Agis IV, Kleomenes III, and Spartan Landscapes

Abstract: This study reassesses the reforms of the mid-third-century Spartan kings. It examines first the possible landscape impacts of oliganthropy and demotion to 'Inferior' status. Possible attempts, by state or individuals, to combat inequality by cultivating unused land or ignoring the prohibition on manual labour did not solve the problem. Since Sparta and periöikic poleis possessed distinct territories, ‘Malea(s)’ in Plutarch’s account of Agis’s land reforms should mean Mt Parnon, not Cape Malea; it was only Sparta’s own chōra that Agis IV and Kleomenes III could redesign. Disadvantaging the periöikoi was impossible, given the relative increase in their power within Laconia.

Keywords: Agis IV – Kleomenes III – Sparta – hellenistic Laconia – periöikoi – Malea

1. Introduction

Between the 240s and the 220s, two kings of Sparta – first Agis IV of the Eurypontid house (c.244–241), then some years later the Agiad Kleomenes III (c.235–222), who had married Agis’s widow – tried to address Sparta’s manpower problem and rebuild its military strength. The present study reassesses their reform programmes in the light of recent progress in understanding the notorious Spartan manpower shortage (‘oliganthropy’) and new archaeological evidence for rural settlement. A proposed new identification of a place-name in Plutarch’s account of Agis’s plans brings into sharper focus the changing balance of power between Sparta and its periöikoi in the late classical and early hellenistic periods.

Plutarch devotes a joint Life to the two kings, comparing them with the Gracchus brothers in late second-century Rome. Kleomenes is the better-known of the two kings, for his reign was distinguished by a brief but overwhelming revival of Spartan military supremacy in the eastern Peloponnese. Modern studies of the two men’s...
careers have often focused on such topics as military strategy, Kleomenes’ manipulation of Spartan education, and the reliability of Plutarch and his sources, notably the non-Spartan Phylarchos, a sympathetic eye-witness to the events of Kleomenes’ reign.4

A fuller understanding can be gained if we start from the principle that in order to understand the history of a polis we must try to comprehend both its internal dynamics and its external links. A precise analysis of Sparta’s manpower problem and its likely impact on the landscape (§§ 2–4), a reassessment of key topographic and numerical evidence (§§ 5–8), and a clear formulation of likely changes in Sparta’s relationship with other communities (§§ 9–11) will clarify the intentions of the kings and the restrictions under which they were operating.

2. Sparta’s Manpower Problem

The Spartan economy in the classical period depended heavily upon agricultural produce delivered to the citizens from conquered lands in Messenia, farmed by helots. The system, already suffering from internal stresses, broke down after the catastrophic military defeat at Boiotian Leuktra in 371 and the subsequent Theban-led invasions of the Peloponnese. Sparta remained a powerful polis, but no longer exercised hegemony over its neighbours.

The loss of most of Messenia in the wake of Leuktra – only the southern coastal settlements being retained down to c.3375 – must have been a disaster for those full citizens, or Spartiates (Spartiatai), who depended on produce from farms there to pay their monthly mess dues. Such men were presumably demoted from full citizenship and added to the category of ‘Inferiors’ (hypomeiones) whose existence is already attested for the early fourth century by Xenophon (Hell. 3. 3. 6).5

Such demotion, before and after Leuktra, was probably the main reason for the Spartan ‘oliganthropy’ (oliganthrōpia) – ‘shortage of people’, specifically full citizens – noted by Aristotle in his Politics between 335 and 322 (e.g. 2. 9. 1270a31–7). Oliganthropy was presumably accompanied by an increase in the size of the class of Inferiors. It should be noted that relegation to Inferior status did not entail expulsion from society or total loss of privileges: in the one episode where the status is explicitly mentioned, a member of that class is given an important mission (Xen. Hell. 3. 3. 8). Evidently the Spartan authorities were not so short-sighted as to deprive the polis of the services of hundreds of trained fighters; and it may be that Inferiors, though presumably excluded from the assembly and from their syssition (platoon mess), were not treated harshly

3 e.g. Fuks 1962 (equality); Africa 1968, Daubies 1971, and Marasco 1979 (helots); Toynbee 1969, 388–90 (army); Mendels 1978 (constitution); and many others.
4 Phylarchos: FGrHist 81 (variously said to be a Sikyonian, an Athenian, and a Naukratite; perhaps all three in succession, see Jacoby on T 1).
5 Ps.-Skylax 46. 1; Shipley 2000, 385–6.
6 Hodkinson 2000, esp. 436.
but merely relegated to subordinate roles or less prestigious positions in the army. It is even possible that the combined total of Spartans and Inferiors did not change greatly; oliganthropy was a reflection of status changes, not necessarily demographic decline.

3. Oliganthropy and Landscape

By the third quarter of the fourth century, most of Sparta's land was controlled by a limited number of people (εἰς ὀλίγους ἧκεν ἡ χώρα, Arist. Pol. 2. 9. 1270a18). It appears that the dominant landowners, those who still owned significant, and in some cases expanding, holdings of land, took no steps – or only undocumented and inadequate steps – to mitigate rising inequality. Furthermore, as we shall see (§ 4), there is reason to suspect that some of them attempted to resist change by upholding the traditional ban upon Spartiates engaging directly in farming; but there are also possible signs of moves, albeit perhaps unregulated, to mitigate inequality.

As Hodkinson has shown,7 Spartans had never been equal; money, land, and private property were no less influential than in other states. Land, moreover, did not only mean cultivable ground; for example, those of the elite that owned horses, such as king Agesilaos's sister Kyniska (IvO 160; Paus. 3. 8. 1–2) or the otherwise unknown Damonon who set up a sculptural monument to his victories (IG v. 1. 213),8 must have had access to disproportionate amounts of space. The inequality that already existed before the fourth century was exacerbated by traditional inheritance practices: notably partible inheritance (heirs receiving equal shares) and, crucially, divergent devolution (daughters inheriting as well as sons; possibly a half-share when there were both sons and daughters).9 Female ownership opened the door to a legitimate marriage strategy on the part of the elite; wealth, that is to say, would unite with wealth.10

Less legitimately, perhaps, the rich appear to have exploited their economic position more blatantly in order to take over poor men's land. Opportunities to do so probably arose, for example, after c.369 when Spartiates lost their supply of free produce from Messenia with which to supplement the income from their own land, and some could no longer pay the required contributions in kind to their syssition. In some cases the resulting demotion may (though this is speculative) have caused them to become dependent labourers on what had been their own farm. In other cases, however, as we shall see (§ 4), farms may simply have been abandoned instead of being added to the portfolios of the rich.

The process of estate-grabbing is described explicitly by Plutarch (no doubt drawing on earlier sources): 'for the powerful people, henceforth without self-restraint, began to acquire (sc. land), pushing aside the rightful people out of their successions

7 e. g. Hodkinson 2000, chs 1–2 (pp. 9–64).
8 Assuming Damonon was a Spartiate and not e. g., a periikos from one of Sparta’s dependent poleis.
10 See e. g. Hodkinson 2000, e. g. 103, 123–5, 400–5.
It is true that he tells us this in connection with the so-called Rhetra of Epitadeus (a decree allegedly enacted in the early fourth century), which supposedly allowed Spartans to alienate their estates; and that this decree is probably fictitious, such a practice never having been forbidden. Yet what he describes makes perfect sense as an explanation for the existence of Inferiors and the failure of the dominant group to neutralize the key internal threat to their own polis.

The Sparta of the 240s, at the accession of Agis IV, is presented to us as a plutocracy. Immediately after the passage just quoted, we read that ‘there were no more than seven hundred Spartiatai left’ (ἀπελείφθησαν ἑπτακοσίων οὐ πλείονες Σπαρτιάται) – that is, full citizens as opposed to Inferiors and others – ‘and, among these, the ones possessing land and allotment were perhaps one hundred’ (καὶ τούτων ἰσως ἐκατὸν ἤσαν οἱ γῆν κεκτημένοι καὶ κλῆρον, Agis, 5. 6). The smaller number is expressly an approximation; the larger no doubt also. Although the famous Spartan upbringing (agōgē) appears to have fallen into disuse by the 250s, it is reasonable to suppose that the ability to contribute primary produce to the syssition was still a qualification for citizenship – perhaps the sole qualification. Presumably all remaining Spartiates owned enough land to pay these mess dues. Nearly all of them, however, had only a limited amount of land, or less productive land; otherwise the distinction Plutarch draws between a wider and a narrower group would make no sense. Some of those in the wider group may have had patrons who paid on their behalf (as in the long-established mothax system).

It is also a reasonable assumption that many of the hundred richest citizens were related to one another as brothers, fathers, sons, and so on; so that the number of families involved may have been no more than a few dozen. Likewise, the six hundred may have belonged to no more than a couple of hundred families. The attenuated character of the citizen body, and the degree to which land ownership was concentrated in the hands of an exclusive minority, were thus even more extreme than a simple head-count suggests.
4. Relaxation of Norms?

Discussing Plato’s provision that in his ideal polis ‘the guardians are not to engage in farming’ (μὴ γεωργεῖν τοὺς φύλακας), Aristotle comments that this ban is ‘something that even now the Lakedaimonians are attempting to implement’ (ὅπερ καὶ νῦν Λακεδαίμονιοι ποιεῖν ἐπιχειροῦσιν, 2. 5. 1264a10–11). The crucial word ἐπιχειροῦσιν, ‘are attempting’, strongly suggests that some men – perhaps lacking sufficient labour resources in the form of helots, chattel slaves, hired hands, or family members to allow them to delegate the physical work – were taking a direct role in farming, while others (no doubt occupying loftier social positions) were trying to uphold the traditional prohibition. Presumably those carrying out agricultural labour themselves were either poor Spartans or actual Inferiors.

It is possible that this change in social practice is reflected in archaeological data from the Laconia Survey: specifically, the apparent re-establishment of small farms, most likely shortly before or after 300, on low-grade hill-lands east and north of Sparta that had been abandoned a few generations before. It is impossible to be certain, however, about who these settlers were and how they came to be there; or whether these were the same men as were departing from convention by undertaking physical labour. They may have been new citizens recruited from among foreigners or Lakedaimonian perioikoi, in an unreported precursor of the reforms of Agis and Kleomenes. They may have been existing Spartans relocating to new farms for some reason, or Inferiors either eking out a living or attempting, perhaps successfully, to regain citizen status. In all these scenarios the new farms may have been either self-sustaining or dependent upon patronage; they may have been set up with state approval or through private initiative on the part of the rich, or the poor. If some of them antedated the death of Alexander the Great, they may be part of the phenomenon to which Aristotle points in the later 330s or 320s; if they postdate the Politics, they may be a later manifestation of the same trend.

At all events, the landscape around Sparta was in a state of flux already in the late classical period. The authorities must have been used to the idea of mobility across the city’s territory (chōra), the counterpart to the ferment of upward and downward mobility that was a salient feature of Spartan society. Yet even if the ruling circles, or individual members of the elite, or poor Spartans and Inferiors at the ‘grass roots’ began to address Sparta’s key structural problem in the fourth and third centuries – by relaxing or breaching the traditional ‘Lykourgan’ rules, or by cultivating idle lands – they had little or no impact, for the citizen body became, or remained, critically depleted by the 240s.

17 Aristotle’s use of Λακεδαίμονιοι (Lakedaimonoi) need not imply that the ban applied to perioikoi as well as Spartiates. Many decisions taken by the Spartans in the name of all Lakedaimonians must have applied only to themselves – though it is possible that perioikoi who were trained to serve alongside them in the Lakedaimonian army were subject to similar obligations.
18 For the existence of helots in Laconia as well as Messenia, see n. 24.
19 Shipley 2002, e. g. at 283–8.
20 For a more detailed consideration of this evidence, see Shipley 2002, esp. 322–5.
5. Bounded Areas: Sparta and Perioikic Poleis

Given that the programmes of Agis and Kleomenes took account of the whole landscape of Laconia, not just Spartan territory, it is vital to establish how we conceive the Spartan–perioikic relationship.

The bulk of the land owned by the hundred richest Spartans in the mid-third century was doubtless concentrated not in marginal areas like that discussed above, but in the level valley floor of the Eurotas, most of which lies south of the city, and on the fertile lower slopes adjacent to the plain. Apart from being the most probable locations for elite estates – on fertile ground, close to Sparta – the combination of these areas will, more importantly for present purposes, have formed the main part of the specific territory (chōra) of the polis of Sparta, bounded by the chōrai of perioikic towns (Fig. 1). Like Sparta, the perioikic communities are routinely called poleis in classical writings, a designation that almost always denotes (when applied to a locality) a politically organized settlement with an urban centre (however small) and a defined territory (chōra); or at least expresses the claim that a settlement is of that kind.

As such, the communities of the ‘other Lakedaimonians’ (Hdt. 7. 234) are most helpfully understood as ‘dependent poleis’. Their members were free citizens of separate, small city-states, each of which was subordinate to Sparta but had its own internal administration (undocumented, but confidently to be inferred) and its own territory. The assembly and government of the Spartiates alone had the power to resolve important matters such as war and peace in the name of all Lakedaimonians; but in many respects the two groups formed a single community and indeed a single state (albeit containing a multiplicity of smaller city-states). The two kings were ‘the kings of the Lakedaimonians’ (e.g. τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίων βασιλεῖς, Xen. Lak. pol. 15. 9), not of the Spartiatai; treaties were made in the name of the Lakedaimonians; the army was that of the Lakedaimonians. The perioikoi may even, like the Spartans, have been supported by helot labour; not only down to the mid-fourth century in Messenia, where perioikic poleis served to keep the interior secure, but probably also in Laconia before and during the hellenistic period.
Fig. 1. Tentative reconstruction of the polis territory of Sparta. Drawn by D. Miles-Williams and L. Farr (Catling 2002, 152, ill. 5.1. Adapted by permission of the British School at Athens.)
Perioikic communities were (with rare exceptions) loyal to Sparta, taking part in military campaigns willingly and sometimes on a basis of approximate numerical parity. Although they played no official role in Spartan decision-making that we know of, we should not dismiss the possibility that these communities, particularly the most populous (such as Gytheion) and those nearest to Sparta (such as Pellana, Sellasia, and Geronthrai), exercised informal influence; especially from the late fifth century, when individual perioikoi held military commands in the Lakedaimonian forces. While there is no evidence that the Spartans’ relationship with their perioikoi was formally altered after the loss of Messenia and northern Laconia, informally it may have changed through force of circumstance, for reasons we shall consider later (§ 9).

6. Land Reforms

In about 244, Agis IV advanced a programme of debt cancellation and land reorganization. According to Plutarch (Agis, 8. 1), he planned to create 4,500 plots (klēroi) in Sparta’s core territory (defined by four topographic markers; see § 8 below) ‘for the Spartiatai themselves; these men were to be augmented from among perioikoi and foreigners’ (ἀυτοῖς Σπαρτιάταις· ἀναπληρωθῆναι δὲ τούτους ἐκ τε περιοίκων καὶ ξένων). (It is a reasonable assumption that the people to whom Agis turned first when considering how to enlarge the citizen body would have been the Inferiors, so that ‘Spartiatai’ may include them.) A further 15,000 plots in ‘the (land) outside’ (τὴν ἐξω) were for ‘those of the perioikoi able to bear arms’ (τοῖς ὅπλα φέρειν δυναμένοις τῶν περιοίκων). Agis’s programme was cut short by the machinations of other wealthy Spartans, culminating in his judicial murder in 241 (Plutarch, Agis, 13–20).

Some fifteen years later, however, Kleomenes III introduced a similar programme, including a land redistribution designed to put the citizen army on a firmer footing. In this instance, unfortunately, no precise number of Spartiate plots is reported, though Plutarch (Cleom. 11/32. 1–2) says Kleomenes and ‘all the other citizens’ (οἱ λοίποι πολῖται πάντες) gave up their land – presumably all in the chōra of Sparta itself – and that ‘it was redistributed’ (διενεμήθη). He reserved plots for men whom he had himself exiled, and recruited the most talented (χαριέστατοι) of the perioikoi into the citizen body until he had 4,000 hoplites – a figure not far off Agis’s 4,500. He also admitted resident aliens (μέτοικοι) to citizenship (Plut. Arat. 38. 3). We are not provided with any figure for the number of perioikic plots.

29 Equal numbers of Spartans and ‘other Lakedaimonians’ at Plataea in 479: Hdt. 7. 234.
30 E.g. Thuc. 8. 6. 4 (a spy), 8. 22. 2 (a ship-captain).
7. Numbers and their Uses

It may be no coincidence that the 4,500 in Agis’s programme is exactly half of the figure of 9,000 that Plutarch gives in his *Lykourgos* for the number of plots of land in Laconia and Messenia created by the supposed founder of the Spartan system (*Lyk. 8. 3*, cf. *16. 1*). This figure of 9,000, in reality, may have nothing to do with any actual reforms in earlier times, and may reflect an attempt by third-century propagandists to validate the programme of Agis and/or Kleomenes by linking it to Lykourgos. Indeed, it may be an arithmetical attempt to reconcile the evidence in *Herodotos* (*7. 234*) that there had been 8,000 Spartans in 479 with Aristotle’s observation that at one time (*ποτε*) the Spartans are said to have numbered 10,000 (*Pol. 2. 9. 1270a36–8*).31

Another arithmetical peculiarity is that 15,000, the number of *perioikoi* in Agis’s scheme as reported to us, is exactly half of 30,000, the number of hoplites whom Aristotle says the ‘land’ (*χώρα, chôra*) is capable of supporting, alongside 1,500 cavalry (*Pol. 2. 9. 1270a29–30*). So large a quantity of men seems too great to be accommodated within the *chôra* of Sparta alone; in any case, the largest attested number of Spartans in classical sources is only 10,000 (see above). Rather, then, Aristotle’s figure should refer to Laconia as a whole — or perhaps to the wider area known as Lakonike (*Λακωνική*), the sum of all territories dominated by the Spartans, which until the 360s included all of Messenia and until the early 330s the perioikic *poleis* of southern Messenia.32 (*The *poleis* of Messenia are situated by some sources ‘in Lakonike’, τῆς Λακωνικῆς.*)33 Thirty thousand could thus be a figure designed to take account of perioikic as well as Spartan territory. Aristotle may have slightly misunderstood his information: when he laments in the same sentence that, in contrast to the vast potential of the land, the number of Spartan hoplites has fallen to less than a thousand (*οὐδὲ χίλιοι, 1270a30–1*), he may unwittingly be comparing a figure for Spartans with one for Lakedaimonians as a whole.

Since Agis appears to have envisaged 4,500 Spartans and 15,000 other Lakedaimonians, it may be that the figure of 30,000 was known at Sparta, perhaps indeed from Aristotle, and was halved to give a target figure for, or current estimate of, perioikic numbers in light of the now reduced extent of Lakonike. Be that as it may, for present purposes it is enough to note, first, that the numbers in Plutarch’s *Lykourgos* are probably tainted by third-century propaganda; second, that even if Kleomenes varied the details of Agis’s land division his programme was effectively the same, at least as far as the core Spartiate citizen body and the Spartan *chôra* were concerned. Furthermore, as we shall see, the recorded numbers in the kings’ plans have significance for our reading of the post-classical evolution of the Spartan–perioikic relationship, provided we frame that relationship correctly and are sensitive to philological details.

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32 For the denotation of Lakonike, see *Shipley* 2004, 570–1.
8. Topographic Indicators

Plutarch tells us that Agis assigned to the Spartans ‘the land from the ravine at Pellana towards Taýgetos, Malea(s), and Sellasia’ (τὴν … ἀπὸ τοῦ κατὰ Πελλήνην χαράδρου πρὸς τὸ Ταύγετον34 καὶ Μαλέαν καὶ Σελλασίαν, Agis, 8. 1), while the perioikic area was simply ‘that outside’ (τὴν ἔξω). The precise import of these words merits close attention. At least one possible reading would imply that the territory occupied by Spartans was to be greatly expanded; perhaps so far as to embrace a substantial part of perioikic Laconia. Can that be the case? The question turns on the identification of the locations specified.

(1) Pellana and (2) Sellasia are unproblematic: they are the two perioikic poleis closest to Sparta on the north, astride the routes out of Sparta’s own chōra to western and eastern Arkadia respectively.35 (3) Taýgetos, the mountain range between Laconia and Messenia, clearly gives the western limit; we are not necessarily to think of the whole length of the chain. (4) Malea, however, has mystified commentators.36 The name is in the accusative case, and could be an inflection either of the feminine form Malea (Μαλέα) or of the masculine Maleas (Μαλέας). A solution is at hand; let us consider the various possibilities.

(a) One Malea was a settlement in the far north-west of Spartan-dominated territory, in a perioikic area though not necessarily itself a polis (a term applied to it only retrospectively, by Pausanias in the second century AD). If, however, Plutarch meant this place, his four topographical points would define only a small quadrilateral far to the north-west of Sparta, excluding the Eurotas plain entirely and altogether separate from the polis territory of Sparta. This Malea, moreover, was taken out of Sparta’s control in the 360s and synoikized into the new Arkadian ‘capital’ of Megalopolis (Paus. 8. 27. 4). Archaeological evidence further suggests that the site was abandoned about then.37 On both counts it is highly unlikely to have featured as a defining landmark in Agis’s plans over a century later.

(b) Alternatively, Malea or Maleas may refer to the long south-eastern cape of Laconia;38 on this reading, Plutarch’s quadrilateral containing the 4,500 Spartan farms would embrace nearly the whole of Laconia, leaving almost no room for perioikic territory. It is important to be clear that Plutarch’s words about the planned reforms do not imply that Agis envisaged a dēmos of 19,500 Spartans, made up largely of former perioikoi. Rather, his words clearly imply that a distinction was to be maintained between a Spartiate citizen body of 4,500, including some former perioikoi, and a wider perioikic group of 15,000. Had the latter been intended to become part of the Spartiate citizen body, the statement about replenishing the numbers of Spartans up to the

34 Here in the neuter form, ‘Taύγετον’.
36 e. g. Hodkinson 2000, 139.
37 Pikoulas 1985, 85–6 no. 1; Pikoulas 1988b, 130; Shipley 2004, 575.
38 Thus Kennell 2003, 101.
number of 4,500 would make no sense. It is impossible, then, to suppose that Agis intended Spartan territory to extend as far as Cape Malea.

(c) There is another possible interpretation, based on topographical evidence that seems not to have been noticed in modern scholarship. There is evidence that the name Malea may not only denote the north-western polis and the south-eastern cape: an entry in the Suda defines Maleas as ‘a cape and a mountain’, presumably meaning that the cape is an extension of the mountain. As a mountain, Maleas should be the Parnon massif, whose dissected contours – much less unified than the Taygetos range – extend from the borders of eastern Arkadia and the Thyreatis in the north to the cape of the same name some 80 miles to the south-south-east. The wide distribution of the various cults of Apollo Maleatas across the eastern Peloponnese, including one at Kosmás in upland Parnon some 40 miles from the tip of the cape, tends to suggest that this Maleas was an extensive area; the epithet of Apollo presumably signifying his attachment to the mountain range rather than its extremity alone. On this view, Plutarch’s words may be read as meaning that the block of 4,500 Spartiate plots envisaged by Agis would extend, not all the way to Cape Malea, but as far as the Parnon range (cf. his use of πρός, ‘towards’) – perhaps to its foothills, not far up into it. Maleas will then be the eastern, not the southern or south-eastern, limit of the area specified. As we noted with reference to Taygetos, this need not be a reference to the entire length of the mountain chain.

The southern limit of the quadrilateral is not stated by Plutarch, but Agis presumably had in mind the edge of Sparta’s chōra in that direction. Between Sparta and the sea lay two distinct communities, Krokeai and Helos, whose territories are tentatively reconstructed in the Laconia Survey publication (Fig. 1). Since, however, neither of them is known to have been called a polis in classical or early hellenistic times, they may have been subordinate settlements within Sparta’s chōra rather than perioikic communities. Perhaps the southern boundary of Agis’s quadrilateral was the shore of the Laconian gulf on either side of the mouth of the river Eurotas.

Whether the Spartan chōra stopped at the beginning of the territories of Krokeai and Helos or included them, the area marked down for Spartiate farms appears to have been nothing more or less than the existing territory of Sparta itself, which was deemed capable by Agis of supporting 4,500 men (not necessarily 4,500 farms: one farm might support several citizens) and by Kleomenes of supporting 4,000. On this reading, the kings did not intend to increase Sparta’s territory at the expense of the perioikoi. On the contrary, some of Sparta’s own territory was to be given to hitherto non-Spartiate perioikoi, who would now enjoy Spartiate citizenship.

39 Suda, s. v. Μαλέας· καὶ ἡ αἰτιατικὴ τὸν Μαλέαν ἀκρωτήριον καὶ δρός.
40 e.g. at Argolic Epidaurus, Paus. 2. 27. 7; Sparta, Paus. 3. 12. 8; and Kosmás in Mt Parnon, probable site of the Maleateia festival mentioned in the Damanon inscription, IG v. 1. 213.
41 The name Parnon occurs only at Paus. 2. 38. 7 (twice), where it may refer only to the highest peak of the range, in NE Laconia, rather than the whole massif, which may have been Maleas.
9. Changes in the Power Balance

The Spartans had long relied on the perioikic communities to protect their heartland. Now, given the largely self-inflicted manpower shortage at Sparta and the increasing frequency with which Laconia was attacked and invaded – at least ten times between 338 and 195, or about once every fourteen years42 – the Spartans and the other Lakedaimonians increasingly relied for protection upon fortified perioikic poleis in the north, especially at Sellasia (Ágios Konstantínos),43 and around the coasts, such as at Epidaurus Limera in the south-east44 and Gytheion in the south.45 A number of perioikic poleis, including Geronthrai,46 were expanding in the third century. These developments may have given the remaining perioikoi additional influence over the Spartans.

Given that Agis and Kleomenes wanted to strengthen Sparta by reconstituting a viable citizen army, then – if re-enfranchising Inferiors did not yield enough manpower – they had no choice but to extend citizenship more widely, beginning with perioikoi and sympathetic foreigners. Furthermore, it is a reasonable guess that perioikoi who already owned land in their home polis would keep it when they became Spartans, becoming considerably richer as a result.47 If this is right, then – while land redistribution within Spartan territory involved the installation of some new owners and perhaps the re-drawing of some farm boundaries – the adoption (by Agis and possibly by Kleomenes later) of total numbers for perioikic klēroi elsewhere in Laconia was probably no more than a formal confirmation of the status quo. The Spartiate kings of the Lakedaimonians had no power to restructure landholding in the chōrai of poleis other than Sparta.

Variations of this reconstruction are clearly possible; but, whichever way the matter is considered, historians and archaeologists need to give adequate consideration to the perioikoi as a dynamic, not a passive, factor in Spartan history. Numerically superior to Spartans to an unprecedented degree; benefiting, in some cases, from land grants in Spartan territory; helping to develop their own poleis (perhaps as a result of the increasingly active trade economy of the post-Alexander eastern Mediterranean) – on all these fronts the perioikoi were starting to count for more in Laconian society. The Spartans had little choice but to invite some of them to sup at the top table – in the syssition.

42 In 338/7 by Philip II (Polyb. 9. 28. 7); in 317 by Cassander (Justin, 14. 5. 4–7); in the late 290s by Demetrios I (Plut. Demetr. 35. 1; Polyain. 4. 7. 9); in 272 by Pyrrhos (Plut. Pyrrh. 26–30); in the late 240s by the Aitolians (Polyb. 4. 34. 9; Plut. Kleom. 18/39. 3); in 222 by Antigonos III (Polyb. 2. 70; Plut. Kleom. 30/31. 1); in 219 by Philip V (Polyb. 5. 17–19); in 200 by Philopoimen (Polyb. 16. 36–7); in 195 by Flamininus (Livy, 34. 28–9); in 193 by Philopoimen again (Plut. Philop. 15–16).
43 Laconia Survey site b111; Shipley 2004, no. 143. Additions to the fortification were made in the 4th or 3rd cent., and the fort was abandoned in or before the early 2nd cent.
45 Falkner 1994.
46 Langridge-Noti 2009.
47 It does not seem certain that in the early hellenistic period a citizen of one polis could not also be a citizen of another; but that is a topic for another discussion.
10. External Relationships

Equally, however, Sparta was not simply reactive or at the mercy of unfavourable winds. Several of its kings displayed dynamic leadership, and on a wide front the Spartans, like the *perioikoi*, were actively modifying their city and pursuing initiatives through engagement with the wider world. The third century saw rapid changes in Sparta. Even while the citizen population was falling, the city was developing physically; for example, the gaps between the main four villages that made up the urban site were being filled in with new habitations, and there may have been the beginnings of a net shift of population from country to town. The influence of the *perioikoi* was growing, as we have seen. But the reforms planned by Agis and Kleomenes were not simply the product of internal processes: they also reflected Sparta’s growing interaction with the outside world.

In the early part of the third century Kleonymos, the uncle of king Areus I, having been passed over in the royal succession, was sent to Italy to gain military experience (later returning to attack his homeland). His son Leonidas, father of Kleomenes III, spent time at the Seleukid court as a young man. Areus himself, who ruled from 309 to c.265, cultivated links with the Ptolemies and Seleukids and responded to diplomatic overtures from the high priest of Jerusalem, who claimed kinship with the Spartans. Another sign of relaxation of cultural boundaries is that around 270 a Spartiate actor, Nikon son of Eumathidas, took part in games at Delphi. Areus built military alliances in the Peloponnese, and played a leading role in the ‘Chremonidean’ war launched by the southern Greeks against the Macedonians in the 260s, when he presented himself, in effect, as the sole ruler of the Lakedaimonians. It was during this war that he put his name on Sparta’s first coins, in imitation of the Successors of Alexander. It is not hard to imagine – though it is not documented – that he also tried to counteract oligarchy in order to rebuild Sparta’s military resources, perhaps through an expansion of agriculture (§ 4). If so, his attempt was ineffective or was baulked, leaving Agis IV to try again.

49 See Shipley 2002, 281–2, 308, 310–12 *passim*, for Laconia Survey site h45 Geladári, directly across the Eurotas from Sparta: it expands in the hellenistic period, though perhaps not until the 2nd cent.
51 Plut. *Agis*, 3. 6, cf. 11. 4, linking him with Seleukos (sc. 1) though it seems possible that Antiochos I is meant, given the chronology (I owe this suggestion to Olga Palagia); cf. Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 238 n. 10.
53 SGDI 2565; Bradford 1977, 312.
54 See the Chremonides decree, *IG* ii² 687 = Austin 2006, no. 61.
55 See e.g. Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 32–3. For a reassessment of the war, see O’Neil 2008.
56 Grunauer-von Hoeschelmann 1978, 1–4 group I (silver tetradrachm) and 4–6 group II (silver obol), pl. 1; Walker 2006, 213 no. 839 and 214 no. 840 respectively (the latter from a die not included by Grunauer-von Hoeschelmann); Hoover 2011, 142 no. 606 and 143 no. 610 respectively.
11. The Limits of Freedom

Thanks to the paucity of the sources for Agis IV and the tragic brevity of his reign, we know nothing of his policy towards the wider world; but Plutarch allows us to see plainly that Kleomenes III inherited Areus I’s mantle in this respect.

Despite the Phylarchean propaganda that represented Areus and his short-lived son and successor, Akrotatos, as having opened the doors to corrupting foreign luxury,57 Kleomenes III himself was very much a modernizer in the mould of his father’s cousin. One of Areus’s aims had been to assert the superiority of the Agiad royal house.58 Kleomenes went further: already married to the widow of the Eurypontid Agis IV, he pushed the other dynasty into eclipse, and Sparta further away from dyarchy towards monarchy, by having his own brother made co-king with him in 227. He had received tuition from a Stoic philosopher from the Black sea.59 He probably built Sparta’s first permanent circuit wall.60 Most importantly, he pursued active relationships with the outside world, for example by nurturing existing links with the Ptolemies.61 Like Areus, he tried to join the ‘club’ of Alexander’s Successors who founded or re-founded cities, patronized artists and writers, and reshaped political and natural landscapes at will. But in the last area the realities of Sparta’s situation restricted his freedom of action.

While adopting the language of post-Alexander kingship, Lakedaimonian kings had to cloak innovation in the language of the Lykourgan ‘past’. Furthermore, they needed the other Lakedaimonians to help them pursue their dynamic engagement with the wider Greek world. Agis IV and Kleomenes III might aim to reorganize land tenure to some extent, but could not expand Sparta’s chôra, bounded as it was by natural features and by the poleis of the perioikoi. Giving citizenship and land within Sparta’s own chôra to perioikoi was a radical step, but it partly reflected the fact that Sparta was not as dominant within Laconia as it had been. Agis and Kleomenes did not have the power to enact a wholesale restructuring of Laconia, and did not attempt to do so: first, because they could not legislate for the territories of separate, though supposedly subject, poleis; second, because, although the numbers of those poleis and of perioikoi had fallen, the Spartiates were now heavily outnumbered.

The scene was already set for the separation of the ‘other Lakedaimonians’ into their own federal koinon, which came to pass in the early second century.62

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57 Phylarchos ap. Athen. 141f–142b = FGrH 81 F 44 (I owe this reference to Ellen Millender).
59 Sphairos of Borysthenes: Plut. Cleom. 2/23. 2; 11/24. 2.
60 Kourinou 2000, 35–6 (sources, esp. Justin 14. 5. 4–7; Paus. 1. 13. 6), 42–62 (archaeology); cf. English summary at 277.
61 e.g. Plut. Cleom. 19/40. 4; 22/43. 3 and 7.
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