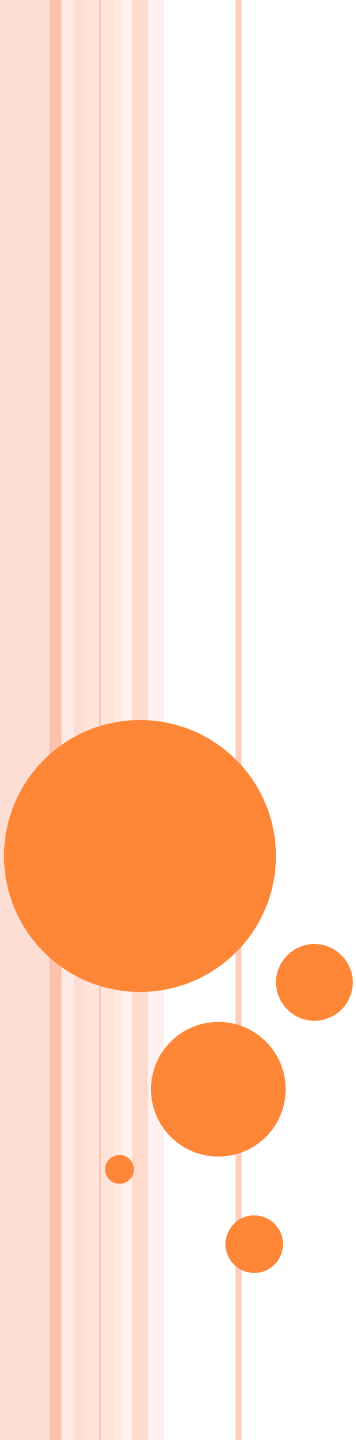
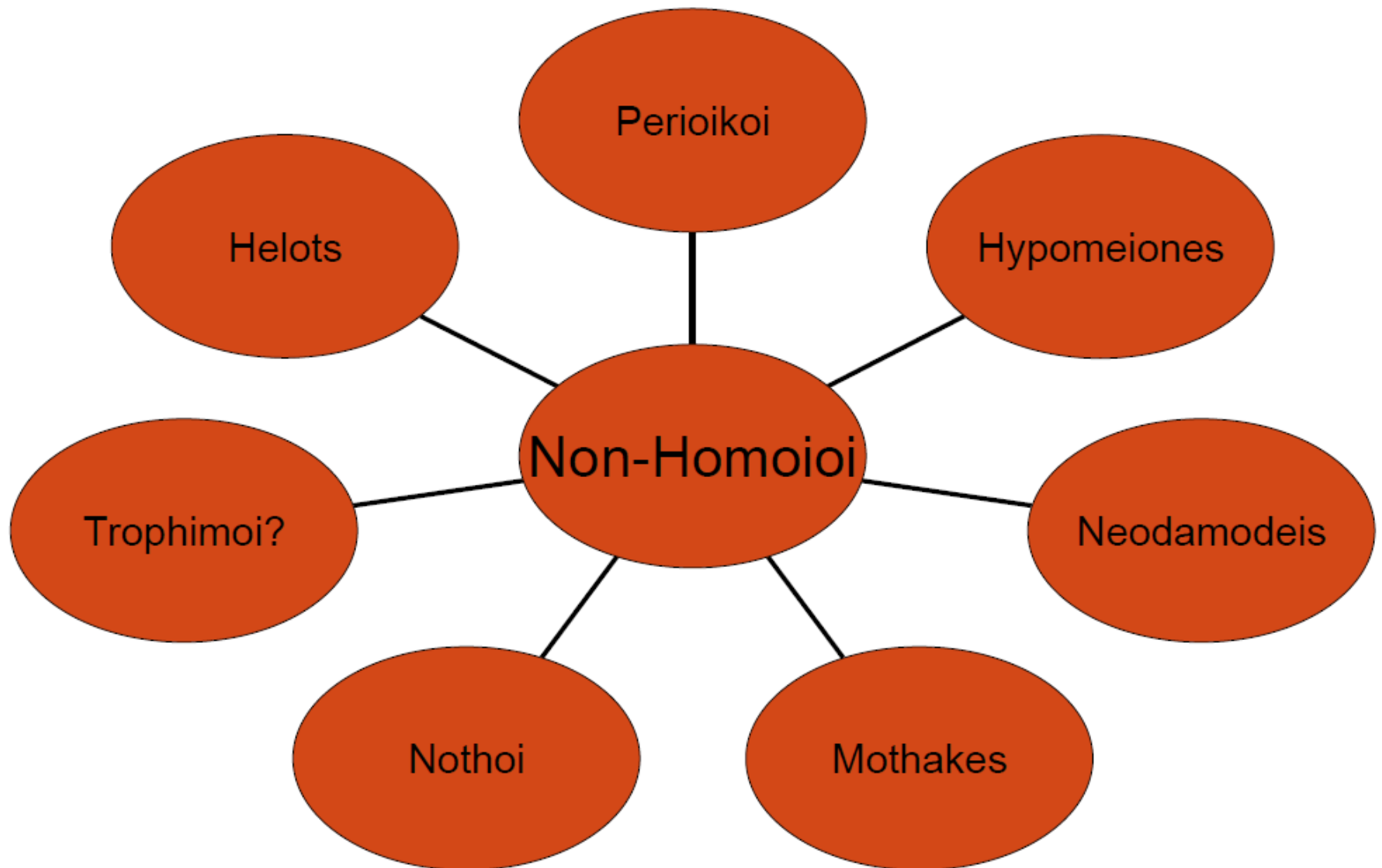




SPARTA: AN EXTRAORDINARY CITY

Lecture 9: Helots

GROUPS OF NON-HOMOIOI IN SPARTA



GROUPS OF NON-HOMOIOI

- There were several groups of non-homoioi at Sparta.
- For the majority, very little is known.
- It is important to remember that in Sparta there were not only helots and perioikoi but other people who were not full citizens.



PERIOIKOI

- Perioikoi means “dwellers around”.
- The ethnic origin of the perioikoi is unknown but they spoke in the Lakonian dialect.
- Perioikoi were under the same military obligations as the homoioi and served in the same regiments.
- They had no political rights.
- Yet the communities of perioikoi had a certain autonomy.
- They mainly worked in trade and manufacture but could own land.
- There were communities of perioikoi in Lakonia, Messenia and Kythera.



PERIOIKOI: THE REIGN OF TERROR

The Ephors have the right to choose as many perioikoi as they wish and put them to death, and this when for all the Greeks the murder of even the most nefarious slaves is considered impious.

Isocrates 12.181



THE HELOTS

- A servile population that were not slaves but had a status between free men and slaves.
- Helots were “between free men and *douloi* (*chattel slaves*)” Pollux 3.83
- The Helots were a population of common ethnic origin, unlike chattel slaves.
- Helots belonged to the community not the individual.



HELOTS NOT SLAVES

The Chians were the first Greeks after the Thessalians and the Spartans to make use of slaves but they did not acquire them in the same way as these. **For the Spartans and the Thessalians... recruited their slave populations from the Greeks who previously inhabited the country they now control, the Spartans from the Achaians, the Thessalians from the Perrhaiboi and Magnetes; and they called those whom they had enslaved helots and penestai.**

Theopompus *FGrH* 115 F122



HELOTS: ORIGINS

- After the First Messenian War, the Spartans who did not participate in the expedition were adjudged slaves and called Helots

Antiochos *FgrH* 555 F13

- Most of the Helots were the descendants of the old Messenians that were enslaved in the famous war; and so all of them came to be called Messenians.

Thucydides 1.101.2



HELOTS: ORIGINS

- For the Greek historians the helots were a pre-Dorian population; thus Theopompus calls them Achaians, the common name of the Greeks in Homer.



HELOTS: AGRICULTURE AND TRIBUTE

- Just like donkeys oppressed with great burdens, bringing to their masters of grievous necessity, half of all the produce their land bears.

Tyrtaios F2



HELOTS: AGRICULTURE AND TRIBUTE

- The helots were tied to the land. But the Spartans could not take their land away.
- The helots had to pay an annual tribute from each plot of land of half the produce. That is a great burden on any agricultural worker.



HELOTS: AGRICULTURE AND TRIBUTE

- A curse was decreed to fall upon the Spartan who exacted more than the long-established rent, so that the helots might serve gladly because gainfully and the Spartans might not exceed the fixed amount.

Plutarch *Moralia* 239d-e

- While $\frac{1}{2}$ of the produce was a great amount, there is care than no more than that is taken from the helots.



HELOTS: RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Their master was permitted neither to manumit them nor to sell them beyond the border.

Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F4

- This was a distinguishing characteristic between helots and slaves in the Greek world.
- Although it may not seem like much it was a form of protection that chattel slaves did not have.



HELOTS: TREATMENT

They assign to the helots every shameful task leading to disgrace. For they ordained that each one of them must wear a dog skin cap and wrap himself in skins and receive a stipulated number of beatings every year regardless of any wrongdoing, so that they would never forget that they were slaves. Moreover if any exceeded the vigour proper to a slave's condition, they made death the penalty; and they allotted a punishment to those controlling them if they failed to rebuke those who were growing fat.

Myron F2



HELOTS: TREATMENT

In other ways too the Spartans treated the helots harshly and brutally; for example they would compel them to drink a large quantity of unmixed wine and then would bring them into the messes to show the young men what drunkenness was like and used them to order them to sing songs and perform dances that were ignoble and ridiculous as well as to refrain from those appropriate to free men. And accordingly, when the Thebans made their invasion into Laconia, and took a great number of the Helots, they could by no means persuade them to sing the verses of Terpander, Alcman, or Spondon, "For," said they, "the masters do not like it." So that it was truly observed by one, that in Sparta he who was free was most so, and he that was a slave there, the greatest slave in the world.

Plutarch *Lycurgus* 28



HELOTS: TREATMENT

- This was an effort to ridicule the helots and boost homoioi morale.
- At the same time ridicule is an effective technique of quelling resistance.
- Clearly part of the Spartan system of quelling helot resistance worked.



HELOTS: TREATMENT

They (i.e. the helots) and their wives must put on mourning and bewail their lords whenever death should carry them away.

Tyrtaios F7

- In this, the earliest source on helotage, we see how a sense of loyalty to Sparta was imposed upon the helots



HELOTS: TREATMENT

The Spartans had once dragged some Helots suppliants from the sanctuary of Poseidon and led them away to be killed, as a result of which, so they believed, the great earthquake had hit Sparta.

Thucydides 1.128.1



HELOTS: RULE OF TERROR

And Aristotle, in particular, adds, that the ephors, so soon as they were entered into their office, used to declare war against them, that they might be massacred without a breach of religion.

Plutarch *Lycurgus* 28



HELOTS: NO RIGHT TO LIFE

- The helots, like chattel slaves, did not have the right to life.
- However, they were protected under religious law, since killing a helot incurred pollution.



HELOTS: RULE OF TERROR

Indeed fear of their numbers and obstinacy even persuaded the Lacedaemonians to the action which I shall now relate, their policy at all times having been governed by the necessity of taking precautions against them. **The Helots were invited by a proclamation to pick out those of their number who claimed to have most distinguished themselves against the enemy, in order that they might receive their freedom; the object being to test them, as it was thought that the first to claim their freedom would be the most high spirited and the most apt to rebel. As many as two thousand were selected accordingly, who crowned themselves and went round the temples, rejoicing in their new freedom. The Spartans, however, soon afterwards did away with them, and no one ever knew how each of them perished.**

Thucydides 4.80



HELOTS: RULE OF TERROR

Hitherto I, for my part, see no sign of injustice or want of equity in the laws of Lycurgus, though some who admit them to be well contrived to make good soldiers, pronounce them defective in point of justice. The **Crypteia, perhaps (if it were one of Lycurgus's ordinances, as Aristotle says it was),** gave both him and Plato, too, this opinion alike of the lawgiver and his government. **By this ordinance, the magistrates despatched privately some of the ablest of the young men into the country, from time to time, armed only with their daggers, and taking a little necessary provision with them; in the daytime, they hid themselves in out-of-the-way places, and there lay close, but in the night issued out into the highways, and killed all the Helots they could light upon; sometimes they set upon them by day, as they were at work in the fields, and murdered them.**

Plutarch *Lycurgus* 28



HELOTS: THE RULE OF TERROR

- The rule of terror is an effective means of quelling a large hostile population.
- However, it does have major drawbacks in that terror will not work against widespread revolt and enhances the possibility of revolt.



HELOTS: THE RULE OF TERROR

It seems to me indeed, if nothing else, yet something very troublesome to keep upon proper terms with them; for if you are remiss in your discipline they grow insolent, and think themselves upon an equality with their masters; and if they are hardly used they are continually plotting against you and hate you. It is evident, then, that those who employ slaves have not as yet hit upon the right way of managing them.

Aristotle *Politics* 1269b7-12



THE KINADON AFFAIR

And within five days after the sacrifice was ended a man reported to the ephors a conspiracy, and Cinadon as the head of the affair. ... the informer replied that Cinadon had taken him to the edge of the market-place and directed him to count how many Spartiatae there were in the market-place. “And I,” he said, “after counting king and ephors and senators and about forty others, asked ‘Why, Cinadon, did you bid me count these men?’ And he replied: ‘Believe,’ said he, **‘that these men are your enemies, and that all the others who are in the market-place, more than four thousand in number, are your allies.’** ... the leaders, however, **put it this way, that it was they** who knew the secret of all the others--Helots, freedmen, lesser Spartiatae, and Perioeci; for whenever among these classes any mention was made of Spartiatae, no one was able to conceal the fact that he would **be glad to eat them raw.**

Excerpts from Xenophon *Hellenika* 3.3.6



THE KINADON AFFAIR

- There are several problems with the account of the Kinadon affair; among them why Xenophon decided to include it in the Hellenika.
- Another interesting issue is that the numbers of non-homoioi are clearly considered to be much larger than those of homoioi.
- Further, it is clear that feelings of hatred and disaffection were rampant among non-homoioi.



HELOTS: THE REVOLTS

The penestai of Thessaly repeatedly revolted as did the Helots – who are like an enemy constantly sitting in wait for the disasters of the Spartans. **Nothing of this kind has yet happened in Crete, the reason perhaps being that the neighbouring cities, even when at war with one another, never ally themselves with the rebels.** For since they themselves possess a subject population, this would not be in their interest. **The Spartans on the other hand were surrounded by hostile neighbours, Argives, Messenians and Arkadians.**

Aristotle *Politics* 1269a37-b5



REVOLTS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

- For the Spartans the fear of helot revolt was a constant factor in their policy, domestic and foreign.
- Sparta was always vulnerable in the domestic front, since enemies could, and did, incite the helots to revolt.



HELOTS: THE REVOLTS

The attacks of the Athenians upon Peloponnese, and in particular upon Laconia, might, it was hoped, be diverted most effectually by annoying them in return, and by sending an army to their allies, especially as they were willing to maintain it and asked for it to aid them in revolting. **The Lacedaemonians were also glad to have an excuse for sending some of the Helots out of the country, for fear that the present aspect of affairs and the occupation of Pylos might encourage them to move.**

Thucydides 4.80



HELOTS: WARFARE

When the ephors asked again: “And where did they say they would get weapons?” the informer replied that Cinadon said: “Of course those of us who are in the army have weapons of our own, and as for the masses”-- he led him, he said, to the iron market, and showed him great quantities of knives, swords, spits, axes, hatchets, and sickles. And he said, the informer continued, that all those tools with which men work the land and timber and stone were likewise weapons, and that most of the other industries also had in their implements adequate weapons, especially against unarmed men. When he was asked again at what time this thing was to be done, he said that orders had been given him to stay in the city.

Xenophon *Hellenika* 3.3.6



HELOTS: WARFARE

Presently the whole Greek army was arrayed as I will show, both the later and the earliest comers. On the right wing were ten thousand Lacedaemonians; **five thousand of these, who were Spartans, had a guard of thirty-five thousand light-armed helots, seven appointed for each man.**

Herodotus 9.28



HELOTS: WARFARE

The Spartans now therefore gladly sent seven hundred as heavy infantry with Brasidas, who recruited the rest of his force by means of money in Peloponnese.

Thucydides 4.80

- These are heavy infantry troops, i.e. hoplites

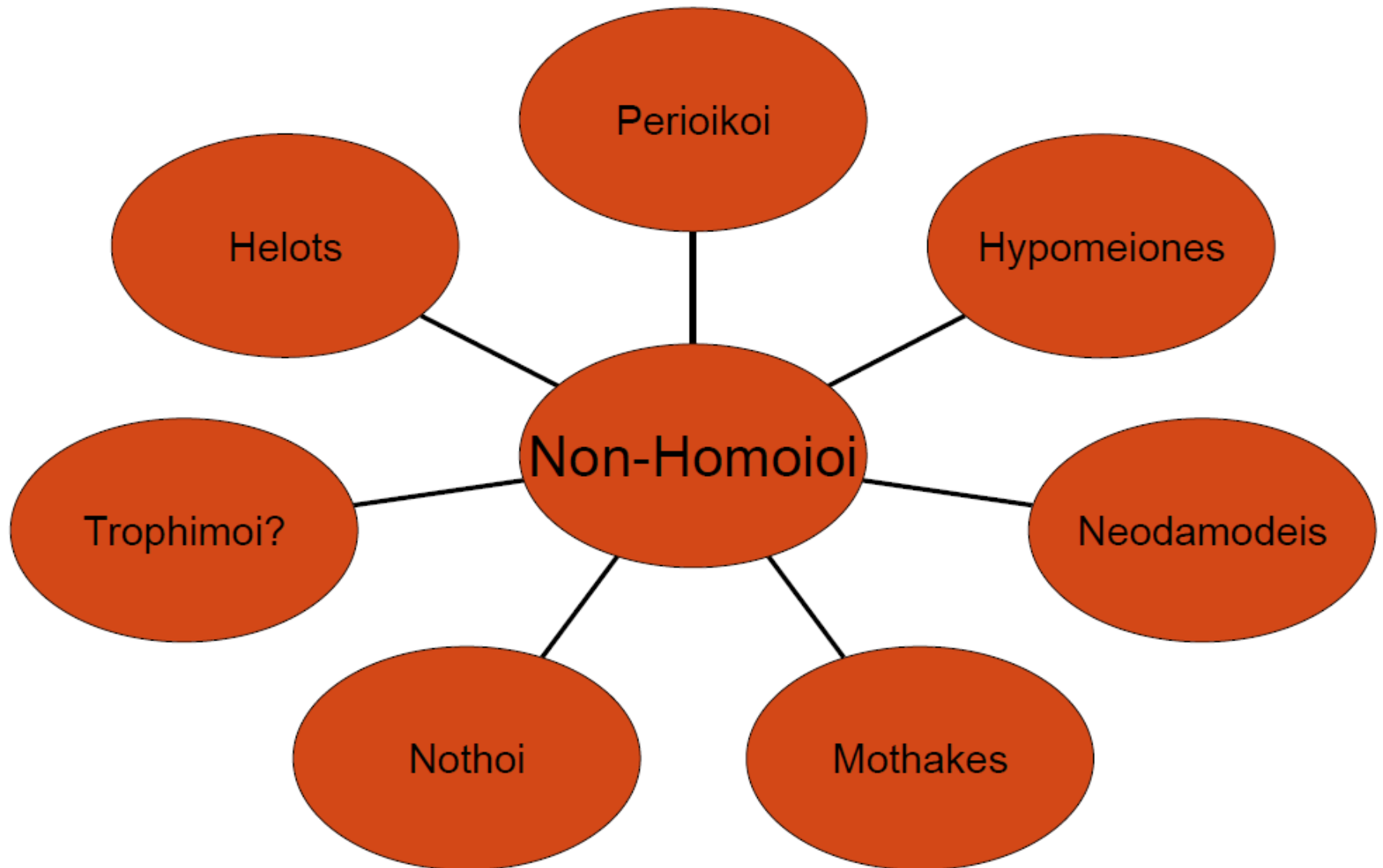


HELOTS: WARFARE

- That the helots were entrusted with weapons and constituted part of the Spartan army shows us that they were not in constant revolt.
- Further, it appears that at least some helots served in the army in the hopes of emancipation.



GROUPS OF NON-HOMOIOI IN SPARTA



THE NEODAMODEIS

- The Neodamodeis were probably manumitted helots.
- They first appear in the Peloponnesian War and were probably instituted as a body after Brasidas' successful campaign to the north.
- They fought as hoplites and were often garrisoned at the borders of Lacedaimon.



MANUMITTED HELOTS

The Spartans often freed their slaves calling some Aphetai, some Adespotoi, some Erykteres, others again Desposionautai; the last they assigned to naval expeditions.

Myron *FGrH* 106 F1



THE HYPOMEIONES

- The Hypomeiones (Inferiors) are attested only in Xenophon (Kinadon affair) and in no other source.
- They are clearly distinct from the Neodamodeis.
- Kinadon appears to have been one of the Hypomeiones.
- The Hypomeiones were probably those who had not managed to successfully pass through the agoge or when not selected for one of the syssitia.
- Probably at least some of the Hypomeiones were enlisted in the army, since Kinadon refers to himself as having weapons because he is in the army.



THE TROPHIMOI

- Xenophon *Hellenika* 5.3.9
- The trophimoi were probably foreign visitors of the Spartan state who had passed through the agoge successfully but could not, by reason of ethnicity, become Spartan citizens.
- Xenophon's sons, who had passed through the agoge, were probably trophimoi.
- The Trophimoi could be part of the Spartan army on a volunteer basis.



THE MOTHAKES

- The mothakes is a very obscure group of Spartans.
- They were probably illegitimate children of Spartan citizen men and Spartan citizen women.
- They could pass through the agoge and reach the status of homoios.
- Lysander and Gylippos are according to some traditions mothakes.



THE NOTHOI

- The Nothoi were probably illegitimate sons of Spartan citizens and non-citizens.
- They could pass through the agoge
- But they could not achieve homoioi status



FOLLOW-UP READING

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