"LYCURGAN" SPARTA

The specific character of the Spartan State is known to have usually been associated to the name of Lycurgus. But as to the age in which the originator of the Spartan constitution had lived opinions differed widely as early as in antiquity. Embarassment in the matter is distinctly reflected in the initial sentence of Plutarch's Life of Lycurgus. No wonder, therefore, that in modern historiography the historicity of Lycurgus has soon been seriously doubted. There are scholars who suggest to consider him as a god. Their arguments are based partly upon the antique tradition of the Spartan cult of Lycurgus and partly upon etymological conjectures as to the origin of his name. Elsewhere I have uttered doubts about the correctness of that hypothesis advanced by U. v. Wilamowicz, E. Meyer, and K. J. Beloch. I equally disagreed with the authors of a few recent publications (K. M. T. Chrimes, W. den Boer, N. G. L. Hammond, H. Michell, A. G. Tsopanakis, G. L. Huxley) who are inclined to consider Lycurgus as an historical personage whereas their chronological references are varying from the late 9th century (Chrimes, Hammond) until the second half of the 7th century (Michell). In my opinion Lycurgus was not a god, but neither may he be ranged among historical lawgivers such as Solon and Pittakos, for instance. His name belongs into the sphere of myth. Mythological tales, though known to contain historical kernels, must not be mistaken for historical events. Nor must their heroes be confused with historical personages.

If Lycurgus is not to be considered as a historical person, there is no reason for us to decline the historicity of everything that happened in early Spartan history and was identified with his name. This concerns in the first place the so-called Lycurgan rhetra, one of the outstanding written relics of the Spartan constitution. It is generally known that its text is quoted in the sixth chapter of Plutarch's Life of Lycurgus. E. Meyer categorically rejects the authenticity of Plutarch's account on the ground of the text not being preserved in pure Dorian wording. According to him the rhetra contains but the condition of the Spartan constitution in classical times. Plutarch, of course, did not write down the authentic text of the rhetra. But it is he who

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1 In a lecture Das lykurgische Problem held in Budapest in November 1965 (not yet published).
tells us that Lycurgus’s institutions have not been recorded. On the other hand, there is little probability of the rhetra being fictitious, a forgery coming from classical times. Its text contains various queer and evidently archaic local names and grammatical constructions which elsewhere are not accounted for. The final sentence of the rhetra is corrupted to such a degree that until the present day there is no certainty of how it exactly read in Plutarch’s record. Very likely the rhetra existed first by word of mouth only. The text preserved by Plutarch, though not its authentic reading, is all the same a genuine record of the provisions of the rhetra. At present the majority of scholars no longer doubts the historicity of the so-called rhetra of Lycurgus although divergencies as to its dating and interpretation remain.

The text of the rhetra is distinctly divided into two parts. The first one concerns the setting up of the sanctuary devoted to Zeus and Athena, the division into phyles and obes, and the appointing of a council of thirty — the Gerousia. All verbs being used in the form of participles we are led to the deduction that all the aforementioned provisions were supposed to allow further provisions of the rhetra — put down in the infinitive — to be effected, namely, regular meetings of the people’s assembly — Apella — at a determinated place designed by mysterious local names (Babyka and Knakion). Another term serves to explain the order of proceedings in the Apella. The final sentence has been preserved in a most unclear and evidently corrupted form from which nothing can be deduced with certainty but that it attributed some obviously important role to the Spartan people (damos).

In the first part there is quite an important passage concerning the phyles and obes. In the older literature it has been doubted whether there existed in Sparta the three Dorian phyles Hylleis, Dymanes and Pamphyloi which are known from a number of Dorian communities, despite the fact that in one scholion to Pindar two of these phyles are recorded. All doubts were removed when in 1918 U. v. Wilamowitz published the papyrus fragment of Tyrtaios from which it is evident that in 7th century Sparta three phyles existed like on other communities inhabited by Dorians.

There is much greater difficulty, however, in explaining what is said of the obes. From various glosses by Hesychius in which the obes are mostly explained in topographical terms, it has long been concluded that the obes were territorial units and that very likely they were the four villages (komai) of which Sparta was composed (Pitana, Limnai, Kynosoura, Mesoa) and to which a fifth one was brought, Amyklai, an originally independent community. Of these
facts evidence is also given in late Spartan epigraphic documents about some not specified ball game being fought by teams and containing names of obes and phyles resembling on the whole to those which subsequently became Spartan city obes. Here the word obe was very likely of older origin and it was not until later, may be under the influence of the Athenian local phyles, that for these territorial units the term phyle became equally customary.7

Investigation into the character of the Spartan obes received fresh impulse in 1951 when A. J. Beattie published the copy of a lost Spartan inscription, coming most probably from the late 6th or early 5th century, where a certain obe of the Arkaloi was mentioned.8 From this Beattie deduced that the hitherto supported conception of a local character of the obes was incorrect. When searching for new etymologic connections he came to the conclusion that the obes were units of the tribal system and situated not only at Sparta but throughout the Laconian territory. W. den Boer holds the view that similarly as the Dorians were divided into phyles, the older population of Laconia was divided into obes. The Dorian conquerors considered the term obe merely as a name of certain localities inhabited by the old population.9 Beattie has been joined by G. L. Huxley in whose opinion the obes were units standing between the phyles and phratries in such a way that each obe comprehended three of the twenty-seven Spartan phratries. This argument, however, is not supported by solid evidence.10 Much attention has been given to the question of the phyles by F. Kiechle. He holds that the obe was a unit of the Dorian tribal system.11

In my opinion, neither of the recent attempts at explaining the special features of the Spartan obes calls for a revision of the older views. To the contrary, the assumption is fully justified that the obes were local units of the Spartan community. Besides, the copy of the above mentioned inscription published by Beattie from Fourmont's record is obscure in many a detail and the interpretation of the entire epigraphic document is lacking accuracy.12

If in the rhetra there are side by side not only two different terms for the units into which Spartan society of that time was divided, but also two verbal forms for the division of the citizens into these groups, there were very likely two different ways of division, that is, the tribal and the territorial principle. I think, this accounts

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7 Inscriptions see e. g. in F. Bölte, *Sparta*, RE III 2 A, 1362, and V. Ehrenberg, *op. cit.*, 1694.
12 Beattie himself mentions that there is little reliability in Fourmonts records of epigraphic documents. Cf. also J. Robert—L. Robert, REG 67, 1954, 132.
very well for Plutarch’s commentary where he states that the Spartans were distributed into divisions called phyles and obes respectively.\(^\text{13}\)

The account of the phyles and obes is immediately followed by that of the Gerousia. In the literature reference has frequently been made to the fact that the Gerousia had not been instituted by the rhetra, but that by the latter the number of the Gerontes was being established.\(^\text{14}\) Already Plutarch deliberated on the number of the members of the Gerousia. The problem seems to have consisted mainly in the fact that among the 30 Gerontes were also both Spartan kings. Hence the assumption that two resigning Gerontes were substituted by the kings, and the deliberations on the „perfect“ number 28. Plutarch himself suggests that there were 28 Gerontes in order to round up the number of 30, including the two kings, for the membership of the Gerousia.\(^\text{15}\) It is evident that like the phyles and obes, the Gerousia, too, had been in existence before, and only been reorganised by the provisions of the rhetra. In ancient times the Gerousia had presumably been a tribal institution the members of which were the chieftains of the Gene or phratries. I consider the object of the regulations of the rhetra to be the fact that besides the tribal system also the territorial system was now taken into account. If the division of the Spartans into phyles and obes was firmly established, then the number of the Gerontes, corresponding to such a division was fixed in an analogue way.

It is difficult indeed to answer the question why the number of the members of the Gerousia had to be thirty. If, however, even after the settling down of the Dorians in four villages (komai) the division into three tribal phyles was kept up at Sparta, it seems more probable that all three phyles were existing in each of the four komaï as wherever the Dorians settled down. After the conquest of the Achaean community of Amyklai its inhabitants were incorporated into the Dorian tribal organisation, which means that there henceforward three Dorian phyles existed. Supposing therefore that three Dorian phyles and five obes had been in existence, the number of thirty members in the Gerousia is not at all surprising. The kings were holding a superior position chiefly as commanders of the army which is apparent from both their title ἀρχαγέτων and their function known to us from a younger period. By no means were they the absolute rulers as whom. U. Kahrstedt considers them.\(^\text{16}\) It is, in fact, not astonishing that they had been members of the Gerousia besides the other Gerontes.

\(^{13}\) Plut. Lyc. 6: „τὸ μὲν φυλάς φυλάξαι καὶ ὀβάς ὀβάξαι, διελείπει έστι καὶ κατανείμηκε τὸ πλῆθος εἷς μερίδας, ὥν τάς μὲν φυλάς, τάς δὲ ὀβάς προσηγορεύειν“.\(^{14}\) Cf. e. g. A. v. Blumenthal, Zur lykurgischen Rhetra, Hermes 77, 1942, 212; N. G. L. Hammond, The Lycurgean Reform of Sparta, JHS 70, 1950, 43.

\(^{15}\) Plut. Lyc. 5.

\(^{16}\) U. Kahrstedt, Griechisches Staatsrecht I, Göttingen 1922, 228: „Wie in der Frühzeit die absoluten Könige naturgemäß die äußere Politik selbstherrlich lenkten . . .“
The second part of the rhetra concerns mainly the function of the assembly of the Spartan people called Apella. It may be assumed that the Apella corresponds to the Homeric Agora and to the Athenian Ecclesia. At the origin it was no doubt the supreme tribal institution to which problems of particular importance were submitted for decision by the Gerousia or by the kings and other tribal chieftains. So neither the Gerousia nor the Apella had only been instituted by the rhetra. The provisions of the rhetra merely determined where and when the Apella should take place. As far as we can deduce from the analogy with Homer’s Agora, the meetings of the Apella were first most probably not held at regular intervals but convoked in case of need by the Gerontes. Henceforward it was decided for the Apella to meet regularly. The term ὤρας ἐξ ὦρας used in the text of the rhetra, is somewhat obscure. According to what is said in the scholion to Thucydides of Apellai being kept at the full moon, it has usually been supposed that the rhetra sustained this very principle. Hammond argues that this is a general determination of time which indicates that the Apella would be meeting forever. This can scarcely be accepted. It appears far more probable that by the rhetra the principle of regular assemblies was stipulated in opposition to a former custom. This results from the fact that further on the precisely identified meeting-place is indicated. As to the topographic terms of Babyka and Knakion mentioned in the rhetra, their meaning was not clear even in antiquity which is evident from Plutarch’s puzzled comment. But it is obvious that according to the provisions of the rhetra the Apella was to meet constantly at regular intervals and at a determined place.

Farther on the rhetra mentions the functions of the Apella. The term εἰσφέρειν has only one signification upon which there can be no doubt, that is, „to propose motions“. There is more difficulty in interpreting the other infinitive ἀφίστασαι. Various renderings of it have been proposed. For instance H. T. Wade—Gery refers to a passage in the History of Thucydides where the same verb is used in the sense of „to reject motions“. He concludes that either of the two mentioned terms concerning the purpose of the Apella must be interpreted to the effect that during the sessions the members of the Gerousia had the power to put forward motions or to decline to do so. This seems, however, difficult to accept by the very fact that the Gerontes had been obviously entitled to entertain proposals in the Apella before — as in the case of the Homeric Agora — and thereby the rhetra would have repeated nothing but the current

18 N. G. L. Hammond, JHS 70, 1950, 43.
19 Plut. Lyc. 6; cf. also Plut. Pelop. 17.
20 For older literature see G. Busolt, Griechische Staatskunde I, München 1920, 43, note 2.
A rather original view comes from A. G. Tsopanakis' according to which the second term means the way of voting in the Apella by the members dividing into two sections.\(^{22}\) The opinion of Tsopanakis, based chiefly on a subjective interpretation of Plutarch's account of the procedures in the Gerousia, has been justly criticised by F. Kiechle, who himself adopts Wade—Gery's view but fails to comment objections, particularly those by Hammond.\(^{24}\) To myself the most plausible interpretation seems the oldest one which renders ἀφίστασθαι as „adjourn“, „terminate the debate“. This complies also with Plutarch's account to the rider of the rhetra.\(^{25}\)

The last sentence of the rhetra is preserved in an evidently corrupted version that requires not only an interpretation but in the first place a restitution of the text. Of all the conjectures hitherto submitted the most frequently and justly accepted one is that of M. Treu to which the Wade—Gery's reading is closely linked.

Tsopanakis' attempts at solving the problem are no doubt made in an altogether new way, nevertheless there is difficulty in accepting his interpretation from the point of view of both paleography and terminology. Comparing it to Treu's treatment of the matter, I am doubtful if the reading proposed by J. H. Oliver, adopted also by D. Butler, can be considered as a progress.\(^{27}\) The proper meaning of the conclusion of the rhetra seems to be that the people had the power to speak for or against any motion proposed to the Apella by the Gerontes, and that it could be accepted or rejected according to the people's decision.

The so-called Lycurgan rhetra is, indeed, a substantial document to the reforms made in the organisation of Spartan society. I myself consider the main point of these reforms to be the connection of the old tribal division with the division based on the territorial system. The Gerousia, too, has been reorganised in this way. The Apella continues to be the foremost institution, convoked in regular intervals, the importance of its resolutions is accentuated, and the people, that is, the entire citizen body has the final voice.

The territorial system supposes not only the settling down of the Dorian conquerors, but also the unification of the settlements including the village of Amyklai. In this sense the rhetra demonstrates also Spartan synoecism, but in no way does its coming into

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\(^{22}\) Critical reservations to Wade—Gery's above mentioned account were made in particular by W. den Boer (Laconian Studies 164) and N. G. L. Hammond (op. cit. 44, note 11).


\(^{24}\) F. Kiechle, op. cit., 152—154.

\(^{25}\) See below.


existence correspond chronologically with the conquest of Amyklai. It was not until the domination of this settlement and the admittance of its Achaean inhabitants to Dorian tribes that the proper conditions for the carrying out of the territorial system reflected by the rhetra were created. The terminus ante quem of the rhetra is the outbreak of the first Messenian war.

Apart from the text of the rhetra Plutarch quotes the so-called rider of which the kings Polydoros and Theopompos are said to be the originators. These kings were striving against the people’s too much modifying the motions proposed in the Apella. Henceforward the kings and other members of the Gerousia were entitled to interfere more rigorously in the procedures of the Apella. The text of the rider — likewise as that of the rhetra — is far from being clear and has become the object of various interpretations and much deliberation.28

The second part of the rider can hardly be interpreted by anything else but that under certain circumstances the kings and the other Gerontes had the power to dissolve the Apella. In fact, there is a grammatical form different from that used in the rhetra, but doubtless the words ἀποστατήρας ἕμεν are nothing but the emphasised expression of the simple infinitive form ἀφιστασθαι.29 The circumstances dealt with in the first part evidently hint to a situation when the people manifested an opinion discordant from motions put forward by the Gerousia. D. Butler has lately been explaining the rider to the rhetra to the effect that it should settle conflicts among the rival groups of aristocrats.30 His suppositions, however, are based on the somewhat unreliable emendation of the last sentence of the rhetra submitted by J. H. Oliver, and on a subjective interpretation of Aristotle’s comment on the Carthaginian constitution, a passage of which he wrongly applies also on Sparta.31

Hence it can scarcely be doubted that the conflict arisen among the Spartans and solved by the rider to the rhetra was really a conflict between the Gerousia and the Apella, between the aristocrats and the people. The rider restricted the competence of the Apella to the benefit of the Gerousia. The incentive hereto comes clearly from the internal evolution of Sparta during the late 8th and early 7th century.

As is well known, the fundamental conflict between the Spartans and the Helots came about as early as the arrival of the Dorian tribes at the Eurotas valley and the seizure of the land. In contrast to Athens,

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28 Plut. Lyc. 6: „αἱ δὲ σκολίαιν ὁ δάμος ἔρωτο, τούς πρεσβυγενέας καὶ ἄρχαγέτας ἀποστάτηρας ἕμεν“. 29 Tsopanakis, as mentioned above, tries to prove that here the manner of voting in the Apella is meant. Accordingly he considers in the first part of the rider the adjective σκολιός to mean „unintelligible“, „complicated“, but not „false“ or „wrong“ (ibid., 52—59).
30 D. Butler, op. cit., 392: „The main contention of this paper is that the Rider was intended to resolve a struggle not between the aristocracy and the demos, but between rival groups within the aristocracy“. 31 Butler’s account to this passage of Aristotle’s Politics (1273a 6ff.) has already been criticised by F. Kiechle, op. cit., 165f., note 5.
where in the 7th century the Eupatridai, relying on their tribal privileges, seized the major part of the tilled land to the detriment of their own people, at Sparta the privileged class was the collective citizen body. The tribal system turned not into an instrument of power of the aristocrats but it was brought into conformity with the territorial system and continued to be an important factor welding together the privileged Dorian conquerors against the subjugated Helots and against the free but rightless perioeci. The manifestation of this status, which got stabilized in the course of the 8th century, is the rhetra.

The discords between the interests of the aristocracy and the people are clearly visible from the rider which strengthens the competence of the Gerousia towards the Apella. Very likely they came about in consequence of the first Messenian war which had expanded the borders of the Spartan state, bringing the Spartans new fertile land and new helots. The problemacy of the Messenian wars and their chronological order belong to the particularly intricate questions of early Spartan history. Nevertheless, the first war may reasonably be placed into the second half of the 8th century. About the ethnic and social conditions in Messenia before the outbreak of the war we have only a vague idea. We do not even know for certain how the Spartans disposed of the newly conquered territory. The most current — and in my opinion the most promising — supposition is that they proceeded in the same way as in Laconia that is, they seized the land and made helots of all inhabitants who had not emigrated. I do not approve F. Kiechle's opinion that after the first war Messenia preserved a certain autonomy and that the peasants were not reduced to helotry. Kiechle refers in particular to Pausanias' account of the terms imposed on the Messenians after the war and concludes that their position was not so bad as that of the helots known from a later period. I consider it quite natural that after the suppressed revolt (the second Messenian war) the situation of the vanquished Messenian population became much worse. From this, however, it cannot be derived whether their status had been different before the revolt.

After the conquest of the Eurotas valley the Spartans are known to have divided the land into lots (klaroi) which became allotted to

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32 Despite the fundamental differences in the conception of the Messenian wars, this dating is agreed upon by J. Kroymann, *Sparta und Messenien*, Berlin 1937, XIV and XVII, and F. Kiechle, *Messenische Studien*, Kallmünz 1959, 13; cf. also G. L. Huxley, *Early Sparta*, 113, note 190, who places the twenty years' duration of the war between 740 and 710. This suggestion is based on Tyrtaios' statement that the war ended in the twentieth year from its beginning (Tyrt. fr. 4D), and Pausanias' chronology (4, 5).

33 Cf. e. g. E. Schwartz, *Die messenische Geschichte bei Pausanias*, Philologus 92, 1937, 24 and 42, where it is said that the Messenians fighting the Spartans in the second war were „rebellierende Heloten“.

34 Paus. 4, 14, 4. The Messenians are said to have got under the obligation not to revolt against the Spartans, to deliver half of their crop and to honour by wearing mourning clothes the memory of the deceased kings and other dignitaries (,,τὸν ἄλλον τὸν ἐν τέλει“). F. Kiechle, *Messen. Studien*, 56ff.
Spartan citizens along with the peasants who so far had been cultivating the land and now were made helots. Moreover, besides this so called public land (πολιτικὴ χώρα), special grounds (τεμένη) were given to the kings and presumably also to other aristocrats. Very likely the Spartans proceeded in the same way after the conquest of Messenia. Since the importance of the kings-commanders of the army — and of the nobility in general had increased in the many years in which the Spartans were fighting the Messenians, it might be concluded that the aristocrats were seeing to it that the booty captured in war was distributed in such a way as to secure to themselves the biggest share. It seems most probable that this was the source of the people's discontent, leading to their disapproval of the motions proposed to the Apella by the Gerousia. The aristocrats thereupon established the rider to the rhetra thus confirming the dominant power of the Gerousia and strengthening their own position within the state.

The Spartan people's discontent with the then existing conditions of life, which perhaps is reflected even in the negative attitude of the Tarentum colonists towards their mother city, could not be efficiently manifested until the power of the Spartan state and of those authorised to direct its affairs was shaken. This was the case when the subjugated Messenians took up arms against their Spartan lords in the so-called second Messenian war which most likely broke out in the second half of the 7th century. It is interesting to remark generally by the fact that the demand for a redistribution of the land was put forward by those of the Spartans who had their land lots in Messenia lost in the revolt. As I have stated elsewhere, I do not consider this account as conclusive. It is generally known that the Spartans did not put up with the loss of the Messenian territory. They tried hard to crush the revolt and to reconquer their positions in Messenia. So the voices calling during the war for a redistribution of the soil can most probably be commented to the effect that the Spartan people was ready to fight the rebels on the condition that

36 Cf. F. Kiechle, Lak. und Sparta, 176—183.
37 For the dating of the second Messenian war which according to Tyrtaios lasted 19 years, see V. Ehrenberg, Sparta, RE III 2 A, 1379 („etwa zwischen 650 und 620“); F. Kiechle, Mess. Studien, 131 (dates end of war between 630 and 600). There is little probability in Huxley's „precise“ chronology fixed from 669—657 (op. cit., 130, note 384).
38 Arist. Pol. 1306b 36 — 1307a 2. Cf. G. Busolt, Griechische Geschichte I, Gotha 1893, 609f.; A. Andrewes, Eunomia, Classical Quarterly 32, 1938, 100; G. L. Huxley, op. cit., 55: „those who had lost their lands and the income from them in Messenia demanded a redistribution of land in Laconia, while the shortage of food unfairly benefited the holders of lots in Laconia whose farming was not interrupted“. 
39 Antiquitas Graeco—Romana. (cf. n. 35)
they would receive a larger share in the booty than heretofore. Compared with the first Messenian war, the importance of the people became more conspicuous in the second one. From the verses of Tyrtaios it is quite obvious that the hoplites played a prominent part at that time. V. Ehrenberg already suggested that it was during the second Messenian war when at Sparta the conception of the equality of all Spartans according to an old tradition began to spread.

The conflict between the aristocracy and the people then became especially striking in the course of the second Messenian war, and for the sake of the preservation and consolidation of the Spartan state they had to be settled by all means. The revolt of the subdued Messenians was a menace to the very foundations of its existence. Consequently the authority of the Spartan state had to be reinforced in such a way as to hold the helots in submission. The interests of the individual had to submit to the interests of the state, and anything liable to impair the unity of the citizens’ collective had to be implicitly removed. So after the victory in the Messenian wars measures were carried out in reaction to the aristocrats’ striving after an exclusive position in the state. The consolidation of the citizens’ unity was connected with the reestablishment of the old "Lycurgan" tradition.

In the effort for a consolidation of the community of the citizens and for greater stability of the Spartan state the ephorate was playing an outstanding part. Owing to the lack of reliable evidence from the archaic period the problemacy of the origin and evolution of the ephorate is extremely complicated. Its anti-aristocratic tendency, however, can hardly be doubted. Against the meaning of G. L. Huxley that only distinguished citizens were appointed to the ephorate, similarly as the Cretan kosmoi, it may be stressed that when comparing the two institutions Aristotle points out that in Sparta the ephors are elected from all citizens. Since the people was taking part in this foremost office, they were also interested in preserving the constitution. Unlike to Sparta, the Cretan kosmoi were selected only from certain Gene. The ephorate may therefore not be considered as an institution close to the interests of the aristocracy. On the contrary, there is every evidence that this office played an important role in the abolition of the privileges of the aristocracy and in the recovery of the community of the citizens such as it had existed towards the end of the archaic period.

Unlike the Gerousia and royalty the ephorate obviously had nothing in common with the tribal system. Of this fact the very number of the ephors gives clear evidence. While it is not possible to make

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40 V. Ehrenberg, Der Damos im archaischen Sparta, Hermes 68, 1933, 300: "Militärisch wie wirtschaftlich beginnt sich in diesen Jahren des zweiten messenischen Kriegs der Gedanke der Gleichheit aller Spartiaten durchzusetzen . . ."  
41 G. L. Huxley, op. cit., 39: "In Crete the Kosmoi were selected only from the most aristocratic families, a fact suggesting that in Sparta the earliest Ephors were distinguished Spartiates, close to the kings".  
their membership of five correspond with the three Dorian phyles, yet it is in accordance with the territorial division of Sparta into five komai — obes. The connection between the number of the ephors and the komai has been frequently pointed out before.\(^4^3\) If there is any, then the ephorate as an institution was not created until Amyklai got attached to Sparta though the ephors as representatives of single Spartan komai might have existed in former times too. It seems that when after the first Messenian war the competence of the Gerousia had been increased in Sparta, the ephorate enjoyed less power and came to its importance only at the end of the Messenian wars.

One of the foremost ephors called Chilon was in office closely before the middle of the 6th century.\(^4^4\) Chilon’s extraordinary authority in archaic Greece is best shown by the fact that along with another few outstanding politicians of these times he was reckoned one of the „Seven Sages“. There is evidence from a papyrus fragment that under his leadership the Spartans were actively interfering with the tyrannies installed in various Greek city-states.\(^4^5\)

At that time certain changes in the evolution of Spartan economy can be remarked. In the first half of the 6th century there was a decrease of foreign imports into Sparta and after the middle of the century a decline in Laconian pottery\(^4^6\) can be noticed. The same is true of poetry and music.\(^4^7\) Moreover it has been frequently stated that since the first half of the 6th century there was a rapid decrease of victors coming from Sparta\(^4^8\) at the Olympic games. With the internal stabilisation of the Spartan state and the growth of its external power in the course of the 6th century a stagnation of the economic and cultural development of the community came along. These facts put the final touches to the picture of „Lycurgan“ Sparta such as we know her from classical times.

The formation of that specific type of the Spartan state was then not the work of an individual nor did it result from one single act. „Lycurgan“ Sparta originated from a complicated development of Spartan society in the archaic period. The development was of course influenced by a number of various factors some of which very likely will forever escape our attention on account of the limited sour-


\(^{4^4}\) According to Diogenes Laertios (I 68) the year of Chilon’s ephorate is 556/5.

\(^{4^5}\) Recorded by F. Jacoby in his Fragmenta der griechischen Historiker 105 F 1. For its interpretation see P. Oliva, *Raná řecká tyrannis (Early Greek Tyranny)*, Prague 1954, 205f. Accounts of antique authors on Chilon are collected in P. Poralla, *Prosopographie der Lakedaimonier*, Breslau 1913, 130f. (Né. 760).

\(^{4^6}\) F. Kiechle, *Lak. und Sparta*, 247f. (further literature quoted).


\(^{4^8}\) See e. g. G. Dickins, *The Growth of Spartan Policy* 32, 1912, 19, note 1. Compared with the period from 720 to 576, the share of the Spartans in Olympic victories had declined nearly tenfold.

\(^{556/5}\)
ces at our disposal. Yet we are able to point out the fundamental and determinating factor in the development of archaic Sparta. It is the particular form of dependence of the direct producers on the owners of means of production, the relation between the enslaved helot peasants and the free holders of the land lots — the Spartan citizens. The necessity of keeping the helots in subjection became the main function of the Spartan state. This is the reason why in Sparta the remnants of the tribal system were being preserved and why the aristocracy had not formed into a ruling class as for instance the Athenian Eupatridai. The conflict between the aristocracy and the people had taken place in Sparta under conditions wholly different from those in Athens. The Spartan 

\textit{damos} never found themselves in a position like that of the Athenian \textit{hektemoroi}, but they always were part of the privileged ruling class of Spartan citizens, the owners of the \textit{klaroi} and helots.

In order to maintain their domination over the subdued peasants of Laconia and Messenia the Spartans were obliged to convert their city into a military state cruelly suppressing any attempt at revolt. They had to seclude themselves from external influence and to put up with the economic and cultural stagnation which became the characteristic feature in „Lycurgan“ Sparta.

\textit{Praha.} \hfill \textit{P. Oliva.}