

SLAVES, WARFARE, AND  
IDEOLOGY IN THE GREEK  
HISTORIANS

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## CHAPTER I

### *Background: warfare, slavery, and ideology*

It was not I who wrote the decree, the battle of Chaeronea did.  
Hyperides on his proposal to free and arm Athenian slaves to fight  
Philip after the defeat at Chaeronea.<sup>1</sup>

War in archaic Greece was as traditional as the society that produced it. The hoplite battle was a limited and conventional way of fighting. Their monopoly of the military reinforced the dominance of independent farmers in political life. With the economic growth and the sophisticated and innovative culture of the classical period, warfare also lost its traditional character. The escalation that Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon document threatened to tear cities apart rather than to bolster their social structures. This book considers the encounter of an ideology rooted in aristocratic and then hoplite combat with the total war of the classical period.

Specifically, the increased manpower needs of a harsher system of war favored the recruitment of slaves and Helots. Chattel slavery had contributed to the economic growth that allowed the transgression of the hoplite ethic; the exploitation of Helots allowed the Spartan army to become the first professional one in the Greek world. Accordingly, large unfree populations were present to fight for their cities or – in another breach of previous practice – to desert or rebel at an enemy’s instigation.<sup>2</sup> When the instances of slave participation are viewed in isolation or are falsely assigned to the category of emergency measures, they may appear to be of marginal importance. When the important cases of slave and Helot involve-

<sup>1</sup> Hyperides fr. 28 Jensen.

<sup>2</sup> To avoid the frequent use of the awkward expression “unfree,” I often use “slave” in a loose sense to include Helots as well. Where the distinction between the two is important, the expressions “Helots” and “chattel slaves” will make this clear.

ment are put together, it becomes clear that, during the classical period, the unfree played a decisive role on several occasions and participated on even more.

We will treat these events in the appropriate chapters; a general idea of their significance can be gained by a consideration of the two major Greek powers for most of our period, Athens and Sparta. The single useful piece of epigraphic evidence on the subject suggests that the navy upon which Athens' power rested may have contained about as many slaves as Athenian citizens.<sup>3</sup> The Spartan-led navy that eventually defeated Athens probably contained an even larger proportion of slave rowers. During the height of Spartan power there were as many Neodamodeis, ex-Helot hoplites, on active military service as there were Spartan citizens in total. The fall of Sparta and supremacy of Thebes was sealed as much by the establishment of Messene for Sparta's rebellious Helots as by the battle of Leuctra, which crippled Sparta's army.

All of this was anathema to the traditional link between politics and war. How could slaves, generally considered cowardly items of property, take part in one of the defining activities of the citizen? The participation of slaves in war was not simply immoral. It was not simply a matter for condemnation. Rather, within a certain ideology, it ought to have been impossible. Accordingly, the use of slaves in war receives short shrift in the classical historians. Their world views could not easily accommodate a military role for slaves.

Much of this book will be devoted to demonstrating in detail these two propositions: slaves were important to Greek warfare; classical Greek historians tend to play down their role. The reasons for Greek unease with slaves in warfare turn out to tell us a great deal about classical society, economics, and the places of these three historians within their cultures. In crude terms the use of slaves in warfare was regarded as an abomination because of Greek culture's admiration of martial prowess and contempt for slaves.

The prestige of Greek warfare derived from several sources. Some of these seem obvious and natural: societies tend to reward and to admire their protectors. More sinister, the possession of weapons can be a source of political power. Throughout recorded history, classes

<sup>3</sup> *IG* 2<sup>2</sup> 1951 now *IG* 1<sup>3</sup> 1032 a-i. See Laing (1966) and Graham (1992).

that wield military power have often dominated their societies.<sup>4</sup> The ideological counterpart of this domination is the high cultural value put upon the warrior and upon war. Most significant for our investigation, Greece had no warrior class separate from the leaders and citizens of its cities.<sup>5</sup> Thus participation in warfare was linked first with aristocratic rule and then with the egalitarian ethos of hoplite farmers. In the fifth century, the *thetes*, the lowest class of Athenian citizens, gained ideological clout since they rowed in the navy upon which Athens' power rested.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the historic and ideological link between political prerogatives and military service, the Athenians were not about to extend rights to their slaves when they too rowed in the navy. Consequently, the position of slaves presented an awkward anomaly for the Athenian mentality. Although metics, resident aliens, also served Athens – both in the navy and as hoplites – without political rights at Athens, there were additional factors that made fighting slaves more threatening.

Slaves' particular unsuitability for war, which we shall document at length, was essentially due to two factors. First and most directly, the Greeks affected to believe that slaves were cowards. This image of slaves, attested in many other slave societies, to a certain extent merely reflects the reality of slaves' relative powerlessness: slaves could rarely stand up to their masters. Paradoxically, such representations may also assuage the insecurity of masters living in dangerous proximity to their slaves. Second and perhaps more important, slavery played an important ideological role in the relations between sections of the free population. Economically, the relatively peaceful coexistence of rich and poor in Athens was based on slave labor. On the ideological level, slaves were a group against which all Athenians could define themselves as a unity. Thus slaves especially ought to have been kept from the warfare so closely connected with civic rights.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Andreski (1968) 26; Howard (1991) 167. Harris (1977) 47–97 finds also a strong connection between the male monopoly of warfare and patriarchy.

<sup>5</sup> Mossé (1985) 221–222; Garland (1989) 143.

<sup>6</sup> [Xen.] 1.2; Millett (1993) 183, 187, 191; cf. Momigliano (1944), Andreski (1968) 27, and Starr (1978).

<sup>7</sup> In fact, the extension of military roles to every level of the Athenian citizen population may have increased the distaste for recruiting slaves. Vagts (1959) 442–443 points out that the extension of military participation and prestige often requires singling out small groups

Evidence from epic, drama, oratory, and philosophy will help fill out our picture of classical ideologies; post-classical biographers and historians as well as writers on military tactics give us additional evidence about actual military practices. Only the classical historians face both ways. Only Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon both exemplify the thinking of the classical Greek world and systematically narrate its warfare.<sup>8</sup> They were directly confronted with describing wars in which slaves participated within systems of thought that could not easily acknowledge this possibility. Although all three historians faced this same problem, their distinct outlooks, periods, and subject matters ensure that each contributes different perspectives to our understanding of the Greek ideology and practice of slavery and war.

The contrast between slavery and freedom is central to the world of Herodotus. Nations that are soft, cowardly, subject to despotic rule, or defeated in war are likened to slaves. In his story of the Scythians' slaves Herodotus makes it clear that not only metaphorical but actual slavery is incompatible with military prowess. His noble story of Greece's fight for freedom has no place for slave warriors by the side of the victorious Greeks.

Although Thucydides is justly renowned for his unflinching gaze, his narrative too was shaped by the categories of his time and world. These sharply distinguished between slaves and citizens and associated only the citizens with military participation. This dichotomy between slaves and citizens smoothed the uneasy coexistence between rich and poor among the citizens. The Peloponnesian War drove Athens into civil war and gave rise to the widespread use of Helots and slave rowers as well as the incitement of slave revolts. Consequently, the categories of slave and of citizen were increasingly blurred at the very time they were most needed to unite the fractured citizenry. In his history Thucydides maintains these threatened boundaries at the cost of playing down the awkward role of slaves in his war.

Xenophon is best understood in terms of his militaristic justi-

without honor: the prestige of fighting, common and thus cheap, could be bolstered by the contrast with a despised class. In classical Athens, slaves may have served this role.

<sup>8</sup> I have used fragmentary historians and the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* for military practices; it would be over-ambitious to extract a world view even from the latter. The uncertainties of source criticism would make it unwise to attempt an account of Ephorus or other historians whose narratives must be extracted from the surviving history of Diodorus Siculus.

fication both of leadership and of slave-master relationships. His philosophy equates the virtues which justify rule with those which bring success in war: rulers should also be the best soldiers. In contrast, slaves are anti-warriors: they are soft, feminine, non-Greek, and cowardly. Although this political philosophy had elite or hoplite domination of the city as its primary aim, Xenophon explicitly calls for the exclusion of slaves from warfare, a necessary corollary, on several occasions. Since Xenophon wrote in a variety of genres, he also provides our best evidence for the Greek stereotype of slaves as cowards in ancient Greece. Arming slaves threatened this stereotype, so fragile yet so psychologically necessary for slaveholders.

These specific cultural and social factors made the participation of slaves in war awkward for the Greeks. Other attitudes could accommodate slave warriors: oligarchic thinking did not insist on the primacy of the divide between slaves and citizens; the increasingly hierarchical armed forces of the fourth century included levels considered appropriate to slaves as well as to citizens and to nobles; professional or mercenary armies were tools of the state rather than the citizens-in-arms. So not even in the realm of ideology was the exclusion of slaves from warfare natural or obvious. Rather I suspect that a coincidence between the ancient and the modern Western ideal of citizens and soldiers has led to an overly enthusiastic embrace of only one strand of Greek ideology, the prohibition of slaves from warfare.

The fundamental reason for modern underestimation of the importance of slave participation in warfare is the very reticence of the ancient sources that this book aims to document. Two other lines of reasoning, although often unstated, tend to leave modern scholars skeptical about slaves in war. My specific arguments about the extent of slave use will stand or fall on their own merits. Nevertheless, a discussion of these unspoken grounds for objection may disarm them and will also illustrate the significance of this project. The first set of objections is intellectual, the second political.

Structuralism and the study of mentalities have had great influence in the field of Greek history. Both emphasize the ways that people think about their world rather than attempting to unmask the realities that lie beneath these models. Inspired by structural linguistics, structuralism holds that all societies organize their conceptual worlds according to systems of opposed categories. It is this system of differences rather than any specific events – or even conscious

thought – that is the subject of their science.<sup>9</sup> The study of mentalities is just as focused on the way that people understand their worlds. It emphasizes, however, the unique mental worlds of different peoples and periods.<sup>10</sup> Neither school is primarily concerned with the accuracy of the models and interpretive categories it elicits. Historians influenced by these schools of thought emphasize the ideological equivalence of soldier and citizen. They pay little attention to actual practice.<sup>11</sup>

In some ways, this concentration on ancient ideology is salutary. Greek thinking often turns out to have been more complex and various than expected: our authors' slant on fighting slaves is certainly not a screen that we need only to get behind. Nevertheless, no matter how subtle the reading of the Funeral Oration's ideology, Pericles' ideal of "falling in love" with your city needs to be confronted with the blunt realism of Aeneas Tacticus' one thousand and one ways to do in your political enemies – religious festivals, for example, were particularly opportune.<sup>12</sup> What people say is usually interesting and revealing; it is not always true. My goal is to pay attention to the model through which the Greeks understood the world without assuming that it perfectly represents – or creates – their world.

Other objections to my argument may derive from political motives of several sorts. One is the notion that the reputation of the West's admired ancestors, the Greeks, may be contaminated if they turn out to have used slaves in their wars. The undoubted bellicosity of the Greeks, especially the Athenians, has often been palliated by

<sup>9</sup> Lévi-Strauss (1963) is the classic introduction to structural anthropology. Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1986) and Hartog (1988) are two works important to our subject influenced by structuralism.

<sup>10</sup> See Lloyd (1990) for bibliography and critical appraisal of the study of mentalities, cf. Williams (1993). Geertz's "thick description," which we discuss below is closely aligned with the study of mentalities.

<sup>11</sup> Loraux (1986) 336 for example, is quite explicit in her distaste for the "historian in quest of *realia*." She has "refused to indulge in the interminable rooting out of illusion." Consequently, Loraux, however perceptive in her reading of ideology, is hardly the scholar to consult for actual practice, e.g., Goldhill (1990) 109.

<sup>12</sup> Pericles in Th. 2.43.1(M): "you should every day look at the true power of the city and should fall in love with the city." Aeneas Tacticus 17.1–2: "In a state full of dissension and mutual suspicion, circumspection is needed about the crowds at torch-races, horse-races, or other contests – indeed, at all religious festivals for the whole people . . . A faction can take advantage even of occasions like these to overcome its opponents. For example . . ." Cf. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 15.4, 18.4.

the argument that they, at least, put their own lives on the line when they voted for war. That this was only part of the story seems to undermine one of the last claims to simple admiration that the classical Greeks retain.

I have more sympathy for a fear which can perhaps be characterized as leftist in its sympathy for the oppressed: if slaves are shown to have fought for their masters, this could be taken to indicate their attachment rather than resentment or resistance to slavery.<sup>13</sup> Of course, some slaves may have loved their masters. Some may have wanted to risk their lives for the very system of slavery. Many varieties of behavior and belief are likely to occur among large numbers of individuals. I suspect that most slaves were quite smart enough to hate their masters – we will see some hints of this in Xenophon – or felt at best ambivalence. The key point will emerge that fighting does not indicate true feelings or require affection. People can – and usually do – fight for others, for pay, or out of compulsion.

On the one hand, reactionary historians maintain the purity of citizen warfare. On the other, “leftist” historians unnecessarily protect an abstract ideal of discontented slaves. Neither motivation makes for good history. In both cases, we are repeating the gesture of the Greeks themselves for whom the categories of slave and citizen/warrior had to be kept separate.<sup>14</sup>

#### CLASSICAL WARFARE

Although war and battles have always been the stuff of history, in recent decades historians have paid particular attention to the connections between Greek warfare, culture, and society. Yvon Garlan points out that from 490 to 338, Athens was at war two years out of every three and never experienced ten years of peace.<sup>15</sup> In the absence of a standing, professional army most male citizens could – and did on occasion – experience warfare first-hand. From the fifth to the mid-fourth century, throughout our whole period, the basic divisions of the citizen body at Athens were based on military status:

<sup>13</sup> Fogel (1989) 158 notes a similar “work ethic” of resistance in some work on Southern slavery.

<sup>14</sup> See Bernal (1987) for another interpretation of classical historiography in terms of a concern for purity, in this case racial purity.

<sup>15</sup> Garlan (1975) 15.

the top class provided money for public services including warships, the *hippeis* formed the cavalry, the next class, the *zeugitai*, were hoplites, and the *thetes* rowed in the navy.<sup>16</sup>

Warfare was also central to Greek culture. Vidal-Naquet interprets the coming of age in Athens as the transformation of the anti-hoplite *ephebe* into the hoplite citizen.<sup>17</sup> Winkler argues that tragic festivals were the “occasion for elaborate symbolic play on themes of proper and improper civic behavior, in which the principal component of proper male citizenship was military.” In particular, he emphasizes the “quasi-military features of tragic choral dancing.”<sup>18</sup> Hanson shows that hoplite warfare was part of the yearly cycle of life for early classical farmers.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, “the peacetime fascination with the use of shield and spear, the hoplite’s ritualistic dance, the competitive race in armor – and the interest of the vase painter, sculptor, and poet” are manifestations of constant anxiety about battles to come.<sup>20</sup>

Some hyperbolic formulations, however, distort the relationship of social status and military participation. Vidal-Naquet insists that the nobility of nobles was “utterly inseparable from their characters as warriors.” He implies that there was no social status other than that conferred by fighting.<sup>21</sup> Such a way of thinking may typify some of Xenophon’s or Livy’s more extravagant moments, but does not characterize any real society. Meier has no trouble showing that the status of Greek nobles depended on factors other than warfare. Some such factors were luxury, music, owning land, and taking part in politics.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the rough equality of hoplites depended as much on their possession of similar farms as upon their interchangeable places in the phalanx.

The importance of warfare in Greek culture may have been a constant until the mid-fourth century; the nature of armed conflict and its social effects changed dramatically in the fifth century. War in the archaic period had been limited with respect to the means employed and to the parts of society that took part. Throughout the fifth century – culminating in the Peloponnesian War – limits on the way that war was waged broke down.

In appearance Greek land warfare was modern: the Greeks used

<sup>16</sup> Hansen (1991) 116.

<sup>17</sup> Vidal-Naquet (1986c) 120.

<sup>18</sup> Winkler (1990a) 21, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Hanson (1983).

<sup>20</sup> Hanson (1989) 221.

<sup>21</sup> Vidal-Naquet (1986d) 85 followed by Lengauer (1979) 12–13.

<sup>22</sup> Meier (1990) 561, 573ff.

the compact formations usually taken to distinguish “true” from “primitive” war.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the brief, but bloody, battles of early hoplite warfare show more characteristics of traditional – if not primitive – war than of prolonged modern struggles. Early Greek hoplites fought in ways that tended both to limit the killing to one time and place and to reduce the economic impact of war.<sup>24</sup> The decisive nature of Greek battle did not depend upon the magnitude of the victories obtained but rather upon certain conventions. Hanson points out that killing was limited by “the postmortem viewing of the dead, the exchange of bodies, the erection of the battlefield trophy, the lack of organized pursuit and further slaughter, and, above all, the mutual understanding to abide by the decision achieved on the battlefield.”<sup>25</sup> Pritchett notes other conventional features such as formal challenges and prearranged battles.<sup>26</sup> Tactical maneuvering or trickery played only a small part in early hoplite warfare.<sup>27</sup> With the exception of Sparta’s conquest of Messenia, hoplite war had as its goal merely the acquisition – often temporary – of marginal border lands.<sup>28</sup>

Granted, the idea of the fair and limited fight did not completely dominate Greek thinking about war. In Homer there are hints of an earlier, less conventional view of war. For example, Homer does not consider ambushes unheroic. Odysseus even went looking for poison for his arrows, although the Gods disapproved.<sup>29</sup> Even in the classical age, the dominance of hoplite ideology was never quite complete. In Euripides’ *Heracles*, Lycus and Amphitryon argue about the relative merits of hoplite fighting and archery. The villainous tyrant Lycus opposes the stout hoplite to Heracles’ cowardly bow; the noble Amphitryon favors killing enemies from a distance without fear of retaliation.<sup>30</sup> It would be over-schematic to imagine a

<sup>23</sup> Turney-High (1971) 39.      <sup>24</sup> Hanson (1991a) 6; Ober (1994) 7.

<sup>25</sup> Hanson (1989) 223.      <sup>26</sup> *GSW* 2.147, 2.173.

<sup>27</sup> *GSW* 3.331; Detienne (1974) 180 n. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Connor (1988) 16. Sparta seems also to have tried to interfere in other cities’ internal affairs, but see Cartledge (1979) 139–140, 148 for a critical appraisal of Sparta’s role as deposer of tyrants.

<sup>29</sup> *GSW* 3.330. Hom. *Od.* 1.260–263. In an older version of the return of Odysseus – who did name his son Telemachus, fighter from afar – Odysseus may have killed all of the suitors with his bow: Homer has Odysseus run out of arrows and rearm to finish the fight with a spear to accommodate the hoplite class’s contempt for unsporting combat at a distance (Griffin [1987] 71).

<sup>30</sup> Eur. *HF* 151–204.

Homeric time of acceptance, a hoplite period of strict rules, and then a complete breakdown in the fourth century. Nevertheless, Hanson *et al.* are basically right: the Greeks rarely used tricks and fought largely according to convention during the archaic and early classical period.<sup>31</sup>

Traditional hoplite warfare lasted as long as it did for various reasons. The common Greek culture of the different city-states must have played an important part. The antagonists all shared in a common language, similar customs, and the pan-Hellenic festivals. In contrast, the Greeks did not defend themselves against the Persians by offering fair fights on level ground.<sup>32</sup> Common adherence to the hoplite ethic was in some sense “a wonderful conspiracy” in that loss of life and especially economic harm was minimized.<sup>33</sup> The level of military technology may have abetted the conspiracy: since the Greeks were unable to storm walled cities, the scope of victories was necessarily limited. The costs of escalation may have obviously outweighed the possible benefits.<sup>34</sup> The way that the campaigning season dovetails into the yearly cycle of agriculture suggests that there may not have been the extra time or wealth to fight extended wars requiring the long-term supply of an army.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, hoplite warfare aimed at internal stability as much as at external threats.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Robert Connor compares a battle to a sacrifice. He concludes that its primary function was civic self-representation.<sup>37</sup> Several scholars argue that the hoplite ethic was a way that the class of farmers who made up the hoplites maintained their power. By limiting warfare to a type that required money for armor, but more men than the aristocracy, and which could be fought and finished during a break in the farming season, the

<sup>31</sup> Pace Wheeler (1988).

<sup>32</sup> Ober (1994) 8. This contrast is a further piece of evidence that wars between Greek cities were fought within conventional limits.

<sup>33</sup> Hanson (1991a) 6.

<sup>34</sup> Meier (1990a) 569. He also points out that during much of the archaic period expansion via colonization or around colonies was possible without the conquest of neighboring cities (572).

<sup>35</sup> Hanson (1989) 35. Turney-High (1971) 30 considers possession of the economic resources to supply an army as perhaps the key factor that brings a people over the “military horizon.” In Thucydides, Pericles contrasts the backward Peloponnesians, whose poverty keeps them from fighting long wars, with the modern Athenians who have the wealth to fight a protracted war (Th. 1.141.3). This supports our argument that Greece was only leaving the realm of primitive warfare in the 5th century.

<sup>36</sup> Cartledge (1977) 24; Garland (1975) 31; Foxhall (1993) 143.

<sup>37</sup> Connor (1988) 17, 23.

hoplites shut out both the rich and the poor from the symbolic capital that defending the city conferred.<sup>38</sup>

The hoplite ethic broke down for reasons that were no doubt complex. A summary in broad strokes will suffice for here. Economic expansion was a necessary precondition for more intense warfare. States in the classical period could afford to arm greater numbers of people for longer periods. In such a situation, the initial advantage of escalation may have proved too tempting to clever tacticians.<sup>39</sup> The extended war with Persia may have accustomed Greece to war outside of the limits of the hoplite tradition. Finally, naval warfare, which had not developed the same conventions, became more important.<sup>40</sup> For all these reasons fifth-century warfare differed radically from the previous hoplite battles.<sup>41</sup> Early hoplite warfare was like a contest, an *agon*, in that it was conducted according to set rules. The decline of the hoplite *agon* led to conditions that encouraged the use of slaves in war.

In the growing Athenian economy, numerous slaves – perhaps 100,000 – were available to fight.<sup>42</sup> The wealth of Athens enabled it to support numbers of sailors in excess of its citizen population for extended periods. Competition among cities transformed the ability to man large numbers of ships into the necessity for doing so; Athens was not the only wealthy, slave-owning state in Greece. The manpower demands of Greek navies were voracious compared with those of hoplite armies. Athens needed 34,000 men to man the navy that fought against the Persians at Artemisium. At this time, Athens could still only field 8,000 hoplites.<sup>43</sup> From early in the fifth century Athens could no longer man its ships with citizens alone.<sup>44</sup> The casualties suffered in naval warfare were also far higher than those

<sup>38</sup> Garland (1975) 127; Cartledge (1977) 24; Connor (1988) 18; Hanson (1991a) 6; Ober (1994) 4–8. See also Hunt (1994) 268 n. 1035 *contra* Holladay (1982).

<sup>39</sup> Ober (1991) 188.

<sup>40</sup> See Th. 1.13–14 with *HCT* 1.120–126 on the growth of Greek navies.

<sup>41</sup> Connor (1988) 29; Meier (1990a) 579.

<sup>42</sup> Garland (1988) 59. Some other estimates are as follows: Sargent (1924) 126: 67,000–103,000; Gomme (1933) 26: 115,000; Vogt (1975) 4: 115,000; Finley (1982a) 102: 60,000–80,000; Hansen (1991) 93: 150,000; Sallares (1991) 60: 30,000–50,000 (4th century); Cartledge (1993a) 135: 60,000–80,000.

<sup>43</sup> Vidal-Naquet (1986d) 92. Before the Persian Wars Athens manned navies of 70 ships which would require fewer than 14,000 men (H. 6.89). In the Peloponnesian War, Athens manned up to 250 triremes (Th. 3.17.1–2 with Kallet-Marx [1993] 130–134, 150–151 for bibliography and a recent discussion).

<sup>44</sup> Meier (1990a) 584.

in hoplite battles. If 50 ships sank in a battle, up to 10,000 men could die. More than twice that number of ships went down in the largest battles. On the other hand, hoplite casualties in the entire century from 470 to 370 may have totaled only 24,000.<sup>45</sup>

The duration of campaigns also increased. Athenian sieges of recalcitrant allies – not to mention the Egyptian and Sicilian expeditions – could last for years. In contrast, a traditional hoplite battle took up part of one day in a campaign measured in weeks.

Wars became more important to cities.<sup>46</sup> No longer matters of borderlands, wars often determined the political independence, if not the physical survival of a city. Athens itself was usually in the position of dictating terms. At the end of the Peloponnesian War, however, Athens' enemies considered enslaving its whole population.<sup>47</sup>

The combination of wealth and risky wars fought by huge navies led to a situation in which all possible sources of manpower including slaves were used. Slave involvement in the intensification of warfare could work also to the detriment of their masters. As war grew more economic both in its ends and its means, slaves became a particularly vulnerable type of property. In times of war slaves had far greater opportunities to run away – an option they seem to have pursued often enough even in peace. A common tactic was to offer freedom to the fugitive slaves of an enemy city. This could induce mass desertion and cripple an opponent's economy. For instance, Thucydides reports that more than 20,000 slaves, most of them skilled, fled to Decelea. This many slaves could have contributed – as a rough guess – 200 talents per year to the Athenian economy.<sup>48</sup> Such a sum was more than a third of the total tribute paid by the empire.<sup>49</sup> The effort Sparta went to for every defection among Athens' allies points out how relatively effective the tactic of inciting slave desertion was. The Helots of Sparta, especially those in Messenia, were rebellious on their own account. Their discontent

<sup>45</sup> Hanson (1995) 308.      <sup>46</sup> Meier (1990a) 583.      <sup>47</sup> *HG* 2.2.19–20; *Plut. Lys.* 15.

<sup>48</sup> Based on an obol of profit per slave per day as in *Vect.* 4.14: the lowest daily pay for a laborer in the Erechtheum work records was 5 obols per day, of which no more than 3 would be needed for subsistence (Randall [1953] 208; cf. Pritchett [1956] 277). As the population of Athens was living largely on the income of the empire during the Peloponnesian War, the comparison of public and private finances is not inappropriate.

<sup>49</sup> *Th.* 2.13.3 gives 600 talents as the total tribute. Scholars question whether this number may be too large (cf. Kallet-Marx [1993] 99); this would only make our argument stronger.

compounded the effectiveness of an appeal to them by the Athenians. When war rose in ferocity to the level of inciting slaves to revolt, it was far from serving the integrative and stabilizing purposes of the hoplite *agon*.

Historians generally acknowledge that the expansion of warfare led to a breakdown of the citizen-soldier link. Their tendency, however, is to locate this break in the late-fifth or fourth century, to point mainly to the use of mercenary soldiers, and to consider this change a sign of decline.<sup>50</sup> As we shall see, trends in fourth-century land warfare do suggest this pattern. The Athenian navy, however, one of the dominant forces in the Greek world through the fifth century, was manned only in part by citizens. Scholars' elision of the fifth century may derive from a preconception that the citizen-soldier is an ideal not only in some moral sense, but in terms of power. According to this logic it is only in the decadence of the fourth century that the breakdown of the citizen-soldier can be located.

One can make the opposite argument: the most powerful states are those in which the citizens no longer have to do all of their fighting and which have the ability to recruit others for this dangerous work. For example, when Athens mounted its most ambitious campaigns – or showed the depth of its resiliency – its navy probably included the greatest proportion of non-citizens. Similarly, it was during the zenith of Spartan power in the 390s that Sparta sent out armies of Neodamodeis. Citizen armies may dominate the 20th century world, but this has not always been the case. It ceased to be the case in Greece by the mid-fifth century at the latest.

#### HELOTS

Throughout this book our attention will alternate between the chattel slaves of cities such as Athens, Chios, and Syracuse and the Helots of Sparta. Since the Helots were considered slaves by many Greeks and played a conspicuous part in warfare, both as soldiers and as rebels, their inclusion is unavoidable. They require separate treatment, because their actual status was not that of slaves. Additionally, the justice of their subjugation was contested to a far greater extent than that of chattel slaves. This issue will figure

<sup>50</sup> Garlan (1975) 91–93; Mossé (1985) 223, 229; Loraux (1986) 98.

prominently when we consider attempts to instigate revolution among the Helots. Here we need to show that in Spartan and pro-Spartan ideology, the Helots figured as arch-slaves. Their recruitment was favored by practical advantages rather than a lack of ideological difficulties.

Scholars have described the Helots as state slaves, collective slaves, undeveloped or even private slaves, serfs, villeins, or peasant serfs of the state.<sup>51</sup> Helots were different from chattel slaves in several respects. Although some served the Spartans personally either as shield-bearers on campaign or in their houses in Sparta, most Helots lived separately from their masters whose political and military duties kept them in Sparta.<sup>52</sup> Helots were not cut off from their families and homes; they were not, as in Orlando Patterson's well-known definition of slavery, "naturally alienated."<sup>53</sup>

The gap between Helots and Spartiates was not as great either socially or legally as that between Athenians and slaves: the children of Helot mothers and Spartiate fathers were given a partial citizenship and were allowed to go through the Spartan education.<sup>54</sup> There does not even seem to have been much prejudice against such offspring: both Gylippus and Lysander were perhaps such half-caste children; yet they rose as high as any non-royal Spartan.<sup>55</sup>

More significant, the amount of produce that the Helots' Spartiate masters could appropriate was limited.<sup>56</sup> Detleff Lotze correctly deduces from this that the Helots had property rights to the remnant

<sup>51</sup> M. I. Finley (1982b) emphasizes that Spartan society consisted of a spectrum of statuses whose interpretation in terms of the slave/free dichotomy hinders our understanding. Detleff Lotze (1959) argues that Helots were not serfs since their personal service for the Spartans was identical to slavery; he calls them collective slaves. Older and especially continental scholarship is concisely reviewed in Oliva (1971) 38–43, who eventually opts for "undeveloped slavery." Since then G. E. M. de Ste. Croix ([1981] 149–150, [1988]) has argued for state-serfs. Cartledge ([1985] 40–41, [1979], 161ff.) agrees with Ste. Croix that legally the Helots were state-serfs, but emphasizes that they were slaves in terms of being exploited involuntary producers and were so called by the Greeks. Garlan (1988) 87 sees the difference between Helots and slaves in the fact that the Helots were subjugated as a community rather than as individuals and prefers the expression communal servitude. Ducat (1990) 29, 46–48, 50, 140, 151 tends to emphasize similarities between Helots and slaves, but admits that it was the relative independence of Helots that required the extremely oppressive measures that made some Greeks consider Helotage an extreme form of slavery (182).

<sup>52</sup> Lotze (1959) 35 collects the references. <sup>53</sup> Patterson (1982) 5ff.

<sup>54</sup> Hooker (1980) 119 on Ath. 6.271 e-f. <sup>55</sup> Kagan (1987) 298.

<sup>56</sup> Cartledge (1979) 164; Figueira (1984) 108 n. 63.