

ON THE ΕΙΔΩΛΟΝ OF A SPARTAN KING

After his discussion of the rights and prerogatives of the Spartan kings, Herodotus, in describing the funeral of a Spartan king, says at 6.58.2–3:

ἔπεάν γὰρ ἀποθάνῃ βασιλεὺς Λακεδαιμονίων, ἐκ πάσης δεῖ Λακεδαιμονος, χωρὶς Σπαρτηγέτων, ἀριθμῶ τῶν περιούκιων ἀναγκαστοὺς ἐς τὸ κῆδος ἰέναι· τούτων ὧν καὶ τῶν εἰλωτέων καὶ αὐτῶν Σπαρτηγέτων ἔπεάν συλλεχθέωσι ἐς τὸντὸ πολλὰι χιλιάδες, σύμμιγα τῆσι γυναιξὶ κόπτονται τε τὰ μέτωπα προθύμως καὶ οἰμογῆ διαχρέωνται ἀπλέτω, φάμενοι τὸν ὕστατον αἰεὶ ἀπογενόμενον τῶν βασιλέων, τοῦτον δὴ γενέσθαι ἄριστον. ὅς δ' ἂν ἐν πολέμῳ τῶν βασιλέων ἀποθάνῃ, τούτῳ δὲ εἶδωλον σκευάσαντες ἐν κλίνῃ εὖ ἐστρωμένῃ ἐκφέρουσι. ἔπεάν δὲ θάψωσι, ἀγορῆ δέκα ἡμερέων οὐκ ἴσταται σφι οὐδ' ἀρχαιρεσίῃ συνίξει, ἀλλὰ πενθέουσι ταύτας τὰς ἡμέρας¹.

It is the consensus of scholars that the εἶδωλον, which Herodotus says was used in the funeral whenever a king fell in battle, was actually present only in those cases where the body of the king was unavailable for the funeral, for whatever reason. Hans Schaefer provided the most thorough analysis of this passage on the Spartan royal funeral, and he concluded that the loss of the body of Leonidas at Thermopylae forced the Apella to pass a decree authorizing the use of an εἶδωλον in the funeral in order to avoid the potential evil consequences for the community if the proper burial rites for the king were neglected. This supposed decree then set the precedent for any future situations in which the body of a king was not available for the royal ceremony, and Schaefer believed that Herodotus' statement about the εἶδωλον being present in the funeral of any king who died in battle was simply a misleading

1) On Herodotus' knowledge of Spartan burial customs, cf. H. Schaefer, *Das Eidolon des Leonidas*, in: id., *Probleme der Alten Geschichte* (Göttingen 1965) 324–25. Xenophon states that although the Spartan kings were not honored differently from other men while alive, in death they were honored as heroes, cf. *Lak. Pol.* 15.9 (also *Hell.* 3.3.1 on the splendor of the ταφή of king Agis). On the Spartan royal funeral in comparison with the funeral rite for Scythian kings, cf. F. Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, trans. J. Lloyd (Berkeley – Los Angeles 1988; orig. Paris 1980) 133–56; on the Spartan funeral and the Athenian public funeral for the war-dead, cf. N. Loraux, *The Invention of Athens. The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, trans. A. Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass. 1986; orig. Paris 1981) 45–46.

generalization based on the special case of Leonidas². Obviously the case of Leonidas would have presented problems for the Spartans and their elaborate funeral: his body was mutilated by the Persians after his death at Thermopylae and his bones were only returned to Sparta forty years after the battle³. But Schaefer's thesis that the εἶδωλον of a king was present in the royal funeral only when the corpse had not been recovered from battle depends on the premise that the εἶδωλον served only the practical function of allowing the ceremony to occur without a corpse. When Herodotus' statement is considered in relation to other evidence for Spartan treatment of religious figures who had died in battle, it becomes clear that there is good reason to think that the εἶδωλον had important symbolic value in the royal funeral, and we should not ignore the significance of Herodotus' statement by simply dismissing it as a description of a special procedure which only occurred in those cases when the body of the king was unavailable for the funeral ceremony.

First of all, the loss of the body of a Spartan king in battle could not have been a frequent occurrence, and we know of only one other Spartan king besides Leonidas whose body was not recovered from battle⁴. In fact, the loss of any corpse was not likely to have been frequent in standard Greek hoplite battle, since strict conventions were observed about the return and burial of the dead by both sides⁵. More important in this context is the fact that it was the Spartan custom always to bring home the bodies of their kings who had died abroad, whether in battle or not, and they

2) Cf. Schaefer (above, n. 1) 324–28; and, most recently following Schaefer, W. R. Connor, Pausanias 3.14.1: A sidelight on Spartan history, *TAPA* 109 (1979) 23, P. A. Cartledge, *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta* (Baltimore 1987) 333, and J.-P. Vernant, *Figures, idoles, masques* (Paris 1990) 39 and 72.

3) Hdt. 7.238.1 and Pausanias 3.14.1; on the problems of the text of Pausanias, cf. Connor (above, n. 2).

4) According to Theopompus, *FGrHist* 115 F 232 (= Athen. 12.536D), the Tarentines in 338 refused to return the body of Archidamos III even though the Spartans offered large sums of money, an incident which serves to emphasize the importance that the Spartans placed on recovering the body for their royal funeral; cf. W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War IV* (Berkeley – Los Angeles 1985) 226. At Leuctra, a Homeric battle took place over the body of king Kleombrotos, cf. *Xen. Hell.* 6.4.13 and *Diod. Sic.* 15.54–56.3.

5) On hoplite casualties, cf. P. Krentz, *Casualties in hoplite battles*, *GRBS* 26 (1985) 13–20; on conventions regarding burial, cf. Pritchett (above, n. 4) 94 ff. On the identification of the individual dead, cf. P. Vaughan, *Identification and retrieval of hoplite battle-dead*, in: V. D. Hanson (ed.), *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience* (London 1991) 38–62.

were the only members of the community to receive such treatment (Plut. Ages. 40)⁶. Herodotus could not have been unaware of these factors and it becomes even more difficult then to accept the idea that his statement about the εἶδωλον was a misleading generalization, especially since we know Herodotus was quite capable of describing a single incident which then led to a law or precedent regarding the Spartan kings (cf. 5.75.2). But in this passage the historian simply says that an εἶδωλον was present in the funeral of any Spartan king who had died in battle, without any stipulation as to the availability of the corpse, and there seems to be no reason to read more into his statement than what he says. Once we free ourselves of the rationalizing assumption that the purpose of the εἶδωλον was simply to take the place of the lost body of the king, ample comparative evidence concerning the role of effigies in the royal funerals of other societies demonstrates that the εἶδωλον of a Spartan king must have had important symbolic significance.

The death of a king or chief in a rigidly hierarchical society is traumatizing for the whole community because the social order loses the embodiment of the authority of its hierarchy. His death constitutes a threat to the political stability of the community, and during the period of transition of royal power, a period of extreme vulnerability for the social order, the royal funeral – which often exceeds in pomp and display the coronation of the new king – serves the important function of focusing the attention of the community on a ceremony which asserts the continuity of the political order despite the loss of the mortal embodiment of that order. The depiction provided by Herodotus of widespread and enforced mourning throughout Laconia, of suspension of normal community business for a prolonged period, and the pomp and circumstance of a sumptuous funeral⁷, are all standard characteristics of the elaborate funerals for chiefs or kings in traditional societies. Such funerary extravagance is often maintained even by societies in which the king has ceased to have any real judicial, military, or political power, a fact which demonstrates that even when the king himself ceases to have true authority in the community, the sym-

6) On return to Sparta of dead kings, cf. Xen. Hell. 5.3.19 (on Agesipolis in 380 B.C.); Diod. Sic. 15.93, Nepos, Ages. 8.7, and Plut. Ages. 40 (on Agesilaos in 359 B.C.).

7) The royal Spartan funeral may have been “the most spectacular pageant the Peloponnese ever saw.” (R. Parker, *Spartan Religion*, in: A. Powell [ed.], *Classical Sparta: Techniques behind her Success* [London 1988] 153).

bol of his person and office in death remains highly significant for the community⁸.

A frequent feature of royal funerals are life-size effigies of the dead king. Far from serving as a substitute for the absent body of the king, the effigy plays an important role in the royal funeral by providing a symbolic representation of the permanence of the political order as formerly embodied in the person of the king. This idealized representation deliberately contrasts with the corpse itself, now in the process of change and decay. While in life the king embodied the authority of the hierarchy, in death and during the funeral – a most sensitive point in the transition of power – the effigy serves as the representation of the body politic. In some communities the effigy even serves as the repository of the kingship during the period of transition, and in all royal funerals the effigy is the manifestation of the other, undying ‘body’ of the king which is crucial to the continuity of the political order⁹. In specific relation to the statement of Herodotus about the Spartan εἰδωλον, it is important to note that in all the royal funerals in which an effigy is present, the availability of the king’s corpse is not usually a relevant factor, although in the vast majority of cases the corpse is also present in the ceremony. The effigy does not replace the corpse in the funeral; it may draw attention away from it, and the corpse itself may not be directly displayed, but the body of the king is present at the funeral and is an integral part of the ceremony.

Sparta was not the only society in classical antiquity to engage in elaborate funerals with effigies. Effigies began to appear in Roman funerals at the very end of the Republic, just as that society was coming under the rule of a hereditary dynasty. A wax image of Julius Caesar, complete with the twenty-three wounds dealt him by his assassins, was displayed at his funeral and it caused the mob to riot (Appian, BC 2.147); at the funeral of Augustus no less than three life-size images, one of which was gold, were displayed in the procession while the corpse itself was out of sight in a coffin (Dio

8) On these characteristics of royal funerals, see the collection of comparative cases in P. Metcalf & R. Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge 1991) 121–183; on the Spartan funeral in this comparative context, cf. Cartledge (above, n. 2) 331–43.

9) On the symbolism of an effigy in royal funerals, cf. Metcalf & Huntington (above, n. 8) 154, 157–58, and 163–72. On the two ‘bodies’ of the king and the effigy, cf. E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton 1957) 419–37.

56.34.1); after these funerals it seems the practice became institutionalized, and a wax effigy was regularly displayed in the funerals of Roman emperors (Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.5 and Herodian 4.2). It is obvious that the social and symbolic purposes of royal funerals in general and of effigies in particular would well apply in the case of the funeral of a Roman emperor. Because all our evidence for the εἶδωλον in the Spartan royal funeral is derived from the one statement in Herodotus, we can only surmise that it served a function similar to that in other royal funerals. And, of course, the comparative evidence can only usefully be applied in terms of the general characteristics of the symbolism of effigies in royal funerals. But in the same way that the whole ceremony of the Spartan royal funeral has clear parallels in its character and purpose with royal funerals of other societies, so the role of the εἶδωλον itself can best be understood in this same comparative context.

Schaefer states that the use of the εἶδωλον did not go back to earliest times of Spartan history. While there is no evidence to confirm this, there is some comparative evidence which supports the idea that the use of an εἶδωλον would have been introduced into the Spartan funeral ceremony due to unusual circumstances having to do with the availability or appearance of the corpse, and that once the precedent was set, the εἶδωλον began to accrue symbolic meaning which established its role in the funeral of any Spartan king slain in battle. The most obvious case would have been the death of Leonidas, as Schaefer recognized. But we know that Sparta's enemies realised the significance the Spartans attached to the recovery of a royal corpse from battle, and Homeric battles were fought over their bodies or they were refused ransom in some cases (cf. instances in n. 4). In light of this, it is not improbable that there were kings before Leonidas whose bodies were lost in battle and so the use of an εἶδωλον in the royal funeral may have originated in an era much earlier than the 5th century. Whenever it first happened that a king's body was not recovered from battle, something out of the ordinary would had to have been done at his funeral, and an effigy must have been the obvious solution. But, again, comparative evidence indicates that the precedent would not then have been restricted only to funerals in which the body of the king was unavailable for the ceremony. The more likely scenario was that the precedent would have applied in the funeral of any Spartan king slain in battle, just as Herodotus says¹⁰.

10) For example, a peculiar set of circumstances required the use of an effigy

There seems no good reason to dismiss or distort what Herodotus says about the Spartan royal effigy, but it does lead to a more complicated question: if the εἶδωλον served important symbolic and ideological purposes in the royal funeral, why was it used only in the relatively rare case for a king who had died in battle? The answer seems to lie in a conjunction of pragmatic and symbolic factors.

The very use of an εἶδωλον in some royal funerals implies that the body of the Spartan king would normally have been displayed during both the πρόθεσις and the funeral procession itself, and so the appearance of the corpse would have been an important consideration in staging the funeral¹¹. A corpse badly disfigured by mortal wounds or in an advanced state of decomposition after many days of transport in the heat of a Mediterranean summer from a far off battlefield would certainly have introduced complications that only an effigy could resolve¹².

The symbolic importance of the effigy for a king slain in battle is more complicated and seems to relate to a larger issue in Spartan religion. Two other disputed and amended passages – neither of which has ever been considered in relation to Herodotus' statement on the Spartan royal funeral – provide evidence that the Spartans attached special significance to the death in battle of a religious figure and such a death was signified by a special funeral rite or memorial.

At 9.85.1–2, Herodotus says that after the battle of Plataea the Spartans buried the ἱερεῖς, the other Spartiates, and the helots in separate burials:

Λακεδαιμόνιοι μὲν τριξᾶς ἐποίησαντο θήκας· ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱερεῖς ἔθαψαν, τῶν καὶ Ποσειδάωνιος καὶ Ἀμομφάρετος ἦσαν καὶ Φιλοκύων τε καὶ Καλλιμάχου. ἐν μὲν δὴ ἐνὶ τῶν τάφων ἦσαν οἱ ἱερεῖς, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἑτέρῳ οἱ ἄλλοι Σπαρτιῆται, ἐν δὲ τῷ τρίτῳ οἱ εἰλωτες.

in the funeral of the English king, Edward II, in 1327. But after this precedent, effigies regularly appeared in English royal funerals; cf. Kantorowicz (above, n. 9) 420–21. “Royal customs such as the use of an effigy in a funeral, often begin in response to chance circumstances and practical considerations but once performed, any part of a royal funeral ritual sets a precedent that is repeated at the next kingly death. Once present in the ritual, an element accumulates meanings the way a ship accumulates barnacles.” (Metcalf & Huntington [above, n. 8] 166.)

11) On anxiety about the appearance of a corpse among the ancient Greeks, cf. Euripides, Supp. 941–49; also S. Humphreys, *Family, Women and Death* (London 1983) 149, and Cartledge (above, n. 2) 335.

12) The Spartans practised a rudimentary form of embalming with honey or wax in order to retard decomposition during the transportation back to Sparta; cf. Xen. Hell. 5.3.19, Diod. Sic. 15.93.6, Nepos, Ages. 8.7 and Plut. Ages. 40. One can be reasonably suspicious of the success of such treatment.

Almost all modern editions of Herodotus accept the emendations ἰρένας and ἰρένες for ἰρέας and ἰρέες, emendations that were suggested tentatively by Valckenaer in the eighteenth century¹³. Valckenaer was bothered by the fact that he knew of no evidence for Spartan priests dying in battle and, furthermore, an ancient lexicographical list to Herodotus mentioned εἶδον as word that occurred in his history, but could be found nowhere in his work. The acceptance of Valckenaer's emendations has persisted, despite the penetrating analysis by W. Den Boer, who showed both that Valckenaer himself was not completely convinced of their validity and that the reasons he gave for them were weak¹⁴. Nevertheless, despite Den Boer's persuasive arguments, Valckenaer's emendations have remained the accepted reading among scholars, and Den Boer's objections have generally been misunderstood or ignored¹⁵.

In light of what we know about Spartan religious figures, which is even less than the little we know of Spartan religion, to say that there is no evidence other than Herodotus about the death in battle and burial of Spartan priests and then to use that as a basis on which to reject the manuscript reading of Herodotus is hardly an argument. Since the one statement in Herodotus essentially constitutes our only evidence on the issue, the lack of other evidence can be used neither to affirm nor deny the reading in his text. Valckenaer's other reason to emend the manuscript, that the word εἶδον appears in a lexicographical list to Herodotus, is more substantial and might seem, on first consideration, to provide sufficient reason for correcting the text. But as Stein demonstrated

13) Legrand in the Budé, series (Paris 1932–1954) retained the manuscript readings of ἰρέας and ἰρέες, but bracketed the sentence which provided the names of the four individuals. Rosén in his recent Teubner text of Herodotus (Leipzig 1987) retains Valckenaer's emendations. For a comprehensive discussion of the issues relating to the emendations, cf. W. Den Boer, *Laconian Studies* (Amsterdam 1954) 288–98.

14) Valckenaer was indecisive and thought a reading of ἰππέας would also be plausible; cf. also R. F. Willetts, *Herodotus IX* 85, 1–2, *Mnem.* 33 (1980) 273–74.

15) D. H. Kelly, *Thucydides and Herodotus on the Pitanate Lochos*, *GRBS* 22 (1981) 33–36 rejected Den Boer's argument but he seems to misunderstand a crucial point since he thinks that the text of *Plut. Lyc.* 27.3, on which Den Boer bases part of his argument, is an emendation when it is in fact the reading of the best manuscript for that *Vita*. Pritchett (above, n. 4) 174 only cites Kelly on the issue and J. Lazenby, *The Spartan Army* (Warminster 1985) 48–50, ignores Den Boer's discussion. Parker (above, n. 7) 163 n. 4, and D. M. MacDowell, *Spartan Law* (Edinburgh 1986) 121–22 are rightly more cautious, although in the end both accept Valckenaer's emendations. M. B. Wallace, *Notes on Early Greek Grave Epigrams*, *Phoenix* 24 (1970) 99 n. 11 and A. R. Burn, *CR* n.s. 30 (1980) 137–38, accept Den Boer's conclusion that the manuscript readings ought to be retained.

over one hundred years ago this list, containing as it does numerous words that are not in Herodotus and some of which are clearly from Sophocles' *Electra*, can have no legitimacy as the sole evidence on which to introduce words into the text of Herodotus¹⁶.

Even more troubling than Valckenaer's reasons for emending the text are the impossible implications that result if we accept his emendations. It is generally agreed that not all four of the men whom Herodotus names (Poseidon, Amompharetos, Philokyon, and Kallikrates) could have been εἰσθενες, i.e. men between the ages of about twenty and (at most) thirty¹⁷. Herodotus says at 9.53.2 that Amompharetos was the leader of a λόχος, which in the Spartan army at the time of Plataea may have contained one thousand men, a fifth of the Spartiate force there¹⁸. Amompharetos obstinately refused a direct order of Pausanias, the Spartan commander of the Greek army, to perform a tactical withdrawal (9.53–57), an act of disobedience hardly conceivable for an εἰσθην in charge of a small force of his peers (cf. Plut. Lyc. 17.3). Furthermore, Kallikrates is described by Herodotus as the most handsome man (ἀνὴρ κάλλιστος) of all the Greeks at Plataea. If we are to accept that the Spartans (and presumably Herodotus, if he was using such a

16) H. Stein, *Herodoti Historiae* II (Berlin 1871) 462–82; on the accuracy of this list cf. esp. 443 and 471–74; cf. also Den Boer (above, n. 13) 291. It is interesting to note that H. B. Rosén in his 'Eine Laut- und Formenlehre der herodotischen Sprachform' (Heidelberg 1962) does not list εἰσθην in his register of Herodotus' vocabulary.

17) The maximum age of thirty is deduced from a statement in Plut. Lyc. 25.1, which says that οἱ νεώτεροι of Sparta could not enter an ἀγορά before the age of thirty. Whether the age of thirty can then be made the upper limit for an εἰσθην is open to question; cf. Den Boer (above, n. 13) 257–58 (who argues that Spartans ceased to be εἰσθενες at the age of twenty-one) and Lazenby (above, n. 15) 48–49. MacDowell (above, n. 15) 164–66, has recently restated the case for an upper limit of thirty.

These four names are not a complete list. Obviously Herodotus names the four because they have occurred previously in his account of the battle at 9.71 and 72. H. Diels' idea, mentioned in a letter to M. Nilsson (cf. Nilsson, *Opuscula Selecta* II [Lund 1952] 870 [= *Klio* 13 (1913) 9–10]), that the reading of the manuscript be emended to ἦρης or ἦρεύς, presumably in recognition of these men as those who fought best among the Spartans (cf. 9.71, where Herodotus mentions only Poseidon, Amompharetos, and Philokyon), cannot be correct because Kallikrates was wounded by an arrow before the battle and did not participate in the fighting (cf. 9.72).

18) On the size of the Spartan contingent at Plataea cf. Hdt. 9.10.1 and 28.2. On the number of men in a λόχος, cf. R. W. Macan, *Herodotus, The Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Books* (London 1908) on 9.53. Lazenby (above, n. 15) 48, is emphatic: "If there is one thing that is certain about the Spartan army it is that no twenty year-old or twenty-one year-old ever commanded a fifth of it."

specific term as εἶρην) made a clear distinction between ἀνήρ and εἶρην (cf. Xen. Rep. Lac. 2.11), then this is still more evidence of the improbability of these four men having been εἰρηνες¹⁹. It is also not unreasonable to think that if Herodotus had used the very specific Spartan term εἶρην in describing a special burial, he would have provided some sort of explanation as to who the εἰρηνες were. Such an obscure term referring to an age-class in the Spartan ἀγωγή would not have been obvious to all his readers in the way that the term ‘helot’ or ‘Spartiate’ was²⁰. Finally, one must ask why Spartan εἰρηνες would have been buried separately from the Spartiates themselves²¹. The purpose of the Spartan ἀγωγή was to produce warriors who would welcome death in battle before retreat or defeat. It seems hardly likely that the Spartans would have maintained the hierarchy of age classification and separated in burial, simply because of their age, young men who through death in battle had certainly proved themselves worthy of full Spartiate status. The only interpretation of a separate burial for εἰρηνες as opposed to those for the Spartiates and the helots can be that they were superior to the latter but not worthy of inclusion with the former. This runs counter to all we know of burial of the war-dead among the Greeks, where death in battle had the tendency to remove even quite severe social distinctions by incorporating all the dead in a common πολυάνδριον²². It seems inconceivable that the Spartans would have segregated in burial rites, simply because of their age, young citizens who had fallen in battle.

19) Scholars who accept the emendations of Valckenaer are aware of these problems but have offered no solutions to them. Kelly (above, n. 15) 36 and Lazenby (above, n. 15) 49, in a curious twist of logic, accept the emendation and then blame Herodotus for his “mistake” in calling Amompharetos an εἶρην. MacDowell (above, n. 15) 165–66, suggests that Amompharetos was a young “star” in the Spartan army, who at an age just under thirty had risen to his high command because of Spartan losses suffered at Thermopylae. But this can only be special pleading.

20) This same objection applies to Willetts’ suggestion (Mnem. 33 [1980] 276–77) of <σφα>ιρέας and <σφα>ιρέες as a solution to the problem. Herodotus could hardly have designated such “ballplayers” as honored with a separate burial at Plataea without explaining who they were and why they received such treatment.

21) Cf. Diels’ letter on this in: Nilsson (above, n. 17).

22) At Marathon, slaves were buried in the same mound as the dead Plataeans (Paus. 1.32.3); the names of slaves and foreigners occur on the casualty lists of the πολυάνδρια in the δημόσιον σῆμα at Athens, cf. C. Clairmont, *Patrios Nomos: Public Burial in Athens During the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.*: The Archaeological, Epigraphic-Literary and Historical Evidence, BAR International Series 161 (Oxford 1983) no. 18 and Loraux (above, n. 1) 35–36.

When we eliminate the dubious evidence of the lexicographical list, the only justification for Valckenaer's emendations is the argument that there is no other evidence that Spartans buried *ἱερεῖς* on the battlefield separately from the other dead. As stated above, this is hardly a sufficient basis on which to emend a text, given the paucity of our evidence concerning Spartan priests and *ἱερεῖς*. Furthermore, it is not clear that there is no other evidence to lend confirmation to the reading of the manuscripts of Herodotus.

In his *Lycurgus* (27.1–4) Plutarch provides the following description of Spartan burial customs:

καὶ μὴν καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς ταφὰς ἄριστα διεκόσμησεν αὐτοῖς. πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ἀνελὼν δεισιδαιμονίαν ἄπασαν, ἐν τῇ πόλει θάπτει τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ πλησίον ἔχειν τὰ μνήματα τῶν ἱερῶν οὐκ ἐκώλυσε, συντρόφους ποιῶν ταῖς τοιαύταις ὄψεσι καὶ συνήθεις τοὺς νέους, ὥστε μὴ ταράττεσθαι μηδ' ὀρρωδεῖν τὸν θάνατον, ὡς μαινόντα τοὺς ἀψαμένους νεκροῦ σώματος ἢ διὰ τάφων διελθόντας. ἔπειτα συνθάπτει οὐδὲν εἶσεν, ἀλλ' ἐν φοινικίδι καὶ φύλλοις ἐλαίας θέντες τὸ σῶμα περιέστελλον. ἐπιγράψαι δὲ τοῦνομα θάψαντας οὐκ ἔξην τοῦ νεκροῦ, πλὴν ἀνδρὸς ἐν πολέμῳ καὶ γυναικὸς τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποθανόντων. χρόνον δὲ πένθους ὀλίγον προσώρισεν, ἡμέρας ἑνδεκα· τῇ δὲ δωδεκάτῃ θύσαντας ἔδει Δήμητρι λύειν τὸ πένθος.

It is the confused reading of the final clause of the fourth sentence that is of concern here: ἐπιγράψαι δὲ τοῦνομα θάψαντας οὐκ ἔξην τοῦ νεκροῦ, πλὴν ἀνδρὸς ἐν πολέμῳ καὶ γυναικὸς τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποθανόντων. This is the reading of the Codex Seitenstettensis, the best manuscript for the *Vita* of Lycurgus, and where ἱερῶν is found with σ written above the ν; that the phrase τῶν ἱερῶν (vel ἱερωῶς) ἀποθανόντων is troubled is obvious. It is not clear who these ἱεροί might have been or what it meant for a person to die ἱερωῶς. Furthermore, in the way the Greek is arranged it is ambiguous whether the participial phrase applies only to the woman or to both the woman and the man slain in war. The difficult nature of the passage can be estimated both from the number of attempts at correction presented in the apparatus criticus of the Teubner edition of Lindskog and Ziegler²³.

In light of these difficulties it is not surprising that a radical emendation, attributed to Kurt Latte by Ziegler, has now gained almost universal acceptance: πλὴν ἀνδρὸς ἐν πολέμῳ καὶ γυναικὸς [τῶν] λεχοῦς ἀποθανόντων. Latte's suggestion is attractive by virtue of providing a neat logical, if not grammatical, balance with ἐν

23) C. Lindskog and K. Ziegler, *Plutarchi Vitae Parallelae* (Leipzig 1973) III 2.

πολέμῳ, and to support his conjecture there are two inscriptions from Laconia in which the letters ΛΕΧΟΙ appear (IG 5.1.713–14). In this way a confusing passage was rendered intelligible and attested: with Latte's emendation men received the honor of an epitaph for dying in defense of the community while women who died in the act of replenishing the supply of manpower were also memorialized – a chain of reasoning which would seem to be in accord with the Spartan militaristic ethos²⁴. Given the latitude and vagueness in the interpretation of the manuscript reading, it is not surprising that Latte's suggestion has gained wide acceptance²⁵.

Unlike the text of Herodotus 9.85, the state of the text of Plutarch seems to call for some kind of correction, but it is not clear that so radical a conjecture as that of Latte is necessary or justified. The primary evidence in support of his introduction of λεχοῦς into Plutarch's text is found in two inscriptions, only one of which is complete (IG 5.1.714: ΑΓΙΠΠΙΑ ΛΕΧΟΙ; IG 5.1.713 has part of what might have been the word ΛΕΧΟΙ), and the exact meaning of neither of which is clear²⁶. It is generally agreed that they are sepulchral and that the dative ΛΕΧΟΙ refers to the manner of death, i.e. of women in bed during childbirth, but this is by no means certain. There are a number of other Laconian inscriptions (IG 5.1.701–713) which contain the formula ΕΝ ΠΟΛΕΜΟΙ, which ought to be considered sepulchral in nature and which, when combined with the evidence of the two inscriptions cited above, would seem to lend confirmation to Latte's proposed reading of Plutarch. But even more frequent than ΛΕΧΟΙ in Laconian

24) Cf. MacDowell (above, n. 15) 122 and M. Nafissi, *La Nascita del Kosmos*. Studi sulla storia e la società di Sparta (Perugia 1991) 295.

25) Cf. R. Flacelière, *Sur quelques passages des Vies de Plutarque*, REG 61 (1948) 403–5; M. Manfredini & L. Piccirilli, *Plutarco, Le vite di Licurgo e de Numa* (Lorenzo Valla 1980). Among historians and archaeologists who have accepted Latte's emendation, see O. Reverdin, *La religion de la cité, platonicienne* (Paris 1945) 183; S. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* (New York 1975) 36; Kelly (above, n. 15) 33–36; N. Loraux, *Le lit, la guerre, L'homme* 21.1 (1981) 37 n. 1 and *Invention* (above, n. 1) 18 n. 9; Lazenby (above, n. 15) 48–50; I. Morris, *Burial and Ancient Society: The Rise of the Greek City-State* (Cambridge 1987) 50. P. Cartledge, *Literacy in the Spartan oligarchy*, JHS 98 (1978) 35 n. 71, is aware of the problem; in 'Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta' (above, n. 2) 336, he accepts the emendation. In a recent translation of Plutarch's *Life of Lysurgus* – one sure to be widely used – R. J. A. Talbert, *Plutarch on Sparta* (New York – London 1988) 39 n. 2, implicitly admits the radical nature of Latte's emendation, but he accepts it on the basis of "Spartan ideals" and the evidence of the inscriptions.

26) Cf. the comments at IG 5.1.713, where various possibilities of the meaning of these two inscriptions are mentioned.

inscriptions is the term $\text{IEPEY}\Sigma$ ²⁷. It is no more clear that these inscriptions are sepulchral than in the case of the ΛEXOI inscriptions, and, like the inscriptions with ΛEXOI , these inscriptions are difficult to date. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that the epigraphic evidence clearly cannot be decisive in determining the manuscript reading of the passage in Plutarch.

As with the passage in Herodotus about the burials at Plataea, the emendation of Plutarch also introduces problems which are sometimes too easily forgotten in the effort to find a neat and satisfactory resolution for the difficult manuscript reading and its implications. Den Boer noted two significant objections to Latte's emendation which still stand. First, that the word $\lambda\epsilon\chi\acute{\omega}$ occurs only one other time in the large corpus of Plutarch, and then only in a quotation of the philosopher Chrysippus (Mor. 1044F22), and so Latte's emendation introduces a word into Plutarch's text which otherwise does not seem to have been part of his normal vocabulary; second, that there can be no convincing paleographical explanation for how ἐρῶν or ἐρῶς came to be read for λεχοῦς ²⁸. Finally, one might add that, as in most pre-modern societies, death in childbirth must have been a leading cause of death for Spartan females in their child-bearing years. Why such a relatively common occurrence would have been recognised with an epitaph, and, more importantly, why so few epitaphs, relatively speaking, have survived, are very difficult to explain if such epitaphs were considered a special honor for women in Sparta.

A possible solution to the problem of the text of the *Lycurgus* might be found in the fact that Plutarch is here describing the traditional Spartan battlefield burial. Plutarch says that the purpose of the Lycurgan burial procedure was to alleviate among the young men ($\text{o}\acute{\iota}$ νεοί) the fear and superstition (δεισιδαιμονία) related to death, obviously for the purpose of making them better warriors. He then goes on to describe a simple, primitive burial, in which the corpse is put in the ground without a coffin, on a bed of leaves, and wrapped in a φοινικίς , the characteristic, red Spartan military cloak²⁹. The military significance of this burial is clear from the φοινικίς as the only item that can be put in the grave, and

27) IG 5.1.1329,1338,1367 and SEG 11.951; cf. also C. Le Roy, $\Lambda\text{AK}\Omega\text{NI-KA}$, BCH 85 (1961) 228–32, Wallace (above, n. 15) 99 n. 11 and Parker (above, n. 7) 163 n. 4.

28) Den Boer (above, n. 13) 296; also MacDowell (above, n. 15) 122.

29) On this type of burial, cf. E. Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, trans. W. Hillis (London 1925; orig.

the simple manner of interment, with no grave goods or coffin, well reflects what a Spartan battlefield burial would have been like. We know that the Spartans always inhumed their war-dead, and that they always buried their dead on the battlefield (cf. Plut. Ages. 40.3). That the description in Plutarch is of a military burial is confirmed by a passage from Aelian (VH 6.6), which says that a Spartan was buried in branches and leaves if he died fighting well and in a φοινικίς if he had performed some especially noteworthy deed in battle:

ὅτι οὐκ ἔξῃν ἀνδρὶ Λάκωνι οὐδὲ σκυλεῦσαι τὸν πολέμον. οἱ δὲ καλῶς ἀγωνισάμενοι καὶ ἀποθανόντες θαλλοῖς ἀνεδοῦντο καὶ κλάδοις ἐτέροις, καὶ δι' ἐπαίνων ἤγοντο· οἱ δὲ τελέως ἀριστεύσαντες καὶ φοινικίδος αὐτοῖς ἐπιβληθείσης ἐνδόξως ἐθάπτοντο.

It is clear that the first three sentences of Plutarch's description of Spartan burial describe practices which were instituted to familiarize young Spartan males with death and its representations in order to allow them to face the possibility of death in battle without trepidation. Suddenly in the next sentence the whole thrust of the passage changes with the reference to an epitaph for a woman if she was a "holy woman" or had died ἱερῶς. It is not likely that the burial in a φοινικίς could have applied in the case of women, and there seems to be good reason to suspect the phrase καὶ γυναικός as the real problem with the text³⁰. If these words are removed, the theme of the passage remains uninterrupted and the resulting Greek, πλὴν ἀνδρὸς ἐν πολέμῳ τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποθανόντος, while not elegant, is intelligible and says essentially what Herodotus says about the burials at Plataea, i.e. that Spartan ἱερεῖς who fell in battle were distinguished from the other dead by a special burial and epitaph³¹. There is some support for removing

Tübingen and Freiburg 1898) 192 n. 61; on the φοινικίς cf. Xen. Rep. Lac. 11.3.1 and Aristotle F 542 [Rose].

30) MacDowell (above, n. 15) 121, who accepts Latte's emendation with a bit of reservation, recognizes this problem, as does Nafissi (above, n. 24) 295 n. 77. I am grateful to Michael Flower for originally directing my attention to the problem of the phrase καὶ γυναικός in this passage.

31) In suggesting the elimination of καὶ γυναικός I do not pretend to have solved the problem of the original form of Plutarch's sentence. My purpose here is simply to show wherein the problem lies when the clause is considered both in the specific context of Plutarch's description in this passage and in the larger context of the evidence from Herodotus. Certainly the conservative elimination of this phrase is as plausible as the radical emendation of Latte, and the resulting locution ἀνήρ ... τῶν ... has ample precedent in the Greek of Plutarch: e.g. Thes. 26.3, Cic. 6.3, Rom. 28.1, Arist. 27.5, Ant. 64.2, Ages. 16.4.

the reference to women in this passage in *Mor.* 238D, a passage which says the same thing about Spartan burial as that in *Lyc.* 27.1 except that there is no reference to women in the comparable sentence: ἀνεῖλε καὶ τὰς ἐπιγραφὰς τὰς ἐπὶ τῶν μνημείων, πλὴν τῶν ἐν πολέμῳ τελευτησάντων. Obviously this passage cannot be decisive for the issue since there is no reference here to ἱεροί, but it does provide some confirmation that the exclusion of καὶ γυναικός from the passage in the *Lycurgus* seems to be the proper way to emend the text.

One can only speculate as to how καὶ γυναικός came into the text. The most likely possibility is that it was originally a gloss meant to correspond to ἀνδρὸς ἐν πολέμῳ in the text, and such a gloss could well have read something like the emendation suggested by Latte. But it does appear clear from the type of burial described by Plutarch and from the evidence of other passages in Plutarch and Herodotus that it ought not to be in the text.

The general acceptance of the exclusion of the terms ἱερεῖς and ἱεροί from the texts of both Herodotus and Plutarch ultimately stems from the fact that we have so little evidence at all for religious figures in Sparta. But both texts do point to the fact that the death in battle of an important religious figure was marked by special funeral ritual or memorial and it is in this intersection of the religious with the military that we might find the answer to the puzzle of why an effigy appeared only in the funeral of a king who had fallen in battle.

Aristotle (*Pol.* 1285b) described the Spartan kingship as a hereditary generalship. But in addition to being the chief military officer in the state, the Spartan kings were also the most important religious figures: they were descended directly from the gods (*Xen. Rep. Lac.* 15.2), acted as intermediaries with them in Spartan society (*Arist. Pol.* 1285a), and the majority of their rights and prerogatives were in the religious sphere (*Hdt.* 6.56–57)³². The death of a king in battle, like the deaths of priests or the mysterious “ἱεροί” in the same context, called for a special burial, one in which an idealizing εἶδωλον in his funeral procession marked the supreme achievement by the leader of the army and symbolized that by such a glorious death the king had overcome death itself. Therefore, when considered in the wider context of the symbolism of effigies in other royal funerals and in relation to the evidence for Spartan treatment of the war-dead, there seems no reason to doubt

32) Parker (above, n. 7) 143–44 and 152–54.

the precise meaning of Herodotus when he says that an εἶδωλον was used in the royal funeral whenever the king had died in battle. Specific circumstances, such as those surrounding the death of Leonidas or some earlier king, might well have introduced the practice, but once in place, practical and ideological reasons coordinate with the Spartan ethos would have assured the maintenance of the custom³³.

New York

Mark Toher

33) I am grateful to this journal's editor, who improved this article by cordial insistence on conciseness of argument, and to Michael Flower and Kurt Raaf-laub, who provided valuable strategic advice. No one of them necessarily agrees with its conclusions. I am happy to acknowledge the support of my work on this article by a grant from the Humanities Faculty Development Fund of Union College.