Myth and territory in the Spartan Mediterranean

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Introduction

'A verse of the *Midrash*, commenting on the quarrel of Cain and Abel, says that the sons of Adam inherited an equal division of the world: Cain the ownership of all land, Abel of all living creatures – whereupon Cain accused Abel of trespass.' Bruce Chatwin filled his notebooks with references like this to illustrate the two alternatives of human social existence: nomadism and sedentary life.[1] The connection of an organized, sedentary community with the land is never self-evident; images and metaphors are needed to invoke it. Abel roamed the land and struck no roots in it, while for Cain all land became his possession, his 'territory'. Whether one is perceived as autochthonous ('as old as the moon' like the ancient Arkadians),[2] or as a late-comer who 'strikes roots' in a place, both images attempt to link two inherently distinct elements – man and the land he inhabits. Often, the connection is in need of further articulation, answering such basic questions as: Why here? Why us? Were we always here and, if not, when did we come, and why? Did our settlement involve conquest and displacement of others? And so on. The aim of this book is to discuss the way myth was used in the ancient Greek world to answer such questions, mediating between the Greek city-states and the territories they inhabited, colonized, or aspired to possess. The city-states discussed here belong to the Spartan Mediterranean, and I begin by saying something about the Greek world in which a 'Spartan Mediterranean' may be identified.

City-states and colonies in the 'Greek world'

The Greek world of the Archaic period encompassed not only modern Greece, the Aegean (including Crete), and some of Asia Minor but also the Mediterranean shores of modern France, Italy, Sicily, and North Africa as

[1] Chatwin 1987: 214. '"Fly in the sky" my brother', said Cain, 'you and your sheep have no place in my land.' Chatwin combines, in fact, two stories: see Ginzberg 1966: 70; 72.

[2] Hdt. VIII 73.1; cf. I 146; Xen. *Hell.* VII 1.23; Demosth. *De fals. leg.* 261; Paus. VIII 1.4–5; Strabo 338 (Arkadian autochthony). Apoll. Rhod. IV 264; Lucian, *De astr.* 26; Schol. ad Aristoph. *Nub.* 397 (the moon theme).

well as the Dardanelles and the Black Sea. Maps of ancient Greece illustrating those areas beyond the Aegean circle usually relegate them to 'Greek colonization', but this distinction between centre and periphery is an arbitrary one. From the point of view of Athens, cities such as Cyrene (Libya), Syracuse (Sicily), Massalia (French Marseilles), and Olbia (Russian Odessa), may appear 'marginal', but in 480 BC a Sicilian Greek facing the Carthaginian invasion, for example, must have felt no less at the centre of things than his counterpart in Athens who, in the same year, was facing the Persians. 'Margins' are an accident either of our meagre sources or of the historical constructs which determine our perspective. We tend to get the answers to the questions we ask.

The very term 'colonization' creates the impression of something secondary and hence peripheral. But colonies are not necessarily secondary; some, such as Syracuse or Cyrene, ruled enormous territories, participated fully in the pan-Hellenic games, and knew affluence and a vigorous intellectual life. Moreover, the modern cultural snobbery of a poorer and weaker mother country vis-à-vis its colonies does not seem to have existed in the Greek world. The designation as 'colonies' of Greek city-states which were founded overseas in barbarian lands after the mid-eighth century from mother cities in 'old Greece' can also be misleading. A very substantial percentage of Greek city-states – whether 'colonies' or not, whether inside the arbitrary Aegean circle or outside it – were established only after the mid-eighth century, and the Aegean, for example, as part of the older Greek world, continued to be colonized in the Classical period, sometimes also confronting barbarians.

Modern historical analysis correctly differentiates between Greek communities founded in the context of the rise of the city-state (*polis*), after the mid-eighth century, and those established and settled earlier.[3] This seems to correspond to a typological distinction that occurs in ancient foundation stories (*ktiseis*), some of which describe the founding of new cities by whole communities while others tell of cities settled (we would say 'colonized') from mother cities which did not cease to exist. The former often relate to what we call 'the Dark Ages', the latter to the Archaic period. This distinction, although indispensable for the history of settlement in the Archaic and Classical periods, is irrelevant to our concerns here. When Greeks in the seventh to the fourth centuries spoke of 'migrations' in the 'Dark Ages' (once again, a modern concept) and the consequent foundation of, for example, Miletos in Asia Minor or Sparta in the Peloponnese, they employed the term which the modern historian reserves for 'colonies', *apoikiai*. Moreover, not all Dark Age foundation stories contain the dis-

[3] Graham 1983: 1–2.

tinctive theme of an exodus. For example, both the people of Aegean Melos, who in 416 BC believed themselves to have been founded from Sparta around 1116 BC, and those of Taras in southern Italy, quite certainly founded from Sparta in 706 BC, saw themselves in the Classical period as colonists of Sparta. In sum, both Sparta (itself a 'colony of the Dorians') and the city-states which viewed it as a mother city were 'colonies'. In positivistic terms, the term *apoikia*, a 'home away from home', is often obviously anachronistic, but this anachronism becomes a windfall if we wish to study the attitudes of the Greeks responsible for it: it teaches us something authentic about the way ancient Greeks saw themselves and their own history. Moreover, this history was understood in terms of continuity with their own (often perceived as 'recent') past of migration and settlement.

Myth and fact

Attitudes are historical facts; myths can be facts when they articulate attitudes. When discussing myths, historians may justifiably see their task as clearing away the fog which obscures the historical 'kernels of truth'. What they want to know is what really happened when the Greeks settled Asia Minor in the Dark Ages. For the most part, this is not the way I shall be discussing myths. 'Historicizing' myths – myths which explain a present situation in historical terms – are often of little use as evidence for events. In and of themselves, however, they are 'facts' firmly interwoven into the context of the period in which they are related. For example, when in the seventh century the poet Tyrtaios proclaimed in Sparta that 'Zeus himself ... has given this land to the Herakleidai, with whom we [Dorian Spartans] left windy Erineos and came to broad Peloponnese', he was invoking the story of the Return of the Herakleidai. To take this story as direct evidence for the Dorian invasion would be highly problematic, to say the least, but in Tyrtaios' world that historical self-image, a 'fact of *mentalité*', had more substance and significance than many actual occurrences. For the Spartans, it was both a constitutive myth of their past and a rallying cry. It was a part of reality, and that reality, viewed and sometimes acted upon in these terms by the ancient Greeks, is the framework for this book.

Going beyond parameters of *histoire de mentalité*, this is a book of history, asking how Greeks articulated patterns of linkage between themselves and their places of settlement through myth on the assumption that myth may provide us with a necessary and authentic frame of reference. There will be much historical enquiry of the more familiar type, analysing contemporary historical contexts and events, in the belief that myths were not just 'reflections' of contemporary events but sometimes informed those very events or were moulded by them.

Questions about 'kernels of truth' such as the 'Dorian invasion' or Spartan colonization in the Aegean, will be raised now and again. They should be regarded as a complement to arguments which may also stand on their own, from a strict functionalist perspective. In general, I do not consider Functionalism as necessarily excluding 'History of Origins'. Admittedly, one way to avoid thorny issues would be simply to maintain that since the subject is, for example, the 'historical' Spartans, one could not care less about the truth of the Dorians' arrival – that it is enough that the seventh-century Spartans believed in it. After all, national myths do not have to be positivistically true to be effective and influential, and this is the major thrust of this book. At the same time, complete avoidance of 'kernels of truth' would be irresponsible. While it might be true that there is no smoke without a smoke-machine, sometimes there really is a fire. Historians should at least raise the question of origins and causes. The domain of Functionalist investigation does not arise *ex nihilo* and, almost by definition, is informed and sustained by its origins. Therefore, in addition to arguing, for example, that it is because the Karneia mainly celebrated Apollo Karneios' association with migration, colonization, and city foundation that it appears in a chain of cult transfers from Sparta through (its colony) Thera to (its colony) Cyrene, I shall suggest that the pastoralist–nomadic migrations evident in the vocabulary of the cult may explain something about how it arose. If the Dorians had 'really come', this may explain why Spartans believed this to be so and, what may be more meaningful, why that belief remained significant throughout the Archaic and Classical periods.

The myths I discuss are all 'historical' in that they have come to play a historical role. Some, such as the Return of the Herakleidai, are historicizing myths telling of migrations and foundations, as if narrating history rather than recounting legends about the gods. Others, such as the myth of Antaios, may be regarded as functioning historically without being historicizing. Rather than telling stories of migration, these myths speak only of 'opening up the land' and freeing it for (eventual) settlement. Other, 'charter myths', such as the divine gift of the clod of earth to the ancestor of Cyrene's founder, establish a precedent in the past, constitute a 'right to the land', and link the ruling dynasty with the heroic recipient of that right. Most of the myths discussed in this book, however much they differ in theme or structure, have in common a historical function as mediators between Greek communities and the lands they inhabited.[4]

[4] For the term Malinowski 1926; cf. Kirk 1970: 20–2. Malinowski uses 'charter' to cover a variety of functions (e.g., 1926: 144). The closest he comes to a 'political' charter of the sort of the Return of the Herakleidai is 1926: 117: 'one of the most interesting phenomena connected with traditional precedent and charter is the adjustment of myth and mythological principle to cases in which the very function of such mythology is flagrantly violated. This

In general, a myth may become historical either through the transformation of a real event into a myth or through the transformation of a myth into history. The need for myth in historical memory is attested in the tendency of certain real events to slip into mythic roles: the Battle of Marathon, the death of Leonidas at Thermopylai, the siege of Masada, the Battle at Roncesvalles, the Tonypandy massacre, the Boston Tea Party, the mutiny on the *Potemkin*, and so on. An event which becomes mythic, functions significantly (and often symbolically) in the life of the community as long as it corresponds to some authentic need. It is useless, beyond the narrow circle of scholarship, for historians to point to contradictory 'facts' or try to 'demythologize' these events. Harmodios and Aristogeiton were popularly regarded as the 'tyrant slayers' despite what a Thucydides or an Aristotle might say; Tonypandy, that landmark of Welsh working-class martyrology, is considered a 'massacre', even though only one person died.[5]

Conversely, myths may sometimes become historical 'events'. In the Greek world this was achieved through processes of selection, temporization, and localization of myths. Certain myths or, more commonly, certain episodes of the pan-Hellenic mythic cycles were attached to the particular history of a Greek city-state. Myths were usually not invented; they were adapted, or evolved into an idea of history. A single episode from the story of the Argonauts, for example, came to be localized in Libya, assigned to the period seventeen generations before the foundation of Cyrene to serve as a charter myth, and the same episode was apparently used by the Spartan Dorieus to justify his territorial ambitions west of his failed colony at Kinyps. In general, giving myths a historical role seems to have been more common than mythicizing events in the world of Greek colonization.

It is today almost a commonplace that Greek historians such as Thucydides, for example, believed that the Trojan War (a 'myth') had really taken place (a historical event) but that the poets greatly exaggerated ('mythicized'?) it. In the world of Greek settlement, what mattered was the localization of myths – their superimposition upon a particular land and its inhabitants. Here, the important question in treating myth as history is not how much 'history' a Thucydides could see in the myth of the Trojan war,

violation always takes place when the local claims of an autochthonous clan ... are overridden by an immigrant clan ... The result is that there comes into existence a special class of stories which justify and account for the anomalous state of affairs. The strength of the various mythological and legal principles is maintained in that the myths of justification still contain the antagonistic and logically irreconcilable facts and points of view, and only try to cover them by facile reconciliatory incident, obviously manufactured *ad hoc*.' Malinowski is not writing about the Return of the Herakleidai and I shall argue later that the concept of '*ad hoc*', in that case, is simplistic and misleading.

[5] Morgan 1981: 146–7.

but, for example, the concern of citizens of Taras with whether Menelaos had really landed on the Iapygian promontory or fought the inhabitants there. The superimposition of myth onto the geography of settlement usually involved changing the time frame of the myth or, more exactly, connecting the myth with a concrete time and place. Most myths take place outside measurable time and beyond geographically known space. Eratosthenes warned of the futility of trying to uncover the precise itinerary of Odysseus; to do so, he said, one would first need to find the cobbler who stitched Aiolos' bag of winds. While this wise warning is directed mainly to antiquarians and scholars, it is totally irrelevant to any discussion of the functions of myth in its Greek setting. Our attitude to evidence should not be subject to criteria of ancient historiography; Thucydides' concerns with myth were not the same as those of the Greek settler landing, for example, at the 'port of Menelaos' in Libya.

Myth cannot be dissociated from cult. The mediating role between people and territory of Menelaos, king of Homeric Sparta, is apparent, for example, in Sparta itself (the Menelaion), in North Africa, and in the western Mediterranean – both through myth and through cult. Discussions of cult abound throughout the book and it was tempting to pay homage in its title to Martin Nilsson's brilliant 1951 book, *Cults, myths, oracles and politics in ancient Greece*. However, since my emphasis is on attitudes, I chose to stress the more comprehensive term 'myth', connoting perceptions, and allow it to stand on its own – or, rather, in conjunction with the two other major elements of this book, 'territory' and the 'Spartan Mediterranean'.

Territory

The difference insisted upon in this book between 'land' and 'territory' is perhaps illustrated by the elegant French distinction between *terre* and *territoire*. 'Territory' implies either the existence of a political community upon the land or the wish of such a community to possess it; territorial myths often relate the initial connection between that community and its territory. By contrast, land-myths may tell the story of the physical formation of the land itself, such as the emergence of Rhodes out of the sea to provide the god Helios with a land sacred to him, or the story of those for whom it is named such as the nymph Taygete (Mt Taygetos) or the hero Eurotas (the Eurotas River). In contrast to historicizing myths which 'bring' man to a specific land, the land-myths account for the country and landscape in which one has arrived. The story of the eponymous nymph Cyrene, for example, is a 'foundation myth' not of Cyrene but of the land on which it was established. By contrast, the story of Battos and his colonization of Cyrene, replete with mythic elements, is the story of the superim-

position of a community on that land, and only with the foundation of Cyrene does the Libyan land become territory.

The concept of territory in the Greek world is problematic, in that it involves different sets of criteria for the older Greek world and for that of the post-eighth-century colonies. In the older Greek world, what mattered were the boundaries among Greek states. The Athenian territory, for example, was demarcated in relation to the sea, Megara, and Boiotia. The colonial situation in the Archaic period, especially in Italy, Sicily, and Libya, was fundamentally different. Greek colonists seem to have conceptualized their territories as having boundaries only along the coasts and open-ended 'frontiers' vis-à-vis the hinterland.[6] (Almost all primary Greek colonies were maritime settlements.) In Libya there was only one mother city, Thera, and only one 'colony', Cyrene, and the concept of 'territory' seems to have been limitless. Battos' original 'charter', for example, was to be the 'founder of Libya', not just of Cyrene, sanctioning further expansion and colonization.

The 'Spartan Mediterranean'

When I set out to write *Religion and colonization in ancient Greece* (1987a), my original (and somewhat simplistic) question was to ask whether, in the ancient Greek world, religion had served to justify or legitimate the possession of someone else's land. One did not need to be reminded of one's *Zeitgeist* to be aware that historical examples for a relationship between religion and colonization abound, and not only in my own country, 'the Hebrew Promised Land'. Very soon, however, I came to realize that the question of how Greek colonists regarded the foundation of their settlements in new lands would be grounded on somewhat shifting sands in the absence of a broad and comprehensive picture of the role of religion in the foundation of Greek colonies. Considering the profusion in print of seemingly irresponsible generalizations based on loose interpretations of the symbolic aspects of Greek myths, I decided to begin by investigating the role of oracles, seers, foundation rites, the establishment of sacred precincts, and founders' cults. I also examined the one pan-Hellenic Greek religious institution which might have been expected to grant colonial 'charters', the oracle of Delphi, concluding that Delphi provided a blanket sanction for the act of colonization but usually no explicit 'charters'. Having established what I hoped was a proper frame of reference, I returned to my original

[6] For distinctions between 'border', 'boundary', 'frontier', etc. see Jones 1959; Daverio Rocchi 1988. It was said (*FGrHist* 555 F 12 = Strabo 264), for example, that Metapontion was founded in order to prevent Taras from reaching down to the Siritide territory – all coastal perceptions.

question only to discover that it was far more complex and interesting than I had at first imagined: justification of conquest, appropriation, and displacement constituted only one aspect of a whole spectrum of attitudes to territories and settlement in the Greek world.

Why carve out only a portion of that world, and why choose what I call the Spartan Mediterranean? In discussing the role of Delphi in the foundation of Greek colonies, one must look at the entire world of Greek colonization in order both to establish consultation at Delphi as a general practice and to understand its nature. Similarly, if 'myth' were the focus any segmentation of that world would be wrong. However, since my purpose is to examine the historical role of myths, I have opted for a *polis*-oriented approach, examining the relationship between a city-state and a range of myths rather than the uses of a single myth by various city-states. This approach allows one to ask about the concrete articulation of attitudes to territory, and from it one learns more about the nature of history.

The Spartan Mediterranean is the world of Spartan colonization – Sparta itself and the city-states which saw themselves as Spartan colonies. Despite its image as a land-locked, introverted, xenophobic city, disclaiming commerce, money, and the sea, Sparta did colonize, or at least tried to. Its people regarded themselves as recent arrivals in the Peloponnese under the leadership of the descendants of Herakles; in the words of Pindar, Sparta was a 'colony (*apoikia*) of the Dorians'. As early as the eighth century, Sparta may have colonized in the Peloponnese and the Aegean, fought the Messenians and annexed their territories, and founded Taras in southern Italy. At some point the people of Thera, Melos, Knidos, Kythera, Gortyn, Lyktos, Polyrrhenia, Kroton, and Lokroi came to believe that they were colonists of Sparta. Cyrene was founded from Thera, perhaps with Spartan involvement and certainly with explicit notions of cultic continuity expressed through a chain of cult transfers. In the sixth century Sparta led a maritime expedition against Samos and made failed attempts to colonize North Africa and western Sicily, despite oracular prophecies justifying both attempts. Finally, in the fifth century, Sparta colonized Herakleia Trachinia. In terms of dots on the map, the 'Mediterranean' in the title must be seen as fully justified by this list, and, roughly speaking, it also provides a chronological framework from the eighth to the fifth centuries.

A metaphor for this Spartan Mediterranean might be a triptych of which the central panel shows the foundation of Sparta itself, whether as perceived through the myth of the Return of the Herakleidai or as studied by modern scholars. On one side panel we would find Sparta's distant (sometimes 'overseas') colonies – not just its supposedly 'unique' overseas colony Taras but also other Mediterranean states, whether really founded from Sparta or only perceived as such. On the third panel we would find the often neglected

short-distance Spartan colonization within the Peloponnese itself, including several frontier settlements (which probably became perioikic communities), settlements by Sparta of refugee populations in strategic locations (Asine, Mothone, Thyrea), and cities in Triphylia colonized from Lakonia.

Why single out this Spartan world of colonization? Why not discuss also the prominent colonizations by Chalkidians, Eretrians, Corinthians, Phokaians, and so forth? The answer to this question constitutes one of the major points of this study. Whereas Greeks often articulated patterns of linkage between themselves and their places of settlement through myths, I have found that it is in the Spartan Mediterranean that one may observe the full spectrum of this use in by far its most explicit form. The reason for this, in my view, is the intensity of the challenge to which the uses of myth responded. In the ninth book of the *Odyssey* Homer describes a lovely, 'good-to-settle' island facing the rich land of the Cyclops; the island is empty of people and thus – both in terms of its position and in the lack of native opposition – ideal for colonization.[7] There are no such places in the Spartan Mediterranean. In terms of images and attitudes, the Spartans were almost always late on the scene, whether as Dorians invading the Peloponnese or as colonizers in the last 'free' places (that is, free of other Greeks) in North Africa or at the western tip of Sicily. A working hypothesis which has proven apt, is that the need for justification may be directly related to the degree of challenge (to use a Toynbeean term) encountered, and the challenge may determine the explicitness of the articulated mythological response.

In particular, Sparta faced a challenge of identity in terms of its 'place in the world'. This challenge is apparent in the Spartans' keen sense of national youthfulness and their historical self-image as new arrivals and is delineated throughout Spartan history in confrontation with the 'Other', especially the fierce resistance of the Messenians whom Sparta had conquered and kept under subjugation for centuries. Spartan colonists may sometimes have inherited fierce attitudes towards enemies who threatened their possession of territory. This seems to have been the case at Taras, the only Greek colony founded after the mid-eighth century whose foundation oracle explicitly commanded it to make war on the natives.

In itself the Spartan sense of being new arrivals is unexceptional. Greeks in general seem to have considered themselves a 'young' people. This self-image was often expressed in a story of departure and arrival, of migration and settlement, of foundation and (often) the displacement of

[7] *Od.* IX 116–42; 'good to settle': 130; full of wild goats: 118. Cf. Moggi 1983 rightly emphasizing the motif of *eremos chōra*. The subject of 'empty places' is being studied by this author.

others. It is important to bear this in mind in examining Greek attitudes to their new foundations in the Archaic period, since colonizing activity could be seen not as something entirely new but rather as continuous with their own past migration and settlement. The Greek sense of being newcomers seems, however, to have been felt more keenly in the Spartan Mediterranean than in other places. Sparta's situation as the overlord of Messenia, the various wars it had to fight to retain its control there, and its other wars in the Peloponnese intensified the territorial and hegemonial challenges[8] and sharpened its response through emphasis on the myth of the Return of the Herakleidai. Sparta was ruled by a diarchy, its two royal houses both supposedly descended from Herakles. The Return, that constitutive myth of the foundation of Dorian Sparta under the leadership of the Herakleidai, thus also legitimated the Spartan kingship. Since that kingship was continuous, it continually reminded the Spartans of who they were and what they owed to their Herakleid kings. The myth of the Return of the Herakleidai was therefore more viable in Sparta than in other Dorian cities in the Peloponnese such as Corinth or Argos (outside the Peloponnese, in the Aegean, Dorian cities were also supposed to have been founded by the Herakleidai but not in the context of a 'return'). Similarly, in Cyrene, the constitutive myth of the gift of the clod of earth to the heroic ancestor of its founder, Battos, legitimated the status of the royal house, and as Cyrene continued to colonize Cyrenaica and fight wars with the Libyans the myth of the 'gift of Libya' must have played a prominent role.

The Mediterranean aspect of the Spartan world of colonization should not be understood merely as a modern abstraction. The term 'Mediterranean' brings out not only the bilateral links between Sparta and each of its colonies, but also the direct interconnections between those colonies. Cyrene and Thera, for example, were to each other colony and mother city, but both retained 'colonial' images of Sparta as a mother city illustrated, for example, in the cult of Apollo Karneios which linked the three; Knidos was linked with Cyrene, had kinship relations (*syngeneia*) with Thera, and was a 'special friend' of Taras. The appellation 'Mediterranean' seems to me apt in that it emphasizes multiple interconnections and also, perhaps, because it is at variance with the common, land-locked image of ancient Sparta. The notion of multiple connections and, sometimes, interdependence owes much to the work of Fernand Braudel, who treated the Mediterranean as a region, although I do not share his distaste for a 'history of events', *histoire événementielle*.[9]

[8] Cartledge 1980: 108: 'The territory of the Spartan citizens was not co-extensive with that of the *polis* as a whole.'

[9] Braudel 1966 with Aymard and Alyada in Malkin 1990c: 3–14; 15–26. Combining both the *résau* approach and that of *histoire événementielle* has been the guiding principle of the *Mediterranean Historical Review*, co-founded and edited by the author.

Scholarship and sources

My interest in Sparta grew through two general fields of Greek history – Greek religion and colonization. This may be what made it possible for me to apply a general question of attitudes to territories and settlements to a Spartan 'world', newly defined. Martin Nilsson (1972) comes closest in his concerns to my own, although Nilsson never meant to write more than a general essay and does not pay much attention to the colonial world. Also, his concept of 'politics' is, in my view, too narrowly 'intentionalist'. The most impressive work on myth in the colonial world, comprehensively treating a relatively major area of Greek colonization (Italy and Sicily), is that of Bérard (1957). But Jean Bérard, possibly following in the footsteps of his father, the Homerist Victor Bérard, exemplifies the 'myth as history' approach which sees myths as containing 'kernels of truth' belonging to a period much earlier than the one in which the myths were told. My approach may be considered 'myth as history' only after having turned Bérard's on its head: I study myths as an integral part of the history of the period in which they were told. Besides Bérard's, one would be hard pressed to find (except for perspicacious remarks in passing, especially by Dunbabin (1948a), and the occasional monographic article (e.g., Dunbabin 1948b)) any discussion of myths from this point of view. Studies of foundation stories (*ktiseis*), like those of Schmid (1947), Gierth (1971), and Prinz (1979), express a thematic concern that is sometimes quite useful for what I am attempting here. Very useful discussions may be found in studies of the uses of myths and cults with regard, specifically, to Sparta, noteworthy among which are studies by Pareti (1920), Huxley (1962), Kiechle (1963), Tigerstedt (1965), Forrest (1968), Toynbee (1969), Hooker (1980; 1989), Calame (1987a;b; 1988; 1990), Cartledge (1979; 1980; 1982; 1987), and Parker (1989). Other works on Greek religion will be discussed *ad hoc*; none, however, seems to devote a comprehensive study to the function of religion and mythology as articulations of attitudes to settlements – as mediators between communities and lands. This lack is apparent both in works discussing Greek colonization and in those whose subject is, expressly, Greek morality and attitudes (for the latter see, e.g., Gomme 1954; Adkins 1972; Dover 1974).

Covering such a wide area of the Mediterranean aggravates the source problem which the ancient historian always faces. Discussion of the sources for ancient Sparta is *de rigueur* in all the modern histories referred to in this book, and I have nothing to add to their general appreciation. The history of Sparta is notoriously difficult, because, except for bits and pieces such as the fragments of the poets Tyrtaios and Alkman (second half of the seventh century), most of the literary sources earlier than the Hellenistic Sosibios do

not originate in Sparta. Plutarch's introduction to his *Life of Lykourgos*, in which he mentions a plethora of contradictory sources, is akin to a punch in the stomach. Most modern scholars acknowledge the basic 'proxy' difficulty, usually for the right reasons. Sparta's image of inner stability served others as a model for contemplation (or admiration); its curious system of upbringing (sometimes called 'education') attracted attention in antiquity as well as in modern times; its excellence in war, the peculiarity of its supposedly 'mixed constitution', and other factors have all contributed to the Spartan mirage (Ollier 1933–43; Rawson 1969).

To what extent then, is it legitimate to use historians such as Herodotos of Halikarnassos, poets such as Pindar of Thebes (both fifth century), or speech-writers such as Isokrates of Athens (fourth century) as proxies for the Spartans? Paradoxically, outsiders' reports of Spartan attitudes, such as those of Herodotos, may sometimes be more authentically 'Spartan' than outsiders' reports about hard facts of the Spartan regime. Reports on the use of myth are not of the same order as the ancient descriptions of the Spartan regime, which often overlooked both synchronic details and diachronic developments. It has been said that, whereas everyone admires Sparta's political system in theory, no one imitates it in practice. It cannot be said that the Spartan attitudes to territory expressed, for example, in the myth of the Return of the Herakleidai, were even similarly admired.

The starting point for the discussion of Sparta's constitutive myth, the Return of the Herakleidai, is relatively free even of the proxy question. It is based, fortunately, on an authentic and early Spartan source, Tyrtaios, who explicitly provides us with the essential elements of the myth. All other sources playing on the theme may be read against this point of control. The hero Menelaos is mostly discussed outside Sparta; the evidence for his cultic connection with that city is mainly archaeological. The cult of Apollo Karneios is discussed, among others, in a Spartan context. Since the evidence is that of either ritual or philology, it is again less prone to idealizing distortion. It was not the Spartan cult of Apollo Karneios to which a Plato or a Cicero looked for inspiration. I join those historians of religion who see in disinterested evidence from ritual a conservative element whose validity is less questionable even in a late source like Pausanias. The same may apply to the cult of Zeus Ammon in Lakonia. With the story of Dorieus we have reached the more 'historical' world of events, some thirty years before the Persian wars. His two failures bolster the authenticity of the reported charter myths, since it is impossible for these to have been *a posteriori* inventions: they promise success. Both the events and their religious circumstances appear as fact. The Spartan colonization of Herakleia Trachinia, where the colonization itself is a 'hard fact', and the attitudes expressed in the contradictory constitutive myths of that city reflect changing political