in his southern flank to be free to focus on the imminent threats deriving from tribes in its north. It was thus imperative to keep a balanced peace with few possibilities for a new hegemon to arise. He aimed «in a tolerably strong Sparta as a counterweight to the Achaean League»³⁸. For this reason, after his victory, he was very generous upon entering the city, kept most of Cleomenes reforms, and propagated that he restored the *pátrios politéia*. The invasion of the Illyrians shortly after reflects the high stakes for his kingdom from the northern tribes.

³⁸ Stewart 2018, p. 394.

While Macedonia operated on a systemic basis, the Achaean League mainly feared the domino effect the social revolution could generate. Aratus, the commander-in-chief, was aware of how popular the idea of land redistribution was, which was emphatically displayed by the rapprochement between Argos and Sparta in 225 BC. He was not willing to give up his power and reputation within the League, nor was he prepared to abandon Sicyon, his city, at the hands of his worst enemy. Because of the preceding, he turned to Antigonos for assistance, despite his distrust for the Macedonians. Eventually, the Battle of Sellasia, in which a NATO-styled coalition of Greek city-states defeated the Spartan army, was a culmination of these systemic and domestic factors.

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The conflict of Cleomenes III, King of Sparta, with Aratus, general of the Achaean League

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Key Words: Cleomenes III, Aratus, reforms, Lykourgan Agoge, democracy, cleomenian wars, diplomacy, coinage.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Κλεομένης Γ', Αρατος, μεταρρυθμίσεις, Λυκούργειος Αγωγή, δημοκρατία, κλεομενικοί πόλεμοι, διπλωματία, νομισματοκοπία.

Abstract:

The reforms of Cleomenes III were not limited to Laconia but aimed at reconstituting the Peloponnesian League under the rule of Sparta. That is why in the year 229 BC, successive battles began against the sovereign Achaean League under Aratus for supremacy over the Peloponnesian cities. Although the supremacy of Cleomenes III was evident, Aratus strongly resisted, managed to secure the alliance of the Arcadians and the determinative reinforcement of the Macedonian king Antigonus Dason. Cleomenes III repeatedly tried to reach a diplomatic consensus in vain with Aratus, so that together they could lead the Peloponnese. Antigonus Dason defeated Cleomenes III at the Battle of Sellasia in the year 222 BC, who moved to the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt, because he did not recognize the leadership of the Macedonian. However, he

* Laconic Studies Society.

managed to reorganize the “Lycurgus’ Education” and strengthen the Spartan economy by minting coins.

Οι μεταρρυθμίσεις του Κλεομένη Γ' δεν περιορίστηκαν στη Λακωνία, αλλά αποσκοπούσαν στην ανασύσταση της Πελοποννησιακής Συμμαχίας υπό την κυριαρχία της Σπάρτης. Γί' αυτό το έτος 229 π. Χ. ξεκίνησαν απανωτές μάχες κατά της κυρίαρχης Αχαϊκής Συμπολιτείας υπό τον Άρατο για την επικράτηση επί των Πελοποννησιακών πόλεων. Αν και η υπεροχή του Κλεομένη Γ' ήταν εμφανής, ο Άρατος αντιστάθηκε σθεναρά, κατάφερε να εξασφαλίσει τη συμμαχία των Αρκάδων και την καθοριστική ενίσχυση του Μακεδόνα βασιλιά Αντιγόνου Δώσωνα. Μάταια προσπάθησε ο Κλεομένης Γ' επανειλημμένα να επιτύχει μία διπλωματική συναίνεση με τον Άρατο, ώστε από κοινού να ηγηθούν της Πελοποννήσου. Ο Αντίγονος Δώσωνας νίκησε τον Κλεομένη Γ' στη μάχη της Σελλασίας το έτος 222 π. Χ., ο οποίος μετοίκισε στο Βασίλειο των Πτολεμαίων στην Αίγυπτο, καθότι δεν αναγνώρισε την ηγεσία του Μακεδόνα. Κατάφερε εντούτοις να αναδιοργανώσει τη «Λυκούργειο Αγωγή» και να ενδυναμώσει τη σπαρτιατική οικονομία με την κοπή νομισμάτων.

In the year 235 BC the king of Sparta, Cleomenes III, succeeded Agis IV continuing the policy of the reform movements¹. Aratus, on his part, began to reorganize his plans after the end of Agis IV. He intended, by consolidating his influence in the Peloponnesian cities, to isolate the Lacedaemonians, since he considered Cleomenes III to be a young and inexperienced king, burdened by his political duties. He himself, Cleomenes III, intended to get involved in a war in opposition to Aratus rather than to make peace on the pretext of unjust and criminal acts from the side of the Achaeans. Aratus, with the leadership of the Achaeans secured, aimed to protect his cities with his own forces, to draw all the Peloponnesians to one power, his vision was the refinement of many years of stratagem, a long political career and sponsorships of Ptolemy III Benefactor. His plans were opposed by the Lacedaemonians, the Eleans and those of the Arcadians who still sided with Sparta².

¹ Flower 2002, p. 194.

² Plu. *Cleom.* 24.6-8: οϊόμενος δ' ἂν ἐν πολέμῳ μᾶλλον ἢ κατ' εἰρήνην μεταστῆσαι τὰ παρόντα, συνέκρουσε πρὸς τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς τὴν πόλιν, αὐτοὺς δίδοντας

In the year 229 BC, by decision of the ephors, the king of Sparta was sent on an expedition to the Peloponnesian cities, in order to join more and more cities under Spartan rule. Sparta tried to project its power in the Peloponnesian region, seeing that the alliance between the Achaean and Aetolian Leagues was threatening the pro-Spartan faction in the cities. It began to occupy cities, such as the city of Athenaeum, in Belmina, which seceded from Megalopolis and stood with a new fortification on the side of the Spartans. As early as the time he was enthroned in Sparta in the year 235 BC, the Central Arcadia had already joined the Achaean League. So Cleomenes III began to militarily repel the Achaean resistance, which reconstituted its army, now opposing Sparta³.

Aratus organized an expedition to conquer Tegea and Orchomenus, which had decided to join the Achaean League in the past; but he was forced to leave due to treason. The ephors of Sparta, sensing that the situation was intensifying, ordered the three hundred horsemen and infantry who had camped in Arcadia around Cleomenes III to return to Sparta. They feared a generalization of the war with the involvement of more Greek forces, for example Arcadia⁴.

In the year 228 BC Cleomenes III continued his military operations in the Peloponnesian and encamped his army in Arcadia. He then lined up with the Spartan army at Palladium, where Aratus avoided clashing head-on with Cleomenes III, even though Achaean had officially declared war on Cleomenes III. In order to strengthen his alliances in the Peloponnesian, he provided military assistance to the Eleians, who were being fought by the Achaeans. Those who left Mount Lycaeus were

ἐγκλημάτων προφάσεις. ὁ γὰρ Ἀρατος ἰσχύων μέγιστον ἐν τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς ἐβούλετο μὲν ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς μίαν σύνταξιν ἀγαγεῖν Πελοποννησίους, καὶ τοῦτο τῶν πολλῶν στρατηγῶν αὐτῷ καὶ τῆς μακρᾶς πολιτείας ἦν τέλος, ἡγουμένῳ μόνῳς ἂν οὕτως ἀνεπιχειρήτους ἐσεσθαι τοῖς ἐκτὸς πολεμίοις. ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων σχεδὸν ἀπάντων αὐτῷ προσγεγονότων ἀπελείποντο Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ Ἡλεῖοι καὶ ὅσοι Λακεδαιμονίους Ἀρκάδων προσεῖχον.; Polyb. 2.47.1-2: οἱ δ' Ἀχαιοὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον διὰ τῆς ἰδίας δυνάμεως ὤρμησαν ἀντοφθαλμεῖν τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις, ἅμα μὲν ὑπολαμβάνοντες κάλλιστον εἶναι τὸ μὴ δι' ἐτέρων σφίσι πορίζεσθαι τὴν σωτηρίαν, ἀλλ' αὐτοὺς δι' αὐτῶν σώζειν τὰς πόλεις καὶ τὴν χώραν, ἅμα δὲ βουλόμενοι καὶ τὴν πρὸς Πτολεμαίων τῆρῃ φιλίαν διὰ τὰς προγεγενημένας εὐεργεσίας καὶ μὴ φαίνεσθαι πρὸς ἐτέροισ ἐκτείνοντες τὰς χεῖρας; see Papastylou, Φίλιου 2006, pp. 124-125, 128.

³ Plu. *Cleom.* 25.1-2; Plb. 2.46.5-6; Thommen 2003, p. 187; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 50. For the fortifications of Cleomenes III in peloponnesian cities see Kourinou 2000, p. 60.

⁴ Plu. *Cleom.* 25.5-7; Urban 1979, p. 173.

persecuted, killed or arrested, and there were rumors circulating that Aratus had also fallen in battle. Aratus himself seized the opportunity, regrouped and organized an attack on Mantinea, causing the city to succumb to the Achaean League. Everyone was surprised at the turn the conflict took after the occupation of Mantinea, because no one expected the city to fall. The Lacedaemonians began to resent and doubt themselves, as did the ephors about the prospect of Cleomenes III's warfare in the Peloponnese⁵.

Due to the turbulent situation in the interior of the Peloponnese, Cleomenes III recalled Archidamus IV, the brother of Agis IV, from Messenia back to Sparta. As his mission was to restore confidence in the king, he gained the recognition of the ephors who did not view the developments in the Peloponnese under Cleomenes III in a positive manner. But the presence of Archidamus IV in Sparta was only viewed with concern by the ephors, because they were simply afraid that the reform practices of former king Agis IV, to whom they objected, would be under a strong platonic influence actually repeated⁶. So, while he was initially accepted by the city, they later decided to eliminate him in the process. Cleomenes III inextricably concludes an alliance with Tarentum and Crete, whose city soldiers fought on his side and captured the city of Leuctron, in Megalopolis. Lysiadis of Megalopolis was also on the side of Aratus, who as general of the Achaeans fell in battle. The Spartans did not face much resistance while defeating the Achaeans in this battle. At first Aratus pursued the Lacedaemonians but, reaching a ravine, his course was interrupted. Lysidas of Megalopolis, however, continued to fight until he found himself in a difficult topographical position with vines, ditches and walls, something that aided Cleomenes III crush the army of the Achaeans⁷.

⁵ Plu. *Cleom.* 26.1-2: Ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῖς Ἡλείοις πολεμουμένοις ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν βοηθήσας, καὶ περὶ τὸ Λύκαιον ἀποῦσιν ἤδη τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς ἐπιβαλόν, ἅπαν μὲν ἐτρέψατο καὶ διεπτόησεν αὐτῶν τὸ στράτευμα, συχνοὺς δ' ἀνεῖλε καὶ ζῶντας ἔλαβεν, ὥστε καὶ περὶ Ἀράτου φήμην ἐκπεσεῖν εἰς τοὺς Ἕλληνας ὡς τεθνηκότος, ὁ μὲν Ἄρατος ἄριστα τῷ καιρῷ χρησάμενος ἐκ τῆς τροπῆς ἐκείνης εὐθὺς ἐπὶ Μαντίνειαν ἦλθε καὶ μηδενὸς ἂν προσδοκῆσαντος εἶλε τὴν πόλιν καὶ κατέσχε, τῶν δὲ Λακεδαιμονίων παντάπασι ταῖς γνώμαις ἀναπεσόντων καὶ τῷ Κλεομένει πρὸς τὰς στρατείας ἐνισταμένω; Urban 1979, p. 171.

⁶ Christesen 2004, p. 331, n. 73.

⁷ Plu. *Cleom.* 26.3; 27.1.3-6: καὶ γενομένης πρὸς αὐτὸν ὀξείας τῶν Ἀχαιῶν βοηθείας Ἀράτου στρατηγούντος, ὑπὸ τὴν πόλιν αὐτὴν παραταξάμενος ἠττήθη μέρει τινὶ τοῦ στρατεύματος. ἐπεὶ δὲ χαράδραν τινὰ βαθεῖαν οὐκ εἶασε διαβῆναι τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς ὁ Ἀρατος, ἀλλ' ἐπέστησε τὴν δίωξιν, ἀγανακτῶν δὲ Λυδιάδας ὁ

In the year 227 he camped in Mantinea, left a part of his army in Arcadia and returned with the rest of his army to Sparta⁸. Resolute in the interior of the city Cleomenes III began minting coins in the year 227 BC with the circulation of tetradrachms, as the King Areus had begun too. The sources of funding were the continuous financial assistance of his mother and considerably rich, war loot, the financial support from Ptolemy III Benefactor after 226 BC and the political liberation of Helots⁹. (TYPE Nr. 1) On the obverse they display the portrait of a young man without a brood facing the right. The head is adorned with a diadem and on the back, it is tied with tape, a coinage that imitates that of the Seleucids, where his father lived, even though they were not coins of Antigonos Doseon, who lived only three days in Sparta. It is likely that Cleomenes III is depicted, in the context of the reorganization of the Spartan Constitution. The national on the reverse side of the "Lacedaemonian" in the form of an *A-A* denotes a national currency instead of the private coinage of king Areus. This side inside the pearl circle depicts a figure, most likely a Sphinx or Siren with a sleeveless tunic, covering the lower limbs. The head is adorned by a Corinthian helmet with an inclination to the right and a jewel on the neck, while next to the picture animal figures are depicted, like a goat. This is Artemis *Orthia*, which was intertwined with the Lycurgan customs¹⁰, which Cleomenes III expected to revive. It was also financially strengthened by the liberation of 6000 Helots due to the payment of 5 Attic mnai for their freedom, which constituted 500 talents and an army of 2000 men¹¹.

The next coinage (TYPE Nr. 2) depicts Ptolemaic types since from 226/225-222 BC Ptolemy III Benefactor paid the Spartan king 6 talents

Μεγαλοπολίτης συνεξώρμησε τούς περι αὐτὸν ἵππεις καὶ διώκων εἰς χωρίον ἀμπέλων καὶ τάφρων καὶ τευχῶν μεστὸν ἐνσεισας καὶ διασπασθεὶς περὶ ταῦτα κακῶς ἀπήλλαττε, κατιδὼν ὁ Κλεομένης ἀνῆκε τούς Ταραντίνους καὶ τούς Κρητας ἐπ' αὐτὸν, ὑφ' ὧν ὁ Λυδιάδας ἀμυνόμενος εὐρώστως ἔπεσε. πρὸς τοῦτο θαρρήσαντες οἱ Λακεδαίμονιοι μετὰ βοῆς ἐνέβαλον τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς καὶ τροπὴν ὄλου τοῦ στρατεύματος ἐποίησαν. Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 51; Marasco 1980, pp. 166-167.

⁸ Plu. *Cleom.* 28.1.5; Plb. 2.57.1.

⁹ Cartledge 2002a, p. 152; Hodkinson 2000, pp. 382-283, 440; Tigerstedt 1974, p. 56.

¹⁰ Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 55; Humble 2002, p. 95; Hodkinson 2000, p. 434; Dimitriadi 1992, pp. 84-86.

¹¹ Grunauer, von Hoerschelmann 1978, pp. 7-9, 11-13, 15-16; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, pp. 55-56; Thommen 2003, p. 188.

per year, which he first paid to Aratus and the Achaean League. The coins were made of brass, depicting an eagle standing in lightning on the obverse and straight lines ending in a circle symbolizing again a thunderbolt on the reverse. The two stars of Dioskouroi can be seen and the coins are dated to 226-223 BC while the national *A-A* is re-depicted. Their average weight is 9.91 gr. It was preceded by a similar coinage (TYPE Nr. 3) without the characteristics of the Ptolemies, i.e. the eagle on the thunderbolt as a war symbol. It depicts the eagle of Jupiter facing forward with its head on a left profile and its wings slightly open. Their average weight is 5.92 gr. The last two coins with Lacedaemonian types (TYPE Nr. 4) date back to 223-222 BC. The first on the obverse depicts the head of Hercules with a lion skin and on the reverse a bat of Hercules within two stars of the Dioskouroi with the national *A-A*. Cleomenes III was forced to mint coins in the latter types after Ptolemy cut off financial aid. The second (TYPE Nr. 5) depicts the same reverse, but the two Dioskouroi stars are located on the obverse above the Pyloi. Both sides of the coins are adorned by a pearl circle. The value system afterwards seemed to be in better condition¹².

At this point we should take into account the criticism of the ancient writer Plutarch on the issue. If it was, he says, possible to rid the Lacedaemonian state of the evils of Sparta associated with the trembling life and luxury, debts and loans, and all the negatives that flow from them, the great distance of poverty from wealth, then he would consider himself the happiest of kings, as a physician who painlessly healed his homeland. It reasonably implies that before judging Cleomenes III for his actions we should take into account that the social situation was disorganized and unfair towards a large majority of the citizens. This led him to a change of regime on the one hand and on the other hand to the creation of arm bastions of the Laconian, so as not to be threatened by Aetolians and Illyrians¹³. The judgment of Polybius differs, of course, who mentions that as early as

¹² Grunauer, von Hoerschelmann 1978, pp. 20-21; Christesen 2004, p. 320.

¹³ Plu. *Cleom.* 31.7-8: εἰ μὲν οὖν δυνατὸν ἦν ἀνευσφαγῆς ἀπαλλάξαι τὰς ἐπεισάκτους τῆς Λακεδαίμονος κῆρας, τρυφᾶς καὶ πολυτελείας καὶ χρεᾶ καὶ δανεισμούς καὶ τὰ πρεσβύτερα τούτων κακὰ, πενίαν καὶ πλοῦτον, εὐτυχέστατον ἂν ἦγείσθαι πάντων βασιλέων ἑαυτόν, ὥσπερ ἰατρὸν ἀνωδύνως ἰασάμενον τὴν πατρίδα. 31. 10: καὶ παυσώμεθα τὴν Λακωνικὴν Αἰτωλῶν καὶ Ἰλλυριῶν λείαν οὖσαν ἐρημίας τῶν ἀμυνόντων ἐφορῶντες; Tigerstedt 1974, p. 61.

the year 227 BC Cleomenes III had turned the kingdom of Sparta into a normal tyranny, although he respected his personality¹⁴.

To some extent it is logically assumed that he had to undertake drastic measures with the help of the philosopher Sphaerus to reconstitute Sparta, which despite the diligent efforts of Agis IV had begun to fall from 244 BC. He re-constructed *agoge*, *syssitia* and *diaita* and for Cleomenes III were the ephors not part of the Lyncurgian Institution anymore¹⁵. Having secured himself in Sparta, he developed his power in the field and left to Megalopolis, plundered the city and burned the periphery. In other words, Cleomenes III considered the time appropriate to demonstrate the militancy of the army, under the thought that Aratus would misjudge the situation and think that due to the civil unrest the Spartan king would not leave the city in limbo but would avoid hostilities. Outside the Megalopolis he subsidized theatrical performances with actors from Messene. He even sat down all day to watch the performances, not because he lacked the spectacles, but to propagandize the enemies of the Achaeans by despising them and emphasizing his superiority. The Spartan army did not attend inappropriate or degraded performances¹⁶.

In the year 226 BC, Cleomenes III continued his advance and camped at Mantinea, where he liberated the city from the Achaean garrison after its fall. The city going through many sufferings and lamentations in the past, so it first asked for the help of Aetolia. In the city he enforced the aristocratic regime and the Lyncurgian laws and went out on the same day. He continued his marshal of military forces for the next city that stood by his side, Tegea, in Arcadia, and reached the powerful city of Pherae, which was under Achaean rule with the aim of also destroying the garrison. He wanted either to battle against

¹⁴ Plb. 2.47.3: καὶ τοῦ Κλεομένους τὸ τε πάτριον πολίτευμα καταλύσαντος καὶ τὴν ἔννομον βασιλείαν εἰς τυραννίδα μεταστήσαντος; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 52; Hodkinson 2000, p. 42; Thommen 2003, p. 188; Tigerstedt 1974, p. 62; Papastylou, Philiou 2006, p. 137.

¹⁵ Hodkinson 2000, p. 30; Flower 2002, pp. 197-200; Tigerstedt 1974, p. 60; Sphaerus gave probably informations from Sparta to Ptolemy in Egypt, Figueira 2004, pp. 56-57.

¹⁶ Plu. *Cleom.* 32.3-5; 33.1-4: ἐμβαλὼν οὖν εἰς τὴν Μεγαλοπολιτικὴν, ὠφελείας τε μεγάλας ἤθροισε καὶ φθορὰν πολλὴν ἀπειργάσατο τῆς χώρας. τέλος δὲ τοὺς περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον τεχνίτας ἐκ Μεσσηνίας διαπορευομένους λαβὼν, καὶ πηξάμενος θέατρον ἐν τῇ πολεμίᾳ καὶ προθεὶς ἀπὸ τετραράκοντα μνῶν ἀγῶνα, μίαν ἡμέραν ἐθεάτο καθήμενος, οὐ δεόμενος θέας, ἀλλ' οἷον ἐντροφῶν τοῖς πολεμίοις καὶ περιουσίαν τινὰ τοῦ κρατεῖν πολὺ τῷ καταφρονεῖν ἐπιδεικνύμενος.

the Achaeans or to accuse Aratus of evading and abandoning the battle. At that time the general of the Achaeans was Hyperbatas, although the whole suzerainty over the Achaeans was still maintained by Aratus. Cleomenes III was led into a head-on collision with Aratus in Dyme, where he crushed the Achaean phalanx and led Aratus to surrender. He also removed the Achaean garrison from the city of Lagoon (an unknown city) and handed it over to Elis. Cleomenes III did not annul the debts of the Peloponnesians but established a *sympoliteia* with his supporting cities¹⁷.

After the defeat of the Achaeans, Aratus, who used to take over the army every other year, refused power despite the appeals of his fellow citizens, even if the situation was very critical. They wondered why at this critical moment he handed over the reins of the confederacy. Peace negotiations between Sparta and the Achaeans followed, with Cleomenes III showing unexpected conciliatory attitude, similar to the communal ideal¹⁸. Of course, he directly demanded that hegemony be handed over to him, making his plans clear once again: Cleomenes III had no enmity towards Achaia and simply sought out to resurrect the once mighty Peloponnesian League under the hegemony of Sparta. He immediately wanted to deliver both the captives and the areas back to Achaia. Under these circumstances, the Achaeans accepted the negotiations and invited Cleomenes III to the city of Lerna, two hours outside Argos, where an assembly was to be convened. Cleomenes III then, since he has ingested large quantities of cold water and could no longer speak, postponed the planned assembly and returned to Sparta, having first released even the most prominent captives of the Achaeans¹⁹. It is surprising, of course, that Cleomenes III showed such goodwill and in the end did not attend the talks. Was Cleomenes III in conclusion tyrannical or even an honest political diplomat with new ideas? But Aratus was anything but a sign of goodwill, because

¹⁷ Paus. 7.7.3; Plu. *Cleom.* 35.1-2.4-5; Plb. 2.51.3; Figueira 2004, p. 59; Urban 1979, p. 172.

¹⁸ See Christesen 2004, p. 314; Christesen 2010, p. 242.

¹⁹ Plu. *Cleom.* 36.1-4: Οὕτω δὲ συντετριμμένοις τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς ὁ μὲν Ἄρατος, εἰωθῶς παρ' ἐνιαυτὸν αἰεὶ στρατηγεῖν, ἀπείπατο τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ παρητήσατο καλούντων καὶ δεομένων, οὐ καλῶς οἶον ἐν χειμῶνι πραγμάτων μείζονι μεθεῖς ἑτέρῳ τὸν οἶακα καὶ προέμενος τὴν ἐξουσίαν. ὁ δὲ Κλεομένης πρῶτον μὲν μέτρια τοῖς Ἀχαιῶν ἐδόκει πρόεσβειν ἐπιτάττειν, ἑτέρους δὲ πεμπῶν ἐκέλευεν αὐτῷ παραδίδοναι τὴν ἡγεμονίαν, ὡς τᾶλλα μὴ διοισόμενος πρὸς αὐτούς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους εὐθὺς ἀποδώσων καὶ τὰ χωρία.; Tigerstedt 1974, p. 62.

he knew that the Achaean democracy was threatened by a small aristocratic-state Sparta with great expectations²⁰.

He had not the slightest intention of accepting the Spartan domination of the Peloponnese and it was difficult for him to see his glory and power be surrendered to the effort of the young Cleomenes III to revive the Peloponnesian League, for which he himself had been a politician for thirty years. The actions of Cleomenes III caused the discontent of the Oligarchs, but he himself became popular even in the low social classes of Achaia. The common people in the "land of Pelops" saw in Cleomenes III a reformer who guaranteed them a powerful currency, land and education, tools that would free them from oppression and give them the prospect of rebirth²¹. Let's not forget that the most serious social problems of the Peloponnesians in the Hellenistic era were the unbearable borrowing and the request for land consolidation, issues dealt with by Cleomenes III in order to impose them on the *Perioikoi*²². For reasons of power gain, out of fear of undoing wealth and poverty, Aratus in 225 BC called Antigonos Doson to the Peloponnese for help, even though he had previously fought against him at Acrocorinth. The ancient writer Plutarch considered this act unworthy and dismissive and believed that it did not go hand in hand with his political conduct. Aratus considered that the centralized policy of Cleomenes III would only cause poverty and decline in the social fabric and saw in the face of the Macedonian a leader who would ensure political orderliness in the Peloponnese and exclude the policy of Cleomenes III. Soon Acrocorinth became the stronghold of Antigonos Doson in his campaign in the Peloponnese against Sparta²³.

This action of Aratus was considered as an act that did not fit the Greek *ethos*, that is, to lure cities from Spartan to Macedonian rule.

²⁰ See Tigerstedt 1974, pp. 49-50; Oliva 1971, pp. 253-254; Papastylou, Philiou 2006, pp. 130-132, 135.

²¹ Figueira 2004, p. 49; Luraghi 2002, p. 230; Hodkinson 2000, p. 30; Papastylou, Philiou 2006, p. 140; see Urban 1979, pp. 176-177.

²² Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 53; Shipley 2002, p. 189; Flower 2002, p. 196.

²³ Plu. *Cleom.* 37.3-4: ὡς δ' οὐ προσείχον αὐτῷ, τοῦ Κλεομένους ἐκπεπληγμένοι τὸ θρόσος, ἀλλὰ καὶ δικαίαν ἐποιοῦντο τὴν ἀξίωσιν τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων εἰς τὸ πάτριον σχῆμα κοσμοῦντων τὴν Πελοπόννησον, τρέπεται πρὸς ἔργον οὐδενὶ μὲν τῶν Ἑλλήνων προσήκον, αἰσχιστον δ' ἐκείνῳ καὶ τῶν πεπραγμένων ὑπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ πεπολιτευμένων ἀναξιώτατον, Ἀντίγονον ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα καλεῖν καὶ Μακεδόνων ἐμπιπλάναι τὴν Πελοπόννησον. 7; Polyb. 2.51.4-5; 52.4; Figueira 2004, p. 59; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 54.

Perhaps his criticism was exaggerated, because the Greek cities would change sides if they noticed that they were risking their interests and the pro-Macedonian faction was not absent in cities such as Elis. However, more specific issues may have led Aratus to this choice, namely to side with Antigonos Doson, judging by the fact that Ptolemy increased his financial demands on Aratus. In his mind he also had the beneficial effect that the action of Philip II, son of Amyntas, had against the Spartan monopoly over the Peloponnese²⁴. However, the result was that the standard of living of Achaia was altered and Aratus fell from the majesty of diadem and purple before the Macedonian sovereign power. Nor did the ancient writer himself wish to accuse Aratus, whom he considered a distinguished patriot, but with a weak moral compass, which deposed him, since armed Macedonians reached Achaia, his home, even the women's loft²⁵.

At this point it is worth noting that the Macedonian king had communication not only with Aratus but also with the Megalopolitans, Nicophanes and CerCidas, who in consultation with Achaea were sent as ambassadors to Macedonia as a call for help. Antigonos Doson appealed to Aratus to be very careful in his actions, and he wrote a letter to the Megalopolitans saying that he would provide them with help, if of course the Achaeans expected a helping hand from him. When the ambassadors returned to Arcadia and handed over the letter of king Antigonos Doson, stating his willing stance, the city assembly also decided to rush to the synod of the Achaeans, in order to assure and plead that they join the Macedonian on the condition that he, on the basis of his own strategy, would undertake the war or diplomatic operations, something that delighted Aratus. When the Megalopolitans displayed Antigonos' correspondence at the synod of the Achaeans, all of them were encouraged. This development caused the discontent of Ptolemy Benefactor, to whom no other solution seemed more favorable than to grant Cleomenes III²⁶.

²⁴ Giannopoulos 2011, pp. 76-86.

²⁵ Plu. *Cleom.* 37.5.8: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν οὐκ Ἀράτου βουλόμενοι κατηγορεῖν γράφομεν (ἐν πολλοῖς γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ οὗτος Ἑλληνικὸς γέγονε καὶ μέγας), οἰκτίροντες δὲ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως τὴν ἀσθένειαν, εἰ μὴδ' ἐν ἡθεσιν οὕτως ἀξιολόγοις καὶ διαφόροις πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἐκφέρειν δύναται τὸ καλὸν ἀνεμέσητον; see Tigerstedt 1974, p. 62.

²⁶ Plb. 2.51.1: ἐπεὶ δὲ Πτολεμαῖος ἀπογνοὺς μὲν τὸ ἔθνος Κλεομένει χορηγεῖν ἐπεβάλετο; Hicks 1980, p. 50.

In the year 225 BC the great Peloponnesian city of Argos expected a better political situation than the plans of Aratus, when the Achaeans arrived in Argos to organize an Assembly. However, Aratus had co-decided his alliance with the Macedonian king Antigonus, which meant deception for Cleomenes III. Aratus intended to converse at the Kylaravion Gymnasium of Argos only if he received three hundred hostages, which Cleomenes III refused as unjust. They should have revealed the secret agreement between the Achaeans and the Macedonians to him from the start. In a letter he accused Aratus of ridicule before the people and rushed into battle, which he did not want to wage in Argos but in Aigion²⁷. Part of the Achaeans decided to revolt against Aratus, seeing that with the call of the Macedonian king he would gain neither freedom and autonomy nor debt relief. The defectors of Achaëa fought with the Spartan king in Achaëa and conquered Pellene, making a surprise attack and driving away the garrison of the Achaeans, captured Pheneos and Penteleion. Aratus, fearing the possibility of treason, stationed the cavalry and infantry divisions in Corinth and Sicyon and situated with his allies in Argos, which he overthrew. Then he celebrated the Nemean games in the temple of Nemean Zeus between Corinth, Sicyon and Phleius, where he waited for Cleomenes III for battle. He took advantage of the Nemean festival in the same year to carry out a surprise attack on Argos at night. The Argives did not have time to fight back and surrendered the city to the Spartan, in order to avoid a plundering of the city and with the hope that political stability would prevail in it. Reinforced by a key city, Cleomenes III continued his campaign in the Peloponnese in 225 BC, recapturing cities in areas such as Hermione, which a few years ago had been infiltrated by Aratus. The Achaeans parked in Corinth and tried to enter the city in vain, calling it in assembly. Fearing derision, Aratus left for Sicyon on horseback, provoking the wrath of Cleomenes III to the Corinthians, because he, Aratus, was not arrested²⁸.

In addition to Hermione, Cleonai, Phleius, Troezen, Epidaurus also sided with the Spartans. Did the cities of the Peloponnese begin

²⁷ Plu. *Arat.* 39.4-5; Plu. *Cleom.* 38.4-8; 39.2; Plb. 2.53.6.

²⁸ Plu. *Cleom.* 40.3-5: ἐκεῖ δὲ τοῦ ἵππου προσαχθέντος ἀναβάς ἔφυγεν εἰς Σικυῶνα. τῶν δὲ Κορινθίων ἀμιλλωμένων εἰς Ἀργὸς πρὸς τὸν Κλεομένην φησὶν ὁ Ἀρατος τοὺς ἵππους πάντας ῥαγῆναι, τὸν δὲ Κλεομένην μέμφεσθαι τοὺς Κορινθίους, μὴ συλλαβόντας αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἑάσαντας διαφυγεῖν; Oliva 1971, p. 252; Christesen 2010, p. 214.

to resent the consequences that a Macedonian domination might have had in the Peloponnese? This question may arise, judging by the fact that Cleomenes III himself did not want a divided Peloponnese. He therefore sought out to form an alliance with Aratus which proved fruitless. Specifically, he sent Megistonon to ask for the consent of Aratus for the capture of Acrocorinth by Sparta in exchange for money, but the Achaeans rejected the proposal. Aratus predicted that if they sided with Antigonus, he would impose himself on Cleomenes III and eventually strengthen the Achaean positions in the Peloponnese. Cleomenes III proudly sided with his forces in front of the gates of Corinth²⁹.

He considered more or less that Aratus would be a satellite of Macedonia in the Peloponnese with all the duties that this entails. This is how Aratus narrates the events at the gate of the Peloponnese. Cleomenes III raised trenches on the Acropolis, since the Achaeans did not intend to leave the city. He called the friends and commissioners of Aratus, proposing to them to take over his house and property, so that he could preserve and administer them. He then sent Tritymallos from Messenia to Aratus with the request that Acrocorinth be guarded by both Spartan and Achaean troops, and to Aratus himself he promised twice as much financial assistance as he received from Ptolemy Benefactor, considering him most incapable of managing the obvious. The management and defense of the property was a matter of honor for Sparta. The new consensual attitude expressed by Cleomenes III was for Aratus the reason why he refused any alliance between the two powers. Instead he sent his son along with other hostages to Antigonus and persuaded the Achaeans to surrender Acrocorinth to the Macedonian king. Polybius did not mention hostage-taking, but sending a relative as ambassador intended to clearly attest to an alliance and generally agreed with the political approach of Aratus. For this reason, Cleomenes III resumed war action, conquered Sicyon, destroyed Corinth without a fight and, by resolution of the Corinthians, confiscated the monetary property of Aratus³⁰.

²⁹ Plu. *Cleom.* 40.5-7; Plb. 2.52.1-2; Hicks 1980, pp. 54-55.

³⁰ Plu. *Cleom.* 40.7-9: Τριτύμαλλον δὲ πάλιν τὸν Μεσσηνίου ἀπέστειλε πρὸς αὐτόν, ἀξίων ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν καὶ τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων ὁμοῦ φυλάττεσθαι τὸν Ἀκροκόρινθον, ἰδίᾳ δὲ τῷ Ἀράτῳ διπλὴν ἐπαγγελόμενος τὴν σύνταξιν ἣς ἐλάμβανε παρὰ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ βασιλέως. ἐπεὶ δ' ὁ Ἀρατος οὐχ ὑπήκουσεν, ἀλλὰ τὸν θ' υἱὸν ἐπέμφε πρὸς τὸν Αντίγονον μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμήρων καὶ

Antigonos III Doson crossed paths with many military forces in the Geraneia Mountains in the area of Corinth and his first attempt to enter the interior through Lechaion was repelled by Cleomenes III. While he was thinking of encamping at Heraion of Perachora, so that by ships could transfer his army to Sicyon, he was approached by male friends of Aratus, saying that the Argives under Aristotle defected from Cleomenes III, because he did not cancel debts as they had hoped and he owed. Then Aratus seized the opportunity, received 1,500 soldiers from Antigonos III Doson and spoke his mind against Argos, where Aristotle had begun to fight against those who guarded the Acropolis. The guarantor of the security of the city of Argos, Cleomenes III, was outraged by this development and immediately sent Megistonoun with an army to help, but he collapsed because of the fierce battle. Messengers often called Cleomenes III for help, but he, under the threat of an invasion of Laconia, withdrew the army from Corinth, causing the city to fall into the hands of Antigonos, who established a garrison. This conflict between Cleomenes III and Aratus soon brought Argos to Macedonian rule³¹.

In return, Ptolemy asked Cleomenes III to hand over his mother and children to Egypt, something that Cleomenes III accepted. But he soon received information from his mother that Ptolemy had secret conversations with Antigonos. He also knew that the Achaeans had the will of reconciliation, but Cleomenes III hesitated to end the war without the consent of Ptolemy. Then the Spartan mother encouraged him to do what was in Sparta's interest and not to account old women and young children³². The determinative conflict between Cleomenes III and Aratus, who had Antigonos as his ally, took place in Megalopolis. Some citizens asked to be reconciled, but Cleomenes III preferred

ψηφίσασθαι τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς ἔπεισεν Ἀντιγόνῳ παραδίδοναι τὸν Ἀκροκόρινθον, οὕτως ὁ Κλεομένης τὴν τε Σικυωνίαν ἐμβαλὼν ἐπόρθησε, καὶ τὰ χρήματα τοῦ Ἀράτου τῶν Κορινθίων αὐτῷ ψηφισαμένων δωρεὰν ἔλαβε; Polyb. 2.52.3-4; Tigerstedt 1974, p. 54; Cartledge, Spawforth 2002, p. 54.

³¹ Plu. *Cleom.* 41.5-8: ἤδη δὲ πρὸς ἐσπέραν ἦκον ἐξ Ἀργους κατὰ θάλατταν ἄνδρες Ἀράτου φίλοι, καλοῦντες αὐτὸν ὡς ἀφισταμένων τῶν Ἀργείων τοῦ Κλεομένου. ὁ δὲ πράττων [μὲν] ἦν τὴν ἀπόστασιν Ἀριστοτέλης· καὶ τὸ πλῆθος οὐ χαλεπῶς ἔπεισεν, ἀγανακτοῦν ὅτι χρεῶν ἀποκοπὰς οὐκ ἐποίησεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Κλεομένης ἔλπίσασι. λαβὼν οὖν ὁ Ἀρατος παρ' Ἀντιγόνου στρατιώτας χιλίους καὶ πεντακοσίους, παρέπλευσεν εἰς Ἐπίδαυρον; 42.8: ἀπάντων. οἱ μὲν γὰρ εὐθὺς ἀπεχώρησαν αὐτοῦ τῶν στρατευομένων, οἱ δ' ὀλίγον ὕστερον τῷ Ἀντιγόνῳ τὰς πόλεις παρέδωκαν; Thommen 2003, p. 189.

³² Plu. *Cleom.* 43.4.9; Thommen 2003, p. 189.

glory over benefit. He sent messengers to the Megalopolitans in Messenien, assuring them that, if they sided with him, he would bring them back home safe and sound³³. He showed a certain magnanimity and humility, but tried to divide his opponents. Then the great general Philopoemen intervened and prevented the Arcadians from surrendering by proposing not to ruin the friendship with Achaia. Then Cleomenes III completely and brutally destroyed the city, extracted money, sculptures and icons, which he sent to Sparta, where he returned fearing reprisals from the Achaeans and Macedonians. The synod of the Achaeans was shocked by the magnitude of the calamity. Cleomenes III regrouped and began to destroy the Argolic land, going as far as Antigonos, ridiculing him. Apart from the Achaeans, the Argians also saw a savior in the face of Antigonos. Shortly afterwards Antigonos set out for Tegea to invade the Laconia³⁴.

After the destruction of Megalopolis, the Lacedaemonians received 6,000 talents, of which 2,000 were delivered to Cleomenes III as was usual in those cases³⁵. When Cleomenes III sent his loved ones to Egypt, Ptolemy simply promised help. However, at the time of the destruction of Megalopolis, an ambassador arrived at Cleomenes III, conveying Ptolemy's will to pay sponsorships. Cleomenes III saw this prospect with positivism, because with the involvement of Antigonos he could barely cope financially. However, being the possessor of 6,000 talents, he was able to renounce Ptolemaic sponsorship, and spend only 300 talents for a winning battle of Sellasia. Polybius also considered it worthy and absurd that despite his financial power he gave in to Ptolemy and censors the reforms of Cleomenes' III in his

³³ Plb. 2.61.4: ὁ δὲ πῶς μὲν ἔλαβε Κλεομένης τὴν πόλιν καὶ πῶς ἀκέραιον διαφυλάξας ἐξαπέστειλε παραχρημα πρὸς τοὺς Μεγαλοπολίτας εἰς τὴν Μεοσήνην γραμματοφόρους, ἀξίων αὐτοὺς ἀβλαβῆ κομισομένους τὴν ἑαυτῶν πατριδα κοινωνῆσαι τῶν ἰδίων πραγμάτων, ταῦτα μὲν ἡμῖν ἐδήλωσε, βουλόμενος ὑποδείξει τὴν Κλεομένους μεγαλοψυχίαν καὶ μετριότητα πρὸς τοὺς πολέμιους.

³⁴ Plu. *Cleom.* 45.5-6.8; 46.1-4: Τούτων δ' ἀπαγγελέθωντων τῷ Κλεομένει, τετηρηκῶς τὴν πόλιν ἄθικτον καὶ ἀκέραιον, ὥστε μηδένα λαθεῖν μηδὲ τοῦλάχιστον λαβόντα, τότε παντάπασι τραχυνθεὶς καὶ ἀγανακτήσας τὰ μὲν χρήματα διήρπασεν, ἀνδριάντας δὲ καὶ γραφὰς ἀπέστειλεν εἰς Σπάρτην; see Polyb. 2.64.2; Tigerstedt 1974, p. 63; Urban 1979, pp. 194-195; Pothou 2017, p. 287.

³⁵ Plb. 2.61.1: Οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ τούτοις ἐξῆς φησιν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐκ τῆς Μεγάλης πόλεως λαφύρων ἑξακισχίλια τάλαντα τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις πεσεῖν, ὧν τὰ δισχίλια Κλεομένει δοθῆναι κατὰ τοὺς ἔθισμούς.

Histories. Soon after came the end of his reign with his defeat in the battle of Sellasia in the year 222 BC³⁶.

In conclusion, the Achaean League managed to stay in the alliance of the victors and regained Peloponnesian domination in 190 BC. As for Cleomenes III, he lifted Sparta from the depression of morals³⁷ and led it to the path of prudence and education³⁸. He developed military power and created a strong Lacedaemonian national economy by minting currency, strengthening the city's reserves³⁹. Both Achaean and Sparta tried their hand against the Macedonian kingdoms by keeping their cities after the battle of Sellasia in the year 222 BC free as centers of political, military and economic power.

³⁶ Paus. 7.7.4; Plb. 2.63.3-4: τὸ δ' ἅμα μὲν πάσας ἀποφαίνειν τῷ Κλεομένει τὰς ἐλπίδας ἐν Πτολεμαίῳ διὰ τὰς χορηγίας, ἅμα δὲ τοσοῦτων χρημάτων αὐτὸν φάναι κύριον γεγονέναι κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς καιροὺς, πῶς οὐ τῆς μεγίστης ἀλογίας, ἔτι δ' ἀσκεψίας ἔστι σημεῖον; Cleomenes III himself escaped to Egypt by not accepting the Macedonian king in contrast to the Spartan *ethos* that did not allow the flight from Laconia. Although Therykion committed suicide after the battle of Sellasia, for Cleomenes III there was still hope. David 2004, pp. 37-40; Papastylou, Philiou 2006, p. 138.

³⁷ Humble 2004, p. 241.

³⁸ Humble 2002, p. 93; Tigerstedt 1974, p. 55.

³⁹ Christien 2002, p. 184.

Numismatic catalogue



Type Nr. 1
Front side: Cleomenes III
Back side: Artemis *Orthia*

Type Nr. 2
Front side: Eagle
(Ptolemaios III)
Back side: Thunder

Type Nr. 3
Front side: Eagle
Back side: Thunder



Type Nr. 4
Front side: Herakles
Back side: Truncheon between
8 lightning stars



Type Nr. 5
Front side: *Piloi*
Back side: Truncheon

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— 7 —

The Cleomenic war: could Sparta have won?

*Constantinos Koliopoulos**

Keywords: Sparta, Cleomenes, Aratus, Antigonus Doson, counterfactual analysis.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Σπάρτη, Κλεομένης, Άρατος, Αντίγονος Δώσων, ανάλυση γεγονότων που δεν έγιναν.

Abstract:

Although counterfactual analysis has a bad name among many historians, in practice it is resorted to much more often than people realize. The present essay employs counterfactual analysis to gauge whether Sparta had any realistic chance of winning the Cleomenic War. Given the overall situation, both within Sparta and internationally, a Spartan victory seems to have been very unlikely.

Παρότι η ανάλυση των γεγονότων που δεν έγιναν (counterfactual) έχει κακό όνομα μεταξύ πολλών ιστορικών, στην πράξη χρησιμοποιείται πολύ πιο συχνά από ό,τι γίνεται αντιληπτό. Το παρόν άρθρο χρησιμοποιεί ανάλυση γεγονότων που δεν έγιναν, για να συμπεράνει εάν η Σπάρτη είχε κάποια ρεαλιστική πιθανότητα να κερδίσει τον Κλεομενικό Πόλεμο. Δεδομένης της όλης κατάστασης, τόσο στη Σπάρτη όσο και διεθνώς, μια σπαρτιατική νίκη φαίνεται να ήταν πολύ απίθανη.

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Why bother with counterfactuals?

Counterfactual analysis, namely analysis of alternative courses of history that did not actually occur, is often frowned upon by historians and ridiculed as “the ‘might-have-been’ school of thought”¹. On the other hand, an increasingly influential group of historians not only recognize that their lot use counterfactual arguments all the time, albeit without admitting it, but also make it clear that counterfactual analysis is imperative if history is to move beyond mere description and provide meaningful explanation of outcomes as well².

A predilection for counterfactual analysis in history may also have something to do with one’s professional concerns. Policymakers resort to counterfactual thinking as a matter of course; whenever they argue that a certain policy will bring about optimal results, they simultaneously argue, implicitly or explicitly, that alternative policies will bring about suboptimal results³. The same applies to scholars of international politics and strategic studies that draw from the historical record for analytic purposes⁴.

If not handled properly, counterfactual analysis can easily become frivolous or propagandistic. If it is to serve any useful purpose, it must be based on realistic assumptions. For instance, no counterfactual analysis can realistically postulate a Second World War where Nazi Germany would be allied with the Soviet Union, for the simple reason that the conquest of the Soviet Union (at least its European part) and the enslavement of its people were core tenets of Hitler’s worldview; without them, Hitler would not be Hitler.

What follows is an exercise in political and strategic analysis. I am as prone to subconscious biases as anyone but can assure my readers that I do not have any hidden agenda, nor have I set out to make any particular point. The analysis begins with a brief overview of the Cleomenic War (229-222 BC). Then, it highlights the immutable parameters of that conflict, namely those features that must remain unchanged in one’s counterfactual analysis, because otherwise the analysis would become unrealistic. After that it will examine the

¹ Carr 1990, p. 96.

² Tetlock, Parker 2006.

³ Brands, Feaver 2017.

⁴ Koliopoulos 2010a; Koliopoulos 2010b.

turning points of the conflict and assess the feasibility of alternative courses of action.

Brief overview of the Cleomeneic War

When young Cleomenes III acceded to the throne of Sparta's Agiad dynasty circa 235 BC, Sparta was in disarray. The city had been in free fall since the disastrous decade 371-362 BC, which witnessed painful military defeats, the loss of Messenia, the invasion of Laconia itself, and Sparta's relegation to a minor international actor⁵. The population of the full-fledged Spartan citizens (*homoioi*) was steadily declining, dropping to 700 men by mid-3rd cent. BC. A few people controlled land and wealth, while the great majority of the Spartan people were indigent and heavily in debt⁶. To make things worse, the Achaean League kept expanding perilously close to Sparta. In 235 BC the League incorporated the greater part of Arcadia, including Megalopolis and kept pressing for complete control of the Peloponnese.

Shortly before Cleomenes' accession, the king of the Eurypontid dynasty of Sparta Agis IV (ca. 244-241) attempted to reform the Spartan polity. He intended to have debts cancelled and the land redistributed in 4,500 allotments for the *homoioi* and 15,000 allotments for the *perioikoi* (free residents of Laconian towns other than Sparta). Since the *homoioi* were now only 700, their numbers would be augmented by granting allotments and political rights to *hypomeiones* (former *homoioi* who had lost their political rights due to impoverishment), *perioikoi* or even non-Laonians. Finally, the Spartans would once again adopt their traditional austere way of life, and the *agoge* (the traditional Spartan education), the common messes and the other traditional "Lycurgan" institutions would be revived. In practice, Agis did not follow through his reforms; he did cancel debts but stopped short of land redistribution. This meant that he ended up facing the wrath of both the former debtholders (who lost their capital and their profits) and the aspiring landowners and citizens (who saw their hopes dashed). Increasingly isolated, Agis was eventually executed after a travesty of a trial⁷. However, it would not be long before Cleomenes took the mantle of reform – and in far more dynamic a manner.

⁵ Hamilton 1991, pp. 202-251.

⁶ Plu. *Agis* 8; Plu. *Cleom.* 3.10.

⁷ Plu. *Agis*.

Cleomenes would not make the same mistake as Agis; the reforms would begin only after the Agiad king had secured complete political control of Sparta. To do so, Cleomenes exploited, and whenever necessary exacerbated, Sparta's conflict with the Achaean League⁸. For this, there were plenty of pretexts and much genuine concern. Apart from their continuing expansion into Arcadia, in 229 BC the Achaeans scored a major success when the tyrant of Argos voluntarily stepped down and had his city join the Achaean League⁹.

The mastermind behind the expansion of the Achaeans was Aratus of Sicyon¹⁰. Unfortunately for the Achaeans, though Aratus was an extremely capable politician, he was a less than competent general¹¹. On the other hand, Cleomenes was one of the best generals Sparta ever produced¹². Aratus' military incompetence quickly became apparent: in 229 BC at Pallantion Aratus prevented a vastly numerically superior Achaean army from engaging the Spartans in battle¹³. Cleomenes got the point: he should seek great battles. In the next few years Cleomenes exploited ruthlessly his superior generalship, achieving great victories at mount Lycaion (228 BC) and Ladoceia (or Leuctra) (227 BC)¹⁴.

The time had come for Cleomenes to implement his political and social agenda in Sparta. After Ladoceia, he staged a coup, assumed absolute power in the city and thoroughly overhauled the Spartan political institutions¹⁵. Even more important, he cancelled debts and had the land divided into 4,000 allotments. The number of the *homoioi* was augmented with *hypomeiones*, *perioikoi* and "foreigners" of unknown provenance (perhaps mercenaries). The common messes, the *agoge* and the traditional austerity were revived, although with quite a few innovations¹⁶. The news electrified people all over the Peloponnese. There was widespread expectation among the poorer

⁸ Plu. *Cleom.* 3; Shimron 1972, pp. 30-32.

⁹ Plb. 2.46.2., 60; Plu. *Arat.* 30.34-35; Plu. *Cleom.* 3.

¹⁰ Plu. *Arat.*

¹¹ Plb. 4.8; Plu. *Arat.* 10.28-29.36.

¹² Plb. 2.47.

¹³ Plu. *Cleom.* 4.

¹⁴ Plb. 2.51; Plu. *Arat.* 36-37; Plu. *Cleom.* 5-6.

¹⁵ Chrimes 1949, pp. 20, 138-139, 147-148; Michell 1952, pp. 131-134; Shimron 1972, p. 39; Cartledge 1989, pp. 51-52.

¹⁶ Plu. *Cleom.* 2.10-11.13.

classes that Cleomenes would implement debt cancellation and land redistribution in their own states as well¹⁷.

Cleomenes rode the wave of success. In 226 BC his army smashed the Achaeans at Ecatombaion, and in 225 BC he settled some age-old scores by capturing Argos. Sparta had recovered hegemony in the Peloponnese; one after another the Peloponnesian states were entering into alliance with Cleomenes; the Achaean League was disintegrating; Ptolemaic Egypt itself entered the fray, giving financial aid to the resurgent Sparta and its formidable Agiad king¹⁸.

In hindsight, that was the pinnacle of Cleomenes' power and glory. The first clouds appeared when Cleomenes declined to introduce his social reforms at Argos, thus alienating his Peloponnesian supporters, who would later defect in droves¹⁹. Even worse was to come. Aratus had reversed a lifetime's anti-Macedonian policy and had managed to persuade the Achaean League to seek Macedonian help against Sparta, while also handing over to Macedonia the impregnable Acrocorinth fortifications, the key to the Peloponnese; powerful Macedonian forces under king Antigonus Doson arrived at the Peloponnese in 224 BC²⁰. Immediately after that, Argos defected from Sparta²¹. Cleomenes did achieve another brilliant success with the capture and subsequent destruction of Megalopolis in 223 BC, but this was not enough to get him out of his predicament²². In the following year Antigonus and his allies invaded Laconia, and at the battle of Sellasia their numerical advantage and sheer fighting power gave them a shattering victory²³. Sparta was captured by enemy troops for the first time in history, and a Macedonian garrison was installed in the city, remaining there for maybe the next two years²⁴. Cleomenes' territorial gains were reversed, and his social measures were largely cancelled²⁵.

¹⁷ Plu. *Cleom.* 17.20; Plu. *Arat.* 39.

¹⁸ Plb. 2.51; Plu. *Cleom.* 14-19; Plu. *Arat.* 39-40; Cartledge 1989, p. 54.

¹⁹ Plu. *Cleom.* 20-21.

²⁰ Plb. 2.47-49; Plu. *Arat.* 38.42-43; Plu. *Cleom.* 16.

²¹ Plu. *Cleom.* 20-21.

²² Plu. *Cleom.* 23-25.

²³ For the best analysis of the battle of Sellasia, see Michalopoulos 2009, pp. 193-217.

²⁴ Plb. 20.5; Chrimes 1949, p. 22.

²⁵ Plb. 2.70; Plu. *Cleom.* 30; Chrimes 1949, pp. 20-22; Forrest 1968, p. 148; Toynbee 1969, pp. 408-409; Shimron 1972, pp. 55-62; Cartledge 1989, pp. 57-58.

All in all, Cleomenes' venture came to a sad end. Could it have turned out otherwise? It is to this question that we now turn.

Immutable parameters

The Cleomenic war featured some constants, that cannot be altered in a counterfactual analysis. First and foremost, Aratus in particular and the Achaean League in general, were bound to remain implacably hostile to Sparta and Cleomenes. Although several outlying members might defect, the core of the League remained steadfastly opposed to Spartan hegemony. As it turned out, Aratus and the Achaean League would prefer anything to subjection to Sparta – even if a Cleomenic hegemony would take the rather benign form of the restoration of the old Peloponnesian League. To be sure, Plutarch asserts that after his triumph at Ecatombaion Cleomenes formally requested the hegemony of the Achaean League and almost got it; the Achaean assembly would supposedly have acquiesced to the request, if illness had not prevented Cleomenes from attending its meeting and if Aratus had not afterwards intrigued with his usual dexterity²⁶. However, this story sounds overly sensational (one suspects Phylarchus' hand here) and does not square with the dogged perseverance that the League subsequently demonstrated. So, all alternative scenarios of the Cleomenic War have to assume a hostile Achaean League, irrespective of whether Aratus retained the League's leadership.

Another constant in the conflict are the political and military qualities of Cleomenes' main opponents, that is Aratus and Antigonus Dason. Aratus was a military incompetent but was also a fine political mind and a first-class schemer; one cannot postulate an Aratus who is unable to secure a favorable vote in any Achaean assembly or fail to carry out elaborate machinations to ensure that the Achaean League would fight Cleomenes to the end. Antigonus was an even more formidable foe, a military genius at least equal to Cleomenes. Furthermore, Antigonus was determined to crush Sparta's attempt at Peloponnesian hegemony. Judging from the magnanimity he showed after capturing Sparta²⁷, his hostility toward that city was a matter of political calculation rather than sheer hatred; as C. von Clausewitz would put it, Antigonus had plenty of hostile intentions toward Sparta,

²⁶ Plu. *Cleom.* 15-17.20; Plu. *Arat.* 38-39.

²⁷ Plb. 2.70; 5.9; 9.31; 9.36; Plu. *Cleom.* 30.

but virtually no hostile feelings²⁸. These hostile intentions of Antigonus must also be considered unalterable; Macedonia would never remain neutral in the conflict, let alone support Sparta.

Finally, it would be unrealistic to expect that Cleomenes' half-hearted allies outside of the Peloponnese could have been any more effective than was actually the case. For all of Polybius' talk about Cleomenes' formidable alliance with the Aetolian League, all the Aetolians did was prevent the Macedonians' southward movement via Thessaly and Thermopylae. Still, Antigonus had enough naval transports to ferry his troops via the island of Euboea²⁹. Ptolemy III of Egypt could in principle have been a decisively important ally. Ptolemaic Egypt was probably still the most powerful Hellenistic monarchy. It is not far-fetched to argue that a full-scale Egyptian intervention at Cleomenes' side could have completely turned the tables in the war. However, Ptolemy would not commit any troops across the sea. Perhaps he feared a Seleucid attack, or he considered the Peloponnesian conflict as too peripheral an interest for his concern. He restricted himself to providing Cleomenes with financial aid, but this aid was too erratic and in any case was stopped before the battle of Sellasia – possibly even as early as 224 BC³⁰. So, although a massive Egyptian intervention might seem a tempting counterfactual, it is in fact unrealistic.

Turning points

All in all, it seems that the Cleomenic War had two obvious turning points where things could realistically have gone differently. Besides, the final phase of the war (224-222 BC) required careful handling by the Macedonian side; lacking that, Antigonus' victory could have been put in jeopardy.

The obvious first turning point is Cleomenes' failure to cancel debts and redistribute land in Argos, as he was widely expected to do after capturing the city. It is unknown whether Cleomenes himself encouraged this expectation. Still, the general expectation of social reforms had crucially assisted the Spartan cause, whereas

²⁸ Clausewitz 1989, p. 76.

²⁹ Plb. 2.45-46, 2.49, 2.52.

³⁰ Plb. 2.51, 2.63; Plu. *Cleom.* 22; Cartledge 1989, p. 54.

disillusionment set in when it turned out that Cleomenes had no intention of exporting the Spartan reforms³¹.

Should he have done so? It seems that this was easier said than done. To start with, the socioeconomic environment of Sparta was so peculiar (e.g., the existence of helotry or hereditary state serfdom), that the complete transplantation of the Spartan institutions abroad was out of the question³². In fact, this was not much of a problem, since there was never any great appetite among the Greeks for adopting the Spartan social, economic and political system in their cities. All that Cleomenes' supporters outside of Sparta probably cared about was debt cancellation and land redistribution, and there was no intrinsic reason why Cleomenes could not have imposed those reforms abroad. On the other hand, debt cancellation and land redistribution were always bound to provoke enormous reaction, and the Spartan king naturally wanted to avoid additional problems while fighting a war with the Achaeans. Furthermore, such reforms would sooner or later have serious political repercussions within the Peloponnesian cities, chiefly regarding the political rights of the new landowners – an added source of complications.

Cleomenes was a restorer of old Sparta, albeit adapted to the Hellenistic age and the independence of Messene. He was content to retain the old, backward, helotry-based economic system of Sparta and would have been happy to merely resurrect the old Peloponnesian League, with no more talk about social reform in the Peloponnese. On the other hand, it turned out that he gained little by cajoling the conservative Peloponnesian elements and lost much by alienating the poorer classes that were bent on social reform. Cleomenes would probably have had greater prospects of success if had presented himself as a comprehensive social reformer rather than merely as a king of Sparta, however great that king may be. Chaotic and risky as it was, the export of Cleomenes' reforms was probably his only hope of victory in the long run.

The second turning point was the entry of the Macedonian army into the Peloponnese. Despite Plutarch's angry protestations³³, seeking Macedonian help to counterbalance Sparta was the logical thing for

³¹ Forrest 1968, p. 147; Shimron 1972, p. 46.

³² Cartledge 1989, p. 53.

³³ Plu. *Cleom.* 16.

Aratus and the Achaean League to do. In international politics, states do not balance merely the power of other states; they balance the *threatening* power of other states. In other words, they do not necessarily balance the strongest among their potential strategic opponents, but the one considered as the most threatening³⁴. Thus, Macedonia was indeed more powerful than Sparta but, since in Achaean eyes Cleomenes' Sparta looked more threatening, the Achaeans collaborated with Macedonia to balance Sparta. The policy of Great Britain during the two world wars affords a similar example: though the United States was stronger than Germany, the British considered the latter as more threatening. Consequently, instead of trying to balance the relatively greater but "benign" American power, the British preferred to collaborate with it in order to deal with the relatively smaller but much more threatening power of Germany.

As far as Macedonia is concerned, the attack on Sparta was a typical example of preventive war: Cleomenes' Sparta represented a potential threat that had to be eliminated before actually materializing. Though the opportunity for the Macedonian intervention was given by the Achaean call for help³⁵, Macedonia could not remain idle while a potential great power was in the making in the Peloponnese³⁶ and it is quite probable that Antigonus Doson or a successor of his would have anyway found a pretext to intervene. However, in contrast to other scholars³⁷, I do not think that Sparta was doomed to defeat if Macedonia intervened *after* Sparta had assumed control of the whole of the Peloponnese.

Even as it was, Sparta's defeat did not come easily. To start with, there was the issue of how exactly the Macedonian troops would enter the Peloponnese. This turned out to be much less of a problem than it could have been, because even though Corinth had just gone over to Cleomenes, Aratus' men were still holding the Acrocorinth and thus secured Antigonus' line of communications across the Isthmus of Corinth. Even then, Cleomenes fortified a passage near the Isthmus

³⁴ Walt 1987.

³⁵ Plb. 2.47-49; Plu. *Arat.* 38, 42; Plu. *Cleom.* 16.

³⁶ Plb. 9.29.

³⁷ Forrest 1968, p. 147; Shimron 1972, pp. 51-52.

and thwarted Antigonus' further advance, until he was compelled to retreat after receiving intelligence that Argos had defected³⁸.

Plutarch has assigned great importance to Cleomenes' failure to capture the Acrocorinth prior to Antigonus' arrival – the Spartan king had tried unsuccessfully to bribe Aratus into handing over the Acrocorinth to him. Thus, Plutarch clearly implies that a timely capture of those fortifications by Cleomenes would have stopped the Macedonian invasion dead on its tracks and altered the course of the war³⁹. This seems to me an exaggeration, since Antigonus could always make use of his command of the sea, as he had done when bypassing the Aetolian garrisons in Thessaly and Thermopylae via Euboea. The Macedonian king could ferry his invasion force across the eastern Corinthian Gulf and land them on the friendly Sicyonian coast. In fact, he seriously considered doing exactly this when initially blocked by Cleomenes outside Corinth⁴⁰. Admittedly, such a landing operation would require time and effort, but it was always feasible, provided that Cleomenes had not in the meantime captured the whole of the Sicyonian coast. This is why I think that Cleomenes would have had decent defensive chances against Macedonia if he had managed to control the Peloponnese: the Acrocorinth fortification complex would have barred a land invasion, and a Macedonian amphibious force would lack landing sites. In the end, Macedonia might have had to tolerate a Cleomenic Peloponnese, hoping that this new-fangled power would sooner or later find itself at loggerheads with the Aetolians. Be that as it may, Sparta was always a long way from turning this counterfactual into reality.

Even after securely establishing themselves in the Peloponnese, the Macedonians still had to actually win the war. There were still many ways for things to go wrong for the Macedonian-Achaean alliance, thus providing the third and final possible turning point of the war. Antigonus marched into the Peloponnese in 224 BC accompanied with 20,000 infantry and 1,300 cavalry⁴¹. This army, in combination with the Achaean forces, was strong enough to force Cleomenes into the defensive, but as yet insufficient for a knockout blow. This

³⁸ Plb. 2.52-53; Plu. *Cleom.* 19-20; Plu. *Arat.* 44.

³⁹ Plu. *Cleom.* 16, 19; Plu. *Arat.* 38, 40-43.

⁴⁰ Plu. *Cleom.* 20.

⁴¹ Plu. *Arat.* 43.

would have to wait until Cleomenes' Peloponnesian alliance was first dismantled. Cleomenes displayed considerable dexterity in defense, initially resorting to a war of attrition and taking advantage of fortified places in the areas under his control. After that, true to the Spartan military tradition, he achieved strategic surprise by his sudden capture of Megalopolis (223 BC). Finally, during the winter of 223-222 BC he tried unsuccessfully to lure Antigonos into battle under unfavorable conditions: the Peloponnesian allies of Antigonos were scattered at winter quarters all around the Peloponnese, and his Macedonian detachments had returned to Macedonia⁴². A lesser general might not have withstood Cleomenes' pressure and might have been tempted to committing a fatal mistake; but not Antigonos Doson. The Macedonian king carefully nurtured his strength until he finally concentrated his forces and launched a powerful offensive into Laconia in summer 222 BC. Cleomenes did his best, going as far as to allow 6,000 helots to buy their freedom and then enlist 2,000 of them in his army⁴³. Still, in the climactic battle of Sellasia Cleomenes could field only 20,000 men against 28,000 infantry and 1,200 cavalry of Antigonos⁴⁴. In the battle itself, Cleomenes made excellent use of the ground to compensate for his numerical disadvantage, but his army finally succumbed to the numerical superiority and the determined uphill assault of the Macedonians and the Achaeans⁴⁵.

The two-year duel between Cleomenes and Antigonos has many a lesson to teach contemporary strategic analysts. As far as the present essay is concerned, arguably the most important lesson to be drawn is that when two fine strategists are fighting it out to the best of their abilities, the stronger side is bound to win⁴⁶. Once again, there is little room for counterfactuals here.

Conclusion

As the situation played out, it seems that a Spartan victory in the Cleomenic War was very unlikely. The forces arranged against Cleomenes were too great, his allies too feeble or unconcerned, and

⁴² Plb. 2.54-55, 2.64; Plu. *Cleom.* 20-26.

⁴³ Plu. *Cleom.* 23.

⁴⁴ Plb. 2.65.

⁴⁵ Michalopoulos 2009, pp. 193-217.

⁴⁶ Cf. Clausewitz 1989, pp. 194-197.

he probably squandered his best chance by not implementing social reforms at Argos.

However, although with hindsight his venture seems almost futile, Cleomenes scored a victory of sorts. His ignominious demise in Egypt notwithstanding, through the centuries Cleomenes has been far more well-known and popular than his two main adversaries, namely Aratus and Antigonus Doson. In this sense, Cleomenes and his Sparta won the battle for posterity.

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Sellasia: a Re-Examination of the Battle

Miltiades Michalopoulos

Keywords: Sellasia, Polybius, Plutarch, Phylarch, Cleomenes, Antigonus

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Σελλασία, Πολύβιος, Πλούταρχος, Φύλαρχος, Κλεομένης, Αντίγονος

Abstract:

This article aims to analyse the literary sources relating to the battle of Sellasia in order to reconstruct the course of the battle. The main sources about the battle of Sellasia are: Polybius (2.66), Plutarch (*Phil.* 6; *Cleom.* 28) and Phylarch (Plu. *Cleom.* 28). The first two authors agree that Antigonus attacked first, on the other hand Phylarch states that Cleomenes started the battle. He also mentions an outflanking manoeuvre that was performed by Antigonus against Cleomenes' left flank. Due to this discrepancy between the literary testimonies, some scholars have considered Phylarch' version unacceptable, whereas others have attempted to reconcile the three literary sources. Through an accurate analysis of the literary sources and the main modern theories, this paper tries to offer a description of the development of the fight.

Το παρόν άρθρο αποσκοπεί στην ανάλυση των ιστορικών πηγών που αφορούν τη μάχη της Σελλασίας, προκειμένου να ανασυνθέσει την πορεία της μάχης. Οι κυριότερες πηγές σχετικά με τη μάχη της Σελλασίας είναι: Πολύβιος (2.66), Πλούταρχος (*Phil.* 6, *Cleom.* 28) και Φύλαρχος (Plut. *Cleom.* 28). Οι δύο πρώτοι συγγραφείς συμφωνούν ότι ο Αντίγονος

επιτέθηκε πρώτος, από την άλλη πλευρά ο Φύλαρχος αναφέρει ότι ο Κλεομένης ξεκίνησε τη μάχη. Αναφέρει επίσης μια κυκλωτική κίνηση που έκανε ο Αντίγονος στο αριστερό πλευρό του Κλεομένη. Λόγω αυτής της ασυμφωνίας μεταξύ των ιστορικών μαρτυριών, ορισμένοι μελετητές έχουν θεωρήσει την εκδοχή του Φύλαρχου απαράδεκτη, ενώ άλλοι έχουν προσπαθήσει να συμβιβάσουν τις τρεις ιστορικές πηγές. Μέσα από μια ακριβή ανάλυση των ιστορικών πηγών και των κυριότερων σύγχρονων θεωριών, η παρούσα εργασία προσπαθεί να προσφέρει μια περιγραφή της εξέλιξης της μάχης.

This paper aims at offering a description of the battle of Sellasia, taking into account the sources and the relevant theories that have been expressed on the subject. The main sources for the battle of Sellasia are three: Polybius, Plutarch and Phylarch.

Polybius gives us the most extensive and detailed narrative of the battle¹. According to him, the battlefield was carefully chosen by Cleomenes². His army of 20,000 troops was numerically and qualitatively inferior to the nearly 30,000 troops of his opponent³. Therefore, he sought a strong defensive position. He chose the place where the road from Tegea to Sparta, following the river Oenus, passed between two hills, Olympus and Evas⁴. Both hills were fortified with ditch and palisade. Cleomenes deployed his main force of 11,000 men, under his own command, on Olympus hill⁵. In the narrow plain between the two hills Cleomenes deployed his cavalry reinforced with lightly armed mercenaries, 2,000 men in total. Finally, on Evas hill he

¹ Plb. 2.66. J. Kromayer has noted that Polybius' narrative was based on a Megalopolitan source favourable to Philopoemen; Kromayer 1903. Others think that Polybius used also Aratos' Memoirs (Walbank 1957) and even Phylarch (Ferrabino 1918-1919). See Couvenhes 2019, pp. 272-276. See also Africa 1960; Shimron 1964; Africa 1968; Urban 1973, pp. 95-102; Morgan 1981; Green 1990, p. 251; McDonnell-Staff 2008, pp. 23-25.

² Plb. 2.66; Kromayer 1903; Pritchett 1965; Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, p. 57.

³ Plu. *Cleom.* 27.5.

⁴ Oenus (modern name Kelefina) is a tributary of the Eurotas River. After a long dispute between historians, Olympus and Evas hills are now identified with Mt. Provatares and Tourles respectively; Pritchett 1965, pp. 59-70. For the long debate on the subject see Michalopoulos 2016, pp. 156-161.

⁵ This force consisted of 6,000 "Lacedaemonians" who were armed with *sarissai*, according to the standards of the Macedonian phalanx (Plb. 2.69) and of 5,000 light armed troops and mercenaries (Plb. 2.69). Africa 1968; Toynbee 1969; Marasco 1979.

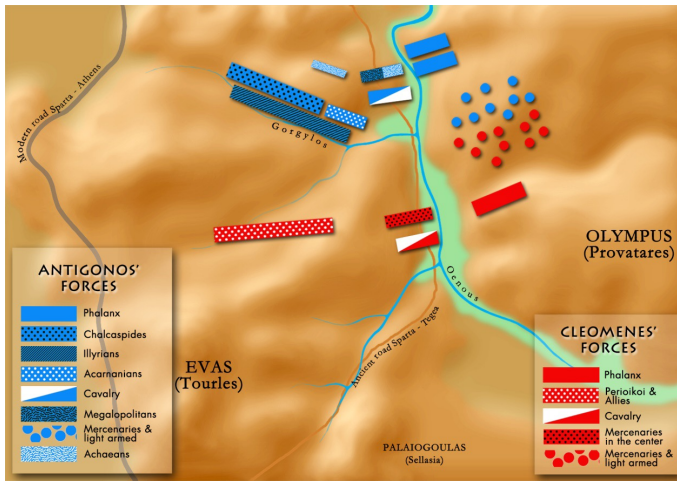


Fig. 1. Battle of Sellasia: initial deployment of the opposing forces, according to Polybius (image by J. Kokkinis).

deployed the rest of his force, the *perioikoi* and his allies, 5,000-6,000 men, under the command of his brother Eucleidas (fig. 1)⁶.

He judged that this force was enough to defend Evas hill, because it was higher and steeper than Olympus. Moreover, at the foot of Evas ran a small stream named Gorgylos, creating a natural ditch. Cleomenes had a very strong defensive position and Polybius remarks that Antigonus spent many days trying to discover a weak point in it. He even tried to lure Cleomenes into abandoning his position, through feigned assaults and flanking moves in different spots. But Cleomenes had deployed scouting parties throughout the area and by performing swift manoeuvres managed to neutralize every encircling attempt on the part of his opponent. In the end Antigonus realized that he had no other option than to give battle on Cleomenes' own terms: he would have to attack from his disadvantageous position at the foot of the hills, and force Cleomenes out of his fortified positions on the high slopes. Polybius gives us a detailed description of Antigonus' deployment. Opposite Olympus hill, Antigonus deployed 10,000 Macedonians of the phalanx under his own command. These were reinforced with 5,000

⁶ Some part of Cleomenes' forces were guarding the other passages that led to Sparta (Plb. 2.65.). Therefore he had less than 20,000 troops at Sellasia. See Daubies 1971, pp. 665-695 and 1975, pp. 386, 387; Toynbee 1969, pp. 389-390; Marasco 1979.

troops and mercenaries⁷. In the center, opposite Cleomenes' cavalry, Antigonos deployed his own cavalry, 1200 cavalrymen together with 1,000 Megalopolitan and 1,000 Achaean infantrymen⁸. His main attack would be unleashed on Evas hill. For this purpose, he would use a combination of heavy and light infantry: the heavy infantry would be the "Bronze Shields" (*Chalcaspides*) Macedonians, a crack unit of the phalanx, capable of fighting in difficult ground and perform complex manoeuvres. The light infantry consisted of the 1,600 Illyrians⁹. Both units were experienced in fighting on steep hills. The combined use of heavy and light infantry was a typical tactic of the Macedonian army when attacking strong defensive positions. The light infantry would rush forward to clear the way and the heavy infantry would follow to secure the conquered ground. The same tactic was used later by Philip V at the battle of Menelaion in order to overthrow the Spartans from the steep hill in 218 BC (Plb. 5.23.1-10). Polybius clearly states that Antigonos stationed the Illyrians and the Macedonian Bronze Shields in alternate *speirai* (units). This deployment gave flexibility to the heavy infantry and at the same time it allowed the Illyrians to sally forward against the enemy, and retreat in the gaps between the phalanx of the "Bronze Shields" (fig. 2).

The same tactics had been used by Pyrrhus against the Romans in Italy¹⁰. There was also one more problem: the crossing of Gorgylos stream that passed at the foot of Evas. The slow moving phalanx of the "Bronze Shields" would lose its cohesion while crossing it, and would be vulnerable to any counterattacks by the defenders of the hill. To overcome this, Antigonos implemented the following stratagem: he concealed the Illyrians in the stream the night before battle. Gorgylos turned from an obstacle to an advantage for Antigonos. By the first

⁷ Plb. 2.69.

⁸ Plb 2.69; Walbank 1988, p.360.

⁹ Plb. 2.69. The Illyrians were also reinforced with 1,000 Acarnanians and with a number of "Cretans", while 2,000 Achaeans were held back in reserve. Since Polybius (2.66) had not mentioned the "Cretans" in his detailed description of Antigonos' force, some scholars suggest that the word "Cretans" is wrong and we should read "Epirots" instead; Walbank 1957, p. 280. The Cretans were famous archers. If they had participated in the attack on Evas they would have probably shoot over the heads of the attackers to cover their advance on the ridge. For a discussion on this subject see Michalopoulos 2016, p. 212, n. 247.

¹⁰ Pyrrhus had copied the roman military tactics of the flexible *manipuli*; Plb. 18.28.10, Walbank 1957, p. 280; Warry 1980, p. 111; Connoly 1981, p. 141.

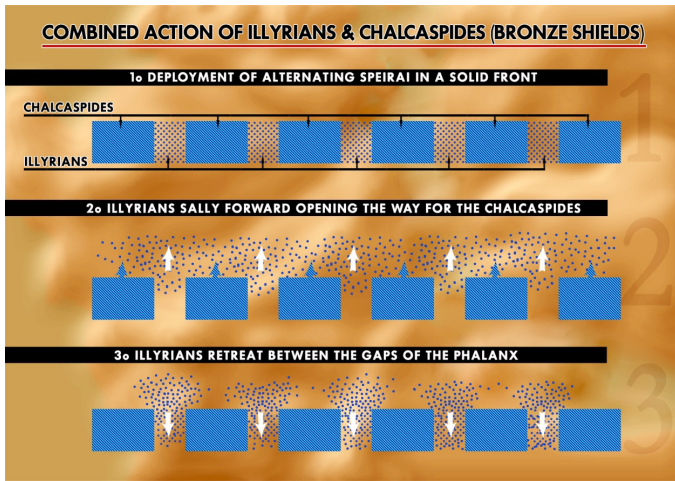


Fig. 2. The function of alternating *speirai* (image by J. Kokkinis).

light the Illyrians launched a surprise-attack and managed to secure an access on the slope of Evas for the following phalanx. However, because of poor coordination, the flanks and the rear of the attackers became exposed. Cleomenes' mercenaries from the center attacked them and started to outflank them. It appeared that the attack on Evas would fail. That moment Philopoemen from Megalopolis on his own initiative, made a vigorous charge with his cavalry against the outflankers, and after a hard fight during which Philopoemen was himself wounded, the outflankers were forced to retreat. «The result was that the Illyrians, the Macedonians, and the rest who were advancing with them, no longer had their attention diverted by an attack upon their rear, and so continued their advance upon the enemy with high spirits and renewed confidence»¹¹ (figg. 3-4).

Polybius claims that at this crucial moment Euclidas made a fatal mistake: he remained stationary on the summit of the hill «with the view of catching the enemy at as great an elevation as possible, that their flight might be all the longer over steep and precipitous ground»¹². What he ought to have done, according to Polybius, was to have rushed down at once upon them; thrown their ranks into disorder; and then retired himself, step by step, to continually higher ground into a safe

¹¹ Plb. 2.67.

¹² Plb. 2.68.

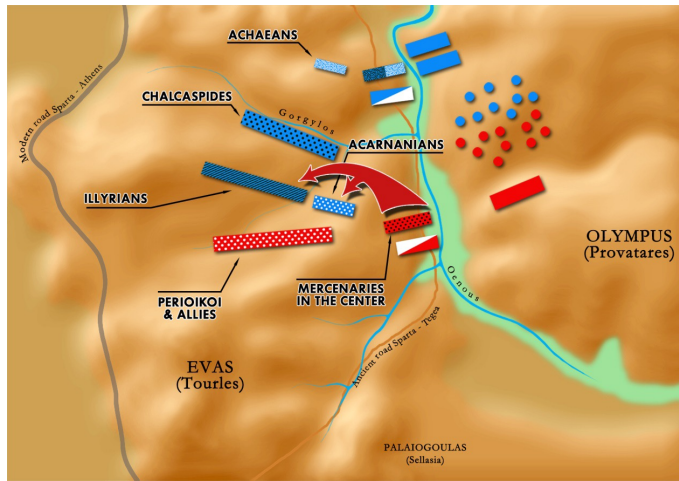


Fig. 3. Cleomenes' mercenaries outflank the Illyrians and the other attackers (image by J. Kokkinis).

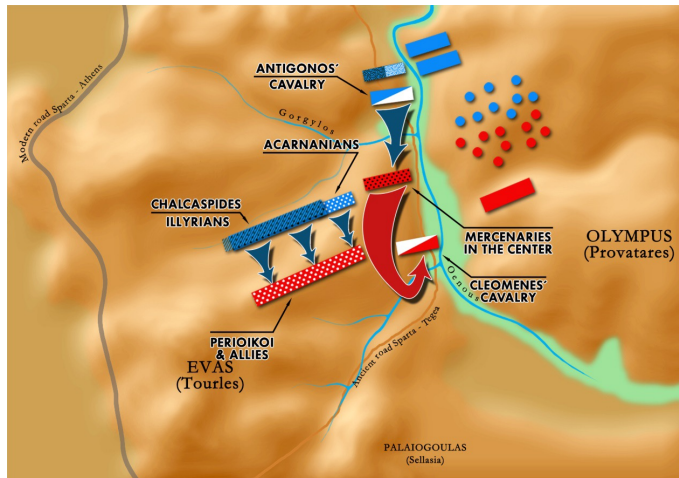


Fig. 4. Philopoemen attacks with the cavalry and forces the mercenaries to retreat. The attack on Evas resumes. The defenders remain stationary on the summit of Evas (image by J. Kokkinis).

position, thus breaking them up and depriving them of the advantages of their peculiar armour and disposition. But Euclidas remained stationary because he was sure he would prevail in close combat. If this was the case, he had obviously underestimated the power of his opponents. Because in the following combat the attackers prevailed and the defenders were thrown from the higher ground by the weight

of the heavy armour and the close order of the “Bronze Shields”. Any ground given by the defenders was immediately occupied by the Illyrians; and soon Eucleidas’ men were obliged to take the lower ground because they had no space for manoeuvring on the top: «The result was not long in arriving: they suffered a repulse, which the difficult and precipitous nature of the ground over which they had to retire turned into a disastrous flight»¹³ (fig. 5). Meanwhile on the other hill, Cleomenes and Antigonus were skirmishing with their light armed troops. None of them decided to engage his phalanx. But when Cleomenes saw the disaster on Evas and that the cavalry in the centre were on the point of retreat, he led his own phalanx in a desperate attack against the phalanx of the enemy. At the beginning, the struggle was indecisive, but in the end the Macedonians prevailed and the Lacedaemonians were destroyed. Thus concludes Polybius’ account (fig. 5).

Plutarch, our second source, refers to the battle briefly in the *Lives of Philopoemen* and *Cleomenes*¹⁴. In both of these, his narration is complementary and in accordance with that of Polybius. In the *Life of Philopoemen*, Plutarch states that it was Eucleidas who ordered the mercenaries from the centre to outflank the advanced Illyrians. He also praises Philopoemen’s initiative to attack the flanking mercenaries and he describes in detail the episode of Philopoemen’s injury. In the *Life of Cleomenes*, Plutarch briefly states that Cleomenes lost because he was overwhelmed by the superior character of his enemies’ armour and the weight of their heavy-armed phalanx¹⁵. He also informs us that of the 6,000 Spartans who fought at Sellasia, all but 200 fell in battle¹⁶.

Our third main source of the battle is Phylarch¹⁷. His version of the battle has not been preserved. It is mentioned (but not adopted) by Plutarch in his *Life of Cleomenes*¹⁸. It has been aptly noted that Phylarch’s

¹³ Plb. 2.68.

¹⁴ Plu. *Phil.* 6; Plu. *Cleom.* 28.

¹⁵ Plu. *Cleom.* 28.1.

¹⁶ Plu. *Cleom.* 28.5. This information comes probably from Phylarch.

¹⁷ As quoted by Plutarch (*Cleom.* 28). The battle is also mentioned by Pausanias (2.9.2-3, 3.10.9, 8.49.4) and Livy (34.28.1) but they provide only scant information.

¹⁸ The fact that in his *Life of Cleomenes* Plutarch chose the description of Phylarch instead of other sources is considered important by some scholars; Couvenhes 2019. Does this mean that Plutarch gives more credence to Phylarch than to the other sources? Hardly likely. Plutarch follows Phylarch simply because he wants to give a flavour of drama to his narrative. His *Life of Cleomenes* (as also his *Life of Agis*)

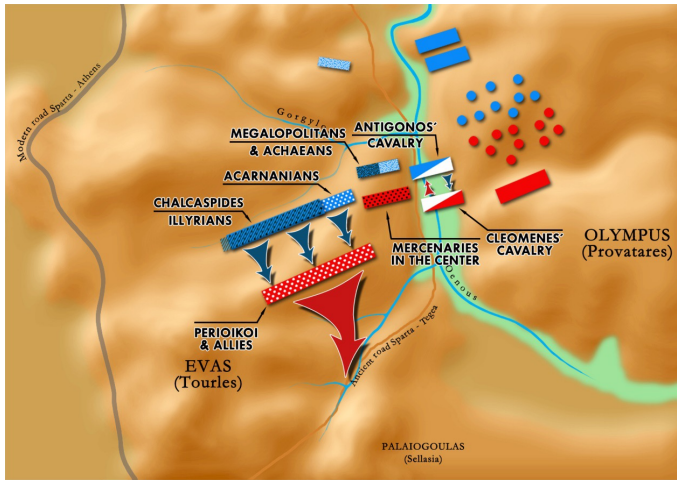


Fig. 5. The defenders on Evas were defeated by the combined attack of the attackers (image by J. Kokkinis).

description of the battle adopts the point of view of the Spartan army, while Polybius' narrative adopts the Macedonian point of view¹⁹. According to Phylarch, Antigonos sent the Illyrians and the Acarnanians in a secret flanking manoeuvre against Cleomenes' left wing on Evas. In order to keep secret this flanking move, Antigonos bribed Damoteles, commander of the Spartan scouting force, the *Krypteia*. Phylarch states that Cleomenes, from his post of observation, could nowhere see the arms of the Illyrians and Acarnanians, and was afraid that Antigonos was using them in an outflanking manoeuvre. He, therefore, called Damoteles «and ordered him to observe and find out how matters stood in the rear and on the flanks of his array. But Damoteles (who had previously been bribed, as we are told, by Antigonos) told him to have no concern about flanks and rear, for all was well there»²⁰. Therefore, Cleomenes charged vigorously upon Antigonos «and by the sweeping onset of his Spartans drove back the phalanx of the Macedonians for about five *stadia*, [approximately

is based on Phylarch, and in many touching passages (before and after the battle) Plutarch has fully copied him. It is not therefore surprising that in the description of the battle, Plutarch prefers the embellished narrative of Phylarch to the plain but accurate description of Polybius.

¹⁹ Couvenhes 2019, pp. 266, 276.

²⁰ Plu. *Cleom.* 28.3.

1,000 meters] and followed after them victoriously»²¹. So, according to Phylarch, Eucleidas and his force became encircled *after* Cleomenes had successfully attacked the Macedonians on Olympus. Phylarch, who was famous for his “tragic” style, informs us that Eucleidas was killed in the battle. He tells us that when Cleomenes was informed of his brother’s death, he exclaimed: «I have lost thee, my dearest brother, I have lost thee, thou noble heart, thou great example to Spartan boys, thou theme for a song to Spartan wives!»²². However, after this touching speech, Phylarch gives us a not-so-heroic picture of Cleomenes: «after Eucleidas and his forces had in this way been cut to pieces, and the enemy, after their victory there, were coming on against the other wing, Cleomenes, seeing that his soldiers were in disorder and no longer had courage to stand their ground, took measures for his own safety. Many of his mercenaries fell, as we are told, and all the Spartans, six thousand in number, except two hundred»²³.

As we can see, there are two contradictory versions. According to the first (that of Polybius and that of Plutarch in the *Life of Philopoemen*), Antigonus opened the battle with a formidable attack on Evas hill. The Illyrians who lead the attack were counterattacked and outflanked by Cleomenes’ light armed mercenaries and they only were saved thanks to Philopoemen’s brilliant attack in the centre. According to the second version (that of Phylarch), it was Cleomenes who attacked first with his phalanx from Olympus hill, against the Macedonians. On the other hand, the Illyrians with the Acarnanians performed a successful outflanking manoeuvre against the defenders on Evas hill. These two contradicting versions have caused many disputes among modern historians. Some of them²⁴ did not hesitate to completely dismiss Phylarch as a non-reliable source, and adopt Polybius’ comprehensive and more sober narration²⁵. Others tried to reconcile the apparently

²¹ Plu. *Cleom.* 28.4.

²² Plu. *Cleom.* 28.4. These are words of an actor in a drama and not of a Spartan Warlord at the moment of crisis.

²³ Plu. *Cleom.* 28.5.

²⁴ Droysen 1953, p. 344; Kromayer 1903, p. 234, n. 2; Park 2010.

²⁵ Note that both Polybius and Plutarch recognize that Phylarch is biased, and a partisan of Cleomenes, and that he doesn’t write history but tragedy: «Surely an historian’s object should not be to amaze his readers by a series of thrilling anecdotes; nor should he aim at producing speeches which might have been delivered, nor study dramatic propriety in details like a writer of tragedy» (Plb. 2.56). See also Plutarch (*Arat.* 38): «For goodwill makes his [Phylarch’s] every mention of Cleomenes ecstatic, and

irreconcilable and have formulated several theories, which rest on facts rather precariously.

According to the first theory, it was the Illyrians alone which outflanked Euclidas' force on Evas. The Acarnanians did not participate in this manoeuvre. Instead, they attacked frontally up Evas hill, and once Euclidas perceived this, he sent his mercenaries to outflank them²⁶. According to this view Philopoemen's attack in the centre was not crucial, but merely rescued the Acarnanians from annihilation (fig. 6).

Yet this reasoning is completely arbitrary and in full contrast with all our sources: Phylarch clearly states that the outflanking manoeuvre was executed by the Illyrians *along with* the Acarnanians. On the other hand, neither Polybius nor Plutarch state that the counterattack of the mercenaries was launched *exclusively* against the Acarnanians (fig. 6).

The second theory, which was first formulated by Jochmus²⁷ and was adopted by Pritchett²⁸, is more solid. It fully accepts Phylarch's version, that the assault on Euclidas' left was executed by the Illyrians *along with* the Acarnanians. Therefore, the counterattack by Euclidas' mercenaries was not directed against the aforementioned units (since according to Phylarch they were secretly performing the outflanking move) but against the Achaeans who were left more exposed during the attack²⁹ (fig. 7).

Both these theories overlook Polybius' statement that the Illyrians and the Macedonian *Chalcaspides* were deployed in alternating units from the start³⁰. But if Antigonus had intended to send the Illyrians without the *Chalcaspides* ("Bronze Shields") to perform an outflanking manoeuvre, then the deployment of these two groups together and in alternating units makes no sense. In order to bypass this difficulty F.W. Walbank formulates another theory: that the outflanking manoeuvre on Evas was executed not only by the 1,600 Illyrians and the 1,000

as if he were pleading in a court of law, he is for ever accusing Aratus in his history, and defending Cleomenes». Cf. Gruen 1972.

²⁶ Errington 1969, pp. 21-23; Piper 1986, p. 71; Walbank 1957, p. 283.

²⁷ Jochmus 1857, pp. 39-40.

²⁸ Pritchett 1965, p. 69.

²⁹ However, none of our sources mentions any involvement of the Achaeans in the course of the battle.

³⁰ Plb. 2.66.5.

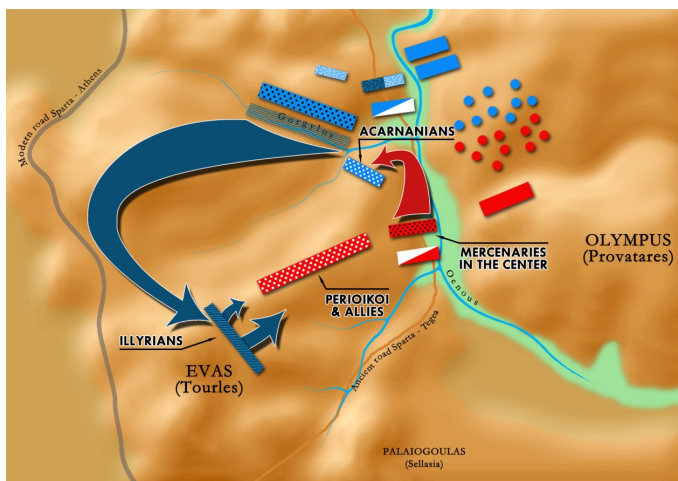


Fig. 6. The first “outflanking” theory: the Illyrians outflank Eucleidas on Evas, while the mercenaries from the center outflank the Acarnanians (image by J. Kokkinis).

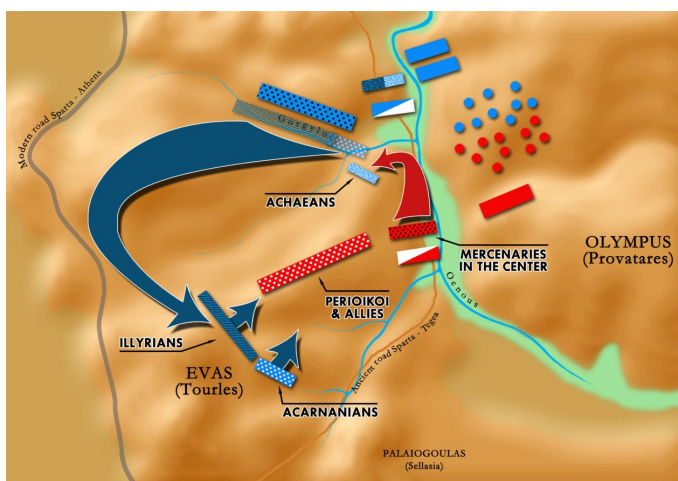


Fig. 7. The second “outflanking” theory: the Illyrians and the Acarnanians outflank Eucleidas on Evas while the mercenaries from the center outflank the Achaeans (image by J. Kokkinis).

Acarnanians but also by the 3,000 *Chalcaspides* with 1,000 Epirotes³¹ in support (fig. 8).

³¹ Walbank 1988, p. 360. See also *supra*, n. 9.

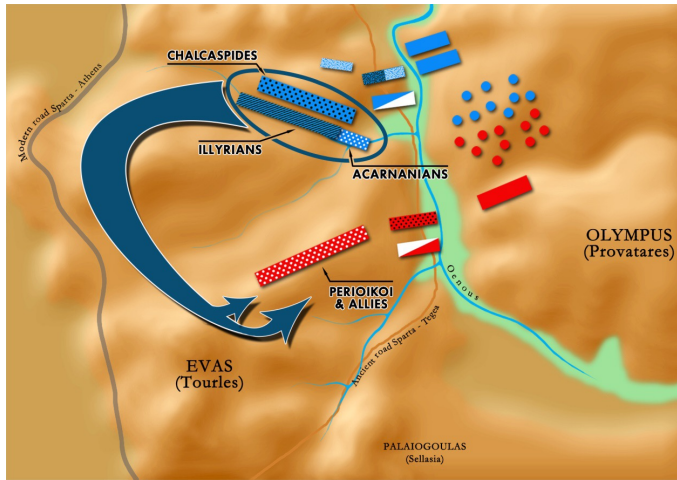


Fig. 8. Third “outflanking” theory: Illyrians, Acarnanians, Chalcaspides and Epirotes (6,600 men) participate in the outflanking move. The mercenaries from the center attacked the outflankers’ rear (image by J. Kokkinis).

According to this assumption 6,600 warriors performed an extremely difficult manoeuvre without been detected by the Spartans³². The question is: how could the Spartans have not noticed the sudden disappearance of 6,600 of their opponents from opposite Evas hill? This is highly unlikely, even if one accepts Phylarch’ theory of Damoteles’ betrayal³³. Strangely, F.W. Walbank, while accepting Phylarch’s outflanking theory, emphatically rejects the betrayal of Damoteles, as a «silly story»³⁴. However, the treachery of Damoteles, “the commander of the *krypteia*”³⁵ should not be ignored. In fact, the encircling manoeuvre of the Illyrians and the Acarnanians was only achieved thanks to Damoteles’ betrayal. Without it the whole theory of the encirclement collapses.

³² Walbank 1988, p. 360.

³³ The outflanking manoeuvre mentioned by Phylarch included only the Illyrians and the Acarnanians, 2,600 men in all. However, their sudden disappearance was noticed by Cleomenes (Plu. *Cleom.* 28). How then, would be possible for a force of 6,600 men to move unnoticed before the eyes of the Spartans.

³⁴ Walbank 1957, p. 285.

³⁵ Phylarch’ mention of this corps, the Spartan secret rural “police”, is very important to be overlooked. Besides, the existence of a Spartan scouting force is implicitly admitted also by Polybius when he remarks that Cleomenes had guards everywhere (2.65). Cf. Mendels 1978.

As for the counterattack of Eucleidas' mercenaries in the centre, F.W. Walbank states that they rushed and «began attacking the Illyrians (and presumably the rest of the Mcedonian right) in the rear»³⁶. However, given the topography of the site, this counterattack of the mercenaries is problematic.

Let us consider the attack on Evas hill. The key for the defense of the hill was Gorgylos. In order to overcome this natural barrier Antigonus concealed 1,600 Illyrians in the streambed of Gorgylos the night before the attack. The bribing of Damoteles is most probably related with the success of this stratagem. In any case, the surprise attack succeeded. The Illyrians stormed up from the streambed and managed to establish themselves at the lower slope of the hill. This was an important step for the seizing of Evas. However, the Illyrians were somehow cut off from the close order infantry³⁷. Eucleidas tried to exploit this weakness and he managed to outflank the Illyrians and the other attacking forces with his lightly armed mercenaries from the centre. He would have certainly intercepted them but for the timely intervention of Philopoemen who dispersed Eucleidas' mercenaries and neutralised his counterattack. Consequently, the Illyrians (with the other light troops) continued their advance on the slope, followed by the slow-moving heavy infantry. The sources admit that the defenders on Evas hill were no match for the heavily armed "Bronze Shields"³⁸. Therefore, they should have avoided close combat and tried to exploit their advantage of holding the higher ground of the hill:

What Eucleidas ought to have done, when he saw the enemy's lines advancing, was to have rushed down at once upon them; thrown their ranks into disorder; and then retired himself, step by step, to continually higher ground into a safe position: for by thus breaking them up and depriving them, to begin with, of the advantages of their peculiar armour and disposition, he would have secured the victory by the superiority of his position. But he did the very opposite of all this, and thereby forfeited the advantages of the ground³⁹.

So, according to Polybius, Eucleidas remained deliberately inactive on the summit of Evas, because he had underestimated his opponents

³⁶ Walbank 1988, p. 360.

³⁷ Plb. 2.66; Plu. *Phil.* 6.

³⁸ Plb. 2.68; Plu. *Cleom.* 28.

³⁹ Plb. 2.68.

and he thought that he could defeat them in close combat. Polybius was a military man and we should respect his authority on military matters. Yet, the hit-and-run tactics that he suggested above, are used mainly by light and agile troops, and need space in order to succeed. The most attackers ascended up the slope the narrower the available space became for the defenders. When the “Bronze Shields” screened by the Illyrians, managed to get an access on the slope of Evas, their further advance up on the hill could not be contained. The coordinated attack of the Illyrians and the “Bronze Shields” proved irresistible. Euclidas’ light troops were held at bay by the experienced Illyrians, and if he attacked them with his heavy troops, they would retreat in the alternating gaps of the phalanx, forming a solid impregnable front. Therefore, Euclidas was practically forced by the superior tactics of his adversaries to remain stationary on the summit⁴⁰, with the hope “of catching the enemy at as great an elevation as possible”. In the ensuing close combat, the enemy’s superiority was crushing and the defenders retreated to the lower ground of the hill and were destroyed. Euclidas fell on the battlefield.

It was only *after* the destruction of the defenders on Evas, that Cleomenes ordered his phalanx of 6,000 men to attack the enemy phalanx of 10,000 Macedonians. It was a desperate decision⁴¹. Cleomenes had no intention of opening the battle with an attack on Antigonus as Phylarch states. He had no reason to attack against the best infantry of the time and in a ratio 6:10 against him. On the contrary, Cleomenes had deployed his own phalanx on the high ground and behind fortifications in order to balance this disadvantage⁴². The Spartans fought bravely but they didn’t manage to defeat the Macedonians. Phylarch is obviously exaggerating when he states that the Spartans drove their opponents back for five *stadia*. If the Macedonian phalanx had been forced to retreat for such a long distance (about 1,000 meters), it would have been crushed and Cleomenes would have won the battle.

⁴⁰ This, of course, cannot be any of the twin summits of Evas (Mt Tourles). The topography of the battlefield suggest that the defenders held the smoother northeast slope of Tourles and not its inaccessible and remote summits. See Michalopoulos 2016, p. 160 n. 19.

⁴¹ This has been acutely remarked by Droysen 1953, p.345.

⁴² Plb. 2.65, 2.69.

Polybius' account is more balanced when he states that:

the Macedonians [were] sometimes slowly giving ground and yielding to the superior courage of the soldiers of Sparta and at another time the Lacedaemonians being forced to give way before the overpowering weight of the Macedonian phalanx. At length Antigonus ordered a charge in close order and in double phalanx; the enormous weight of this peculiar formation proved sufficient to finally dislodge the Lacedaemonians from their strongholds, and they fled in disorder and suffering severely as they went⁴³.

Consequently, in order to understand the collapse on Evas Hill, one does not need any theory of encirclement. If the alleged encirclement by the Illyrians and the Acarnanians was realized, it took place *after* the conflict on the summit had been concluded. It contributed to the destruction of the defenders: as they retreated down the slope they were probably outflanked by the fast-moving Illyrians and Acarnanians. This was overemphasized by Phylarch in order to give a more dramatic tone to his narrative. Antigonus used his superior troops in a battle-proven Macedonian tactic when faced with strong defensive positions on high and difficult ground. It was a well-coordinated attack on a strong defensive position. And although it came very close to failure, the attack succeeded.

⁴³ Plb. 2.69.

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— 9 —

About the distance of 5 stades in the Phylarchaeon-Plutarchaeon version of the battle of Sellasia

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Keywords: Battle of Sellasia, Gorgylus river, road-network, battlefield.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Μάχη της Σελλασίας, ποταμός Γοργύλος, οδικό δίκτυο, πεδίο μάχης.

Abstract:

While commentators often use exclusively on Plb. 2.65-69 to explain the battle of Sellasia, it is possible to relate the information transmitted by Plu. *Cleom.* 28 with the Polybian account. The two authors describe the same battle, but from two different points of view and from three sources. Having already reappraised Damoteles' treachery, I would like to reconsider the distance of 5 *stadia* that Plutarch quotes from Phylarch. This distance is consistent with Polybius' account and allows, in my opinion, not only to better understand the course of the battle, but also to locate the camp of Antigonus' army for several days and to identify the location of the river Gorgylus.

Ενώ οι σχολιαστές συχνά χρησιμοποιούν αποκλειστικά το Plb 2.65-69 για να εξηγήσουν τη μάχη της Sellasia, είναι δυνατόν να συσχετίσουμε τις πληροφορίες που μεταδίδονται από τον Plu. *Cleom.* 28. με την πολυβιακή διήγηση. Οι δύο συγγραφείς περιγράφουν την ίδια μάχη, αλλά από δύο διαφορετικές οπτικές γωνίες και από τρεις πηγές. Έχοντας ήδη

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επανεκτιμήσει την προδοσία του Δαμοτέλη, θα ήθελα να επανεξετάσω την απόσταση των 5 σταδίων που παραθέτει ο Πλούταρχος από τον Φύλαρχο. Η απόσταση αυτή συνάδει με την αφήγηση του Πολύβιου και επιτρέπει, κατά τη γνώμη μου, όχι μόνο να κατανοήσουμε καλύτερα την πορεία της μάχης, αλλά και να εντοπίσουμε το στρατόπεδο του στρατού του Αντιγόνου για αρκετές ημέρες και να προσδιορίσουμε τη θέση του ποταμού Γοργύλου.

In a recent paper, I reappraised Damoteles treachery in the Plutarchean account of the defeat of Cleomenes III at Sellasia¹. In a volume devoted to Plutarch's real quality as a military historian², and not as a simple compiler³, I found it interesting to show how Plutarch, who had several sources at his disposal, had given a coherent account of the battle of Sellasia, while at the same time relying on and completing Polybius' description, which was certainly the authoritative one of his time. Polybius, in fact, meticulously recounts the course of the battle in book 2.65-69, of his *Histories*. In five detailed paragraphs, "Colonel Polybius"⁴, a native of Megalopolis and therefore a good observer of Spartan affairs, gives an apparently exhaustive description of the battle. Plutarch discusses the battle in two of his *Lives*: in *Cleom.* 27-28, where the Spartan king is defeated by Macedonian troops, forcing him into exile; and in *Phil.* 6, where the young Megalopolitan officer distinguishes himself in the ranks of the allied forces led by Antigonos Doson. Let us note that Plutarch's *Life of Aratus* mentions the battle only in two lines, in 46.1, which suggest that the Sicyonian did not play any role that day⁵, even if he could have witnessed the battle in the entourage of the Macedonian king⁶.

¹ Couvenhes 2019.

² Traina, Gazzano, Couvenhes 2019.

³ I depart from the very literary conception of Almogor 2018, 2020 which considers things from the point of view of intertextuality.

⁴ The origin of the words is Momigliano 1975, p. 27.

⁵ Following Walbank 1933, p. 110, scholars have concluded that Aratus was not *strategos* of the Achaean *koinon* in the year the battle took place.

⁶ This is the hypothesis of Ferrabino 1918-1919, p. 756, n. 1 that we follow: cf. *infra*, n. 9.

The Polybian account constitutes the main narrative of the events retained by the modern works⁷. Paraphrasing Polybius, we can say that, expecting an attack from Antigonos and the Achaeans, Cleomenes fortified the other passes leading into Laconia and came himself, with the greater part of his army, twenty thousand strong, to occupy the plain of Sellasia as well as the two hills which border it, named Evas and Olympus. The road from Tegea to Sparta runs along the river Oenus at this point. Cleomenes established his camp near the settlement of Sellasia. On the two heights located on both sides of Oenus, and on which he had drawn a ditch and an entrenchment, Cleomenes posted his army; he placed his cavalry and light-armed mercenary troops in the centre, at the crossing of the road and the river. His brother, Eucleidas, leading *Perioikoi* and the Allied, was ordered to defend Evas; he positioned himself on Olympus leading Lacedemonians and mercenaries. Antigonos approached him with an army of about 30,000 men. But seeing the cleverness with which his adversary had known how to take advantage of the field, he preferred to temporize and set up camp a short distance behind the river Gorgylus. Nevertheless, after a few days of waiting, it was decided, on both sides, to give battle. Antigonos distributed his army symmetrically to that of Cleomenes. On his right wing, facing the troops of Eucleidas, he placed the Macedonian *chalkaspides* with the Illyrians, drawn up in alternate units, with, behind, Acarnanians and Cretans, then behind again Achaeans; the cavalry and light-armed troops faced their Lacedemonian counterparts in the plain; and he himself stood with the Macedonian phalanx on the left wing, facing the phalanx of Cleomenes, positioned on Olympus. The battle began when the signals were given on the Macedonian side. The Macedonians and Illyrians, of Antigonos' right wing, began the fight with an attack on Mount Evas; but as they climbed the hill, they were themselves attacked from behind and on their flanks, from the central position in the plain, by the light-armed troops of Cleomenes. They were on the verge being defeated when Philopoemen, who commanded the cavalry of the Megalopolitans, who was still young and without fame, took the initiative alone to charge the Lacedemonian cavalry and

⁷ The bibliography on the Battle of Sellasia is extensive. We can note to: Walbank 1957; Le Bohec 1993; Apostolides, Apostolides, Apostolides 2006-2011; Michalopoulos 2016; Michalopoulos 2019. On the site location of the battle: Pikoulas 2012, pp. 606-609.

obliged, by this sudden attack, the Lacedaemonian light-armed troops to descend from the hill to support their horsemen, whose defeat they could not however prevent. The Illyrians and the Macedonians, being thus free, continued their attack against Eucleidas, whom they put to flight, by making themselves controls of the position on Evas. Moreover, the fight between the two kings on Mount Olympus had also begun. At first there was a rough but balanced fight between the light-armed troops of each side, under the eyes of the two kings and the two armies. Cleomenes, seeing the rout of his brother's soldiers, and the difficulties of his cavalry, broke down the entrenchment to launch his phalanx armed in the Macedonian style, i.e. with sarissa ; the two light-armed troops cleared the ground; Cleomenes' phalanx pushed back Antigonos' one, before the latter, taking advantage of the peculiar formation of the double phalanx, reversed the movement and pushed Cleomenes' phalanx back to the camp from which it had started. Defeated, Cleomenes fled. Antigonos took possession of the field.

Polybius relates things from a Macedonian point of view. He had at his disposal not only a Megalopolitan source that insisted on Philopoemen's attitude⁸, but also the Aratus' *Memoirs*⁹, from which one can think that he drew the numbers of Doso's army. Moreover, it is possible, but not certain, that Polybius travelled to Sellasia, because according to him, a true military historian must have a true knowledge of the battlefield¹⁰. However, Polybius also had the work of Phylarch on his desk, which he uses in his *Histories*, but which he criticises for being theatrical or melodramatic¹¹. It has been recognised

⁸ This source would have enabled Polybius (cf. 10.21.6) to write a *Life of Philopoemen*; cf. Walbank 1967, p. 221; Pédech 1951.

⁹ Ferrabino 1918-1919 considers that the description is based on three sources: the Aratus' *Memoirs*, the Megalopolitan source and Phylarch; contrary to Kromayer 1903, p. 269, followed by Walbank 1957, p. 272, who considers only two sources: the Megalopolitan source and Phylarch. The Ferrabino's arguments seem to me on this point more relevant than that of Kromayer who considers that in his *Memoirs*, the politician did not have to specify an event in which he did not appear; yet Aratus was certainly not very far from Antigonos Doso on this occasion, even if he was not *strategos* of the Achaean *koinon* that year. Moreover Plb. 2.40.4 says that he is basing himself on the Aratus' *Memoirs* throughout his chapter 2. Finally, it seems to me that the very detailed numbers can only come from a source close to the king, which was not the case with Philopoemen, who could be the Megalopolitan source.

¹⁰ Plb. 12.25.f. See also Pédech 1964, p. 358.

¹¹ Most recently, Pédech 1989.

that it is precisely Phylarch that Plutarch uses most in his *Lives of Agis and Cleomenes*, because this author gives the Lacedaemonian point of view¹². Ferrabino¹³ also thinks that Polybius uses Phylarch in the account of the battle of Sellasia, but only partially, because he prefers the point of view of the winner (Doston) and probably also wants to emphasise the role of the Achaeans through that of his compatriot Philopoemen. Ferrabino attributes to this partial use of Phylarch by Polybius some of the contradictions found in Polybius' own account.

For the account of the battle of Sellasia, Plutarch thus bases himself on Polybius, which he was able to compare with the Aratus' *Memoirs*, which he also had in his possession. Plutarch had Polybius' *Histories* as well as Polybius' *Life of Philopoemen*, which served as the basis for his own *Life of Philopoemen*. On the other hand, as if to rectify the account of the battle, Plutarch finds in Phylarch several details that Polybius «neglected to retain or contributed to omitting, for the latter was not unaware of Phylarch's account»¹⁴. These details are three in number, in fact, and appear in the following passage from Plutarch:

28. 2. Phylarch, however, says that there was treachery also, and that this was chiefly what ruined Cleomenes. 3. For Antigonus ordered his Illyrians and Acarnanians to go round by a secret way and envelope the other wing, which Eucleidas, the brother of Cleomenes, commanded, and then led out the rest of his forces to battle ; and when Cleomenes, from his post of observation, could nowhere see the arms of the Illyrians and Acarnanians, he was afraid that Antigonus was using them for some such purpose. 4. He therefore called Damoteles, the commander of the secret service contingent, and ordered him to observe and find out how matters stood in the rear and on the flanks of his array. 5. But Damoteles (who had previously been bribed, as we are told, by Antigonus) told him to have no concern about flanks and rear, for all was well there, but to give his attention to those who assailed him in front, and repulse them. So Cleomenes, putting faith in what he was told, advanced upon Antigonus, and by the sweeping onset of his Spartans drove back the phalanx of the Macedonians for about five furlongs (stades), and followed after them victoriously. (trad. B. Perrin, Loeb)

¹² Gabba 1957; Africa 1961. Whereas Plutarch prefers the Aratus' *Memoirs* in his *Life of Aratus*.

¹³ Ferrabino 1918-1919.

¹⁴ Couvenhes 2019, p. 175.

In this paragraph, Plutarch adopts Cleomenes' point of view and emphasizes only three pieces of information:

- the Damoteles treachery, which is the most developed detail
- the victorious march of the Lacedaemonian phalanx, which initially pushed the phalanx of Antigonos into a distance of about 5 stades, or 900 metres in length, with a stade of about 180 metres¹⁵
- the fact that Cleomenes followed or accompanied his phalanx¹⁶.

In the previous article, I insisted on the episode of the treachery of Damoteles (*Cleom.* 28.2-5). It is indeed the first piece of information that we find in Phylarch and that Polybius does not include. At this date, Damoteles was at the head of an elite troop in charge of the territorial patrolling, as it also existed in Athens in the Hellenistic period¹⁷. The treachery, which could be considered as an easy excuse given by Phylarch to clear the final failure of his hero, must be considered seriously¹⁸. This is not what a number of commentators have done since the 19th cent., who often mention the treachery only to dismiss it immediately because it does not fit into Polybius' account of the battle. From a political point of view, the treachery is plausible: it reflects an atmosphere of *stasis* within a civic body, admittedly largely shaped by Cleomenes, but some of whose representatives had been able to maintain contact with the 80 exiles of 227, whose lands had however not been confiscated¹⁹. This atmosphere of *stasis* already existed in the time of Agis IV²⁰; it was accentuated after Cleomenes' exile in the aftermath of the battle²¹.

Above all, I had shown that this piece of information from Plutarch does not contradict Polybius' account, but in a way completes it. It appears to me today, more firmly than before, that Damoteles omitted to specify to his king that Macedonian and Illyrian troops were standing

¹⁵ Hultsch 1882, p. 54: the stade is equivalent to 185 metres (Attic system), with a foot of 0.308 m. Lammert 1920, col. 2515: the stade is equivalent to 177 metres (Macedonian system) with a cubit of 0.4435 m. We have approximated to 180 metres, noting, with Juhel 2017, p. 21, n. 32, that «ancient metrology remains a domain of investigation where the answers seem uncertain and especially for the Attic metrology of Alexander's time».

¹⁶ These are the two meanings of ἠκολούθησεν in Plu. *Cleom.* 28.5.

¹⁷ Couvenhes 2014.

¹⁸ Couvenhes 2019.

¹⁹ Plu. *Cleom.* 11.2.

²⁰ E.g. the exile of Leonidas II: Plu. *Agis* 3.5.

²¹ Couvenhes 2022.

in the bed of the Gorgylus, at the foot of Evas, as Polybius points out (2.66.10). Plutarch is not trying to give an alternative version of the battle but to complete the account of Polybius who omitted to give this information which he certainly had since he also used Phylarch as a source.

What about the other two pieces of information: Antigonus' phalanx was forced to step backward by almost a kilometre due to the pressure of Cleomenes who follows his phalanx in this movement? Most commentators have dismissed this both as unrealistic or exaggerated²². A commentator has argued that the Phylarchaen version seeks only to exalt the bravery of the Spartans and in particular their king: this would be an exaggeration to portray the psychology of Cleomenes²³. The same thought that a 5 stades march backward would have completely disorganized the phalanx: his main argument is that a phalanx was not very mobile²⁴, which is doubtful. Furthermore, no commentator has found such a distance on the top of Olympus. On the contrary, J. Kromayer estimated that, if that had happened, the Macedonian phalanx would have fallen into a ravine²⁵. It is true that J. Kromayer's reconstruction of the battle has long been authoritative. However, this reconstruction has been revised for Evas; it should certainly be revised for Olympus as well.

Not only Plutarch, but also Polybius insists on the mobility of the two Macedonian phalanxes, that of Antigonus and that of Cleomenes. Polybius also indicates that Antigonus split his phalanx in depth to adapt it to the ground: he wanted the front of his phalanx to be smaller. It was this depth that eventually allowed the Macedonians to impose a greater weight and to regain ground until the Lacedaemonian phalanx was thrown back from the entrenchments from which it had started at the very beginning, according to Polybius' account (2.69.9). Polybius also points out that at first Cleomenes' phalanx forced Antigonus' phalanx to move backwards. Polybius uses *epi polu* (2.69.8), which indicates the idea of a long distance, an expression he has already used twice for the engagement on Evas (2.68.7 and 10).

²² E.g. Ferrabino 1918-1919, p. 811; Walbank 1957, p. 286; Morgan 1981, p. 328, n. 14; Michalopoulos 2016, p. 72, n. 266. Michalopoulos 2019, p. 183, n. 271.

²³ Marasco 1981, p. 580. Plutarch theorised this psychological approach to characters: *Plu. Nic.* 1.5; *Alex.* 1.2.

²⁴ Marasco 1981, pp. 580-581 based on Plb. 18.31.

²⁵ Kromayer 1903, p. 244, n. 2.

These two pieces of information about the backward march of Antigonos' phalanx and the charge led by Cleomenes are derived from Phylarch and reemphasized by Plutarch. It completes Polybius' description without modifying that description itself. In a way, Plutarch gives voice to Polybius' silences. Presumably, the two authors used two common sources, the Aratus' *Memoirs* and Phylarch, which depict a similar reality, but from two different points of view, indeed they are not laying the emphasise on the same details.

If Plutarch's description of the battle did not attract much particular interest, Polybius' description of the battle was the subject of considerable controversy in the early nineteenth century²⁶. In 1965, W.K. Pritchett demonstrated that most of the difficulties are not found in Polybius' text, but in its interpretation by modern historians²⁷. He suggested that the battlefield be moved about a kilometre north of J. Kromayer's location²⁸, a move that is removing many of the objections raised by earlier authors²⁹. Thus, Pritchett showed that the Palaioioula did not correspond to Evas, as Kromayer thought, but was the fortified *polis* of Sellasia; that the remains of the entrenchments identified by Jochmus on the foothills of Tourles, where Eucleidas and his troops were located, could still be seen at that date; that the Gorgylus must have corresponded to the intermittent watercourse situated to the north of the remains of the Khan of Dagla, aligned with a small gully situated on the opposite hill, the Provotares. To the south of this gully is the Kokkina (below the Melissi)³⁰ (fig. 1), also called Rhankazovouni (fig. 2), on which J. Kromayer but also W.K. Pritchett placed Cleomenes' troops³¹.

However, two difficulties remain. The first difficulty is the location of Antigonos' camp, protected by the Gorgylus, which should be located in the north of the plain. This difficulty alone seems to me not compatible with the current identification of the Gorgylos. How to imagine that enemies could have faced each other for several days at

²⁶ See Michalopoulos 2016, pp. 157-164 for "the modern battle of Sellasia".

²⁷ Pritchett 1965, confirmed by Pritchett 1984.

²⁸ Kromayer 1903, Karte 5.

²⁹ To a large extent, W.K. Pritchett's locations for the hill called Evas and the Gorgylus were anticipated by Ross 1841, pp. 178-186 and Jochmus 1857, pp. 34-41.

³⁰ Kromayer 1910, Pl. XIII; Pritchett 1965, p. 65; Pritchett 1984, p. 254.

³¹ Walbank 1957, p. 256, Map. 5 and Hammond, Walbank 1984, p. 358, fig. 11 are depended on Kromayer and Pritchett for their approach to fighting on the Olympus.

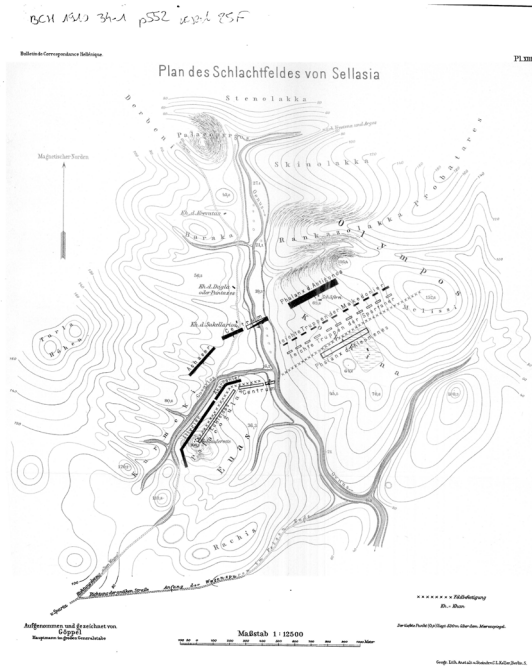


Fig. 1. The Battle of Sellasia according to Kromayer.
Map: Kromayer 1910, Pl. XIII.

such small distance, and troops hidden in this Gorgylus, so close to the Lacedemonian entrenchments. The second difficulty is that of the two phalanxes fighting on the Olympus, preceded by the two light-armed infantry battle. Several solutions were proposed in the past³². J.D. Morgan thought to locate the place of the phalanxes battle in a small plain of altitude in the North of Melissi, on Provotares³³. With reason, W.K. Pritchett found that unnecessarily far from the plain³⁴. Since then, the most updated reconstructions have adapted the reconstruction proposed by Pritchett, without however removing these difficulties. Thus, the reconstitutions of N. Depastas, M. Michalopoulos or

³² Roloff 1903; Lammert 1920; Morgan 1981.

³³ Morgan 1981, p. 330.

³⁴ Pritchett 1984, p. 254.

**Legend :**

wcr = Ancient Greek wheeled-cart roads (traces of wheel-ruts)

wcr ? = Hypothetical Ancient Greek wheeled-cart roads

k = Turkish paved road or kalderimi (traces)

k ? = Hypothetical Turkish paved road or kalderimi

Tf = Turkish fort (see fig. 1: *Palaiokastro*)

P = Palaiogoulas (*Sellasia*)

M = War memorial erected to the 118 Spartiatai who were killed on November 26, 1943

A = Antigonos' camp

E = Euclidas' camp

C = Cleomenes' camp (see fig. 1: *Kokkina*)

G1 = Gorgylos river, according to Pritchett 1965

G2 = Probable Gorgylos river

Fig. 2. Access roads to the plain of Sellasia and locations of the camps of Antigonos, Euclidas and Cleomenes.

Map: Spárti - 1:50000 – December 1992.

the Apostolides brothers, whose positions of the armies on their maps derive from Pritchett³⁵.

How can the Phylarchéan(-Plutarchean) reference of the 5 stades be helpful to the overall reconstruction of the battle? It is possible that the distance of 5 stades does not correspond to the distance that each of the two phalanges recedes in one direction and then in the other. During the fighting, it is difficult to see an observer taking an accurate measurement. On the contrary, I suggest that these 5 stades correspond to the distance from the entrance to the plain of Sellasia to the entrenchment of Cleomenes' wing. It is over this distance that, at one point in the battle, the Lacedemonians almost succeeded in pushing the Macedonians back and thus almost disorganising them.

³⁵ Apostolides 2011, pp. 781-783; Michalopoulos 2016, pp. 67, 70-71; Michalopoulos 2019, pp. 175-179. The map of Depastas 2004, p. 120 is similar to those by Jochmus 1857.

This tactic failed for several reasons: firstly, the Macedonians were experienced in disciplined manoeuvring, probably better than the Lacedaemonians themselves, who were animated by ardour (*empsychia*); secondly, the pushing of the phalanx of Antigonos, due to the double phalanx, prevailed once the (slight) slope had ceased to work in favour of the Lacedaemonian phalanx; Finally, the troops of Eucleidas or the Lacedaemonian troops in the centre were unable to help Cleomenes' phalanx, which finally suffered heavy losses.

In the 19th cent., the first travellers to have identified this plain as the site of the ancient battle emphasised its narrow dimensions, both in width and in depth³⁶. Using on line topographic tools³⁷, we can see that there are about 1,800 metres of depth between the north of the plain and the top of the Palaigoulas, and 100 to 300 metres of width, as the plain extends from north to south. However, it should be remembered that today's aerial or satellite images do not perfectly reflect the ancient reality, since the relief has evolved. The geomorphology is now not identical to that of 222: on the one hand, the river Oenus may have changed its flow, and on the other hand, as Pritchett pointed out³⁸, during the building of the Sparta-Vresthena road, a great quantity of gravel and dirt was removed from the bed of the Kelefina-Oenus, which explains why the junction between the left bank of the river and the Provotares is more abrupt today than it was in ancient times. Moreover, because of the olive trees that are now planted on the site, the site on the right bank has been deeply altered. Furthermore, the perioikic settlement of Sellasia was larger than the summit of the Paloiogoulas alone³⁹.

It is also necessary to better define the route followed by Antigonos' army to fight on the plain. What is this entrance gate or pass (*eisbolon*: 2.65.7, cf. 2.65.6) or access road (*eisodos*: 2.65.7) that Polybius mentions

³⁶ Ross 1836, p. 14: «une petite plaine de dix minutes de large un quart de lieue de long»; Ross 1841, p. 181: «einer kleinen Ebene von zehn Minuten Breite und einer Viertelstunde Länge», which corresponds to approximately 300 metres by 1 kilometre.

³⁷ More than Google Earth, the website of the Hellenic Cadastre can be consulted with profit (Ελληνικό Κτηματολόγιο): <http://gis.ktimanet.gr/wms/ktbasemap/default.aspx>; see fig. 3.

³⁸ Pritchett 1984, p. 254, n. 18 who indicates that any future reconstruction of the battle should be based on the early photographs of Kromayer 1903 and especially Sotiriadis 1910 and Sotiriadis 1911.

³⁹ Pritchett 1984, p. 253: «Sellasia was a prosperous town of considerable size».

several times in connection with the site? The road runs along the Oenus. This is contradictory to the road as mentioned by early 19th cent. travelers who used the Turkish Kalderimi from the north-west and not the road that follows the river from the north⁴⁰. As early as A. Jochmus and L. Ross, the temptation was great to have Antigonos' army break out along this Kalderimi and thus to deploy the Macedonian army on its positions to the north of the plain, separated nevertheless from the positions of Cleomenes' army by the Gorgylus and by the ditches and entrenchments. But then, everything would have been played out in a handkerchief.

Contrary to the hypothesis of G. Pikoulas⁴¹, my own survey, together with J. Christien, a precious expert of the road network of Laconia, or C.G. Byris⁴², M. and N. Mylonas, have led me to believe in another configuration of the roads in this area. I suggest that from the War memorial erected to the 118 *Spartiatas* who were killed on November 26, 1943⁴³, where traces of wheel-ruts are easily observable, wheeled-cart roads went directly down to the Oenus, probably through the valley of the Potamos Triôn Tessarakôn (fig. 2)⁴⁴.

Antigonos army was forced to take this route, along the river, before the entrance in the plain of Sellasia. Horses and soldiers, as well as the logistics of the Macedonian army, were able to drink from the river, having camped on the banks of the river for several days before the battle. A convenient place to establish the Macedonian camp could have been the hill of Stenolakka, which is bordered on the east by the meanders of the Oenus and which is covered on the south by a deep gorge, which currently forms a cliff of 10 to 15 meters high in its eastern

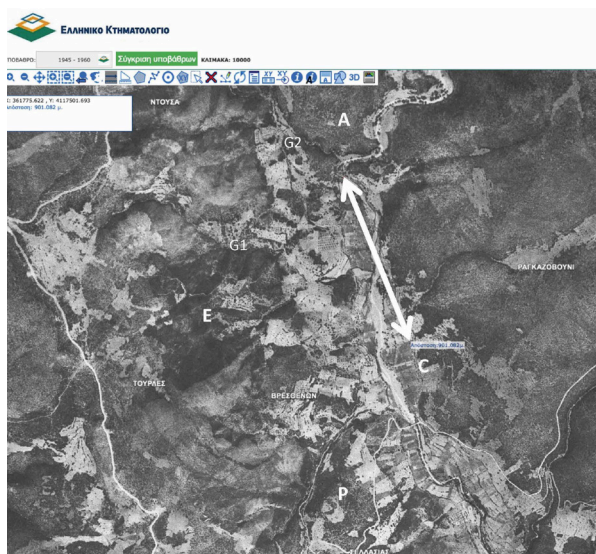
⁴⁰ Boblaye, Leake, Ross, Jochmus, etc... all of them mentioned the Khan of Krevata, on the side of the road.

⁴¹ Pikoulas 2012, pp. 67-70 (4a), pp. 71-73 (4β).

⁴² He is one of the guides that led Pikoulas 2012, p. 71, to this site.

⁴³ Located on the modern Sparta-Tripoli Road; cf. Pritchett 1980, pp. 169-170; Pikoulas 2012, pp. 71-73, 4β.

⁴⁴ I think that part of the southern route of Pikoulas 2012, pp. 67-70, 4a should not be considered ancient Greek. The Greek scholar takes up the layout of the Kalderimi, in my opinion. Kromayer 1902, p. 221 mentioned that «Immer noch 3-4 Kilometer, die Strasse und Fluss zusammen gelaufen sein könnten», i.e., north of the plain of Sellasia, «the road and the river could have converged another 3-4 kilometres». See Pritchett 1980, pp. 155-157: «Routes through river gorges were presumably almost impassable in times of heavy winter rains; and this condition helps account for the fact that warfare in the classical and Hellenistic periods was waged in the dry season».

**Legend :**

- ↔ = Distance of 5 stades, or about 900 metres
- A = Antigonus' camp (see fig. 2: *Stenolakka*)
- E = Eucleidas' camp (see fig. 1: *Kokkina*; fig 2: *Rhankazovouni*)
- C = Cleomenes' camp (see fig. 1: *Kokkina*; fig 2: *Rhankazovouni*)
- G1 = Gorgylus river, according to Pritchett 1965
- G2 = Probable Gorgylus river

Fig. 3. The 5 stades, or about 900 metres, distance from the entrance of the pass to the position of Cleomenes' phalanx behind its entrenchments

Map: Hellenic Cadastre/Ελληνικό Κτηματολόγιο – 1945-1960: <http://gis.ktimanet.gr/wms/ktbasemap/default.aspx>

part. At the top of this gorge, already on the plain, are the remains of a small fort which W.K. Pritchett considered to be a Turkish fort⁴⁵, which I think must have controlled the Kalderimi which runs west. I suggest that the Gorgylus should be identified with this gorge (fig. 2), whose name, Gorgylus, recalls the idea of an intermittent stream flowing over rocks.

Being established on the easily defended *Stenolakka* hill, Antigonus' troops had access to the *Oenus* river to the east. From there, it is difficult to access the *Provotares* unless one attempts a very steep climb. However, it is possible to enter the plain, either through the pass where the Ancient Greek road comes from, along the *Oenus*, either by going up the *Gorgylus* gorge, which then joins the path that travelers used in the 19th cent. and which was the old Turkish *Kalderimi*. It is possible that the effect of *Damoteles'* treachery was to see the troops who stormed the *Tourles*, by this bypass and with the consequences that we know. Moreover, the pass was secured by Antigonus' cavalry

⁴⁵ Pritchett 1965, p. 62, n. 13.

to allow the light troops and then the phalanx to penetrate the plain to face the troops of the entrenched camp of Olympus.

Polybius underlines that Antigonos split his phalanx in depth because of the «narrowness of the space» (2.66.9). The phalanx that Antigonos opposed to Cleomenes on the Olympus had to present a reduced front. For that, the phalanx had to have 32 ranks instead of the usual 16⁴⁶. This makes about 312 men in front⁴⁷, which corresponds, when the *phalangites* adopt the fighting position, called *πύκνωσις*, a width of 312 x 0.90 metres (2 cubits) = 280 metres. This width can be reduced to half as much, in the defensive position, called *συνασπισμός*, i.e. 140 metres. But this position corresponds to a phalanx receiving the enemy's assault, the *sarissas* most certainly being lowered, but motionless. Yet Polybius indicates that if the two phalanxes have the *sarissas* lowered, they are constantly in movement. That let's suppose a front included between 140 and 280 meters, if the front is of 312 men on the Macedonian side; a little broader on the Lacedaemonian side which was to fight on 16 ranks⁴⁸. The "narrowness of the space" could therefore correspond to the space between the river Oenus and the first slopes of Olympus, up to the camp of Cleomenes' wing (fig. 3).

Therefore, 5 stades, or about 900 metres, could be the distance from the entrance of the pass to the position of Cleomenes' phalanx behind its entrenchments, which is, as Pritchett pointed out, south of the gully facing the Khan of Dagla: this corresponds to Kokkina on Kromayer's map (fig. 1), to Rhankazovouni on the 1:50,000 map of 1992 (fig. 2). In relation to Polybius' description, W.K. Pritchett argued that «I know of no other battle in which the narrative and the topography seem to agree so easily»⁴⁹. The mention of the 5 stades in Plutarch, taken from Phylarch, perhaps makes it possible to consider things more clearly, in the absence of additional archaeological evidence from the battlefield⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Plb. 18.30.1.

⁴⁷ Walbank 1957, p. 281.

⁴⁸ Walbank 1957, p. 285: «In width Cleomenes' phalanx (375 files of 16 men 6,000) will have slightly exceeded Doso's (312 files of 32 men 9,984 (10,000))». In reality, one can imagine an even smaller front on the Macedonian side since *chalcaspides* were assigned to the assault on Evas, in alternating units with Illyrians, which could reduce the number of *phalangites* on the Olympus side.

⁴⁹ Pritchett 1965, p. 69.

⁵⁰ The Laconia Survey (Cavanagh, Crowel, Catling et alii 1996; Cavanagh, Crowel, Catling et alii 2002) did not bring any new elements from the point of view of the battle.

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— 10 —

From the Battle of Sellasia to *In 200 B.C.*
by Kavafis.
A Poetic Tour of the Body of History

Panagiota Laskari

Key-words: Kavafis, battle of Sellasia, Cleomenes III, Cratisiclea, poetry, history

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Καβάφης, μάχη της Σελλασίας, Κλεομένης Γ', Κρατισικλέα, ποίηση, ιστορία

Abstract:

The paper deals with the poetic production of the renown Greek poet Constantinos Petrou Kavafis, by analyzing some of his masterpieces evoking historical figures and real events that played pivotal roles in Greek culture. Particularly, the historical contents of four poems revealing Kavafis' interest for the history of Sparta are taken into account and in-depth examined. These poems, namely *Thermopylae*, *In Sparta*, *Hail, king of the Lacedaemonians* and *In 200 B.C.* are pervaded by irony and, at the same time, awareness of the contribution of Sparta in shaping the Hellenic past. Such four historical poems exemplify some of the core features of C.P. Kavafis' literary outputs, such as the extensive use of allegory, symbol and allusion, resulting in an active involvement of the reader in an interactive poetic game which entails a stimulating dialogue between past and present.

Η εργασία ασχολείται με την ποιητική παραγωγή του γνωστού Έλληνα ποιητή Κωνσταντίνου Πέτρου Καβάφη, αναλύοντας μερικά από τα αριστουργήματά του που αναφέρουν ιστορικά πρόσωπα και πραγματικά γεγονότα που διαδραμάτισαν καθοριστικό ρόλο στον ελληνικό πολιτισμό. Ειδικότερα, λαμβάνεται υπόψη και εξετάζεται σε βάθος το ιστορικό περιεχόμενο τεσσάρων ποιημάτων που φανερώουν το ενδιαφέρον του Καβάφη για την ιστορία της Σπάρτης. Τα ποιήματα αυτά, δηλαδή *Θερμοπύλες*, *Εν Σπάρτη*, *Αγε, ὦ βασιλεῦ Λακεδαιμονίων* και *Το 200 π.Χ.*, διαπνέονται από ειρωνεία και ταυτόχρονα από επίγνωση της συμβολής της Σπάρτης στη διαμόρφωση του ελληνικού παρελθόντος. Τα τέσσερα αυτά ιστορικά ποιήματα αποτελούν παράδειγμα ορισμένων από τα βασικά χαρακτηριστικά της λογοτεχνικής παραγωγής του Καβάφη, όπως η εκτεταμένη χρήση της αλληγορίας, του συμβόλου και του υπαινιγμού, με αποτέλεσμα την ενεργό συμμετοχή του αναγνώστη σε ένα διαδραστικό ποιητικό παιχνίδι που συνεπάγεται έναν διεγερτικό διάλογο μεταξύ παρελθόντος και παρόντος.

I begin from a position that finds me wholly in agreement, not to draw prestige from the indisputable glory of the authenticity of the Stagirite philosopher, but to question alongside you, what is emerging from this position, directly or indirectly, in relation to the subject of my introduction.

Aristotle, in his *On Poetics*, highlights the main difference between a historian and a poet, assessing it somewhat like this: the historian describes what has happened in the past, while the poet describes what was expected to happen. He concludes with: «That is why history is more philosophical and more important than poetry. For poetry tends to express the universal, while history conveys the particular»¹.

We understand that such a position takes on a special dynamic for a poet like C.P. Kavafis who dedicated his life to the service of the art form of poetry². He himself confesses: «I had two qualities. To create poems and write History. I didn't write history and now it's too late. Now you will say, how do I know that I could write History? I understand»³.

¹ Menardos, Sykoutris 1991, pp. 79-80.

² Loudovikos 2006, p. 337.

³ Kavafis 2015, p. 175.

Regarding this, I hasten to comment in advance and say: "It is fortunate, that he did not write!", not to underestimate his apparent ability, nor, of course, the value of history but because, beyond my agreement with Aristotle about the power of true Poetry, in the case of C.P. Kavafis, the poetic tour of the body of History, both on the part of the poet and on the part of his suspicious readers, opens up an excellent perspective of the dialogic development of Art and History, not as a simple cultural achievement, but as a factual proposal of existential immersion in the flow of History.

The battle of Sellasia, in July 222 BC regardless of the historical gravity that over time can feed back on us Spartans to preserve and recover through mechanisms of memory, as a capital "piece" of our local history, is a historical landmark. It is a historical event, multiplied over time by the various and heteronomous readings of the genesis, but also of its descendants. The battle of Sellasia marks the transition to a new order of things, not only for the Spartan and Greek reality of the Hellenistic era, but, I dare say, for the entire Mediterranean basin.

Among C.P. Kavafis' historical poems, four reveal his particular interest in the Spartan *ethos* and Spartan history. The first, the well-known *Thermopylae* (published in 1903), belongs to the second period of his poetic writing (1891-1904), which is a transitional phase, during which his poetic uniqueness is established. The other three belong to the last, the mature period of his writing (1911-1933), where C.P. Kavafis' techniques are developing in an impressive way. From the reader's perspective, at the level of experience and discovery are broadening and deepening seeing C.P. Kavafis' poetry as the development of an art of life, a personal idiomatic ecosystem that composes a condensed proposal of *biosophia*⁴. The first poem, *In Sparta*, was published in 1928, the second, *Hail, king of the Lacedaemonians*, in 1929, and the third, the infamous *In 200 B.C.*, in 1931.

The first two are satellites of the battle of Sellasia, as a historical event that communicates through the pre-celebratory events and vice versa, while the third, *In 200 B.C.*, just twenty-two years after the shocking battle, updates history in a relentlessly beneficial way, for those that have eyes to see and ears to hear.

⁴ Kavafis 2015, p. 52.

All three, very close in time to one another, are chosen primarily and in various ways with *Thermopylae* from some noteworthy time distance.

In the poem *In Sparta*, the poetic reproduction of the historical setting is attempted with Plutarch as the author:

Cleomenes III, son of Leonidas and Cratisiclea, unlike his father, follows the ideas of Agides IV and attempts to transform the corrupt regime of Sparta... He finds supporters of his plans in his mother Cratisiclea and his wife Agiatida... In order to confront the Macedonians who had allied with the Achaean League, Cleomenes seeks the help of Ptolemy III of Egypt, who promises to help him, with the condition that he send his mother and his children as hostages. The Spartan king, fearing for their fate, does not report anything to Cratisiclea, but she [Commands her son to do what was right and advantageous for Sparta and not to fear Ptolemy because of an old woman and two small children]⁵.

The *ethos* of the tragic queen is further refined in the next poem, titled *Hail, king of the Lacedaemonians*, describing the mother's exhortation to her son, as Plutarch narrates it, shortly before her departure to Egypt and the deadly battle of Sellasia. The rest of the story is known. I shall briefly evoke the memory, so that we can better understand, both the fate of the glorious queen and her glorious son, as well as the fate of the glorious city.

Cleomenes is defeated in the most deadly battle of Sellasia. He leaves Sparta and with friends from Gytheio reaches Egypt. There, he incites a rebellion with the help of Cratisiclea. The rebellion fails and Cleomenes commits suicide. After that, Ptolemy IV Philopator, who was on the throne of Egypt, orders the death of Cratisiclea and her escort. Cratisiclea asks not to attend the execution of her grandchildren. Her last desire is not granted. She is taken to the place of execution and witnesses the slaughter of her grandchildren. She only utters one sentence at the tragic moment: my children, where have you gone?⁶.

The two poems, as far as their thematic core is concerned, could form a continuum. I will mention a few brief remarks, through my own point of view:

⁵ Laskaris 2004, pp. 144-145.

⁶ Laskaris 2004, p. 145.

In Sparta: 1. The poem moves on the tightrope of a delicate balance between the majestic Spartan spirit and *ethos*, as evidenced mainly by the words and deeds of a wonderful woman, queen Cratisiclea, and in the humiliating agreements of her glorious son with the descendants of Alexander the Great, in moments of extreme danger and historical need. 2. Sparta, this unique case, fascinates C.P. Kavafis. An eponymous, subversive, criminal, political regime that often chooses isolation and presents it as a sign of excellence, the moment that claims from all prominent position and recognition. Sparta looks like him... 3. Behind the admiration for Cratisiclea and Sparta is hidden, as always, an ambivalence that effortlessly provokes our own question: what would the poem look like if the irony of the last verses was absent: «Sparta's political ideology was certainly not capable of being felt by a Lagidis of days past»? This is the focal point that reveals the abysmal difference between two worlds that are unable to understand one another. On top of this weakness, what, possibly, is Kavafis proposing through the tug of war of his irony?

Hail, king of the Lacedaemonians: in this poem the reading of the specific story by C.P. Kavafis is completed on more than one level. I previously mentioned a possible continuation. The poem completes as a perfect allegory the poetic, existential, meta-historical, within history, proposal of Kavafis that began with *In Sparta*. The existential updating of History is preserved and does not fall into mere didacticism, thanks to the poet's very subtle and contemplative irony, which we mentioned in the previous poem.

In 200 B.C.: a lot of conflicting and ambitious interpretations about what the poet wants to express in the end... Who does this apparent irony, which runs through the poem from beginning to end and is exalted with the fortissimo saying «Let's talk about the Lacedaemonians now!», really target? Is it aimed at the Lacedaemonians or the rival awe that starts with Alexander the Great and his panhellenic alliance and forms in record time a completely new political and cultural Greek proposition and reality?

I proceed with some brief remarks on the specific poem, before attempting some more general personal evaluations: 1. In 1931, C.P. Kavafis published a poem based on a historical event, ambiguous in its creation: after the battle of Granicus, the great general sends to the Acropolis of Athens spoils from the battle with the inscription: «Alexander, son of Philip and the Greeks, except for the

Lacedaemonians»⁷. The phrase «except for the Lacedaemonians» is a statement of fact, but also a comment on the part of Alexander the Great, certainly with more than one interpretation. 2. The poem begins with the victorious battle and the celebrated campaign arriving at the presentation in the new Greek world, with its extended territories, the diverse action of the thoughtful adaptations and the common Greek speech, the most striking proof of an indisputable political and cultural achievement. According to general confession, the spiritual child of that is C.P. Kavafis himself. But the poem is titled *In 200 B.C.*, on the one hand, just twenty-two years after the battle that finally decided Sparta's last attempt to regain its lost glory in a rapidly changing world; on the other hand, at the end of an era in the game of Mediterranean sovereignty. In the last two decades of the 3rd cent. BC the political image of the Hellenistic world changed significantly, with the main characteristic of the period being the appearance of a foreign great power, Rome. Perhaps, even in 200 BC, none of those who lived through the events could appreciate the new political reality (this is how it usually happens, and history surprises us), despite the fact that prominent political figures of the time had emphasized that⁸. In 200 BC the Hellenistic worlds, as a political power, still had a bit of room to brag about its greatness (not unjustly), as Sparta did in earlier times (again not unjustly). The Romans, playing at the political chessboard, with an imminent checkmate move and C.P. Kavafis, situated in a safe distance, a skeptical and thoughtful observer of the whole game! 3. Through such viewpoint, it is becoming clear what Alexander the Great was possibly aiming to achieve with his irony, beyond aligning himself with one or the other side⁹ and to satisfy most of us who continue, in a world that is collapsing, to reach for power as a display of strength and dominance, even when we talk about the most "spiritual" things.

I leave the field of inquiry open, only to point out something that concerns this particular poem: I consider the poem *In 200 B.C.* as one of Kavafis' masterpieces, because irony, his main allegorical trick and the driving force of his poetry, finds its perfect expression here. In the

⁷ Kavafis 2015, p. 390.

⁸ Paparrigopoulos 1978, p. 416.

⁹ Tsirkas 1959, pp. 439-447; Malanos 1957, p. 392; Bowra 2006; Savvidis 1978, p. 75; Keeley 1979, pp. 61-65; Keeley, 1994, pp. 335-336.

same poem and not in the dialogue of two or more poems, the position and the contrast, obvious or apparent, incite an intelligent subversive dialectic that artificially involves the reader in the poetic game. On a first level, with the thoughtful skillful pendency of irony, they leave the choice to the reader¹⁰, and in the second, perhaps more demanding way, they give the reader the option to read irony as an oxymoron, as a transcendence of the underlying contradiction, which is then apparent. With such a reading, C.P. Kavafis' irony comes to strip away any power from its ephemeral greatness and to speak of the tragic individual and collective impasses which are recycled in History, without, however, any deduction on both sides paying tribute to the glory that Time created. Be that as it may, in this way, the poet, this incurable lover of the past, this historian in poetry, initiates, each time anew, a poetically fruitful conversation with the present. The obsolete concerns us directly in the now.

After this, I arrive to the crucial question that concerns both the last part of my introduction, but what was its inspiration: what does the poet C.P. Kavafis do with History and how does he do it? I will begin by addressing the how, starting from the position that interpretation is an attempt to understand and can never result in a definitive conquest of it. That is especially true for a classic and at the same time modern poet, a classic of modernism¹¹, who was opposed to the established, sometimes with the risk of a heretical attitude and with the risk that the essence of his poetry is the constant change of his masks¹².

Firstly, the way in which he recites and poetically converses with History is the way of allegorical irony¹³. Historical memory and imagination, when conversing, constitute the clay that through its poetic forms creates life itself. He ironically reads (constantly mocking the classical readings of History) in order to ironically write, i.e. ambiguous, multi-meaning, protean, allusive, with the meanings highly present, but in perpetual suspense. C.P. Kavafis, with twists of allegory and symbolism, and following the modern technique of montage¹⁴, directs the poem as an entity conversing with the past, the

¹⁰ Kavafis 2015, p. 111.

¹¹ Kavafis 2015, pp. 44-52.

¹² Kavafis 2015, pp. 60-61.

¹³ Kavafis 2015, pp. 112-119.

¹⁴ Kavafis 2015, pp. 67-68.

present and the future, in many ways, dynamically and fascinatingly. What is special about him, and herein lies his charm, is that in his most mature poems, as a genuine creator he avoids the easy didacticism to which the allegorical narrative could lead him, deliberately allowing allegory and symbol to mix. So, the symbol is obscured by the ambiguity of the allegory, as the last is practiced with the rhetoric of irony, that delicate sophistry of C.P. Kavafis, which is far removed, of course, from sarcasm and parody. In this pinnacle of poetic achievement of a shift in focus that stimulates the reader intellectually and emotionally, the role of language economy emerges as very important, functioning as concealment and lack. That results to, the meaning not being apparent, but remaining hidden¹⁵.

Reaching the coda of our question: what, is after all, C.P. Kavafis' aiming at – consciously or unconsciously – by using the ironic allegorical reading and corresponding poetic incarnation of the historical past?

1. In C.P. Kavafis' poetic field, History is the primary element of his poetic writing. The metaphysical agony against Time, which passes irreversibly, condemning everything to decay and Death, and plunges the poet into a painful impasse, without any possibility of redemption or escape, is balanced by the existential, through poetry, individual and collective immersion in unexplored depth of the events of Time¹⁶. In other words, from the poetic tour of the body of History. Thus, the individual and collective subject confronts the all-powerful Time and often loses, when the poetic eye looks upon the dominant and the established ironically and uncommitted, shining its own light onto History. They reveal unknown, never before read, illegible, from the intentional enactments, or possible and contingent aspects. In this way, the poetic tour confronts the past, in order to converse existentially with the present, in the opening of a new perspective of acquaintance with the future, so that, in a seemingly paradoxical way, a "thinker of melancholy", with his poetic alchemies, to keep the otherwise aged body of History always cheerful. His craftsmanship and bio-philosophy are born, developed and perfected through this attitude towards History¹⁷.

¹⁵ Kavafis 2015, p. 110.

¹⁶ Kavafis 2015, p. 66.

¹⁷ Kavafis 2015, p. 67. Regarding Kavafis' attitude towards History, see also earlier, different from the present, interpretive approaches: Dimaras 1992, pp. 26-27, 51 and Tsirkas 1959, p. 16.

2. Therefore, C.P. Kavafis' poetic axis is Time and not Place¹⁸. The temporal distance, the memory, the imagination and the conception of the "Greek" (due to temperament, origin, family, social conditions and spiritual vessel) beyond the ethnic boundaries¹⁹, as a textual time and a cultural event in evolution, in the medium of History, make C.P. Kavafis a limbic poet, far from the ideology of the ethnic center. He follows the tradition of Hellenism genuinely, as evidenced by the timelessness of his language suggesting to us a reading of History that is modern and unbound by conventional and expected approaches that, sometimes, serve specific ideological purposes and their respective rhetorics. The fluidity, the alternation, the otherness, the diversity and variety, the intelligent dialectic and ultimately the loving and fruitful mixing of opposites, characterise the "Greek" in his cultural time and are also the characteristics of our poet, which show him unadulterated ecumenical and always up-to-date, precisely because it is so Greek.

3. C.P. Kavafis achieves his poetic individualisation by conversing with his tradition and its socio-centric epistemological method, from Socrates to Byzantine communalism²⁰, both at the level of language and at the level of attitude towards History. According to him, History is the basis for poetically methodising his existential analysis. He is a poet "of the historical way of being", meaning that for him Being is not transcendental, but fundamentally historical, and History constitutes its deeply existential structure²¹. Therefore, poetry, in his case, creates History, as a continuous meaning on the given historical canvas. His existential poetic proposal, as a necessary personal, subjective, individualised distancing, is valid, precisely because it is historical, i.e. existentially "real" within space and time²². Thus, the events of Time speak to us about the method by which we will know ourselves, individual and collective, and not confirm as transcendental subjects our transcendental nature within History, as a will to gain power. In C.P. Kavafis the poetic narration of the lives of famous and anonymous people, in their most unknown, hidden, private moments, undermines the macro-historical, hyper-deliberative adherence to a great intra-

¹⁸ Kavafis 2015, p. 98.

¹⁹ Kavafis 2015, pp. 72-76.

²⁰ Loudovikos 2006, p. 344.

²¹ Loudovikos 2006, pp. 337, 339.

²² Loudovikos 2006, p. 339.

historical Purpose. The historical narratives of the body, thought, passions, care of life, metaphysical struggle, the human situations of the individual and the collective subject, in other words, the micro-historical, existential conception, according to which there are no sovereigns, but only as potential losers, it undermines any macro-historical uplifting and the ambitious institutional-centered idealistic goals that it reproduces²³.

Looking through this lens, perhaps we can understand why C.P. Kavafis continues to captivate, with undiminished – dare I say increasing – intensity, all of his readers, especially the modern western reader. With his existential poetic proposal, he frees us from an uncommunicated individualisation of an institution-centered character, proposing to us an individuation that gains in meaning as long as it intra-historically recovers its lost communal and psychosomatic completeness²⁴. This is a very current Greek proposal!

After this, perhaps we can mention the indisputable greatness of Sparta, of Cleomenes and Cratisiclea on a different basis, if, indeed, the past concerns us, and if, indeed, the phrase of our Nobel poet, Odysseus Elytis, carries some truth: «One day the past will surprise us with the power of its relevance»²⁵.

²³ Loudovikos 2006, p. 342.

²⁴ Loudovikos 2006, p. 344.

²⁵ Elytis 1976, p. 62.

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This issue of "The Historical Review of Sparta", jointly promoted by the Department of Classics of Sapienza University of Rome and the Institute of Sparta, focuses on the battle of Sellasia, which occurred in the summer 222 BC and saw the clash between the Spartans led by Cleomenes III and the Achaean-Macedonian alliance guided by Antigonos III Doson. The several papers here collected address the historical incident from different and complementary perspectives, in the attempt to contextualize it in a wider framework. Hence, the articles carry out a thorough analysis of Hellenistic Sparta, by investigating the constitutional reforms implemented during the 3rd cent. BC, exploring the political (and sometimes conflictual) relations between the Laconian *polis* and other emerging powers in Greece and the Mediterranean basin, and discussing the changes occurred in the governmental, economic, military, educational and religious field. Furthermore, the contributions offer an in-depth study of the military strategies and tactics implemented in the battlefield, as well as an analysis on the final impact of the catastrophic defeat of Sparta on its internal societal structure and cultural system, and a reflection on the modern reception of the historical event.

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