MYTH AND TERRITORY IN THE SPARTAN MEDITERRANEAN

Greek attitudes to settlement and territory were often articulated through myths and cults. This book emphasizes less the poetic, timeless qualities of the myths than their historical function in the Archaic and Classical periods, covering the spectrum from explicit charter myths legitimating conquest, displacement, and settlement to the 'precedent-setting' and even aetiological myths, rendering new landscapes 'Greek'. This spectrum is broadest in the world of Spartan colonization – the Spartan Mediterranean – where the greater challenges to territorial possession and Sparta's acute self-awareness of its relative national youthfulness elicited explicit responses in the form of charter myths. The concept of a Spartan Mediterranean, in contrast to the image of a land-locked Sparta, is a major contribution of this book. This revised edition contains a substantial new Introduction which engages with critical and scholarly developments on Sparta since the original publication.

IRAD MALKIN is Professor Emeritus of Ancient Greek History, Tel Aviv University. He is also a laureate of the Israel Prize for History, a foreign member of the Athens Academy, and co-founder and co-editor of the *Mediterranean Historical Review*. His books include *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece* (1987), *The Returns of Odysseus: Colonization and Ethnicity* (1998), *A Small Greek World: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean* (2011), and *Drawing Lots: from Egalitarianism to Democracy in Ancient Greece*, with J. Blok (2024).

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Myth and Territory in the Spartan Mediterranean

MYTH AND TERRITORY IN THE SPARTAN MEDITERRANEAN

SECOND EDITION

Irad Malkin
Tel Aviv University

WITH A FOREWORD BY

Nicholas Purcell
University of Oxford

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Foreword

Nicholas Purcell

It is splendid to see this reissue of Irad Malkin's classic of thirty years ago, with the author's new Introduction, and I am delighted to have the privilege of writing a prefatory note.

The mark of a serious and lasting contribution to the field is that it is taken up in the debate so thoroughly that its original freshness can be forgotten. From the Introduction which follows, this seems to have happened even to the author in the case of this monograph. Malkin notes how he now perceives more clearly the extent to which this work has shaped his own – notably rich – subsequent contributions to Mediterranean history, and – above all – to the study of Archaic and Classical Greece. Here is a very welcome opportunity for us all to revisit a work which has offered so much – not only to its author's later oeuvre, but to the history of Archaic and Classical Greeks across the Mediterranean world and beyond. The book's abundant influence actually makes it hard to know what to foreground in these remarks. I shall limit myself to reflections on two broad domains suggested by the title itself, but attempt to say something about five of the areas which the new Introduction pinpoints: ethnicity, networks, Mediterranean issues, the impact of myth and quasi-historical accounts on history, and the legitimization of conquest and settlement.

On 'myth and territory'

One of Irad Malkin's most important contributions (in this work and many other publications) has been to explaining what underlay the patterns of resemblance across widely dispersed communities and between variously employed mobile groups across the Early Iron Age Mediterranean. These conformities, or even uniformities, can easily be taken as givens, but factors promoting and facilitating homogeneity are actually one of the most important subjects in Mediterranean cultural history (especially in

this period), as well as one of the most difficult. It is not easy to summarize the richness of what Malkin's research has made common property of those working on the period, but his attention to what one might broadly call 'cognitive' aspects has been especially fruitful and influential – going far beyond older attention to membership of communities or ethnic groups, or even the manifold practical challenges of survival or gain. The present book is a classic case, and the twin ideas of his title instantiate the approach well. The label 'myth' may stand for the whole sphere of narrated and constantly redeployed explanation, especially explanation through the traditional medium of religious and para-historical exegesis, which sought to make sense of and justify the actions and objectives of mobile agents across the Mediterranean world. The parts of this continuum which bear on Lakedaimon, Lakonia, and adjacent regions, as presented here, make a splendid case study for this enquiry – though a formidably intricate one. The pictures teased out in these chapters show precisely how much can be gained if the unities and patterns which made up Archaic and Classical Greek culture are interrogated, rather than taken for granted.

Myth, on this analysis, is not logically prior to the enquiry, something already in existence with which communities could work, but was itself elaborated in the process of establishing and stabilizing comparisons between the circumstances of individuals displaced across the Mediterranean world. Convergence was of enormous help in reassuring and normalizing the often violent and always vulnerable conditions of settling together in new locations. The example of the *nomima* of each community was available as model or as grounds for differentiation. Cult, law, economic behaviour, accounts of foundation history and mythical backdrops – all aligned through comparability or differences which resembled each other, to produce the familiar continuum of a self-consciously Greek world (while similar processes may be discerned across other groupings of communities in the wide Mediterranean world). 'Territory', likewise, can be explored not as an obvious given, but – in all its various guises – as alignment with practices of claim to legitimate occupation or use developed dialectically across hundreds of particular experiences. Institutions of property thus came into being in rather the same way as agreed patterns of mythical narrative. One of the most striking refinements of that theme here lies in the 'challenge function' of territorial myth, of which there are several examples in the pages which follow. The whole lexicon of talking about being away from home emerges as an instrument of representation, of a double ethnography – simultaneously self-fashioning communities and dis-

tinguishing them from their neighbours. 'Founding', reshaping, explaining, even counting, settlements were the building blocks of culture.

Not the least fascinating aspect of this argument is what one might call the 'who dreamed it?' question. How far, and in which cases, did the real institutions and practices of settlement come first, to be interpreted and reshaped through the comparative possibilities of mythical or historical narrative? How far can we go down the route of thinking that all or most of the regularities, conformities, or patterns which mark out the world of *apoikia* and *metropolis* are the product of deliberate persuasion and plausible narration, if not downright inventions?

This book shows how relatively easy it was to legitimize through comparison and constructive exegesis, building sets of coherent allusions across wide geographical spaces. Many mobile Greeks benefited, but a world where such claims could so readily be made was vulnerable, too. The mobile world facilitated a far-reaching commoditization, which went far beyond territory. The little saga of the Samians in the West at Herodotos VI 22–4 shows Zankle offering them a Sikel settlement under an enticing Greek name, Kale Akte, the Good Shore, 'wanting to found a city of Ionians'. Caught out by hostile neighbours, however, Zankle is parcelled up. Many of its inhabitants are enslaved; the existing slaves and the other mobile assets in city and territory, neatly distinguished, are assigned as *misthos* to the treacherous victor Hippokrates of Gela, or to the opportunistic Samians who take over Zankle completely. With the subsequent refoundation as 'Messana' by Anaxilas of Rhegion (Thuc. VI 4, 6), this sorry saga speaks of a further dimension of the 'Spartan Mediterranean', alternatives to the Lakonian vision. Zankle wants to found an *Ionian* city; with the memories, real or concocted, of Spartan connections and a long Lakedaimonian history could be deliberately counterpointed evocations of the Messenian victims of that history. Or so it could seem in the later fifth century to systematic enquirers such as Herodotos and Thucydides. Part of the richness of this book lies in the further ramifications and implications that its findings suggest. It may be helpful to call these contingent connections, liable to abandonment, repudiation, and constantly needing reconstruction and fresh reinforcement, 'networks', but they are elusive and sometimes gossamer-thin, and their very vulnerability gave the system part of its character, as with the 'weak ties' which the author has studied so effectively elsewhere.

This book steers a course between insisting that Lakedaimon was as capable as Chalkis or Corinth of being a *metropolis*, and establishing the interest of the entangling in Mediterranean-wide activities of a place which

conspicuously was not a *polis*. It was from the first a signal virtue of this book that it investigated both the settlements which came to equip themselves with the full accoutrements of 'colonial' identity and the ones which were labelled *emporia*. Not that the two should be rigidly separated. Herodotos, again, notes (IV 108) the partly Greek element in the culture of the Gelonoi in Skythia: explaining that Greeks 'setting out from the *emporia* settled among the Boudinoi'. The role of such settlements has played an increasingly decisive part in understanding the Mediterranean of this period since this book was first published.[1]

'Spartans' at home and abroad

The 'Myth and territory' of the title naturally belong out in the world of the sea lanes. But Malkin is very well aware of the recursivity between travellers and homeland, and a further important contribution of this study is its implication for the study of Lakedaimon in its Peloponnesian context. He represents Spartan horizons as a triptych, with panels depicting Lakonia, Peloponnesian conquests, and overseas horizons, thoroughly rejecting the landlocked and terrestrial preoccupations often attributed to Lakedaimon. It remains the case that all other communities with such complex overseas concerns were much closer to the sea, and the synergy which is implied here between the distinctive aggressions and subjugations of the Spartans at home and their ambitions in a maritime world is extremely important – all three parts of the picture illustrate the others. There are lessons there for the thoroughgoing recombination of 'domestic' and overseas strands of Greek history in general. There must, however, be a sorites-style question as to how far the Lakedaimon of the age of the foundation of Taras was really the same community as Dorieus' homeland, and it is further complicated by the very variable mutual relations of the different parts of the 'Spartan' polity. The cumulative effects of the interactions of the Spartans' ever-more-complex concerns entailed profound transformations of the way 'they' thought about their present and its mythic and historical pasts. The inflection of 'Dorian', as of 'Ionian', and affiliation in the formation of self-perceptions of course changed considerably over the Archaic period. There is something of a paradox here. Malkin's willingness to accept multiple overlapping constructions of legitimating self-presentation pulls against and away from the continuities implicit in a sense of the Spartan. *Was* there

[1] See for instance Demetriou 2012; Gailledrat et al. 2018.

a Spartan Mediterranean, or should the subject rather be seen as an unstable set of Spartanizing discursive gambits, adopted variously by people who had very different relations with the core Spartiate elite of Lakedaimon itself?

Among related questions which the reissue of this book might help pursue is the social location of the knowledge and ideas it discusses. Were these mainly artefacts of a cultured and networked elite, or were they the common property of much wider sets of social strata? These issues, too, have been explored more in recent years, for instance by Gabriel Zuchtriegel.[2] The inclusivity of this book invites consideration of the engagement with 'Spartan' thematics of wide ranges of individuals who were not even Greek. The non-Greek is as important as the Greek in the wider Mediterranean of social interactions, of exploitations and new dependencies, and the fame of Sparta, as it grew, encouraged the burgeoning of opportunistic outgrowths of real or supposed ties. In *emporia*, in particular, the interests and agency of local communities, seeking outlets for the products of expanded economic activity, should be seen alongside the more predatory purposes of aggressive outsiders, as Marco Rendeli has suggested of the key site at Sant'Imbenia in northern Sardinia.[3]

A rapidly changing subject

The Greek (and other) social and cultural matrices around the 'Spartan Mediterranean' look rather different in 2024. The remarkable thing is that this reframing has by no means invalidated the analysis of this book – rather, it has given it new contexts and put it to new purposes. The history of Mediterranean mobilities in the Early Iron Age is now much longer, and sites such as Lefkandi and Skala Oropou have transformed the picture of the ninth and eighth centuries: but already in these pages Malkin inveighed against the artificiality of the concept of the Dark Age, and the Aegean he postulated, in which Thera and Melos might have been 'founded', now seems to need less defence.

Beyond and within the world traced by Greek movements, the Phoenicians have changed even more dramatically – this work was somewhat hesitant about the parallelisms between Greek and Phoenician experience, and no longer needs to be.[4] For all that, and remarkably for a work of its time, this book was outstanding from the first for its inclusiveness,

[2] E.g. Zuchtriegel 2018.
[3] Rendeli 2018; cf., more broadly, Bernardini and Rendeli 2018.
[4] See for instance López-Ruiz 2021.

and for a collective vision of the Greek world, supported by a wide and detailed scholarship which it shares with Malkin's other publications. The Spartan Mediterranean was naturally one in which Spartans and their interests intersected and interacted with those of numerous others. In Gelon's words reproaching Greeks – of various *poleis* – for their short-sightedness in allowing the *emporia* of the west to be taken over by Carthaginians (Herodotos VII 158), from these ports 'great benefits and yields had once accrued to them'. As this book established beyond any doubt, these Greeks included Spartans (of various kinds): indeed, the ports in question had been a striking product of Spartan adventuring and initiative in the western Mediterranean. The gains which Herodotos emphasizes were shared by other communities though, and what the benefits exactly were, and how they were deployed for the good of the *poleis* of the Greek participants, is a further instance of how rich are the insights of the pages that follow for further research. Something similar could be said about the role of Gytheion, for Thucydides (IV 53), the *prosbolē* or 'destination' of commercial shipping from Egypt and Cyrenaica in the late fifth century, and the principal opening of Sparta the city to the sea – but just what economic behaviours are expressed in these laconic words? The shadow of Finley's *Ancient Economy* (in its second edition of 1984) remained long in 1994. Many aspects of Archaic and Classical economic history which have received very constructive attention in the last few decades were much less prominent on scholarly agendas at that time. Underlying them, however, is the phenomenon of large-scale human mobility – something which is far more familiar in thinking about the contemporary Mediterranean than it could have been in 1994, and which is duly reflected in today's ancient history and archaeology.[5] Precociously, that mobility, conceived much more generally than 'colonization' or 'trade', has been a theme of Malkin's scholarly vision from the first.

On 'Mediterraneans'

One theme which I can hardly omit is the 'Mediterranean' dimension, to which the author alludes in the Introduction. What might a 'Spartan Mediterranean' actually *be*? What does the possibility of multiple systems of cross-reference, interaction, self-definition, and explanatory legitimation suggest about the larger Mediterranean world which accommodated them

[5] E.g. Isayev 2017.

all? The book is actually rather coy on this, only at one point specifically addressing a 'Mediterranean of interactions', and aptly beginning by saying that a maritime world of relatively easy communications is one in which margins are found in often very unexpected places. Indeed, margins are one of the ingredients in a great theme of this work – the narrative of 'challenge' and its various places in the justification of aggression and the explanation of failure. Here a truly transhistorical Mediterranean history can be glimpsed, in which the constructions and exegeses of mobile individuals and groups add up not only to imagined communities with serious real-world implications, or to reassuring cultural mirrorings and comparabilities, but to a sense of a geography of communications and of social and economic possibilities which pulls together the physical Mediterranean world and reinterprets it as a historical reality. It was the Mediterranean which enabled the specific cognitions, already mentioned, which underlay ethnogenesis in the Archaic and Classical periods.[6]

As in other periods of Mediterranean history, a vital variable is orientation towards or away from the sea. Here, too, later historiography made Spartans play a precocious role, attributing to them an astuteness about the implications of connectivity, which probably derives from the seaborne engagements that are the subject of this book. Take the Spartan histories summarized in Book 3 of Pausanias' *Periegesis*. As pointed out by Malkin here, it is to a Spartan in the generation before the Messenian conquest that a strange arbitration in Crete is attributed, ending a civil war (as behoved a Dorian intermediary), but also systematically encouraging the settlement of coastal cities at the expense of weak inland ones, 'joining in setting them in locations opportune for the *paraplous*'. The *paraplous*, the 'voyage past', is just the kind of seafaring which sometimes made Crete an important stopover on routes between distant places, as revealed for an earlier period so impressively by the excavations at Kommos. Whatever the historical value of the statement, here is an attribution to Archaic Spartans of a very considerable understanding of the geography of the Mediterranean and the modalities of its communications. And speaking of 'historical value', a notable strength of this book is the author's readiness to interrogate what is recorded for its own sake, as well as using it as evidence for other matters. That Charmidas' mission to Crete was narrated as a Spartan intervention in a larger Dorian economic geography is a historical fact about some period, even if no such mission ever occurred. In this sophisticated dissection of patterns of allusion and mirroring, this book remains a joy to read.

6 Cf. Voss 2015.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations of periodicals follow *L'Année philologique*. Epigraphical abbreviations follow ML.

AR	*Archaeological reports*. Published annually by the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*.
BE	*Bulletin épigraphique*. Published in *Revue des Etudes Grecques*.
BMC	*Catalogue of the Greek coins in the British Museum*. Ed. R. S. Poole, B. V. Head, G. Hill *et al.* London 1873–.
BTCGI	*Bibliografia topografica della colonizzazione greca in Italia e nelle isole tirreniche*. Diretta da G. Nenci e G. Vallet. Pisa, Rome.
CAH	*The Cambridge ancient history*, second edition. Vol. III part 1: The prehistory of the Balkans; the Middle East and the Aegean world, tenth to eighth centuries BC. Edited by J. Boardman, I. E. S. Edwards, N. G. L. Hammond, E. Sollberger. Cambridge 1982. Vol. III part 3: The expansion of the Greek world, eighth to sixth centuries BC. Edited by J. Boardman, N. G. L. Hammond. Cambridge 1982. Vol. IV: Persia, Greece and the western Mediterranean *c.* 525 to 479 BC. Edited by J. Boardman, N. G. L. Hammond, D. M. Lewis, M. Ostwald. Cambridge 1988.
FD	*Fouilles de Delphes*. Series published by the Ecole française d'Athènes.
FGrHist	F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Berlin 1923–30; Leiden 1940–58.
FHG	K. Müller, *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum*. Paris 1841–72.

GGM	K. Müller, *Geographi graeci minores*. 3 vols. Paris 1855–91.
HRR²	H. Peter, *Historicorum romanorum reliquiae*. 2 vols. 1906–14.
IC	*Inscriptiones creticae opera et consilio F. Halbherr collectae . . . curavit M. Guarducci*. Rome 1935–59.
IG	*Inscriptiones graecae*. Berlin 1873–.
LCL	Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press.
LGS	*Leges graecorum sacrae e titulis collectae*. Ediderunt et explanaverunt Ioannes de Prott, Ludovicus Ziehen. Vol. I–II part I. Leipzig 1896.
LIMC	*Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*. Président, O. Reverdin. Vandoeuvres, Genève 1981–.
LSAM	F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie mineure*. Paris 1955.
LSCG	F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*. Paris 1969.
LSCG Suppl.	F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques. Supplément*. Paris 1962.
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones. *A Greek–English lexicon with a supplement*. Oxford 1968.
MCPT	*Modes de contacts et processus de transformation dans les sociétés anciennes*. Actes du colloque de Crotone (24–30 Mai 1981). Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome 67. Pisa.
ML	R. Meiggs and D. Lewis. *A selection of Greek historical inscriptions to the end of the fifth century* BC. Rev. ed. Oxford 1989.
PECS	*The Princeton encyclopedia of classical sites*. Ed. R. Stillwell *et al.* Princeton, NJ 1976.
RE	*Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Ed. G. Wissowa *et al.* Stuttgart 1904–.
Roscher, *Lexikon*	W. H. Roscher, ed. *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*. Leipzig 1893. Reprint edn 1977 Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim – New York.
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum graecum*. Lugduni Batavorum 1923–71; Sijthoff and Noordhoff 1979–.
SGDI	*Sammlung der griechischen Dialektinschriften*. Ed. H. Collitz *et al.* Göttingen 1884–1915.
TGF	*Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta*. Second edition. Ed. A. Nauck. Leipzig 1889.

NOTE

In general I have tried to adhere to Greek forms of tranliteration (Kameiros, rather than Camirus, Hekataios, rather than Hecataeus) except for more conventional names, such as Thucydides or Corinth. Bibliographical references appear in the notes in an abbreviated form; the full reference can be found in the Bibliography at the end of the book. Exceptions are references and articles in lexica and encyclopedias, and some epigraphical publications.