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SLAVERY IN CLASSICAL GREECE

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Chapter 3

Community Slaves or Serfs: the Spartan Helots and Others

[Note: in this chapter *SL A 1* (etc.) refers to a source translated in Appendix 4 of Paul Cartledge's *Sparta and Laconia* (London, 1979), which provides a collection of translated ancient sources on the helots.]

By the middle of the fourth century Greek writers made explicit the distinction between the bought, largely non-Greek, chattel slaves of many Greek cities and the large-scale dependent labour-forces found in a specific group of cities or regions (Sparta, Thessaly, Crete, Heraclea on the Black Sea, Syracuse and a few others). We find the distinction in Theopompos (*SL B 5*, quoted in the last chapter, and in Aristotle [see *SL C 7*] and also *GARS 80*, pp. 80-2); it is spelled out fully in the following passage from Plato, though his terminology remains slightly confusing:

The helot-system of the Spartans, of all Greek institutions, would seem just about to provide the most intractable and contentious subject of all, as some think it was a good idea, and others that it was not; the slave-system of the Mariandynoi at Heraclea provides less dispute about the enslavement, as does also the race of Penestai in Thessaly.

(Plato, *Laws 776c-d* = *SL A 2*)

A later scholar, in the Hellenistic period, loosely classified the non-chattel slaves as 'between free people and slaves (*douloi*)' (Aristophanes of Byzantium, quoted by Pollux, *Onomastikon* 3.83 = *SL C 13*). What differentiated such types of dependent labour from chattel slaves were some or all of the following: they were identifiable and cohesive populations who had been enslaved *en bloc* by conquest and forced to work for their conquerors in what they might still consider 'their' country; they were usually therefore Greek, not foreign; they tended to be the property of the city as a whole, not just owned by individuals – hence some scholars (such as Garland in his *Slavery in Classical Greece* ch. 2), prefer to classify them as 'community slaves'; they were essentially tied to the

land and to particular estates, and hence were not (normally) expected to perform a wide range of different jobs or tasks for their masters, or be sold away from the estate; they were a self-reproducing group, and hence were permitted to marry and form lasting family groups and households, whether on the estate or in villages. If weight is put on these last two factors, one may, as with many scholars (e.g., de Ste. Croix in his *Class Struggle*), find it helpful to classify most of these groups as 'state-serfs' (cf. the discussion above p. 4).

Spartan helots: origins, developments and functions

Reconstructing Spartan history and society is not easy. We have no genuine Spartan sources; the Spartans themselves seem to have been masters of secrecy and propaganda; and most of our writers, many of them Athenian, have been influenced, for or against Sparta, by the debate generated by her peculiar institutions and her apparent success and stability. It is even more difficult to recover any sort of narrative of the origins of the Spartan state and of her subject-classes. What survives of the traditions of Spartan and Messenian history is seriously confused – and badly slanted – by later propaganda for or against the Spartans.

Perhaps some time after 950 BC what was to emerge as the dominant group in the southern Peloponnese, a population of Doric-Greek speakers, become established at Sparta. They were probably a group of immigrant 'Dorians' from North-West Greece, attracted by the potential for cereal crops and olive-growing afforded by the lower Eurotas valley. They then achieved dominance over this central part of the southern Peloponnese, and reduced the other populations to one of two sharply distinct types of subjection. Some became 'helots', state-serfs, forcibly attached to particular estates. Two explanations of the term were found in the ancient sources, and both make some sense in this context: either 'captives' (*heilotes*), reflecting the fact of reduction through conquest, or 'people from Helos', a region in the lower Eurotas valley which may have been one centre of the initial conquests (cf. sources in *SL B*). Other peoples became the *perioikoi*, the 'livers-around', peasants, fishermen, craftsmen, miners and traders, who led relatively free lives in their small towns and villages (and, in time, came to own chattel slaves of their own). However, they had no political independence, and were expected to serve in Sparta's armed forces with no share in making its policies.

In the eighth century BC, perhaps under pressure of over-population, the Spartans invaded Messenia, the region to the west of the

Taygetos massif dominated by the larger and more fertile valley of the Pamisos. It took a long initial war and a major revolt and war in the mid-seventh century before the conquest was complete. The Messenians thus reduced to helot-status were considerably more numerous than the Laconian helots (cf. Thucydides, 1.101); and they retained their national identity and desire for independence much more vigorously over the next four centuries. Some Messenian communities, largely outside the wealthiest valley lands, acquired perioikic status.

These conquests made Sparta more powerful, and from the beginning of the sixth century, after a failed attempt to extend the helot-system to Tegea in Arcadia, she built up a position at the head of a system of alliances that created a lasting hegemony for her in the Peloponnese (called by modern historians the Peloponnesian League). Spartan citizens ('Spartiates') became individually richer as the new Messenian lands were assigned to them as the ruling class. But this system of dependent labour created also the conditions of insecurity and permanent threat that forced the Spartans to transform most aspects of their state. These changes, which led to the creation of the classical Spartan economic, political and social systems, were attributed by most Greek authors (from Herodotus, 1.65ff. on) to a single lawgiver called Lycurgos, whose life they placed at various dates in the distant past, and to whom they attributed the sudden and lasting creation of 'good government' (*eunomia*) in place of civil discord. We should see Lycurgos as a 'useful myth' created by the Spartans, seeking to give a sense of antiquity and solidity to their complex and bizarre system. In fact, varied patterns of interlocking changes must have been adopted over a period of a hundred or more years from the early seventh century on. The single most important reason underlying all these changes was probably the perceived need to maintain control over a very large, and to a great extent permanently disaffected and cohesive, labour force, the helots, and above all the Messenian helots. The result was that Sparta became more and more like an 'armed camp' of its citizens (as many ancient writers observed, for example, Plato, *Laws* 666e and Plutarch, *Lycurgos* 24): or, in de Ste. Croix's potent image, like Fafner in Wagner's *Ring*, a giant who turned himself into a dragon, living gloomily in a cave, in order to be better able to guard the treasure of the Rhinemaidens. In the sense that they had been able to remove themselves completely from the need to perform any productive labour, the Spartiates were, as their Athenian admirer Critias said, 'the most free of all the Greeks', as the helots were 'the most enslaved' (SL C 1); but in the self-imposed discipline and homogeneity of their lives and culture such 'freedom' might seem intolerably

constricting and repressive.

The relative numbers of helots and Spartiates cannot be known with any accuracy, but we can be sure that they entailed a large-scale problem of control, and that this increased very considerably from the mid-fifth century BC on. During the Persian Wars, Sparta could put 5,000 Spartiate hoplites and 5,000 *periokoi* into the last decisive battle at Plataea in 479 BC (Herodotus, 9.28-9), and probably had about 8,000 male Spartiates in all at that time (Herodotus, 7.234). A decline in Spartiate manpower set in soon after, though its pace and causes are matters of great dispute that cannot be discussed here. At the equally decisive battle of Leuctra (371 BC) they put a mere 700 into the field, of whom 400 were killed (Xenophon, *History of Greece* 6.4.15-17), and the total number of Spartiates seems to have been between 1,000 and 1,500 (cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1270a29-32). At the time of the Peloponnesian War, the best guess is that there were about 3,000 Spartiates. How much of this steep decline was the result of the possibly massive losses sustained during the severe earthquake of the mid-460s, and how much of long-term tensions and contradictions in the operations of her systems of inheritance, property-regulation and citizenship, remains controversial. (For what I think are the most plausible explanations, see the works by Cartledge and Hodkinson listed in the bibliography.)

For the helots, the only figure comes also from Herodotus' Plataea narrative; seven helots, he repeatedly claims, accompanied each of the 5,000 Spartiates. One may doubt that it was thought necessary or desirable to let as many as 35,000 helots out on campaign, but the figure may reflect a general opinion that there were roughly seven times as many helots as Spartiates; if so, one must ask what such an opinion would be based on, and how keen the Spartans would be to let true figures (if they had them) be widely known. It is safer to accept the general perception that the helot class was larger than any other slave-class in Greece, as Thucydides claims (8.40 and also 4.80), that helots outnumbered Spartiates by a considerable factor, and that this factor was increasing rapidly from the Persian Wars onwards.

The main function of the helots was to perform agricultural labour on the estates to which they were tied. They were also, as we have just seen, used as light-armed troops, attendants and supply-labour on campaigns and increasingly, as the Spartiate population declined, in more active capacities in war. Helots were also used as domestic servants and as cooks, waiters and so on in the common messes. Helots were attached to particular estates (*klaroi*), and could only be killed, released or transferred from their estates, or set free, by order of the state. In that

sense they were, as the first-century Greek geographer Strabo puts it (8.4.5 = *SL C 11*), 'in some way public slaves'. In another way, as Strabo's wording implies, they 'belonged' to those individual Spartan citizens on whose estates they worked and to whom they paid their 'rent' in kind. According to Tyrtaeus, the mid-seventh century Spartan poet, they paid them half their produce (fr. 6 = *SL D 1* = *GARS 15*), but we do not know if the proportion was still the same during the classical period. Their individual masters were responsible for supervising the helots' work and ensuring their good behaviour. The political and economic status of these masters depended on the production of their helots, since citizenship was conditional on individual Spartiates maintaining a certain level of contributions, in the form of produce, to their 'common messes' (*syssitia*); this pressure to produce would of course be transferred to the helots.

But the use, management and control of all helots was recognised as a joint responsibility of all Spartiates. As they enjoyed an allegedly 'equal' life-style, they could all in theory make casual use of each other's helots, as of their dogs or horses (Xenophon, *Spartan Society* 6). No Spartiate was permitted (under pain of a 'public curse') to exact more than the accepted proportion of crops in rent (*SL F 2.b*), so as to prevent too much pressure being applied to the helots. In particular, Spartans had always to remember that the helots were their conquered enemies who might rise in revolt at any time, and for that reason, it seems, every year 'the ephors, as soon as they first enter into their office, declare war on the helots, so that it may be religiously proper to do away with them' (Plutarch, *Lycurgos* 28, quoting Aristotle). Thus we see that not only is it a plausible mode of analysis to classify the Spartiate/helot relationship as a 'class-war', in that the Spartan economic system and its wealth depended above all on the forced labour of the helots, who sought constantly to break free; it is actually recognised as an open and permanent war by the ruling class itself, though the apparent reason for this frankness was a narrow religious scruple – to avoid the religious 'pollution' of unjustified killing.

Control of the helots: terror, division, encouragement and confusion

Two celebrated passages reveal graphically how the Spartans exercised the right they gave themselves to treat the killing of helots as legitimate acts of state. First, there is an incident recorded by Thucydides. During the Peloponnesian War, in 425, the Athenians had captured the headland of Pylos in Messenian territory, had captured 120 Spartiate prisoners on

the island of Sphacteria, and were beginning to encourage neighbouring helots to join them in revolt. Thucydides reports that at that time the Spartans were so afraid of the hostility and numbers of the helots that they devised the following plan:

Most Spartan institutions in relation to the helots have always been organised with a view to security. They made a proclamation to them to choose those of their number who claimed to have proved themselves excellent fighters for the Spartans in the wars, as they (the Spartans) were going to set them free; they did this as a test, thinking that those who claimed themselves to be the most worthy of being set free would also be those possessing the greatest spirit to attack them. When they had selected up to 2,000, those helots put garlands on their heads and went around the shrines as if they had been set free, but the Spartans, not long afterwards, made them disappear, and no one found out by what means each of them was destroyed.

(Thucydides, 4.80 = *SL D 5*)

Such a spectacular and well-organised fraud and massacre was a remarkable feat of devious and intelligent organisation on the part of the Spartan authorities. Apparently up to 2,000 men, selected for their boldness and courage, were coldly deceived and then murdered, by the secretive officials and their selected nocturnal killers, who belonged to the ruling class of Spartiate citizen-soldiers, numbering, as mentioned above, perhaps only c. 3,000 in all. The great nineteenth-century historian George Grote judged that 'this stratagem at once so perfidious in the contrivance, so murderous in the purpose, and so complete in the execution, stands without parallel in any history'; one may argue whether or not twentieth-century outrages surpassed it. Thucydides' account should probably be accepted as essentially correct, though one could wish that he had indicated more precisely when he thought it took place, and from what sources he had learnt of the event. Thucydides himself comments on the secretiveness of the Spartan state and the difficulty of discovering accurate information about her affairs or the numbers in her army (5.68), but he is not so hostile to Sparta that he is likely to have invented such a story or accepted it without reason.

Killing on such a huge scale could not have occurred very often, without destroying the economy as well as the prospect of any trust between Spartans and helots. It reveals the anxiety Spartans were beginning to feel about the extent to which they were outnumbered, and the

justified fear that the Athenian presence at Pylos might stir a large-scale revolt (cf. also Thucydides, 4.41). Thucydides, however, goes on in the same chapter (4.80) to describe how the Spartans, apparently within a year, sent out a force of 700 helots with their commander Brasidas, and how the survivors were later freed, and then served the Spartans as a garrison in Elis (Thucydides, 5.34). These facts show the complexity of Spartan treatment of their helots; they were extremely adept at combining, in confusing ways, false carrots, very big sticks, and the occasional real carrot.

But small-scale helot-killing seems to have been a matter of some regularity. Herodotus mentions that Spartans carried out all their killings 'by night' (4.146); and Plutarch, basing himself again on Aristotle's lost *Constitution of the Spartans*, gives a detailed account of a special Spartan institution:

In all of this (i.e. the measures Plutarch has just been describing) there is no sign of the injustice and excess for which some find fault with Lycurgos' laws, arguing that they make sufficient provision for courage, but are lacking in justice. The so-called *krypteia* ('secret operation') of theirs, if it really was one of Lycurgos' institutions, may be what led Plato as well to that opinion about the system and the man. It operated like this: the leaders of the young men from time to time would send out those who seemed to have the most sense into the countryside in different directions, equipped with daggers and sufficient provisions, but nothing else; by day they made their way in scattered groups to remote places and hid themselves and rested; at night they came down into the roads and slaughtered any of the helots they caught. Often too they journeyed into the fields and did away with the strongest and bravest of them.

(Plutarch, *Lycurgos* 28 = SL D 6)

Plato, in his *Laws*, while making some serious criticisms of Sparta, presented a much more favourable (or 'sanitised') picture of the *krypteia*, emphasising its role in training young Spartans in endurance – ranging over the whole country in winter, night and day, barefoot, without bedclothes, and without attendants (633c). Plutarch accepted the helot-killing version as a reality, but preferred the view that it, and other aspects of savage or degrading treatment, only took root after a crisis in Spartan-helot relations brought on by the earthquake of the 460s. Aristotle, who was in general much more systematically critical of Sparta than his

teacher Plato, seems to have seen its faults and eventual decline in the fourth century in terms of the structural tensions and errors built into the 'Lycurgan' system, and hence did not see the *krypteia* and its established cruelty as a recent development. The account in Plutarch, it must be noted, does not make it clear how often this operation took place (every month? annually at fixed times? or only when a need was felt by the authorities?); nor does it give any idea how many helots might be 'culled' in this way.

We need to distinguish clearly between the origins of this institution and its operation as part of the system of helot-control. As was first pointed out by the French scholar H. Jeanmaire in 1913, using ethnographic parallels from Africa, the picture of young men about to become adults and soldiers, ranging about in the remote countryside, operating by night, by deceit, on their own, and with the lightest of arms, strongly suggests an origin in the last phase of boys' initiation rituals into manhood. In such rituals youths in a transitional or 'liminal' stage act out a role-reversal of the norms of adult male society – in the Greek case the norms of the cohesive, heavily-armed, hoplite infantry. Parallels in the shadowy records of other Greek cities suggest that such initiation rituals had existed, but usually then decayed or were transformed to suit the needs of growing *poleis* (this theme has been well explored by another French historian, P. Vidal-Naquet). Such initiation rituals often involve – in Greece and elsewhere – homosexual pair-bondings, which are in fact well attested in the developed upbringing-system for young Spartiates, and also the hunting of animals on foot and with nets in the wild country.

But the Spartan *krypteia* described by Plutarch is a systematic and deliberate re-institutionalisation of such rituals for the purpose of controlling and creating terror among the helots, who become the victims of the 'hunt'. His description also suggests two distinct modes of operation: firstly, the nocturnal and murderous supervision of a *de facto* curfew on helots moving on the roads (which would be intended to inhibit organised resistance, brigandage or flight); and secondly, the selective killing, presumably after tip-offs had been received, of potentially dangerous individuals. Just how initiatory endurance and hunting became systematic state-terror remains as uncertain as does the actual extent of the killing. Most scholars now believe that a major re-organisation of the Spartan system of boys' upbringing (the *agoge*) took place around the time of the Second Messenian War or in the following century (c. 650-550). This involved the re-institutionalisation and adaptation of old initiation rituals into a disciplined and highly hierarchical structure

of 'age-classes' and military and political training to suit Sparta's needs. Some scholars, though, are tempted to follow the line suggested by Plutarch and suppose that regular, officially-organised killing of helots rather than animals only began after the earthquake and the Messenian Revolt of the 460s, which produced an awareness of a growing numerical disparity. Some are even inclined to treat it as a matter of ritualistic or symbolic behaviour, that would reinforce for the helots the huge gulf between them and Spartiates, without involving (much) actual killing. Others (and I would tend to agree with them) suppose that helot-killing too went back to the earlier re-organisation of the system of upbringing, though some intensification of it may well have occurred from the mid-fifth century on. Overall, while few would now follow Plato in (implicitly) denying any secret helot-killing by the Spartan youths, there is room for considerable disagreement on just how pervasive an operation it was.

Many other indications of systematic maltreatment are given in our sources: degradation, demoralisation and reminders of permanent inferiority seem to be the main objectives of these practices. According to a Messenian history by a third-century BC historian, Myron of Priene (a source probably biased in favour of the Messenians), helots had to wear distinctive, and inferior, clothing – rustic animal skin caps and clothes – and be subjected to regular beatings even if they had done no wrong, 'so that they should never forget that they were slaves' (SL D 7). According to the same chapter in Plutarch's *Lycurgos* quoted above, Spartans would make individual helots drunk on unmixed wine and bring them into the Spartiates' common messes. They would also force them to perform vulgar and silly dances and songs, while not permitting them to sing the songs which Spartiates used to sing; this may have occurred at the common messes, or at specific religious festivals, or perhaps at both. Helots were thus encouraged or forced to play the roles, as buffoons and vulgar dancers, that were performed in other places by poor clients, parasites, and slave or foreign entertainers. In Plutarch's view, in addition to the harshness involved, the purpose was to instil in Spartiates a sense of 'what drunkenness was like'. This is a plausible idea, since in the interests of collective cohesion and an equally austere life-style for all the 'Equals', the system clearly sought to prevent the sort of regular male drinking sessions which were tolerated in other states.

It is likely that the effects of these practices would be confusing, and were intended to be so. Being selected for an evening's merrymaking might seem a privilege in relation to other helots, even though the helots were themselves being humiliated. Spartans made considerable efforts

to separate helots from one another by giving some of them superior functions as supervisors in the fields, in domestic duties, or in rituals; in general they also sought to persuade helots to accept and to internalise the social and political gulf between themselves and their masters. There is evidence for believing that this policy had some success, particularly with the Laconian helots. Even when the Thebans invaded Laconia in 370 BC, it was only the Messenians who revolted successfully. Large numbers of Laconian helots accepted the offer of enlistment with the Spartans (1,000 according to Diodoros, 6,000 according to Xenophon), and some captured helots refused to sing the Spartiates' chief songs, saying their masters would not like it (Plutarch, *Lycurgos* 28).

Perhaps the chief spur to loyalty was the hope of some sort of freedom, as with chattel slavery elsewhere. It seems likely that the frequency of manumission of helots increased, as did the methods of inspiring fear, precisely as the numerical disparity grew. Sparta appears to have deployed a baffling number and variety of terms for those granted apparently different levels of privilege. According to Myron of Priene there were those called *aphetai* ('released'), *adespotai* ('masterless'), *erykteres* ('restrainers') and *desposionautai* ('master-seamen'), and we hear most of all about those called *neodamodeis* ('new members of the demos'), like the survivors of Brasidas' army mentioned above (SL C 8, Thucydides, 5.34). Despite their title, these last did not become Spartiates (any more than freed slaves in Athens or elsewhere in Greece became citizens); but they served as hoplites in the army and were used as garrisons on the frontiers. These groups of ex-helots were presumably freed above all from the harsh conditions of labour-dues. In addition, there was at Sparta a growing number of status-groups in decline, including bastard children of Spartiates and helot-women (*mothakes*), and those demoted through cowardice, failure to maintain the mess-payments of produce, or because of incompetence in the *agoge* – generally known as the *hypomeiones* ('Inferiors'). Thus the principle of 'Divide and Rule' was operated with considerable ingenuity, and the system doubtless kept individuals in these intermediate statuses more or less docile as a result of many individual acts of patronage (such as meals at the messes). On the other hand, the more members of the lower status-groups might be singled out for privilege or advancement, the more (if they were wise), they might fear sudden removal.

A final story told by Xenophon, perhaps somewhat overdramatised, rounds off these themes. In c. 397 BC a brave young 'Inferior' called Cinadon, who claimed later under torture that he had wanted to be 'lesser to no one in Sparta', planned a revolt. He encouraged

potential conspirators by pointing out how, among those present in the Spartan civic centre, the Spartiates were outnumbered roughly 100:1 by those belonging to the lesser status-groups – and Xenophon's account names the four chief ones: helots, *neodamodeis*, *hypomeiones* and *perioikoi*. All of these, according to Cinadon, would 'gladly eat the Spartiates raw'. An informer gave away the incipient plot, and the Spartan ephors, with a few of the Council of Elders (the *Gerousia*), devised highly cunning counter-moves. Making use of the fact that Cinadon had already been employed in secret manoeuvres with 'the young men' (the *krypteia*, presumably), they arranged to have him arrested far away from the city and tortured to reveal his fellow-conspirators (Xenophon, *History of Greece* 3.3.4–11).

In the end, despite the large-scale revolts in the mid-seventh and the mid-fifth centuries, and mini-revolts like Cinadon's, efficiently and ruthlessly crushed, and despite the growing evidence of tensions within the system and the disastrous failure of the ruling class to reproduce itself, it took military defeat and an invasion of Laconia by the Thebans in 371–0 BC to achieve the permanent liberation of the Messenian helots (but not of the Laconian), and a lasting end to Sparta's position of hegemony in the Greek world. The more Spartan economic, social and political systems can be seen to be collapsing under a network of internal tensions and contradictions, the more remarkable becomes the discipline, organisation and subtlety with which her rulers, so few in number, maintained their physical and ideological grip over their serfs. The need was indeed great: the helots were the ultimate source of their wealth and power, and in all probability the chief cause of their having adopted for themselves such an austere, and ultimately unsustainable, life-style.

Serf-systems in other states

Very much less is known about other serfs. On the island of Crete the various city-states had systems that were frequently compared to Sparta's. According to our literary sources, which are basically fourth-century political theorists and historians such as Plato, Aristotle and Ephoros, the Cretan political systems were geared for war, though less intensively than the Spartan, and enjoyed considerable stability. There was a male citizen class that maintained the observance of regular collective dining in 'messes', and some initiatory homosexual educational practices. There was also a complex variety of dependent, largely agrarian, status-groups: some, though free, lacked citizenship, and thus resembled the *perioikoi*; some appear to have been serfs, tied to the land,

and called *Mnoitai*, or *Klarotai*; and some look more like chattel slaves, though evidently with rather more legal privileges than those in Athens. But we remain almost entirely in the dark as to how the systems worked: how we are to marry our generalised literary accounts with the detailed extracts from the one law-code which has survived on stone (from Gortyn); how much those systems changed over time or varied from one city in Crete to another; or why they seem to have caused much less discontent than in Sparta. Aristotle's explanation for this last question was that neighbouring cities never supported each other's subject groups in revolt even when they were at war with them, and that Crete stayed isolated from Greece's wars (*Politics* 1269a39–b2, 1272b16–22).

The other large-scale group of this serf type on the Greek mainland, the *Penestai* in Thessaly, were, like the helots, in all probability defeated inhabitants of the region who were forced to work on fixed conditions on their lands, but may have been given some protection from being exported or killed by their landlords (according to an author quoted by Athenaeus, 264 = *GARS* 80, p. 82). According to Aristotle (*Politics* 1269a35–9) they did give more trouble, and according to the same Athenaeus extract (from an author later than Aristotle, though his precise date is unclear) some of them became richer than their masters. Inasmuch as Thessaly was a less cohesive aristocratic state, her serfs were probably less tightly controlled and oppressed than Sparta's helots. Elsewhere, we hear of varied and colourfully titled subordinate groupings in some other Peloponnesian cities, such as the 'club-wearers' or 'sheepskin-wearers' at Sicyon, the 'dusty-feet' at Epidaurus or the 'Naked Ones' at Argos; and – what are probably only a few tips of a large number of nasty icebergs – in the places the Greeks colonized we hear of subordinate serf-type groups in Syracuse called the *Kallikyrioi*, in Heraclea on the Black Sea called the *Mariandynoi*, and in Byzantium we hear of groups of Bithynians (cf. *GARS* 80, pp. 88–9, *SL* B.5, 9; C.7). How important these labour-groups were in their respective cities remains obscure (but probably not to be under-estimated). A recurring pattern of stories from the middle of the fourth century BC suggest that such disgruntled groups provided a constant source of support for allegedly radical rulers such as Dionysius I in Syracuse, Clearchos in Heraclea, and Euphron in Sicyon, whom our generally conservative-minded sources regard with deep hostility and label as tyrants. The same fate was to befall those Spartan kings in the late third and early second century BC (Agis IV, Cleomenes III and Nabis) who attempted to bring back some glory to Sparta by reforming the land-tenure system and 'liberating' some of the *perioikoi* or helots.