

**Reconceptualising Citizenship: Analysing Mothax Recognition
within Spartan Societal Boundaries and Its Implications**

The writings of Sparta during its infamy, past and present, from the 9th Century to the 4th Century are minimal. That which we do have today presents her [Sparta] as a city-state perceived only in glory and honour after they displayed self-sacrifice for the survival of Greece against the fearsome might of the Persians at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BCE (Herodotus, *The Histories*, 7.206). Yet, this infamy has led to Sparta being recorded as an idealised land, where the line between the truth and falsifications is perpetually blurred. This essay will be utilised to break apart the mirage, uncover the reality of its society, and more specifically uncover a virtually unknown concept that allowed Sparta's fame to be continually unprecedented during the Peloponnesian Wars – the Mothax.

The 'Mothax' – the name supposedly comes from the Doric Greek for 'stepbrother' - themselves are now only a concept recorded by surviving ancient sources, only through the description of what they are, and modern speculation regarding the mentioning of them by name or similar words that may attain to them (i.e.; Xenophon refers to 'nothoi' in one of his texts, which translates to 'bastard' – some modern historians have taken this as him writing about the Mothax, whilst others disagree) and if they have been mentioned by name, it typically comes from writings well after the downfall of Sparta. This is marked by the Battle of Leuctra against Thebes in 371 BCE, (Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 6.4) from which she was unable to return to the level of military superiority her infamy comes from.

Aristotle (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1278a) and Xenophon are sources close to the time of Sparta's infamy, yet neither of them names the Mothax. It is puzzling that a sociopolitical class, no matter how unknown, is not given a name when they are usually given definitive designations within all societies – ancient and modern – to deign their roles, power, and more. It isn't until sources like Phylarchos in the 3rd Century give the name to the Mothax (Phylarchos, 6.102). It may have been that the reference sources he may have used no longer survive, but it is also strange that for someone living within Sparta as Xenophon did he doesn't explicitly describe them despite likely having some contact with them, and high opinions with one of the Spartan Kings, Agesilaus II.

A major point regarding the Mothax, and likely the most important question of all, is how none of the sources from any Century or Period divulge into what the Mothax existed for, why it was not until the end of the Peloponnesian War and subsequently 30 years later, the 'end' of Sparta, and at what point does a child become a part of the Mothax and how it develops; which I shall do to the best of my knowledge.

The Mothax most likely existed because of the value of Spartiate blood – the Spartiates I refer to are male citizens who have completed the brutal Spartan education system, the Agoge, and have been accepted into a syssitia where other Spartiates will live, eat, sleep, train, etc. with. To be a part of a syssitia (after being accepted by voting) one must contribute towards the mess system with food from a plot of land given ownership to by the Ephors – this plot of land will be one of the many plots that Lycurgus, the potentially mythical Spartan lawgiver, ordained for the Spartans and managed by the helots and/or the Perioeci (Periokoi, ‘dwellers-around’ *the land of Messenia and Lakonia*) – at the height of Sparta only 10000 Spartiate soldiers existed, having been through the Agoge and passed the Cheese Stealing event at the temple of Artemis Orthia. With this, the value of Spartiate blood and eugenics is vital.

The Mothax are a class of male children that are half-helot (slave/serf) and half-Spartiate. It would be irresponsible of the State to completely disregard the value of the sons born from these eugenics, and as such, many ancient authors then allude to the concept of a sociopolitical class made up entirely of the male children from helot-rape by Spartiates by a description of these characteristics – however, there are also modern recordings that include other characteristics, like how some Mothax were the sons of Spartiate fathers who were impoverished because they could not afford to contribute the syssitia via their plot of land, and as such, if the children were able to obtain a Spartiate sponsor from their community if they were deemed able to complete the Agoge, they were able to take part and become Spartiates themselves.

This poses a question: at what point do these children become Mothax? Is it from the moment when their father is unable to contribute towards his syssitia’s mess? In the case of those half-helot, half-Spartiates, is it from the moment they’re born? Are these sons also able to enter the Agoge if they can obtain a sponsor? For those Mothax that have succeeded in completing the Agoge, do they then cease to be Mothax in favour of recognising their success at becoming Spartiates? Are there cases of both types of Mothax existing at once? The sheer number of questions that continue to pile up because of the little information we have and the ignorance both ancient and modern sources have given to less understanding

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