

THE THIRD MESSENIAN WAR

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

There are certain basic problems which will probably affect the world as long as there are people on it, namely how to appreciate and live in peace with one's fellows. The Third Messenian War amply illustrates another failure to do so. The Third Messenian War involved problems of race. The Messenians were largely of Achaean stock, and their Spartan masters were Dorians. It concerned poverty and socio-economic discrimination. Witness the situation of the helots and perioeci in Sparta and the depressed artisan democrats of the coast in Athens who overthrew Cimon. The war took place in a bi-polarized world rushing toward conflict, with a cold war beginning in 461. Sparta was sensitive to Athenian imperialism, and each viewed the other as a purveyor of toxic ideology. The Third Messenian War illustrates the inflexibility which accompanies long wars, both for Sparta in fighting the war while Athens made the most of it, and for Athens bogged down in Thasos while Sparta prepared to

attack. The war contained examples of international political blunders and their results, seen in Sparta's incredible dismissal of Cimon's forces. In short, the Third Messenian War contained some of the same bricks over which we today continue to trip.

The original sources for the war are neither precise nor in agreement. For this reason, as in most episodes in ancient history, imagination plays a significant role in the reconstruction of the war. The paucity of source material requires the student of ancient history to squeeze the most from each word of his sources. The result is that, in reference to the Third Messenian War, it is often impossible to be precise, and requires exploration of the possibilities to assess the probabilities.

Some scholars of ancient history delight in choosing champions from among ancient historians. The result of such intellectual jousting is often invective and an unwillingness to synthesize accounts of the ancients, when possible. This is especially applicable to the modern historians who touch on the Third Messenian War, most of whom deal with chronology. N. G. L. Hammond believes that Diodorus of Sicily is a much under-rated historian, and promotes his accounts against those of Thucydides who is championed as strongly by G. B. Grundy and A. W. Gomme. The history of

the Third Messenian War must be more than an apology for one of the ancient sources.

The Third Messenian War, said Diodorus, was the "first cause of the estrangement" between Athens and Sparta which resulted in the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides claimed that it was in consequence of this Third Messenian War that "a lack of harmony in the relations of the Lacedaemonians and the Athenians first became manifest." Few modern students of the period agree wholeheartedly with Diodorus and Thucydides<sup>1</sup> on this point, but to a degree the Third Messenian War did play the part of the catalyst in helping to produce the Peloponnesian War. The war was not the major cause of this event, yet the Peloponnesian War could have been accelerated, delayed, or altered had the course of the Third Messenian War been different. The exigencies of time and space usually relegate the Third Messenian War to an insignificant position in most Greek history texts. The relatively brief account in some specialized works belies the multitude of controversy surrounding nearly every detail of the war. The Third Messenian War has been eclipsed by the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars between which it occurred. Though, admittedly not as significant as those two events,

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<sup>1</sup>Thuc. 102. 3; Diod. 11. 64. 3.

the Third War is worthy of study in its own right. It was one of the first formal causes of the dissolution of the anti-Persian spirit pervading Greece in the first decade of the fifth century B.C. It played a significant role in the rise of the Periclean party in Athens. It was closely related to the phenomenon of the shrinking population which eventually caused Sparta to fade into oblivion. It was one of the turning points in the organization of the famed Spartan army. It connected the Messenians and Athenians for the next hundred and fifty years, a fact which eventually resulted in the creation of a colorful Messenian history. For these reasons a history of the Third Messenian War is a worthwhile contribution to the study of ancient Greece.

The history of the Third Messenian War requires a section on the historiography of the period. This section analyzes the sources for the information on the war, with comments on reliability and method. Hopefully this will make clearer the author's reasons for favoring one account over another at various points in the study.

A section concerning the early Messenian-Laconian relations is included. It contains basic background material explaining the origins of Messenia, how Sparta gained control of Messenia in the First and Second Messenian Wars,



explains why Sparta undertook the conquest, and comments on the subsequent results of that conquest. A section on the causes of the Third Messenian War follows. The causes include a long standing resentment and the political situation immediately preceding the war.

The nature and conduct of the war follows the section on its causes. This chapter indicates the difference between the Third Messenian War and the previous two, and outlines its course. It will also include appropriate remarks on the actual mode of battle during the period, specific engagements, heroes, and the eventual cessation of hostilities.

Discussion of the date of the war is in the appendix. This is one of the most controversial factors of the war. The controversy stems not only from a difference in the calendars of Athens and Sparta, but also from a basic disagreement in the sources. It is at this point that the practice of some scholars of championing certain ancient sources, mentioned above, is most evident.

The final section will contain comments on the results of the war, both immediate and long range, in Sparta and in Athens, and other concluding remarks. This paper will delve into nearly all of the facets of the war and present the pertinent information extant. In order to

understand the nature of that information it is necessary  
to begin by evaluating the ancient sources.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SOURCES

The major sources for the Third Messenian War are more numerous than those for an occasion as important as Hannibal's crossing the Alps. For the former there are four, Thucydides, Diodorus of Sicily, Plutarch and Pausanias of Lydia, while for the latter there are only Polybius and Livy. The sources of information for many events in ancient history are frequently few and of dubious value. For this reason some explanation of the reliability and method of the sources for the study of the Third Messenian War is necessary.

Two major source problems confront the student of the Third Messenian War. First, the works concerning the Third Messenian War are not in all cases strictly historical accounts. Second, a cultural trait of the Greeks which affected the history of the Third Messenian War is a love of symmetry, pattern, and balance. Any work which purported to use reason or was intended to be of an excellent quality

frequently reflected certain elements of symmetrical form. Especially, it seems, did Greek prose reveal an excessive emphasis on what Kitto terms "balance and antithesis."<sup>1</sup> In fact, he says, ". . . the Greek tended to impose pattern where it is in fact not to be found, just as he relied on Reason where he would have been better advised to use observation . . . ." <sup>2</sup> This is a point especially applicable to certain of the less reliable historians mentioned later in this chapter.

The period between the end of the Persian Wars in 479 B.C., and the beginning of the Peloponnesian Wars in 431 is commonly called the Pentecontaetia.<sup>3</sup> It is noted for its lack of historical material available to modern historians. It falls between the events of the fifth century B.C. with which the greatest historians of the period, Herodotus and Thucydides were concerned. This is not to say that there is no evidence from the period, but that it is notorious for its scarcity. There are a few inscriptions; some

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<sup>1</sup>H. D. F. Kitto, The Greeks (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1951), pp. 186-87.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Adolf Holm, History of Greece, trans. by Frederick Clarke (London: Macmillan and Co., 1898), II, 102, insists that the period lasts only from 479-439 and is therefore a Tessanakontaetia rather than a Penticontaetia.

chronological narratives, namely those of Thucydides, Diodorus, and Hellanicus; a few biographies, Plutarch's being the only one relevant to the Third Messenian War; and a sort of ancient travel guide, not precisely a chronological narrative, by Pausanias. "We have indeed been scurvily treated in the history of the Pentekontaetia . . . ." <sup>4</sup>

Thucydides (ca. 460-400), son of Olorus, is usually regarded as the most accurate Greek historian. He employed a critical approach to the writing of history which places his work, the History of the War Between Athens and Sparta, far above the charming storytelling approach of his contemporaries. Thucydides avoided the platitudinous, moralizing approach of some later historians. <sup>5</sup> Most modern historians concede that the lack of corruption in the text of Thucydides combined with his great skills make him the most reliable of ancient sources for those events which he relates. The matter of textural purity is most important for study in this period, because many copiers of the ancient historians were obliged to improve the ancient texts in their possession.

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<sup>4</sup>A. W. Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1945), I, 53.

<sup>5</sup>J. B. Bury, A History of Greece to the Death of Alexander the Great (3rd ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1952), p. 381.

In the case of Thucydides, there is not a single instance where corruption can unquestionably be proved.<sup>6</sup> Generally, the weak spots in the text of Thucydides arise from the fact that he probably learned Thracian Greek before Attic, and this is reflected in his style. Such points are important to textual critics and grammarians, but they do not affect the history of Thucydides.<sup>7</sup>

The references of Thucydides to the Third Messenian War are found in the history of the Pentecontaetia in Book I of his history. The account is mainly a digression to illustrate the point of his entire work, that the Peloponnesian Wars resulted from the sharp growth of Athenian power. This presents a problem in evaluating the sources for the Third War because Book I is not so clearly organized or dated as the rest of Thucydides' history. Since Thucydides died before he finished his history, Willamowitz-Moellendorff, Junghahn, Muller-Strubing, and others, suggest that an editor completed it, perhaps from notes left by Thucydides, and they attribute some of the incongruities of Book I to this editor. Thucydides did not begin to collect materials

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<sup>6</sup>G. B. Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), I, 53.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 51-55.

for his history until after the Peloponnesian War had begun. After this date he could rely on his own selection of sources, but for much information on events prior to the war, which includes the period of the Third Messenian War, he had to rely frequently on sources not of his own choosing and not subject to his personal critical standards. For this reason, basically, the editorial theory is discarded, and the cause of confusion in Book I is clear. The period of the Pentecontaetia is an independent unit which appears simply to have been inserted into the text of Book I, running from 87 through 118. 2. Grundy surmises, then, that Thucydides added the material to the first draft of Book I after he had come to see the Athenian-Spartan conflict as a single war, that is after he had begun writing later books. It is likely that he died without having had opportunity to return to Book I to polish his form, especially since he did not even finish his work quantitatively.<sup>8</sup> The veracity of this explanation of the cause of the confusion in Book I, which includes the material on the Third Messenian War, is increased by the fact that the extant manuscripts of Book I show little variation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 402-12.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 57.

Thucydides limited his topic, i.e., he wrote a history of the Peloponnesian Wars and not a history of Greece, or of Athens. As a result he omitted certain cultural and economic points of history as well as certain elements of political history when they did not appear to him to relate directly to the war.<sup>10</sup> But his incomplete accounts of some events do not include, apparently, that of the Pentecontaetia and the Third Messenian War. One of the main purposes of his inclusion of an account of the Pentecontaetia in Book I, was to explain the origin of the disharmony which eventually broke up the Great Alliance against Persia, and led to the Peloponnesian War.<sup>11</sup> Thucydides viewed the Third Messenian War as "the first cause" of the falling out between Athens and Sparta.<sup>12</sup> Thucydides' self-imposed limitation of topic, then, did not essentially affect his account of the Third Messenian War.

Of the major historians of the period, Thucydides was nearly contemporary to the Third Messenian War, fought in 465. He was in a position, and made the effort, to interpret accurately and critically information on what to him was a fairly important event. Where some later accounts of

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<sup>10</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 25.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 302. <sup>12</sup>Thuc. 1. 102. 3; Diod. 11. 64. 3.



the Third Messenian War differ from Thucydides, it is necessary to determine the nature and quality of the sources upon which they are based. It is apparent that other sources for the Third Messenian War must have been familiar with Thucydides, who "imposed his will, as no historian has ever done," over events surrounding the Peloponnesian War.<sup>13</sup> They may in some cases have simply abridged Thucydides' own account. Thucydides was the only historian of the period of absolute value.<sup>14</sup> In particular, his account of the Pentecontaetia, including the Third Messenian War, supplanted that of Hellanicus. Thucydides' account is short and only a survey, so it can be supplemented by written documents and perhaps by bits of the narrative of other sources. Yet most scholars of Thucydides, Gomme and Grundy for example, insist that when statements or even implications of Thucydides are contradicted by Diodorus or Plutarch or other later writers, they must be rejected. "The chance of the coincidence of Diodorus being right just where Thucydides was wrong, is so small that it will be generally neglected by prudent men."<sup>15</sup>

Hellanicus (ca. 500), son of Andromenes of Mytilene,

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<sup>13</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 29.

<sup>14</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 104.

<sup>15</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 84-85.

whose account of the Pentecontaetia Thucydides supplanted, was a contemporary of Thucydides and the Third Messenian War. He would have been invaluable as a source for that war, if he had been as critical and observant as Thucydides. Such does not seem to have been the case since he was not held in high repute by such ancient authors as Thucydides and Strabo.<sup>16</sup> The probable date of Hellanicus' Attic history is 406. Thucydides referred to Hellanicus' history of the Pentecontaetia, as overly brief and chronologically inaccurate.<sup>17</sup> From extant portions of Hellanicus' work it is clear that he attempted to treat the period of the Third War as a chronicle. In so doing, he tried to compute the dates of magistrates in various areas to create a chronology. The result, since magistrates did not take office at the same time during the year, was ridiculously clumsy, and apparently error ridden.<sup>18</sup>

As mentioned above, the Third Messenian War has almost certainly been interpolated into Thucydides' Book I.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>L. Pearson, s.v. "Hellanicus," Oxford Classical Dictionary (OCD), p. 410.

<sup>17</sup>Thuc. 1. 97. 2.

<sup>18</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 4.

<sup>19</sup>Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, I, 445.

Hellanicus' account of the war was probably available to Thucydides who was familiar with it. Thucydides may have used those portions of Hellanicus he found to be accurate, but no fragment of Hellanicus involving any event considered by Thucydides has yet been discovered.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike either Thucydides or Hellanicus, Diodorus of Sicily (fl. 45) was not contemporary to the Third Messenian War. Diodorus, unlike Thucydides, was a compiler. He wrote an History of the World from the beginning to Caesar's Gallic Wars. Most historians, like Gomme, charge that his history was a plagiarized compilation from the works of previous scholars, varying in quality according to the periods under study.<sup>21</sup> This practice has earned him the epithet, "as good as his sources." For the history of the Pentecontaetia his source was Ephorus of Cyme. The careless narrative in Diodorus belongs to Ephorus.<sup>22</sup> The chronology provided for the period of the Third Messenian War, however, is Diodorus' own.

Diodorus attempted to equate Athenian archon years and Roman consular years. The former began in late summer

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<sup>20</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 29.

<sup>21</sup>For a moderation of this view see also Holm, History of Greece, II, 103. But, even Holm insists on the very poor quality of Diodorus.

<sup>22</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 45.

and the latter in the early spring. The result of his efforts was confused and inaccurate. His narrative source, Ephorus, grouped series of events in order of their occurrence, and one series of events followed another, even though in point of time they overlapped.<sup>23</sup> Ephorus himself made no point of chronological precision.<sup>24</sup> Diodorus kept the series of events belonging to Ephorus' work, but assigned each series a single date. Consequently, a series of events which obviously covered several years is assigned to one year.<sup>25</sup> The resulting muddle of chronology is adequately illustrated by Diodorus' claim that the Third Messenian War lasted ten years,<sup>26</sup> but that it began 469/68<sup>27</sup> and ended 456/55.<sup>28</sup> Again, Diodorus claimed that Archidamus, one of the kings of Sparta during the Third Messenian War, came to the throne in 476/75, and reigned for forty-two years;<sup>29</sup> then he held that Archidamus conducted part of the Peloponnesian War from 431-429.<sup>30</sup> These are classic examples of Diodorus' faulty chronology, but some of his dates are

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 52-53.    <sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>See Holm, History of Greece, II, 106.

<sup>26</sup>Diod. 11. 64. 4.    <sup>27</sup>Ibid., 63. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 84. 8.    <sup>29</sup>Ibid., 48. 2.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 12. 42. 6; 47. 1; 52. 1.

correct. A rule for Diodorus' dates is that, "normally we need more than his authority to trust them, and when there is difficulty or doubt his evidence is of very little value."<sup>31</sup> A. Holm has gone so far as to charge that for his history of the period of the Third Messenian War, Diodorus created an imaginary chronology. Since he wanted to maintain his annalistic form but was confronted with Ephorus' dateless narrative, he simply inserted archons at certain convenient points to date his history.<sup>32</sup>

Diodorus, then, recounted a narrative of the Third Messenian War created by Ephorus, which may not be trustworthy, and which is usually considered to be chronologically useless.<sup>33</sup> Diodorus was at best a mediocre historian who ought always to be used with extreme caution.

The narrative source for Diodorus of Sicily was Ephorus of Cyme (ca. 405-330). Ephorus was a student of Isocrates of Cyme, but a resident of Athens. He wrote a Universal History of the entire Greek world from the Return of the Heracleidai to 340. His history is nearly all lost

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<sup>31</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 53. For further explanation of the cause of some of these misdatings see Appendix.

<sup>32</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 106-107.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 108-109.

and comes to us mainly from plagiarists such as Diodorus.<sup>34</sup> As mentioned above, Ephorus' account of the period of the Third Messenian War consisted of consecutive groups of series of events, some overlapping in time. Ephorus was little concerned with dates.<sup>35</sup> He treated groups of events which were connected by subject matter with no attempt to sort them into proper years.<sup>36</sup> Ephorus was a rhetorician, and wrote to display his style and to provide moral instruction. He does not seem to have used official documents for his works, which leaves in question the matter of his sources. The fragments extant and what can be seen of Ephorus in Diodorus, indicate that his work was extremely superficial and lacking in historical judgment. The accuracy of Ephorus' accounts is doubtful.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, some historians, such as Grundy, regard him as entirely untrustworthy.<sup>38</sup>

Since Ephorus lived almost a century after the Third Messenian War, it is obvious that he relied on some previous source for his account of the war. For the period of the

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<sup>34</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 44-45.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>36</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 108-109.

<sup>37</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 44-45.

<sup>38</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 104.

Peloponnesian War in general, Ephorus seems to have followed Thucydides.<sup>39</sup> There is some indication, however, that for the account of the Pentecontaetia in particular, Ephorus used a more strongly biased source than Thucydides, probably Hellanicus.<sup>40</sup> Some historians believe also that Ephorus may have used an Atthis, a species of local Athenian antiquarian and chronologer.<sup>41</sup> Much, though not all, of their work was little more than myth and speculation, full of self glorification and untrustworthy detail. Since the Atthidae themselves did not begin until about 400, they are not much older than Ephorus,<sup>42</sup> and would most likely have drawn their accounts of the Third Messenian War from either Hellanicus or Thucydides.

Another major, non-contemporary source of information for the Third Messenian War is Plutarch's (ca. 46-126 A.D.) Lives. Plutarch was an essayist, not an historian. He was not even, in the strict sense, a biographer. He did not aim

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 107. See also Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 45.

<sup>40</sup>G. L. Barber, s.v. "Ephorus," OCD, p. 319. See also N. G. L. Hammond, "Studies in Greek Chronology of the Sixth and Fifth Centuries B.C.," Historia, IV (1955), 372. Other possible sources are Ion of Chios and Stesimbrotus of Thasos, who are judged by Holm, History of Greece, II, 104, to be relatively unimportant.

<sup>41</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 105. <sup>42</sup>Ibid.

to describe a man's career or policy, nor to give either a place in history. His major concern was with the character of his subjects, as shown in the moral conduct of their lives. He made no pretense of writing detailed narrative history.<sup>43</sup> Plutarch meant for each one of his Lives to be a work of art. The Lives represent the Greek cultural trait of preoccupation with symmetry, balance, and antithesis.<sup>44</sup> The life of each statesman portrayed in the Lives is compared with that of another. One of the pair represents moral virtue and the other represents the lack of moral virtue. This organization then determines the selection of evidence presented by Plutarch.<sup>45</sup> The validity of the details represented, as in the case of Diodorus, often depends on the sources used. Some were accurate and others were from moralists and anecdote peddlers. It is clear then, that Plutarch was not concerned with the history of the times in which his characters lived, the historical importance of their achievements, or the chronology of their lives, except in the most general sense.<sup>46</sup> "Plutarch

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<sup>43</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 55-56.

<sup>44</sup>See above, pp. 7-8..

<sup>45</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 112.

<sup>46</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 56-57.



categorizes incidents by their kind . . . and though his task of biography compels him to relate events in the time dimension . . . the compulsion remains external and homage to chronology is perfunctory."<sup>47</sup> If an event was important to illustrate a point concerning one of his characters, Plutarch took no note of chronological order.

A classic example of this carefree chronological attitude occurs in Plutarch's "Cimon."<sup>48</sup> It is "Cimon" in which is found Plutarch's remarks on the Third Messenian War. The general chronological evaluation of "Cimon" seems to be a matter of whether the glass is half full or half empty. Holm insists that since "Cimon" contains two obvious chronological errors, none of its chronology ought to be accepted.<sup>49</sup> Gomme, on the other hand, notes that compared to some other of the Lives, the chronological order is excellent, with the exception of a few bad historical errors.<sup>50</sup> The conclusion must be that whatever the worth of the narrative, there are chronological errors in "Cimon."

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<sup>47</sup>H. T. Wade-Grey, "Thucydides the Son of Melesias," Journal of Hellenic Studies (JHS), LII (1932), 226.

<sup>48</sup>Plut. "Cim," 17. 1. For further explanation see Chapter 5.

<sup>49</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 114.

<sup>50</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 65.

Plutarch's main authority for the narrative, and perhaps chronology, of "Cimon," was Theopompus. Theopompus wrote a history of Philip of Macedon and included a section on popular Athenian leaders, from which "Cimon" was drawn. He treated the subject only as an excursus and was obviously anti-democratic. Aside from this, he was not of particular value as an historian.<sup>51</sup> Stesimbrotos of Thasos, a sophist and political pamphleteer, also served as a source for Plutarch's "Cimon." Plutarch was one of the two ancient historians ever to have quoted from the work of Stesimbrotos, which is probably indicative of its value.<sup>52</sup> Plutarch may have relied in part for information concerning the Pentecontaetia upon Hellanicus.<sup>53</sup> Plutarch seems to have been widely read, cultured, and generally honest, something more than a mere compiler, such as Diodorus.<sup>54</sup> His aim was not history and it is unfair to judge him by historical standards. In addition to Theopompus and Stesimbrotos as particular sources for his "Cimon," he probably was familiar with

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<sup>51</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 103-104, 115.

<sup>52</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 35-37. Athenaeus was the other.

<sup>53</sup>Hammond, "Studies," p. 372.

<sup>54</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 81-82.

Aristophanes, Thucydides, and Ephorus.

Aristophanes' Lysistrata refers to the Third Messenian War. He was however, a comic dramatist and not an historian. His job was to extract comedy from sometimes serious political situations. A canon to bear in mind for the use of Aristophanes is that ". . . mockery or satire of individuals, in the dialogue, illustrates the character of the speaker and not, or only incidentally, that of the individual attacked . . . ." <sup>55</sup> Of as much value as Aristophanes himself are the scholiasts who provided editorial comments on his works. The scholia were scholars of Alexandria who carried on the tradition of the Atthidae mentioned above. The chief extant scholia on Aristophanes derived ultimately from Didymos (ca. 83) whose sources, of which there were several, were of indeterminate value. <sup>56</sup> This indicates that information the scholia provides for the Third Messenian War ought to be used cautiously, especially if it differs radically from the near contemporary account of Thucydides.

The last major source for the Third Messenian War,

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 37-38. For application see Chapter 5. Much is made of a comment from Aristophanes quoted in Plut. Cim. 16. 8, to support the theory of twice sent aid. Note especially Chapter 5.

<sup>56</sup> A. Gudeman, s.v. "scholiast," OCD, p. 814.

Pausanias of Lydia (fl. A.D. 150), was primarily a geographer and traveler who provided brief historical sketches to accompany his descriptions of geographic, historic, and religious sites.<sup>57</sup> Still, the individual historical points of his narrative are of value if weighed carefully. For earlier periods of Messenian history he used Myron of Priene and Rheanus of Bene both of whom were negligible historical quantities.<sup>58</sup> Since certain elements of Pausanias' account of the First Messenian War and many elements of his treatment of the Peloponnesian War seem to be borrowed from Thucydides, it can safely be assumed that part of his account of the Third Messenian War comes from the same source.

The four main sources for the Third Messenian War are Thucydides, Diodorus of Sicily, Plutarch, and Pausanias of Lydia. Thucydides was the only one who was likely to have a first hand account of the war. Diodorus was practically a cypher in regard to chronology and doubtful as far as narrative accuracy is concerned. Plutarch was almost as valueless for chronology but his narrative material is of

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<sup>57</sup>E. H. Warmington, s.v. "Pausanias of Lydia," OCD, p. 657.

<sup>58</sup>Lionell Pearson, "The Pseudo-History of Messenia and its Authorities," Historia, XI (1962), 397, 410.

better repute than Diodorus. Pausanias provided valuable historical and archaeological information which helps in establishing a chronology, and his narrative may be of some value depending on its use and relation to other evidence. The only conciously critical historian, Thucydides, must be given preference in matters concerning the Third Messenian War, unless solid evidence to the contrary can be produced to contradict him.

The accounts of the Third Messenian War by these four ancients seem to fit into pairs. Thucydides and Pausanias agreed and substantiated each other. The reason probably lies in the assumption that Pausanias relied for the most part, though not exclusively, on the account of Thucydides for his own account of the Third Messenian War. Diodorus and Plutarch substantiated each other.<sup>59</sup> Again the explanation must lie in a similar, shared source. It could well have been Ephorus since it is obvious that Diodorus used that historian and probable that Plutarch was familiar with him, but Ephorus' reputation does not usually merit such a compliment. The common source might even have been Hellanicus since it is certain that Ephorus had easy access

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<sup>59</sup>For the particulars of this similarity and its re-enforcements by Herodotus, see Chapter 5.

to his works and at least possible that Plutarch was also familiar with them. This is all the more probable since not only do the accounts of Diodorus and Plutarch collaborate each other, but together they vary from that of Thucydides in several particulars of the war. Hellanicus was the earliest source, and was supplanted by Thucydides. Thus from the period as early as Ephorus two somewhat opposing accounts were probably available, and may be reflected in the accounts extant today. Thus the state of the sources for the history of the Third Messenian War is scanty and confused. Incredible as it may seem, sources for the early background of Messenia and Laconia are even more scanty and confused.

## CHAPTER 3

### BACKGROUND TO THE WAR

The early history of Messenian-Laconian relations has a fundamental bearing on the nature and cause of the Third Messenian War. Unfortunately the sources for the period are meager. This is so not only because the period about to be considered reaches back to 1100, but also because Sparta in general was to her contemporaries a mystery defying understanding.<sup>1</sup> The extant fragments of works by the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus, give scholars much of what they know about early Spartan and Messenian history. Tyrtaeus was mentioned neither by Herodotus nor Thucydides, and his own dates are a matter of dispute.<sup>2</sup> No continuous account of Messenian history exists prior to that of Pausanias of Lydia, and therefore, it is most often used to reconstruct the period of early Messenian-Laconian relations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, I, 212.

<sup>2</sup>Pearson, "The Pseudo-History," p. 400.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 397.

When the Dorian Greeks invaded the Peloponnesus (ca. 1100) from the north, Messenia was spared the brunt.<sup>4</sup> Before the invasion, Messenia was part of the Mycenaean-Achaean world, the subject of Homer's Odyssey. Sandy Pylos, the home of Nestor of Odyssey fame, was probably the principal city of Messenia. Archaeologists have proved that the same language was used for keeping records at Pylos as at Mycenae and Knossus; and it is possible that Pylos in Messenia, Sparta or Amyclae in Laconia, and Mycenae in Argos were at one time the holdings of a single family of Achaean princes. From the time of the Dorian invasion to the seventh century, however, very little is known of Messenia. It seems probable, since the Dorians did not engulf Messenia as they did Laconia, that they mixed with the native Achaean population, rather than subjugated it.<sup>5</sup> The Dorian influx is evidenced in the cultural output of Messenian society,<sup>6</sup> but the population remained substantially non-Dorian.<sup>7</sup> Messenia developed as a distinct, geographic entity with her own capital city,

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<sup>4</sup>Humphrey Michell, Sparta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 76.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>K. M. T. Chrimes, Ancient Sparta: A Re-examination of the Evidence (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 282.

<sup>7</sup>Donald Kagan, Botsford and Robinson's Hellenic History (5th ed.; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1969), p. 75.



possibly Pylos or a mysterious walled city in the Stenyclarus Plain (see Plate II).<sup>8</sup> Messenia had a structured government headed by dyarchs until the late ninth or early eighth century, when a single monarch assumed the throne.<sup>9</sup> Messenia bred a landed aristocracy and a system of land tenure akin to serfdom.<sup>10</sup>

The Dorians completely subjugated Laconia and established themselves at Sparta. Three tribes of Dorians participated in the invasion, the Hylleis, Dymanes, and Pamphyloi. Each tribe was socially subdivided into gens and phratries, and Spartan political and social organization was based on the combination of the three Dorian tribes. The Achaeans

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<sup>8</sup>Pearson, "The Pseudo-History," pp. 398-403, distinctly disagrees with this view. He claims that Messenia in this period was an area of small villages, widely separate and incapable of political life, "in the proper Aristotelian sense of the term," similar to Arkadia in the same period. This view is in sharp contrast to that of Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, p. 291. The comparison of Messenia to Arkadia is not valid. Messenia, unlike Arkadia, was composed of fertile plains which could easily support large scale social organization. Paus. 4. 4. 1-23. 10, makes it clear that the country was ruled by kings, and in the First and Second Messenian Wars, sported a well organized army, which compared favorably on the field with that of Sparta. Arkadia was composed primarily of mountains whose distinct and widely separate valleys supported and enforced smaller scale village social organization. Even the Arkadians, however, were capable of large scale organization, as the Arkadian League proves. See W. P. Wallace, "Kleomenes, Marathon, the Helots, and Arkadia," JHS, LXXXIV (n.d.), 33-34.

<sup>9</sup>Paus. 4. 5. 8. <sup>10</sup>Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, p. 296.

who were within reach, in the Eurotas valley, when the Dorians came, were captured and made state serfs, or "helots," probably a derivative of the Spartan for "captives." Those in Achaean cities in the less accessible areas of Laconia, and those who had fled to the mountains ahead of the invasion, together with a few Dorians who may have settled as colonists among the Achaeans, were made perioeci, or "dwellers around." The perioeci enjoyed much freedom, especially in conducting trade and commerce, but they were denied the rights of Spartan citizens, especially political functions. By the eighth or seventh century, Sparta was entirely dependent for the manufacture of armaments on her Laconian perioeci, since the rigorous economic reform attributed to Lycurgus strictly forbade any Spartan citizen to engage in commerce or manufacturing. The perioeci gained the protection and enjoyed the prestige of the Spartan army and a stable political system. This advantage was often offset by the fact that perioeci were required, at times against their wills, to furnish troops for Spartan campaigns. The fact that those in Laconia complied with their obligations, usually without protest, is a fair indication of the extent of their Dorianization, at least by the fifth century.

Helots, on the other hand, were tied to the land. They could not be moved or freed, except by the government,

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Helots, on the other hand, were tied to the land. They could not be moved or freed, except by the government,

nor could they be sold outside the country. They were, by the fifth century, the property of the state, no single individual. The land captured by the Spartans was divided into estates owned by the state, or cleroi. Each Spartiate family was given a cleros on which to live and was entitled to a large fraction of the produce from the cleros, though it did not own either the cleros or the helots who were permanently assigned to work the cleros. These helots lived with their families on lots of the cleros assigned to them and rendered to their masters the amount of produce stipulated by law. The rest they could keep for their own use, and possibly even sell that which they did not require for subsistence. This is especially important in view of the fact that one of the reforms usually attributed to Lycurgas was the military organization of Spartan males. Training began at the age of seven and at twenty a youth became a full fledged soldier and remained so until the age of sixty. All of society was remodeled to the advantage of army life. At age twenty the Spartiate joined a social-military organization, the syssition, or "common mess," of about fifteen men. Each member of the syssition contributed his share of the larder monthly. The citizen's continuing ability to provide his share of produce to his syssition was a qualification for Spartan citizenship, but the efficiency of the army

depended upon the soldier's being economically independent and free for a life of military training. Each soldier's contribution to the syssition depended upon the produce of his cleros. The helots worked and harvested the produce of the cleros, and gave it to their Spartan masters. The loss of either cleros or helots meant that the state lost both citizens and soldiers.

Not all helots tilled the cleros. There seem to have been various classes of helots. Some were utterly subject, such as those of the cleros, some were graduated to better positions, such as permanent outpost garrisons, and a few may even have been freed for exceptional service.<sup>11</sup> Helots were used in war time occasionally as hopelite attendants. They were usually not engaged in actual combat and those who were, were treated with caution and suspicion by Spartiates. Traditionally, inferring from Plutarch, historians believed the life of the helot unbearable. Kagan, Botsford, and Robinson, for example, say that as a part of the Lycurgan reform, the Crypteia, or "secret police," was formed and empowered by the ephors, once a year, to slaughter helots at will, to prevent helot uprisings. The ephorate, a group of five chief magistrates were elected annually by lot and were

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 39, 301.

a check upon the executive power of the dyarchs. Scholars usually assign floggings, demeaning dress, and personal indignities of all varieties to the lot of the helot.<sup>12</sup>

By the early eighth century, Sparta had begun to outgrow the Eurotas valley. She, like most of Greece at this time, was affected by the pressure of increased population. While many Greek cities established colonies overseas, Sparta began to advance slowly on Messenia. Messenia offered the best grain producing land in all of the Peloponnesus, or considering that only about 1/5 of the land in Greece was cultivatable, perhaps the best grain producing land in Greece.<sup>13</sup> Messenia was of a milder and moister climate than Laconia, and watered by the Pamisus River (see Plate I). Its reputation rested on the fertility of the Stenyclarus and Macaria Plains lying between the Taygetus Mountains on the east and the coastal Phigalian Mountains on the west. The upper, or Stenyclarus Plain is divided from the lower Macaria Plain by a line of low hills reaching from Mount Ithome in the northwest to the Taygetus Mountains on the western boundary of Laconia. The result of the Spartan push into the rich Messenian land was the First Messenian War (ca. 743-724).

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<sup>12</sup>See Chapter 4 for further discussion.

<sup>13</sup>Michell, Sparta, p. 5.

The First Messenian War was probably fought primarily on the Plain of Macaria.<sup>14</sup> It was between two formal armies, one Spartan, eventually led by King Theopompus, and the other, Messenian, led by King Aristodemus.<sup>15</sup> The war was closely contested for its twenty year duration, and both sides sought and received aid from neighboring allies. After five years the Messenians under Aristodemus were forced to withdraw to a fortified stronghold atop Mount Ithome, and from there conducted an effective guerilla war against the Spartans, using light-armed troops to the great disadvantage of the Spartan hopelites. Pausanias recounted that Aristodemus sacrificed his daughter in response to a Delphic oracle requiring the sacrifice for Messenian victory. Some years later Aristodemus committed suicide on his daughter's grave, in despair. Theopompus at last defeated the Messenians decisively. Sparta relegated the Messenians, who did not escape, to helot status and put them to work on what had formerly been their own lands, now divided into Spartan cleroi.

Early in the seventh century Sparta was involved in a series of local wars with the neighboring states of Argos,

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<sup>14</sup>Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, p. 297.

<sup>15</sup>Paus. 4. 4. 1-12. 7.

Arkadia, and Elis.<sup>16</sup> The implication of the enormous increase in the number of inferior and probably sullen helot laborers, resulting from the First Messenian War, became apparent with the Second Messenian War (ca. 648-631). The Messenian helots revolted and probably joined the remnants of the regular Messenian army and allied armies of Arkadia, Argos, and Elis.<sup>17</sup> Fighting was again between two formal armies, and this time probably centered in the Stenyclarus Plain, except for the siege of Mount Ira. Aristomenes, the Messenian leader, was successful in his early encounters with the Spartans. He was defeated at the Battle of the Great Trench and held out on Mount Ira for eleven years. The war was a repetition of the experience of the First Messenian War.<sup>18</sup> The Spartans at last found a leader in Tyrtaeus, poet and general, who led them to the complete control of the Stenyclarus Plain. Possession of the plain cut all routes of aid to Messenia from Elis and Arkadia, so that the war of attrition fought around Mount Ira followed.<sup>19</sup> The Spartans

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<sup>16</sup>A. Andrews, "The Spartan Alternative to Tyranny," in Problems in Ancient History: The Ancient Near East and Greece, ed. by Donald Kagan (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1966), I, 198-204.

<sup>17</sup>Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, pp. 295-99.

<sup>18</sup>Paus. 4. 13. 1-23. 10.

<sup>19</sup>Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, p. 299.



won, and the remnants of the Messenian forces apparently settled as colonists in various portions of the Greek world. The second Spartan victory brought the possession of all the fertile land of both major plains, unlike the first, and control of most of the rest of Messenia. It resulted in more cleroi and more helots. Messenians were moved from some coastal areas,<sup>20</sup> and Spartan garrisons and governors must have insured the others of perioeci status.<sup>21</sup> It is probable that only the plains region of Messenia and the coastal perioeci areas were completely subjugated by Sparta, who had little use for the small mountainous areas remaining.<sup>22</sup> The newly won perioeci were allowed much the same freedom as Laconian perioeci, who had become Spartanized by this date. Political domination by foreigners, however, who controlled all foreign policy was bound to rankle the Messenian perioeci. The Messenian helots may have been dealt with more harshly than were Laconian helots, and probably harbored greater resentment toward their Spartan masters since their status was more recently acquired than that of their Laconian counterparts. A sharp distinction between Messenian and Laconian helots was

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 298-99. <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>22</sup>Michell, Sparta, p. 5; Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, p. 296.

drawn by the Spartans in title and, perhaps, in treatment.<sup>23</sup>

The Second Messenian War resulted in a tremendous increase in the number of helots. By 479 and the Battle of Plataea, according to Herodotus, there were apparently 5,000 Spartans of military age, 5,000 perioeci, and 35,000 helots, for a ratio of 1:1:7.<sup>24</sup> Grundy estimates the combined populations of Laconia and Messenia during the period as 400,000.<sup>25</sup> The helot population numbered about 345,000 or nearly 86% of the total. This figure produces a Spartiate-helot ratio of 1:6, which correlates closely with the ratio given by Herodotus. The war itself was long and painful, and nearly lost by Sparta. The domestic hardship it produced combined with the terrible threat posed by the huge helot population, the revolt by a part of which had begun the Second Messenian War, is usually credited with inspiring the rigid Lycurgan Constitution and the galvanization of Sparta into a garrison state, perpetually on guard against further internal threats.<sup>26</sup> The Lycurgan reforms may have produced

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<sup>23</sup>Michell, Sparta, p. 76n. <sup>24</sup>Hdt. 9. 28.

<sup>25</sup>Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, I, p. 296.

<sup>26</sup>For an opposing view see Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, p. 304 and Guy Dickins, "The Growth of Spartan Policy," JHS, XXXII (1912), 36.

the crypteia, involved a redistribution of land, severely restricted the accumulation of wealth by citizens, and created a military machine which occupied the citizen's time and so was meshed with the political-social organization of the state. The old tribal organization was discarded and a new political-military organization was based on the five obae or districts which together formed what had become Sparta city. One obe was probably Amyclae. The other four obae were Pitana, Mesoa, Kynosoura, and Limnae, once separate villages, but by the time of the reform grown together to form the city of Sparta. The army was composed of five lochoi, drawn originally from each of the five obae.<sup>27</sup> The Messenian conquest made Sparta the largest single state in Greece,<sup>28</sup> but it also forced upon her an increased preoccupation with internal affairs and separation from the rest of Greece.

The separation from the rest of Greece because of the task of subjugating a population more than six times that of the Spartan citizen body, did not mean isolation. Sparta observed events elsewhere and tried to maintain control of Peloponnesian affairs to her own advantage. She intervened

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<sup>27</sup>For more information on obae and army organization, see Chapter 6.

<sup>28</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 112.

in Attican affairs from time to time and eventually saw the danger of the Persian threat. In her concern for controlling Peloponnesian affairs, Sparta closely watched the Isthmus connecting the Peloponnesus to mainland Greece. Sparta's sea communications were negligible because the navigators of the period could not run the capes which projected on either side of most Spartan harbors. Four of the major land routes to the Isthmus were blocked by mountainous Argos, with whom Sparta was usually at odds. In fact there is reason to believe that Sparta kept Argos from decline in order to pressure Corinth, Sparta's not overly reliable watch dog on the Isthmus in the fifth century.<sup>29</sup> One other route to the Isthmus ran through Arkadia, also a mountainous region not always at peace with Sparta. The conquest of Messenia opened yet another route to the Isthmus (see Plate III). It ran along the coast of Messenia, Elis, and Achaea to Corinth. Possession of Messenia ensured the terminus of the route and provided a guard point from which to intercept Arkadian or Argolian forces approaching the route. Elis alone was no threat, and Achaea was a nonentity most of the time. Aside from noting the possible advantages of this route, one can

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<sup>29</sup>Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, I, 217.

say little of it since there seems to be no indication in ancient sources that it was used militarily.

There are several elements of this early Laconian-Messenian history which one should keep in mind examining the Third Messenian War. First, as a result of her Messenian incursions, Sparta was committed to an agricultural economy based on forced labor of huge proportions.<sup>30</sup> This forced her to be concerned with domestic affairs and to be sensitive to the influence of Peloponnesian and extra-Peloponnesian affairs. Second, it is probable that neither all of Messenia nor all of the Messenians were subjugated by Sparta.<sup>31</sup> Third, the Messenian helots were willing in the Second Messenian War, to rebel after a century, and some sort of Messenian army still existed. Fourth, the ratio of helot to Spartiate increased continuously after the Second Messenian War. Last of all, and important in noting the nature and conduct of the Third Messenian War, is the pattern set by both preceding Messenian Wars, of guerilla raids from mountain fortresses and years long sieges. The roots of the Third Messenian War are clearly found in the early history of Spartan-Laconian relations.

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<sup>30</sup>W. G. Forrest, A History of Sparta, 950-192 B.C. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1968), p. 38.

<sup>31</sup>Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, p. 296.

## CHAPTER 4

### CAUSES OF THE WAR

Two elements of early Spartan-Messenian history may be cited as long-range causes of the Third Messenian War. The first was the treatment of helots. Comments made by Plato and Myron of Priene seem to indicate that the situation of the helots was exceedingly harsh.<sup>1</sup> The view they provide is that of the poor, starving helots, worked relentlessly, subjected to the whims of a cruel Spartan citizen, flogged half to death, subjected to mass annual extermination by the ruthless crypteia, made victims of lessons in the art of killing for the benefit of young Spartans, and forced to wear humiliating garb. It seems logical to assign the cause of the Third Messenian War to the extreme cruelties of the institution of helotry. Some modern historians, however, have raised significant objections to such an interpretation.

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<sup>1</sup>For more on this, see George Grote, A History of Greece From the Earliest Period to the Close of the Generation Contemporary with Alexander the Great (London: John Murray, 1888), II, 296n.

There may have been various classes of helots. Some garrisoned outposts and served in the army. Others were emancipated with varying rights. Some could live where and in the manner they chose.<sup>2</sup> Even those who were tied to the soil may have led pleasant lives with their own homes, wives, and families.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that a portion of the unfavorable account of the treatment of helots is Athenian political propaganda.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the cause, it is clear that the helots were necessary for the livelihood of their masters. To have made helot life totally unbearable would have been poor policy. It is difficult to believe that the Spartans pushed such a massively superior population to desperation.<sup>5</sup> The tradition of annual warfare on helots may have been part of a ritual of domination, outmoded once Spartan national security was partially achieved.<sup>6</sup> Assassination may have been used to be rid of particularly troublesome helots, but the existence of a permanent organ of state which carried out mass annual slaughter is not certain.<sup>7</sup> Helots were probably

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<sup>2</sup>Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, pp. 300-301.

<sup>3</sup>Grote, History of Greece, II, 292.

<sup>4</sup>Chrimes, Ancient Sparta, p. 301.

<sup>5</sup>Michell, Sparta, p. 82. <sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

flogged, but so were Spartan youths. Helots wore garb different from that of most Spartans, who were soldiers, but not unlike the regular Greek rural dress.<sup>8</sup>

It would seem, then, that the physical mistreatment of helots may not necessarily be a valid cause for the Third War. There were undoubtedly abuses. Systems of serfdom seem inevitably to produce them. Generally, though, the psychological hurt done the helots could serve as effectively as physical abuse to encourage helot insurrection when the Spartan guard was down. The scorn of Spartans for helots, the chafing knowledge of the helots that they were legally inferior, and the degrading sensation of, and discrimination against, a permanent sub-citizen strata could have had such an effect. This was probably so among the Messenian helots, since a sharp distinction was drawn between them and the Laconian helots in title, and perhaps in treatment.<sup>9</sup>

The second element in the long-range causes of the Third Messenian War was Messenian nationalism. An alien power had forced itself on a once free people. Unlike the Laconian helots, the Messenians probably still preserved memories of an independent past. The Laconian helots by the time of the Third War had been subjugated for over six

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 81. <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 76n.



hundred years, and through more personal contact with their Spartiate rulers, had become a self-recognized Doric institution.<sup>10</sup> It is not likely that the Messenians succumbed to such Dorianization, and the Spartans themselves unwittingly prevented it. As previously noted, Spartans drew a sharp distinction between the two types of helots. The Second Messenian War, in which the Messenian helots rebelled, conscious of their Messenian identity, occurred a full century after those helots had been conquered. The same fierce nationalism must have been present in the Third War. Besides the common Messenian experience, racial hatred, Achaean against Dorian, may have helped to keep Messenian helots on edge.<sup>11</sup> The Third Messenian War was a revival of the lost cause of Euphaes, Aristodemus, and Aristomines--a reassertion of Messenian nationality.<sup>12</sup>

The Third Messenian War was not entirely independent of the events of years immediately preceding it. The short-run cause of the Third War was the general internal political

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<sup>10</sup>A. H. M. Jones, Sparta (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 10.

<sup>11</sup>Forrest, A History of Sparta, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup>William W. Loyd, The Age of Pericles: A History of the Politics and Arts of Greece from the Persian Wars to the Peloponnesian Wars (London: Macmillan & Co., 1875), I, 377.

situation in Sparta and the Peloponnesus from 490 to 465. To understand the nature of this situation and its bearing on the cause and conduct of the Third Messenian War, the process of policy making in Sparta at the time, must be considered. There are two main theories explaining Spartan policy formation for this period. Guy Dickins explains Sparta's policy formation in the context of a great power struggle. The Agiad kings, he claims, attempted to restore old royal prerogatives and to build a Spartan empire. They were supposedly opposed by the ephors who were seeking power for their own institution, and therefore, opposed the kings at every step.<sup>13</sup> G. B. Grundy on the other hand, asserts that Sparta was not free to act as she pleased. Her policy, he notes, was determined by the helot question at home. Spartans appeared to other Greeks to be narrow minded and provincial, ". . . but men who have to guard against destruction every day of their lives have no time for day dreams or large ambitions."<sup>14</sup> Sparta, says Grundy, knew that the first consideration in making all policy was strict control of the helots.

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<sup>13</sup>Dickins, "The Growth of Spartan Policy," pp. 26-42.

<sup>14</sup>Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, I, 220.

It seems logical to assume that power struggles in Spartan politics, such as the one posed by Dickins between the Agiads and ephors, existed, as they did in most other Greek states of the period, but within the peculiar internal framework created by the massive helot labor force. Grundy concludes that because of the helot threat, both the Agiads and the ephors guarded against becoming too heavily involved outside the Peloponnesus.<sup>15</sup> This may be so, but within the Peloponnesus, it seems clear that the temptation to use the helot menace as a lever in the play for political power was ever present for those unscrupulous few who were willing to risk all for their political prestige. Such was the case of Cleomenes I and Pausanias I, as will be seen later. Because of the importance of the helotry in the Spartan socio-economic system, it could hardly escape effect in Spartan politics and the inevitable power struggles.

Since the evaluation of the Spartan political situation made by Dickins and Grundy, other proposals have been made, which in essence change the parties involved in Spartan power struggles. A. H. M. Jones suggests that the two parties contending for power were an anti-Athenian war party and

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 218-21. See also G. B. Grundy, "The Policy of Sparta," JHS, XXXII (1912), 261-69.

a less anti-Athenian peace party. Spartan policy varied depending on which of the two had momentary superiority.<sup>16</sup> W. G. Forrest agrees that Spartan policy was affected by the helot dangers, especially those incurred by the conquest of Messenia. The parties contending for power according to Forrest, were one which sought to influence Sparta to establish an hegemony at sea, another which sought to influence Sparta to leave the sea to Athens and to extend Spartan authority by land, and a third party which suggested that Sparta concentrate on maintaining herself at full power in the Peloponnesus. Forrest's analysis of the situation seems reasonable in view of the opportunity afforded Sparta for Hellenic leadership in fighting off the Persians, and the threat to this opportunity raised by the sea power of Athens. The Spartan army was generally the most respected in Greece and its use by Cleomenes, Leonidas, and others, perpetuated such belief. The Spartan navy, under Pausanias at least, showed skill, but the growing prestige and greater capital of Athens made her an obvious rival of Sparta on the sea. The Persian War demanded that Sparta concern herself with the rest of the world, and it is only natural that the tools of such concern, the army and the navy, would each have its proponents. On

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<sup>16</sup>Jones, Sparta, pp. 59-65.

the other hand, traditional Spartan policy seems to have been primarily concerned with the Peloponnesus. This tradition was interrupted by the Persian War, and no doubt by 465, fifteen years after the Persian threat was removed from mainland Greece, there was a cry by some for a return to a policy emphasizing the Peloponnesus. Forrest blames Sparta's wavering among these choices for her muddled political situation during the period 479-464.<sup>17</sup> Even if none of these parties directly involved the helots in a power struggle, the mere existence of such a struggle would have been to the advantage of smoldering Messenian nationalism.

If the precise cause of the inner turmoil in Sparta is in dispute, there is ample indication of its existence. There were four cases in historic times in which Spartan kings were deposed or compelled to leave the throne for long periods.<sup>18</sup> They are the cases of Demaratus (ca. 491), Leoty-chidas (ca. 476), Pleistoanax (ca. 446), and Pausanias II (ca. 395). Three of the four kings were deposed during the fifty year period from 490 to 440. In the same period Cleomenes I was forced to flee the country. Both he and

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<sup>17</sup>Forrest, A History of Sparta, pp. 39, 99-100.

<sup>18</sup>H. W. Parke, "The Deposing of Spartan Kings," Classical Quarterly, XXXIX (1945), 108-110.

Pausanias I died violent deaths at the hands of their fellow countrymen. It is not likely that the domestic unrest which produced such fluidity in the Spartan monarchy, or the unrest produced by that fluidity, whichever the case may be, went unnoticed by men who were inclined to take advantage of it. The Third Messenian War was probably in part the product of such inclination.

Four elements of unrest in the Spartan political environment which had particular bearing on the helotry were the activities of Cleomenes I and the helot unrest in 490, the Persian War, Pausanias' plot, and a slump in Spartan power in ca. 471.

In 490 a plot hatched by Cleomenes I, to rid himself of his fellow dyarch Demaratus by bribing the Delphic Oracle, was uncovered.<sup>19</sup> Cleomenes fled eventually to Arkadia where he apparently organized the Arkadian League with which to restore himself to power.<sup>20</sup> Sparta then recalled him to resume his rule, whereupon he went mad and committed suicide under peculiar circumstances. Cleomenes, for whatever reason, sought more power for himself by introducing the helotry, especially the Messenian helots, to his plot, offering them

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<sup>19</sup>Hdt. 6. 50-75.

<sup>20</sup>Wallace, "Kleomenes," pp. 34-35.

enfranchisement for their support.<sup>21</sup> This is the basis for the much disputed helot uprising of 490. Plato noted that Sparta was late in sending aid to Marathon because Messenia was waging war against Lacedaemon, thus preventing her from rendering assistance.<sup>22</sup> Pausanias placed King Leotychidas in the Second Messenian War.<sup>23</sup> Since there was a Leotychidas who was king of Sparta in the early fifth century, it has often been assumed that Pausanias referred to a helot revolt in that period, earlier than the Third Messenian War.<sup>24</sup> Further proof of a Messenian war in 490 seems to be that at about this date, some fugitive Messenians were settled in Zancle by Anaxilas of Rhegium. The name of the place was then changed to Messene.<sup>25</sup> Strabo asserted that there were two Messenian wars after the one involving Tyrtaeus, usually called the second, implying one in 490 and one in 464.<sup>26</sup>

Critics attempt to counter the claim of a 490 revolt by insisting that Plato as an historian is vague and confusing.<sup>27</sup> They point to the fact that Herodotus specifically

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<sup>21</sup>Dickins, "The Growth of Spartan Policy," pp. 31-32; Wallace, "Kleomenes," pp. 32-35.

<sup>22</sup>Pl. Leg. 3. 692E, 698E. <sup>23</sup>Paus. 4. 15. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Dickins, "The Growth of Spartan Policy," pp. 31-32.

<sup>25</sup>Paus. 4. 23. 6. <sup>26</sup>Strab. 8. 4. 10.

<sup>27</sup>See Grundy, "The Policy of Sparta," pp. 266-69.

stated that the Spartans were reluctant to send aid to Marathon for religious reasons.<sup>28</sup> The material of Pausanias in regard to Leotychidas was taken from Rhianus of Alexandria who wrote during the third century, and who was therefore not trustworthy, it is claimed. It is possible that there was a seventh century king, Leotychidas, and that Pausanias was correct in assigning him to the Second Messenian War.<sup>29</sup> Critics point out that Thucydides explained the renaming of Zancle by making Anaxilas a former Messenian who renamed Zancle for his former home.<sup>30</sup>

The evidence in general, however, tends to substantiate a helot revolt in 490. It is numismatically certain that Zancle was renamed ca. 490.<sup>31</sup> Pausanias clearly noted that refugee Messenians were recruited for the campaign, and implied that it was their participation which caused the name change.<sup>32</sup> As for Herodotus' remark that the Spartans had religious reasons for coming late to Marathon, there is

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<sup>28</sup>Hdt. 6. 106.

<sup>29</sup>Pearson, "The Pseudo-History," pp. 419-22.

<sup>30</sup>Thuc. 6. 1. 6.

<sup>31</sup>E. S. G. Robinson, "Rhegion, Zankle--Messana and the Samians," JHS, LXVI (1946), 18.

<sup>32</sup>Paus. 4. 23. 6-10.



no way to judge Spartan sincerity or to determine whether they were simply making good use of a religious excuse.<sup>33</sup> Although absolute proof is lacking, it seems more logical that Plato, Pausanias, Rhianus, and Strabo had some tradition of an insurrection in 490 than to assume that they had none.<sup>34</sup>

Pausanias noted that at the temple of Apollo at Amyclae, ". . . there are bronze tripods, the most ancient of which, they say, are a tithe-offering of the spoils of the First Messenian War."<sup>35</sup> Again, in another account, Pausanias said that, the Spartans, upon completion of the First Messenian War, "out of the spoils they dedicated bronze tripods to the Amyclaeon god . . . ."<sup>36</sup> The artists who were involved in making these tripods were Gitiadas and Kalon of Aegina.<sup>37</sup> L. H. Jeffery claims that by literary reference and the evidence of a signature on a base at the Acropolis at Athens, Kalon is securely dated from 500 to 480. The date of Gitiadas, though less certain, notes Jeffery, is commonly placed at the middle to late sixth century.<sup>38</sup> Neither artist lived

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<sup>33</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 26n.

<sup>34</sup>Wallace, "Kleomenes," p. 32n.

<sup>35</sup>Paus. 3. 18. 5. <sup>36</sup>Ibid., 4. 14. 2. <sup>37</sup>Ibid., 3. 18. 5.

<sup>38</sup>L. H. Jeffery, "Comments on Some Archaic Greek Inscriptions," JHS, LXIX (1949), 27-30.

during the First Messenian War. This discrepancy in the account of Pausanias is usually explained by claiming that the offering was made at the end of the sixth century, but with the First Messenian War in mind. The inference in Pausanias' account, however, is that the two artists were commissioned soon after the war, to make the tripods which commemorated it. The war must have taken place, then, at the end of the sixth or beginning of the fifth century. It must have been, therefore, the misty revolt of Messenian helots in 490. Pausanias described a twelve foot statue of Zeus at Olympia, by noting that, ". . . they say that it was dedicated by the Lacedaemonians when they entered on the second war with the rebel Messenians."<sup>39</sup> Jeffery claims that the inscription on the base of this statue is later than the seventh century, the date of the Second Messenian War. By comparison and analysis of styles, the date probably is 500 to 490. Examination of the construction of the statue's base shows that it is quite similar to a style somewhat archaic by ca. 500. It is possible that such a style was used as late as 490, but unlikely that it was used as late as 465.<sup>40</sup> Such is the archaeological evidence for the 490 revolt.

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<sup>39</sup>Paus. 5. 24. 3.

<sup>40</sup>Jeffery, "Comments," pp. 27-30.

L. Pearson in refuting Jeffery says that in the case of Gitiadas and Kalon, Pausanias reports only that people say their tripods celebrated victories over Messenians.<sup>41</sup> They may, he insists, denote events occurring at a date earlier than the lives of the artists. If they do not refer to the First Messenian War, why, Pearson asks, would Spartans want to commemorate by expensive dedications the suppression of a mere revolt, such as that alleged to have existed in 490 or the one in 464? This point is especially weak. Pausanias unquestionably implied that the two artists were commissioned to make the war memorials soon after the war had been fought. Given the peculiar socio-economic system of Sparta, and its vital dependence on uninterrupted helot labor, it seems clear that a helot revolt was a threat even more dangerous than a foreign army, which might be resisted on foreign territory. In that case, it is not difficult to imagine the Spartans erecting expensive dedications to commemorate the suppression of a helot revolt.

The conclusion to be drawn, is that it is likely that there was some form of helot unrest around 490. The helots most likely affected were those of Messenian origin. If Cleomenes were not directly responsible for that unrest, his

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<sup>41</sup>Pearson, "The Pseudo-History," pp. 419-22.

illicit endeavors must have at least helped to loosen the hold of Sparta on the helots. Cleomenes' bribery of the oracle was discovered in 491, and his subsequent flight, his role in the Arkadian League and the helot revolt, and his recall to Sparta followed soon after. All of this must have occurred just prior to the request for Spartan aid at Marathon.<sup>42</sup> This indicates that the helot unrest probably did not blaze forth as full war, and that it must have been quickly suppressed. It also explains why there is no certain tradition of the 490 revolt. The embers of this revolt, however, burst into flame in the Third Messenian War, several years later.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Wallace, "Kleomenes," p. 35n. suggests the same conclusion. He may be over anxious to prove a 490 revolt, however, in citing Thuc. 1. 128. 1, "For the Lacedaemonians had on one occasion caused some suppliant Helots to leave... the temple of Poseidon at Taenarus... and put them to death," as proof of what he terms unrest among the helots prior to 465. Thucydides clearly connects this event with the great earthquake, 1. 101. 2. which destroyed Sparta, and verified Paus. 4. 24. 5-6, who also described the violation of the temple as a cause of the great earthquake, which both agree began the Third Messenian War in 464. This is an indication of prior unrest in that the executions may have been reprisals for previous actions. Neither source clearly says so, however, and on the whole the point is not as firm as Wallace indicates, though it is possible.

<sup>43</sup>Jeffery, "Comments," pp. 26-27, suggests that if there were a Messenian War in 490, it should be called the third and that of 464, should be called the fourth. Because the unrest in 490 seems to have been neither as severe nor as

The second element of unrest in the Spartan political situation which particularly affected the helotry during this period was the Persian War. This was so because the Spartans were preoccupied with leading the Greek forces against foreign invaders, not with guarding helots. There is no extant account of an overt expression of unrest during the war, and in the case of Plataea, helots served with the Spartan army in a minor capacity, probably as a means of keeping the helots under surveillance. The effect of the war was to lighten the hand of the Spartiates upon the helots. This is not to say that they experienced any change in physical condition, but that they felt relief at a less intense scrutiny. This is by itself no reason for the Third Messenian War, but it is a significant factor when considered with the elements of resentment of serf status and Messenian nationalism. It is even more significant if there were a helot revolt in 490. Even if not, certainly the affairs of Cleomenes and the Persian War encouraged the Messenian helots to contemplate stiffer resistance.

The third irritant, and cause of the war, was the

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long lasting as that in 464, and was suppressed with relative ease, the term, the helot revolt of 490, is more appropriate than the Third Messenian War, reserving that title for the obviously greater struggle in 464.

plot of Pausanias I.<sup>44</sup> Pausanias as regent for Pleistarchus, commanded the fleet in 479 in a most successful campaign, capturing Byzantium. He began behaving haughtily, however, adopting the manners and dress of an oriental despot. He was recalled to Sparta when it was learned that he had been corresponding with Xerxes, the Persian king. He was tried for treason and acquitted, but Dorcis was sent by Sparta to replace him as navarch. Pausanias sailed back to Byzantium privately and reopened his negotiations with the Persian king. Sparta again recalled him. He returned, was jailed, then set free to await trial. The ephors were cautious, trying to accumulate massive evidence of his guilt before charging the popular leader again with treason. At this point they were informed that Pausanias was intriguing with the helots. Apparently, Pausanias promised the helots freedom and citizenship if they would join him in a revolt. Once the ephors personally had conclusive proof of his guilt, Pausanias fled to the temple of Athena of the Brazen House, where he was walled in and starved to death. It is probable that Cleomenes' activities served as a precedent for Pausanias in appealing to the helots to further his own ends.<sup>45</sup> It seems

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<sup>44</sup>Thuc. 1. 128-34.

<sup>45</sup>Dickins, "The Growth of Spartan Policy," p. 34,

likely too, that the Messenian helots, who were the most amenable to such intrigue, were involved in Pausanias' plot. The importance of the affair to the Third Messenian War is that the hopes of the helots were aroused once more by a Spartan king. The hope of admission to the civil body had been theirs for a time and was probably a vision difficult to forget. In addition, the testimony of Pausanias and Thucydides indicates that reprisals may have been made for helot participation with Pausanias.<sup>46</sup> Resentment and vengeance were then added to the frustration of having been denied freedom.<sup>47</sup>

Sparta's prestige and position began to decline with

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suggests that Pausanias was the victim of the ephor-Agaid power struggle. Grundy, "The Policy of Sparta," p. 267, claims that Pausanias sought to expand Sparta's activities abroad and met his end because the ephors and other Spartans were more concerned with the helot problems near at hand. The point that he involved the helots is not hotly debated, except that Grundy specifies that Pausanias was only accused of doing so, and was not formally found guilty. This point is weak, especially in view of the fact that Pausanias fled when warned by a friend that he was to be charged with conspiring with the helots.

<sup>46</sup>Paus. 4. 24. 5-6; Thuc. 1. 128. 1.

<sup>47</sup>For a similar view, see Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 403n.; M. L. W. Laistner, A History of the Greek World from 479 to 323 B.C., Methuen Series (London: Methuen & Co., 1936), p. 26; A. H. Allcroft, The Making of Athens: A History of Greece, 495-431, ed. B. J. Hayes (2d ed.; London: University Tutorial Press, 1909), p. 89; Dickins, "The Growth of Spartan Policy," p. 36.

the intriguing of Pausanias, and it is this decline which is the fourth factor of Peloponnesian politics affecting the helots and thus contributing to the cause of the Third Messenian War. Dorcis, sent to replace Pausanias as navarch, was rejected by the other Greeks. Sparta was foiled in attempts to pack the Delphic Amphictyony and to take medizing Thessaly. The commander of the forces sent to take Thessaly, Leotychidas, was suspected of taking bribes and fled to Tegea where he joined the Arkadian League in opposition to Sparta. Themistocles ruined Spartan attempts to keep Athens from rebuilding her walls soon after the Persian War. In the decade 480-470, the Eleans underwent unification and democratization, thoroughly repugnant to Sparta. In that period, Themistocles lived in exile at Argos and traveled about the Peloponnesus stirring up opposition to Sparta. It is more than likely that he had a hand in Pausanias' efforts to disrupt the helots.<sup>48</sup> Mantinea underwent synoecism and lapsed into opposition to Sparta during this period. All of these occurrences were distasteful to Sparta, but apparently she could not correct them, which seems to be further evidence of Sparta's lessened power.<sup>49</sup> After 470, the Arkadian League

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<sup>48</sup>J. B. Bury, Cambridge Ancient History (CAH) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), V, 63.

<sup>49</sup>Allcroft, The Making of Athens, p. 86.



and Argos repeatedly threatened Sparta's position in the Peloponnesus, although Mantinea experienced the recurrence of a pro-Spartan government. The battle of Tegea was probably fought just prior to the Third Messenian War and the battle of Dipaea may have been fought after the war had begun, accounting for Sparta's urgent request for aid during that war.<sup>50</sup> Sparta after the Persian War was no doubt apprehensive of the growing power of Athens, but for some reason was reluctant to face the dangers of contesting it. Her decline in power and the trouble she had with the Arkadian-Argive coalition, witnessed in Tegea and Dipaea, probably accounts for this reluctance. The one effort Sparta made to contest Athen's rise to power, the Thasian agreement of 465, which must have come during a lull in the struggle with the Arkadian-Argive alliance, was cut short by the critical period of the Third Messenian War.<sup>51</sup>

Numerous theories have been raised to account for this Spartan power slump. Dickins accounts for it by blaming the Agiad-ephorate power struggle. Grundy accounts for it by suggesting that Sparta was concerned with domestic affairs,

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<sup>50</sup>See Hammond, "Studies," pp. 380-81; Wallace, "Kleomenes," pp. 34-35; A. Andrews, "Sparta and Arcadia in the Early Fifth Century," The Phoenix, VI (1952), 1-5.

<sup>51</sup>Grundy, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 234.

especially the helots. Jones comments that the Spartans thought that the Athenians were concerned with increasing their own power in the further conduct of the Persian War.<sup>52</sup> He concludes that the war party in Sparta carried the assembly about 475, and only the persuasion of Hetomaridas kept war from breaking forth then.<sup>53</sup> Before further war efforts could be made, the Peloponnesian situation forced Sparta to concern herself with matters near at hand. By 465, his theory runs, the war party was dominant again, as evidenced by the Thasian agreement. The earthquake of the same year, which began the Third Messenian War, ended temporarily the ascendancy of the war party. Forrest more convincingly argues that Sparta's power decline resulted from her "ineffectual dithering" among three parties of influence.<sup>54</sup> Pausanias failed in his attempt to maintain Spartan hegemony at sea. Leotychidas failed in his efforts to leave the sea to Athens and extend Spartan authority by land. By this time Spartan power and prestige was at a new low, and the only alternative, especially in view of the Arkadian-Argive combination, was for Sparta to concentrate on affairs in the

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<sup>52</sup>Jones, Sparta, pp. 59-60, based on Thuc. 1. 90. 5.

<sup>53</sup>Based on Diod. 11. 50. 6.

<sup>54</sup>Forrest, History of Sparta, pp. 100-101.

Peloponnesus. As Forrest says, the Thasian agreement of 465 came about when Sparta had begun to regain her equilibrium, and probably during a pause in her conflict with the Arkadian-Argive entente, so it does not detract from his theory of Sparta's indecision as the source for her power decline.

Regardless of the cause, the Spartan decline in power and prestige, and the threat of neighbors, probably lessened Spartan supervision of the helots even more than previously. A period of declining power was ideally suited to inspire the Messenian helots, in a state of ferment because of previous prodding mentioned above, to greater heights of resistance. They had been promised freedom twice, involved in plots, and subject to several fluxuations in intensity of supervision during a relatively brief period. This frustration and prodding was added to Messenian nationalism, the psychological and possibly physical abuses to which helots in general were subject, and the discrimination against the Messenian helots in particular. Had the Messenian helots been completely subjugated for centuries, without any hope of improved circumstances, without encouragement and involvement in political affairs, revolt might not have resulted. At this point, however, the Messenian helots needed only an opportune moment to attempt to crack the Spartan hold. It is this opportune moment, the havoc and confusion caused by

the great earthquake of 464, which was the immediate cause for the opening conflict of the Third Messenian War.

## CHAPTER 5

### NATURE AND CONDUCT OF THE WAR

The following examination of the nature and conduct of the war is important because the title "Third Messenian War" seems to place that struggle in the same class as the first two Messenian Wars mentioned above. This is not the case. That is not to say that the Third Messenian War was any less important than its predecessors, but simply that it was a different type of conflict, as will become clear.

Thucydides recounted that the Athenians in 465 were confronted by the revolt of Thasos from their empire.<sup>1</sup> Cimon, son of Miltiades, was sent to Thasos, and the Thasians were soon defeated and beseiged. Unknown to the Athenians, the Thasians had gotten word to Sparta, proposing that the Spartans should come to their aid by invading Attica. The Spartans, already aware of the Athenian threat to their position as leaders of Greece and the Peloponnesus, promised to

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<sup>1</sup>Thuc. 1. 100. 1-102. 2. Dates connected with the war are disputed. See Appendix.

invade. This promise is not mentioned by any other major source for the war. Some scholars charge that the promise is doubtful since it remained a complete secret for two or possibly three years after it was made. They claim that the agreement was an anachronism inserted into Thucydides' history to justify Athenian anti-Spartan sentiment thirty years later during the Peloponnesian War.<sup>2</sup> Thucydides was the most critical and reliable of ancient historians. He was a near contemporary to the war. If the Thasian agreement were a fact, he would have reported it as he did. Thucydides wrote his history to prove that Athenian imperialism caused the Peloponnesian War; it was not his aim to justify Athenian anti-Spartan sentiment. Until other, more reliable evidence on the point appears, one must accept Thucydides' contention that the Thasian agreement with Sparta was accomplished, and his implication that it was concealed effectively for two to three years.

According to Pausanias, in 464, helots of Messenian origin, condemned to death, took sanctuary in a temple of Poseidon at Taenarum in Laconia.<sup>3</sup> They were seized upon orders of the ephors, and taken from the temple and executed.

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<sup>2</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 298.

<sup>3</sup>Paus. 4. 24. 5-6.

Pausanias concluded that for this sacrilege, Poseidon smote Sparta with a tremendous earthquake.<sup>4</sup> All four major sources agree that Sparta was stricken by an incredible quake, and that this earthquake and its aftermath prevented the Spartans from moving on Attica as planned.<sup>5</sup> The city of Sparta was leveled,<sup>6</sup> except for five houses.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps as many as 20,000 people died in the catastrophe,<sup>8</sup> including many of the prime Spartan hopelites who were killed when the gymnasium in which they were exercising collapsed on them.<sup>9</sup> At this point, dispute occurs. It was then that the war began, but just who was involved?

Pausanias and Thucydides both agreed that the helots took advantage of the opportunity provided by the earthquake to revolt against their Spartan masters. Pausanias said that "those Helots who had originally been Messenians revolted and took refuge on Mount Ithome."<sup>10</sup> Thucydides modified this notion and claimed that "most" of the helots who revolted were the descendents of "the early Messenians who had been enslaved of old, and hence were all called Messenians. The

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; Diod. 11. 63. 3. <sup>5</sup>Thuc. 1. 101. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Paus. 4. 24. 5-6. <sup>7</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 5.

<sup>8</sup>Diod. 11. 63. 1. <sup>9</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Paus. 4. 24. 6; 3. 11. 8.

Lacedaemonians, then, were involved in war with the rebels on Ithome," and so the Thasians came to terms with Athens in the third year of siege. Thucydides further specified that the perioeci of Thuria and Aethaea joined the revolt.<sup>11</sup> Both of these perioeci cities were Messenian. Thuria was located on the left bank of the Pamisus River near its mouth, and Aethaea was probably just north of it.<sup>12</sup> It seems clear that the Third Messenian War was fought by Spartans against revolting helots of Messenian origin.

The first hero of the war, Archidamus II, Eurypontid King of Sparta, entered at this point. After the great earthquake, the citizens of Sparta were groveling in the ruins of the city attempting to save relatives and belongings. Structures not yet fallen, but made wobbly by the quake and its accompanying tremors, were collapsing on these people. With a number of prime hopelites crushed in the gymnasium, Sparta could ill afford further losses. King Archidamus, cognizant of all this as well as the dangerous opportunity for the helots to repay their Spartiate masters, sounded the signal for the defense of the city. The Spartan army assembled for the battle on open ground near-by. Thus Archidamus drew

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<sup>11</sup>Thuc. 1. 101. 2-3.

<sup>12</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 298.



many of the citizens from the falling ruins, established military control of the situation, prevented panic, and met the onslaught of revolting helots.<sup>13</sup>

Archidamus aptly anticipated the movement of the helots. As Plutarch noted, this move was all that saved Sparta from certain destruction.<sup>14</sup> Finding Archidamus and the army drawn up and ready for attack, the helots, when they arrived at the city of Sparta, either lost nerve or assessed their numbers as too few to attack. They "withdrew to their cities and waged open war, persuading many of the Perioeci to do likewise."<sup>15</sup> Plutarch closed his account of the quake and immediate results by muddying the otherwise-clear picture of a helot revolt. He said, "The Messenians besides joined in this attack upon the Spartans,"<sup>16</sup> which has led some historians, notably N. G. L. Hammond, to believe that the Spartans faced helots, perioeci, and "the Messenians."

Diodorus recorded no meeting of the rebels and Archidamus' defenders, as did Plutarch. Simply "hearing" that Archidamus and his troops had struck a defensive stance was enough to send the rebels described by Diodorus skittering off to Messenia, where they seized a "stronghold," presumably

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<sup>13</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 6-7; Diod. 11. 63. 5-6.

<sup>14</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 6-7. <sup>15</sup>Ibid. <sup>16</sup>Ibid.

Mount Ithome.<sup>17</sup> The rebels made this stronghold "their base of operations and from there continued to overrun Laconia."<sup>18</sup> Like Plutarch, Diodorus' definition of the rebels seems to be in conflict with that of Thucydides and Pausanias. He provided that "the Messenians together with the Helots" revolted.<sup>19</sup> Again, later in the war, "a suspicion arose that the Athenians were about to go over to the Messenians."<sup>20</sup> He also said that "the Helots revolting in a body from the Lacedaemonians joined as allies with the Messenians."<sup>21</sup> Finally, "the Lacadaemonians had . . . over come both the Helots and Messenians . . . and the Messenians they had allowed to depart."<sup>22</sup>

The implication of the accounts of Plutarch and Diodorus seems to be that a foreign threat in the form of "Messenians" existed and played a part in the Third Messenian War. They are reenforced by Herodotus, who referred to the participation in the war of "the whole army of Messenia."<sup>23</sup> This implication of an independent Messenian force serves as the core of what may be called the Hammond thesis in

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<sup>17</sup>Diod. 11. 64. 1. Ithome is not specifically mentioned until 11. 64. 4.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. <sup>19</sup>Ibid. <sup>20</sup>Ibid., 2. <sup>21</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 84. 8. <sup>23</sup>Hdt. 9. 64.

explaining the conduct of the Third Messenian War.<sup>24</sup>

Unlike any other source, Diodorus dated the war's beginning with earthquakes in 469.<sup>25</sup> Hammond accepts this view, and specifies that the great earthquake mentioned by the other major sources as the beginning of the war, was actually only the beginning of the most dangerous phase of the war.<sup>26</sup> His thesis is that a group of independent Messenians siezed Ithome in 469, and when the great earthquake occurred in 464, they were joined by the Messenian helots and perioeci. This thesis, he believes, explains the allusion of Plutarch and Diodorus to the three distinct groups of enemy facing Sparta during the war. Hammond contends that Thucydides (1. 101. 2) reads the helots and perioeci of Thuria and Aethaea "revolted to Ithome," meaning that they joined the side or cause of those independent Messenians at Ithome since 469.<sup>27</sup> In the view of Hammond, Sparta's very existence was threatened by the combination of the helots, perioeci, and "Messenians."<sup>28</sup> As proof of the point that Sparta was crumbling, Hammond cites Diodorus to the effect that "Laconia was being overrun by the Messenians."<sup>29</sup> Under

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<sup>24</sup>Hammond, "Studies," pp. 371-411. <sup>25</sup>Diod. 11. 63. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Hammond, "Studies," p. 374. <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 376.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 377. <sup>29</sup>Ibid.

these circumstances, says Hammond, Sparta was forced to call for aid from her allies, including Athens. Upon this occasion, Sparta sent Pericleidas, a white-faced suppliant, to Athens.<sup>30</sup> Pericleidas was distraught because of the gravity of Sparta's situation in having to fend off helots, perioeci, and "Messenians." According to Hammond, Athens responded and saved Sparta from certain destruction.

The genesis of Hammond's evaluation of the conduct of the war, his main source, Diodorus, does not support his case. Diodorus (11. 63. 1) clearly stated, "During this year [469] a great and incredible catastrophe befell the Lacedaemonians; for great earthquakes . . ." occurred in Sparta and caused". . . the tumbling down of the city . . . ." <sup>31</sup> The destruction of Sparta city and the death in Sparta city is obviously attributed to these "earthquakes" in 469. Without noting lapse of time, Diodorus (11. 63. 2-4) referred to other dangers befalling the Spartans at the hands of men. "The helots and Messenians," he says, had been quiet to this point, because they feared Sparta, "but when they observed that the larger part of them had perished because of the earthquake," they joined together in a war upon the Lacedaemonians. Later, Diodorus (11. 63. 5-6), called Archidamus

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<sup>30</sup>Ar. Lys. 1137ff.    <sup>31</sup>Italics mine.

the savior of his countrymen during "the earthquake," the first to arm himself "when the terrible earthquake struck." Hammond's claim that Diodorus noted a series of earthquakes beginning in 469, but more especially described the great earthquake of 464, seems to be a clumsy attempt to explain Diodorus' mention of earthquakes and earthquake without noting time lapse and almost in the same breath. Since it is obvious from his account that Diodorus referred to quakes and quake which directly affected Sparta city, it is likely that this is the same catastrophe reported by Thucydides, Pausanias, and Plutarch under the year 464. Diodorus simply misdated the great earthquake of 464.

Diodorus' account of the quake and resulting war disproves Hammond's contention that the war began when independent Messenians took Ithome in 469/68. It is clear from Diodorus (11. 63. 4) that the "Messenians," of whatever origin, arose at the same time as the helots, and that if the helots did not rise until 464, neither did the "Messenians." It is clear also from Diodorus (11. 64. 1) that when the revolt came, "the Messenians together with the Helots . . ." seized Ithome. They did not do so if it was already seized in 469/68 by those other "Messenians," assuming that here, Diodorus refers to the revolt of Messenian helots in 464, even though he presents nothing to counter the view that

all of this took place in 469.

Diodorus (15. 66. 4) referred to the last Messenian War as "starting on the occasion of the great earthquake," which confirms the theory that Diodorus described the same event as the other three sources, but misdated it.<sup>32</sup> Hammond claims that this summary statement has less validity than the full account (11. 63-64).<sup>33</sup> This is true only if the conclusions of the summary account (11. 63-64) and the full account (15. 66. 4) are basically different, and since the summary account does in fact indicate that the war began with the great earthquake, but that it was misdated by Diodorus at 469, the two accounts are the same. The confusion which makes the two passages appear to differ resulted from Diodorus' reference to Messenians and helots. Diodorus attempted to distinguish between Laconian helots, as simply "helots," and Messenian helots, which he called "Messenians." It is also possible that Diodorus attempted to distinguish between helots, both Laconian and Messenian, called "helots," and the Messenian perioeci, as "Messenians." Pausanias' dating of the great quake and subsequent activity at 464 is secure, so neither of these possibilities could have occurred in 469. The only proof of an independent Messenian force, however,

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<sup>32</sup>Hammond, "Studies," p. 375n. <sup>33</sup>Ibid.

lies in the need to fill the gap between Diodorus' date for the war's beginning, and 464 when the other ancients take up the story.

Since by 469, most of Messenia had been conquered by Sparta, it is clear that Hammond's force must have come from outside Messenia. Why for the first time in two hundred years did this independent Messenian force make itself known, invading and seizing Ithome in 469? Sparta had had trouble with her helots before, and reasonably, more trouble with those helots of Messenian descent. Why did no help come from the independent force of Messenian immigrants in the helot uprising of 490, fostered by Cleomenes I?<sup>34</sup> Why did Pausanias not make arrangements with the independent Messenians, certainly a more formidable foe than the helots themselves, in planning his coup? Better yet, the Persian War provided a perfect opportunity for the independent Messenians to strike back at Sparta. Yet on none of these occasions is there evidence of an independent Messenian force surviving after two hundred years in force enough to threaten Sparta. Even if the series of earthquakes supposedly attributed by Diodorus to the year 469 were true, it would make more sense for helots, Messenian helots perhaps, to have taken advantage

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<sup>34</sup>For these events, see Chapter 4.

of the confusion caused by quakes in the outlying districts, and flee to Ithome, than for an independent Messenian force to march on such flimsy cause.

As noted above, Hammond seeks to translate Thucydides (1. 101. 2) to read that in consequence of the earthquake the helots and perioeci of Thuria and Aethaea "revolted to Ithome," meaning revolted to the side or cause of Ithome, indicating that the independent Messenians had already established themselves there as a cause.<sup>35</sup> The line translated by Hammond "revolted to Ithome," is as often translated "revolted and went to Ithome."<sup>36</sup> In this state it obviously implies no notion that the rebels were joining a group already at war and holding Ithome. Ithome was a traditional Messenian strong-hold, and Messenian helots would have fled there readily. The Hammond theory requires the belief that when the great earthquake finally came and encouraged the helots to revolt, while seriously crippling Spartan military power, the independent Messenian force sat tight on Ithome, allowing the helots, according to Plutarch (Cim. 16. 7), to return to their respective cities and fight. The independent

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<sup>35</sup> Hammond, "Studies," p. 376.

<sup>36</sup> Thucydides, trans. by C. F. Smith, Loeb Classical Library.



Messenians took no advantage of the chaos in Sparta. Unlikely as that is, even more so is it that Sparta, with some kind of Messenian army perched on Ithome since 469, posing a constant threat of helot revolt, agreed to invade Attica on behalf of the Thasians in 465.<sup>37</sup> It would have been convenient and more pertinent to explain the grave danger of Sparta and the reason for abandoning the Thasians, for Thucydides to have explained that the helots were joining Hammond's mysterious "Messenians" who had taken Ithome five years earlier. Hammond says that it is this "serious moment" to which Thucydides refers "so explicitly." Thucydides (2. 27. 2) referred to the "time of the earthquake and the revolt of the Helots." Later (3. 54. 5) he spoke of "the revolt of the Helots and their occupation of Ithome." Thucydides was consistent in recognizing the war solely as an helot insurrection, and was unaware of the role of any independent Messenians in the war, for good reason.

The Hammond thesis appears to be invalid. It is most unlikely that an independent, non-helotized group of Messenians existed in numbers strong enough to threaten Sparta in times of adversity. Diodorus distinguished between Laconian and Messenian helots involved in the various stages of the

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<sup>37</sup>Thuc. 1. 101. 2.

war as "helots" for the Laconians, and "Messenians" for the others, a confusion eliminated by Thucydides who clearly explained that most of those involved were Messenians. Hammond attempts to disprove Thucydides' explanation,<sup>38</sup> by citing, rather misleadingly, Pausanias. Hammond says that "our sources" refer to the Messenian helots as "helots," not "Messenians," so that it is unlikely that the term "Messenians" meant "helots of Messenian origin." Pausanias (3. 11. 8) noted that Tisamenus' fourth victory was "over the rebel Helots who had established themselves in Ithome."<sup>39</sup> This not only counters Hammond's claim that independent Messenians had taken Ithome prior to the revolt, but the next sentence proves the contention of Thucydides, even though the rebels are at first referred to as "rebel Helots." In that line Pausanias stated, "It was not all the Helots who revolted, but only the Messenians." The distinction is clearly drawn. Pausanias (4. 24. 6) remarked that "those Helots who had originally been Messenians revolted." Again, though not referred to as "Messenians," the distinction between Messenian helots and Laconian helots is clear. In the same book, Pausanias flatly stated that "the Messenians who were besieged

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<sup>38</sup> Hammond, "Studies," p. 379.

<sup>39</sup> For Tisamenus, see the conclusion of this chapter.

in Ithome, capitulated and marched out." It is certain, thanks to Pausanias' clearly drawn distinction, that the Messenians who marched out of Ithome were Messenian helots, referred to simply as Messenians. Hammond's point that "our sources" do not refer to Messenian helots as Messenians, is lost. Probably, then, Thucydides' explanation that most of the helots who revolted were descendants of the early Messenians and were all called Messenians, should be accepted and applied to the accounts of Diodorus and Plutarch.<sup>40</sup>

Plutarch (Cim. 16) noted that after the great earthquake and the uneventful helot assault on Sparta, the helots "withdrew to their cities and waged open war, persuading many Perioeci to do the same. The Messenians besides joined in this attack . . . ." Contrary to Hammond's thesis, there

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<sup>40</sup> Even if it is granted that Diodorus referred to independent Messenians and not to Messenian helots, one of the most plausible explanations of his account is that in the treatment of the revolt as a war in the sense of a conflict between nations, there is evidence of a Greek historian's concern for balance and cyclic history. To achieve balance and to fulfill the cycle of Messenian Wars, the first two of which were remarkably similar, Diodorus may have carried the traditions of the previous two wars, which involved the clash of two formal and to an extent, national armies, to the Third Messenian War. Indeed the Messenian revival of a century after the Third Messenian War, may have required the creation of a national history, encouraged by Athens, staunch ally of the Messenians as a result of the Third War. Elements of this contrived national history may have crept into the account of Diodorus.

is no indication that "Messenians" here referred to any body of men who had seized Ithome in 469/68. The "Messenians" might as easily have referred to the helots of Messenian origin, as Thucydides and Pausanias specifically stated. The Messenian helots, located primarily in the plains of Stenyclarus and Marcaria, received late word of the general rising of helots in the country around Sparta, and hastened to join in the effort with them. This interpretation explains Plutarch's sequence of events concerning the rebels immediately after the earthquake: the rise of helots around Sparta, their return to home cities, and the joining in of the Messenians. The sense of Plutarch's account does not indicate that the Messenians were an independent force, as Hammond says, but that the revolt included the Messenian helots.

Because of the similarity in the confusing use of the terms "helots" and "Messenians," Hammond and others suggest a common source as the origin of the accounts of the Third Messenian War by Diodorus and Plutarch. Thucydides flourished during the century in which the Third Messenian War took place, and Ephorus, the prime source for Diodorus' account of the war, flourished during the century after Thucydides. If the common source is not Ephorus himself, and his reputation does not usually merit such a compliment, it must lie in the century with Thucydides. In that case, there

seem to be only two probable choices.

The first choice is Hellanicus' account of the Pentacontaetia, of which there are only fragments.<sup>41</sup> Hellanicus may have posited the existence of an independent Messenian force; he may have mistakenly applied the tradition of the previous two wars to the Third Messenian War; or he may not have explained clearly, exactly who was involved in the war. Any of these flaws would account for the confusion in versions presented by Diodorus and Plutarch. Given the possibility of the use of Hellanicus, however, it seems possible that Thucydides, by his pointed and positive remark (1. 102. 2) that most of the rebels were descendents of the early Messenians and so were all called Messenians, meant to correct a previous misimpression left perhaps by Hellanicus. This remark is clearly emphasized and seems to be a conscious digression from Thucydides' account of the movement of events of the war in the preceding and following sentences. Thucydides (1. 97. 2) complained of Hellanicus' inaccuracy in chronology and the brevity of his account. Thucydides may have, if not corrected, at least added his reference to the Messenian helots to clarify and present a more accurate

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<sup>41</sup>Even Hammond, "Studies," p. 372, grants the possibility.

account of the war than Hellenicus. If it is conceded that Thucydides himself used Hellenicus for part of his account of the war, it may be concluded that the comment on the Messenian helots also came from Hellenicus, eliminating him as the source for Ephorus-Diodorus, and Plutarch.

The second choice for a common source is Herodotus.<sup>42</sup> His mention of the war is so cursory that reliance on it could accomplish little but confusion. On one occasion he said that one of Tisemenus' five victories was "over the Messenians at Ithome." At another point he commented on the death of a hero of Plataea who was defeated and slain in a battle against "the whole army of Messenia." Herodotus gave no real account of the war and only hinted at the participants with vague comments. The comments he did make seem to indicate an independent Messenian force, and the confusion of the accounts of Diodorus and Plutarch may lie in their efforts to reconcile the tradition of the war as an helot insurrection and the impression given by Herodotus that it involved an "army of Messenia." Again, Thucydides might have attempted to correct this impression given by Herodotus with his comment on the Messenian helots.

The Third Messenian War was not a war in the technical

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<sup>42</sup>Hdt. 9. 35, 64.

sense, and in the grand tradition of the First and Second Messenian Wars, as some modern historians infer from the confused accounts of Plutarch and Diodorus, but a revolt primarily of Messenian helots. There was no independent Messenian force taking part in the war. The Messenian helots, whose fierce nationalism had created problems for the Spartans for a century before the Third War, maintained the revolt, aided occasionally by efforts of Laconian helots and friendly perioeci.<sup>43</sup> With the great earthquake in 464, Laconian helots, those closest to Sparta city, threatened the city, were deflected by Archidamus, and returned to their respective cities to carry on the war. The Messenian helots, farther away, after hearing of Spartan preparedness, repaired to Mt. Ithome as a base of operations for the revolt, where they may have been joined later by those Laconian helots who had begun the initial assault.

That there is some confusion in the conduct of the war should not be surprising. Since there was no tradition of leadership among the rebels, it is probable that the rebels conducted erratic attacks, at least in the first stages of the war. This explanation could account for the remarks

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<sup>43</sup>For a confirming view, see Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 303.

of both Plutarch and Diodorus that the rebels assaulted Sparta, returned to their homes to wage war, and then fled to Mt. Ithome, while Thucydides and Pausanias record only the flight to Ithome.<sup>44</sup> The likelihood that the helots involved revolted in several waves after the earthquake, accounts for the remark by Diodorus that the helots revolted, were joined by the Messenian helots, and that more helots revolted to join the rebels after they had taken refuge on Ithome.<sup>45</sup>

Dickins and others claim that the rapidity with which the helots struck after the quake proves that they were organized and prepared for attack. Plutarch noted that the helots in the "country round about" rushed to Sparta to pillage and slaughter. Others did not join the movement until later.<sup>46</sup> This indicates no organization, only a willingness to revolt at a moment's notice, something the Messenian helots had been noted for since 650. The haphazard way in which some helots withdrew to their own cities, while others went to Ithome, tends also to count against the theory of prior organization. The lack of common planning and leadership accounts for much of the confusion as to which helots were involved and how, but all four major sources neglect the

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<sup>44</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 7; Diod. 11. 64. 1.

<sup>45</sup>Diod. 11. 64. 2-4. <sup>46</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 6-7.



mention of prior organization and agree that the war began in earnest with the earthquake, and that eventually its most important phase centered around the capture of Mt. Ithome.<sup>47</sup>

Since all accounts note the prominence of Ithome in the conduct of the war, it seems most likely that the stiffest rebel resistance, comprised of Messenian helots, assembled there. Ithome could not have supported every Messenian helot, so it is likely that after some struggle, many helots who had joined in the revolt were reconquered, leaving Ithome the center for numerous die-hard Messenian insurgents. This is precisely the implication of Thucydides, and the statement of Diodorus.<sup>48</sup> Diodorus commented that the rebels seized Ithome, made it their base of operations and from there

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<sup>47</sup>For a statement in sympathy with the view of an unplanned, spontaneous revolt, see Evelyn Abbott, A History of Greece from the Ionian Revolt to the Thirty Years Peace, 500-445 B.C. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), II, 318. For an opposite view, that the war was well planned and that the rebels were prepared for an attack, see Dickins, "The Growth of Spartan Policy," p. 36.

<sup>48</sup>Thuc. 1. 101. 2-4. Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 301-302, agrees that this is the implication, though he misinterprets it. He believes Thucydides implied a siege of precisely ten years duration, and so says Diodorus was "nearer the truth." Diod. 11. 64. 1, noted the use of Ithome as a base of operations from which the rebels made raids. Thucydides did not oppose this view. Thuc. 1. 101. 1, noted the war as "a long affair," and that it ended in a siege. Diod. 11. 64. 4, agreed. The question in dispute is whether or not Athens was involved in the actual siege.

continued to overrun Laconia.<sup>49</sup> The implication is not that Sparta was flooded by rebel helots, but that the helots sallied forth from Ithome to ravage the surrounding countryside. It is hard to imagine the helots ravaging all the country since according to both Diodorus and Plutarch, the assembled Spartan army was in some cases enough to turn away the helots without even a fight.<sup>50</sup> It seems certain that the Spartans were able to repulse the raids until the Messenian helots were restricted to Ithome and its near vicinity, since the war was ended by the siege of Ithome, as all major sources indicate.

The Messenians traditionally were rather fierce. Pausanias revealed that Messenian warfare contained both a tradition of the phalanx and hand-to-hand combat which rivaled that of the Spartans, and a tradition of guerrilla raids from fortified positions. The guerrilla tradition probably involved the use of light armed troops, which, when properly deployed were the nemesis of the phalanx down to the Battle of the Caudine Forks in the Great Samnite War (327-304). The diversified use of helots by Spartans may also have served to the advantage of the Messenian rebels in the Third War. Some Messenian helots were used to garrison

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<sup>49</sup>Diod. 11. 64. 1. <sup>50</sup>Ibid.; Plut. Cim. 16. 7.

frontier outposts, while others were hopelite attendants. Not all were cleroi laborers, but even those who were, through their labors, were strong and physically fit. The rebels, then, had some experience in military affairs; were capable of stealing, making, and using arms; and possessed the strength and spirit necessary for a protracted war. They were a difficult foe. Shortly after the war began, the Messenian rebels caught and annihilated three hundred Spartan hopelites in the Stenyclarus Plain. They killed the Spartan leader, Aeimnestus, slayer of Mardonius and victor at the battle of Plataea.<sup>51</sup> After bouts of intermittent warfare,<sup>52</sup> the Messenian helots received a significant defeat at Isthmus, an unknown place in Messenia, after which Messenian resistance was restricted to the country around Ithome.<sup>53</sup>

The conduct of the war by Sparta probably followed its traditional pattern. The phalanx was the key formation. It involved the lining up of hopelites, heavy-armed infantrymen, shoulder to shoulder in three blocks, usually from eight to twelve rows deep. The virtue of the phalanx was its solidarity, both physical and moral. Physically the ranks were

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<sup>51</sup>Hdt. 9. 64. <sup>52</sup>Diod. 11. 64. 4.

<sup>53</sup>Bury, A History of Greece, p. 329; CAH, V, 70. The ancient source is Hdt. 9. 35, 64. Difficulties in translation are involved.

compact and deep enough to fill front line gaps, and morally, each soldier could see comrades all about him, and he fought shoulder to shoulder with them. The hopelite received his name from the large, round, bronze shield he carried. It was big enough to hide his entire body when kneeling and to cover his body from the neck to the knee when standing. Metal greaves, cuirass, and helmet completed the hopelite armor, which weighed seventy pounds. He carried a heavy thrusting spear and a short, thrust-cut sword.<sup>54</sup>

The three phalanx blocks served as center and flanks. The power of the phalanx was the actual strength of the hopelites. Phalanx warfare was a pushing contest. Each block of soldiers, shield to shield, attempted to roll the other backward. One of the major limitations of hopelite warfare was that it required large, level plains areas, where the shoulder and shield contact necessary to maintain the continuity of the line could be achieved. In rugged and mountainous terrain, where balance and contact were nearly impossible, the phalanx was useless. Light-armed troops in such terrain could and did obliterate hopelites in phalanx formation.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Lynn Montross, War Through the Ages (3rd ed.; New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1960), p. 7, 8; F. E. Adcock, The Greek and Macedonian Art of War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 3.

<sup>55</sup>Grundy, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 272.

The phalanx also proved to be relatively useless against strongly fortified positions. Hopelites were unsuited to siege by assault because of the weight and cumbersomeness of their armor, and they were psychologically unprepared because of their extensive training in close, well-ordered, protected ranks.<sup>56</sup> To dash madly over a wall, helter-skelter, every man for himself, was unimaginable for Spartan soldiers. According to legend, Lycurgus realized this weakness of the phalanx and forbade the Spartan army to attack walled cities, so that women and children could have no hand in killing brave Spartan hopelites.<sup>57</sup> In historic Greece, until the Peloponnesian War, there is no certain record of the storming of a Greek city by Greeks.<sup>58</sup> The usual method of siege was by circumvallation and starvation, which took months or years.

Mt. Ithome, where the Messenians established themselves, was a natural fortification. The traditional fortress of beleaguered Messenians, Ithome was reputed to have been one of the highest and most inaccessible mountains of the

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 290.

<sup>57</sup>Michell, Sparta, p. 253.

<sup>58</sup>Adcock, Art of War, pp. 57-58.

Peloponnesus.<sup>59</sup> In view of the peculiar incapacity of the Spartan army, this fact alone would have made the Messenians nearly invulnerable. The top of Ithome, however, was also the site of a ruined walled city, and certainly contained a temple of Zeus. This meant a double check on the effectiveness of the Spartan hopelites against the Messenian rebels. The rebels could easily hold the Spartans at bay with raids and sallies from a fortified position using light-armed forces to advantage in the terrain. The usual practice of siege by circumvallation was probably ruled out by the rigors of Ithome's slopes. The only other alternative was investment of the whole mountain, a job much too large for the Spartan forces alone. It is little wonder that the Messenian helots were so successful in issuing from Ithome against the Spartans and in search of food and supplies. Supply would have been no problem until late in the war, since Ithome commanded much of the Pamisus valley where grain was plentiful.

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<sup>59</sup>Paus. 4. 9. 2; 12. 8; 24. 7. In spite of this evidence, Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 301-302, believes that Ithome was unfortified, except by a wooden palisade on the model of the Persian encampments of the period. Apart from the fact that Pausanias disproved him, it is my impression that the practice of building palisaded encampments as the Persians did, was not adopted by the Greeks. If the Messenians had erected such a palisade, it would have been one of the first of its kind, and worthy of report by one of the ancient sources for the war.

The effect of the rebels' reliance on mountainous terrain, guerrilla raids, and fortification on top of Ithome produced a long war, especially perplexing for the Spartans.

The Messenian helots made up the most important economic basis of the state, dependent upon their labor in Messenia, the food producing base of Sparta. The economic dislocation in the rising of Messenian helots reduced the food supply of the army. The revolt served as a source of encouragement for the ever-threatening rise of all the helots, the complete destruction of helotry, and the resultant total collapse of the socio-economic foundation of the state. The longer the Messenian helots were successful, the greater the economic dislocation and the greater the danger of the revolt spreading to Laconian helots and other perioeci. The loss of hopelites in the earthquake and the various encounters with helot rebels added to the perilous situation of the Spartans. The Spartan army was the best trained of Greek armies. In its own element, in the long run, it could have won against the Messenian insurgents and apparently did so, as the initial unsuccessful attack on Sparta and the Battle of Isthmus show. While the rebels were bold enough to meet the Spartan army in the plains and do battle in the traditional manner, the Spartan army won most of the time. When the rebels refused to do so, when they were restricted at last to

Ithome and surrounding country, the Spartan army was out of its element, and the rebels were either too few or too wise to fight in the traditional manner. The threat they posed to internal security and economic dislocation remained, and even grew as it took more time and more troops to try to halt the raids from Ithome.

As if this conflict with the rebels on Ithome were not enough, some historians, e.g. Hammond, claim that the Battle of Dipaea against the Arkadians, took place during the period of the Third Messenian War. There are two major sources for the battle. Herodotus noted simply that the Battle of Tegea preceded Dipaea and that they both followed Plataea and preceded the end of the Third Messenian War.<sup>60</sup> Isocrates remarked that Sparta fought without allies and was out-numbered at the Battle of Dipaea.<sup>61</sup> Some, Hammond again and perhaps Andrews, find evidence of Dipaea and Tegea in Diodorus who commented on the Mycenaean War, under his date 468, saying that the Argives ". . . seeing that the Lacedaemonians had been weakened and were unable to come to the aid of the Mycenaeans . . ." laid siege to the city. The Mycenaeans were forced to surrender since ". . . the Lacedaemonians could bring them no aid because of their own wars and the

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<sup>60</sup>Hdt. 9. 35. <sup>61</sup>Is. Arch. 99.



disaster that had overtaken them in the earthquakes . . . ."<sup>62</sup>

There is no way of knowing when the Mycenaean War took place in relation to Dipaea.<sup>63</sup> Diodorus may have meant by the weakened condition of Sparta, the result of the earthquake and its havoc plus "their own wars," resulting from the groups of revolting helots who took advantage of the havoc of the earthquake to revolt. Since the battle at Tegea involved both Argives and Arkadians, and the Mycenaean War, only Argives, Sparta's "other wars" may also refer to the confrontation of the Spartans and Arkadians at Dipaea. If, however, Sparta fought alone at Dipaea, then Dipaea must have been fought before 464, the opening date of the Third Messenian War, when at least Mantinea was her steadfast ally.<sup>64</sup> It is not likely that Sparta would have made the Thasian agreement in 465 if she faced obvious danger from Argives and

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<sup>62</sup>Diod. 9. 65. 3-4.

<sup>63</sup>Despite Hammond, "Studies," p. 381.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 380. Andrews, "Sparta and Arkadia," p. 5, establishes the date for Tegea and Dipaea at 465. If Dipaea took place at this date, Mantinea was a close ally of Sparta. Why, then, was Sparta alone at Dipaea? Isocrates' description of the battle is grossly exaggerated. See Hammond, "Studies," p. 380. Since even with Argive aid, the Arkadians were defeated at Tegea, Sparta was probably justified in a limited effort at Dipaea. If Isocrates used Plataea as a point of comparison for assessing Spartan numbers, his evaluation is invalid. Plataea was the only occasion on which the full Spartan army ever crossed Laconian

Arkadians. Dipaea must have come before that date, and not during the Third Messenian War.<sup>65</sup>

The traditional date for Dipaea is ca. 470.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps it should be moved closer to 465,<sup>67</sup> but at the present, the view that Sparta had saved her position in the Peloponnese by 465, and so was able to promise Thasos aid against Athens seems likely.<sup>68</sup> Tegea and Dipaea, excepting the Mycenaean War, were probably not fought during the Third

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borders. See Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, I, 216. Since Sparta could fight at any time of year without allies, because of her helot based economy, Dipaea may have been fought in planting or harvesting season, explaining Sparta's lack of aid. For a similar view, see Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 11. The cause and extent of Spartan numerical inferiority at Dipaea is indeterminate, and of little consequence since Sparta won despite her supposed disadvantage.

<sup>65</sup>Hammond, "Studies," pp. 380-81, places the date at 466, but he dates the beginning of the war at 469, so for him, Dipaea still occurs during the war. Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 302, suggests that Thuc. 1. 102. 4, proved that Sparta and Argos were at war during the Third Messenian War. Thucydides said that Athens became allies of Sparta's enemies the Argives. Thucydides clearly intended this remark to illustrate the growing enmity between Sparta and Athens. It does not prove that Sparta and Argos were at war. It could as easily prove that Tegea and Dipaea came soon before the war, 467/66, and that the Argives were still resentful.

<sup>66</sup>CAH, V, 66-67.

<sup>67</sup>As the eloquent testimony of Hammond, Andrews, Wallace, Loyd, and Gomme attests.

<sup>68</sup>Forrest, History of Sparta, p. 101.

Messenian War, but they cannot be excluded as causes of the war.<sup>69</sup> The situation in Sparta resulting from the helot revolt and subsequent role of Ithome provided a serious enough threat to Spartan security without placing Dipaea at the same time. The longer the Messenians held out at Ithome, the more Spartiates were tied down in guarding them, the greater the chances of further risings in their support, and the more vulnerable the Spartan position to outside interference. Under such circumstances, it is not at all strange that Sparta called on allies for aid, or that Pericleidas, who was sent to Athens to ask for aid, was upset.

Sparta drew her allies from the Peloponnesian League and from her alliance against the Persians, the Great Alliance of 481. Not all of the members of the Great Alliance were obligated to send aid, but some of them did so as a matter of policy. Among the allies who brought aid to Sparta was Mantinea,<sup>70</sup> who may have been the first respondent to the Spartan request, and probably re-insured the safety of Sparta city.<sup>71</sup> Both Aegina and Plataea sent troops to aid the Spartans.<sup>72</sup> There is some indication that Corinth was

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid. See Chapter 4. <sup>70</sup>Xen. Hell. 5. 2. 3.

<sup>71</sup>CAH, V, 70.

<sup>72</sup>For Aegina, Thuc. 2. 27. 2; 4. 56. 2. In 2. 27. 2,

reluctant to aid her Peloponnesian ally, but no definite proof exists.<sup>73</sup> Sparta also seems to have written a standard clause in many major treaties obligating the signatory to come to her aid in the event of a helot revolt. Such was the case in treaties with Athens and Tegea.<sup>74</sup>

The ally of most note upon whom Sparta called for aid was Athens. The request for Athenian aid was carried by Pericleidas to Athens and became the subject of a debate between the anti-Spartan democrats led by Ephialtes and Pericles, and the pro-Spartan aristocrats under Cimon. Cimon won by asking the Athenians "not to suffer Hellas to be crippled nor their city to be robbed of its yokefellow."<sup>75</sup> Athens responded by sending 4,000 hopelites under the laconophile statesman Cimon.<sup>76</sup> Obviously, the Athenians were

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the Aeginetans rendered ". . . a service at the time of the earthquake and the revolt of the helots." Besides the obvious point, the quote illustrates Thucydides' consistency in associating the beginning of the war with the earthquake, and in failing to recognize the existence of any independent Messenian force. For Plataea, Thuc. 3. 54. 5. Again, he refers to ". . . a mighty terror owing to the revolt of the helots and their occupation of Ithome . . . ." He credits the helots, not independent Messenians with siezing Ithome.

<sup>73</sup>Plut. Cim. 17. 1.

<sup>74</sup>Thuc. 5. 14. 1; Jones, Sparta, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 8.

<sup>76</sup>Thuc. 1. 102. 1; Ar. Lys. 1138-44; Paus. 4. 24. 6; Diod. 11. 64. 2-3.

unaware of the results of the Spartan-Thasian negotiations of 465, or aid would not have been sent. Thucydides clearly implied that the Spartans had restricted most of the rebel activity to Ithome before calling on Athens, but were having trouble taking the stronghold. Sparta called on Athens, he said, because ". . . they were reputed to be skillful in siege operations . . . ." It is possible that Athens achieved such a reputation because of her success in assaulting palisaded Persian encampments at Plataea, Mycale, and Eurymedon. It is the reputation, not the actual ability which was at this stage important.<sup>77</sup> Pausanias supported Thucydides in clearly placing Ithome as the center of operations against which Sparta requested Athenian aid. Diodorus placed the call for allied aid in the sentence directly following that in which he described how the rebels made Ithome their base of operations. He noted, after some digression and obvious lapse of chronology, that ". . . at the time in question, the Lacedaemonians together with their allies marched forth against Ithome and laid siege to it." The conclusion must be that Ithome had become the last stronghold of Messenian revolt and the key to ending the war.

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<sup>77</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 301. For a different view, see Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, I, 282-89.

Sparta called her allies, including Athens, to help her take Ithome, a job she could not accomplish herself because of its strength and the magnitude of the operation.

Plutarch's account of Athenian aid begins when Pericleidas is sent to Athens and Cimon takes a force to Sparta.<sup>78</sup> "After he had given aid to the Lacedaemonians, he was going back home with his forces through the Isthmus of Corinth . . . ,"<sup>79</sup> where he was the righteous victor in a verbal contest with Lachartus of Corinth. The Lachartus anecdote illustrates Cimon's wisdom and boldness. Immediately following the anecdote, Plutarch said, "Once more the Lacedaemonians summoned the Athenians to come to their aid . . ." against Ithome.<sup>80</sup> Clearly, Plutarch implied, although he never explicitly stated, that Sparta asked Athens for aid twice, once immediately after the earthquake and once after the helots were pent up on Ithome.

Modern champions of Plutarch's double aid theory usually base their arguments on the seriousness of Sparta's situation after the earthquake. G. A. Papantoniou<sup>81</sup> claims that when Sparta sent Pericleidas who sat "at the alters,

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<sup>78</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 7. <sup>79</sup>Ibid., 17. 1. <sup>80</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>81</sup>G. A. Papantoniou, "Once or Twice," American Journal of Philology, LXXXII (1951), 176-81. Both he and Hammond, "Studies," pp. 377-79, champion the double aid theory.

pale of face,"<sup>82</sup> the situation was obviously a grave emergency. He points also to the remark of Ephialtes, who wanted to "let the haughty Sparta lie to be trodden under foot of men," and to Cimon's reply that Hellas ought not to be crippled nor Athens robbed of its yokefellow, Sparta.<sup>83</sup> These phrases indicate a great crisis, says Papantoniou. The time for such an emergency must have been immediately after the earthquake. When the Messenian helots were besieged on Mt. Ithome, no emergency existed, he says. Hammond, who agrees with Papantoniou, holds that Athens' aid immediately after the quake, literally saved Sparta from destruction. After Athens saved Sparta the first time, so the theory runs, the siege of Ithome became protracted and Athens was called back. This second expedition is supposedly the one mentioned by Thucydides and Pausanias. According to Plutarch's supporters, the four thousand hopelites under Cimon were sent to aid

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<sup>82</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 8, who relied ultimately on Ar. Lys. 1137ff. Didymus, upon whom much of the scholia for Aristophanes was based, was three hundred years removed from the events he described. He was not a researcher. See "Didymus," OCD, p. 279. He was an editor and commentator. There were several intermediate levels between Didymus and Aristophanes. See "scholia," OCD, p. 814. A quote from Aristophanes may not be historically valuable. See Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 37-38. In this case, the description of Pericleidas as a white faced suppliant, may have been meant to reveal more of the character of the speaker, Lysistrata, than to divulge any information about the Third Messenian War.

<sup>83</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 8.

Sparta on the first expedition. In this view, Thucydides failed to mention the first expedition of 464 because it was involved in no action and was deemed unimportant. The second expedition was more "relevant to the enmity between Athens and Sparta and the rise of Athen's power," which was the subject of Thucydides, holds the theory.<sup>84</sup>

Traditionally, Plutarch's view of twice-sent Athenian aid has been rejected. It is clear from Plutarch, and implied by Thucydides, that Cimon led the expedition to the siege of Thasos which was underway when the earthquake struck Sparta in 464, and that he took Thasos when it fell three years later.<sup>85</sup> Obviously Cimon and a good part of the Athenian army could not have been tending the siege of Thasos and the defense of Sparta at once. Since Thasos did not fall until 463/62, Thucydides' assertion that Cimon's expedition to aid Sparta came in an effort to take Ithome, in 462, and his positive implication that it was the only expedition from Athens, seem most credible.

Plutarch is the only one of the four major sources who implied twice-sent aid.<sup>86</sup> He mentioned the first

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<sup>84</sup>Hammond, "Studies," pp. 378-79, 399-400.

<sup>85</sup>Plut. Cim. 14. 2; Thuc. 1. 100. 1-101. 2.

<sup>86</sup>There may be some dispute about this. Plut. Cim.



expedition only as an anecdote involving Cimon and Lachartus of Corinth, clearly meant to illustrate Cimon's sterling qualities. Since Plutarch wrote with the intent of providing examples of virtue and good living, and not necessarily of achieving accurate history or chronology, the whole concept of twice-sent aid is unlikely.

According to Diodorus, and to Plutarch himself, the assembled Spartan army of Archidamus, immediately after the earthquake, sent the rebels dashing off to their home cities and to Ithome.<sup>87</sup> This obviated the need for immediate military aid from Athens to prop up the Spartan army. The need for Athenian aid came when Sparta sought to secure the fall of Ithome, as Thucydides said. The proponents of the twice-sent aid theory seem to agree that the first expedition was not mentioned by Thucydides because it engaged in no action. If the Spartan army frightened away the rebels after the earthquake, and if the supposed expedition from Athens

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16. 7-8, noted that Pericleidas was sent to Athens. The account of the Ephialtes-Cimon debate followed. Then at 17. 1, comes the Corinthian anecdote. 17. 2, begins "Once more," and the call for aid to Ithome follows. Uxkull, as quoted in Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 411n., suggests that with the anecdote Plutarch left chronological order, then with "once more," returned to his narrative of the same expedition.

<sup>87</sup>Diod. 11. 64. 1; Plut. Cim. 16. 7.

marched into Sparta without engaging in action and then marched out again in 464, as it must have done since Cimon was at Thasos in 463, what became of the serious situation which is supposed to have necessitated the Athenian expedition in the first place? If Sparta were really on the verge of collapse, why would the Athenians march in and out without some effort to remove the helot threat? Surely such an early departure by Athens in the face of grave danger would have been resented by Sparta. Since the so-called second expedition to Ithome was dismissed by Sparta, if Athens had saved Sparta from certain destruction on the first expedition, the story of twice-sent aid, illustrating Spartan ingratitude, would have been much more relevant to the enmity between Athens and Sparta, and more suitable to the purpose of Thucydides than his current version.

The proponents of the twice-sent aid theory also seem to agree that after the Athenians departed, the Spartans were able to box up the Messenians on Ithome before calling for aid again. If Sparta accomplished the restriction of the Messenians to Ithome without Athens, the first expedition from Athens was not at all necessary. It marched in and marched out, failing to engage the rebels and taking no hand in restricting the Messenians to Ithome. Even if the first

expedition did occur, which seems highly unlikely, it might as well not have.

Plutarch's divergence into the anecdote implying twice-sent aid, makes his account appear as though he consulted first his historian source in beginning the narrative of the Athenian expedition, then consulted his anecdotal source for some interesting detail. He returned again to his historian source to continue the narrative of the expedition.<sup>88</sup> The most likely explanation of the confusion in Plutarch's account is that he used a source, like Diodorus', perhaps Hellanicus, which began the Third Messenian War in 469/68, with Cimon's expedition soon after. Since it was known that Cimon's ostracism in 461 resulted from his expedition to aid Sparta, a second expedition had to be created to balance the accounts.<sup>89</sup> Plutarch's account of twice-sent aid is untrustworthy, and one must accept Thucydides' account until better evidence is available.

Athens sent aid to Sparta under Cimon, probably in 462, to aid in the capture of Ithome. The tradition of Pericleidas and the words of the Cimon-Ephialtes debate quite

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<sup>88</sup>Uxkull, as quoted in Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 411n.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

properly denote emergency. The Messenian possession and use of Mt. Ithome was an emergency. The Spartans alone could not take the mountain. Ithome's continued existence as a Messenian stronghold made Sparta vulnerable to revolt from within and interference from without. The Pericleidas mission and the great debate in Athens took place in advance of the Athenian expedition to Ithome in 462. There was no other expedition. Sparta counted on Athen's supposed ability in siege war to end the revolt.

The route of the Athenians to Ithome is a matter of dispute. Plutarch said that when Cimon remained in Athens, he took the side of the nobles against the democrats, but that "when he sailed away again on military service, the populace got completely beyond control."<sup>90</sup> Among other things, they reduced the powers of the Areopagus. "And so when Cimon came back home . . . ," he attempted to win back some of the losses of the nobles. The reduction of the Areopagus is usually dated at 462. Hammond turns Plutarch's remarks into proof of two Athenian expeditions to Sparta by noting that since Cimon and Lachartus, according to Plutarch, had disputed Athen's crossing the Isthmus on the so called first expedition, Cimon avoided Corinth on the second by

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<sup>90</sup>Plut. Cim. 15. 1.

sailing to Ithome.<sup>91</sup> The notion that Cimon sailed to Ithome does not seem likely. There is no convenient port in Laconia or Messenia for disembarkation to Ithome. It would have been simple, on the other hand, to march there. Plataea did so, apparently without interference from Corinth. Plutarch's anecdote of the first expedition recounts only a verbal exchange between Cimon and Lachartus, not a skirmish. Cimon's boldness got the Athenians through once, why not again, especially since Sparta specifically requested Athenian aid. One might have expected that Corinth would have acted her usual part as the enfant terrible, but she would not have risked war with both Athens and Sparta. Plutarch did not say specifically that Cimon sailed off on any particular campaign. Plutarch made a general statement that when Cimon was at home he tended to check the democrats and enhance the privileges of the nobles, but that while he was forced to be away on campaigns, the democrats had the upper hand. On one of these occasions, the Areopagus was stricken. It could well have been while Cimon was at Ithome, but there is not necessarily a connection between his sailing away on military service and the expedition to Ithome. It seems more likely that the Athenian expedition marched to Mt. Ithome.

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<sup>91</sup>Hammond, "Studies," pp. 399-400.

The Athenians actually had no great ability at siege tactics and failed to dislodge the Messenian helots from their defenses on Ithome. All four major sources agree that the Spartans suspected the Athenians of intending to defect to the rebel Messenians. Thucydides clearly stated that the Athenian failure to take the Messenian position awakened the fear of Athenian "audacity and fickleness."<sup>92</sup> Pausanias indicated that the Spartans suspected the Athenians as soon as they arrived.<sup>93</sup> Plutarch likewise commented that the "dashing boldness" of the Athenians caused Spartan suspicion.<sup>94</sup> Diodorus supported Thucydides in this regard. He noted that, at the outset, the Spartans with allies, including Athens, were "much superior to the enemy." Later, he said, the Spartans suspected that the Athenians were about to join the Messenians, and so dismissed them. He digressed, then returned to the narrative by explaining that "at the time in question the Lacedaemonians together with their allies marched forth against Ithome and laid siege to it."<sup>95</sup> Cimon and his contingent were dismissed and returned immediately to Athens in disgrace. One of the major questions concerning the Third Messenian War is why Sparta dismissed only the

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<sup>92</sup>Thuc. 1. 102. 3.    <sup>93</sup>Paus. 4. 24. 6.

<sup>94</sup>Plut. Cim. 17. 2.    <sup>95</sup>Diod. 11. 64. 2, 4.

Athenians, led by her good friend Cimon. The ancient historians offered no explanation of the probability of the Spartan fear of Athenian treason. Such fear must not have existed when the call for aid was issued, or the Athenians would never have been asked.

There are as many explanations of the Cimon affair as there are historians of the subject. The several interpretations of Spartan policy formation in the fifth century offer institutional explanations. Dickins makes Cimon's expedition the victim of a power struggle.<sup>96</sup> King Archidamus, he claims, was, unlike his predecessors, in favor of a policy of peace and concern for domestic affairs. It was Archidamus, says Dickins, who called for aid from Athens. Archidamus presented a problem for the ephors. Cleomenes and Pausanias had favored expansion. The ephors, to gain power for themselves, opposed the kings and pronounced themselves in favor of peace and concern for domestic affairs. When Archidamus gained the throne, he usurped their policy in an effort to regain power lost to the ephorate by the old expansion policy. The ephors were forced then to adopt the war and expansion policy in order to oppose Archidamus' new bid for royal prerogative. When Archidamus called on Athens for aid, the

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<sup>96</sup>Dickins, "The Growth of Spartan Policy," pp. 37-42.

ephors sent Cimon's expedition home in disgrace. It seems unlikely, even if the power struggle were fact, that the ephors, with open revolt going on in Sparta, would have risked war with Athens by the insulting dismissal of Cimon simply to challenge royal powers over foreign policy.

A more likely theory is that of G. B. Grundy, who claims that Spartan policy ought to be viewed as three concentric circles.<sup>97</sup> The innermost was the concern for the helots, the super domestic problem of Sparta. The second circle was concern for Peloponnesian affairs, since they could have important effects on the helot situation. The third circle was extra-Peloponnesian affairs. According to this theory, Sparta in dismissing Cimon acted according to her list of policy priorities. Sparta feared that Athens might join the Messenian helots. She then put her concern for greater Greek politics behind her concern for the helot problem, and dismissed Cimon's contingent.

W. G. Forrest implies that in 465 the party favoring a Spartan naval hegemony was in power and almost promoted war with Athens by the Thasian agreement.<sup>98</sup> When the Messenians

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<sup>97</sup>G. B. Grundy, "The Policy of Sparta," JHS, XXXII (1912), 269.

<sup>98</sup>Forrest, History of Sparta, p. 102.



revolted, the party of isolation came to power. Under its auspices, Cimon's expedition was called to Sparta. After the contingent arrived and the helot danger decreased, the party for naval hegemony once more gained power and ordered Cimon back to Athens. Forrest in effect claims that the ephors, the Gerousia, or one of the kings was willing to risk a great war at the very time when an internal revolt was underway. In 465, before the revolt, the Spartans may have risked a war with Athens, but not in 462. The Spartan naval hegemony had been buried for fifteen years, and local wars seem to be the cause of its suppression during the period 475-465. Why should naval proponents have been given free rein while a local war of even greater importance than the previous ones was in progress. This theory also contains the possible, but strange, paradox of an isolationist party requesting Athenian aid in internal Spartan affairs. Similar objections apply to the theory of A. H. M. Jones.<sup>99</sup> Jones implies that a war party came to power in 465 when the decision was made to join Thasos and attack Attica. With the earthquake and helot rising, the peace party came to power and called for Athenian aid. The war party then regained power and dismissed Cimon's expedition.

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<sup>99</sup>Jones, Sparta, pp. 60-61, 175n.

Another explanation of the Cimon affair, the Laquer thesis, notes that it made no sense for Sparta to agree to attack Athens when her friend, Cimon, was the Athenian leader, and in the next breath ask for Athenian aid to put down the helots. If the Thasian agreement were a secret, according to this theory, neither Thucydides nor anyone else could have known about it. If it were not a secret, Athens would not have sent aid. Thucydides' whole account of the war, says Laquer, is biased and aimed at justifying the anti-Spartan policy of Athens.<sup>100</sup> A point overlooked by Laquer is that Sparta did what she thought best for her own interests, not what was best for Cimon.<sup>101</sup> The Thasian agreement could have remained a secret until after the helot revolt, and then come to light sometime before Thucydides wrote his history. In this case, the agreement served as one of the causes for conflict between Athens and Sparta, which was Thucydides' concern in recounting the Third Messenian War.

Probably no single explanation can account for the Cimon affair. Certainly, some political motives were involved, and though no one can ever determine just what they were, Grundy's view squares best with the evidence of

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<sup>100</sup>See Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 407.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

Thucydides. It is possible that Pericleidas got word back to Sparta that Cimon's hold on Athenian politics was ebbing toward the democrats. The democrats may have taken advantage of Cimon's absence to initiate some startling reforms, such as the stripping of the Areopagus, of which the Spartans learned, and in consequence dismissed Cimon.<sup>102</sup>

Besides political factors, emotional factors probably played a major role in the Cimon affair. The Spartans over-rated Athenian skill in siege techniques. When the Athenians failed to take Ithome, perhaps Spartan imaginations ran rampant. The Spartans must have been on edge more than usual because of their secret negotiations with Thasos. Any dashing innovation or excessive military bravado by the Athenians would have made the Spartans extremely uncomfortable. Added to the Spartan nervousness was the fear of Athenians as purveyors of subversive political doctrines. Sparta, in an irrepressible burst discharged the source of irritation, Cimon's contingent.

At this point in the war, as the Spartans were bending their full effort to the siege of Ithome, that which they probably feared from the start happened. "The helots,

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<sup>102</sup>Hammond, "Studies," p. 400; Loyd, The Age of Pericles, I, 389.

revolting in a body from the Lacedaemonians, joined as allies with the Messenians . . . ." <sup>103</sup> This statement seems to be a clear reference to a revolt of the Laconian helots, which took place when the Spartans were occupied at Mt. Ithome. It is certain from Diodorus' description of the war's end, that at least some of the Laconian helots managed to take refuge on Ithome with those Messenians who remained there. Nothing is said of this uprising by the other sources, and apparently it was suppressed by the Spartans with ease, since the war ended shortly after the uprising began.

In 460/59 the war ended. The helots atop Mt. Ithome made a truce with the Spartans. <sup>104</sup> Probably they had been surrounded and were about to be starved into capitulation. Ithome was too strong for another course to have been followed. <sup>105</sup> The Spartans freed those Messenian helots on Ithome, probably few in relation to those who had been re-enslaved during the course of the war. The truce bore the condition that the Messenians freed were to leave the Peloponnese, and were never to re-enter it on penalty of a return to helot status. <sup>106</sup> The Laconian helots who had revolted during

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<sup>103</sup>Diod. 11. 64. 4. <sup>104</sup>Ibid., 84. 8.

<sup>105</sup>Paus. 4. 24. 7.

<sup>106</sup>Thuc. 1. 103. 1-2; Diod. 11. 84. 8.

the last stages of the war were returned to helotry, and it is likely that those who played a prominent part in the revolt were punished.<sup>107</sup> Sparta was probably glad to be rid of the Messenians on Ithome, because they were the core of the troublemakers of the type who had been responsible for Messenian helot unrest for a half century.

Spartan generosity in freeing the Messenian helots who were left on Mt. Ithome, was due to a Pythian Oracle, which commanded the Spartans not to harm the suppliants of Ithomian Zeus.<sup>108</sup> The great earthquake resulted from the defamation of Poseidon's temple at Taenarum,<sup>109</sup> and the Spartans were not willing to risk a second wrathful catastrophe. At this late date entered the second hero of the Third Messenian War, Tisamenus of Elis. Tisamenus was told by the Delphic Oracle that he would win five contests.<sup>110</sup> The Spartans realized that "contests" meant battles, and made Tisamenus a citizen so that he could lead their armies. Tisamenus had won four of his victories by 465, beginning with Plataea. By the time of the Third Messenian War, Tisamenus was influential in Sparta as an oracle in his own right.

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<sup>107</sup>Diod. 11. 84. 8.

<sup>108</sup>Thuc. 1. 103. 2; Paus. 4. 24. 7.

<sup>109</sup>Paus. 4. 24. 5. <sup>110</sup>Hdt. 9. 33-35.

It was Tisamenus who was responsible for bringing the oracle which saved the Messenian helots on Ithome to the attention of the Pythian priestess.<sup>111</sup> As a bonafide oracle vendor, Tisamenus probably forged the prophecy in question.<sup>112</sup> Perhaps, since Tisamenus was not a Spartan by birth, he was sympathetic toward the Messenians.<sup>113</sup> Whatever his reasons, it was due to Tisamenus that the Messenian helots on Ithome and their families were allowed to leave the Peloponnesus.<sup>114</sup> The Messenians went first, briefly, to Athens and then were resettled at Naupactus, after the Athenians captured it from the Ozolian Locrians.<sup>115</sup> The Third Messenian War was at an end.

In summation, the great earthquake ended Sparta's plans to attack Athens on behalf of Thasos. Much of the city of Sparta and many troops were destroyed in the earthquake. The helots took advantage of the disaster to revolt.

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<sup>111</sup>Paus. 3. 11. 8.

<sup>112</sup>H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, The Delphic Oracle (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), I, 184.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid. <sup>114</sup>Thuc. 1. 103. 3.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.; Diod. 11. 84. 7. This is another point against Hammond's theory of independent Messenians in the war. If, as he says, these independent Messenians were emigres, they would have had homes and families to which to return. They would not have fled to Athens.

Archidamus organized the army and prepared for the attack. Soon after the Laconian helots assaulted Sparta city, the Messenian helots siezed Mt. Ithome, and used it as a base of operations from which to raid the surrounding country. The rebels fought valiantly, as the obliteration of Aeimnestus and three hundred Spartans at the battle of Isthmus proves. The Laconian helots and most of the Messenian helots were reconquered, leaving only a hard core of Messenian resistance on Mt. Ithome. The Spartans, unable to sieze Ithome, because of the obstacles it provided to the Spartan army, called for aid from her allies, including Athens. Because of suspicion that the Athenians might join the rebels, probably inspired by the fear of the revelation of the Thasian agreement, Cimon's contingent of Athenian aid was summarily dismissed. As more Spartan attention was given to the siege of Ithome, some of the Laconian helots revolted again. Most of them were subdued with ease, and some escaped to Ithome. Soon after, Ithome was starved into a truce, which permitted the Messenian helots and their families to leave the Peloponnesus. The Laconian helots on Ithome were re-enslaved. Freedom was granted the Messenians on this occasion because of an oracle forged by Tisamenus of Elis and delivered by the Delphic Priestess. The Messenians were taken in by Athens, and were later resettled at Naupactus.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESULTS OF THE WAR

The Third Messenian War, although a localized conflict affecting a subject people and their masters, had surprisingly ponderous results. Part of the reason for the relatively great impact of the war was due to the transitional period in which it occurred. Anti-Persian, Hellenic unity had ceased to exist, and there was growing and continued friction between the two masters of the Greek world, Athens and Sparta, with their fluctuating spheres of influence and opposing political systems. The war was caught up in these trends and served to accelerate them. From hindsight one may see the eventual clash of Sparta and Athens in the Peloponnesian War at least as early as the Persian War. Spartans in the Persian War were given their traditional place as leaders of Hellas. Before the war's end, that place was being disputed by Athens, and soon after the war Athens began building an empire with the Delian League. Sparta countered, using the Peloponnesian League. The rest



of Greece fell into line depending upon variable political, economic, and geographic factors. Modern historians can see the threat to Spartan prestige and security in the Peloponnesus posed by Athenian imperialism. Thucydides also saw it.

As the testimony of Diodorus and Thucydides indicates there existed among the ancients, a tradition of fixing the actual, formal break between Athens and Sparta at the Third Messenian War.<sup>1</sup> There is ample reason for doing so. It is as a consequence of that war that a significant alteration in Athenian politics occurred, which resulted in the victory of distinctly anti-Spartan partisans. In Athens in the last quarter of the sixth century the men of the coast, the artisans, were dissatisfied with their economic lot. They were dislocated by the few who profited immensely from increased trade, and by the growing use of slave labor, which put them out of business and made their skills socially unbecoming for citizens.<sup>2</sup> This discontented element, located chiefly in Athens and neighboring ports, made up the party of extreme democrats represented by Ephialtes and Pericles prior to the Third Messenian War. They were opposed by a

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<sup>1</sup>Thuc. 1. 102. 3; Diod. 11. 64. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, I, 125-32.

combination of the old aristocratic families, who had in previous Athenian history injured their class interest by feuds, and a party of moderate democrats who comprised most of the rather conservative yeomanry of Attica.<sup>3</sup>

The rise of Themistocles was the cause celebre for the union of the aristocratic families.<sup>4</sup> The three most important of these, the Philaidae, the Ceryceae, and the Alcmaeonidae, were united by the marriage of Cimon, son of Miltiades, to Isodice, granddaughter of Megacles; and by the marriage of Elpinice, Cimon's sister, to Callias, head of the Cyrces family. Cimon then became the chief spokesman for the aristocrats. Cimon was popular initially because of his habit of bestowing gifts upon lesser citizens and because of his military successes. Cimon's aristocratic bent and his opposition to further concessions to democracy were anachronistic during a period in which the use of commoners as the backbone of Athenian naval power increased their contribution to and pride in the state, and their demands for a greater share in the state which they were building.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid. <sup>4</sup>CAH, V, 47-48.

<sup>5</sup>An interesting account of this period of transition is found in Loyd, The Age of Pericles, I, 374-90.

The aristocratic coalition ably led by Cimon, controlled Athenian policy from about 480 to 462. Cimon's foreign policy, as one might expect, was one which held to old traditions and sought to guard against radical democracy, much like his domestic policy. Both of these facets dictated friendly relations with Sparta. Maintenance of the Great Alliance against the Persians, insured Athens against a Persian-Spartan coalition, allowed semi-dependent Athenian allies no hope of resistance, and permitted safe and profitable raids against the barbarians from time to time.<sup>6</sup> Based on these concepts, Cimon evolved his "yokefellow" policy in regard to Sparta.<sup>7</sup> This policy reflected an acknowledgement of the peaceful continuance of dual leadership in Greece. This was, of course, anathema to the democrats, whose devotion to their political cause and growing nationalism resulted in a vociferous anti-Spartan policy. In 465, Ephialtes (and Pericles who was as yet still in the political background) had overcome all the bases of Cimon's popularity except one, by championing the popular cause and by distributing gifts to the well deserving from the funds of the Delian League. The one remaining base of support on which Cimon tottered in 465 was his dashing military countenance.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 386-87. <sup>7</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 8.

One blight on this record might have sent him and his pro-Sparta policy plummeting, while the democrats under Ephialtes and Pericles assumed control of Athens.<sup>8</sup>

In this light, the trial of Cimon on charges of taking bribes in the Thasian campaign was significant. Cimon was acquitted, but in the trial, Pericles played his first significant role in Athenian politics, on the side of the anti-Cimon democrats. Pericles was himself a member of the great, aristocratic Alcmaeonid family. His participation at this point, bore public witness to the fact that the coalition of aristocratic families was disintegrating.<sup>9</sup>

In this Athenian context, the Third Messenian War was extremely important, and was recognized so by the ancients. The Great Alliance was as useful to the Spartans as it was to the Cimonites. Neither prized it primarily for its protection from the Persians. Sparta found it invaluable in just such an emergency as the Third Messenian War, for summoning allied aid. Athens under Cimon, dedicated to the preservation of friendly relations between the two powers, and to continuance of the Great Alliance, had no choice but to respond to Sparta's summons.

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<sup>8</sup>Loyd, The Age of Pericles, I, 374-75.

<sup>9</sup>CAH, V, 68.

The great Cimon-Ephialtes debate mentioned by Plutarch, reveals that the democrats were strong enough to challenge Cimon's Spartan policy. The debate clearly drew the distinction between Cimon's approach to Sparta and Ephialtes' approach. Cimon won and went to the aid of Sparta. He and his 4000 hopelites were dismissed in disgrace by Sparta. This was the final blow to Cimon's popularity, and seemed to vindicate Ephialtes and the democrats. Cimon was ostracized in 461, and the democrats under Ephialtes and Pericles at last gained firm control of Athenian politics. The democrats, in pursuance of their uncompromising anti-Spartanism, regarded the Great Alliance as an anachronism, and launched a campaign to take advantage of Sparta's position in the Third Messenian War by seizing new territory in preparation for an immediate clash with Sparta.<sup>10</sup> Athens concluded anti-Spartan agreements with Thessaly and Argos, absorbed Megara who deserted the Peloponnesian League, and launched an attack on Aegina. Athens hedged the Gulf of Corinth with captured cities and established a Gibraltar at Naupactus, using the Messenians from Mt. Ithome. Sparta responded to the appeals of her ally Corinth and to the Athenian control of the Isthmus, seeking to bolster the Peloponnesian League and to

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<sup>10</sup>Loyd, The Age of Pericles, II, 1-2.

re-establish the hegemony of Thebes over the rest of Boeotia. Tanagra and Onephyta were products of the Spartan response.

The lines for the great clash, the Peloponnesian Wars, were well drawn and Periclean Athens well established by 455, thanks largely to the effect (on Athens) of the Third Messenian War. Also as a result of the war, the Great Alliance was obliterated, and in 460/59 the Persians attempted to capitalize on the fact by asking Sparta for aid against Athens who was meddling in Persian affairs in Egypt. Sparta was still engaged in the Third Messenian War, or had just ended it, and was still too weak to undertake such direct action, but there is little doubt that the Great Alliance was gone.<sup>11</sup> The mutual anti-Spartan sentiment held by the Athenians and Messenian refugees settled in Naupaetus and produced by the Third Messenian War, seems to have eventually resulted in the creation of a Messenian national history and literary heritage, one which they would otherwise have lacked. One example of this heritage was Cresphontes the lost play of Euripides concerning the Messenian royal line.<sup>12</sup> Athens, then, who played only a minor role in the Third Messenian War, was greatly affected by it.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 12-14; CAH, V, 71.

<sup>12</sup>Pearson, "The Pseudo-History," pp. 402-404.

Sparta, by virtue of the fact that the war disrupted her political and socio-economic life, was directly affected by the war, as is evident in preceding chapters. Spartan population after the Persian War exhibited some tendency to decline in the face of growing numbers of helots. This tendency was greatly accelerated by the Third Messenian War. It is clear that many hopelites were killed in the great earthquake in 464, which probably killed as many women and children as men.<sup>13</sup> Spartan losses during the war itself may have been heavy, as the loss of Arimnestus and his three hundred at the battle of Isthmus indicates. Some historians have estimated that, due largely to the impetus of the Third Messenian War, Spartan population between Plataea and the Peloponnesian War declined as much as sixty per cent.<sup>14</sup>

One of the chief results of this precipitous decline in the Spartiate citizenry, caused chiefly by the Third Messenian War, was the reorganization of the Spartan army. The early Spartan army was a tribal one, based on the three Dorian tribes who claimed descent from the three sons of Herakles. Once Sparta was established and unified by the

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<sup>13</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 298-99.

<sup>14</sup>Ziehen, as quoted in Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 298-99.

Lycurgan reforms, the army was reorganized into one based on the five obai, or villages, which had once been separate, but which by then had grown together to form Sparta city.<sup>15</sup>

It was this obal army which participated at Plataea.

Every Spartiate was on active duty for forty years, beginning with his graduation from the wolf pack at twenty. Each was assigned to a year class. The first year class contained all those twenty years old, and the fortieth year class contained all those who were sixty. A campaign opened with an order announcing how many year classes, from one through forty, were to assemble for duty. These year classes were the tactical basis of the battle line. Charges and sallies from the line were ordered by year ranks.<sup>16</sup> The Enomotiai was the smallest unit of both the obal army and its successor, and was permanent. It contained one representative of each of the year classes. Year classes were apparently ordered out in groups of five, so each Enomotiai had to

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<sup>15</sup>Four of the obai were Pitane, Messoa, Limnae, and Konoura. Bury, A History of Greece, p. 113, claims Dyme as the fifth, but Amyklai, not actually absorbed into Sparta city, seems to be a more frequent choice, as in H. T. Wade-Grey, Essays in Greek History (London: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 75.

<sup>16</sup>A. J. Toynbee, "The Growth of Sparta," JHS, XXXIII (1913), 263.



enroll five new members in every five year period, not necessarily one each year.<sup>17</sup> On the basis of twenty-five year classes called out,<sup>18</sup> the obal army contained two hundred Enomotiai of twenty-five men each, which comprised fifty Penetekostyes of one hundred men. These were combined into five Lochoi of one thousand men, for an army of five thousand Spartans.

The decline of Spartan citizens after the great earthquake and the Third Messenian War required the reorganization of the army into the mora system, to compensate for the disastrous losses.<sup>19</sup> The new system increased the number of year classes called out, and seeded the army liberally, more liberally as the Spartan population continued to shrink, with perioecic forces. The normal call out of year

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 264.

<sup>18</sup>Wade-Grey, Essays, p. 83, provides these figures on the grounds that the obal system was based on twenty-five year classes. Toynbee, "The Growth of Sparta," p. 263, supposes that all forty year classes were used in the obal army. The organization described by both is essentially the same, otherwise. The dispute can be settled by assuming that the maximum call-out strength, without reserves, was forty year classes, with forty in an Enomotiai; but that twenty-five year classes, with the rest in reserve, may have been the normal strength of the army, making an Enomotiai of twenty-five men.

<sup>19</sup>Wade-Grey, Essays, p. 83.

classes was increased to thirty-five.<sup>20</sup> The mora army consisted of one hundred ninety-two Enomotiai of about thirty-two men each, combined into forty-eight Pentekostyes of one hundred twenty-five each, in twelve Lochoi of five hundred, divided into six morai of one thousand each, for a total army of six thousand.<sup>21</sup> One lochos of each mora was composed of Spartans and the other of perioeci.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Spartans and perioeci were brigaded together, permitting constant surveillance of the perioeci. In addition, perioeci were even included in the Spartan Enomotiai. By 420, every full Spartan Enomotiai of forty year classes contained thirty-two Spartans and eight perioeci, so that by that date only forty per cent of the full army, without reserves, was Spartiate, while sixty per cent was perioecic.<sup>23</sup> Thus the mora system increased the size of the Spartan army without increasing the expense of Spartan citizens in maintaining it, a reform required by the heavy losses of the period of the Third Messenian War. The twin brigading and incorporation of perioeci in Spartan Enomotiai eliminated the danger resulting from the

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<sup>20</sup>Toynbee, "The Growth of Sparta," pp. 264-65.

<sup>21</sup>Wade-Grey, Essays, p. 80.

<sup>22</sup>Toynbee, "The Growth of Sparta," pp. 266.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 267-68.

shrinking numbers of Spartans and growing numbers of peri-  
oeci.<sup>24</sup>

The mora system must have been adopted soon after the Third Messenian War. It seems unlikely that such a drastic reorganization would have been carried out during the war. The brigading of perioeci with Spartans, had it come during the war, would have eliminated the need, at least in part, for the urgent request for allied aid. The only certain date for the first use of the new army is 425, during the Archidamian War, but the role of the Third Messenian War and the great earthquake which started it are certain causes for the creation of the new army.

The helots, especially the remaining Messenian helots, after the Third Messenian War were probably kept under closer surveillance than prior to the war. In fact, Plutarch attributes the extreme cruelties usually associated with helot treatment to the period after the Third Messenian

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.; Wade-Grey, Essays, p. 74. Both point out that the mora system was also designed to emphasize the bond among professional soldiers. That is, one did not fight beside his friends and relatives of the same obe as in the obal army. This reorganization, as Toynbee notes, "completed the internal unification of the Spartan community." The Skirites also formed a lochos of the mora army, which fought on the left wing by 420. It was probably raised from perioeci communities of Arkadian origin. See Toynbee, "The Growth of Sparta," p. 269n.

War.<sup>25</sup> It is possible that the Spartans, either as a reaction to the war, or as a planned effort to cow the, by then, phenomenally more numerous helots into submission and to eliminate remaining helot leaders, launched a reign of terror.<sup>26</sup> The shrunken Spartan citizenry must have required redoubled watchfulness of the disaffected helot population.

In regard to the Spartan situation in international relations, the outcome of the Third Messenian War made it clear to all parties in Sparta that Athens was the enemy and that she must be dealt with soon. The rise of Pericles and the anti-Spartans at Athens was convincing proof of the point. Soon after the conclusion of the war Athens made a bid to control the Isthmus, and thereby the means of entrance and exit to the Peloponnesus, an act which threatened Spartan national security. Sparta began to re-cement the Peloponnesian League, and made preparations to extend her influence over the mainland via Thebes and the old Boeotian League.

Thus were the results of the Third Messenian War. It was an helot rebellion rather than a conflict between nations, as had been the previous two Messenian wars. It

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<sup>25</sup>Plut. Lyc., as quoted in Kagan, The Ancient Near East and Greece, I, 178.

<sup>26</sup>Paus. 4. 26. 1; 5. 26. 1.

was probably begun in 464 and ended in 459. It was caused in the long view by Messenian nationalism and Messenian resentment of the helot system. The intriguing of Cleomenes, the Persian War, and the Spartan power recession of 470 served to relax the Spartan grip on the helots. There is some indication that Cleomenes strove to induce the helots to rebel and help him regain the Spartan throne in return for citizenship. Whether Cleomenes was responsible or not, there was a helot uprising in 490, which is clear evidence of helot, most likely Messenian helot, unrest. It is almost certain that Pausanias intrigued with the helots, especially the Messenian helots, before his fall. All of these internal political factors produced ferment and tension among the already disaffected and identity conscious Messenian helots. When a great earthquake occurred in 464, the Messenian helots, apparently joined by some Laconian helots and Messenian perioeci, rebelled. Much of Sparta itself was destroyed and some of the rebels marched on the city. King Archidamus II, however, assembled his troops in time to face down the onslaught. Those who assaulted the city were probably the Laconian helots from near-by, who returned to their home cities after being repulsed by Archidamus, to carry on the revolt. The Messenian helots, farther away, probably went to Mt. Ithome after the quake and after word of the destruction

of Sparta reached them. Sparta was hard hit, some of her hopelites having been killed in the quake, but she was probably not on her knees. The Laconian helots were put down unfirmly, and most of the Messenian rebels had been restricted to Mt. Ithome and surrounding area with the aid of allies, when Athens was called to the war because of her supposed ability at siege warfare. The Spartan phalanx was inefficient and unwieldy in mountainous terrain and against fortified positions. Mt. Ithome presented both of these obstacles. The rebels made forays into the plains below Ithome for food. The Spartan army was not, by itself, large enough to invest Ithome, but it did so with allied aid. While the siege of Ithome was being conducted, some of the Laconian helots revolted again and joined the rebels remaining on Ithome. By then, Ithome held a group composed of the stoutest of the Messenian resistors, few in comparison to the number who had been captured and re-enslaved, and the late arrivals from Laconia.

Before the war ended, Sparta dismissed the Athenian contingent, led by the Laconophile, Cimon. The reason may have been the fear that the Athenians might join the rebels if they discovered the secret Thasian agreement, whereby Sparta had agreed to attack Athens just three years earlier. After the Athenians left, the rebels were starved into

capitulation. The Laconian helots were siezed and punished, but the Messenian helots were allowed to go free, provided that they never returned to the Peloponnesus. The reason for the release of the Messenians was a forged oracle, presented to a Pythian priestess by Tisamenus of Elis, who commanded the Spartans not to harm the suppliants of Ithomian Zeus, whose temple was on Mt. Ithome. The preistess announced the oracle to the Spartans, and the Messenians, few in relation to those who remained behind, went first to Athens, from which they were removed to Naupactus on the Corinthian Gulf, which had been prepared for them by Athens in an obviously anti-Spartan move.

After the insult of his dismissal, Cimon was ostracized, and the anti-Spartan, democratic party of Ephialtes and Pericles gained power. Alliances were made with the enemies of Sparta, and the Great Alliance of 481 against the Persians was dissolved.

As a result of the Third Messenian War, Sparta's position in the Peloponnesian League was firmly established and anti-Athenian sentiment became a dominant influence in Sparta. As a result of the war the disproportion of Spartiate to helot was magnified. To meet the crisis the Spartan army was reorganized on the mora system, and increased supervision and harsher treatment of the helots was initiated.

In so far as its relation to the totality of Greek history is concerned, the Third Messenian War ought to be seen as the first overt sign of, and, according to the ancients, one of the primary reasons for the disaffection between Athens and Sparta which grew into the Peloponnesian War.



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## APPENDIX

### DATES OF THE WAR

It is clear from the ancient accounts that the date of the earthquake and the following war is a matter of dispute. The most frequent modern allusion to the Third Messenian War is in the context of this chronological dispute, which rages unconfined to the present. Establishing certain dates for any event in the Pentecontaetia is difficult. No Greek state used an accurate calendar. All of them used the 354 day lunar year requiring successive intercalations of thirty days. These intercalations were sporadic and occurred at different times in different states. This means that the most widely used method of dating for the period, the use of archon years by Pausanias, Plutarch, and Diodorus, for example, is risky. At Athens one archon year sometimes differed from the next by as much as thirty days, and it is relatively certain that no archon took office on the same solar day of the year as the last. When these factors of error are multiplied in an attempt to equate archon-ephor, or archon-consul

years, the impossibility of precision is even more obvious.<sup>1</sup> To make matters worse, since most of the sources for the period use pivotal Athenian dates, Athens, in the fifth century, had two official calendars. They provided for bouletic and civil years. The bouletic year, with ten prytanies, was similar to the modern solar year, but the civil officers held office under the civil or lunar year, mentioned above.<sup>2</sup>

Thucydides attempted to overcome the difficulties of using archon years by using seasonal years. His seasons included an eight month summer and a four month winter.<sup>3</sup> Such a system was well suited to detailing military campaigns which took place according to those seasons, but beyond this, Thucydides rarely defined the year and month of a single event.<sup>4</sup> Holm's dictum that ". . . the nature of our authorities makes abstention from positive chronological conclusions the only safe rule,"<sup>5</sup> is the only certainty in dating the Third Messenian War.

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<sup>1</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 5. <sup>2</sup>Ibid., n.

<sup>3</sup>Hammond, "Studies," pp. 382-83; Thucydides, History of the War Between Athens and Sparta, Loeb Classical Library, trans. by C. Forester Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), I, 258-59n.

<sup>4</sup>Hammond, "Studies," p. 381.

<sup>5</sup>Holm, History of Greece, II, 106.

Pausanias (4. 24. 5) specifically dated the quake by Olympiad and Archon, and his date is usually calculated as 464.<sup>6</sup> Since Thucydides and Pausanias marked the war's beginning with the quake, Thucydides' date for the opening of the Third Messenian War is 465/464. Thucydides (1. 101. 3) said the Thasians capitulated "in the third year of the siege," or 463/462, and the Cimon expedition must have followed immediately, probably in 462,<sup>7</sup> since the ostracism which resulted from his dismissal from Ithome occurred in 461.<sup>8</sup> Thucydides (1. 103. 1) clearly remarked that "in the tenth year," the rebels on Ithome surrendered. Thucydides' date for the conclusion of the Third Messenian War seems to be 456/455. This date is an impossibility. Thucydides implied that the war ended before the Battle of Tanagra, and is reinforced in this implication by Herodotus.<sup>9</sup> The date for Tanagra is 457. It is not probable that Sparta would have been marching about central Greece if the war were still in progress. Thucydides indicated that the war ended prior to

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<sup>6</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 401-402.

<sup>7</sup>Hammond, "Studies," p. 399; Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 403.

<sup>8</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 403.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 410.



the Athenian alliance with Megara and prior to the Athenian expedition to Egypt, and both these events occurred earlier than 456/455. Their usual date is 460/459.<sup>10</sup> If the sense of Thucydides' narrative is followed, excluding his specific chronology, the war must have ended 460/459, and ended not in the tenth year, but in the fifth.

This means that in one respect or another, Thucydides is wrong, or the MSS term "tenth year" is corrupt. If the war ended in 460/459 and lasted nine years it began 469/468, but if it began 465/464, it did not last nine years. Because of Thucydides' reputation as one of the most remarkable of ancient historians and one of the most precise chronographers of the period, the corrupt manuscript position is possible. Gomme attributes the chronology found in Diodorus to this corruption.<sup>11</sup>

The tenth year is an issue in the chronologies of both Diodorus (ll. 64. 4) and Thucydides. The end of the Third Messenian War, according to available evidence, ought to be 460/459. According to devotees of Thucydides,<sup>12</sup> if the tenth year remark of Thucydides is an error in the MSS, then

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<sup>10</sup>Thuc. 1. 107. 1-7; Hdt. 9. 35.

<sup>11</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 404-405.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

it must have been there when Ephorus used them. Ephorus was a careless chronographer, and he could easily have passed on the error. Ephorus, and those who followed, kept the tenth year corruption,<sup>13</sup> so either Ephorus was responsible for the corruption himself or simply passed it along as he found it. The specialist chronologers, the Atthidae and scholia, apparently made attempts to solve the problem. Either the war ended in 460/459 as Thucydides implied and so began in 469/468; or it began in 465/464 as he said and so ended in 456/455.<sup>14</sup> Both traditions seem to appear in Diodorus. The latter, as has been shown from Thucydides' own narrative, is nearly impossible. The former involves Thucydides in a direct misstatement regarding the date of the war's beginning, and perhaps in dating Cimon's expedition.<sup>15</sup> Some have suggested that the Atthidae could not have misread Thucydides and that they transmitted the correct dates of 465-460 for the war. The corruption, according to this theory, occurred several hundred years later when the scholia were transmitting the account as in the scholia for Ar. Lys., Philochoros.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 403.    <sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> If Plutarch was correct, and two expeditions were sent, then the date for Cimon's second expedition was that found in Thucydides. This is Hammond's argument. See Chapter 5.

<sup>16</sup> Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 407-408.

It is of course as likely that Philochoros was trying to unuddle the corruption which had passed to him by dating the war at 469 to justify Thucydides' tenth year.

N. G. L. Hammond points out that the notion that Ephorus adopted the tenth year remark from a corrupt version of Thucydides rests on two assumptions.<sup>17</sup> First, that Ephorus drew on Thucydides at all, and second, that between the date of publication of Thucydides ca. 400, and a reading of it by Euphorus (fl. ca. 360), a corruption in the text occurred. The second possibility seems remote. Hammond suggests, in answer to the first assumption, that Ephorus drew his account of the Third Messenian War from Hellanicus and so did not perpetuate the tenth year corruption of Thucydides.<sup>18</sup> This must mean that Thucydides drew also from Hellanicus, because he perpetuates the same tenth year tradition as Ephorus but with different dates, and disputes the chronology of Hellanicus.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps then, Thucydides unwittingly perpetuated an error made by Hellanicus in restating the tenth year tradition, but since he objected to Hellanicus' chronology, the precise inference that the war began in 465/464 and his ponderous implication that it ended in 460/459 was his attempt

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<sup>17</sup> Hammond, "Studies," p. 372. <sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Thuc. 1. 97. 2.

to correct or improve Hellanicus.

Diodorus (11. 63. 1) began the war in 469 and ended it after ten years (11. 64. 4). Diodorus (11. 84. 8) also said, "At this time [456], it may be explained, the Lacedaemonians had finally overcome the Helots and the Messenians . . . ." Hammond insists that this remark is simply an after-thought tacked on to the account of the settling of the Messenians at Naupactus.<sup>20</sup> This statement would indicate that Diodorus did not really mean that the war ended in 456, but that it began in 469 and lasted ten years, ending the war when all agree it must have ended. Thus, Hammond would prove the existence of a tradition independent of Thucydides, providing a chronology with none of the complications of that of Thucydides. This argument might be convincing, except that "it may be explained" is obviously a parenthetical expression and may be excluded from the sentence without altering the meaning. So doing, the sentence reads, "At this time, the Lacedaemonians had finally overcome the Helots and the Messenians . . . ." The meaning is clear. Diodorus obviously implied that the settlement at Naupactus came soon after the end of the war, which lasted ten years, from 469 to 456.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Hammond, "Studies," pp. 373-74.

<sup>21</sup>Everything here depends on the first comma in the

Thus the account of Diodorus is fraught with as many complications as Thucydides, but lacks the reputation for chronologically related events, despite stipulated dates, which Thucydides has.

As is usual in the case of the Third Messenian War, Plutarch adds only confusion to the problem of chronology.<sup>22</sup> Plutarch begins his narrative of the war, "while Archidamus, the son of Zeuxidamus, was in the fourth year of his reign . . . ." <sup>23</sup> Diodorus attributed a forty-two year reign to Archidamus. <sup>24</sup> The accepted date for the death of Archidamus is 427/426. <sup>25</sup> This would indicate that he came to the throne in 469/468 and that his fourth year was 465/464. This would seem to substantiate Thucydides' date of the war. The problem is that Diodorus commenced Archidamus' reign in 476. <sup>26</sup>

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sentence. The sentence would have Hammond's meaning if it were removed. "At this time it may be explained, . . . ," as opposed to, "At this time, it may be explained, . . . ." The Smith translation is positive in making the expression parenthetical.

<sup>22</sup>Plut. Cim. 16. 4.

<sup>23</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 405-407; Wade-Grey, "Thucydides," p. 224n.

<sup>24</sup>Diod. 12. 35. 4.

<sup>25</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 405. Based on Thuc. 3. 1. 1; 26. 2; 89. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Diod. 11. 48. 1.

According to Diodorus' calculation, the fourth year of his reign was 472. It is probable that Archidamus died in 427/426, but Diodorus placed his death at 434. Diodorus said that Archidamus' son Agis, reigned twenty-seven years,<sup>27</sup> until 407. Again, it is nearly certain that Agis died in 400.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that there is an error of seven years in Diodorus' dating of the two Eurypontid kings.

The seven year error is explained by the complications surrounding the accession of Archidamus. His predecessor, Leotychidas was exiled after his return from an expedition to Thessaly,<sup>29</sup> probably in 476/475.<sup>30</sup> Either he lived on until 469/468 and these years were later counted as years of reign,<sup>31</sup> or his successor, Archidamus, was a minor until 469/468.<sup>32</sup> Either of these occurrences would account for Diodorus' seven year error, and indicate that Plutarch's date for the beginning of the war, 465/464, is the same as that of Thucydides. This is possible, but not certain. There is no way of knowing to what year Plutarch attributed

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 12. 35. 4.

<sup>28</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 406.

<sup>29</sup>Hdt. 6. 72.

<sup>30</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 406. <sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Wade-Grey, "Thucydides," p. 224n.

Archidamus' succession. He may have made the same error as Diodorus. Another factor is that all this conjecture depends upon Diodorus' giving accurately the length of the reigns of Archidamus and Agis, which he may not have done.<sup>33</sup> Plutarch is of little positive chronological value for the Third Messenian War.

It seems that until one finds better evidence to the contrary he must accept the statement of Pausanias and the precise implication of Thucydides that the war began in 464 over the confused muddle of Diodorus and the uncertainty of Plutarch. Thucydides' tenth year duration of the war is probably wrong, but his implication by sequence of events that the war ended 460/459 must be correct.

Thucydides and Diodorus are again at loggerheads over the date of the establishment of the Messenians at Naupactus. Diodorus credited Tolmides with the settlement when he raided around the coast of the Peloponnesus in 456.<sup>34</sup> Thucydides placed the settlement between the Argive and Thessalian alliances and the Megaran alliance and Egyptian expedition, which is to say 460/459.<sup>35</sup> Thucydides mentioned Tolmides'

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<sup>33</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 405-407.

<sup>34</sup>Diod. 11. 84. 7.

<sup>35</sup>Thuc. 1. 102. 4-103. 4.

expedition, but without mentioning Naupactus.<sup>36</sup> It seems also that the scholiast to Aeschines noted the expedition without mentioning Naupactus.<sup>37</sup>

Hammond dates the fall of Naupactus to 457/456 because of Thucydides' remark (1. 103. 3) that the Athenians received the Messenians "when already at enmity with the Lacedaemonians." This enmity, he reasons, must be war, the first outbreak of which was at Tanagra, so the settlement came after Tanagra.<sup>38</sup> Hammond insists that there is a contrast between the language of Thucydides (1. 102) in referring to the problems between Athens and Sparta by such terms as "the open disagreement," "the lack of harmony," and "renunciation of the alliance," and that of a later chapter (1. 103) using "enmity," which for Hammond means war, in regard to the Athenian-Spartan troubles. Thucydides (1. 102. 4) noted,

. . . the instant Cimon's expedition returned home they gave up the alliance which they had made with the Lacedaemonians against the Persians and became allies of their enemies, the Argives. And an alliance at the same time, on the same terms and confirmed by the same oaths, was concluded by both the Athenians and the Thessalians.

Then, (1. 103. 4) he said, ". . . the Megarans also entered

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 108. 5. <sup>37</sup> Hammond, "Studies," pp. 402-403.

<sup>38</sup> Grundy, Thucydides and the History of His Age, I, 234.



into an alliance with the Athenians, revolting from the Lacedaemonians . . . ." Regardless of the words of scattered phrases, the sum of these events is enmity if it is anything at all. The entire range of Thucydides' discussion (1. 102. 4-103. 4) illustrates the growing enmity between Athens and Sparta, and it was ". . . in consequence of the enmity to the Lacedaemonians already existing . . ." that the Messenians were settled at Naupactus, and that is why the settlement is mentioned in the narrative where it is. "Enmity" does not mean a declaration of war. There is no proof in Thucydides that Naupactus was settled after 457. Thucydides was usually careful in chronological detail, at least in so far as the arrangement of events in his narrative, and he gave no hint that he departed from the order of events when he placed the settlement of Naupactus between the Argive and Megaran alliances, which would certainly have been mentioned in the same breath if another event had not separated them.<sup>39</sup>

Hammond claims that Thucydides (1. 107. 3) said, "In the summer of 457 an Athenian fleet sailed around the Peloponnese to prevent the Spartan force from crossing the Crisaeon Gulf." This must have been when Naupactus was captured, Hammond reasons, and the Messenians were then settled

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<sup>39</sup>Hammond, "Studies," p. 403.

there by Tolmides in 456, explaining why Thucydides failed to mention Naupactus on this voyage.<sup>40</sup> (Hammond does not explain why a raiding party, ready for action "round the Peloponnese," would hamper itself by transporting Messenian families. If the scholiast is correct, as Hammond says, then Tolmides captured Boecee and Cythera on the same trip. Surely he did not drag boat loads of Messenian women and children with him, and if he settled them at Naupactus first, why did the scholiast not mention it? Perhaps because they were not along, and if Tolmides stopped at Naupactus, it was already an allied city, and his stopping was of no particular importance.) Thucydides (1. 107. 3) actually said, "Now if they wished to take the sea route and make their passage by way of the Crisaeen Gulf, the Athenians were sure to take their fleet round the Peloponnesus and block their way . . ." Clearly, the Athenians did not send a fleet in 457, but they could have, had the need arisen. The settlement of Naupactus was then neither in 456 nor 457.

Ephorus may have credited Tolmides with the command of the fleet capturing Naupactus, and Diodorus jumped to the conclusion that the capture took place during Tolmides' more

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 405.

famed exploit of 456.<sup>41</sup> This suggestion could explain why Diodorus was the only source associating Naupactus with Tolmides' 456 voyage. Once again, until better proof is available, it seems that one must accept the order of Thucydides' narrative, indicating that the Messenians may have stayed in Athens, as Diodorus clearly states, but for a much shorter period than the six years Hammond supposes. The Messenians were probably settled in Naupactus in 460/459.

In conclusion, a chronology of the war appears, though uncertain, as follows:

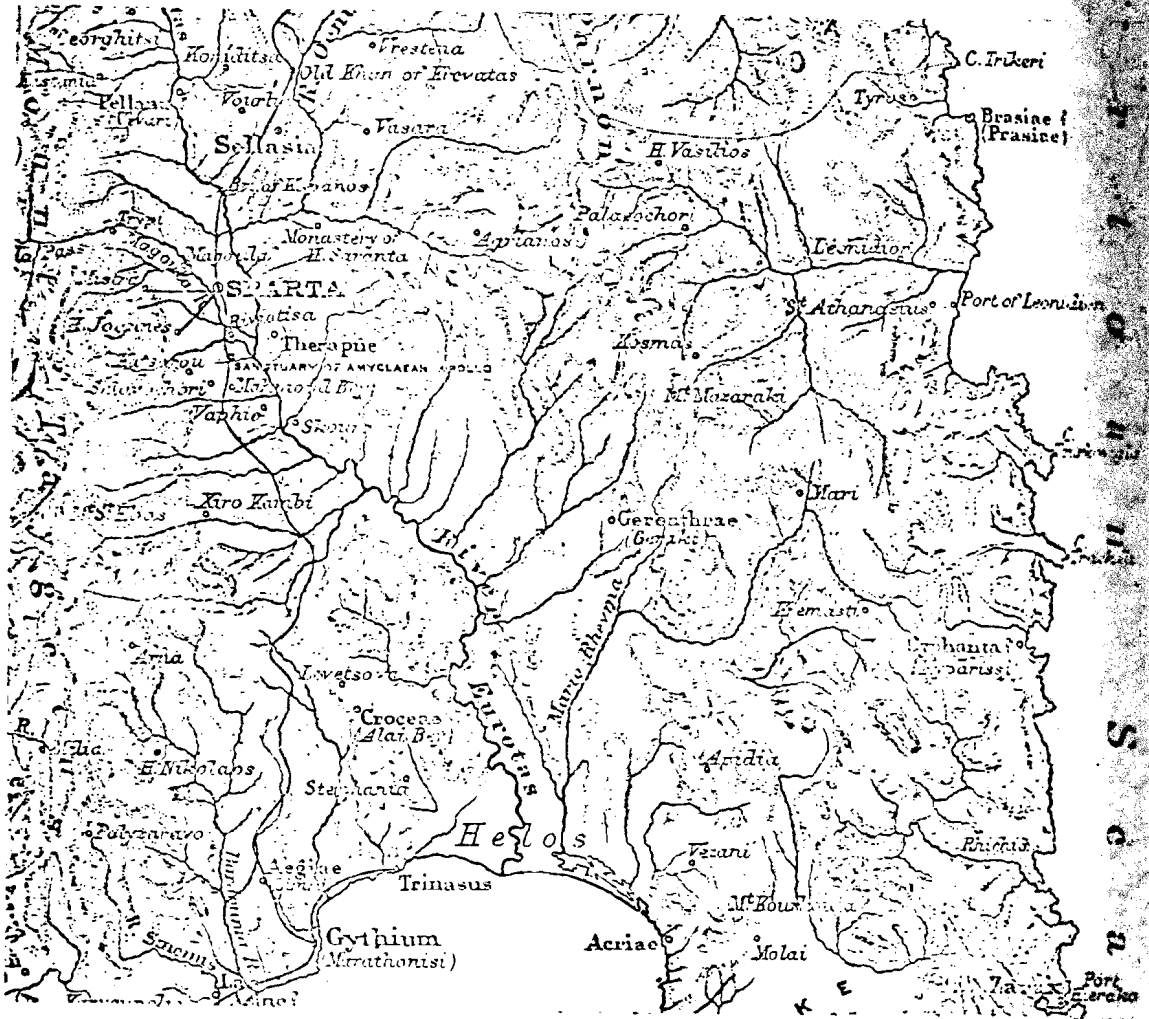
- 465 Thasian agreement.
- 464 Earthquake and beginning of Third Messenian War. Abortive assault on Sparta by Laconian helots. Messenian helots flee to Ithome. Battle of Isthmus.
- 463 Thasos falls. Messenians pent up on Ithome. Aid requested.
- 462 Cimon expedition. Argive and Thessalian alliances. Great Alliance broken.
- 461 Cimon ostracized.
- 460 Fall of Ithome. Messenians evacuate to Athens.
- 459 Messenians settled at Naupactus. Megaran alliance concluded.

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<sup>41</sup>Gomme, Commentary on Thucydides, I, 405.

PLATE I

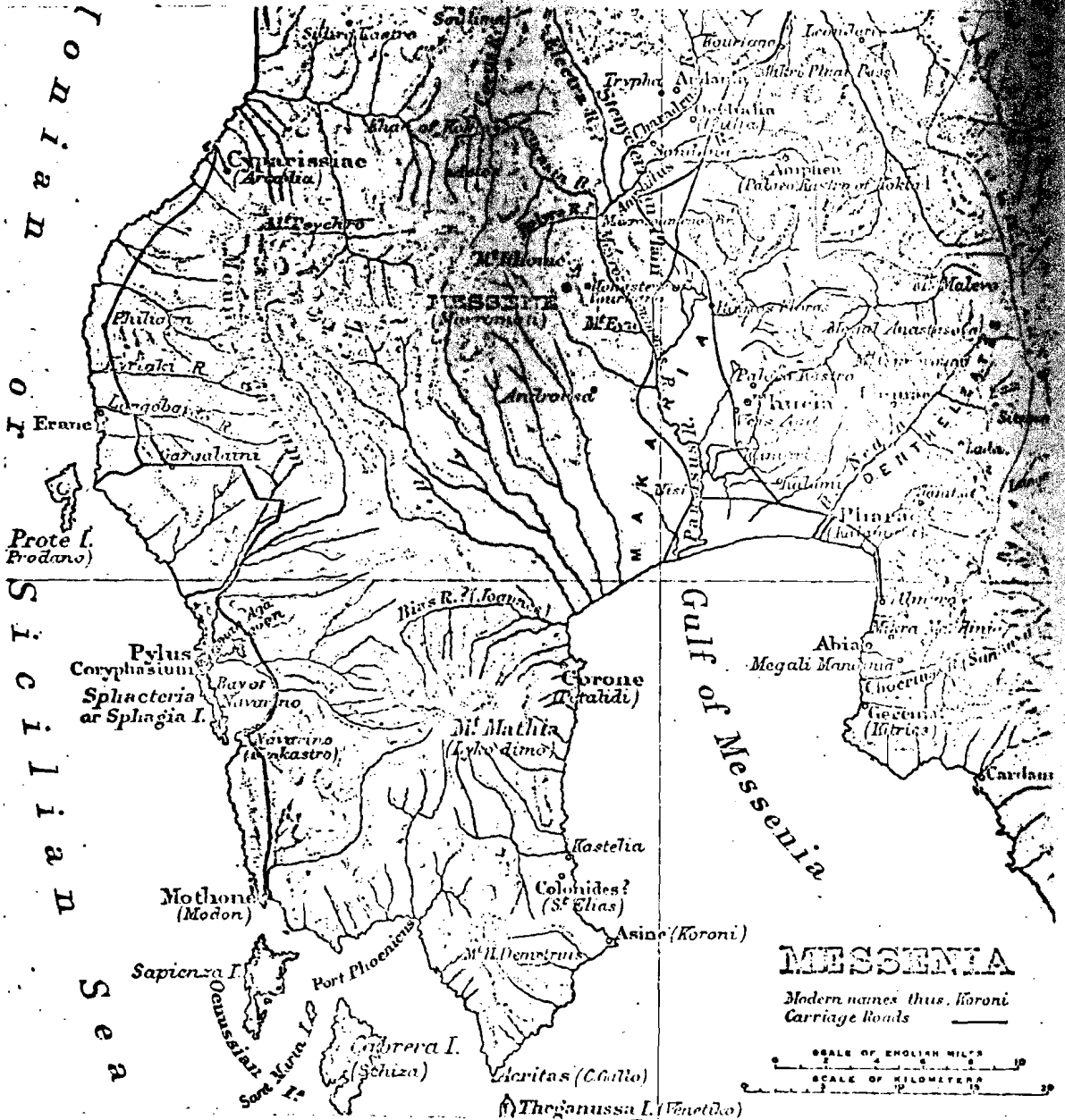
Laconia



Pausanias of Lydia, Description of Greece, trans. by J. G. Frazier. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1913), VI, map 4.

PLATE II

Messenia



Pausanias of Lydia, Description of Greece, trans. by J. G. Frazier (London: Macmillan & Co., 1913), VI, map 5.

PLATE III

Routes of the Peloponnesus



Donald Kagan, Botsford and Robinson's Hellenic History (5th ed.; London: Collier Macmillan, 1969), p. 185.